Religions and Reality

Pesach and Easter have their origins in or near Israel. Pesach, or Passover, is a holiday to commemorate and remember the liberation of the Jews from slavery in Egypt. Easter is the Christian celebration of the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth, and a day of redemption.

At Pesach, Jews make matzah to remember the Exodus from Egypt. The unleavened bread commemorates the fact that Jews fleeing the Pharaoh’s army were in a hurry, and did not have time to let their bread rise. To symbolize the resurrection of Jesus, Christians eat the Lamb to symbolize the resurrection of Jesus, who was crucified by the Romans. He cried out “Eli, Eli, lama asawatani?” – “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Only then did Jesus find redemption.

In the age of exile and persecution, Jews have regained their biblical homeland. Today, Israel lives in relative peace and security. The country has achieved a kind of “cold peace” with the great Arab powers, including Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. But the enormous human and economic potential of peaceful collaboration remains to be achieved. However, the relative peace within and around Israel is no reason for complacency. The Israel-Palestine conflict is far from resolved. In this part of the world, war and violence remain the norm. In the Syrian civil war alone, more than half a million people have been killed in recent years. Millions more have been injured, displaced, or forced to flee. Major powers in the region – and Russia and Iran – continue to help sustain the war with money, weapons and soldiers. The democratic and Christian nations, for most parts, are simply watching and standing by.

Pesach, or Passover, is also a time of renewed hope. In the days of Passover, Jews remember the story of how the Israelites were saved from slavery in Egypt, and how they were able to escape. Similarly, Jews hope that they will one day be able to escape from the current situation in Israel and Palestine.

Jews must live in safety

HEIKO MAAS

Jews must live in safety

Federal Minister of Justice Heiko Maas aims to have a hand in securing that Jews live safely in Germany. It is shameful that Jewish institutions in this country still require police protection. Maas tells JVG in an interview, in which he also commits himself to German-Israeli friendship, that Jews should be able to live in safety.

This mutual understanding is a necessary precondition for the peace that we all desire. Peace, Shalom and Salaam – it is a wish worth striving for. But words alone will not bring about peace between religions and between states. Peace is an arduous process. It requires a great deal of patience and to be able to engage with, and understand, the needs of the other side.

Matzah with Lamb

Dear Readers,

Matzah, the bread of Jewish liberation, and the white lamb of Easter, the Christian symbol of the innocent Son of God – are they compatible? Yes! They are indeed compatible in the Jewish Voice, a publication that seeks to advocate for mutual understanding. This mutual understanding is a necessary precondition for the peace that we all desire. Peace, Shalom and Salaam – it is a wish worth striving for. But words alone will not bring about peace between religions and between states. Peace is an arduous process. It requires a great deal of patience and to be able to engage with, and understand, the needs of the other side.

Avoiding future wars

This is also what the Jewish Voice regards as one of its central missions. On page 2 of this issue, we describe how a window of opportunity for peace has opened between Israel and its moderate Arab neighbors. We must take advantage of this opportunity now – otherwise the window will close and the conflicts could once again escalate. But the wars of the future will above all be fought over water – our most precious resource. We also describe how modern technology from Israel is making it possible to reduce water use and combat hunger effectively. That way, we will be able to avoid the black sheep war and famine.

Jewish Voice
Peace Now!

Window of opportunity should be used

By Rafael Seligmann

T

It is time for an Arab-Israeli peace deal. And it has to happen soon, because the moment is auspicious and it will not last. We currently have a pairing of circumstances that have been seized upon by foreign and regional players and that have all the makings of a historic opportunity.

An appreciation of the connection between politics and the economy is nothing new. In Ecclesiastes, King Solomon pointed out: “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens: a time to tear and a time to mend, ... a time for war and a time for peace.”

