



Holocaust Educator

By MIRIAM L. ZIMMERMAN

Can enemies become friends in a world of intolerance and xenophobia?

The old year, 2014, ended for me with hope and optimism. Technology and friendship inspired me to conclude that we humans will, indeed, figure out ways to live together in peace. The annual “Season of Light” celebration by the Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group of San Mateo included participants from the Middle East, West Africa, and North America, representing nine different “peacebuilding” organizations.

Billed as a “Three Continent Video Bridge,” technology facilitated participation by geographically diverse groups, all of which share an ideology of peace through face-to-face relationship building. Each of us creates as friends, people whom our governments define as our enemies. All of us choose to become “peacebuilders” within our respective communities. After many years as an active participant, I am now on leave from the Jewish-Palestinian Living Room Dialogue Group as other responsibilities have dominated my life.

During this season, I read a relevant book, *From Enemy to Friend: Jewish Wisdom and the Pursuit of Peace*, by Rabbi Amy Eilberg (Orbis Books 04/14 Paperback, ISBN: 9781626980617). Rabbi Eilberg’s scholarship provided a religious and spiritual rationale for peacebuilding endeavors, grounded in Jewish scripture and commentary. This book validated my own personal efforts at peacebuilding, as modest as they might be in comparison to some of the other participants.

On Dec. 6, 2014, Zoom technology set up in the living room of Len and Libby Traubman, the founders and leaders of the Jewish-Palestinian Dialogue Group, made it all possible. A large screen stretched across one end of the living room. Len’s computer projected images of the participants onto a dozen rectangles.



This is a complete listing of organizational names. Only individual names of the first group are included, both for security and brevity purposes. **Top row, (L-R):** Members of my own Living Room Dialogue Group: Nahida Salem, Ellen Rosenthal, Judy Serebrin, and Fadwa Musleh; Hagar; Jewish-Arab Education for Equality, Beer Sheva, Israel; and The Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF), Jerusalem, Israel-Palestine. **Middle row:** Hand in Hand Center for Jewish-Arab Education in Israel, Kfar Kara, Israel; Interfaith Encounter Association, Jerusalem; and United for Peace Against Conflict International (UFPACI), Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire. **Bottom row:** Sharing Life Stories & Music as Bridges, Nafat and Wahat al-Salam ~ Neve Shalom, Israel; Palestinian Peace Society – Cooperation Circle of United Religions Initiative, Hebron, West Bank, Palestine; and Interfaith Encounter Association, Jerusalem.

We connected; we communicated; and we celebrated our stories, all of which share a vision of a world living in peace and unity. Even though I met most of these people for the first time, they already felt like friends.

Rabbi Eilberg defined the psychological work involved in transforming one’s enemies into friends. In her words, it is a “movement from the heart and mind closed in fear and wounding to a state of openness and curiosity about another human being (p. 3).”

Her implicit exhortation is for the reader to “move from hatred to caring, from suspicion and fear, beyond tolerance, to embrace of the other.” According to the Rabbi, to be able to do so is the greatest heroism, as delineated in both rabbinic and Koranic teachings. To explicate these teachings and thus explore “this inner work of peacebuilding,” is the goal of her book.

Although most of the participants in the Season of Light celebration would probably not define their efforts in such terms, I believe they have intuitively managed such a progression and have been able to convert enemies to friends. In doing so, all are the greatest of heroes, according to both Jewish and Islamic traditions.

In the Video Bridge, the names of the participants reveal their diversity; their organizations’ names describe the work they do (see the picture above).

The Parents Circle – Families Forum (PCFF), Jerusalem, Israel-Palestine is a grassroots organization of bereaved Palestinians and Israelis, who have lost loved ones in the wars between the two peoples. The PCFF promotes reconciliation as an alternative to hatred and revenge. Members of this group are,

unfortunately, intimate experts on the destructive horror of war.

The magic of technology brought us together in one living room. For a complete list of these organizations, see the website of The Season of Light Three-Continent Video Bridge at this link: <http://traubman.igc.org/light2014.htm>.

It is easy to apply the wisdom from Rabbi Eilberg’s text to members of these organizations. She pointed out that in the *Torah*, the admonition “to love, reach out to, and do justice to the stranger” is repeated more than any other commandment, 36 times (p. 34). In the Jewish mystical tradition of *gematria*, in which letters have numbers, 36 is “double *chai* (“*chai*” means “life” in Hebrew,)” a very lucky number.

