



Flushing-Fresh Meadows Jewish Center

193-10 Peck Avenue ✦ Flushing, New York 11365 (718) 357-5100

February, 2011
Vol. 8, No.8

THE BULLETIN

Shevat/Adar I 5771
Rabbi Gerald M. Solomon
Cantor Mordechai Dier

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY

Friday, Feb. 4 – Rosh Chodesh Adar I – First Day
Candle Lighting Time. 4:58 P.M.
Saturday, Feb. 5 - Rosh Chodesh Adar I –
Second Day – Parashat Terumah
Shabbat Services. 9:00 A.M.
Shabbat Ends. 6:08 P.M.

Friday, Feb. 11
Candle Lighting Time. 5:07 P.M.
Saturday, Feb. 12 - Parashat Tetzaveh
Shabbat Services. 9:00 A.M.
Shabbat Ends. 6:17 P.M.

Friday, Feb. 18
Candle Lighting Time. 5:15 P.M.
Saturday, Feb.19 - Parashat Ki Tissa
Shabbat Services. 9:00 A.M.
Shabbat Ends. 6:26 P.M.

Friday, Feb. 25
Candle Lighting Time. 5:23 P.M.
Saturday, Feb. 26 - Parashat Vayakhel
Shabbat Services. 9:00 A.M.
Shabbat Ends. 6:34 P.M.

The Love Affair With Torah Continues



Romance & Sexual References In The Tanach Part II

An In-depth Study & Analysis Class Wednesdays,



February 2nd, 9th,
16th, & 23rd
10:30 AM
Until 12 Noon



INSTRUCTOR:
Rabbi Gerald Solomon

ATTENTION:

Friday evening services for February have been suspended due to continuously inclement weather conditions.

SCHEDULED EVENTS

Monday, February 7th @ 8:00 PM

Program Committee Meeting
All Are Welcome To Attend

**Wednesdays, February 2nd,
February 9th, February 16th, &
February 23rd**

10:30 AM to Noon

Adult Education Institute Courses
Conducted By Rabbi Gerald Solomon
"Romance & Sexual References
in the Tanach" Part II
An in-depth study & analysis

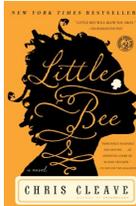
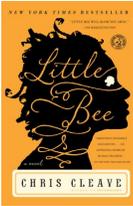
Thursdays: 11 AM to 1 PM

"On-going Discussion Group" is on hiatus
due to the inclement weather

Thursday, February 24th

@ 10:30 AM

Sisterhood Book Club
Little Bee
By Chris Cleave



ENDOWMENTS

Yahrzeit Plaque

In main Sanctuary. \$275

In Lasky Chapel. \$175

Panel in new stained glass window. . . . \$500

Endow a Siddur. \$50

Endow a Chumash. \$75

Sponsor a kiddush. \$150

Special kiddush. ask

Listing in Book of Life. \$25

Rabbi's Discretionary Fund.

Please contact office (718) 357-5100
if you are interested

MAZEL TOV

Anita Bernstein and her family welcomed the arrival of her great great-niece, Kyla Lam. May you *schepp* much *nachas* from this new addition.

REFUAH SHELEIMAH

We wish to extend our heartfelt prayers to all those who are confronting illness, have undergone medical procedures, and are recuperating from mishaps. Among those on our speedy recovery list are Anita Bernstein, Miriam Nadler, Carl Rosenthal, Bernie Solomon, Sylvia Udasin, and Shari Weinberger.

CONDOLENCES

Our heartfelt condolences go out to Rae and Leonard Mischler on the passing of Rae's cherished sister, Rachel Rosenberg. May you be comforted along with all the mourners of Zion and Jerusalem and may know of no more sorrow.

ALERT FOR OUR SISTERHOOD BOOK CLUB PARTICIPANTS

Renovations on the Fresh Meadows branch of the Queens Public Library have been completed and you may now obtain the February Book Club selection from that branch.

KEEP ON GIVING

Hunger is a daily struggle for the indigent and is harder felt in light of the harsh weather we are encountering. Please continue to bring in canned or boxed goods so that the wintry months will be a little less cold for those less fortunate.

RABBI'S MESSAGE – FEBRUARY 2011

MIDWINTER MUSINGS: ARE WE READY TO MOVE INTO THE FUTURE?

I am very pleased and thankful to have been able to serve as your rabbi these past six and one half years and I pray that with G-d's help I will continue to serve the needs of our beloved congregation and community. I thank G-d and the membership of the Flushing-Fresh Meadows Jewish Center for having afforded me this wonderful opportunity. I will continue to endeavor to do my very best to support and promote both the spiritual and physical well being of FFMJC and its membership as well as the Jewish Community of which it is a constituent.

The new secular year offers each of us a new opportunity for a new beginning in our personal lives as well as in our communal lives. Congregationally speaking, we want to face the future as one united congregation, united in purpose and method, with reverence and love for the Creator and for the Torah and with love, respect and caring for each other. A Jewish congregation is meant to be a Kehilla Kedosha, a "Holy Congregation," where the philosophy of "Chaverim Kol Yisrael," ("All Israel are Friends"), is its primary characteristic. That's the kind of congregation we want.

A congregation which practices Traditional Judaism must, ipso facto, be guided by the great law of the Torah, "V'ahavta L'rayacha Kamocha," "And you shall love your neighbor as you love yourself.." Whatever love and caring you would like shown to you, be sure to show that same love and caring to others. A congregation united by love is a strong and dynamic congregation indeed, and becomes a

shining example to the Jewish community and a beacon of light to illuminate the darkness and despair found in the world. Indeed, we are commanded to be the "Or Lagoyim," the "Light unto the Nations," bringing the truths of the Torah to a world in need of much direction and "Tikkun,"(repair).

At the time of this writing, our nation is mourning the innocent victims of the tragic shooting of those who perished and praying for the full recovery of those who were injured in Tucson, Arizona this past week including Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords. Our congregation and community join in spirit with our fellow Americans in mourning this tragic loss of life and hurt imposed upon our fellow citizens and their families and condemn this heinous deed in the strongest possible terms.