Solomon was by no means a naïve monarch who sought peace at any cost; he was an experienced politician who understood that something to many a more recent politician has refused to recognize on principle, namely that in the real world the use of force by a state can sometimes not be avoided if the outbreak of greater wars and the domination of the most ruthless are to be prevented. Considering the dilemma of good intentions in the empirical world, the German sociologist Max Weber (1864-1920) developed the concept of an ‘ethic of responsibility’, whereby an agent considers the possible effects of his actions, and the contrasting concept of an ‘ethic of conviction’, whereby the unbounding commitment to, say, peace can have only ill effects in sequences. One example of the latter might be the appeasement of Nazi Germany by Britain and France in the 1930s.

The time has come for peace in the Middle East. The decisive reason for that is that the Jewish state is surrounded right now by neighbors willing to make peace: Egypt, Saudi Arabia and Jordan. The exception is Lebanon, which is ruled by the Shi’ite Islamist Hezbollah.

Sadat and Begin

Relations between Israel and Egypt demonstrate the very real power of peace. Those relations were first marked by war: Since Israel was established in 1948, the two countries fought three wars – in 1948, 1967 and 1973. The hostility towards Egypt dates back 3,500 years, when the Egyptians were enslaved there. In the 20th century, war and violence seemed to be the dominating factor in the binding Israel and Egypt to each other – until 1977, when Egyptian President Anwar Sadat decided, on the spur of the moment, to invite Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin to come to Jerusalem. Sadat held a revolutionary address before the Knesset. He welcomed Israel among the Arab states, which until then had all been at war with the Jewish state, but he demonstrated in return that Israel would draw from all the Arab territories it had occupied in 1967 and that it make peace with the Palestinians.

Cup of coffee: ‘There is peace. Those relations were now by neighbors willing to make peace. Some ministers thought there was room for a deal whereby Israel could keep part of Sinai, but Sadat would not budge. He insisted on Israel’s full withdrawal from the peninsula.

The nationalist Begin realized that Sadat’s offer was genuine: Either Israel accepts his terms and there will be peace between the two countries, or the Israeli people will be lost. The prime minister and his foreign minister, Moshe Dayan, chose peace and ordered a complete pullout from Sinai. It was a painful decision. Just four years earlier, in the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, Israel had avoided a military catastrophe thanks to the strategic depth provided by its occupation of Egypt’s Sinai peninsula – the only place Israel’s army had any scope to pull back.

Nonetheless, Begin’s government chose to accept Egypt’s offer. At that time, the Israelis understood that peace would make their country much safer than would strategic depth plus enmity, which would have meant the continuation of the series of wars with Egypt.

Stable treaties

For this achievement, Menachem Begin and Anwar Sadat were rightly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Sadat paid for this peace with his life. An Islamist extremist murdered him in 1981. Fourteen years later, the then Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin of the Labour Party was murdered in Tel Aviv by an Israeli extremist. Rabin’s ‘crime’ was continuing to pursue Begin’s policy of ‘Land for Peace’ and signing a peace deal with Egypt.

Jordan’s King Husni died in 1994. Despite a number of crises, both treaties have proved to be stable; peace has endured until today. Peace has never reigned eternal, especially in the Middle East. The region is currently being ravaged by several wars. The civil war in Syria has killed more than half a million people, wounded countless more and driven millions from their homes. A civil war is also raging in Yemen, where the Shi’ite Houthi militia are attempting to seize control and are also threatening Saudi Arabia. Aggressive Islamist forces are controlled and supported by Iran. Its Shi’ite regime is open about its goals of destroying Israel and becoming the leading power in the region. Tehran wants to topple the moderate governments in Egypt and Saudi Arabia and replace them with Islamist ones. In Amman know that, unlike Israel, Iran represents a strategic threat. They are ready to make peace with the Jewish state. The need is the same as it was for Sadat and Begin: land for peace. In 2002, Saudi Arabia and the U.S. put it in Washington, Israel does not want to rule over two million Palestinians. He should draw the consequences and form a stable coalition government with the opposition forces that are committed to peace in order to focus on the goal of creating rapprochement. Now is the moment. It must not be missed.
It’s Never Too Late for Justice
Heiko Maas on ideals, basic rights, Israel, power and triathlon

The Social Democratic Party has a new star. How do you account for Martin Schulz’s success?

