

## Passover: Looking into the Heart of Choice

By Nehemia Polen

No one understands human freedom, which, at root, is freedom to choose. Throughout the ages, many have denied that humans have free will at all, preferring to believe in fate, or causality and scientific determinism. For these skeptics, freedom is nothing but an illusion, an artifact, an epiphenomenon, a "ghost in the machine." Others believe in freedom of will (or wish to believe in it), but have a hard time trying to explain it or understand it.

Robert Nozick in his work *Philosophical Explanations* refers to free will as that "most frustrating and unyielding of problems." The puzzling, paradoxical nature of free choice was aptly captured in the cryptic words of Gertrude Stein, who wrote:

"The idea is that as for a very good reason anything can be chosen the choice is the choice . . ."

Indeed, the choice is the choice, but the question is, Why?

We all have the experience of choosing to do something. When asked to explain why we made the choice we did, we may come up with reasons; for example: I bought Brand X rather than Brand Y because it is a better product, and it costs less. In Jewish thought, however, such a decision does not really count as a choice at all. It is merely a rational determination, based on specific factors which are weighed and applied according to some tacit or overt calculus.

Jewish thought, especially within the kabbalistic tradition, sees the exercise of freedom of will precisely in those choices for which no rational explanation can be given. For the kabbalists, the quality called "Will" is associated with the highest divine manifestation, known as *Keter* ("Crown"), which is beyond the reach of rational thought. When we humans evoke our capacity of will, we reach into the very core of our personalities, expressing the essence of our selfhood, and revealing the nucleus of our value systems.

Some choices are devalued and cheapened by attempting to find rationales to explain them. The choosing of a husband or wife is a good example of this. If someone specifies a reason for choosing a mate, whether money, education, attractiveness, or even compatibility, we feel that there is something missing, something diminished. The only spiritually satisfying answer to the question, "Why did you choose your mate?" is "I did so out of love." But since, as we know, love is beyond reason, our choice, to be truly a choice, must remain unexplained.

So the mystery of love and the mystery of freedom of

(Continued on Page 23)



Photo by Leonard Eisenberg

**VOLUNTEERS DELIVER CHAMETZ** to Women Inc., of Roxbury, a counseling and training center for single parents seeking freedom from drugs, alcohol, and public assistance. In foreground is Marcia E. Levine (left) and Stacey Reisner, with the Brookline-Brighton-Newton Community Center. Stan Orel, volunteer driver, and Candice Cason, executive director of Women Inc., stand in the background.

## Project Mazon Brings Food to the Hungry Stranger

By M. Stevens

Special to the Advocate

It could have been a massive sale at your local supermarket. People of all ages walked quickly from table to

table, filling their shopping bags with everything from baby food to Chinese cuisine. The large room of the Brighton-Brookline-Newton Jewish Community Center buzzed with activity, as more food was unloaded, sorted, and bagged.

Unlike a local supermarket, however, the atmosphere at the Center was festive. The groceries were donations, and the "shoppers" were volunteers for

Project Mazon, an annual food drive that brings non-Passover food, or chametz, to homeless shelters and food pantries throughout greater Boston.

Now in its sixth year, the Project collects food for 16 organizations, under the direction of the Greater Boston Hillel Foundation. By noon last Sunday, Project Mazon organizer Rochelle Steinberg said about 100 bags of food had been collected from area synagogues and Jewish groups. Donations were down from participants in last year's food drive, she said.

But that was before 15 students, teachers, and parents arrived from Lexington's Temple Isaiah, bringing a lot more food with them. Other donations trickled in while the Project volunteers were bagging the groceries, so the final bag count was much higher than Steinberg's original estimate.

As the donations were brought in, the food was sorted into several categories and placed on long tables. Canned goods led all donations, running three tiers

(Continued on Page 24)



**HEADS EVENT** — Jonathan L. Samen, partner in the law firm of Kaye, Fialkow, Richmond and Rothstein, has been named chairman of the Lawyers Team Annual Breakfast for the Combined Jewish Philanthropies Community '88 campaign. (See story on page 7.)