Rabbi Eilberg used new research findings from the field of neuroscience to explicate the dynamics of this commandment, as processed by the brain. “In developing the value of hospitality and care for the stranger, religion both reflects and nurtures the development of the frontal cortex, the part of the mind that can evaluate and sometimes supersede physical sensations of danger when, on reflection, there is really no need for fear.

“These religious values positively empower the frontal cortex to pause and reflect on the veracity of a potential threat, to question limbic panic more often, and to supersede the automatic instinct to fear the other in the absence of real danger (p. 35).”

The participants in the Season of Light celebration are acting from their neo-cortexes and not from their amygdalas, part of the primitive limbic system in the brain. We have chosen not to fear our

enemies, but to extend hospitality and make them our friends. Rabbi Eilberg sprinkled research findings from neuroscience throughout the text, an approach greatly appreciated by this academic.

On Jan. 7, 2015, just a month and a day after the Season of Light Video Bridge, the annihilation of 12 journalists of the weekly French satirical newspaper *Charlie Hebdo* by Islamic terrorists in Paris was followed by the murder of four Jews two days later at a Parisian kosher butcher shop by another Islamic extremist. My Season of Light optimism transformed into despair.

How can I write about peacebuilders, given the reality that so many fanatics want to destroy their fellow humans simply because they do not share religious beliefs? How can Rabbi Eilberg's teachings apply in such circumstances? Can such enemies ever become friends?

The *Charlie Hebdo* massacre kept my amygdala active for 24 hours. My daughter Leah and her husband Ian, both academics, spent two weeks in Munich and one in Paris over the winter break. They stayed in friends' apartments in each city. I had just received an email from my daughter with a picture (below) of her holding my granddaughter in front of the Eiffel Tower.



With Paris exploding and extremists targeting Jews, I panicked for the safety of my daughter and her family, somewhere in the City of Light. My neo-cortex told me they were safe, but my amygdala took charge, causing me to rail against Islamic terrorists who threatened my people, my family.

Finally, an email arrived from Leah, now safely back in Munich. "The apartment we stayed in was very close to the *Charlie Hebdo* offices where the shooting occurred. The attacks occurred around the

time we were leaving for the train station" to return to Germany. Irony supplanted anxiety as I realized that Germany provided a safe haven for my Jewish daughter and her family. I said a prayer of thanks for personal delivery from danger when I learned that her friend's apartment was in the same arrondissement (neighborhood) of Paris as *Charlie Hebdo*.

I turned to Rabbi Eilberg's book to help me understand how to think about the events in Paris. On page 84, she explicated the calling for Jews to serve as a "light unto the nations" (Isa. 42:6). "It is essential for Jews to develop the capacity to see the world as others see it, as well as through the lens of our own experience. If we never fully open ourselves to global perspectives, how can we serve the nations?"

As a light unto the nations, we are "to help bring the world to God and to justice, but not to persuade the peoples of the world to live as Jews (p. 85)." With the creation of Christianity and Islam, we successfully brought God to the gentiles. But there is more work to do. *And that is the work of the heroes of the organizations listed above.*

A light bulb went off somewhere in my brain, probably not in my amygdala. We Jews need to teach the world that there are many paths to God, a continuing religious imperative, grounded in our responsibility to be a light unto the nations. Are you listening Isis? This is a commandment from God: you need to learn that your way is not the only way.

The last chapter, "The Ways of Peace," is like a how-to manual for peacebuilders, including both theory and exercises that individuals can activate in everyday life. As an academic, I appreciate her translating peace theory into peace practice. Many concrete ways of thinking and behaving were presented in that concluding chapter, that, with conscientious effort, anyone can incorporate into their own lives.

On p. 240, she referenced rabbinic teaching that Amalek (the collective name for the enemies of Jews; the opposite of what is godly and pure) is our own evil inclination. In the face of conflict, we are to ask what is our own role in this battle? What have we contributed to get here? "Thus, the 'inner Amalek' idea exhorts us to stop shouting deeply inside ourselves to see how we ourselves might contribute to the conflict and how we might instead work for its resolution (p. 241)." "The shouting is, 'I'm right; you're wrong.'"