Martin Schulz speaks a language that people understand. And he’s focusing on the right issues – many issues that fall under the rubric of “social justice,” which has the SPD breathing a huge sigh of relief. His form of political engagement, and the way he speaks, gives people the sense that he’s listening to them, understands them, and is placing their concerns at the center of his political agenda.

What does Judaism mean to you?

Judaism, and especially Jewish Germany, has become an extremely important aspect of my life and my work. I first went into politics because I had grappled in a very intense way with Germany’s past. During my years as a Federal Minister, I’ve visited Israel more often than any other country. Despite any political differences we may have, I collaborate closely with my Israeli counterpart, Ayelet Shaked, and we’ve been able to launch many projects together. Judaism is thus a very important aspect of my political work; wherever I can, I work toward the goal that is my dream, which is that Jews in Germany will be able to live completely normal and ordinary lives. I think it is shameful that their schools and synagogues still require police protection.

You recently presented the results of the Rosenburg Files study in Tel Aviv. Why didn’t this study of the history of the Federal Ministry of Justice get underway much earlier, for example under SPD Ministers of Justice Heinemann, Vogel, or Jahn?

That probably has something to do with the fact that until the early 1990s, many people in positions of leadership within the ministry were former Nazi Party members. But it’s never too late for justice to be served. It’s terrible that it took so long – but that makes it all the more important that we finally managed to undertake a thorough investigation of the topic.

In a speech before the Knesset in March 2008, the German chancellor said Israel’s security is non-negotiable... Two years ago, this security was indirectly the subject of negotiations by the permanent members of the Security Council plus Germany. Israel, but also Saudi Arabia and Egypt, feel themselves under threat from Iran...

I understand the skepticism on the part of Israel with respect to this nuclear deal with Iran. But this agreement was not made by individual states; rather, it reflects what the majority of the international community regards as a sensible solution. We are convinced that Israel’s fears will not be realized – otherwise we would never have agreed to such a deal. Increasing Iran’s isolation would not have been a viable solution – not for Israel, either.

How is Germany helping to secure Israel’s existence?

Germany is an active partner when it comes to matters of Israel’s defense. We also want to help represent Israel’s interests in international associations and organizations. To the best of our ability, we wish to help Israel ensure that its people can live in safety.

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What is the biggest danger to German democracy today?

Extremists and populists; they have no affinity for the truth. They try to pit different groups of people against one another for political advantage. Citizens against non-citizens, citizens against citizens. That is paving the way to increasing divisions within our society. Ultimately, it could mean that conflicts and disagreements will no longer be negotiated in parliament, but battled out on the streets. All democratic forces must seek to counter this threat. Moreover, the actions of extremists cannot merely be countered in the political sphere; they are also a matter for the courts. Crimes committed in the name of extremism against individuals as well as against the state must be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

What about hate speech online? You are stepping up pressure on online providers.

Unfortunately, hate crimes are not being sufficiently addressed and removed online. This is first of all a legal matter. Hate speech, threats, and slander are criminal acts, and they must be pursued to the fullest extent of the law. The internet is not outside the law. We also want social network providers to assume greater responsibility. Twitter removes only 1 percent of reported criminal content. Facebook removes 90 percent of such content. Google removes 90 percent of such content from YouTube, which demonstrates that we are not demanding the impossible. We have now decided to purpose legal measures: if an online provider fails to enact a functional complaint system, individual staff members could face fines up to €5 million, while the company could face fines up to €50 million.

Right-wing populists in Poland and Hungary, Brexit... how can liberal Europe regain the upper hand?

