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Israel and Gaza: Why We Care So Much

from Rabbi David Novak

Why do we care so much? There are wars and skirmishes, some of them lasting for years, that we rarely think or utter a word about. Yet when the elected government of Israel decides to take military action against one of Israel's sworn enemies, protests form around the world, emails go flying, and rivers of ink (or electrons given the Internet age) are expended with proponents and opponents making known their point of view.

All of it is caught up, naturally, in the immediacy of the large-scale scope of Israel's attack on Gaza. With a display of power that suggests that the Israeli leadership decided to definitively end Hamas' terrorizing of Israeli citizens, the citizens of the world have been treated to a non-stop display of the

war's carnage. As members of the human race, we should feel badly that innocent civilians are being hurt and killed. We should feel badly when we see the damage that is being done to Gaza, to the rivers of blood and tears that are flowing. Concomitantly, we should be aware of the fear of kindergartners who have rockets landing on their playgrounds in Sderot and in civilian locations throughout southern Israel. More than the crude rockets that Hamas began with, today they are using more sophisticated rockets that can travel much farther, to Be'er Sheva and to the suburbs south of Tel Aviv.

To know Hamas is to know that it
continued on page 4

Now Here:: *Mishkan T'filah:* A Reform *Siddur*

M*ishkan T'filah*, A Reform *Siddur*, is now at Israel Congregation! This is the first prayer book published by the Reform movement since 1975. Users will find many similarities to our current prayer book, *Kol ha Neshamah*, as well as many enhancements.

All of the prayers in *Mishkan T'filah* are transliterated. There are numerous English choices for prayers that derive from the themes of the Hebrew. In short, this is a wonderful liturgical addition to Israel Congregation's worship choices.

Once the books arrive, a schedule

will be posted on our website and in the *Shofar*, delineating the Friday nights we will use *Mishkan T'filah* for our worship. We will use *Mishkan T'filah* in repertory with *Kol ha Neshamah* (one week one *siddur*, the next the other). There will be some *Shabbat* mornings when we will use *Mishkan T'filah* as well. There will also be study sessions soon to introduce you to the richness of the prayer book.

Israel Congregation of Manchester is a joyful Jewish community where congregants come from all backgrounds. This new *siddur* will make our commitment to the diversity of our congregation that much more evident. Our gratitude goes to **Cathy Kimmel** for organizing this most generous donation, comprised of donations by many of our members.

**Tu B'Shvat
Seder
Feb. 8 at 4pm
Don't Miss It!**

Memories are created by sharing special moments with loving family and friends.

Please join us as our son

Elijah William Brown

leads Kabbalat Shabbat services

Friday evening at six-thirty
and

is called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah
Saturday morning at nine-thirty
the twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth
of February, two thousand nine

Ann and Barry Brown

Dinner to follow Friday services

Luncheon to follow Saturday services

Trip to the Theater

Yours, *Anne*, a play telling the story of Anne Frank, is being performed by the New York State Theatre in Troy on March 22nd--and ICM is going!

The play tells the story of Anne Frank, whose famous diary was published by her father, Otto Frank, the only member of Anne's family who survived the *Shoah* (Holocaust).

We will be attending a matinee performance at 2:00 p.m. If we are a group of more than 10 people, the group rate is: Adults \$15; Seniors and Students: \$12; Children under 12: \$7.50.

Given the sensitive subject matter, ICM and the NYS Theater Institute recommend that only children ten years and older (grade 5 and up) attend.

Please contact **Jodi Stark** at 802.366.1331 or jodi18@verizon.net, **Betsy Hart** at 802.875.6391, or the synagogue at 802.362.4578 by February 22 to reserve tickets for yourself and your family. We will carpool from the synagogue.

Finally, if there is interest, we will have dinner at Lo Porto, a lovely Italian restaurant located close to the theatre. We look forward to your joining us for this wonderful performance!

BOOKNOTES

FUGITIVE PIECES, by Anne Michaels

When the ICM Book Club read *Fugitive Pieces*, it resulted in a spirited discussion about this first novel, a story of "damaged lives and the indestructibility of the human spirit." One reviewer observed that "[t]he lyricism and sassy deftness of *Fugitive Pieces* remind [him] of the early work of Saul Bellow," whose novel, *Mr. Sammler's Planet*, was also an ICM Book Club selection.