## U.S. Official Accuses Israel of 'Brutalizing' Palestinians

By Howard Rosenberg

WASHINGTON (JTA) — A senior State Department official said Tuesday that Israel has violated human rights standards by "brutalizing" Palestinian prisoners and "randomly beating" civilians, but not by using lethal force on the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The official, Richard Schifter, assistant secretary of state for human rights and

humanitarian affairs, testified at a hearing of the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on International Organizations and Human Rights. The session was devoted to Israel's handling of violence in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

"We have made representations at the highest level of the Israeli government, urging that these acts of brutality or indiscipline be brought to an end and be punished,"

Schifter said.

In addition to criticizing the "brutalization of Palestinian prisoners immediately after they have been taken into custody," Schifter said the United States opposes "beatings administered to persons who were not taken into custody and who were not suspected of or known to have been engaged in any conduct in breach of civil peace."

(Continued on Page 21)

## Strong Jackson Showing Causes Concern for Jews

By David Friedman and Andrew S. Carroll

WASHINGTON (JTA) — The Rev. Jesse Jackson's stunning victory in the Michigan caucuses and the garnering of nearly thirty percent of the vote in Connecticut is causing increasing concern in the Jewish community, although seasoned observers do not expect him to end up as the Democratic nominee for the presidency.

But these strong showings have led to increased media speculation that Jackson, who now has more than 600 delegates, only slightly fewer than Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis, could win the nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Atlanta in August. "I don't think there is any chance of Jackson being on the ticket," said Morris Amity, former executive director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and a close observer of the political scene.

Mark Siegel, a political consultant and a Jewish liaison in the Carter administration, also agreed that Jackson will not be on the ticket, although he noted that there is a "good deal of concern about the possibility" in the Jewish community.

Neither analyst believes

that the concern will result in Jewish Democrats taking part in a "stop Jackson" effort. "No one needs to," Amity said, repeating his assertion that Jackson will not be on the Democratic ticket.

The latest turn of events appears to increase the importance of the New York state primary on April 19, where Jews make up nearly

25 percent of the Democratic voters.

Jackson has made a concentrated effort in this campaign to reach out to the Jewish community, where his views on Israel have aroused anxiety.

The candidate has toned down his rhetoric since the 1984 campaign, but Jews are

(Continued on Page 22)

## Somerville Friend Of Vanunu Decries Sentence

By Bette Keva  
Advocate Staff

The Somerville girlfriend of Mordechai Vanunu, the Israeli who was sentenced to 18 years for releasing secrets about Israel's atomic plant at Dimona, expressed her outrage at the harshness of his sentence.

Like thousands before her, Judy Zimmet, a New York-born "cultural Jew" made her way to Israel in 1985 to experience another side of life. Fortified with degrees in biology and nursing, and a Masters in midwifery, Zimmet studied Hebrew in an ulpan in Arad with the World Union of Jewish Students. The agency later helped her

land a job in Beersheva Hospital where there was a shortage of staff and her talents were sorely needed.

In October of that year a friend arranged a blind date for her with a young, handsome Moroccan-born Jew, Mordechai "Moti" Vanunu, a student at Ben-Gurion University in the Negev, and a full time employee of the Dimona nuclear center there.

The deeply serious philosophy student, who was 34 when they met, captured Zimmet's imagination. They began to date and soon began to talk and plan their future marriage.

But it was not to happen;

(Continued on Page 17)

## Jewish Unity Top Priority, Leading Authority Asserts

By Judith S. Antonelli  
Advocate Staff

Calling a link between the modern Orthodox and right-wing Conservatives a "major key" to Jewish unity, a leading Orthodox rabbi says it is time for Jewish community organizations to spend as much money on intra-Jewish dialogue as they do on Jewish-Christian dialogue.

