



TEMPLE
EMANUEL



THE PEOPLE'S PULPIT™

A COLLABORATION OF MANY VOICES

an

On-Line Journal

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ISSUE TWO

Welcome to the Second Issue of **THE PEOPLE'S PULPIT**. We've created this journal to give each of us the opportunity to tell our own deeply felt spiritual story.

In our first story: Where is the Outcry? Why is it so Hard to Condemn Open Hatred of Jews? Why Don't Jews Count?, Nina Gilbert writes of the shocking lack of public reaction following the events of October 7th. Her story is a personal cry of outrage against the silence. Her entire world has been degraded from that which she once held to be self-evident.

As I write my story, 'The Jewish Personnel,' the surviving hostages of the Nir Oz kibbutz, sit shivering in a tunnel below Gaza City. We now know that the words: '*Please, don't take me, I'm too young*,' are not enough. We must rely on the troopers of the IDF to crush Hamas and to free the hostages.

May Israel prevail in this war and may the hostages be returned safely. Ultimately, we pray for a mutually acceptable resolution to the conflict in which Israel and her neighbors may live together in security, peace and prosperity.

The third story, by Ron Lang is How I Learned About Antisemitism. It is a poignant reminiscence of a childhood dilemma. We feel Ron's pain and confusion, yet we applaud his courage.

Finally, Rabbi Israel de la Piedra, our dear Temple member and sometime *Shabbat Gabbai* writes 'My Jewish Journey,' a story that you will find inspiring.

We are seeking submissions for the Third Issue of **THE PEOPLE'S PULPIT**. We welcome your participation. Tell us your story!

RALPH AND VAN

Where is the Outcry? Why is it so Hard to Condemn Open Hatred of Jews? Why Don't Jews Count

By: Nina Gilbert

Bio: Nina is a successful graduating Senior in the School of Journalism at U. Mass. Amherst. She has already had the good fortune to have been published. With her enthusiastic personality and her innate talent she looks forward to a deeply fulfilling journalistic career.

* * *



After October 7, I realized that in the minds of some, Jews really don't count.

The first thing I saw online the morning of October 7 were videos of Israeli girls my age and younger, Shani Louk (22) and Naama Levy (19), who were kidnapped, raped, and murdered by Hamas. Footage went viral of Louk's lifeless naked body in the bed of a truck paraded and spat on down the streets of Gaza. Louk was kidnapped from the Nova Festival of Life and Peace on the morning of October 7th and later her head was found [decapitated](#) in Gaza. Levy appeared terrified on [footage](#) with blood rushing from her head and private parts while being dragged by her hair into a car by a Hamas terrorist.

"They raped girls. Burnt them just after that. All the bodies outside were burnt," Yael Richert, Superintendent of Israel police, [told CNN](#). "There were girls with broken pelvis due to repetitive rapes, their legs were split wide apart in a split," Richert quoted one survivor of the Nova music festival massacre as saying.

"Our team commander saw several female soldiers who were shot in their crotch, intimate parts, vagina, or shot in the breast. There seems to be a systematic genital mutilation of a group of victims," she added, Shari Mendes, an Israel Defense Forces (IDF) reservist [told CNN](#).

“A Hamas video from a kibbutz shows terrorists torturing a pregnant woman and removing her fetus. Our forensic scientists have found bodies of women and girls raped with such violence that their pelvic bones were broken,” Michal Herzog, Israeli First Lady, [wrote](#).

“They bent someone over and I understood he was raping her, and then he was passing her on to someone else, she was alive, she stood on her feet and she was bleeding from her back. I saw that he was pulling her hair. She had long brown hair. I saw him chop off her breast and then he was throwing it toward the road, tossed it to someone else and they started playing with it,” an anonymous eyewitness from the Nova festival [told CNN](#). The witness added: “I remember seeing another person raping her, and while he was still inside her he shot her in the head.”

I am not the same woman I was before learning about the horrors of October 7 and I will never be the same woman after hearing the deafening silence that followed from women’s rights organizations across the globe. Despite this sadistic mass sexual violence against Israeli women, human rights organizations worldwide have remained silent while some even question the veracity of these events or worse said it was justified.

Nearly 50 days after October 7 and immense outcry over their silence, UN Women finally issued a statement condemning Hamas and their attack.

Their initial statement, posted on UN Women’s Instagram page, read “We condemn the brutal attacks by Hamas on October 7 and continue to call for the immediate and unconditional release of all hostages.”. However, soon after it was deleted and replaced its condemnation of Hamas and only called for the release of hostages.

The same organizations that taught me about how a rape victim’s assault goes well beyond the incident itself, i.e. “she had it coming with that outfit” or “prove it” are the same organizations refusing to explicitly condemn sexual violence against innocent Israeli children, women, and elderly. Or worse, that it was “justified resistance” and that being alive and Israeli meant they “had it coming.”

#MeToo movement where are you?

Red Cross where are you?

UN Women where are you?

After October 7, I now find that I don't count in the eyes of some of the ideologies and human rights movements I passionately defend. The same

organizations and movements that I believed would return such protests to the mass murder, rape, and mutilation of my people, are the same organizations and movements that have stayed silent or legitimized the mass murder, rape, and mutilation of my people.

“The very essence of gender equality and women empowerment groups worldwide is to assist victims of such atrocities. A pregnant woman was cut open and her unborn baby was shot. How could anyone stay silent when faced with such horrific acts?” Orit Sulitzeanu, executive director of the Association of Rape Crisis Centers in Israel, [told the Times of Israel](#).

