

Thinking Out Loud

By Albert Schlossberg



Chicken Little

"What's the matter with unsere Yehudim, unsere rabbonim?" The question was posed to me by a good friend, a rabbi. My friend went on to tell me that he had been called by a colleague and asked to join in a public demonstration of protest against the recent appearance of Rabbi Meir Kahane. In strong words and animated conversation, my rabbi friend repeated his two-word response to the invitation, "Get lost!"

I've been about as public in my personal, private and organizational opposition to the Jewish Defense League as anyone could be. I've bearded that proverbial lion in its den by participating in radio shows with officials of the JDL. I've parried the darts and arrows of Kahane's supporters as they blasted me for my condemnation of JDL tactics. In my columns, on speaking dates and in public and private conversations I've made it clear that I am in diametric, philosophical opposition to the programs, tactics and rhetoric of the American and Israeli versions of the JDL. So just in case you didn't know it before, you know it now. I believe that Rabbi Meir Kahane is a brilliant demagogue but dead-wrong! Forked though it may be, he has a silver tongue. Convinced, or self-deluded, in the rightness of his philosophy, Kahane, like a pied piper, has created a small band of zealots who are convinced that he is a modern prophet. Meir Kahane is a false prophet and he's going nowhere!

Back to my rabbi friend and the invitation to demonstrate against Kahane's appearance at the Brookline High School. Some reactions. I wasn't asked to join in the demonstration to counter Kahane's speaking date. Had I been asked I'd have reiterated my rabbi friend's answer, but my language may not have been as polite.

What about public reaction to the Kahane presence in the Boston area? I decided to do a seat-of-the-pants survey. I asked a simple question, "What do you think of Rabbi Kahane's policies and statements on Arabs and Jews in Israel?" Almost without exception the response to my query was "Huh?" After the indication of incredulity had worn off I'd ask if they knew that Kahane was in town and was to speak at the Brookline High School that night. Reaction? "So what?"

O.K., so a good number of my test sample were non-Jews. But on the day before Kahane's appearance, local radio stations had carried the news of Kahane's forthcoming speaking date. Ever the opportunist, the JDL leader called a press conference and the media turned out in full strength. Kahane had a field day! In his inimitable style he thrust and parried as the assembled media mavens played Abbott to his Costello. They became exactly what he wanted them to be, an amplifier of his message.

After the Kahane press conference the media people did exactly what they always do, they rushed to "Jewish leaders" for comment. The "Jewish leaders" also did exactly what Kahane wanted them to do, they responded, on the record, with vituperative condemnation of Rabbi Kahane. From radio station to radio station, from T.V. channel to T.V. channel newscast, Jews were heard and quoted calling another Jew a "racist."

Since, judging by my rump-survey, non-Jews were uninterested and had tuned out any tentative information on Kahane I decided to concentrate on Jewish reaction to the staged controversy. Except for those Jewish friends who are dyed-in-the-wool news hounds who check the news-temperature readings every day to see if it's a good day or a bad day in the press, for Jews, the response was ho-hum. Most considered Kahane's Brookline visit a non-event, not worth any excitement or aggravation.

Yet, there's a different dimension to the organized Jewish reaction to the Kahane incident. Question, what's Jewish about rabbis and other Jewish activists joining together — even if physically separate — with Arab and non-Arab supporters of the PLO in public condemnation of a rabbi and his Jewish followers? As shown on television, the signs carried by the publicly self-identified supporters of the PLO and the Arab positions were little different from similar signs displayed by students and PLO supporters in Hebron, Birzeit University and other Mideast trouble-spots.

Where were these same Jewish demonstrators when Jesse Jackson spoke at a school in Framingham? Did they, or would they have joined with members of the JDL to demonstrate against Louis Farrakhan? How can my Jewish friends defend their participation in a demonstration that was as close as one could get to "prior restraint"? No matter how much they may disagree with Rabbi Meir Kahane and his JDL followers, doesn't he have a right to present and defend his position at a public or private podium? Would my Jewish demonstrator friends have mounted a similar effort against the American Nazis when the rag-tag pseudo-stormtroopers marched in Skokie, Illinois?

Or is it something more subtle? Can we detect a bit of titter? Is it possible that my Jewish demonstrator friends were

Canada Also to Investigate Attempted Entry by Mengele

By Michael Solomon

MONTREAL (JTA) — Prime Minister Brian Mulroney announced last Thursday that he has ordered an urgent investigation of reports that Dr. Josef Mengele, the Auschwitz "Angel of Death," applied for entry into Canada in 1962.