That challenge was too much for me, given the activation of my amygdala by the *Charlie Hebdo* murderers and my fears for my daughter's safety. On page 260, Rabbi Eilberg acknowledged that Jews are commanded to defend themselves in the face of threat. "Judaism is not

a pacifist tradition. A clear preponderance of Jewish sources defends – even requires – responding with violence when necessary to protect life."

These seemingly contradictory commandments must be mediated by our neo-cortex, so that we choose appropriate responses that could result in peace. I admit I have a great deal of work to do to be able even to think about Islamic terrorists as potential friends.

Rabbi Eilberg gave me tools for understanding peace work by connecting and dissecting the religious, spiritual, psychological and neurobiological dimensions of human interaction in the face of conflict. Her section, "Listening from the Heart" reinforced what I have done implicitly throughout my career as a communication professor. I have taught the importance of listening to one's adversary in almost every communication course I have ever taught.

Finally, the book is a personal reflection on the Rabbi's own journey engaging in this work. She shared realizations she made in encountering texts and in her experience of the teachings of rabbinic sages, both ancient and contemporary. Her insights into peacebuilding became mine. The reader feels her presence, her voice, throughout the text.

In juxtaposing the Season of Light participants with murderous religious fanatics, I realize how challenging it is to engage in the work of peacebuilding. Interacting with those who are already peacebuilders is easy; the test is to apply Rabbi Eilberg's teachings to those who would destroy us.

Each of us can become a hero, by transforming enemies into friends. Self-reflection is critical to begin this work. Rabbi Eilberg pointed out that it must begin from a place of humility regarding one's self and generosity toward those who are different from ourselves. It will

(see Zimmerman, page 18)

From her website, <http://www.rabbi-amyeilberg.com/>: Rabbi Amy Eilberg is the first woman ordained as a Conservative rabbi by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

After many years of work in pastoral care and hospice, Rabbi Eilberg now serves as a spiritual director, directs interfaith dialogue programs in Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN, and teaches at United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities. She serves as a co-chair of the Civility Initiative of the Jewish Council on Public Affairs and teaches the art of listening and peacebuilding in venues throughout the country. Photo taken by Marcie Stein; used with permission.



KAPLAN

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Preheat oven to broil. Rub lamb with oil and sprinkle with salt and pepper. Broil or grill 4–5 minutes per side for medium or for desired doneness. Let cool 5 minutes. If serving immediately, slice into thin, 2-inch long pieces. If making in advance, wait to slice after reheating. In a small bowl, whisk mayonnaise, white horse-radish, sugar and wine until well combined. Add salt and black pepper. To assemble salad, place romaine in a large bowl. Add celery and parsley and toss to combine. Sprinkle walnuts and apples on top, arrange egg quarters around perimeter of bowl. Scatter lamb pieces on top. To serve, scoop some of everything onto each plate and drizzle with the dressing.

Crumb Cake Muffins (gluten free)

(16–18 muffins)

Batter

- 4 large eggs, separated
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup packed light brown sugar
- 2 tsp. vanilla (optional)
- 1/4 cup milk
- 3/4 cup gluten-free cake meal or potato starch
- dash salt

Streusal topping

- 1 Tbsp. ground cinnamon
- 1/2 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1/2 cup pecan halves, chopped into 1/3-inch pieces
- 1/2 cup walnut halves, chopped into 1/3-inch pieces
- 3 Tbsp. unsalted butter at room temperature
- 1 Tbsp. gluten-free cake meal or potato starch

Preheat oven to 350°F. Place paper cups in 16–18 cups of muffin tins. Place egg yolks, sugar, brown sugar, vanilla (if using) and milk in medium bowl and beat with electric mixer at medium speed for 1 minute. Add cake meal or potato starch and beat for 2 minutes more. In a separate bowl, beat egg whites on low speed until foamy. Add salt then beat on high speed until stiff. Using a silicone spatula, fold the whites into the batter in four parts, mixing at increasingly slower speeds after each addition until all the whites are incorporated. In a medium bowl, mix the streusel cinnamon, brown sugar, pecans and walnuts. Add the butter and cake meal or potato starch and use your fingers to work the mixture until it sticks together. Break it back into crumbs. Fill the muffin cups 2/3 to 3/4 full with batter. Sprinkle crumbs on top. Bake for 22–25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted into the center of a muffin comes out clean.