In his message at the memorial service the other night, President Obama made the following statement which we as Americans and as Jews should find most applicable. He said: "...But at a time when our discourse has become so sharply polarized - at a time when we are far too eager to lay the blame for all that ails the world at the feet of those who think differently than we do - it's important for us to pause for a moment and make sure that we are talking with each other in a way that heals, not a way that wounds." Yes, we are here to heal, not to afflict, to fix, not to break, to create, not to destroy, to care, not to be apathetic, to be united with our people, not to be separated from them, to solve problems, not to create them, to love others and not to hate them.

As we enter a new stage in our development as a congregation, I believe it important to be reminded of a few things. "Tikkun Olam,"

fixing the world is always our calling. In order to fix the world, we need first to fix ourselves through training in and practice of the teachings of Torah. We need to learn or relearn and apply those teachings that we may do a good job of “fixing.” Regular Torah study is, therefore, an essential part of congregational life. Working together, we need to develop good educational programming that we may fulfill our mission and insure our continued growth and well being as a “Holy Congregation.” If we want real “life” for our congregation, then Torah study must be increased, and it’s teachings practiced. As we learn in Pirkei Avot, “Marbeh Torah, Marbeh Chaim,” “the more Torah, the more life.” The task of the congregation is to find ways and means of implementing Torah teachings both within the precincts of the congregation, for its membership, as well as in the world outside.

We, as a congregation, should see ourselves as being on a constant campaign to facilitate the return of our people to traditional Jewish religious practice. We will measure our success not by getting ourselves and others to philosophize about Judaism, but by getting ourselves and others **to do** Judaism. With the doing will come the understanding. Religious observance, like swimming, for example, is only learned and mastered by getting into the water and **doing**.

Many questions people ask about Jewish religious practice are answered for them when they practice it. “Lo ha-midrash ha-ikar ela ha-ma-aseh,” says the Talmud. The deed is the main thing, not the text. Surely we need the text to learn what to do first, but we need to always bear in mind that the learning is for the purpose of the doing. If we can get another Jew to light Shabbat candles, put up a mezuzah, give tzedakah, attend a religious service, study a little Torah, eat a kosher meal, say a bracha, observe a holiday, join the synagogue, etc., we will have

succeeded as a Holy Congregation. Understanding will come with the doing. People are transformed by doing.

On the Festival of Shavuot we always remember the response of our ancestors at the giving of the Torah. They said “Naaseh V’nishma,” “we will do and we will hear (obey).” In other words, they were teaching the truth that learning alone is insufficient, that doing has priority and is an essential prerequisite to true understanding. It is the primary method of mastery. Learning without doing is incomplete learning. Doing reinforces the learning. Doing is what we are here for in this “Olam Ha-asiyah,” this “World of Action.” Our actions will speak much louder to us than our words. First do and then **you will learn** about what you are doing.

In our religious lives we need to remember this truth. Understanding comes with the doing. Many of those who absent themselves from synagogue life are missing the boat because they think they have to understand first. Once they understand, they say, then they will do. They need to be informed that it doesn’t work that way. **Doing comes first and will answer questions.**

As we begin the new secular year of 2011, let us emphasize **doing** as the way to successful learning and growing, for the individual as well as for the synagogue. If we really want to change our lives for the better, then let us resolve to **do** more of those righteous and good deeds prescribed by our faith in the new year, and a blessed year with welcome changes will be ours, as individuals and as a congregation.

With love,
Your friend and rabbi,
Rabbi Gerald M. Solomon

A FOND FAREWELL

After eighteen years of dedicated service, first to Fresh Meadows Jewish Center and then to Flushing-Fresh Meadows Jewish Center, our office manager, Karen Rothman, has decided to seek retirement. Her responsibilities included receiving and disbursing checks, and all the bookkeeping that it involved, which are essential to the operation of the business of our Center. Through many changes in administration, Karen kept things in the office running smoothly. Ever at the ready when a last minute flyer was needed or the bulletin required being run off well beyond it's cut-off date, Karen swiftly and efficiently performed any and all tasks which crossed her desk, whether it be for the Sisterhood, the clergy, or the board. She served as the first line of contact to the congregation-at-large and the community in general and presented our synagogue in the best light possible to all with whom she dealt. We will most certainly miss her commitment and loyalty to FFMJC and wish her only the best in all her future endeavors.



WELCOME

We wish to welcome Marcia Federman, treasurer of the Queens Jewish Community Council, who will be serving as the new FFMJC office secretary upon Karen's retirement.



PRESIDENT OBAMA'S SPEECH

TUCSON, Ariz. - *These are the prepared remarks which were delivered by President Barack Obama at the Memorial Service for the Victims of the Shooting in Tucson, Arizona.*

"To the families of those we've lost; to all who called them friends; to the students of this university, the public servants gathered tonight, and the people of Tucson and Arizona: I have come here tonight as an American who, like all

Americans, kneels to pray with you today, and will stand by you tomorrow.

There is nothing I can say that will fill the sudden hole torn in your hearts. But know this: the hopes of a nation are here tonight. We mourn with you for the fallen. We join you in your grief. And we add our faith to yours that Representative Gabrielle Giffords and the other living victims of this tragedy pull through.

As Scripture tells us:

There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.

*God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.*

On Saturday morning, Gabby, her staff, and many of her constituents gathered outside a supermarket to exercise their right to peaceful assembly and free speech. They were fulfilling a central tenet of the democracy envisioned by our founders - representatives of the people answering to their constituents, so as to carry their concerns to our nation's capital. Gabby called it "Congress on Your Corner" - just an updated version of government of and by and for the people.

That is the quintessentially American scene that was shattered by a gunman's bullets. And the six people who lost their lives on Saturday - they too represented what is best in America.

Judge John Roll served our legal system for nearly 40 years. A graduate of this university and its law school, Judge Roll was recommended for the federal bench by John McCain twenty years ago, appointed by President George H.W. Bush, and rose to become Arizona's chief federal judge. His colleagues described him as the hardest-working judge within the Ninth Circuit. He was on his way back from attending Mass, as he did every day, when he decided to stop by

and say hi to his Representative. John is survived by his loving wife, Maureen, his three sons, and his five grandchildren.