After October 7 I now wonder who on my college campus or in my city or my country would legitimize my rape, torture, and murder for being a Jew. My sense of security and dignity as an American Jew has collapsed beneath my feet. I feel diminished. I feel the earth shifting under my feet.

Why don't Jews count when it comes to calls for genocide?

Why don't Jewish victims of sexual violence count?

The silence I am witnessing from women's rights organizations everywhere about the Jewish women and girls who were violently raped during their last breath has left me shattered.

When it's Jews who are the victims, rape is resistance.

When it's Jews who are the victims, torture is liberation.

Why don't Jews count when it comes to outright condemnation of mass murder, rape, and terrorism?

It wasn't just the execution of these families on October 7, but the brutal and deliberate manner in which they were dehumanized during their last breaths.

“I don't know what kind of evil, devil, can create that kind of an operation because they [Hamas terrorists] thought about everything, it was well organized and the world needs to know that, right now,” an Israeli paramedic and first responder at Kibbutz Be'eri, Linor Attitas [said](#).

At Kibbutz Be'eri families were murdered one after the other or while tied together according to Israeli paramedic Linor Attitas. “They tied up the kids (an eleven-year-old boy and a 6-year-old girl) and the parents were tied up and killed in front of their kids. They shot them. So much blood,” Attitas said. “There was a little girl, 10 or 12, they cut off her head,” Attitas [told CNN](#)..

“The body hardened and, unfortunately, appeared to have also swollen... and really, the heating element of the oven was on the body itself”, Asher Moskowitz, Israeli first responder, [said](#).

“The terrorist shot open the door, threw a grenade, the last thing my dad said was that he lost his arm, and then my mom died on top of me,” Rotem Mathias, 16, from Kibbutz Be’eri [said](#).

No, this does not permit Israelis to do to others what has been done to them, absolutely not. Yes, the Palestinians are suffering terribly today and have been brutalized by the current conflict. They lack freedom of movement, resources, and the opportunity to create a better life for themselves. But it's not because the Jews came home that Palestinians are used as political pawns and human shields trapped in horrible circumstances. It's because of the extremists who will always choose the blood of their enemy over the peace of their people and are persistent in their efforts to stoke conflict and destroy any possibility of peace between Jews and Palestini- ans.

The root of this conflict stems from a misconception of who the Jewish people are. Despite archeological records, genetic evidence, and written history across nations confirming our origin, people still try to rewrite history in real-time. After the Jews were exiled from Israel by the Roman Empire we lived as a minority amongst the many nations of the world. Our communities remained tightly knit and somehow found ways to prosper under harsh circumstances. Again, and again, and again. Preservation and the hope of return became a pillar of the Jewish identity. However, this success led to jealousy, which turned to hate, which turned to violent persecution.

Again, and again, and again. Leading up to the Holocaust which taught us we would never be safe at the mercy of our non-Jewish nations.

Since October 7, there has been a 388% increase in antisemitic-related harassment, vandalism, and assault in the United States compared to this time last year, says Rabbi Jonah Steinberg, the New England Regional Director at The Anti-Defamation League.

The worst manifestations of outward Jew-hatred have exploded on the campuses of elite institutions across America. At Cornell a [professor](#) called October 7 "exhilarating" and "energizing." Like thunder follows lightning, a Cornell [student](#) said he was going to “shoot up a Kosher dining hall and stab and slit the throat of any Jews he sees on campus”, to "rape and throw off a cliff any Jewish females”, and “bring an assault rifle to campus and shoot all you pig Jews.” At my own university, University of Massachusetts

Amherst, on the path I take twice a week to my night class, students were shouting on megaphones, "Intifada, intifada, intifada." Do they know what they're calling for? Do they know what happened on October 7?

As a Jewish college student, I am painfully disoriented, fearful, and outraged.

On October 24 students at [George Washington University](#) projected the words "Glory to our martyrs" onto a campus building. On October 8 a speaker at a rally held on [UPenn's campus said](#), "I think we should all give applause right now, to Hamas, for a job well done." Like thunder follows lightning, an academic building at [UPenn was defaced with a swastika](#).

As Jonathan Schanzaer, Senior Vice President for Research at The Foundation For Defense of Democracies [said](#), "This is a microcosm of what is happening throughout the country."

In Los Angeles, [Paul Kessler, a 69-year-old Jewish man](#), died after being struck in the head by Loay Alnaji, a professor from California, who [previously shared pro-Hamas social media posts](#). The [synagogue](#) that received bomb threats resulting in evacuation on November 19 in Needham, Massachusetts, is just 10 minutes from my house.

Beyond the U.S. we are seeing antisemitism explode in Europe. In [Melbourne, Australia](#) an elderly care facility housing Holocaust survivors was defaced with swastikas. In [Siegen, Germany](#), a school was vandalized with graffiti, including "Kill all Zionists!", and a crossed-out Star of David. In [Sydney, Australia](#), two days after October 7, crowds gathered cheering "gas the Jews." Among the most painful: in [Warsaw, Poland](#) "protesters" holding signs that read, "Keep the world clean" showing the Star of David in the trashcan.

Signs like these make me feel dirty. Signs like these held up on the same grounds as the largest Nazi ghettos during the Holocaust. Signs like these held up on the same grounds where families of Jews who didn't starve to death, die from disease, or get murdered in cold blood were sent to Auschwitz.

