

Chai~Lights



March 2009

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Keys Jewish Community Center

P.O. Box 1332 • Tavernier, FL 33070 • 305-852-5235 • keysjewishcenter.com

March 2009

5 Adar - 6 Nisan

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
		<div> <p>KJCC Purim Observance Friday March 6th. 5:30 Megillah Reading 6:30 Shabbat Dinner Sponsored by Suzanne & Michael Gilson 7:30 KJCC Religious School Purim Play 8:00 Services</p> </div>			Sam & The Shabbatones <i>Carol & Steve Steinbock</i> <i>Toby & David Goldfinger</i>	
8 Spring Forward! Daylight Savings Time Begins	9 Fast of Esther	10 Purim	11	12	13 Marc Bloom <i>Patricia & Henry Isenberg</i>	14
15	16	17	18	19	20 Bernie Ginsberg <i>Barbara Calev</i>	21
22	23	24	25	26	27 Alan Beth 6:30 Service <i>Bill & Freda Ferns</i>	28
29	30	31				
				<div> <p>Names denote leaders of Friday services. <i>Italicized names are Oneg sponsors.</i></p> </div>		

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CHAI-LIGHTS is the
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Keys Jewish Community Center
P.O. Box 1332
Tavernier, Florida 33070
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President's Message Alan Beth



I would like to first thank the outgoing board for their tremendous effort. The synagogue is stronger and better now than ever. This of course leads to thanks to our outgoing president, Steve Steinbock. Steve brought all of the qualities that encourage growth for our Keys Jewish Community Center, as stated in our by-laws: "Improve, Encourage and Enrich the Religious, Educational and Social Life of the Jewish People in our Community." The list, I should warn you, is very long! We have a religious school for our children, bar/bat mitzvah class, adult Hebrew classes, Holocaust studies, lectures, adult education, a splendid little library, movie nights, social gatherings, and of course Friday night services. These are the foundations that we need to build upon. As we know, living in the Keys our homes need to be on strong pillars. We have that in our community and in our KJCC home.

I have been the head of the religious committee for the last six years. When Joel Pollack asked me to lead it, I told him that I was not qualified. Joel assured me that others are very knowledgeable and I'd have help. I learnt that was a true statement. Over the years I have gained so much knowledge about our religion from those in our community.

What has amazed me, every Friday night, is the amount of time people stay after services.

Often, in other places, we go to a synagogue in a large community only to find that we are strangers amongst the many. Here, our Onegs, Friday dinners and the social events are the backbone of the synagogue, the glue that binds us together as a community. For this we should give praise to Sisterhood.

It takes a lot to maintain a home. Some people are visible, leading Friday services. Others are working hard behind the scenes, maintaining our records, our finances, writing correspondence, looking after the house and the garden. It takes a group of dedicated people to keep the home functioning well. To this, I would ask each of you to be involved: If we all do a little, it is not so much.

This is the home that we have built, a place in which we can pray, study, learn and then schmooze.

I am very grateful and honored that you have chosen me as your president. I will remember the words that Joel told me years ago: if ever I need advice or guidance then I can look to the talent we have in our community.

I look forward to working with all of you, and especially with our new board of officers and directors, to continue to build and nurture our KJCC. ♦

Our Mishpocha Is Growing

The KJCC would like to introduce you all to our newest members, Rachel and Richard Peine of Key Largo, David and Patti Gross of Islamorada and Rita and Wes Conklin of Islamorada. A warm welcome to you all, and we hope to see you soon!

Scholarship Info

If you are interested in learning more about a KJCC scholarship, contact Kurt Kluger at kurtkluger@bellsouth.net or by phone at 305-852-4353. The KJCC has implemented two types of financial awards available to children of KJCC members who are full time Monroe County residents, upon their graduation from high school or secondary school. They are the Pauline and Al Roller Merit award and The KJCC Scholarship award. If you or someone you know would be interested, contact Kurt for more info. Applications must be in by April 15.

Oneg Sponsors for March 2009

March 6th — Carol and Steve Steinbock in honor of Steve's birthday, and Toby and David Goldfinger to mark Toby's birthday.

March 13th — Patricia and Henry Isenberg in honor of their anniversary on the 14th. Happy 39th!

March 20th — Barbara Caley to celebrate her birthday, which is the 21st.

March 27th — Bill and Freda Ferns in honor of Alan Beth and Joyce Peckman. Congratulations!

The Purim dinner is being sponsored by Suzanne and Michael Gilson.

BOOK PLATE

In Memory of Shirley Zwerdling

By Natalie and Barry Dorf



For Sale - Lee's Boat

1999 SportCraft 272 Sport Fisherman

- 27 ft. Overall Length
- Twin Volvo 4.3 GS I/O's, 400 Engine Hours
- Beam : 9'4"
- Autopilot, Radar, GPS, Fish/Depth Finder
- Vee-Berth Sleeps 2
- Galley One Option w/sink and stove
- Live & Bait Wells, Outriggers, Rod Holders

For More Information and Price Contact Lee Schur at 312-415-9554 or leesboat@aol.com

Second Seder Reservations

The Second Passover Seder will be held on Thursday, April 9th, 2009. at 6:30 p.m. It will take place at the Islamorada Fishing Club. Reservations will be taken for KJCC members only until March 30th, and then will be opened to the public. Confirm your spot now, because space is always limited. Contact Leslie Dillon at 852-3654 for reservations or any questions you may have. Ticket prices are \$40 for adults, kids 12 and under are free. This is always a wonderful event and a high spot on the KJCC calendar.

I Didn't Know They Were Jewish

This month's entry is an American actor, comedian and musician who is the son of two satellite engineers. He discovered his love of comedy and acting during a family Seder. While playing a game of "Freeze" with the other kids after the meal, he found that his antics caught the attention of the adults as well. He has been performing for us ever since. His name is Jack Black.

Purim Mitzvah

Purim is different from any other holiday in our calendar. Like Halloween, there are costumed children and adults going raucously from door to door (in religious neighborhoods). But instead of begging for treats, they are distributing them. *Shalach manot*, giving gift bags containing at least two kinds of foods, is one of the essential *mitzvot* of *Purim*. Partying--and yes, drinking--is another. Providing charity, especially in the form of food, is a third essential *mitzvah* of this holiday. The fourth and most important is the retelling and listening to the tale of power, lust, vengeance, courage, blood and wisdom that makes up *Megillat Esther*.

We have the opportunity to do all of the above on *Purim* at the KJCC. Friday, March 6th is our *Purim* observance, and we will meet at 5:30 p.m. in the David Kamely classroom to read the *Megillah* in English, round-robin style. There will be a charity box going around; please come prepared to donate.

If you want to come in costume – go for it...! The children will be providing our *shalach manot*, and Sisterhood will provide the food for our 6:30 p.m. dinner that follows the reading. Our thanks to Suzanne and Michael Gilson for sponsoring the Purim Dinner this year. The KJCC Religious School will be performing an original Purim play at 7:30 written and directed by our own multi-talented Gloria Avner. Services will begin at 8:00 and are being led by Sam Vinicur and the Shabbatoners. Anyone who brings two types of food or drink to share will be fulfilling the *mitzvah*. Although I don't recommend "getting so drunk that you can't distinguish Mordechai from Haman," BYOB if you please. For more information, or to let me know what you are bringing, call me at 451-0665.

-Joyce Peckman

Ongoing Projects

General Donations – can be earmarked to our various ongoing funds; e.g. Holocaust Education Fund, Scholarship Fund, Sara Cohen Memorial Tzedukah Fund, or General Fund. Honorarium and memorial cards can also be requested. Call Linda Pollack 852-8575.

Gift Shop - We have many lovely gift and holiday items on hand and can special order for you as well. Contact Joan Boruszak 852-0833.

Jewish Youth Enrichment Program - will assist in involving our children in Jewish activities. Call Neal Rakov 852-9400.

Sunshine Committee - If you know of any member who should receive a get-well, congratulations or condolence card from the Center, call Rene Rose, 852-3959.

Cemetery Information - If you wish to plan for the very distant future, you can reserve space at the Kendall Mt. Nebo Cemetery in the KJCC section. Call Bea Graham, 852-0214.

Picture Postcards - We have beautiful picture postcards bearing the Millard Wells representation of the KJCC, which was commissioned by Sisterhood. Quantities can be packaged to fit your needs and mailed to you or your gift recipient. The price is \$36 per hundred but we will sell lesser quantities. Contact Joan Boruszak, 852-0833.

Oneg Shabbat Sponsor - To schedule your special date with Sisterhood, call Joyce Peckman, 451-0665. **KJCC Tree of Life Leaves and Rocks, Sanctuary Seat Plates, Yartzeit Memorial Plaques, Bookplates for Siddurim.** Call Linda Pollack to arrange your donation, 852-8575.