George and Dorothy Morris - "Dot" to her friends - were high school sweethearts who got married and had two daughters. They did everything together, traveling the open road in their RV, enjoying what their friends called a 50-year honeymoon. Saturday morning, they went by the Safeway to hear what their Congresswoman had to say. When gunfire rang out, George, a former Marine, instinctively tried to shield his wife. Both were shot. Dot passed away.

A New Jersey native, Phyllis Schneck retired to Tucson to beat the snow. But in the summer, she would return East, where her world revolved around her 3 children, 7 grandchildren, and 2 year-old great-granddaughter. A gifted quilter, she'd often work under her favorite tree, or sometimes sew aprons with the logos of the Jets and the Giants to give out at the church where she volunteered. A Republican, she took a liking to Gabby, and wanted to get to know her better.

Dorwan and Mavy Stoddard grew up in Tucson together - about seventy years ago. They moved apart and started their own respective families, but after both were widowed they found their way back here, to, as one of Mavy's daughters put it, "be boyfriend and girlfriend again." When they weren't out on the road in their motor home, you could find them just up the road, helping folks in need at the Mountain Avenue Church of Christ. A retired construction worker, Dorwan spent his spare time fixing up the church along with their dog, Tux. His final act of selflessness was to dive on top of his wife, sacrificing his life for hers.

Everything Gabe Zimmerman did, he did with passion - but his true passion was people. As Gabby's outreach director, he made the cares of thousands of her constituents his own, seeing to

it that seniors got the Medicare benefits they had earned, that veterans got the medals and care they deserved, that government was working for ordinary folks. He died doing what he loved - talking with people and seeing how he could help. Gabe is survived by his parents, Ross and Emily, his brother, Ben, and his fiancée, Kelly, whom he planned to marry next year.

And then there is nine year-old Christina Taylor Green. Christina was an A student, a dancer, a gymnast, and a swimmer. She often proclaimed that she wanted to be the first woman to play in the major leagues, and as the only girl on her Little League team, no one put it past her. She showed an appreciation for life uncommon for a girl her age, and would remind her mother, "We are so blessed. We have the best life." And she'd pay those blessings back by participating in a charity that helped children who were less fortunate.

Our hearts are broken by their sudden passing. Our hearts are broken - and yet, our hearts also have reason for fullness.

Our hearts are full of hope and thanks for the 13 Americans who survived the shooting, including the congresswoman many of them went to see on Saturday. I have just come from the University Medical Center, just a mile from here, where our friend Gabby courageously fights to recover even as we speak. And I can tell you this - she knows we're here and she knows we love her and she knows that we will be rooting for her throughout what will be a difficult journey.

And our hearts are full of gratitude for those who saved others. We are grateful for Daniel Hernandez, a volunteer in Gabby's office who ran through the chaos to minister to his boss, tending to her wounds to keep her alive. We are grateful for the men who tackled the gunman as he stopped to reload. We are

grateful for a petite 61 year-old, Patricia Maisch, who wrestled away the killer's ammunition, undoubtedly saving some lives. And we are grateful for the doctors and nurses and emergency medics who worked wonders to heal those who'd been hurt.

These men and women remind us that heroism is found not only on the fields of battle. They remind us that heroism does not require special training or physical strength. Heroism is here, all around us, in the hearts of so many of our fellow citizens, just waiting to be summoned - as it was on Saturday morning.

Their actions, their selflessness, also pose a challenge to each of us. It raises the question of what, beyond the prayers and expressions of concern, is required of us going forward. How can we honor the fallen? How can we be true to their memory?

You see, when a tragedy like this strikes, it is part of our nature to demand explanations - to try to impose some order on the chaos, and make sense out of that which seems senseless. Already we've seen a national conversation commence, not only about the motivations behind these killings, but about everything from the merits of gun safety laws to the adequacy of our mental health systems. Much of this process, of debating what might be done to prevent such tragedies in the future, is an essential ingredient in our exercise of self-government.

But at a time when our discourse has become so sharply polarized - at a time when we are far too eager to lay the blame for all that ails the world at the feet of those who think differently than we do - it's important for us to pause for a moment and make sure that we are talking with each other in a way that heals, not a way that wounds.

Scripture tells us that there is evil in the world, and that terrible things happen for reasons that defy human understanding. In the words of Job, "when I looked for light, then came darkness." Bad things happen, and we must guard against

simple explanations in the aftermath.

For the truth is that none of us can know exactly what triggered this vicious attack. None of us can know with any certainty what might have stopped those shots from being fired, or what thoughts lurked in the inner recesses of a violent man's mind.

So yes, we must examine all the facts behind this tragedy. We cannot and will not be passive in the face of such violence. We should be willing to challenge old assumptions in order to lessen the prospects of violence in the future.

But what we can't do is use this tragedy as one more occasion to turn on one another. As we discuss these issues, let each of us do so with a good dose of humility. Rather than pointing fingers or assigning blame, let us use this occasion to expand our moral imaginations, to listen to each other more carefully, to sharpen our instincts for empathy, and remind ourselves of all the ways our hopes and dreams are bound together.

After all, that's what most of us do when we lose someone in our family - especially if the loss is unexpected. We're shaken from our routines, and forced to look inward. We reflect on the past. Did we spend enough time with an aging parent, we wonder. Did we express our gratitude for all the sacrifices they made for us? Did we tell a spouse just how desperately we loved them, not just once in awhile but every single day?

So sudden loss causes us to look backward - but it also forces us to look forward, to reflect on the present and the future, on the manner in which we live our lives and nurture our relationships with those who are still with us. We may ask ourselves if we've shown enough kindness and generosity and compassion to the people in our lives. Perhaps we question whether we are doing right by our children, or

our community, and whether our priorities are in order. We recognize our own mortality, and are reminded that in the fleeting time we have on this earth, what matters is not wealth, or status, or power, or fame - but rather, how well we have loved, and what small part we have played in bettering the lives of others.