Sybil Kaplan is a journalist, food and feature writer, and author of nine kosher cookbooks. ★

JACOBSON/KLEINER

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Palace Hotel.

The latter was built in 1929, to what was, in that period, the highest expectations demanded of a luxury hostelry in the Middle East. Although it might seem bizarre today, the Palace offered a unique technological novelty in that time slot, an elevator and steaming hot water in the guest rooms.

The architect was Nahas Bey, a Turkish citizen. The Waldorf Astoria re-builders took great care to preserve many of the elements of The Palace, including the splendid exterior facade, the great Hall and the spacious public rooms.

1929 however, was inauspiciously the beginning of the Great Depression, whose tendrils precipitated a worldwide economic malaise which eventually engulfed the Middle East and The Palace Hotel. It suffered a catastrophic financial collapse and it was Britain’s mandatory government in Palestine, which stepped in to transform the hotel into a huge government administration building.

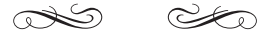
About a decade ago, more than 80 years after the original Palace Hotel closed, the Reichmann family of Toronto, Canada, decided to invest \$150 million in a bold project to add one more prestige property in Jerusalem to the 26 existing Waldorf Astorias worldwide. The Reichmanns contracted with the Hilton Corporation to manage the new hotel. A small sample of the family’s private library of Jewish books can be found in the hotel’s lower lobby.

It took almost seven years to find and install the electronic and decorating materials that met the exacting standards of the Waldorf Astoria. The finished structure, completed in 2014, in time for the Passover holiday, has succeeded admirably in reinstating the quiet grandeur associated with the Palace Hotel, and in going beyond that by virtue of the old-new aesthetics, embedded into the Jerusalem Waldorf’s design, cuisine and airy ambience. It has already been characterized, in its first year of operation, as the flagship of the Waldorf Astoria chain.

Extraordinary care has been taken by the management to ensure the hotel’s reputation for the finest appointments; the current hotel has sparkling crystal chandeliers that cost over \$2 million, Italian-made furniture and rugs, and each guest room door bears a beautiful glass *mezuzah* made in the Czech Republic. The Jerusalem hotel features Greco-Roman, Gothic and Ottoman architecture as well as Oriental design inside to match the outside exterior.

The hotel is *sui generis* in its ecumenical spirit. *Kashrut* prevails throughout, including in-room dining, while many of the service

and staff cadres are from the Israeli Arab community, all of whom speak English and Hebrew. Just off the main floor foyer area in the middle of a downward staircase is a swirling collection of sculpted doves suspended on a fifty foot pole encircled by English, Hebrew and Arabic wall inscriptions invoking the hopes for peace. ★



ZIMMERMAN

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not be easy; we have to start by understanding and taking control of our own amygdalas, acknowledging our own role in the conflict. Let the work begin.

Dr. Zimmerman is professor emerita at Notre Dame de Namur University (NDNU) in Belmont, Calif., where she continues to teach the Holocaust course. She can be reached at mzimmerman@ndnu.edu. ★



SILVER

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instrumental in the gatherings from the early 1950’s when a group of professors and town professionals established Har Shalom to start a Sunday school so their children would continue the heritage. The elder Chessin housed the congregation’s *Torah*, borrowed from a closed congregation in Helena for Bert’s *bar mitzvah*. It is now the current *Torah*.

“There is a Hillel at the university that gathers Friday night for *Shabbos*, but they come to Har Shalom for *Rosh Hashanah* and *Purim* – we have a big *Purim* party – and they have their own *Sukkoth*, and do their own *Seder* but they use our building,” says Bert. “It’s all part of the larger Jewish community.”

On the wall of the sanctuary is Deuteronomy Chapter 30, which is the final discourse Moses gave the people of Israel right before they entered *Eretz Yisrael*, the land of Israel. Har Shalom, Mountain of Peace, closing in on 65 families, continues to grow from strength to strength in Missoula, the Garden City of Montana. To contact the congregation, go to www.har-shalom.org.

Matthew J. Silver is a writer, reporter and researcher living in Indianapolis. ★



GOLD

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are mine. I did not mean to offend, but my integrity caused me to share my reaction to the music as well as their performance. Should you feel differently, that is your right. It is really a question of taste.

Dr. Gold is an award winning composer and critic, and the son of a hazzan. ★