JNF Trees in Israel - A gift of a tree, or two or more, makes a long-remembered way to honor a loved one, a relative, a friend or an occasion. Both Israel and the KJCC benefit. Call Bea Graham, 852-0214.

Chai-Lights Mitzvah - Place a greeting or notice in Chai-Lights. Call Linda Pollack, 852-8575, to make your donation.

Advertisement in Chai-Lights - Your business ad will appear in every issue of Chai-Lights. Call Linda Pollack, 852-8575, for the low annual rates.

Call the names listed above for assistance or send your request and check to the KJCC, P.O. Box 1332, Tavernier, FL 33070. Recipients of your gifts will be notified by card and listings will appear in Chai-Lights as well.

BOOK PLATE

In Memory of Allen Zwerdling

By Natalie and Barry Dorf

Gene Silverman an "Unsung Hero"

Gene Silverman, nominated by the Voices For Florida Keys Children, recently was recognized and given an award at a dinner for "Unsung Heroes" at the Marriott Key West.

Voices For Florida Keys Children is the fund-raising arm of the Guardian Ad Litem and Foster Care in Monroe County. It provides with medical, dental, optical, social, school and scholarship help for all children from Key Largo to Key West. VFFKC is strictly a volunteer organization, and 99.9 percent of the monies raised are spent on the children. VFFKC is in the process of building its first "cottage" in Key Largo, which will be home to four children (with foster parents who will be in charge). As of today, there are approximately 360 children in the system. Gene is a Vice-President and the fund-raising Chairman. The event that took place at the Marriott Key West was the 2009 Unsung Heroes/Volunteers of the Year Awards Luncheon. There were 86 organizations with their Unsung Heroes who were all honored and Gene was one of them. Please see the photographs in Photo Gallery.

March Anniversaries

		Years
1st	Jerry & Sheila Olsen.....	50
4th	Robert Jay & Gloria Auston.....	27
7th	Joseph & Susan Sachs.....	44
14th	Henry & Patricia Isenberg	39
18th	Alvan & Carol Field.....	21
24th	Robert & Sylvia Berman.....	53
24th	Morris Willner & Sherrie Willner.....	40
25th	Joseph & Susan Goldberg.....	16

March Birthdays

Melvin L. Jacobson.....	1st
Sasha Dutton.....	1st
Barbara Kantor.....	2nd
Stephanie Gilderman.....	3rd
Stephen Steinbock.....	3rd
Benjamin K. Kwalick.....	4th
Bea Graham.....	6th
Bill Gordon.....	6th
Hannah Feig.....	7th
Toby Goldfinger.....	7th
Allen Holbrook.....	8th
Pearl Jacobs.....	9th
Kate Horowitz.....	10th
Laurence Green.....	10th
Alvin J. Gottlieb.....	11th
Bryan Schur.....	11th
Heath Greenbaum.....	12th
Carl Roy.....	13th
Eileen Hermann.....	13th
Jenna Lane.....	14th
Seth Horowitz.....	14th
Allan Boruszak.....	15th
Johanna Willner.....	15th
Steven Nobil.....	16th
Benjamin Schwaid.....	17th
Eric Grace.....	18th
Michelle Palacino.....	19th
Janet Palacino.....	20th
Susan Sachs.....	20th
Barbara A. Calev.....	21st
Erwin Kantor.....	21st
James Nobil, Jr.....	21st
Joseph Palacino.....	21st
Lois S. Kaufman.....	21st
Doug Graham.....	24th
Gloria Auston.....	24th
Sylvia Berman.....	25th
Adam Karron.....	26th
Michelle E. Denker.....	27th
Roger Vorcheimer.....	28th
Joel Pollack.....	29th
Anthony A. Gutierrez.....	30th
David VanArtsdalen.....	30th
Lee Schur.....	30th
Eva Faust.....	31st
Sari Eliz. Goldstein.....	31st

In Memoriam March 2009

In Memory Of

THERESA STEINBOCK

By Stephen & Carol Ann Steinbock

<><><><><><><><><><><>

In Memory Of

DEBORAH EICHLER

By Lawrence & Judith Weber

<><><><><><><><><><><>

In Memory Of

EDITH WEPRIN

By William & Barbara Weprin

<><><><><><><><><><><>

In Memory Of

IDA WEISS

By Sheldon & Carole Weiss

<><><><><><><><><><><>

In Memory Of

ANNE TEMKIN

By Robert & Susan Temkin

<><><><><><><><><><><>

In Memory Of

ABE M. REIDER

By George & Muriel Swartz

<><><><><><><><><><><>

In Memory Of

ALICE WEBER

By Lawrence & Judith Weber

<><><><><><><><><><><>

A Notice From Alan Beth On Yahrzeit

Rabbi Joseph Teluskin writes that there are several occasions each year when the dead are memorialized. The most significant of these is *yahrzeit*, the anniversary of the death, which is observed according to the Hebrew calendar. Most synagogues keep registries of the Hebrew dates of members' deaths and send out notices reminding family members of the *yahrzeit* date.

We at the KJCC are also maintaining such a database, but unfortunately it has some missing data and some missing dates. We ask your cooperation to please notify us of any corrections that need to be made. It is especially important that we get the spelling correct and of course the date of death.

There are three dates that we track: 1. The date of death (conventional calendar) 2. The Hebrew date of death (Hebrew/lunar calendar) 3. The Hebrew date converted to the current date on the secular calendar.

We will send you a letter to remind you of the Hebrew date and how that date converts to the current year's calendar.

As a congregation, we need to decide, during the Friday night service, which of the dates should be used, the secu-

lar date or the converted Hebrew date. So if, for example, you are remembering someone who passed away a few years ago on Jan 21st, 2000, the Hebrew date for that day was 14 Shevat 5760. Today, 14 Shevat in the current Hebrew year (5769) converts to February 8, 2009. So that is an example how the Hebrew dates and the standard calendar dates often differ, and can differ substantially.

If you are coming to Friday night services specifically for a yahrzeit please verify with that week's leader that your loved one is remembered during the service.

As a synagogue we are responsible for helping you to remember the converted secular date according to the Hebrew calendar.

If you have any questions or comments please feel free to contact me: Alan Beth, KJCC President, 240-1509 or e-mail feedback@keysjewishcenter.com



On the Parasha Beshalach

Synopsis

Concealed in a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, God leads the Israelites out of Egypt by way of the Sea of Reeds. Moses carries with him the bones of Joseph. The Egyptians pursue the escaping slaves. At the edge of the Reed Sea, the people of Israel hesitate. It is only when they go forward into the water that the sea splits so that they cross the sea, while all of Pharaoh's army is drowned. Now convinced of the greatness of God, the Israelites, led by Moses and Miriam, sing songs of praise.

Wandering through the wilderness, the people complain about the water; they quarrel with Moses. He cries out to God about the rebelliousness of the people and God instructs him to strike a rock at *Horeb* from which water will flow. Moses does so and brings water. The place is named *Massah and Merivah* (Trial and Quarrel) because the people had tried the patience of God there.

At *Rephidim*, the Amalekites come to attack the people and are defeated; God instructs Moses to record these events and to remember Amalek as Israel's eternal enemy.

Insights From the Tradition

In *Beshalach*, several miracles or acts seem to contradict the laws of nature. Attempts have been made to give scientific explanations for the pillars of cloud and fire, the splitting of the Reed Sea, the miraculous waters of *Marah* and *Horeb*, and the provision of quail and *Mannah*. We might ask ourselves: what is a miracle? Do miracles happen today? How do we understand the miraculous events in the story of the Exodus? In this connection, Martin Buber has written:

"It is irrelevant whether much or little, unusual or usual, tremendous or trifling events happened; what is vital is only that what happened was experienced, while it happened, as the act of God. From the Biblical viewpoint, history always contains the element of wonder."

That God is the controlling power of the Exodus is again demonstrated in this portion. Aside from all the wondrous events, the Torah explicitly states that God also chose the route by which the Israelites traveled to Canaan. The Midrash adds that the inhabitants of the Promised Land were ready to battle the Israelites shortly after the departure from Egypt. "Concerned that they might become faint-hearted at the thought of war, God led the Israelites by another route."

The Israelites express fears and doubt about their journey. This becomes a recurrent and troublesome theme during the years of wandering. An ongoing attempt is made to transform the escaped slaves into a united people through the imposition of codes of behavior and observance. The first concrete lesson in the observance of divine law was given in *Beshalach*: no *manna* would be gathered or found on Shabbat. The tradition of having two *Challot* on Shabbat is derived from the double portion of manna God provided on the sixth day.