Across the globe, I have become aware of the same antisemitic fear-mongering propaganda that allowed for the elimination of 1/3 of my people, in my grandfather's lifetime. During this time, we must remember it was rhetoric like this that turned the general public, neighbors, and even friends of Jews against us.

We are Jews of the diaspora, the Jews who thrived in Israel for over a thousand years before most of our forefathers were exiled from their homeland by the Roman Empire and scattered around the world.

The most common antisemitic trope is to tell Jews to “go back to where you came from” or that “you aren't from here.” At the same time, we are one of the oldest populations of people. Jew hatred is the world's oldest hatred. No matter how much we have to prove we have a right to exist, that we're from where we're from, it's a fight we have fought for centuries.

There are Jews from everywhere. Jews from Yemen, Ethiopia, Germany, Spain, Egypt, Malaysia, India. This is because Jews have been banished from everywhere. [61% of Israel's population is Mizrahi Jews](#), Jews who were in the diaspora in the Muslim world. Almost 1 million Jews were ethnically cleansed from the Muslim world throughout the 1940's. The scenes from October 7 mirrored that of those seen during The Farhud, the violent disposition of Jews in Baghdad, a once 40% Jewish city at the beginning of the 20th century.

As Jews, we are from everywhere and told we are from nowhere.

Noa Fay, a Jewish, Black, Indigenous resident assistant at Columbia's University Barnard College, the same university whose [professor Joseph Massad](#) called October 7th “awesome,” walked past posters on her way to class that read “by any means necessary” and “one solution, Intifada revolution,” referencing Hitler's “final solution” as well as the first and second Intifada, a series of violent attacks dedicated to indiscriminately killing Israeli soldiers and civilians, carried out by Palestinians which ran from the late '80s to the early '90s. After the first intifada, Hamas was founded and dedicated its charter to the indiscriminate killing of Jews and the annihilation of the state of Israel.

I am broken by the so-called “peace activists” and outwardly liberal “justice-seeking” young individuals who ferociously tear down posters of hostages like [Kfir Bibas, a 10-month-old baby](#) stolen from his crib by terrorists for being a Jew and being alive. “Those who gleefully tear down hostage posters are tearing down, or at least trying to tear down, the essence of our common humanity, trying to tear down a divine image that is at the very root of our civilization,” Bari Weiss said. Weiss added, “The same crowd who has tried so hard to convince us that words are violent insist that actual violence was a necessity.”

To some, it is impossible to be successful and still fit into the “Victim” category. Jews and Israel as a successful minority fit only in the “Victimizer”

category as a result of their success. To some, the debt due to Jews for suffering the Holocaust and thousands of years of murder and persecution has long been repaid with interest and now they are seen as the rightful punching bag for the Colonialist, self-enriching superstructure in which they place the rest of Western Civilization.

In fact, due to their success, Jews are sometimes seen as the apex predator in this contorted worldview. In this way, the world view of some Progressive Liberals comports well with the same canards and libels that animated the most virulent strains of antisemitism of the last century, with claims that wealthy Jewish families controlled the banking systems and secretly manipulated society, called a cabal of puppet masters serving only their own interests.

What happens when this overly simplistic template fails? What happens when you have two victimized people? Or worse, two victimized people pitted against each other?

“The campus pro-Palestinian movement frequently denigrates Zionism as allegedly inherently racist and disparages pro-Israel students, at times invoking antisemitic tropes. Some of the most strident activists attack Israel’s right to exist and demand that students who feel connected to Israel be excluded from campus life,” Steinburg says.

“This is a psychological problem that can only be dealt with through education, like any other form of hatred, that we have come to combat,” Fay says. She added that there needs to be an equivalent of Critical Race Theory for antisemitism. “I don’t know how else to put it. I don’t know how else to make it more clear. This is what needs to happen, or at the very least, antisemitism needs to be included in teaching CRT because what we are seeing is it’s becoming a form of racism,” Fay added.

“When antisemitism is on the rise it is not about the Jews. It is never about the Jews. It is about the society where it is being allowed to proliferate,” Bari Weiss said.

The Jewish Personnel

By: Ralph Gilbert

All events and characters are factual.

Bio: Ralph Gilbert, (88), an engineer, a businessman,

an accomplished writer, and a sometime soldier was a past president of Temple Emanuel. He holds two degrees from M.I.T., a Certificate of Completion from Hebrew College and was a benefactor of the American Friends of Technion in Israel.

* * *



The big props of our military Douglas Dakota DC-3 began to wind down. We all made an effort to stand. It had been a long flight. The year was 1959. Soviet Premier Khrushchev had slammed his shoe down on his desk at the U.N. and vowed to bury the West. The Cold War was on. Soviet long range nuclear bombers flew regular patterns over the globe. American men were being drafted. Citizens trembled. President Eisenhower needed a plan. Nike Missile defense posts were built all over America.

At the time I was employed by Bendix Aviation working on inertial navigation systems. The job provided me with 'critical skills' military deferment. I would never be drafted, but I hated the job. I felt unsettled. I wanted some physical challenge. I wanted to know myself better. Growing up I had no real core, no Jewish life. I yearned to belong somewhere. At 23, I feared that I was slowly slipping into unresolved complacency. I had had a belly- full of academics at MIT. I needed to find something different. I did. I quit my job and enlisted in the U.S. Army as a Nike Missile Crewman. Unexpectedly, however, a few months before I was required to report, something equally momentous occurred. I met my future wife.