Fugitive Pieces is written as a memoir in two parts. Part one is the story of Jakob Beer who is 7 years old when the Nazis invade his Polish village, slaughter his parents and abduct his beloved 15-year-old sister, Bella, a gifted musician. Jakob is saved by a Greek geologist, Athos Roussos, who takes him to his home on the island of Zakynthos where they survive the Nazi occupation, barely managing to escape the atrocities that virtually destroy Greece's Jewish community. At the end of the war, Athos accepts a university position in Toronto, and he and Jakob begin a new life, although Jakob continues to be haunted by visions of his parents' death and his lost sister. As an adult, Jakob becomes a poet, mourns the death of Athos, survives an unfortunate first marriage, and ultimately finds his soul mate in his second wife, Michaela.

The second part of the novel centers around Ben, a young man profoundly influenced by Jakob Beer's poetry. In fact, Ben travels to the Greek island of Idhra in an attempt to find Jakob's notebooks after his death. Ben, too, is a damaged soul, the son of Holocaust survivors, who carries their sorrow with him always. Ben feels that he was "born into absence...a hiding place, rotted out by grief." It is through Jakob's writings, however, that Ben finds a way to acknowledge love and contemplate a brighter future.

In the words of one reviewer, *Fugitive Pieces* by the poet Anne Michaels is "a moving tale of survival [that] becomes a grave and stately hymn to the revivifying qualities of language and learning." Michiko Kakutani in *The New York Times* lauded this novel as "extraordinarily magical."

President's Perspective

The lexicographer defines “peace” as the absence of war, or violence, or civil commotion. It is, perhaps, the fact that the word is principally defined by what it is not, rather than by what it is, that has made it so elusive over the centuries. The very existence at the present time of violent wars in various parts of the world, as well as civil unrest and destruction in other locations is ample evidence that we have not yet mastered the ability to achieve for our own well-being the state of mutual harmony between the inhabitants of our globe and the creation of the state of tranquility and security for which humanity has always yearned. I do not profess to be so wise as to be able to unlock the secrets of how peace on our planet is to be achieved but I wish to offer some observations about the concept and the process and our tradition.

Judaism has never considered violence to be glamorous. In the army of *Bar Kochba*, new recruits were expected to prove their bravery by severing one of their fingers. The rabbis of the time strongly disapproved of this practice, considering it destructive and pointless. Despite the Jewish distaste for violence, Judaism recognized both “a time for war and a time for peace” (Ecclesiastes 3:8). What requires clarification is how the conflicting values of war and peace interact with each other.

Peace is Judaism's highest aspiration. The *Midrash* says the entire *Torah* is based on the value of peace, noting that the obligation to seek peace is of a much higher order than ritual observances. Although many of the *Torah's* commandments are phrased in conditional terms such as “if you meet” or “if you see,” which indicate they are only operative in specific situations, the imperative of peace is much greater, because the *Torah* commands that one “search for peace and pursue it” (Psalms 34:15).

In order to maintain peaceful relations between individuals, we are allowed to compromise on other moral and religious values. One may lie in order to prevent strife. One must bend over backwards to make peace. It is said to be a mark of piety if a person accepts insults quietly and does not respond; a true scholar is humble and ignores the slights of others.

But how do we apply these values in the face of aggression? Some might argue that pacifism is an appropriate response since it has the advantage of being uncompromising, categorical and absolute. Pacifists argue that in the long run, the world will be more peaceful if individuals and groups choose to remain passive in the face of aggression and that since violence is absolutely forbidden, by defending yourself with violence, you perpetuate an endless cycle of violence. This view has sometimes been referred to as the “*shveig shtill*” approach which was often employed by Jews in anti-Semitic societies where they found it best to avoid disturbing the cooperation they gave to those in authority. The limitations of such an approach are illustrated by the apocryphal tale of two Jews who are about to be executed by a firing squad. As they are handed their blindfolds, one of the Jews refuses to put his on. The second Jew, mortified by this act of rebellion, turns to his friend and says: “Please, don't make trouble!”

While this form of pacifism may be a reasonable approach for a powerless group, it would seem absurd for a powerful nation to remain completely nonviolent, allowing all who attack it to do so with impunity. Jewish tradition, therefore, considers pacifism in the face of aggression to be immoral, and that refusing to fight evil is to become a party to the evil. If you don't help the victim, you become an ally of the aggressor. If a person refuses to defend himself, he allows evil to triumph.