Beshalach introduces us to *Amalek*, the archetypal enemy of Israel. Many enemies of the Jewish people came to be known as Amalekites. Tradition has it that *Haman* was descended from *Amalek*. Therefore, the portion in Deuteronomy that recalls the actions of *Amalek* is read on *Shabbat Zachor*, the Shabbat before *Purim*. ♦

KJCC Annual Second Passover Seder



Reservations will be taken for members only until March 30th at which time they will be opened for others. Send your check early to confirm your place. Call Leslie at 852-3654 for information and reservations.

Thursday, April 9, 2009

6:30 pm

Islamorada Fishing Club

PASSOVER

Adults \$40

Children 12 and under are our guests.

Sisterhood Joyce Peckman



Sisterhood meets the first Sunday of each month at 9:30 a.m., with coffee at 9. I was truly happy to have so many of you attend in January. If you haven't joined us for a while, why not come March 1st? You'll be in great company.

One of the many facets of Sisterhood is its financial commitment to the KJCC. We will be holding our annual fundraising event on Saturday evening, March 14, and it should be a fun evening. The high point will be a raffle for the grand prize of \$2,000. You should already have received the tickets by mail – each ticket for \$50 will admit one hopeful partygoer to our cocktail party at the beautiful Coral Harbor clubhouse, where you can enjoy a large variety of appetizers and hors d'oeuvres, wine and cocktails, while you relax or dance to live music. Many of the appetizers will be homemade, by our members, so we need your help. Sofy and Nettie are spearheading this event, and have some wonderful ideas and recipes to share, and I am coordinating. So please send in your raffle tickets, ask your friends to join you, and contact me, Sofy Wasser or Nettie Seder about contributing to the menu. My e-mail is Joyce@adoctorsbag.com.

The Purim Dinner will be Friday, March 6th. This year will be a mid-eastern buffet, sponsored by Suzanne and Michael Gilson. Feel free to bring wine or your favorite beverage in the spirit of this holiday! Costumes are optional. *Megillah* reading will begin at 5:30, Shabbat dinner at 6:30, and of course the school performance at 7:30. We will pass the hat at the *Megillah* reading, so that everyone can join in the mitzvah of Purim *tzadakah*.

Bea Graham reports that "Les Miserables" tickets are going quickly. Only \$40 for a three-hour award-winning show – what a bargain! A number of us plan on going to

lunch before the play. At the March meeting, we will share info about carpools.

The 6th annual Women's Seder will be a tribute to one of KJCC founders, Sarah Cohen. It is a time for women of many backgrounds to come together and celebrate women's contributions to freedom...and feast! The Seder will be Wednesday, April 1st, 2009 at 5:30 p.m. Meredith A. Cline is working hard, planning and organizing. Contact her at maccline2@aol.com.

Many thanks to Beth Kaminstein, who again opened her pottery studio and her heart before the seder. This year, most of us made dual-handled ceremonial hand-washing cups. We came away with new respect for handles! It's always great therapy and a lot of fun. We hope that by this time Beth has recovered from knee surgery, and is better than ever.

Second Seder, April 9th, is rapidly filling. Contact Leslie Dillon 852-3654 for tickets. Now is also a good time to check your Pass-over supplies. Joan Boruszak will be happy to stock the Gift Shop with whatever you need.

The Women's Domestic Abuse Shelter was grateful for our donation of books last year. This year we will undertake an on-going drive for new or like-new personal items that they always need. We will have a box to receive the following: twin-size bedding, sanitary products, deodorant, razors, soap, shampoo, pots and pans, forks and spoons (no knives). Joan Stark is spearheading this project.

We would like to begin a mid-week book club, and possibly a Sisterhood book exchange. Let's each bring a book we enjoyed, but could part with, to the next meeting, and try to find a weekday that works and a common book to discuss. You might want to put an address label in any book you want returned. ♦

Keys Jewish Community Center

6th Annual Women's Seder

Wednesday

APRIL 1, 2009

5:30 PM @ KJCC

Homemade Seder Dinner
w/Wine

Limited seating - Contact
Meredith at
451-3664 or
maccline2@aol.com

Dinner--Chai Donation \$18

Additional Tzedakah
donations will be welcome.

Join us in celebration as we
continue our efforts of
Tikkun Olam - repair the
world.



Eye On The Arts

Gloria Avner



It's hard to believe that we are already writing about events in March and April. Though it feels like we are in the thick of "high season," let's not let cultural opportunities, abounding right now, slip through our fingers. Call a friend. Make a party. I've put stars (okay, asterisks) next to the events that are produced by, worked on, and financially supported by many among our own KJCC usual suspects.

Feb. 27, Friday: *Garden Walk,** 10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m. The public will vote for their favorite work of "bird" art and the winner will receive the Joe Cella Memorial Award that day. An open house at the Beach House Gardens Landscape Center at MM 104 also is planned. Attractions are to include garden design ideas, a plant sale, live music by Dave Feder, a garden tea party and a show by the Purple Isles Art Guild. Tickets can be purchased by calling Key Largo Floral and Gift Shop at (305) 451-3702, Key Largo Chamber of Commerce at (305) 451-1414, Shear Paradise at (305) 451-7110, Islamorada Chamber of Commerce at (305) 664-4503 and Cover to Cover Books at (305) 853-2464. Encompassing Key Largo, Islamorada, and Plantation Key, the Garden Walk includes eight private and public gardens between mile markers 92.5 and 104.4.

Thursday, Mar. 5 - Sunday April 5: Art show held by The Florida Keys Watercolor Society at Marathon Community Theater; a competition and sale will be held during the run of the MCT production "Company," Marathon Community Theater, MM 49.5 Oceanside, 743-0994.

March 7, Saturday: *"The Purple Isles Art Guild" Annual Show.** Key Largo Library: 10 a.m. - 6 p.m. through Sunday, March 15. Judging and a reception will be held on Friday, March 6. Be sure to come visit and vote at any time during the week for your favorite work in this exhibit by local artists.

March 7, Saturday: Upper Keys Concert Series presents the fourth concert of the season *"Cypress String Quartet"** has brought audiences to their feet in major venues around the world including the Kennedy Center and the Library of Congress. 8:00 p.m., Coral Shores High School Performing Arts Center, MM 90 Oceanside. Tickets at door: \$30, or at TIB branches and Chambers for \$25. For info: www.keysice.com or 305-766-3585

March 9, Monday: * "Out of the Blue."** 8:00 p.m. Two complete opposites perform at ICE's TIB Amphitheater, MM87 bayside, Islamorada: Michael Pickett: powerful acoustic roots/blues, singer/songwriter, master guitarist/ renowned harmonica player. EOTO - String Cheese Incident alums perform jam band electronica, using mixing boards, looping stations, congas, laptops, synthesizers, and traditional drums. For info, www.keysice.com or 305-766-3585

March 14th, Saturday: KODO, Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, 1300 Biscayne Blvd, Miami. "KODO's music can raise the roof" (New York Times). Exploring the limitless possibilities of the traditional Japanese drum, the international world music stars bring their one-of-a-kind sonic spectacle

to the state-of-the-art Adrienne Arsht Center stage. Since their debut at the Berlin Festival in 1981, KODO has given over 3,100 performances on all five continents; their music continues to produce startling new sounds and forms. Email-www.arshtcenter.org; Phone: 305-949-6722.

March 21, Saturday: *"THE BEST OF BANU GIBSON."** (Last Concert of the 2009 Upper Keys Concert Series). 8:00 p.m. Dynamic performer of early classic Jazz, Swing, Dance, Banjo and more, backed by the "New Orleans Hot Jazz" ensemble. Leonard Maltin from Entertainment Tonight calls Gibson and her band an "irresistible blend of musicianship and showmanship," making great entertainment. Coral Shores High School Performing Arts Center, MM 90. Tickets at door: \$30. At TIB branches and Chambers, \$25. For info, www.keysice.com or 305-766-3585.

March 22, Sunday: "Dancing With Our Island Stars." Now a Keys favorite, this third annual event features six local celebrities and their partners in a ballroom-type dancing competition patterned after the successful television series "Dancing with The Stars." Each couple will perform two numbers. Audience members will have the opportunity to vote for their favorite couple. Don't miss it! Wildly entertaining! For info: www.keysice.com, 305-395-6344.

March 28, Saturday, The Keys Community Concert Band performs at Islamorada Founders Park, Bayside, MM 87, Plantation Key. 4:00 p.m. Bring your chairs and blankets. The entire family will enjoy the experience of listening to traditional concert band music in a lovely Keys setting. Admission to all concerts is free. For more information call (305) 853-7294.