At basic training, in Ford Dix, New Jersey, we were forced, through sleep deprivation and intimidation, to internalize the brutal methods of combat. Later, I would be trained at Fort Bliss, Texas in missile defense. My eventual deployment would be in a Nike Missile radar van, searching the New York City sky for Soviet bombers. Well... that was the plan, any-way.

The Dakota's doors opened. Then, one by one and all together, we pushed and grumbled, cursed and staggered and made our way towards the open door. I blinked back the intense glare and humped my duffle down the stair. An outside thermometer stood at 102. The tarmac smelled of urine and burning sulfur. My face was on fire. My eyes teared. My boots stuck to the runway.

"Where in Hell are we, Mac?" I asked.

"Welcome to West freaking Texas in the summertime," Mac answered. Sergeant Mac was not from our outfit. He was lean and hard. His eyes were red. His teeth were stained. His breath reeked of nicotine and gin. His regulation military buzz cut showed gray around the ears. His sleeve carried so many service hashes that I figured that he must have joined up during the Civil War.

"Well, son, you're in El Paso del Norte, as the explorers called it. See over there," he pointed. "Over there, 'cross the Rio Grande', between them glimmerin' hills, that's Meh-ico, City of Juarez. You can get anything you want over there...over at the White Lake Saloon," he said with a wink, "abs-freaking-lutely anything...grab them blood-red steaks, them ice-cold Coronas and them big busted, brown-eyed, bar girls".

"I really don't want anything, Mac," I said. "I just miss my girlfriend."

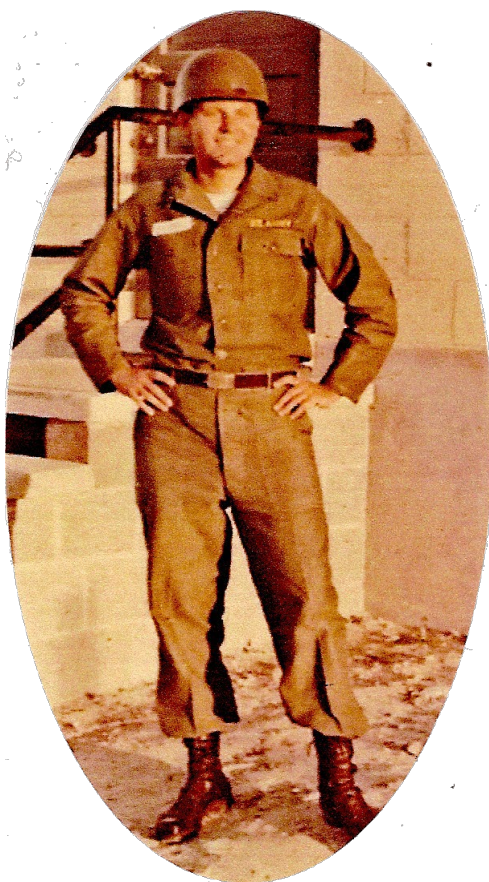
Fresh from the mountains of Western North Carolina she was now making her way in the Big City. As our days together ticked down towards my induction, our passion for each other increased. We talked about all the trips and adventures we would take together. Finally, on our last day together, in my dress uniform, I held her in my arms at the New York City Port Authority bus station.

"I'll miss you," I said. "I really will. Please wait for me. I'll be back before you know it."

"Oh really? Don't take yourself so seriously, big boy," she answered. "Why would I wait for you? It's not like we're engaged or anything."

'Engaged or anything?'...the idea had never occurred to me. I made some mumbled reply then I kissed her and climbed onto the bus.

“That right? Your girlfriend? You miss your girlfriend?” Mac repeated. “I miss the war... back in '43... Seventh Army, General Patton.” “Really?” “Yeah, got some battlefield promotions over there in Messina...lost lots of buddies, can you feature that? Officers were killed... promotions were made, and I got, all the way up... all the way up to Lieutenant freaking Colonel.”



All events and characters are factual.

“No kidding? Lieutenant Colonel?” I said, looking at his sergeant strips. “Got rified down again, son.” He laughed. He took out his smokes, popped on his shades and then, without another word he ambled towards the clutch of NCO’s idling near the trucks. I never saw old Mac again, that is except for that one terrifying moment when I thought I saw his leering face on my radar screen.

Up ahead, at the end of the runway, four high-wheeled troop trans-ports waited.

“Fall in, you sorry-ass troopers,” a staff sergeant shouted.

Fort Bliss was the center of America’s rocket program. Its former director was the past SS-Sturmbannfuher, Dr. Werner von Braun, developer the V- 2 rocket. I first heard Von Braun’s name in a satirical song in a coffee house in Harvard Square. Sitting at the piano was a young, Jewish, MIT, Mathematics instructor. Tom Lehrer’s lyrics were:

‘Gather round while I sing you of Wernher von Braun, A man
whose allegiance is ruled by expedience.
Call him a Nazi he won't even frown, Nazi, Schmazi says
Wernher von Braun.’

When the Germans lost the war, Von Braun made it a point to surrender to the Americans. After the Blitz, the British were not his friends nor were the Russians. Von Braun and other German scientists were smuggled into America by the US Military on troop ships. This deception was required since the US State Department officially barred former Nazis.