That process of reflection, of making sure we align our values with our actions - that, I believe, is what a tragedy like this requires. For those who were harmed, those who were killed - they are part of our family, an American family 300 million strong. We may not have known them personally, but we surely see ourselves in them. In George and Dot, in Dorwan and Mavy, we sense the abiding love we have for our own husbands, our own wives, our own life partners. Phyllis - she's our mom or grandma; Gabe our brother or son. In Judge Roll, we recognize not only a man who prized his family and doing his job well, but also a man who embodied America's fidelity to the law. In Gabby, we see a reflection of our public spiritedness, that desire to participate in that sometimes frustrating, sometimes contentious, but always necessary and never-ending process to form a more perfect union.

And in Christina...in Christina we see all of our children. So curious, so trusting, so energetic and full of magic. So deserving of our love. And so deserving of our good example. If this tragedy prompts reflection and debate, as it should, let's make sure it's worthy of those we have lost. Let's make sure it's not on the usual plane of politics and point scoring and pettiness that drifts away with the next news cycle.

The loss of these wonderful people should make every one of us strive to be better in our private lives - to be better friends and neighbors, co-workers and parents. And if, as has been discussed in recent days, their deaths help usher in more civility in our public discourse, let's remember that it is not because a simple lack of

civility caused this tragedy, but rather because only a more civil and honest public discourse can help us face up to our challenges as a nation, in a way that would make them proud. It should be because we want to live up to the example of public servants like John Roll and Gabby Giffords, who knew first and foremost that we are all Americans, and that we can question each other's ideas without questioning each other's love of country, and that our task, working together, is to constantly widen the circle of our concern so that we bequeath the American dream to future generations.

I believe we can be better. Those who died here, those who saved lives here - they help me believe. We may not be able to stop all evil in the world, but I know that how we treat one another is entirely up to us. I believe that for all our imperfections, we are full of decency and goodness, and that the forces that divide us are not as strong as those that unite us.

That's what I believe, in part because that's what a child like Christina Taylor Green believed. Imagine: here was a young girl who was just becoming aware of our democracy; just beginning to understand the obligations of citizenship; just starting to glimpse the fact that someday she too might play a part in shaping her nation's future. She had been elected to her student council; she saw public service as something exciting, something hopeful. She was off to meet her congresswoman, someone she was sure was good and important and might be a role model. She saw all this through the eyes of a child, undimmed by the cynicism or vitriol that we adults all too often just take for granted.

I want us to live up to her expectations. I want our democracy to be as good as she imagined it. All of us - we should do everything we can to make sure this country lives up to our

children's expectations.

Christina was given to us on September 11th, 2001, one of 50 babies born that day to be pictured in a book called "Faces of Hope." On either side of her photo in that book were simple wishes for a child's life. "I hope you help those in need," read one. "I hope you know all of the words to the National Anthem and sing it with your hand over your heart. I hope you jump in rain puddles."

If there are rain puddles in heaven, Christina is jumping in them today. And here on Earth, we place our hands over our hearts, and commit ourselves as Americans to forging a country that is forever worthy of her gentle, happy spirit.

May God bless and keep those we've lost in restful and eternal peace. May He love and watch over the survivors. And may He bless the United States of America."

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**EHUD BARAK, ISRAEL DEFENSE MINISTER,
QUITS LABOR PARTY**

Josef Federman

Huffington Post, January 17, 2011

Israeli Defense Minister Ehud Barak abruptly announced Monday that he was leaving the Labor Party--dividing the movement that dominated Israeli politics for decades and setting off a chain reaction that cast new doubts over already troubled peace efforts with the Palestinians.

The split in the iconic party that led Israel to independence did not appear to threaten the majority of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's coalition. Barak, a former prime minister and military chief, will stay in the ruling coalition with four followers who joined him.

But Labor's eight remaining members, who had been pushing him to leave the government because of the impasse in peace talks, were expected to withdraw. With a smaller but more unified majority and rid of these dissenting voices, the government could find it easier to dig in on hard-line positions.

Labor has been the sole moderate party in Netanyahu's coalition, which is otherwise dominated by religious and nationalist parties that oppose major concessions to the Palestinians.

By mid-afternoon, three Labor Cabinet ministers had announced their resignations.

Barak, one of the most powerful members of the government, said he was tired of the infighting within Labor. He accused his former partners of moving too far to the dovish end of the political spectrum.

"We are embarking on a new path," he said during a news conference at Israel's parliament. "We want to wake up without having to compromise, apologize and explain."

He said the new faction--to be called Independence--would be "centrist, Zionist and democratic." He did not take any questions.

Netanyahu said the Labor shake-up made his government stronger by dashing any hopes the Palestinians might have that his coalition would fall.

"The whole world knows and the Palestinians also know this government will be here in the coming years and this is the government they must negotiate with for peace," he told a meeting of lawmakers from his ruling Likud Party.

Peace talks broke down in late September, just three weeks after they were launched, over Israel's refusal to renew an expiring settlement freeze in the West Bank and east Jerusalem. Since then, Israel has announced plans to build hundreds of homes in the West Bank and east Jerusalem.

The Palestinians refuse to negotiate until Israel freezes construction in those areas, captured by Israel in 1967 and claimed by the Palestinians for a future independent state.

The chief Palestinian negotiator, Saeb Erekat, called Barak's decision a domestic affair, but appeared skeptical of the current government's commitment to peace. "Unfortunately, the current Israeli government has chosen settlements over peace," he said. Erekat said the Palestinians this week would ask the U.N. Security Council to

condemn settlements--a long-planned move aimed at raising international pressure on Israel.

Opposition leader Tzipi Livni called on Netanyahu to dissolve his government and hold a new election. "The Netanyahu government is falling apart from the inside because of political rot and a lack of vision," she said.

Barak and Netanyahu have had a mutually beneficial relationship. The men have known each other for decades, back to the time that Barak was Netanyahu's commander in an elite commando unit in the army. As a former prime minister who offered a peace plan to the Palestinians a decade ago that called for uprooting settlements and sharing Jerusalem, Barak has given the governing coalition a well-known and relatively moderate face to deal with the international community.

At times, particularly with the U.S., Barak has served as a de facto foreign minister, replacing Foreign Minister Avigdor Lieberman, an ultranationalist who is often scorned in the West. Netanyahu, meanwhile, has given Barak extra influence in decision-making out of proportion to the relatively small size of Labor.