Fridays in March: *DAVE FEDER** at the Green Turtle, MM 82. A wonderful mix of old favorites, original material, requests, and Dave repartee as only he can present it, wild and very entertaining. 8 p.m. - 11?

April 15, Wednesday: * NATIONAL ACROBATS OF CHINA. IN THEIR ONLY** far South Florida performance, this dazzling company of 35 performers mesmerizes and mystifies with its stunning displays of the best in Chinese martial arts, illusion, and acrobats, all set to traditional music. We were very lucky to be able to acquire this internationally acclaimed entertainment for our small community. We hope that as many people as possible take advantage of this rare opportunity. Tickets at door, or at TIB branches and local Chamber(s): \$40 Adult, \$20 Student. www.keysice.com or 305-766-3585. NOT TO BE MISSED.

Thursday Nights at Fairchild -- from 6 to 9 p.m. through May 28, Fairchild Tropical Botanic Garden is open every Thursday evening for visitors to experience the unparalleled beauty of the Garden after dark. Enjoy Fairchild's amazing plant collections, art exhibitions, live music, food and drinks, all under South Florida's starry skies. Not to be missed is this year's featured art exhibition "Mark di Suvero at Fairchild," consisting of five monumental sculptures uniquely placed in the lowlands. A new and exciting installation this month is a work by Belgian artist Kris Martin entitled "For Whom...", a massive, three-ton swinging bell. All exhibitions run through May 31st. See it all on a Starlight tram tour at 6:30 or 7:30! Admission includes full access to the Garden and exhibitions. The cost is \$10 for Fairchild members, \$5 for member children age 6-17; \$15 for non-members, \$8 for non-member children age 6-17, and free for children 5 and under. 10901 Old Cutler Road, Miami; 305-667-1651.

Friday, March 27 through Monday, March 30: ARTEAMÉRICAS; arteaméricas, the premier fair of art from Latin America, will be returning to Miami for the seventh consecutive year. The fair will showcase the latest trends in paintings, sculpture and multimedia from contemporary artists as well as renowned masters. Miami Beach Convention Center, 1901 Convention Center Drive, 305-854-3050 for information. ♦

World Jewish Report

Medina Roy



Mother-Daughter History Makers

A Jewish woman and her daughter made history and earned one of Australia's highest awards, an "Officer of the Order of Australia," by becoming the first mother-daughter duo to successfully climb Mount Everest, the world's tallest peak. Cheryl Bart, a resident of Sydney, dedicated the award to her late father, a Holocaust survivor, who migrated to Australia from Hungary. The two women carried a flag of Israel to the summit of Everest. They also became the first mother-daughter team to climb the highest peaks of each continent. Three other of the 536 awardees were also Jewish. (www.jta.org, 1-27-09)

Israel's Got Gas!

A U.S.-Israeli exploration group, led by Noble Energy, the Houston-based company that drills for Israel's Delek fuel company, announced that it has discovered a huge deposit of natural gas under the Mediterranean Sea near Haifa with the potential to meet Israel's gas needs for well over a decade. Infrastructure Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer said that the find was of "historic proportions," and that it could change the face of Israel's economy. "We are witnessing an historic moment in Israel's energy market," he said. "If it turns out in a few weeks that the indicators received in recent days are true, then we are talking about the biggest find in Israel's history." It is estimated that nearly 3.1 trillion cubic feet of high quality gas has been found. "This ...appears to be the largest discovery in the company's history," Charles Davidson, Noble's chief executive, said in a statement. Stock prices in the Delek Company jumped 38 percent following the announcement. The gas is located between Israel and Cyprus but the

rights to the Cypriot drilling sites are owned by Yitzchak Teshuva, owner of Delek. If the discovery pans out, it is likely to put an end to plans to build a coal energy plant in Ashkelon. (www.uk.reuters.com, 1-18-09)

Record Visitation in 2008

More than three million visitors entered Israel in 2008, an all-time record number and 32 percent more than in 2007. There were 13 percent more visitors than in the previous record year of 2000. Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics released the statistics in mid-January. The largest number of tourists came from the United States, with a record figure of 617,000. Following the U.S. were tourists from Russia, France, Britain and Germany. (www.israelnationalnews.com, 1-18-09)

Solar Power to Africans

Disturbed by the poverty she saw in Africa when she worked there, 30-year-old Sivan Achor-Borowich, a former kibbutznik, decided to do something about it. She started a charity last year which she named *Jewish Heart for Africa* (JHA). Her charity now provides solar panels for three community projects in Uganda, Ethiopia and Tanzania where the sun is producing electricity and pumping water for schools and clinics. Borowich now lives in New York and says that since JHA has no office, no overhead and seventeen volunteers, 100 percent of the funds raised - more than \$24,000 - go towards the African projects. The solar panels are purchased from Interdan, an Israeli company. JHA estimates that 17,000 Africans have benefitted from these solar panels. (*Dateline: World Jewry, February 2009*)

Sydney Taylor Book Awards

In January, the 2009 Sydney Taylor Book Awards were announced by the Association of Jewish Libraries. The award recognizes the publication of outstanding books for children that “authentically portray the Jewish experience.” For young readers, the winner was “*As Good As Anybody: Martin Luther King, Jr. and Abraham Joshua Heschel’s Amazing March Toward Freedom*,” by Richard Michelson with illustrations by Raul Colon. The story traces the lives and friendship of the two civil rights leaders from different religious backgrounds and how they came together to fight prejudice. For older readers, the winner was Karen Hesse’s “*Brooklyn Bridge*,” an immigrant novel; and for teens, the winner was “*A Bottle in the Gaza Sea*,” by Valerie Zenatti, a story that looks at the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the voices of two teenagers. This is the first time in the award’s 41-year history that one author, Michelson, won the main book award as well as winning an honor (or runner-up) for his young readers’ picture book, “*A is for Abraham*,” illustrated by Ron Mazellan.

Named after the popular author of the beloved “*All-Of-A-Kind Family*” series, the Sydney Taylor Award is among the most prestigious awards for writers and illustrators of Jewish children’s literature. Bubbes and Zaydes looking for enriching gifts please take note. (*American Libraries*, 1-14-09)

Flowers From the Lab

Researchers at the Hebrew University say they have genetically enhanced the scent of flowers and can even implant a scent into odorless ones. The results of their research have been published in *Plant Biotechnology Journal*. The scientists claim a “ten-fold increase in floral scent and success in having flowers emit aroma day and night.” Yissum, the technology company associated with the University, has reportedly patented the process, which could be a tremendous benefit for Israel’s booming flower producing industry. Israel is the world’s third-largest floral superpower, following the Netherlands and

Kenya, the industry contributes an annual \$200 million into its economy. (*Dateline: World Jewry*, February 2009)

A Solid Purchase

The state of Illinois has purchased ten million dollars worth of Israel bonds. According to the state treasurer, Israel bonds will mature in three years with a 2.43 percent rate of return as opposed to U.S. government bonds which will yield a 1.51 percent return during the same period. “Israel’s economic resilience has been praised by international credit agencies, and we are proud that the state (Illinois) has also expressed confidence through this significant investment,” said Joshua Matza, president and CEO of Israel bonds. Illinois started buying foreign government bonds in 2003 and this is not the first time Illinois has purchased Israel bonds. (www.jta.org, 1-28-09)

Venezuela’s Oldest Synagogue Vandalized

On Friday, January 30th, the Tiferet Israel Sephardic synagogue, the oldest synagogue in the Venezuelan capital of Caracas, was vandalized by fifteen people who tied up a security guard and held him at gunpoint. He was found on the floor the following morning by members of the synagogue. The men had gone on a rampage, defacing administrative offices with anti-Semitic graffiti. Torah scrolls were thrown on the floor, damaging some. “Death to Jews” was painted on the synagogue walls. Seven Venezuelan police agents and four civilians have been arrested in connection with the attack. The same synagogue had been vandalized previously, as had been the Israeli Embassy. A Jewish community center was raided by authorities in 2007, the pretext being a search for illegal weapons. (None were found.) Leaders of Venezuela’s Jewish community – approximately 15,000 members – said vocal denunciations of Israel by President Hugo Chavez and the country’s state-owned and pro-government news media may have encouraged the attack, which they called the worst ever in their community.