He told Parliament that he has directed Justice Minister John Crosbie and Solicitor General Elmer MacKay to sift intelligence records for evidence that Mengele, one of the most notorious Nazi war criminals still at large, sought a visa at the Canadian Consulate in Buenos Aires under the alias Joseph Menke. There is no knowledge that he ever entered Canada.

MacKay, speaking after the Prime Minister, said all restrictions on the publication of incriminating documents now in the possession of the U.S. State Department in Washington will be lifted for the Canadian government so that a thorough investigation can be conducted.

OSI to Investigate
In Washington, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs Elliott Abrams said on Jan. 24 that the Reagan Administration agrees that the Justice Department's Office of Special Investigations (OSI) look into reports that Mengele was arrested by American authorities in the U.S.-occupied zone of Vienna in 1947 and then released.

This was indicated in Army intelligence documents obtained under the Freedom of Information Act by the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles. The documents reportedly mention that Mengele may have sought entry to Canada from Argentina under an alias in 1962 and that U.S. intelligence was informed of his visa application.

The U.S. reportedly supplied the Canadians with information about Mengele but subsequent follow-up, if any, has not been revealed. U.S. intelligence has established that Menke was an alias used by Mengele.

"Repugnant and Repulsive"
Mulroney told Parliament in Ottawa that the idea of Canada as a refuge for Mengele



Mengele — The Angel of Death

was "repugnant and repulsive in the extreme to our citizenship."

Canada's former Solicitor General Robert Kaplan, now a Liberal MP for Toronto, said, "It looks as if he has slipped through the fingers of Canadian officials. I'd like to know why. I'd like to know how high it went in the Canadian government," he told reporters. However, he said he doubted Mengele actually entered Canada.

The West German government issued a warrant for Mengele's arrest in 1959, but there is no evidence that Canada's Department of External Affairs informed Bonn of his whereabouts in 1962.

In 1966, the Canadian Jewish Congress submitted a report to the Ottawa government on Nazi war criminals hiding in Canada. The list contained about 14 names, mostly of Estonian and Lithuanian origin. But no action has been taken to denaturalize the suspects and the statute of limitations has since precluded it.

Mass. Leaders Promote Prejudice Awareness

Advocate Report

Plans for "A World of Difference," a year-long prejudice awareness and reduction project, were unveiled last Wednesday by the Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith, the Greater Boston Civil Rights Coalition, Shawmut Banks, and WCVB-TV, Channel 5.

The project's centerpiece will be the creation of a prejudice reduction curriculum for grades 6 through 12 with special emphasis on grades 6 through 9. Teacher curriculum guides and student study guides will be offered to each

of the state's public, private, and parochial schools. In addition, highly focused media outreach, primarily through Channel 5 programming, will be used to educate the public about prejudice, with the intent of reducing the level of these attitudes.

The project was introduced last Wednesday at a news conference in Boston attended by Massachusetts Governor Michael S. Dukakis, Boston Mayor Raymond L. Flynn, and a representative of Boston Archbishop, Bernard Law, all of whom expressed their support of the

saying, to their and my non-Jewish friends, "Kahane is not our kind of a Jew." Are we so insecure, even here in the United States, that we have to put on sackcloth and ashes simply because a Jew, yes a rabbi, mouths positions which are anathema to the most fundamental principles of Judaism? Do we really believe that intelligent non-Jewish Americans don't know that in Israel and in America Rabbi Kahane and the JDL have failed, dismally, to muster even a modicum of support for their positions. Have we forgotten that Kahane's party list garnered less than 2 percent of the Israeli vote and that share included Arabs who voted for Kahane simply to embarrass Israel?

In the days before Meir Kahane spoke to an anticipated small gathering of followers and curiosity seekers, some Jewish Chicken Littles crisscrossed the town to tell us that because Kahane was going to speak the sky would fall in. Then, less than 24 hours after the speech, images of Kahane faded from the TV tubes and not even an echo of his words was heard on radio. On the morning after the night of Kahane, even the *Boston Globe* chose to bury the story on page 27. Chicken Little was wrong, again!

Prison Movie Wins Israeli "Oscar"

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israel's version of the "Oscar" has gone to the locally produced movie "Beyond the Walls," a story of Jews and Arabs in prison. Uri Barabash was cited as best director and the two principal performers, Arnon Zadok and Mohammad Bekri, shared the best actor award. The film itself was a box office hit. Israel's "Oscar" was instituted 10 years ago.

