

WESTCHESTER COMMUNITY FOR HUMANISTIC JUDAISM

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Editor: Jeannine Simon

From your editor:

It is time to resume our Newsletter. The New Year is upon us: 2020 has a resonance. Big things happening; better vision? A hundred years ago, prohibition started, which led to many events, including the Chicago gangsters and the fortune of the Bronfman family.

This is what I started writing in January. What happened was coronavirus. And Zoom. The bad, the very bad, and yet some lemonade came out of this dreadful lemon. Including regular Shabbat meetings with Rabbi Frank on Zoom. Jonathan Turovsky might blow the shofar for Rosh Hashana on Zoom.

We have two forthcoming programs:
(See the ads later in the Newsletter)

Israeli Cooking: A Jewish Iraqi Brunch
On Tuesday, July 28 from 12 to 1 pm.
To register, go to [www. wjccouncil.org](http://www.wjccouncil.org)

Jewish Heroes
On Saturday, August 1 at 7:15 pm
Hosted by Dmitry Turovsky.
Call at 914 713 8828 or e-mail: aristophil@yahoo.com

Rabbi's Corner

NATURE'S WISDOM

In the wonderful book "Sabbath" by Wayne Miller, there is a story of a South American tribe that embarked on a long journey. They walked for a few days, then stopped and made camp for a few more days before resuming their expedition. When asked why they stayed in camp for so long, they replied, "We need to stop and rest so that our spirits can catch up with our bodies."

There is a rhythm to life that nature obeys. Tides ebb and flow in monthly patterns due to the moon's gravitational pull. The timing of a cricket's chirp is linked to the air temperature. The instinctive wisdom of birds tells them to migrate to find more plentiful food sources in warmer climates.

Scientists have even discovered that sunflowers have a circadian rhythm. Young sunflowers begin their day facing east, move their heads as the sun crosses the sky and end their day facing west. This phenomenon, called heliotropism, helps promote a growth hormone in the plants. When scientists staked a sunflower so that it could not move, the plant's growth was diminished.

Perhaps we can learn a lesson from nature and take the time to listen to our own rhythms. We have the same connection to this wisdom. The innate intelligence within us knows when to move forward and when to stop; when to play and when to rest. Honoring the tempo of our lives makes us more productive, less stressed and happier.

- Sally Robbins

Kol tov,
Rabbi Frank

Diaspora 425-1492

Expulsions and Persecutions

It was in 1348 and the following year that the fury reached its height. The Black Death was devastating Europe, sweeping away everywhere one-third or more of the population. It was the greatest scourge of its kind in history. No natural explanation could be found. Responsibility for it, as for any other mysterious visitation, was automatically laid on the Jews. The ridiculousness of the charge should have been apparent even to fourteenth century credulity, for the plague raged virulently even in those places, such as England, where the Christian population was absolutely unadulterated, and elsewhere the Jews suffered with the rest, though their hygienic manner of life and their superior medical knowledge may have reduced their mortality. It was when the outbreak had reached Savoy that the charges became properly formulated in all their grotesque horror. At Chillon, a certain Jew "confessed" under torture, that an elaborate plot had been evolved in the south of France by certain of his co-religionists, who had concocted a poison out of spiders, frogs, lizards, human flesh, the hearts of Christians, and consecrated Hosts. The powder made from this infernal brew had been distributed amongst the various communities, to be deposited in the wells from which the Christians drew their water. To this the terrible contagion which was sweeping Europe was due! When the storm had died down, a large number of the cities thought better of the vows made in the heat of the moment never to harbor Jews again in their midst, and summoned them back again to supply the local financial requirements. The period which followed was one of comparative quiescence, if only for lack of victims.

Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews*

Amos Oz

The young nation of Israel has witnessed in recent years a dwindling of its founding generation — from the passing of statesmen like Shimon Peres to the death last week of novelist and political activist Amos Oz. Oz was 79; Israel is but 70. Oz was old enough to witness Israel's fight for independence, and now his death turns the page on yet another chapter of its improbable resurrection — with an old language that became new again.

Oz had a lot to do with that. He imbued Hebrew with a literary style and gave it a novelistic voice. The author of 40 books, including 14 novels, and hundreds of articles and essays, many of which delved into the messy politics of the Middle East, Oz was Israel's first great man of letters, an old-school public intellectual in a brand new nation with many jobs to fill — from the brawny to the brainy. Those patriarchs and matriarchs made the saying “next year in Jerusalem” both a reality and redundancy. With little natural background, they willed themselves to become equal parts poets, farmers and soldiers.