According to a WBUR, 1945 radio interview with a young American soldier: ‘We arrived at Boston Harbor in the worst weather and roughest seas. From the giant troop ship to the deck of the Boston whaler far below, each German was lowered by a shaky bosun's chair, a little harness hanging by a rope from the davits and lowered like a lifeboat, swinging in the storm.’ Von Braun and the others were taken to an island in Boston Harbor, then to a secret base in Virginia and eventually to Fort Bliss. It would take Von Braun less than nine months from being a Nazi, user of slave labor to become America’s leading rocket expert.

The next morning. Well before the Texas sun arose, we were called out for rollcall. The Company Area was the parking lot in front of our barracks. We struggled to stay awake and to listen to our sergeant who shouted to us from somewhere in the dark.

“Now men, watch your step out here. Them rattlesnakes leave the cold desert in the evening for the warmth of the tarmac.”

“Where...what, Sergeant?”

“Right there, soldier, where you’re standing.”

What followed next was the sound of a chorus of Army boots dancing to the music of ‘Stomp.’

“Also don’t forget. Look into your boots in the morning before you stick ‘em on. They like the warm moisture of your boot.”

“What does, Sergeant? What likes it.” “Them scorpions and tarantulas.”

I was suddenly wide awake, my eyes darting, my feet dancing.

Our training was conducted in two radar vans deep in the Texas desert. Fat, black cables snaked their way from the vans to three huge rotating radar discs. The vans were super air conditioned and dimly lit. Inside, on either side was a row of circular radar screens. They glowed aquamarine. Our missiles were buried deep in concrete silos waiting to burst out of the earth. Later versions had tactical nuclear warheads. And whom should the Army choose to put in charge of these ultra-dangerous toys: half asleep troopers like me, dreaming about our girlfriends back home.

We were each assigned a screen. Our instruction began. Told to monitor the screens for potential targets shown as electronic blips, we were then to manipulate our cursor to coincide with the target blip and then to lock-on by pressing a button. Once locked-on we were then to challenge the suspected target by pressing a second button which sent out an electronic challenge. If the suspected target was, for instance, an American Air- lines plane packed with women and children, the commercial jet’s preprogramed transducer would send back a signal for us to stand down. If, on the other hand, our challenge was ignored we were then to press the red button that would begin the process to launch our missiles.

The problem was that in order to move my cursor fast enough to coincide with the target blip I had to turn two tiny cranks on the console. They moved my cursor in the X and Y axis’s. The blips moved so quickly, however, that I didn’t have the ability to turn my tiny crank fast enough. By the time I caught up with one blip another showed up on the opposite side. I just couldn’t crank fast enough. I tried. I just couldn’t do it! The only thing that I reckoned I could have tracked successfully and brought down was a bi-winged mail plane with Snoopy at the controls. The Army had turned us into a barrel of crank-turning monkeys. I wondered what in hell would hap- pen if the Soviets were actually on their way. Sitting in the van, listening to the hum of the electronic equipment, I slipped into an uncontrollable sense of dread. Oh no! The damn system didn’t work! This is insane! Oh, the damn, Army! I visualized a mushroom cloud over the Upper West Side. I was horrified. Then, blank staring into my radar screen, I thought I saw an

image. It looked, for all the world, like old Mac's leering, winking face. I wanted to scream.

Later, I revealed my fears. A good forty percent of our New York outfit happened to be Jewish. Garber, white-faced, pledged to go to the top of the chain of command. Greenberg warned: "My mom works in Congressman Javits' office..." Taub threatened: "I'll phone my brother. He's an editor at the Times." These highly articulate complainers were told to shut up. Nothing happened, then one day, while standing in formation our sergeant called out:

"At ease, now listen up...We have an announcement...now, would, would all.... ALL JEWISH PERSONNEL fall out!"

What? I never had heard those words spoken before excepting in a Nazi war movie. What in Hell do they want with the Jewish personnel? Oh no, it's happening again. For two thousand years when anything bad happens it's always been the fault of the Jews! I'm a secular Jew! Get it? Leave me alone! But there was no hiding, since my dog tags were stamped, with an 'H' for Hebrew. This, for the convenience of a possible battlefield burial. Were they planning on shooting us then burying us today? ... just for complaining? ...we complain all the time...that's what we do... we complain...Didn't they get that?

The Jewish Personnel were then directed to the office of our Company Commander Captain Grody. We stood at attention. Grody was a fastidious man. His office smelled of Lysol. His kakis were tailored, and his shirt was starched. He had a pug nose, plaid blue eyes and the dimpled chin of an emotionally unstable 'B' movie actor. He spoke to us clearly and slowly as though he was communicating with a group of sub-literate Rumanian prisoners of war.

"I been told that you people will be having your...er... Holidays soon. I have been authorized to make arrangements for you to be released forth with from active duty. You will have the opportunity to return to your families and enjoy your holiday. Would you like that?"

For the very first time in our collective lives, we were speechless.

Words, which usually came so easily were now unavailable. Then one husky trooper, whom we knew as Moe, spoke up.

"Yes Captain, we would like that. Thank you, Sir."

I had the image that if we handed Moe a staff and a toga, he would have become our own Moses ready to lead us through the desert to free- dom. The Jewish personnel were going to be dismissed, forthwith! Perhaps the higher ups wanted us out of the army because they didn't want to hear our public speculations about the Nike system. Why else would we be singled out?

I arrived home to Paula to find that our relationship was still very much intact. Her Rabbi explained the ketubah. I signed it immediately.