While peace is Judaism's paramount value, at times we are compelled to make war and are confronted by the paradox of loving peace and making war at the same time. The resulting dilemma can be dealt with by never losing sight of the humanity of our enemies, recognizing that every death on the battlefield is tragic. The *Talmud* teaches us that on the night the Egyptian army drowned in the Sea of Reeds, the first true moment of freedom for the Jews fleeing Egypt, God refused to hear the angels singing their prayers in exultation and said, “My creations are drowning in the sea and you will sing songs?” Golda Meir was often quoted as saying

continued on page 5

Religious School

We are very excited at Religious School as we have been seeing lots of positive indicators regarding our students and program. We are happy to share our progress with you:

- Attendance has improved
- Most students now arrive at 3:50 so they can snack and socialize with their friends
- More children are taking out books from the school library
- Homework quality has improved
- Feedback on class restructuring has been positive
- More parents are joining in on the singing time at the end of school

Would you like to join the Religious School Team? We are looking for our 2009-10 team players now. We are looking for people who:

- can teach Hebrew
- can teach Judaic studies
- have a school administration or educational background.

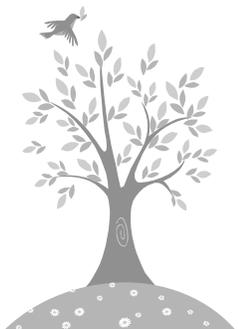
For details call Michael Dreiblatt at 549-5025 or email mike@BalanceEducationalServices.com.

Michael Dreiblatt

Tu b' Shvat Seder

Even though we are still in the heart of winter in Vermont, it is time for the new year for trees—the 15th of the month of *Sh'vat* that we know as *Tu b'Shvat* (literally the 15th of *Sh'vat*).

We will hold a special *Tu b'Shvat seder* in our social hall on February 8 at 4 p.m. We will use a special text brought by our own **Dina Bronson**—and there will be wonderful food by Dina as well. Our Religious School students will lead the *seder* for us. This is an ICM-wide event—all are welcome. Please let Lynda know if you are coming by calling 802.362.4578 or emailing office@israelcongregationvt.org. Your response will help us plan appropriately for our *seder*.



*Happy Birthday to
Religious School Students...*

Abigail Marmer, February 5
Emet Koffman, February 25

Why We Care

continued from page 1

is an organization motivated not by peaceful relations with Israel and others on its border but by jihad, warfare, and suicide bombings. The complete and total destruction of Israel remains its goal. This goal was succinctly expressed in a sign carried by a protester in London that said: "Palestine: From the River to the Sea."

As Israel approaches her 61st birthday, there is much to be proud of—and there is still sadness that Israel is still not one of the safest places in the world for Jews to call home. There is cold peace with Egypt and Jordan—but existential threats continue from Gaza, from some in the West Bank, from Hezbollah in Lebanon, and now from Iran.

Yet there are shifts that are apparent beneath the surface. There are Arab governments in this Gaza conflagration that are not defending Hamas' position: they don't want Hamas to threaten their states, either. There is not the solidarity that has formerly been expressed in the Arab world. There is also sympathy to Israel's need to respond to stop the barrage of rocket fire that persists from Hamas-administered Gaza.

So why do we care so much? Because Israel represents to many of us something much grander than a member of the nations of the world. She represents one place in the world where being Jewish will never be a disadvantage within the country—yet around her borders it is still no benefit. Israel is in a tough neighborhood. Forty-two years after the Six Day War, we should remember that Israel needs us to be supportive of her people, not just in times of extremes, but in all times.

Rabbi David Novak

President's Perspective

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she could forgive the Arab countries for killing Jewish children, but she could not forgive Arab countries for making it necessary for Jews to kill Arab children, recognizing that the warrior must mourn the deaths of his enemies and never forget the value of life.

Clearly, there are those who genuinely believe that the path to peace can only be found at the end of the battlefield. American leaders have made their observations about the relationship between war and peace. "There is nothing so likely to produce peace as to be well prepared to meet the enemy." (George Washington). "I know all the war rhetoric, but it's aimed at achieving peace." (George W. Bush). "It is an unfortunate fact that we can secure peace only by preparing for war." (John F. Kennedy). And yet the words of practical statesmen echo in sharp contrast: "There never was a good war or a bad peace." (Benjamin Franklin). "I think that people want peace so much that one of these days government had better get out of their way and let them have it." (Dwight Eisenhower).