But Labor members have grown increasingly unhappy with Barak, accusing him of enabling Netanyahu to stall in peace efforts. Although Barak is an outspoken advocate of peace with the Palestinians, he also takes a tough line on security matters and has moved slower than his critics would like on making concessions. The Labor rebels also were uncomfortable about sitting in the same government with Lieberman, who has ridiculed the notion of reaching a peace deal and openly questions the loyalty of Israel's Arab minority.

Einat Wilf, a Labor lawmaker who joined Barak, said the defection was in the works for the past 10 days and that Netanyahu was aware of the plan.

"I think the prime minister has not received enough credit for the steps he has taken over the past two years," she told The Associated Press. "We think it is part of our responsibility to strengthen those elements." Barak's decision took other Labor lawmakers by surprise.

Cabinet Ministers Isaac Herzog, Avishai Braverman and Binyamin Ben-Eliezer quit the government just hours after Barak's announcement.

Barak "spit in the face of the party that elected him," Ben-Eliezer said.

Labor dominated Israeli politics for the country's first three decades, producing a string of prime ministers that included Israel's founding father, David Ben-Gurion, and the slain prime minister, Yitzhak Rabin. Barak himself briefly served as prime minister in 1999-2000.

But in recent years, Labor has been reduced to a midsize party, with just 13 seats in the current parliament. Many party members hold Barak responsible for the party's demise, and accuse him of abandoning its socialist and dovish ideals to remain in power.

Barak's departure from Labor resembled Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's departure from Likud in 2005 to form the centrist Kadima Party in the wake of his pullout from the Gaza Strip. Sharon suffered a stroke shortly after, but his successor, Ehud Olmert, led the party to victory in a 2006 election.

Yohanan Plesner, a Kadima lawmaker, said it was a sad day for Israel. "This is the day the Labor Party was buried for good," he said.

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MKS ON BARAK: ISRAELI POLITICS HIT NEW

LOW

Roni Sofer

Ynet News, January 17, 2011

The Knesset's House Committee on Monday approved Defense Minister Ehud Barak's request to split from the Labor Party together with four Knesset members and set up a new faction called Independence.

Likud, Yisrael Beiteinu, United Torah Judaism, Shas and Habayit Hayehudi MKs voted in favor of the move, Kadima members were opposed and a Meretz MK abstained.

Opposition Chairwoman Tzipi Livni responded to the Labor split during a Kadima faction meeting Monday afternoon, calling on the Netanyahu government to “lose the small political maneuvers” and call elections.

“This is a sad day for Israeli politics,” Livni said. “The Netanyahu government is a narrow government crumbling from the inside for lack of choice due to political decay and the absence of a vision and road. The Netanyahu government lost its legitimacy today and is living off small political maneuvers. The only way for political opportunism is elections, and Kadima is reiterating its call for elections.”

The opposition chairwoman slammed Barak and his friends, saying that “the public in Israel sees its leaders, who will sell anything for a seat, abandon their road, past and heritage for a dubious present time at the expense of the State’s future. Since the elections, Kadima has been loyal to its voters and is not selling itself for free,” she added. Livni criticized Prime Minister Netanyahu, “who is busy with his survival.”

The move was also slammed earlier by politicians from the Meretz and Kadima parties, while other lawmakers took advantage of the situation to mock the split party.

MK Nitzan Horowitz (Meretz) said, “This is a low point in Israeli politics, a cynical and miserable move. The entire Labor faction should leave the government. And now what? This new faction will get five ministers? Barak and (Prime Minister Benjamin) Netanyahu are proving that they will do anything to survive.”

MK Shlomo Molla (Kadima) complimented Netanyahu on the move. “We should say ‘well done’ to the prime minister. He succeeded, and Ehud Barak has revealed himself once again as executing the National Union’s policy. This is not what Ehud Barak was elected for. Ehud Barak was elected by sane people seeking a peace settlement. This announcement is an announcement on the end of peace. Ehud Barak is informing us today that he is joining (Foreign Minister Avigdor) Lieberman.”

His fellow party member Yohanan Plesner eulogized the Labor Party: “A party with a glorious past, which fails to honor its past. A dying party emphasizing all the bad aspects of politics. I think this is a sad day. Mr. Netanyahu will buy anything.”

MK Uri Orbach (Habayit Hayehudi) said that “the Labor Party of the past few years is a story of a long tail wagging a small dog. Today the dog decided to separate from the tail, and rightfully so. I believe this is a necessary move, but it’s not a simple day. We congratulate you. I wish you luck and foresee failure.”

Labor’s coalition partner, Yisrael Beiteinu, did not remain silent either. “We are laughing and joking, but at the end of the day it’s an unfortunate move,” said MK Robert Ilatov. “We accept this request because we usually accept political groups’ requests to split.”

MK David Rotem said that “the Labor Party has not been a party for a long time now. There are MKs in the government and Knesset who have no respect for the coalition or the commitments they have taken upon themselves.”

‘A positive change’

Labor’s senior ministers were surprised by Barak’s announcement Monday morning.

Social Affairs Minister Isaac Herzog said in response, “This is a day of positive change for the Labor Party. Barak’s retirement allows the party to renew itself and return to social work and a real political vision. I am staying in the Labor Party in order to lead it. I will bring in new and fresh forces and turn it into a real political alternative. I’ll work to convene the party’s leaders as early as today to make the required decisions.”

Industry, Trade and Labor Minister Binyamin Ben-Eliezer said, “I’m looking into the situation created. No one was ready for this. I’m not dealing with the question whether I’ll be Labor’s next chairman. I’m not leaving the Labor Party. This is my home and this is where I’ll stay.”

NEW ISRAELI FACTION LAUNCHES A REVOLUTION

Evelyn Gordon

Commentary Blog, January 17, 2011

Internal party politics aren't normally the stuff of groundbreaking revolutions. But the Israeli Labor Party's split this morning could prove to be exactly that.

Like most such splits, this one stemmed partly from personal animosities. But it also had a substantive reason: as one member of the breakaway faction explained, the government will now be able to conduct peace talks "without a stopwatch," instead of under constant threat that a key coalition faction would quit if Israel didn't capitulate to Palestinian demands.