Estimating that less than a million dollars is spent on intra-Jewish dialogue annually, while more than \$10 million is spent to improve relations with Christians, Rabbi Irving (Yitz) Greenberg, president of CLAL: The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership, stated, "The point is obvious. Every community organization must put Jewish unity on its agenda. We must recognize the problem and set it as a national Jewish priority . . . Every rabbi should spend at least five percent of his time on the issue."

Greenberg, who was in Boston last week to speak on "Will There Be One Jewish People in the Year 2000?" as part of Synagogue Awareness Month, told the Advocate in an interview that "Christian-Jewish dialogue has overcome significant barriers. The fact that the pope has spoken of a valid covenant with the Jews is an indication of what dialogue can do when it is taken seriously . . . If we make dialogue among Jews a priority, things will begin to happen."

(Continued on Page 24)

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#### Of Special Interest

A Cause for Rejoicing in Brookline  
See Page 6

Israel and South Africa: Mythical Alliance  
See Page 13

The Afikomen That Was Its Own Reward  
See Page 1-Sec. 2

Along North Shore 6-Sec 2

Arts — On Film 19

Celebrations 14, 15, 16

Classifieds 22, 23

Editorials 12

Features 13

Financial 7

Garber's Grandstand 10

Letters to the Editor 2

Obituaries 21

Thinking Out Loud 8

Singles Column 16

South Shore Events 7-Sec 2

Speakers' Calendar 17

Synagogue 3-Sec 2

Young Reader 11-Sec 2

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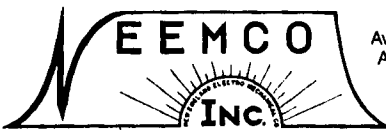
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**HAPPY AT LES MISERABLES** — Southern New England Region/Bigger Giving Event recently held at the Shubert Theatre — *Les Miserables* Theatre Party, preceded by a dinner at "57" Restaurant. Chairing the evening were Gloria A. Field, Sudbury, Framingham Chapter, and Nancy Levy, Region Fundraising Coordinator. Shown (left to right): Dr. Jeffrey Rudnick, Susan Rudnick, president, So. N.E. Region Hadassah, Carolyn Kroll, Weston Arnold Kroll, Weston (in front) Ellen Weiss, president, Needham, (back) Deborah Casty, Weston, Jacob Levy, Sudbury, Leslie Gaffin, V.P. Region, Nancy Levy, Fundraising Coordinator Region.

## Passover: Heart of Choice

(Continued from Page 1)

choice are deeply connected. But this is precisely what the Torah says about the love of G-d for His people Israel: "It is not because you are the most numerous of peoples that the L-rd set His heart on you and chose you — indeed, you are the smallest of peoples; but it was because the L-rd loved you and kept the oath He made to your fathers that the L-rd freed you with a mighty hand and rescued you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt (Deut. 7:7-8)."

The exodus from Egypt, which was the moment of G-d's taking Israel for His people, was an expression of love — and of free choice. As such, we cannot fully explain it. The Rabbis of the Midrash struggle to find some virtue, some merit, that would justify the choice of the Israelites over the Egyptians — after all, both were practicing idolatry in Egypt.

In the end, we can only say that G-d's choosing us was an act of grace and love, freely given: "You were still naked and bare when I passed you by and saw that your time for love had arrived. So I spread My robe over you and covered your nakedness, and I entered into a covenant with you by oath — declares the L-rd G-d; thus you became Mine (Ez. 16:7-8)."

When we truly choose, we cannot specify a reason, but that does not mean that the choice is arbitrary or capricious. Quite the contrary, a choice made out of love emerges from the very essence of who we are. It has a compelling quality, a feeling that things could not be different than they are, but were somehow destined to be so for all eternity. Yet this feeling of inevitability is not a contradiction to freedom; it is the highest expression of it. Only when we are compelled by an external force is our freedom violated. When the compulsion comes from within, then the choice is one of love, for it is the deepest unfolding of our true selves.