Last month, Chavez expelled the Israeli ambassador and seven embassy staff mem-

bers and cut diplomatic ties in protest over Israel's military operation in Gaza. In response Israel also expelled the three Venezuelan diplomats in Tel Aviv. According to reports by the World Jewish Congress, the Venezuelan Jewish community has declined by about 25 percent under Chavez's rule. (*The Forward*, 2-2-09, *World Jewish Congress* 2-2-09 & 2-9-09)

Rosa Robata

A memorial was recently dedicated in Sydney, Australia to a Polish woman who was hanged for helping to blow up the crematoria at Auschwitz just before the end of World War II. The *Rosa Robata Gates* was unveiled at the Montifiore Home for the Aged; it is the only known memorial to the young woman. As the Russians were advancing on the camp in January, 1945, Rosa Robata, a 23-year-old prisoner of the Nazis, and dozens of co-conspirators courageously sabotaged part of the death camp. According to historical accounts, Robata, who along with three other women was promptly hanged by the Nazis, never revealed the names of her fellow resistance fighters despite the fact she was brutally tortured. (*Dateline: World Jewry*, February 2009)

Joe Straus

State Representative Joe Straus (R - San Antonio), in just his third legislative season, has become the first practicing Jew to serve as Speaker of the Texas House, according to Jimmy Kessler, founder of the Texas Jewish Historical Society. From about 1839 to 1841, before Texas was a state, David S. Kaufman served as Speaker of the House in the Congress of the Republic of Texas and although he was of Jewish descent, there is no evidence that he was a practicing Jew. He did not receive a Jewish burial. Although his wife is not Jewish, Straus is a life-long member of Temple Beth-El, a reform congregation north of San Antonio. Following the Governor and Lt. Governor, the House Speaker is regarded as the third most powerful position in state government. (*www.statesman.com*, 1-8-09)

The Most-Wanted Nazi

According to German investigators, new documents have surfaced indicating that Aribert Heim, the former Mauthausen concentration camp doctor and the world's most-wanted Nazi war criminal, died in Egypt in 1992, and the information appears to be credible. The Baden-Wurttemberg state police unit, which investigates Nazi-era crimes, is requesting that Egyptian authorities allow them to pursue the case in Cairo. Heim had been living under the pseudonym Tarek Hussein Farid and was a convert to Islam. Germany's ZDF television said that, in a joint effort with the New York Times, it had located more than 100 documents left behind by Heim in a briefcase in the hotel room in Cairo where he lived for the ten years leading up to his death. The documents included a passport, bank slips, personal letters and medical papers. Efraim Zuroff, Simon Wiesenthal Center's head Nazi hunter, said that he has not seen the documents and that they need to be examined further by experts. "The most important thing is missing," said Zuroff. "The body. There's no grave, there's no corpse, there are no DNA tests."

According to witnesses, Heim worked closely with pharmacist Erich Wasicky on gruesome experiments on Jewish prisoners, injecting them into the heart with various solutions to see which killed them the fastest. In 1962, Heim fled to Egypt after authorities tried to arrest him at his home in Baden-Baden. He apparently had been tipped off. If he were still alive today, Heim would be 94. (*www.washingtonpost.com*, and *World Jewish Congress*, 2-5-09)

Japanese Wins Israeli Prize

Japanese author Haruki Murakami, author "Kafka on the Shore," was just awarded the Jerusalem Prize for the Freedom of the Individual in Society, the most prestigious literary prize Israelis give to foreigners. It's the first time the prize has gone to a writer of a non-European language. Murakami has had five novels appear on best-seller lists in Israel. Previous winners of the prize include four who later won the Nobel Prize for literature. ◇

Photo Gallery



Scenes from Friday, January 23rd's Membership Dinner, the last major event, and a very successful one, of Steve Steinbock's presidency. After dinner Big Jim and Gloria led a well-attended service. It's been said that if you feed them they will come.

In the center photo at left are new members David and Patti Gross (and Patti's mom) and Rita and Wes Conklin. Below left are Georgia Landau and Dave Mont.



Gloria brought her teaching and art skills to KJCC in the first of this season's adult education series. Fifteen of us learned to make art from watercolor and strings dipped in India ink. At bottom left, more advanced students display their beautiful results from Gloria's batik watercolor class.



High season is full of activity in the Keys, especially for the doers at KJCC. Top, eighteen of us gathered to celebrate Linda Rutkin's birthday. At center, Carol Steinbock and Teresa Kwalick at their adult education seminar on wills and powers of attorney at KJCC Wednesday, February 4th. Below, photos of Gene Silverman being awarded an "Unsung Hero" award from Voices for Florida Children. At center bottom, Gene is surrounded by all the friends--and Mort, of course--who made the trip to Key West to show their support.





Once again, the KJCC religious School added life to our larger community as a whole. Witnessing the installation of this year's officers and Board (top photos) was a new experience for our students. They and our teachers were touched and honored by Marc Bloom's reading of the blessing on students and teachers, right after blessings were said for our country, leaders, synagogue, and Israel. After the installation, all proceeded outside to plant the new

fig tree, (donated thoughtfully by the Werthamers) the latest Tu B'Shvat addition to our KJCC orchard. We dug, we added dirt, we patted, we sang "Mayim," and danced. We watered. We then proceeded with our annual Tu B'Shvat seder, a mindful mystical acknowledgment of the seasons and their correlation to life and growth, as we say the blessings of fruit and nuts and grains, and

partake of them in a sacred manner. Thanks to all who helped, particularly to Richard Knowles for taking pictures and the mothers and grandmothers who kept the wineglasses filled and the fruit dishes circulating. *-Gloria*





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\$2000.00 Cash !!!**

**KEYS JEWISH COMMUNITY CENTER
ANNUAL FUNDRAISER**

**AN OPPORTUNITY TO
DREAM!**

LIVE MUSIC

HORS D'OEUVRES

March 14, 2009

6 pm

Coral Harbour Clubhouse

88181 Overseas Highway, Islamorada

Contact Joyce Peckman (305) 451-0665 for information



Purchase of each raffle ticket entitles to you to 1 admission to our Cocktail & Canape Party to be held March 14th when we will have a random drawing of the winning ticket. Raffle proceeds benefit Keys Jewish Community Center. Winner need not be present to win. Limited tickets will be sold.

Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____
Phone/Email _____

I am purchasing one chance for \$50 each or six chances for \$250.* Enclosed is my check for \$_____ payable to KJCC Sisterhood.

Mail coupon(s) with your check to:

KJCC Sisterhood
P.O. Box 116
Tavernier, FL 33070

***Note: If purchasing six tickets for \$250, please complete and mail all six coupons.**

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The Homestead Jewish Center & Chabad of Homestead and Cutler Bay

are pleased to invite all KJCC members to a unique briefing dealing with

Radical Terrorism and Peace

Guest Speaker: Dr. Ra'anan Gissin

Former Spokesman of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon

Sunday, March 15, 2008

5:00 PM

at

The Homestead Jewish Center

183 NE 8th Street (Campbell Drive) Homestead

Kosher Israeli-style dinner will be served courtesy of, and under the supervision of Rabbi Wolff

**This program is sponsored fully by JNF,
the Jewish National Fund**

RSVP Homesteadrabbi@aol.com

Dr. Ra'anan Gissin was the Senior Advisor to former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon. In recent years he has become one of Israel's leading spokesmen for the foreign press and the international community on security, strategic issues, terror, the Iranian and radical Islamic threats, and the peace process. His distinguished career with the Israeli Defense Forces began in 1979 with his position as a Strategic Analyst in the planning branch. Dr. Gissin became Ariel Sharon's closest advisor on public diplomacy, media and his official spokesman to foreign press.

The remarks of Dr. Gissin range in depth and scope from global radical Islamic terrorism to insight and analysis of Israeli-Palestinian conflict, in a regional and global perspective.

He is also one of the leaders of the "SRATCOM" project with a focus on developing an effective communication strategy for Israel as well as other embattled democracies facing the challenges of public diplomacy in the "global village."

The Maccabiah Games

A Russian Teenager's Dream Come True

by Joel Pollack

Not as well known as our modern Olympics are the Maccabiah Games, held in Israel the year following the Olympics and open to Jewish athletes from all over the world.

The stirrings of Zionism created more than just lively political discussions over coffee in outdoor cafes. As a response to the religious oppression, pogroms and isolation suffered by Eastern European Jews in the 19th century, self-defense groups were formed for protection. Gymnastic

clubs were founded in order to build their bodies. Taking Judas Maccabaeus, the Hebrew religious zealot and warrior from the second century B.C.E. as their role model, the clubs adopted the name, Maccabiah.

The concept of the Maccabiah Games was the brainchild of 15-year-old Russian-born Yosef Yekutieli. The teenager was so energized by news of the 1912 Olympic Games (dominated by American Indian Jim Thorpe) that he conceived the fanciful notion of a worldwide Olympics for Jewish athletes in Palestine. With little encouragement, and not a small amount of ridicule, Yekutieli spent the next ten years developing details of his unique idea.