Years later, I had an opportunity to speak at my men's club about the Nike Missile program. After my talk, a member identified himself as an Academy man, whether Army or Navy, I don't recall. He had been Raytheon's representative to the Department of Defense.

"Well, Ralph," he began. "I enjoyed your talk, my apologies to the Jewish Personnel. Thank you for your service.

So, Denny," I asked. "Did the Nike system work or not? What's the story?"

"Well, Ralph, even after sixty-five years that's still classified, you know... all I can really say... is that whole project was a terrible headache. We had a heck of a time with it."

(I've since seen internet data claiming that the system was sound.)

Upon reflection, I theorized that if the Jewish Personnel were convinced that the system didn't work then the Army knew that as well. What mattered to President Eisenhower was that the American public felt protected. Also, my guess was that the Soviets really didn't want to start a world-ending nuclear war, so they did nothing. This bilateral inaction led the public to conclude that the Nike defense system was a major deterrent. Most folks are more interested in a simple, compelling narrative than the complex, nasty truth. Perception is reality. Folks believe in what they want and refuse to consider facts to the contrary. I take note of this with the realization that I, myself, from time to time would be subject to that error of thinking.

The Cold War ended. My military career was over. I started a small business. The Nike bases were all torn down, never having fired a single missile. Nothing remains of my time in the Service except for my 'Ground to Air

Missile Control' certificate. It hangs, framed, over my desk. I look at it from time to time and remember that day, long ago, when I was pressed together with the other Jewish Personnel in Captain Grody's office.

In retrospect, in a funny way, I had achieved my goals. My inclusion with the Jewish Personnel, made me feel I finally was part of something. Years later, in order to understand more, on the suggestion of my dear friend Charlie, of blessed memory, we found a Rabbi and spent the next seven years studying at Hebrew College. I had made the time by asking our comptroller to take over the day-to-day business operations. He loved being boss. My spiritual life expanded. My family life was enhanced and my journey towards understanding myself and my faith became mature. I'm grateful that I followed my youthful intuition. I was lucky. I finally found where I belonged. Just to think, none of this might have happened if I hadn't shown up at that recruiting office on Whitehall Street in Lower Manhattan and then much later, thinking that I was hiding my identity, to have nonetheless been called out to stand together with all the other members of the JEWISH PERSONNEL.

How I Learned About Antisemitism By Ron Lang

Bio: Ron was born in Hell's Kitchen (Manhattan) two weeks after his parents arrived in America from Hungary in 1932. He studied engineering at City College of New York and Columbia University. He met the love of his life, Evelyn Baker, on a blind date on St. Valentine's Day in 1954. Ron was the chief engineer for the Project Apollo Space Suit and Portable Life Support System. He later founded "Ronald Lang & Associates," an international crisis management consulting firm, where he remains engaged to this day. He and Evy are the parents of three marvelous women, Beth, Debby, and Carry.

* * *



In 1932, my grandfather saw that antisemitism in Hungary was growing with the emergence of Hitler. When my mother got pregnant, he insisted that my parents return to America immediately. They demurred but, in my mother's ninth month, they reluctantly agreed to leave Budapest.

I was born in Manhattan in 1932, two weeks after my parents returned to America from Hungary. They had lived in America from 1924 until 1929. They became American citizens during their stay here. My father, however, could not make a living here as the Depression developed and so returned to Hungary, but only for a few years.

From when I was about eight years old, in 1940, until 1953, my family lived at 120 Vermilyea Avenue in Manhattan. Our apartment building was called "Piccadilly Gardens." I guess it was one of the fancier apartment houses in the area. It was on the west side of Vermilyea Avenue at 207 Street in an area called "Inwood."

About a fifth of the units in the apartment houses on the west side of the street were rented by Jews. All the apartments on the east side of the street were rented by Irish Catholics. Those families included Johnny Coughlin, Dick Mooney, and other Catholic kids about my age.

Johnny Coughlin was a couple years older than me, and he was a real bully. He was also the leader of the Catholic gang of bullies.

Whenever I walked down Vermilyea Avenue and saw him coming up the street, I would rush to cross the street to try get out of his way. Every time he had an opportunity to beat the shit out of me, he did so. And on Sundays it was even worse. After they came out of church, Johnny and his gang would come looking for us and beat us up.

It got so bad that one day I proposed to my Jewish friends that we go to the local church and ask the priest if he could tell us why these kids were such bullies. My friends agreed.

When we went to see the priest, I was the spokesman because it was my idea.

At the church front office, I asked to speak to the priest. I did not realize that there was more than one. I did not know any of their names.

Nevertheless, we met with the priest who seemed to be the top guy.

He asked, "Why are you here? How can I help you?"

I said, "Father, please, can you tell us, why do Johnny Coughlin and his friends, who all attend this church, come looking for us after church on Sundays to beat us up? Why do they do that during the week when we are walking to school or home again? We are not bothering them, but they come after us and beat us up. Why?"

After a long silence, the priest took my hand. He looked me straight in the eyes. He said, "My son, they do not learn that in this house. They learn that at home. From their parents. And I have tried repeatedly to address and condemn antisemitism from our pulpit."

He did not explain "antisemitism," a term I had never heard. I learned its meaning only years later.

And so it went. After our talk with the priest there was no change. From about 1945 until about 1949, we ran the gauntlet two or three times a week!