At the Exodus from Egypt, G-d gave us freedom. Fifty days later, at Mount Sinai, He gave us the Torah with its 613 commandments, its rules and regulations detailing every aspect of our lives. Yet the Jew does not feel less free because of his fidelity to the Law — quite the contrary. As the Talmud puts it, "The only free person is the one who is engaged in the Torah." The hasidic masters stress that it is precisely in our observance of the "non-rational" commandments, the *hukkim* (such as the prohibition against mixing meat and milk), that our love of G-d is most deeply expressed. Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook put it this way: G-d is described in philosophical terms as "the necessary Existent." Yet this "necessity" is not a limitation in G-d, not a restraint, because it is simply the expression of His inner essence.

So we too, when we come to live in harmony with our G-dly nature, with the Torah, with our Jewish identity — we are not enslaving ourselves, but exemplifying the highest degree of freedom. Like G-d in His love for us, we choose to be bound in love to Him. As the Song of Songs (7:6) says, "The King is held captive in the tresses [of His beloved]."

Muriel Rukeyser wrote that  
To be a Jew in the twentieth century  
Is to be offered a gift. If you refuse,  
Wishing to be invisible, you choose  
Death of the spirit . . .

If, however, we choose life, choose Torah, choose G-d, choose to be Jews, then we will have found not only our inner selves, but love and freedom as well. This Passover, as always, the choice is ours to make.

Rabbi Nehemia Polen, Ph.D., is rabbi of Congregation Tifereth Israel of Everett. He is assistant professor of Jewish Thought at the Hebrew College in Brookline.

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## Israel and South Africa

(Continued from Page 18)

ganized a panel discussion in Chicago on similarities between Israel and South Africa. Dr. Alan Boesak, the head of the United Democratic Front, the leading anti-apartheid protest group in South Africa, was scheduled to speak, but failed to appear.

In 1986, another pro-PLO group with a more Marxist orientation, the November 29 coalition, co-sponsored with the African National Congress a 19-city tour on the Israel-South Africa alliance theme. Based on remarks made at these meetings, two prominent figures in the coalition wrote an article for *American-Arab Affairs*, "South Africa: The Israeli Connection," which reads as a virtual compendium of arguments to show that Israel and South Africa are allied.

A third PLO supporter active in propagandizing this myth is the Palestine Research and Educational Centre of Washington, D.C., which in 1984 published "Israel and South Africa: Partners in Repression" by Alfred T. Moeleah. The familiar message of this pamphlet is: "Israel and South Africa became partners because they are both racist settler colonial states (p. 4)."

A second purveyor of the alliance myth is the Soviet Union. Since it began in the early 1970s, the Kremlin has sought to end the Soviet Jewish emigration movement through a variety of means — intimidation in the form of arrests on trumped-up charges, anti-Jewish publications, releasing some Jews to "let off steam" and a flood of negative media portrayals of Israel. The propagation of the notion that Israel and South Africa are allied is intended to make Israel seem evil and imperiled — hardly a desirable destination for Soviet Jews.

Propagating the Israel-South African alliance myth also serves Soviet foreign policy interests. By linking Israel with South Africa, and pointing to the close ties between Israel and the United States, the Soviets aim to tar the image of the U.S., its main rival. Indeed, the Soviet Union's efforts to depict Israel, the U.S. and other Western countries as allies of South Africa (even though the USSR itself has strong economic links with Pretoria) is one of the chief aspects of its African strategy. Soviet support of the Israel-South African alliance canard is also a political favor to the PLO and the Arab world.

A superpower, the Soviet

Union can devote considerable resources to this propaganda effort. It uses domestic publications such as *Sotsialisticheskaya Industriya* (March 30, 1986) as follows: "Ultimately it is not a question of how many bombs . . . the South African racists and Israeli Zionists are prepared to drop on their neighbors . . . The main thing is that in their identically fascist, anti-human essence, in their assertions concerning the 'exclusiveness' of their race . . . they are prepared to do this."

The Soviet Union also instructs its allies to vote in favor of UN resolutions alleging an Israel-South Africa alliance, and presses them to participate in UN conferences on this theme. At the 1985 UN General Assembly, for instance, the Czech representatives compared Israel's policy toward the West Bank and Gaza with "South Africa's practices," as did the Vietnamese delegate.