The first Maccabiah Games, Tel Aviv 1932.

In 1928, Yekutieli presented his far-fetched proposal to the Jewish National Fund, with the notion that the Maccabiah Games be organized to commemorate the 1800th anniversary of the Bar Kochba Rebellion (the leader of the third and final Jewish revolt against the Romans, in 132 C.E., who had been certified as the messiah by the pre-eminent spiritual leader of the day, Rabbi

Akiva). Coincidentally, the Maccabiah organization was, at the same time, formulating ideas to provide a means of participation by Jewish athletes living in the British Mandate of Palestine in important international sporting events. This idea had many selling points, all rational and reasonable. But the real reason was that conspicuous Jewish participation would also act as a form of interna-

tional recognition of Palestine as the Jewish National Home.

Yekutieli's *Maccabiyyon*, as the Games were originally called, was the right idea at the right time. With the *hechture* (meaning approved as Kosher) of the Eretz Israel Soccer Association, other Holy Land sports groups fell in line to give the proposed Games their blessings. But approval of the ruling British Palestine High Commissioner was the final hurdle to realization.

In the fall of 1931, Great Britain appointed Sir Arthur "Andy" Wauchope as High Commissioner of Palestine. Contrary to previous High Commissioners, Sir Arthur admired the achievements of Zionist Palestine, including

the burgeoning Jewish sports movement. The new High Commissioner gladly extended his patronage to the *Maccabiyon*, on condition that it host Arab and official British Mandate athletes as well as Jewish sportsmen. Thus was born the Maccabiah Games.

This was a world without true mass media, so how did word of the impending Jewish games get spread to Europe, where most of the world's Jews lived? By two separate delegations of motor-bikers, the second of which included Yosef Yekutieli himself. Their itinerary took them across Sinai to Alexandria, then across the Mediterranean to Greece, then through the Balkans to France and Germany and across the English Channel into Great Britain. In all this tour covered a total of 5,825 miles.

The first Maccabiah Games opened in Tel Aviv, a city of 50,000 residents, on March 28, 1932 and drew 390 athletes from 22 nations, including Egypt and Syria. (The world was also in the depths of the Great Depression. Franklin Roosevelt would be elected to his first term as President the next November. The post-war German Weimar Republic was tottering; Hitler lost the German presidency to Hindenburg that year but would be appointed Chancellor the next.) The American delegation of eleven men and two women won 13 gold medals. A woman fencer earned the only gold medal won by Palestine in these, the first Maccabiah Games in Eretz Israel.

The second Maccabiah Games were held in 1935. Participation more than quadrupled from the first games three years prior, with 1,700 athletes from 27 countries. Though this was a period of severe restrictions to Jewish immigration, many athletes from other countries who participated in these games did not return to their country of origin. The entire Bulgarian team stayed, sending only their musical instruments back to Europe. The 1935 games therefore became known as the Aliyah Games.

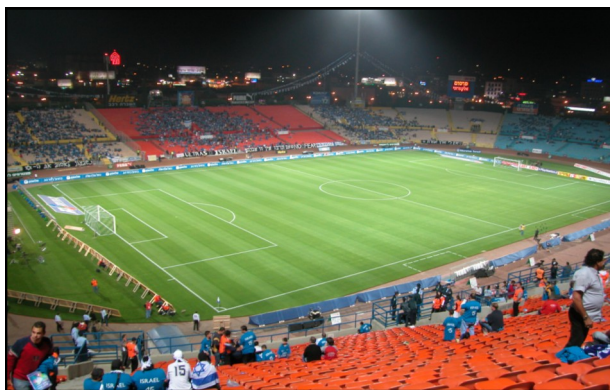
A third Maccabiah was planned for 1938, but the threat of war in Europe caused the games to be cancelled. The next games were held in the new State of Israel in 1950, with

20 countries and 500 athletes participating. Countries participating for the first time included Argentina, Canada, India, Libya and Sweden.

In 1965, 15-year-old American Mark Spitz wins three Maccabiah Games gold medals, in his first taste of international competition.

The games continued to grow and, in 1977, 33 nations participated along with 2,276 athletes. In 1981, 35 countries with 3,500 athletes participated. Some 4,000 athletes from 40 countries turned out for the 12th Maccabiah in 1985, participating in 28 sports. Mark Spitz, winner of seven gold medals in the 1972 Munich Olympics, lit the torch at the opening ceremonies.

The Maccabiah Games celebrated its Bar Mitzvah in 1989, with 4,500 athletes from 44 countries participating in the 13th Maccabiah. For the first time, the closing ceremony was held at the Western Wall in Jerusalem. In 1993, many Eastern European countries, amongst them Poland, Bulgaria and Czechoslovakia, joined for the first time since the establishment of the State of Israel. In all, 5,100 athletes from 48 countries competed in 32 sports. The 1997 Maccabiah games came as Israel celebrated the start of the 50th



Ramat Gan Stadium in Tel Aviv, today's Maccabiah Games venue.

anniversary of the State of Israel. A total of 5,500 athletes from 50 countries took part in 34 sports.

While all Maccabiah matches, games, and races are keenly competitive, some events measure up to world-class competition. Numerous Olympic and national champions have sought Maccabiah gold, silver, and bronze medals. Among the Olympic gold medalists, world champions, and world record holders who have competed in the Maccabiah Games are Mark Spitz, Lenny Krayzelburg and Marilyn Ramenofsky (swimming); Debbie Lipman (diving); Mitch Gaylord, Abie Grossfeld, Agnes Keleti and Kerri Schrug (gymnastics); Larry Brown, Ernie Grunfeld, Danny Schayes, coaches Nat Holman and Dolph Schayes (basketball); Carina Benninga (field hockey); Lillian Copeland, Gerald Ashworth, and Gary Gubner (track and field); Corey Pavin and Bruce Fleischer (golf); Angela Buxton, Julie Heldman, Allen Fox, and Dick Savitt (tennis); Angelica Rosenau (table tennis); Isaac Berger and Frank Spellman (weightlifting); and Fred Oberlander and Henry Wittenberg (wrestling).

The Maccabiah Games continue to be held every four years and grow further in stature, with more and more outstanding Jewish athletes competing. There is competition in four categories: Open, Masters, Juniors, and Disabled. Now sanctioned by the International Olympic Committee, which considers them regional games, the Maccabiah Games are the fifth largest sports gathering in the world. Imagine what Yosef Yekutieli would say if he could see what his dream has become. ♦

How I Came to Play in Israel's Maccabiah Games

by Shyella Mayk

I played softball for Shore Regional High School in West Long Branch, New Jersey. I had a very successful high school career, including pitching several one-hitters, no-hitters, and perfect games. I was recruited and received a scholarship to play softball at Quinnipiac University in Hamden, Connecticut, which is a Division 1 school in the North-

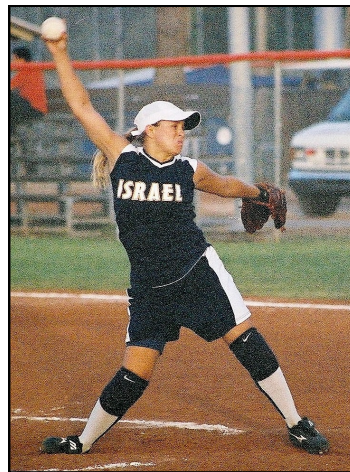
east Conference. After graduation with a degree in Mass Communications and Graphic Design, I decided to move to Israel to build my life there.

I moved to Israel in 2000, and after adjusting to my job as a website

designer/technical writer, I decided to find out if softball was played in Israel. I found the Israel Softball Association and they informed me that there was only fastpitch for men; the women played slowpitch. Since I am a pitcher of fastpitch softball, I wanted to play on one of the men's teams. I was not allowed. Instead, they told me to teach all of the women in the league how to play fastpitch. So, in 2001, I met with each team and taught them the differences in the rules and organized several practices and learning scrimmages, and the women loved it!

The following year, 2002, the women's league became a fastpitch league. We also held tryouts to determine the best players in the women's league in order to form the Women's Israeli National Softball Team and be able to compete in the European Championships. The European Championship is a major tournament in which all of the European teams compete every other summer. We have been to three European Championships so far, the first in Sorrono, Italy 2003, the second in Prague, Czech Republic 2005, and the third in Zagreb, Croatia 2007, each time improving drastically.

In Croatia we qualified for the playoff rounds and finished fourth place out of 12 other European teams. That was our best tournament so far, since we had a great game against France, who was the number two



Shyella in full wind-up.

team, where we played 10 intense innings but lost in the end with a score of 1-2. Because of this exciting game and the close finish, our team was actually the talk of the tournament! It is extremely important to me that women's softball continues to grow in Israel, and to make sure of this, we have developed a thriving youth league. It is such a thrill to be representing Israel while playing softball internationally.