Other thinkers and doers have offered contrasting formulae for the process of seeking peace. The philosopher Baruch Spinoza opined: "Peace is not the absence of war; it is a virtue; a state of mind; a disposition for benevolence; confidence; and justice." Moshe Dayan noted: "If you want to make peace, you don't talk to your friends, you talk to your enemies." Golda Meir, who, in her administration enjoyed some successful peace negotiations, observed pointedly that one cannot shake hands with a fist.

But perhaps the words of Ramsay MacDonald, a one time British Prime Minister, spoken in 1914 when he opposed his country's entry into World War I, provide the most direct invitation to those who have either become enamored with or enmeshed in the pursuit of war: "We have all taken risks in the making of war. Isn't it time that we should take risks to secure peace?"

Morty Bunis

CENTER OF LEARNING

First Tuesday Series

Feb. 3 *Great Victorian Literature, 7:00 pm*
When 18 year-old Princess Victoria became queen in 1837, no one dreamed she would reign for 64 years. After 1840 when Victoria married Albert, we see the heyday of attitudes of prudery and a strict outwardly moral code that marked the Victorian Era and lasted until about 1890 when Prince Edward and his more spirited lifestyle was echoed in Society. With this as background, participants will recite excerpts from Victorian literature. Led by **Paul Ross**

March 3 *Literature and Philosophy, 7:00 pm*
Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman
Henry David Thoreau, William James,
Hermann Melville, Henry James
Nathaniel Hawthorne. Led by **Paul Ross**

Tuesday Evening Classes

Feb. 24 *Spells, Magic Tricks, Talking to the Dead: The Supernatural in the Bible, 7:00 pm*
Rabbi Novak and **Yuval Sela**

Cooking

Feb. 12 *Back to the Source: Eastern European Favorites in the ICM Kitchen, 6:00 pm*
Join **Yuval Sela** for knish making, mushroom barley soup, and other favorites. Materials \$10.00. Reservations requested; please call 802.362.4578.

A complete schedule of upcoming classes is listed on our website, or you may pick up a copy of the calendar at our office. Our website:

www.israelcongregationvt.org

Ma'aser Sheni



The Torah required three tithes of the Israelites. The first, Ma'asher Rishon, was given to the Temple priests. The second, Ma'aser Sheni, supported the general community, benefiting both giver and receiver. The third, Ma'aser Shlishi, provided funds for the poor. Our congregants participate in the mitzvah of Ma'aser Sheni by contributing to funds that benefit the synagogue and its members.

Thank you for your donations!

GENERAL FUND

Bone Builders – RSVP • Barbara & Martin Donner in memory of Barbara's mother, Mildred Finkelstein
Susan & Herb Donner in memory of Susan's parents, Syd and Albert Cohen
Jeannette & William Epstein in memory of Sarah Epstein • **Brenda & Paul Gottlieb** in memory of Jack Schnair • **Janet Hoffman, Inc • Judith & Henry Kaplan** in memory of Celia Levine •
Judy & Stewart Katz to start a *great 2009* for our congregation • **Roberta & Al Michaels** with best wishes for a speedy recovery to Louis Bronson • **Dr. Joel Shapiro** in memory of his mother, Marion Shapiro
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 Correction: **Marilyn & Ed Rice**, "Get Well soon" to Robert & Iris Taylor

SHABBAT DINNER FUND

**William A. Hazelton • Micki & Bob Horowitz • Norma Colin & Fred Polsky
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Roberta & Al Michaels in memory of Cheryl Ullman's husband, Peter Jannke

HOROWITZ CHILDREN'S EDUCATION FUND

Micki & Bob Horowitz in memory of Larry Davis' mother, Phyllis Schoen; in memory of Norman Perlman

Special Thanks ~

Gary Marmer for leading services January 23
Barry Schoenwetter for providing music January 23
Allan Eisemann for leading services January 24

Mazel Tov ~

Dr. Joel Shapiro, of Green Mountain College, on being granted a Fulbright Scholarship to lecture at the University of Presov during spring 2009

Bikur Cholim

Bikur Cholim, or visiting the sick, is one of the many *mitzvot* we are commanded to perform. Having company lifts the spirits of those who are sick or isolated. Do you know someone who is ill and would appreciate a visit from Rabbi Novak? Please call the office at 802.362.578 to let Rabbi Novak know. He will gladly make the time to visit.