For weeks, various Labor ministers have threatened that the party would leave the government if Israeli-Palestinian talks didn't resume soon. At yesterday's cabinet meeting, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu lashed out at these threats, saying they merely encouraged the Palestinians to up their demands and refuse to negotiate unless they are met.

This isn't the only reason for Palestinian intransigence, but it's certainly a contributory factor. Why *should* the Palestinians negotiate when they can let Israel's Labor Party do the work for them? And that's basically what Labor has been doing: demanding that Netanyahu offer ever more concessions to tempt the Palestinians back to the table, on pain of having his government collapse if he refuses. Most Labor MKs never blamed the Palestinians for the impasse or demanded any concessions of *them*; they put the onus entirely on Netanyahu.

The same is true of Israel's main opposition party, Kadima. It, too, blamed the impasse entirely on the government, giving the Palestinians a pass, and demanded more concessions only of Israel, not the Palestinians.

This behavior didn't just increase Palestinian intransigence; it also increased international pressure on and opprobrium for Israel. After all, if even members of Israel's government deemed Israel the

guilty party, why should non-Israelis doubt it?

But finally, a contingent of Israel's left has said "enough": As Israelis, it's our job to negotiate the best deal for *Israel*, not the Palestinians. And it's our job to promote *Israel's* positions overseas, not to besmirch our own country by promoting the Palestinian narrative.

Right now, it's a small contingent--five of Labor's 13 MKs--spearheaded by a widely disliked leader, Defense Minister Ehud Barak. Thus its capacity for growth is unclear. But it does give the government stability, as these five are enough to ensure its majority (especially since many of the others never voted with it anyway). So at least the government is now better positioned to fight the diplomatic battles ahead.

More important, however, five MKs from the heart of the left have openly challenged the leftist parties' destructive behavior. And if their challenge catches on, it could revolutionize Israel's diplomatic position. For while many of the reasons for Israel's growing pariah status have nothing to do with Israel, the chorus of Israelis blaming the ongoing conflict entirely on Israel clearly plays a role. If additional swathes of the left started advocating for their own country rather than its adversaries, Israel could fight back much more effectively.

There are plenty of reasons to dislike Barak and his allies. But in this effort, they deserve support from everyone who cares about Israel.



WISHFUL THINKING IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS NOT ENOUGH

Daniel S. Mariaschin (*Miami Herald*)

Highlights

- *The Palestinian leadership seems to be working on the premise of wishing a state into being, at the expense of meaningful negotiations and an agreed upon security framework.
- *Speaking of the campaign to win recognition of a Palestinian state by Latin American nations, PA President Mahmoud Abbas told AP: "These

recognitions of a Palestinian state will help us to convince the Israelis on the necessity to reach a two-state solution."

*That's disingenuous. It is not the Israelis who need convincing. At every turn Israel has demonstrated a willingness to sit down to negotiate, while the Palestinians have followed the path of delays and deferrals.

*A Palestinian state can only be created through direct talks between Israel and Palestinian representatives. In collecting endorsements, Abbas circumvents that step and gives the Palestinian side license to evade meaningful negotiations.

*In declaring a state absent negotiations, the international community is sending the clear message to the Palestinians that there is no need for them to make any compromise: outsiders will do all the heavy lifting, and Israel will be left with a *fait accompli*. Such false hope - that the Palestinian side does not have to make any compromises - can only doom the process.

*Nearly 20 years ago, the Oslo Accords established a framework for all future negotiations. A key component - which the Palestinians agreed to - is that a Palestinian state would be created through talks between the parties. Pushing Israel out of the mix is a blatant violation of this agreement, which has been the guiding force in a side-by-side solution for nearly two decades.

The writer is executive vice president of B'nai B'rith International.



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SPRING LECTURE SERIES**

1. Tuesday, March 8, 2011, 7:15PM
LEFRAK CONCERT HALL

**“Jewish Politics in Postwar America and
the Rise of the Neoconservatives”**

Discussant: Professor Nancy Sinkoff, Associate Professor of Jewish Studies and History at Rutgers, and Chair of the Department of Jewish Studies. Author of *Out of the Shtetl: Making Jews Modern in the Polish Borderlands*, a study of the Jewish Enlightenment in late eighteenth-century Poland. The lecture will explore the impact of East European Jewish history on the political culture of post-war American Jews.

This lecture has been made possible by the Rabbi Israel Mowshowitz Endowment Fund.

Free and Open to the Public.

2. Sunday, March 13, 2011, 1:30 PM
STUDENT UNION, 4TH FLOOR

**“Toward a Jewish Theology
of Pluralism”**

Discussant: Dr. Arnold M. Eisen,
Chancellor of the Jewish Theological Seminary

Dr. Eisen is one of the world’s foremost experts on American Judaism, and prior to becoming Chancellor, he served in the Department of Religious Studies at Stanford University. Dr. Eisen will be joined by a panel of Queens College students from the Center of Ethnic, Racial & Religious Understanding.

Free and Open to the Public.

Coffee and kosher refreshments will be served.

3. Thursday, March 24, 2011, 7 PM
LEFRAK CONCERT HALL

**“Israeli–Palestinian Peace:
Solution or Delusion.”**

Panel:

Dr. Moshe Halbertal, renowned Israeli scholar of Jewish Thought and Philosophy at Hebrew University and Gruss Professor at New York University School of Law. Currently a visiting Professor at Harvard Law School, and a recipient of the Bruno Award of the Rothschild Foundation and the Goldstein-Goren Book Award.

Ghaith al Omari, Advocacy Director at the American Task Force on Palestine (ATF), former Director of the International Relations Department in the Office of the Palestinian President; and lead Palestinian drafter of the Geneva Initiative.

Robert Danin, former member of the White House/National Security Council, Director of the Levant and Israeli-Palestinian Affairs.

This program has been made possible by the Ernest and Marta Schwarcz Endowment Fund
Free and Open to the Public.

4. Sunday, March 27, 2011, 2 PM
LEFRAK CONCERT HALL

“VARIETY SHOW”

Starring comedian/author Joel Chasnoff, and singing sensations Esty Tzabar Crisona, Dmitri Shevelev, and Kreshnik Zhabjaku.