When we all got to be about 17 years old, the beatings had stopped, with no help from the priest.

I graduated from Washington High School and went on to City College of New York in January, 1950. In June of that year, the Korean War began.

Johnny Coughlin, who was about 19 at the time, joined the Army and went to Korea. I was at City College. So our lives took us in separate ways, thank God.

When I finished my first year at City College, I heard from someone, I don't remember who, that Johnny was back in the States and was in the hospital recovering from wounds he suffered in the war. Ironically, life being stranger than fiction, Johnny was a patient at Jewish Memorial Hospital in Washington Heights.

I decided to go visit him. Why did I do that? I have thought about that question, but I do not know exactly why I went and I have no idea now what I expected to find.

When I got to the hospital, I learned that Johnny had been so badly wounded that he was now a quadriplegic!

I found out where he was. I walked into his room. He looked at me. He said, incredulously, "Are you Lang, the Kike?"

I said, "Yes, I am Lang, the Kike, the same guy that you beat the shit out of every time you had the chance. But I'm not here about that. I just want you to know I thank you for your service to our country."

Johnny burst into tears. He said, as he wept, "I can't believe it. You, a Jew, are the very first person apart from my family to come here and visit me. You're a Jew. None of my Catholic friends have shown up to see me!"

I said, "That's a real shame."

We talked a bit more. Then I said goodbye, saying as I left, "I hope the doctors find a way to heal you, or at least make you better."

I never saw Johnny Coughlin again. About three years later, he died, having never recovered from his wounds.

I've thought a lot about Johnny Coughlin since then. His hatred of me and my Jewish friends made no sense to me then and still makes no sense. I've learned that, contrary to what that priest told us, it was official Catholic church doctrine until Vatican II in 1965 that all Jews in every age bear the responsibility for the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Johnny Coughlin and his buddies took that teaching literally and punished us every chance they got. Or maybe they came up with their own reasons to hate us!

I never forgave Johnny Coughlin. I think, as I reflect on that period in my life, I went to visit him because he was one of the few guys I knew who went to war and was badly wounded. It was the right thing to do. I felt good about myself. Even now, however, every time I see his face in my bad dreams, that old feeling of my early boyhood panic returns.

My Jewish Journey **By Rabbi Israel de la Piedra**

Bio: Born in Lima, Peru, in 1956. M. A. in Political Economy and from BU, 1980. Moved to Chile, working for the United Nations for five years, then moved to Washington DC and worked for International Monetary Fund (IMF) for 20 years. Married college sweetheart, Aliza, in Jerusalem, in 2000. Made Aliyah in 2004. Ordained at Hebrew College in 2013. Now serving in the Hebrew SeniorLife community in Randolph and in AccentCare Hospice.



1. My Judaism

I have returned. That is how I see my Judaism. After a hiatus of a few generations, this great-great grandson of a Jewish immigrant from Germany to Peru has come back home. I may have traveled much in my life, but I am not a wandering Jew – I am the Jew who returned home. I was born in a traditional Catholic family in Peru. As a teenager I discovered Judaism – or maybe Judaism discovered me. I have no recollection of how I came across Judaism for the first time, but when I was in my late teens I was already basking in Judaism. I was born with the name Enrique, and I do not have any recollection either of how or when I started to call myself Israel (I changed my name officially when I made Aliyah and kept Enrique as my middle name).

At times I have tried to rationalize my growing appreciation of Judaism since I was a teenager, but there seems to be no single answer. What was it that attracted me to Judaism? Maybe it was its love for books and the written word – I have been drawn to books since I was a child. Maybe it was its traditions and values – they seemed to be richer and more logical than what I had been exposed to until then. Maybe it was Hebrew – I always have had a love for languages (I am now learning German, my sixth language – and why German? – that's another story); I even remember taking down notes at class in college in Peru writing in Spanish but with Hebrew characters! Maybe it was the Jewish friends I consciously started

seeking – my wife Aliza is one of those friends from way back then. Maybe it was all of this, maybe it was more than this. But my inner being told me that I was Jewish, and so I tried to live like a Jew as much as I could. At some point, however, I actually discovered that I had Jewish ancestry, and the whole thing fell in place. My great-great grandfather, a man by the name of Max Bromberg, had immigrated in the last third of the 19th century to Peru. I first found out about him from a book, called “Jews in Peru in the 19th Century.” The book mentioned Max Bromberg and who he had married (a non-Jewish Peruvian lady), and I was able to tie loose ends from family stories to confirm that I was his descendant. Max Bromberg was a successful businessman, I learned later; he was one of the founders of the German Club in Lima, Peru, and his name is inscribed in a monument at the entrance of the Jewish cemetery of Lima recording the names of the donors for its establishment. Finding out that I had Jewish ancestry helped me confirm that my Jewish journey was not a journey of conversion but a journey of return, that it was the journey of a lost Jew who finally found his way home. It had been a serious journey until then, and it became even more serious. I formally went through a conversion ceremony. I was married in a Jewish ceremony in Jerusalem to Aliza. I made Aliyah later. I took time off work to learn at the Conservative Yeshiva in Jerusalem. Eventually I took early retirement to attend rabbinical school at Hebrew College, became a rabbi, and started working with the old, the frail and the dying.