Oz was a living embodiment of those multiple duties. After his mother's suicide, which occurred the year before his bar mitzvah, he came of age on a kibbutz and fought in two of Israel's wars. He then published acclaimed novels such as “My Michael” and “Black Box,” as well as the literary memoir “A Tale of Love and Darkness,” that captured the finer points of domestic Israeli life, the yearnings and sexual passions, and the madness of a people who reinvented themselves so soon after nearly being annihilated en masse.

Oz, through the 45 languages in which his novels were translated, introduced the world to Israelis in all of their rambunctious, high-strung, pattering essence — the kibbutz kibitzers, the brave sabra boys, the Mizrahi misfits, the lost European intellectuals trying to scrape out a life of the mind in a barren desert.

The Start-up Nation had to start somewhere, and Oz was not only there at the beginning, he also captured the mood, rhythms and sorrow of its people for nearly every decade of Israel's existence.

But there was more. He was one of the founders of Peace Now. Indeed, he was among the first, almost immediately after the euphoria of the Six-Day War, to attribute a doomsday prophesy to the capturing of Arab land. In his writings and public statements, Oz spoke of a moral corruption that could only be corrected by a two-state solution. No longer was he a mere fiction writer; he had become the conscience of a nation and a pesky activist in its political culture.

But now, so many years after the failed Oslo Accords, with multiple wars in Gaza and Lebanon, ISIS and Hezbollah in Syria, a nuclear Iran, and intifadas of the suicide-bombing, mortar-throwing, car-ramming, knife-stabbing and incendiary kite-flying variety, Israelis have largely abandoned the aspirations of Peace Now. The vision for Israel that Oz helped pioneer had suddenly become anachronistic, a byproduct of a bygone, hope-filled era.

Some of Oz's later books dealt with issues of betrayal, fanaticism and zealotry — as if he was taking on his critics, Palestinians and even himself. But no one would have expected what Oz told a German interviewer in the summer of 2014 when asked about Israel's military conduct during the Gaza War, and the killing of Palestinian civilians standing shoulder to shoulder with Hamas terrorists:

"What would you do if your neighbor across the street sits down on the balcony, puts his little boy on his lap, and starts shooting machine-gun fire into your nursery? What would you do if your neighbor across the street digs a tunnel from his nursery to your nursery in order to blow up your home or in order to kidnap your family?"

The founder of Peace Now, who never gave up on the dream, gazed at Gaza not with the romanticism of a novelist but through the eyes of a protective father. And to the surprise of many, despite the civilian dead, he acknowledged Israel's true moral dilemma and the tragic dimensions of this theater of war. An insistence on peace — that it must come "Now"! — is not a sustainable political strategy when peacemakers are nowhere to be found and martyrs are aplenty.

*Thane Rosenbaum, novelist, essayist and law professor, JTA
December 2018*

Rabbi Frank Tamburello

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For general information or questions

Please contact Dmitry Turovsky,

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or search our website, wchj.org



Jewish Heroes (and Not So Heroic)

This virtual program will be presented by Susan and Art Zuckerman.

To register for this free event, hosted by Dmitry Turovsky, please call him at 914 713-8828 or email aristophil@yahoo.com, and we will send you a link.

ISRAELI COOKING WITH NADAV

Our Westchester Shaliach

Tuesday, July 28th - 12 to 1 pm

To register for this event please go to our website at
www.wjcouncil.org

On the Menu - A Jewish Iraqi Brunch of

Ih'jeh—an Iraqi Frittata and
Sabich Plate—Jewish Iraqi street food

To cook along with Nadav please have ready in advance:

Ih'Jeh

2 red potatoes—big
1 medium sized onion
Parsley bunch
4 large eggs
3 tablespoons of white flour
1 teaspoon of salt
1/2 teaspoon black pepper
A pinch of cumin
1/2 teaspoon of Paprika
Ovenproof frying pan

Sabich

1 sliced Eggplant
1 yellow potato, boiled and
peeled
3 hardboiled eggs
2 small chopped cucumber
2 small chopped tomatoes
2 pickles



Nadav will teach you how to cook these dishes from his family's cuisine in Israel, give you some history about the dishes and explain the importance to him and his family.