NEFTY Hosts Conclave

The Temple Sinai teen youth group, the Sinaites, will host a NEFTY Conclave, a weekend program, from February 1 to February 3 at Temple Sinai, Brookline. More than 80 teens from NEFTY (Northeast Federation of Temple Youth) youth groups located in Laconia and Manchester, NH; Lowell, Chelmsford, Westborough, Newton, Plymouth, and Boston, Massachusetts, will participate in the event.

Under the direction of advisor Dr. Jeremy Wolfe, an MIT professor, and with the assistance of Rabbi Frank Waldorf, the Brookline ninth through twelfth graders have been organizing a program combining teachings from the Torah, Bible and current religious leaders since last summer.

The Tu bi-Shvat Dimension

Nurturing the Tree of Life

By Nehemia Polen
Special to the Advocate

To judge by our classical sources, Tu bi-Shvat barely counts as even a minor holiday. The Talmud (*Rosh Hashanah* 2a and 14a) mentions the fifteenth day of the month of Shvat as the day which initiates a new agricultural year with respect to the tithing of fruit trees, but specifies no liturgy, ritual, or celebration to mark the day.

There is little reference to Tu bi-Shvat in the early medieval authorities, and even Rabbi Joseph Karo's *Shulhan Arukh* merely notes that one may not proclaim a fast on Tu bi-Shvat, and that penitential prayers are omitted on that day (see *Shulhan Arukh Orach Hayyim* 131:6 and 572:3).

That's it as far as *halakha*. But where law stops, custom begins, and it has become a custom to observe Tu bi-Shvat as a festive day, by eating species of fruit which flourish in the land of Israel, such as dates, figs and carob, known in Yiddish as *bokser*.

With the dramatic rise of Jewish agricultural activity in the Holy Land over the last century, Tu bi-Shvat has taken on an added dimension as the Jewish Arbor Day, devoted to planting trees and restoring forests destroyed through centuries of neglect and plunder. Most recently, American Jews — with their interest in celebrations, especially those with a mystical flavor — have popularized the Tu bi-Shvat Seder, a liturgy based on kabbalistic themes.

The Tu bi-Shvat Seder is reminiscent of the Passover Seder, with readings selected from the Bible and Midrash, along with four cups of wine and fruits to be eaten in a specific order. The Seder sets up a correspondence between the Kabbalah's Four Worlds and certain categories of fruit: fruits which require protective, inedible outer shells, such as nuts, correspond to the lowest World. As the Seder progresses, the focus shifts to a succession of higher Worlds. In most contemporary versions of the Tu bi-Shvat Seder, the mystical overtones are muted, and the event serves primarily as an opportunity for celebration, song, and study on biblical and ecological themes.

Trees have always loomed large in Jewish religious consciousness. The Bible begins with the story of the Tree of Knowledge and the Tree of Life. When Scripture wishes to praise the righteous individual, it does so with a comparison to a tree. In rabbinic literature especially, trees are endowed with human qualities. One beautiful passage speaks of trees in love:

Rabbi Takhuma said: There was once a palm tree in Hamethan which would not bear fruit. They grafted it and still it would bear no fruit. A palm-gardener said to them: She sees a palm tree at Jericho and longs for it. So they brought a portion of it and grafted it, and it bore fruit immediately.

(Gen. R. 41:1; Num. R. 3:1)

So, the Midrash concludes, are the righteous: their longing is for the Holy One, blessed be He.

But trees can also feel fear:

When iron was created, the trees began to tremble. G-d said to them, "Why do you tremble? If none of you



allows your wood to supply a handle for the axe, you will never be harmed."

(Gen. R. 5:9)

One can hardly imagine a more pointed warning against the human propensity for self-destructive behavior.

The same midrashic text tells us that in the original plan for Creation, the earth was to have brought forth edible trees — trees which would themselves taste like the fruit they produce. The earth, however, did not follow her instructions, and brought forth fruit-bearing trees with inedible trunks. In messianic times, however, G-d will restore the original plan of Creation, so we will be able to savor the taste of the fruit in the tree itself (*Sifra Bechukotai* 1).

To understand the point of this Midrash, we must recall that trees are living organisms which provide structure, support and nurturance to their fruit. But, as the Torah puts it, "humans are like trees of the field." We too require stable societal institutions to maintain and nurture our fragile existence. The trouble is that many of our institutions become so rigid and desiccated that they no longer function properly; they do not bear fruit.