2. Highlights of my life as a Jew

My life as a Jew is centered around the three principles of Torah, Avodah and Gemilut Hasadim – Torah, service of God, and acts of kindness. Learning Torah is the backbone of our life as Jews. But Torah is not just the first five books of Moses, it is so much more. The five books of Moses, which we lovingly take out from the Ark every Shabbat, are the foundation of a much larger edifice. Torah is what Moses bequeathed to us but also the accumulated wisdom of the Jewish people since those days until our day. Torah is what we learn and what we teach. Torah is what we receive from the Jewish people and what we give back. Torah is what the prophets taught us and what we build in our day. Torah is learning to pray just as it is learning to fight for Israel. Torah is basking in our tradition to celebrate our joys as well as finding refuge in it in times of pain and distress. Torah is how the Jews do it – in all its diversity, its wisdom, its questions, even in its complicatedness.

Service of God – Avodah – is the second pillar of Judaism. Just as the word Torah is a much wider construct than what we usually call “the Torah,” so service of God is so much more than coming to shul on Shabbat to pray. Service of God is rising to our charge to sanctify the name of God in everything we do and at every point in time. Service of God is not only what we do in the enclosed sanctuary of our synagogues but is mostly what we do in the open spaces of life where we meet others and we can help them. Service of God is making life better for our fellow Jews and it is also making life better for all others. Service of God is to support Israel and to strengthen our communities. Service of God is what informs my way of life. Acts of kindness – Gemilut Hasadim – is the third pillar. It forms the backbone of my work as a rabbi. My Torah and my Avodah move me to be there for others in moments of great need. That is why my rabbinate has always been one of service to those who are getting old, to those who are sick, and to those who are dying, as well as to their families. I worked at Hebrew SeniorLife’s Newbridge facility in Dedham for a few years while I was still in rabbinical school, I then took the position of rabbi and director of spiritual care at a large Jewish institution in Miami (Miami Jewish Health, which I describe as being like Hebrew SeniorLife minus snow plus palm trees – and I eventually came back to Boston for my snow), and I currently work as a rabbi at Hebrew SeniorLife’s Simon Fireman community in Randolph and as a hospice chaplain (where I visit people of all religious back- grounds).

3. Decision to attend Hebrew College

My decision to become a rabbi took form when I was living in Ghana, in West Africa – granted, not the usual road to decide to become a rabbi. When I was working as an economist at the International Monetary Fund I was posted in Accra, Ghana as its Resident Representative. After the big shock of not being able to travel to Ghana on our scheduled flight on September 11, 2001, Aliza and I and the children eventually flew out there and settled down for two years. We traveled there thinking we would not see a Jewish person for all that time, until one of the first things we saw was a big sign on our way from the airport to the hotel, having just arrived, that had the word “Dizengoff” (like the name of the famous square in Tel Aviv) on it. Long story short, as they say, there were many Israelis and other Jewish “expats” living there.

One day early on, Aliza suggested that we invite people for Kabbalat Shabbat at home. It took some convincing for me to decide to lead Kabblat

Shabbat services in our new and strange surroundings, but we started doing it. And people joined us for prayers (and dinner!), all manner of people, including many Israelis who I am sure would never visit a synagogue in Israel. We had an open house every Friday evening at home, and all were welcome. Luckily, we never had any incident even though we were warned about Hezbollah's presence among the Lebanese in Ghana. Eventually, I started to be seen as a kind of spiritual leader in our small community. And when I asked my rabbi from the Washington DC area for a siddur that I needed because I was leading services in Ghana but we had no rabbi, he said to me, "You are wrong, you are the rabbi there." I was shocked by his words and by how I was being seen in our community. And when my posting in Ghana was over, I decided to take time off, go to Israel with Aliza, make Aliyah, and start learning in the Conservative Yeshiva.

A few years later, having returned to DC for two more years and then gone back for two more years to yet another African country (Burundi – look it up in the map, it is next to Rwanda), I took early retirement, applied at Hebrew College, went for my interview in Newton Center during a snowy day (that had to be a good sign!), and that same day I was accepted. Four years later, in June 2013, I was ordained at the old Mishkan Tefilla synagogue on Hammond Pond Parkway.

Why Hebrew College? I liked the fact that it encouraged you to adopt your own practice of Judaism and did not keep you within the strict boundaries of a certain practice. I also liked the fact that it was in Boston – the city that I have called home since I first arrived here one month before the great Blizzard of '78. I didn't like the position on Israel of many of the younger students, but it helped me to some extent to learn how to deal with those who think differently. Hebrew College was a good place for me to become a rabbi, I loved my teachers, and I made some friends there whom I appreciate very much.

4. A final word on Israel

A major component of who I am as a Jewish person is my deep love for the State of Israel. Israel is necessary. Israel is the beating heart of the Jewish world. Israel is the Jewish state, tiny in size but immense in its significance. Aliza and I have a home in Israel, close to Haifa. We have grandchildren in Israel. By the time this is published our granddaughter Lily will have become a Bat Mitzvah and we will have gone to Israel to celebrate her. Israel is a miracle. It is a miracle not because God one day decided to establish it. It is a miracle because true miracles are not gifts from God in silver

platters, but because a miracle is what we are able to do with our own hands inspired by God, given strength and resilience by God, given eyes by God that we can open and seize the opportunity to build, to grow, and to deliver. Israel is the miracle that we all have built and continue to build together, the all-too-real miracle that we fight for together. The year 5784 started with a tragedy, but the miracle that we bring about goes on, and better times lie ahead. We will recover, we will build, we will grow, and we will deliver. Am Israel Hai!