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All attendees invited to a special reception following the performance, sponsored by Elsi Levy. Endowed by Elsi Levy and the Levy Family.

The following essay was written by Lois Greene Stone, whose father was President of the Flushing Jewish Center in 1951 and whose mother was President of the Ladies Guild (predecessor of the Sisterhood). Married in 1956, she now lives in Pittsford, NY. The essay is being published with her permission.

A Time to Speak, A Time to Remain Silent
By Lois Greene Stone

In 1990, I stood in front of the two-story brick house that had been converted into a synagogue. "I was married in there," I pointed to the Flushing Jewish Center, now covered in places with chalked-on graffiti.

"Oh," said my twenty-seven year old son. David. "Did this area look this," he paused trying to carefully consider his words, "way when you were growing up? Even the synagogue looks like it's in poor shape."

Pretending not to hear, rather than explain that this part of Queens County was an original pretty suburbia not the currently depressed area, I uttered, "See. Look inside through the glass in the front door. See. There's my father's name as President of the Temple in 1951."

"Didn't he die soon after that?" My son inquired, noting he was glad he'd been raised 400 miles northwest. Looking at a name was meaningless as he never knew his dead grandfather.

"Yes," I whispered. "Oh, David. Once there was a garden beside the shul. I guess the land was valuable and sold."

"Did you live far from here when you were growing up?"

"It was a long walk during the High Holidays. And we had to cross over the railroad tracks on an overpass, which meant going up a steep flight of stone steps to go over the bridge, then descending a steep flight."

I touched the small glass in the locked front door. "So much I remember." My mind wandered to a post-war High Holiday. Inside my head, I recalled a family walk to this very synagogue, but now putting myself into each person's thoughts as if I were writing a play:

"Lois is getting older." My mother squeezed my dad's free hand; his other was clasping a tiny velvet bag with a star of David embroidered on one side.

"We can actually share feelings now with her. We're lucky watching our daughter grow up." My father nodded his head yet his hat didn't shake. "Itchy wool." I thought and pushed up my suit-jacket sleeves until swelling of arm muscles stopped the rise. "Stupid to wear on a hot 1947 September day." Aloud I uttered, "Can't I take off my jacket?"

My dad viewed his family as they walked the ten blocks to synagogue services. "No, honey. You look like a princess this way."

"Perspired Princess. It's always hot in New York now. Why can't people wear summer things!" I didn't like my father's answer.

"New Year is 'new', and autumn is part of the process. This year you even have a new skirt length." My mother commented and touched the folds of my dress. Platform shoes with ankle straps hugged my feet but the dress almost touched my ankles.

"Looks like I'm standing in a hole. Why do I have to wear this just because some foreign designer sketched it on his pad?"

"Oh, it's so good to have the war over and have people show it with material. No more skimpy skirts to save yardage; now we can have yards and yards to put into ballerina length." My mother touched her velvet outfit and smiled. Her reddish-purple lipstick made her teeth look very white.

"I'd rather skimp," I muttered.

I wished Jews followed a calendar like everyone else where New Years is December 31/January 1. I knew the lunar calendar made more sense and was much, much older than the one everybody used, but it was not the one everybody used! And I hated being dressed for winter. I missed my usual purse, which I couldn't carry today, but my father cradled a little zippered case embossed with gold stars.

Crossing to Northern Boulevard, a shirtless boy whizzed by on his bicycle and called, "How come the gas chamber missed you?"

"Don't answer," My mother sharply said. "Don't even show him you heard those words."

"He's half a block ahead, already," I stated. "I hate this." I fingered the hem of my suit jacket. During the war, walking back and forth to P.S. #32, I could pretend it didn't matter that Jews weren't invited to "class" parties. Those awful winter icy snow balls aimed at my bare calf muscles severed skin and seeped blood into my rubber boots. I held in my tears until I got home.

"How I remember those years," sighed my mother.

"Why couldn't I just once have fought back?" I questioned. My face took on an intense expression. One tiny pimple had surfaced on otherwise unblemished pale skin.

"It wouldn't have accomplished anything and you'd only have gotten hurt," replied my dad. Tiny moist beads on his forehead indicated that he was warm wearing an undershirt, a silk long-sleeved French cuff dress shirt, and a double-breasted heavy wool suit. His suspenders dug into one shoulder.

"But I WAS hurt." Inside I screamed from Jewish rejection and outside I had hot blood pouring from icy legs. My white socks caught the flow and stains stayed as a reminder. I could not accept my father's words.

"Lois, once you get to high school, you'll be known

for your artistic talent, leads in plays." My mother tried to brighten the subject.

"Sure. I'll SHOW them! My name will choke them on everything from posters to plays to running for school office, and they'll even have to listen to my speeches in assembly." I was angry.

"Holidays are meant to start evaluation of priorities and values." My mother spoke quietly. Did she wonder if the move from Brooklyn to a large house in a neighborhood that was mostly German Catholic had indeed been wise? This suburban part of Queens County never welcomed Jewish people.

"But I hate the mockery of religion. All religions. So much bad's been done blanketed under cover of religion. Oh, Mom."

I brushed my limp blond hair behind my ears, "so many people come to services today just to be noticed. They drive to 169th Street, park, then walk to 171st pretending all the while they didn't drive."

I was argumentative and seemed caught up in it. "Those fur coats in this heat are even crazier than the stuff I'm wearing. Every time we have to stand during services, fur coats get wrapped around shoulders."

"Lois, Lois, don't judge by one's trappings. When you're older, you'll see how much is part of the act of putting on airs or part of covering up pains. Don't judge our traditions by what you see others do because you don't know their real intentions." My mother tried to explain.

I was defensive. "I wish it wasn't so hard to be Jewish."

"Age old comment," My mother whispered to my father. Their eyes met for a moment.

"Just think of all your accomplishments because you are Jewish and spent these elementary school years with the same twenty-five or so people who

made you a non-person." My father quietly preached. "Maybe those who park today on 169th Street can't walk so far but don't want to call attention to it or insult the other members of the congregation."

"It's just too much grey." I said. "Black and white is easier to live with."

"Living isn't black and white and you know this, Lois. So now what's the problem?" My dad asked trying to conceal irritation. "You are special and you are able to show it."

