

[Search All Issues](#)

[Community Directory](#)

JEWISH NEWS

of Greater Phoenix



May 11, 2001/Iyar 18, 5761, Vol. 53, No.32

Letters to the Editor

May 11, 2001



[Click Here](#)

STORIES IN THIS ISSUE

FEATURES

[Women's foundations](#)

[Mother wants artwork](#)

VALLEY

[Solel dedicates sanctuary](#)

[Hillel receives donation](#)

[Fed maintains agency funding](#)

[Justice pioneers](#)

NATION

[McVeigh execution](#)

[Pope's silence](#)

WORLD

[Jewish vote split in Britain](#)

ISRAEL

[Gov't cautious of U.S. report](#)

[Murdered teens found in cave](#)

OPINION

[Editorial - Measure for measure](#)

[In the Mail - Letters to the Editor](#)

[Commentary - The gifts that matter most](#)

[ARTS](#)

[Bernstein celebrates Community leaders perform](#)

['Oy, it's a boy!'](#)

BUSINESS

[Success taken to heart](#)

[Mind Your Own Business - Business Calendar](#)

[People on the move](#)

COMING UP

[This Week](#)

Northwest Jewish community prospers

Editor:

Thanks you for your article about Reform Judaism and its positive development ([Jewish News, April 27](#)). It is true that Reform congregations are definitely changing in their effort to make worship more meaningful and services more relevant.

However, you failed to include us in your report. Our congregation, Temple Beth Shalom, is a West Valley congregation of 700 members. We are composed of energetic and mature adults who enjoy their participation. We have a large attendance at Sabbath services.

To facilitate a joyous spirit, we have introduced new, more informal music and celebrate with the Torah in procession. There is interaction between pulpit and pew and generally a sense of renewal from the experience.

Two weeks ago, we celebrated Israel Independence Day with a Klezmer band at the oneg Shabbat, a dialogue sermon with a member who recently returned from Israel, and spirited Israeli music. Last week, we had a creative "Renewal Service" with special attention to the power of healing and renewal of soul. Every Sabbath is indeed a "festival of the spirit."

We are a viable Reform temple, affiliated with Union of American Hebrew Congregations. We are involved in the community with social action programs and have a universal outlook. We may be a senior congregation, and many of our members are retired, but that doesn't mean that we have retired from living.

Our congregation serves an important need for its members and is as active a synagogue as any in the Valley, or for that matter, the nation.

It was an unfortunate oversight not to be included in your article about Reform Judaism and its forward-looking progress. We are indeed part of the Phoenix Jewish community and a leader in the Northwest Valley.

MILESTONES

Births
 B'nai Mitzvah
 Weddings
 Obituaries

SENIORS

Events

SINGLES

Datebook

YOUTH

Sixth-grader donates
 locks

TORAH STUDY

Dignity of deceased
 prevails over laws



Rabbi Arthur J. Abrams
Temple Beth Shalom
Sun City

Text study deserves our esteem

Editor:

First, I'd like to point out that most Orthodox Jews, including the "ultra-Orthodox Haredim," agree with Florence Eckstein's basic point, if not her cynicism in "Get a job boychik" ([Jewish News, April 27](#)). A Jew must not take anything to which he or she is not entitled, and making an honest living is a high Jewish ideal. Only yesterday, more than 400 Orthodox Jewish businessmen and professionals gathered in a Manhattan hotel for an Agudath Israel "Interface of Ethics and Halacha in the Business and Professional World" conference. They went in order to better understand their ethical obligations under Jewish law - which is stricter in many ways than secular law - regarding monetary and other workplace matters.

Almost all of those men and women spend time - some of them years - in full-time postgraduate Torah-study. That they are now part of the workforce is something you will certainly commend. But we should realize that their commitment to Jewish business ethics did not appear out of a vacuum; it was empowered by their strong immersion in our tradition and its texts.

That said, though, the unspoken subtext of the column (actually, quite explicit, in the third paragraph from the end) seems to be that immersion in full-time Torah study is somehow not desirable or defensible, even when it is supported by legal means like private underwriting. Would we be so quick to judge so harshly a government-funded research scientist or social worker that sought assistance for his or her family's needs? Would we say "shame on them"? We need to hold our own religious heritage in as much esteem (quite frankly, much more esteem) as we hold the humanities, literature and even Egyptology. All of those are legitimate academic pursuits. If we don't cherish the study of our own texts (not to mention the need for rabbis and educators), there can be no hope for Jewish continuity.

We need to applaud the many idealistic Jewish scholars and their families who have chosen to dedicate themselves to our communities and religious heritage over more lucrative avenues.

Rabbi Zvi Holland
Phoenix Community Kollel

Shame on Lieberman

Editor:

Sen. Joseph Lieberman (D-Conn.) may be a bit surprised at President Bush ([Jewish News, April 20](#)) but I'm equally surprised at the senator.

I always felt the senator to be a fair, open, honest person.

I feel strongly that once an election is over, all of us must join ranks and pull together. Isn't it much more important to keep America sound, than to insult and nit-pick?

The senator sounds as if he is still on the campaign trail. My family spent eight years enduring Bill Clinton, but never did we waste our time on name-calling. Through the years I have voted Republican and Democrat and have given the winner my support and respect.

Need to burnish Israel's image

Editor:

Mitchell Bard's premise ([Jewish News, April 27](#)) that "Israel's image problem is mostly in our heads" is both naive and dangerous. His statement "nothing can make Israel look good as long as the situation on the ground is in upheaval" assumes that Israel is at fault. Mr. Bard is dead wrong.

Citing a Gallup poll that 51 percent of respondents sympathized with Israel while 16 percent with the Palestinians, Bard ignores the 33 percent unreported...perhaps undecided? The reality is that Arab propaganda through the biased media whittles away at world opinion and thus world support for Israel. Big lies repeated over and over are eventually accepted as fact. Of course PR can't bring peace, but it is essential for continued U.S. support of Israel.

Not only must Israel be encouraged to put forth spokespersons and materials to defend its legitimate positions and actions, but also American Jews must be proactive in educating themselves about this conflict and demand fair and accurate reporting from the media.

American Jews are not naive children as portrayed by Mr. Bard but rather simply ignorant on Middle East facts. The constant media drumbeat of Arab sympathizers and apologists is undermining the average Jew's tenuous connection and sense of pride in the Jewish homeland. Education through factual, positive news stories will provide the facts that Israel is a just nation having a right to exist in peace and security.

And the fact is that as Israel goes, so goes the survival of the Jewish people.

*Helen and Jim Freedman
Tempe*

Actions, not words

Editor:

Put all ambiguity aside. The message President Bush sent to Palestinian Authority President Yasser Arafat is clear: Negotiations can only be restarted when the violence ends. We urge the President to hold fast in order to ensure that Palestinian words are translated into actions.

Don't invite Arafat to the White House until the cease-fire takes hold. That means a complete cessation for months before true negotiations can begin.

Furthermore, Israel is not at all obligated to offer what was offered to - and rejected by - the Palestinians at Camp David and Taba.

*Israel Rubin
Manalapan, NJ
(Via the Internet)*

Tune in

Editor:

The Anne Frank story is a new TV movie that will be broadcast Sunday, May 20 (and also May 21) on ABC Channel 15. You should not miss watching this - or tape it on your VCR.

You should not forget.

Bill Parker

(Via the Internet)

[Home](#)