The 2005 Maccabiah Games in Israel was the first time ever that women's fastpitch softball was a represented sport. It was a major accomplishment in itself to have our sport added and especially to have beaten Canada to win the bronze medal. The Maccabiah Games are also known as the Jewish Olympics and are held every fourth year, the year after the world Olympics. Jewish athletes from all over the world, participating in all sports, come to Israel to compete in these games. The opening ceremony in 2005 was held in The National Stadium in Ramat Gan.

Athletes from all over the world marched into the fully packed stadium, with each delegation proudly waving their national flag. The events of the ceremony were nationally televised and included the passing and dramatic lighting of the torch, speeches from the Maccabiah organizers, and elaborate dance and song performances. The most thrilling event of the evening was the sudden rising of six colorful hot air balloons. These hot air balloons symbolized to me that athletes playing in the Maccabiah Games can proudly reach the heights of athleticism as Jews. It is the Maccabiah Games which unify and glorify Jewish athletes from all over the world. The event was an unforgettable highlight in the lives of those who came to watch as well as those who came to play. My team's participation in the Maccabiah Games was for me a proud accomplishment

and a dream come true.

We also most recently came back from Argentina, in January 2008, where we played in the Pan American Maccabiah Games (which is really only for Jewish athletes in North and South America) and brought back the bronze medal again. In the 2009 Maccabiah Games we want to skip the silver medal and just go for the gold!

Our team came into existence with a lot of hard work and dedication in a country where sports besides soccer and basketball have no support or recognition. The other members of my team are from all over Israel, have different backgrounds, and are at different stages in life. Some are soldiers serving in the army, some are in the middle of their college studies, and some have to take vacation time from work to attend every practice and travel with the team.

Even though I currently do not reside in Israel, I have been a visitor every summer and winter vacation throughout the past four

years. Whenever my team has a tournament (once or twice every other year) I train intensively on my own and meet my team a few weeks before the games to join the practices. Creating and playing for this team was a dream of mine ever since high school when I was quoted in a local paper (in 1995) saying that one of my goals is to bring fastpitch softball to Israel.

Our next two tournaments in July of 2009 are the Maccabiah Games in Israel, and another European Championship in Belgium. And so, you ask, how long does one of the founders of Israeli fastpitch softball plan to keep playing? I plan to keep playing forever. ♦



Shyella the medal-winner.

Shyella Mayk, granddaughter of Bea and Marty and sister of Liati, last wrote for Chai-Lights in June/July 2008.



PURIM

The whole Megillah--

The real Megillah--

The KJCC Megillah--

Friday, March 6, 2009

5:30 Megillah Reading

**6:30 Shabbat Dinner with a Middle Eastern
flavor - provided by Sisterhood. In the spirit
of Purim, BYOB.**

7:30 Purim Play

8:00 Services

**Megillah reading will be moderated by Joyce
Peckman with participation by our students
and congregation. Purim play will feature our
students. Tzedakah will be collected to be
used for Passover meals for those in need.**

**Contact Joyce Peckman, 451-0665, for
information.**

Purim Unmasked

Purim, based on one of the most recent and difficult to interpret books of the Tanach, is marked by both great relief and great merriment. This year we explore its mystical and formal elements plus some of its oddities. Original artwork courtesy of Gloria Avner.

Behind And Beneath The Story Of Purim

by Gloria Avner

Take out the costumes, the crowns, the beards and the bottles. It's Purim time. We all know the surface of the story. Let's look beneath the mask for more. It is, after all, a Jewish Holiday and the only one, as the Talmud tells us, that will be honored in the world to come.

There is something about masks that excite imagination. World cultures have used them spiritually and educationally since the time of ancient Greece. From Native America to deepest Africa to the far reaches of Asia, people have used masks to tell their stories. We tell these stories to ourselves, tales of divinity and heroes, tricksters and fools. Masks make us not ourselves. And yet, in the process of concealing, sometimes something hidden is revealed.

That certainly happens at Purim. Our children dress up. They take on the characters of Esther and Haman, Mordechai, and King Ahashverosh. They get to feel what it is like to be admired or despised, to wield absolute power or to dispense wisdom. I have seen children cry when booed. Identification is powerful.

The themes of hiding and exposure permeate not just the story but also the very title "*Megillat Esther*." Each word has two meanings. "*Megillah*," besides referring to a document rolled up as a scroll, means "to expose." "*Esther*," in addition to being a woman's

name, means "concealment." The whole document's meaning then is "revelation of that which is hidden."

Take the basic story. The plot is filled with coincidences, mistaken identity, and happenstance, each of which leads to the unimaginable end.

To recap: Seventy years have transpired since the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem. The Jews are in exile in Persia, under the hand of King Ahashverosh, the ruler of the Middle East. The king throws a large banquet for all his subjects (actually, in honor of the captivity of the Jews). He summons his beautiful wife, Queen Vashti, to appear before him. She rudely refuses and he subsequently has her killed. After that, Esther, a Jewish exilee, is taken to the palace as the king's new wife. If the degradation of a Jewish girl abducted to the palace of a wicked despot is not enough, Mordechai, one of the leaders of that generation, abandons his place among the sages to sit day and night in front of the king's gate in his concern over Esther, his ward. The king's vizier, the wicked Haman, is promoted. A personal vendetta against Mordechai develops, and Haman decides to visit his anger upon the entire Jewish people. A death sentence is issued against all the Jews in the King's provinces, and Haman builds a special gallows upon which to hang Mordechai. Things go from bad to worse. However, on one fateful night, the king awakes from his sleep and learns that Mordechai had once saved his life. He grants him royal honors. Haman is killed. The decree is rescinded. And the Jews high-handedly defeat their enemies.

Everything in this story is a paradox. Each event that seemed bad for the Jews proved to be for their good. The royal banquet in celebration of Israel's exile provided the very means for Esther to enter the king's palace. The fact that Esther was abducted allowed her to bring about Haman's demise. The fact that Mordechai sat idly by the palace gate allowed him to overhear a conspiracy and

save the king's life. Haman's rise to power was the very thing that produced his conflict with the Jews and brought about his downfall. He was even hung on the very gallows he built for Mordechai, and all his wealth, that had made him so influential in the first place, was given to Esther. The very day appointed for the annihilation of the Jews was the day of their greatest victory over their enemies. It is the day on which we celebrate Purim.



Purim revelers in costume, from a 1657 print.

actually the very means by which God was manipulating history to bring about the redemption of the Jews. Everything began to change on "that night the king awoke from his sleep" (Esther 6:1). The king, says the Talmud, actually alludes to God, the King of kings. On that night, God awoke from the sleep of concealment, and began to reveal His presence in the world below.

Many scholars have remarked on the total absence of God's name from this *Megillah*, alone of all books in the Bible. God makes no showy miracles here, no parting of the seas, no manna on the ground. Unlike all previous persecutions, exile from Persia was not even an option. At other times in history those in power did not want to kill us. It was much

more profitable to leave us be or to convert us. It was only in the times of Purim and Nazi Germany that Amalek held sway with a hatred so total that annihilation of the race alone would do.

Those who focus on hidden meanings say that the hand of God is evident everywhere in this *Megillah*, even though the name is not. For every crisis encountered, God already had a solution in place.

Purim teaches us how to relate to God in a time when seas don't split, when bushes don't burn, when plagues don't befall our enemies, when the workings of God are concealed, beneath the surface appearance of things.

In Purim, we celebrate miraculous reversal of fortune. From assured mass destruction, the tables were turned and in the space of 24 hours the Jews in Persia (today's Iran) were suddenly routing every anti-Semite in the world's most vast and powerful empire.

Ever since that day, Jews celebrate its message: no matter how bleak, how dark and how hopeless a situation can appear, the Almighty has guaranteed our survival and an answer has already been prepared for every difficulty. Our mode of celebration is one of the most uncharacteristic in the annals of Jewish tradition: the sober, intellectual People of the Book turn to the bottle and are commanded to get drunk! Perhaps we are supposed to attain a state of mind other than the normal, a consciousness more attuned to the illogic of the day. And in our intoxicated state of joy, we clothe ourselves in colorful masks and costumes, deliver gifts of money to the poor, and give treats to our neighbors.