February Calendar Of Events

- Feb 3 7:00 pm, **Center of Learning:** Great Victorian Literature with **Paul Ross**
- Feb 4 3:50 pm, **Religious School**
- Feb 6 6:30 pm, **Family Shabbat Service**, followed by our Community Dinner, sponsored by **Ruth & Bob Rosenfeld** in honor of their 53rd Anniversary
- Feb 7 9:30 am, *Shabbat* Worship, *Parashat Beshalach*
- Feb 8 4:00 pm, *Tu B'Shevat Seder* with treats provided by **Dina Bronson**
- Feb 11 3:50 pm, **Religious School**
- Feb 12 6:00 pm, **Cooking Class:** *Back to the Source: Eastern European Favorites* with **Yuval Sela**
- Feb 13 6:30 pm, Friday Evening *Shabbat* Worship, followed by our Community Dinner
- Feb 14 9:30 am, *Shabbat* Worship, *Parashat Yitro*
- Feb 18 No Religious School
- Feb 20 6:30 pm, Friday Evening *Shabbat* Worship, followed by our Community Dinner
- Feb 21 9:30 am, *Shabbat* Worship, *Parashat Mishpatim*
- Feb 24 7:00 pm, **Center of Learning:** *Spells, Magic Tricks, Talking to the Dead: The Supernatural in the Bible*, with **Rabbi Novak** and **Yuval Sela**
- Feb 25 3:50 pm, **Religious School**
- Feb 27 6:30 pm, Friday Evening *Shabbat* Worship, followed by our Community Dinner, sponsored by **Ann & Barry Brown** in honor of **Elijah Brown's Bar Mitzvah**
- Feb 28 9:30 am *Shabbat* Worship and *Bar Mitzvah* of **Elijah Brown**, *Parashat Tecumah*

Please call 802.447.1545 for information about the Green Mtn. RSVP's Bone Builders Class

Sponsor a *Shabbat* Dinner

We encourage members to support our communal *Shabbat* Dinner by sponsoring a dinner in honor of a life cycle event, achievement, anniversary, birthday, or for any other *simcha*.

The cost to sponsor a dinner is \$180. This amount will cover the food, serving, and clean-up expenses regularly provided by the synagogue. Attendees will still be expected to augment the meal by bringing a potluck dish.

A sheet of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) about *Shabbat* Dinner sponsorship is available from the office. Call Lynda at 802.362.4578.

Upcoming Sponsored Dinners

- Feb. 6 **Ruth & Bob Rosenfeld**, in honor of their 53rd Anniversary
- Feb. 27 **Ann & Barry Brown**, in honor of **Elijah's Bar Mitzvah**

Please join us for these special dinners and bring a meatless dish to share.

Open Dates for sponsoring a *Shabbat* Dinner:

- March 6, 13, 20
April 3, 17, 24
May 8, 22, 29
June 26

Thank you to Israel Congregation

Thank you so much for allowing our Bone Builders group to exercise at your congregation throughout the year. Bone Builders – RSVP: Terry Quinn, **Lili Kalish**, Liz Roberts, Winnie Raffaille, Mara Seddon, Robin Langstaff, Connie Daley, Barbara Trafford, Pat Murphy, Ann Taft, Vivian, Linda Hauge

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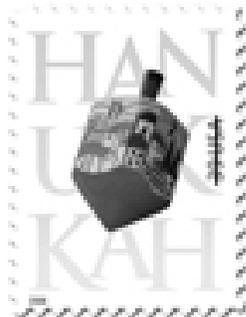
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Israel Congregation of Manchester

*Enriching Jewish Community
in the Northshire*

Israel Congregation has about 230 member families of diverse Jewish backgrounds, both full-time and part-time residents of southern Vermont. We provide weekly Shabbat and holiday services, a religious school, adult education, life cycle events, and cultural and social programming, in a warm and welcoming environment.

An integral part of Jewish life in the Northshire for more than 70 years, Israel Congregation has been at its current location on Rte 7A, 1.2 miles north of Rte 11/30, since 1985. Our building is ADA accessible.

Kabbalat Shabbat Service: 6:30 pm, Friday
(followed by Congregational Dinner)

Shabbat Service: 9:30 am, Saturday

Religious School: 3:50 pm to 6 pm, Wednesday

Office Hours: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm, M-Th,

9:00 am to 1:00 pm Fridays

Telephone: 802.362.4578

David Novak, Rabbi

Michael Cohen, Rabbi Emeritus

Lynda McCann Gillman, *Administrator*

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Israel Congregation of Manchester

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in the Northshire*

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