I sighed, and released my fine strands from the place behind my ears. To myself I said, "I'm still the Jewish outsider . . . a survivor from a war fought 3,000 miles away, as the boy on the bicycle reminded."

I decided that this discussion was better if dropped. Maybe getting older was causing me to think what can/cannot be resolved or to even continue talking about. My blue-green eyes made contact with my father's pale blue ones. I hesitated, trying to accept that life is grey rather than black and white. I lowered my gaze, smiled, then quipped, "My problem is wearing a calf length wool suit on an 82-degree New York day."

"Mom. Mom!" My son shouted. "Can we go now? You seem to be in a trance." David touched my shoulder. "I don't want to hurt your feelings, but I'd really like to get out of *here*. If there's something you want to talk about, or maybe show me the house you grew up in, then okay. But, can we do it already?"

I felt I was still the young girl knowing what can and cannot be resolved or talked about, only now it was with my younger son rather than my parents. First I was an outsider as a Jew, currently, just an outsider from this community. Looking at the squiggle chalk marks on the brick facade made me realize that my childhood Temple was a place these non-Jewish townspeople still didn't respect. But my adult "I" respected myself, and was secure with my Jewishness.

"Mom?"

"It's okay. Nothing," I sighed. "There isn't anything I need to talk about. I guess I was really grown up in 1947; private joke. Come. Let's skip the house I grew up in. Mixed memories." I outwardly smiled, but thought of the famous line from Ecclesiastes about nothing being new under the sun, took a last yet loving look at the brick house/shul, and then began walking to the rented car parked on the corner.



In case you miss reading one or more of the Torah portions for February, here are some brief summaries - Rabbi Solomon

Terumah - 2/5/11

Summary: With Parashat Terumah, the major theme of the rest of the Book of Exodus is now introduced. Great detail is given about the construction of the Mishkan (Tabernacle), the portable sanctuary that was the centre of the Israelites' religious life during the years they wandered in the wilderness. The Mishkan was "God's dwelling place amongst the people," where sacrifices were offered and God communicated with the people through Moses and the High Priest.

Very detailed instructions are given to Moses as to how the Mishkan should be built and what materials are to be used. Included among the Klay Kodesh ("holy implements") are the Menorah, the altar for sacrifices, the Ark, and the Holy of Holies. The portion begins with God asking Moses to ask the Israelites to bring Terumah, usually translated as "gifts," meaning something like "contributions" or "donations," but they are to be freewill offerings.

Tetzaveh - 2/12/11

Summary: We continue with the theme that defines most of the rest of the Book of Exodus: the construction and institution of the Mishkan, the portable sanctuary, that was the place of worship for the Israelites and the House of God among the people during the years of wandering in the wilderness. Parashat Tetzaveh specifically focuses on the Cohanim, the Priests who perform the rituals and sacrifices on behalf of the people. Great detailed descriptions are given of the complex ritual garments of the Cohen Gadol (the High Priest) - regally resplendent in gold and adornments of precious stones. Details are also given for the seven day period of sacrifices and rituals required to consecrate the priests for service. The Parasha ends with a short description of the golden altar upon which incense was offered and how it too is to be consecrated.

Ki Tissa - 2/19/11

Summary: Parashat Ki Tissa continues with discussion about the building of the Mishkan, (the Tabernacle). The portion begins with instructions for taking a census of the people. Each Israelite adult over the age of twenty must contribute half a shekel, to be used in support of the worship in the Mishkan. Next, there is description of the additional holy implements that need to be created: a copper washstand, the anointing oil and the incense. God then identifies Bezalel, a man endowed with "divine spirit of skill," as the chief artisan and architect of the Mishkan. But, before construction actually begins, God reminds Moses to tell the people about the importance of maintaining Shabbat. At the conclusion of this passage, God gives Moses the original set of the two Tablets, which are inscribed directly by God, and Moses returns to the people.

The Torah's focus then switches down the mountain to the people, and jumps back a bit in time. The people, upset at Moses's delay up on the mountain, approach Aaron to make them an idol, and Aaron complies by creating a molten calf for the people to

worship. Both God and Moses become angry with the people, and, upon his return, Moses smashes the Tablets and, together with the Levites, resumes control of the people, and 3,000 are put to death. God threatens to wipe out the people, but, despite his anger and words of rebuke, Moses prays on the people's behalf, and God relents. Moses then returns up the mountain and beseeches God to reaffirm the Covenant. Moses carves a new second set of Tablets, and before he returns, he is treated to a viewing of the Divine Presence. God does reaffirm the Covenant along with all its ritual and ethical implications.

VaYakhel - 2/26/11

Summary: The two short parashiyot of VaYakhel and Pekudei are usually read together. Parashat VaYakhel seems a bit repetitive, telling the story of the actual building of the Mishkan. If it seems familiar, it is because it describes the people actually putting into effect the instructions we've already heard before. At Moses's bidding, the people bring all the materials required and the craftsmen begin to do the work. But, before the work even begins, everyone is reminded again to maintain Shabbat, emphasizing especially the prohibition against kindling fire.

Pekudei - 3/5/11

Summary: Parashat Pekudei is the final portion of the Book of Exodus. Pekudei begins with Moses's full accounting of all the materials used in the construction of the Mishkan. He first inventories the building materials themselves, and then continues with the vestments of the Priests. Once all the work is completed according to God's instructions, Moses inspects the Mishkan and blesses the people. The Mishkan is then assembled for the first time, and the Divine Presence, manifest as a cloud, fills the Sanctuary, serving as a guide for the people.

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
FEBRUARY 2011 SHEVAT – ADAR I 5771						
						
		1 ²⁷ Shevat	2 ²⁸ Shevat	3 ²⁹ Shevat	4 ³⁰ Shevat Rosh Chodesh Adar I- Day 1  4:58	5 ¹ Adar I Rosh Chodesh Adar I-Day 2 Terumah
6	7	8	9	10	11  5:07	12 ⁸ Adar I Tetzaveh
13	14	15	16	17	18  5:15	19 ¹⁵ Adar I Ki Tissa
20	21	22	23	24	25  5:23	26 ²² Adar I Vayakhel
27	28					