We encounter this in bureaucratic organizations which lose sight of their stated goals — their "fruit" — and function merely to perpetuate their own existence. Religious institutions may also forget that without the steady flow of the sap of Divine vitality, even the most imposing edifices are little more than dead-wood.

The Midrash's messianic vision suggests a world in which all our activities and institutions contain within themselves a taste of their own fruit. In this utopian world, making plans for a birthday party would itself be fun; preparations for weddings would themselves be filled with love and tenderness; and (greatest miracle of all!) synagogue fundraising events would overflow with spirituality and the praises of G-d. The means to every worthwhile end would be laden with a taste of the end.

We clearly do not yet live in that kind of world. But as we celebrate this year's Tu bi-Shvat (on Tuesday evening, February 5 and Wednesday, February 6), perhaps we can capture some of that vision even here and now. Let us look forward to the day when trees and fruit will share a common essence; when structure and function, letter and spirit, body and soul, will be united in a perfect union which reflects the unity of the One whose infinite vitality nurtures us all.

raised to date for the project from the Shawmut Bank, the ADL is still seeking others to donate another \$40,000. "ADL is extremely committed to this project," Zakim said enthusiastically.

Dukakis told the approximately 80 people in attendance that day, "I don't know when I first became aware of prejudice, but it made me angry at a very early age."

He related that while attending college near Philadelphia, he became the campus barber during a boycott because barbers in town would

not trim the hair of black students. "Although we have ended the legal and semi-legal forms of discrimination... there is still something out there that re-occurs," he warned.

"What's Your Attitude?", a live, 90-minute WCVB-TV special hosted by Natalie Jacobson of "NewsCenter 5" and Harvard Law School professor Arthur R. Miller of "Miller's Court," aired on Tuesday evening as the first programming element in the year-long prejudice awareness and reduction project.

Other TV programs in February include:

— "Housing Discrimination," a news series reported by Ron Gollobin. "NewsCenter 5 at Six," Monday-Wednesday, Jan. 28-30.

— Beginning in February, with dates to be announced, monthly half-hour "Chronicle" programs (M-F, 7:30-8 p.m.) on the history, contributions, and presence of Massachusetts' different ethnic groups.

Israel Bond Conference

JERUSALEM — Prime Minister Shimon Peres told Israel Bond leaders here that Israel would ultimately become "economically independent" at the closing gala dinner of the 1985 Israel Bond Prime Minister's Leadership Conference, held in Israel during the middle of January.

The Premier lauded the Bond Organization for its efforts, stating that Israel's economic stability rested on continued partnership and support from its many friends abroad.

Heading the conference delegation, which was attended by 200 leaders from the United States, Canada and Latin America, were David B. Hermelin, national campaign chairman, and Brig. Gen. (Res.) Yehudah Halevy, president and chief executive officer.

The Greater Boston delegation was comprised of general chairman Leo Karas and Barbara Karas; New England region chairman Ralph Kaplan and Harriet Kaplan; commerce and industry chairman Harvey Allen; Bernard and Miriam Kaplan; Barnett Tobins; and executive director Susan Brusilow.

El Al Names New District Manager for this Region

Shimon Seidenman has been appointed the new district sales manager for El Al Israel Airlines' New England region, it was announced by David Schneider, El Al's general manager for North America.

Seidenman began working for El Al ten years ago as a flight attendant while he was a student at Tel Aviv University. When he graduated in 1980, he joined the airline's marketing division as interline sales manager, a position he held until recently assuming his new post in Boston.

"We're very pleased to have Simi Seidenman head up our Boston offices," said David Schneider. "He has demonstrated a solid track record in sales and marketing, and will prove a real asset for the New England region."

A native of Jerusalem, Seidenman currently resides in the Boston area with his wife



Shimon Seidenman

Sylvia. El Al will resume its direct service from Boston to Tel Aviv starting June 19 with weekly service departing from Logan International Airport on Wednesdays.

El Al Israel Airlines' district offices are located at 20 Park Plaza, Boston, MA 02116, (617) 267-9220.

since its founding in 1951, has been the major source of investment funds for the economic development of the State of Israel.

The Israel Bond campaign,

FEBRUARY 3, 1985

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EDITOR MOMENT MAGAZINE
SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 3, 1985
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PROGRAM 10:30 SHARP
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