Other promoters of the Israel-South Africa alliance myth include non-aligned states, radical leftists, and, curiously, the South African government and some of its right-wing supporters. The non-aligned states, including African, Arab, Asian and Latin American members, voice support for the idea either, one would imagine, out of fealty to the USSR (Cuba), or for the pragmatic reason that the myth helps to hold together the fractious non-aligned movement (Zimbabwe). A linking of Israel with South Africa forms a natural bridge between Arabs and Africans.

Radical American leftists also like to compare Israel with South Africa. The California publication, *Israeli Foreign Affairs*, devotes considerable attention to this theme, and one left-wing activist claims that the notion has "spread throughout the anti-apartheid and Central

America solidarity movements in the San Francisco area." Left-wing support for the notion that Israel and South Africa are allies stems from a world view that sees the forces of "liberation," including the PLO and ANC, waging battle against ever new branches of imperialism.

Right-wing supporters of South Africa also attempt to analogize Israel and South Africa. A Washington-based right-wing group, Sentinel, has argued that American anti-apartheid legislation hurts South Africa's friends — among them Israel.

### The Myth's Future

The rise in salience of the South Africa issue has been a mixed blessing for the purveyors of the notion that Israel and South Africa are allies. One the one hand, the increased interest in South Africa has brought the myth greater exposure in the U.S. and the West as a whole. But as the American and Western media have begun to examine South Africa's internal situation and its foreign relations, information about Arab, Soviet and European ties to Pretoria also come into focus. The mythical alliance between Israel and South Africa, the invention of Israel's adversaries, will have a difficult time surviving critical assessment by Western public opinion.

Allan L. Kagedan is policy analyst in the International Relations Department of the American Jewish Committee.

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Community '88  
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As I write these words shortly before Pesach, I am anticipating the joy, the warm feelings this holiday instills in me and, I know, in the entire Jewish family.

The Passover seder truly unites us as one people, one family. Jews everywhere in the world will sit down at the seder table this week to share the memories of our ancestors' Exodus from Egypt and our universal longing for freedom.

Marranos in Spain used to celebrate the delivery of their ancestors from bondage behind guarded and shuttered windows. Jews in the Soviet Union share the seder meal in similar fashion. We read of sedorim in Tibet, in China, in remote settlements in Alaska, and we understand why Jews, separated from their people and their families, search out other Jews with whom they can offer the blessings, chant the prayers, sing the familiar songs and ask the Four Questions.

Though the message of Pesach is universal, it has a particularly unique meaning for us as Jews. Each Jew on Passover is linked with Jews throughout our history and with all those living today. Their suffering, whether in the past or in the present, is ours as well.

But the seder is not only an occasion on which we remember slavery and bondage. It is a celebration of freedom and of liberation. The Passover story reminds us of what it means to be free.

And so it is that on this holiday, our thoughts turn to those not yet liberated, those not able to be with their families and their people. By remembering those who struggled for freedom in the past, we must renew and strengthen our pledge to assure that all Jews will soon enjoy a life of freedom.

The Community '88 Campaign of the Combined Jewish Philanthropies is dedicated to that goal. We must raise the necessary funds to assure that the Jews of the Soviet Union, of Ethiopia and of other lands of oppression can live freely. We must provide the funds which are necessary to make their plight known. And we must provide the funds to resettle those Jews in Israel, Boston, or wherever they choose to live. During this holiday season, I know you will want to give of yourself — to your family, to your community, to your fellow Jews throughout the world.

I know that when we sit down this year at our seder tables in Boston, we will feel as one with Jews everywhere, that we will retell the story of Passover and rededicate our efforts on behalf of those still seeking freedom. That, I believe, is the joy of Pesach!

May I wish you and your family a sweet and happy holiday, and may we all be reunited in freedom next year.

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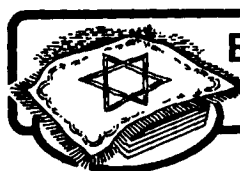
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