The costumes and masks are vivid reminders that, as in the Purim story, things are not what they seem. Below the visible surface, a mysterious, hidden plan is unfolding every moment, silently steering world history and us. If we are alert, aware, and appreciative of all that comes to us, we can play our parts well. None of us, at least none of us mortals, ever knows how the story will end. After all, it was the son of Esther and Achashverosh, King Darius II, who allowed the Jews to return from exile and rebuild the Holy Temple. ◇

On Masks, Costumes, Faith and Trust

by Yarden Kamely



The whole idea of dressing up and wearing masks on Purim is interesting, and personal. My memories of Purim come to me in the form of costumes – my sister and I wearing long, colorful skirts and silky robes pretending to be Queen Esther. I have always understood the symbolism of costumes and masks as they relate to the theme of Esther's hidden religious identity, but these days I am thinking more about two other aspects of this story's theme: the hidden reasons why things happen in our lives and the hidden hand of God in the events we experience.

The old adage says: Everything happens for a reason. I believe that, and I also believe the popular saying, "Every cloud has a silver lining." Yet, I admit that often I find it difficult, in the moment, to see a solid reason for bad things that happen to me or others I know. When we go through a difficult situation, trust doesn't come so easily. At times like these, the religiously faithful have an easier time coping, I think. They more easily – maybe habitually – trust that God has a "plan" for them. When we aren't in the habit of thinking this way, we have to force ourselves into a place of trust, make ourselves conscious of the faith we might have but not often feel. From my studies of Judaism I understand that there is some sort of predestination; I also believe that we influence the course of our lives through our own choices, that we have free will.

While I see God's hand in the Purim story, I also see Esther and Mordechai making choices that affect outcomes. My professor was saying that to him, faith means not letting "negative" situations cloud his days or his judgment or his ability to make choices. Rebbe Nachman of Bratslov taught, "If you don't feel happy, pretend to be." In other words, put on a happy mask.

Nachman also taught that thoughts, feelings and words possess a creative power. "You are where your thoughts are. Make sure

Numbers and Nuremberg: Purim and Purimfest

Talk of hidden meanings in a Jewish holiday would not be complete without some discussion of coded alphabets and numbers. There is one understanding that the coming of the Nazis was predicted in *Megillat Esther*. When after Esther's fast and banquet the King (some say this reference does indeed refer to God and not King Ahashveros) asks Esther what she'd like him to do for her. "Ask me anything," he says. She makes a strange request. She asks that the ten sons of Haman be "hanged again tomorrow as they were today," a very unJewish thing to say. She, or the oral tradition behind the *Megillah*, must have known that another time of potential annihilation would come, when intercession would once again be needed.

The names of the ten sons, as written in the *Megillah*, each have one letter in superscript and three in subscript. When numerical value of the uniquely ordered letters are added, they total 5706, the equivalent in our calendar of 1946, the year of the Nuremberg Trials, at which time ten of Hitler's highest echelon cohorts were hung. The final words of the tenth Nazi hung on the gallows at Nuremberg, Jules Streicher, were "Purimfest 1946!"

-Gloria

your thoughts are where *you* want to be," he said. Whereas before we were asked to put on a mask, in this case we are asked to take off the mask that hides our true identity, our true nature. Hidden underneath our "human costume" we are "powerful creators in our own right, creators made in the image of the Creator." We have the ability to make choices that affect our lives. We can use thought, words, actions, and feelings, as Rebbe Nachman suggests, to propel us forward and to manifest what we want and need. To do so, however, we must take off the costume, unmask ourselves, show up as the creative spirits that we are. ◇

Purim Tidbits & Factoids

Like all the Bible stories, there's the actual story—the text—and then there's the commentary. Usually the commentary is longer and more complex than the original. (Remember how most discussions go: first there's "on one hand," which is followed up by "and on the other hand..." We should be grateful Jews weren't created as octopi.) We've compiled a few of the interesting small things that appear in the Book of Esther commentary.

□ The book of Esther is unusual in that it is the only book of the Bible that does not contain the name of G-d.

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

□ The word "Purim" means "lots" and refers to the lottery that Haman (Boo! Hiss! Twirl Grogger!) used to choose the date for the planned massacre of the Jews.

□ The book of Esther is commonly known as the *Megillah*, which means "scroll." Although there are five books of Jewish scripture properly referred to as *megil-*

lahs (Esther, Ruth, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs, and Lamentations), this is the one people usually mean when they speak of *The Megillah*.

□ A common treat at this time of year is *hamentaschen* (literally Haman's pockets). These triangular fruit-filled cookies are supposed to represent Haman's three-cornered hat. (Okay. 'Fess up. We'll bet you didn't know that Haman had a three-cornered hat.)

□ Esther's name probably is derived from Ishtar, a Babylonian goddess, and Mordecai's name from Marduk, a Babylonian god. Equivalent names today might well be Mary and Christopher. (In other words, they weren't

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Jewish names at the time.) But some rabbis of the Talmud see the name Esther as derived from the Hebrew word Hester, which means hidden. In Persian, Esther means "star."

□ Esther's Jewish name is Hadassah, which translated means "myrtle."

□ We are told in the following Talmudic passage (from *Megillah* 7A) that Esther needed to lobby the sages in order to have her story included in Jewish memory. Rav Shmuel Bar Yehuda said: Esther sent a message to the sages: Place me in Jewish memory for all generations!

Sages: Your story would incite the nations against us.

Esther: [It's too late for that.] My story is already recorded in the chronicles of Medean and Persian kings.

(If this is true, why were the sages so unsage-like as to not recognize the full, enduring significance of this event?)

□ When did the events described in the Book of Esther actually take place? The Persian Empire was created by Cyrus the Great in 530 B.C.E. Alexander the Great destroyed it almost exactly 200 years later. So, if historical, the events would have taken place during that 200-year period.

□ The Book of Esther is unique in that it contains words that appear nowhere else in the Bible. These include:

Tebet: the tenth Hebrew month

Kasher: fit

Patshegen: a copy of the (written) text

Ahashdarpenim: Persian word for the King's officers

Pur: Persian word meaning "lot"

Karpas: Persian word for "cotton"

□ All the letters of the Hebrew alphabet are found in the Book of Esther, chapter 3, verse 13.

□ The Hebrew word *Mishteh*, meaning banquet, occurs 20 times in the Book of Esther (which is equal to the total of ALL the

other times it is found in the rest of the Bible).

□ The longest verse in the Bible appears in the Book of Esther. It has 43 words in Hebrew (and approximately 90 words in English). It appears in chapter 8, verse 9.

□ The Talmud instructs that on Purim one should drink until he knows not the difference between "Blessed be Mordecai" and "Cursed be Haman." Interestingly, the numerical value of the Hebrew letters in each of the phrases amounts to a total of 502.

□ The drinking of wine is significant, because several key events of Purim happened through wine. Ahasuerus got drunk and killed Vashti, paving the way for Esther to be made queen. Esther gave wine to King Ahasuerus and lowered his defenses, which resulted in his killing Haman. Thus the *Megillah* tells us that we should celebrate by "feasting." The Hebrew words for "feasting" mean bread, cooked food, and drinking wine. The Talmud therefore tells us to drink on Purim "more wine than we usually do."

□ Esther and Mordechai together were said to have composed the Book of Esther, which therefore becomes the only full Book in *Tanach* (the Jewish Bible) directly composed by a woman. (Several women are quoted, such as the Prophetess Deborah in Judges, but she did not compose the Book of Judges itself. The song she composed comprises only one chapter in the Book of Judges.)

□ Shushan, the city of the Book of Esther, is the Susa of Greek and Roman writers, once the capital of Elam. It lay in the uplands of Susiana, on the east of the Tigris, very near the modern border of Iraq (ancient Mesopotamia and Babylon), about 150 miles to the north of the head of the Persian Gulf. It is the modern Shush, on the northwest of Shuster.

Once a magnificent city, it is now an immense mass of ruins. Here Daniel saw one of his visions (Dan. 8); and here also Nehemiah (Neh. 1) began his public life. ♦

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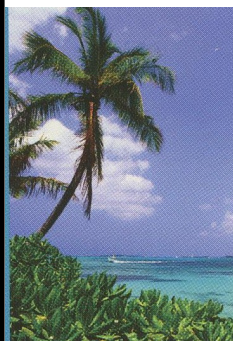
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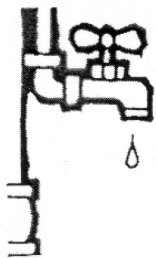
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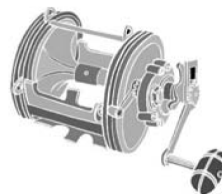
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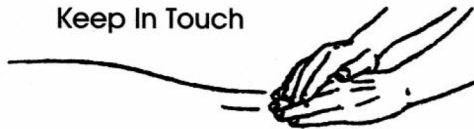
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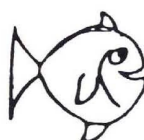


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