Only with good arguments. I know this is difficult, particularly in our post-factual age. But we will not be able to solve any of the major challenges of our present day or the future, whether they be matters of environment or climate policy, or problems that are economic, social or political in nature, purely on the level of the nation-state. It is even more the case when it comes to questions of migration. Otherwise we are doomed to fail. Even if it requires immense effort, even if we’re forced to talk until we’re blue in the face, I don’t believe there’s any alternative to international collaboration when it comes to tackling our current problems, which are all cross-border in nature.

What lessons have you learned as a triathlete when it comes to politics and to life in general?

That it’s worth it to never give up. To continue on your path, even if it’s sometimes painful. To keep going. And to stand up if you fall. The goal lies ahead of you somewhere – and it’s waiting for you. And when you arrive at your goal, it will be extremely satisfying.

What does power mean to you?

Power isn’t something to be exercised for its own sake. Power is what makes it possible to implement some of the things you believe in. Without power, that’s impossible. That’s why you need to have an enlightened attitude toward power. In the political sphere, claiming that you want nothing to do with power is nothing but a lie.

Heiko Maas spoke with JVG editors Elisabeth Neu and Rafael Seligmann at the Federal Ministry of Justice and Consumer Protection in Berlin.
Nothing to Celebrate for Anybody

Ideals, security and economic interests in danger

By Claudia Schlembach

A rticle 50 of the EU’s Lisbon Treaty has been triggered. Britain will leave the European Union. Two years now remain to negotiate an exit deal that will satisfy all parties. This is not a lot of time, given the many issues that require clarification. But it is plenty of time to do harm to the ideals of an open and enlightened international order.

The outcome of the Brexit vote was in part the result of a highly emotional debate, but it also reflected more objective reasons that have to do with the European Union itself. The perception among European citizens that the “Eurocrats” have created a bureaucratic monster that is doing an end-run around basic issues such as security and migration reflects what is, at the very least, a failure of communication on the part of the EU.

Fear of uncontrolled migration, especially from Eastern Europe, which was stoked by the conviction that these new arrivals were taking British jobs, ranked among the top reasons given for leaving the EU. This is one of the perennial arguments in the protectionist repertoire. However, EU regulations do not permit restrictions on free movement of workers. Until now, this principle has been a sine qua non for membership in the EU. This is one of the perennial arguments in the protectionist repertoire.

But it is already possible to say what we will lose – what Europe, the idea of Europe, and Germany will lose. Europe is more than its bureaucracy and its economic interests. For its part, the European Commission should have been able to predict, at least presented itself as such, even when this posture was not always founded in reality. A country that, together with Germany,adena strategic actor in the world order, appears to no longer be robust enough to appeal to its nearest neighbors. Every force that weakens the union also weakens the structures of democracy and the rule of law. This is something that Europe should have been able to predict, and Europe should have done more to strengthen the union as such, rather than its bureaucracy and its economic rationale. Brexit offers an opportunity for Europe to do exactly that. But it is no reason to celebrate.

By Claudia Schlembach

Only a slim majority voted for Brexit, and even today many Britons are taking to the streets to demonstrate in favor of remaining in the EU. The outcome of the Brexit vote was in part the result of a highly emotional debate, but it also reflected more objective reasons that have to do with the European Union itself. The perception among European citizens that the “Eurocrats” have created a bureaucratic monster that is doing an end-run around basic issues such as security and migration reflects what is, at the very least, a failure of communication on the part of the EU. But it is already possible to say what we will lose – what Europe, the idea of Europe, and Germany will lose. Europe is more than its bureaucracy and its economic interests. For its part, the European Commission should have been able to predict, at least presented itself as such, even when this posture was not always founded in reality. A country that, together with Germany,adena strategic actor in the world order, appears to no longer be robust enough to appeal to its nearest neighbors. Every force that weakens the union also weakens the structures of democracy and the rule of law. This is something that Europe should have been able to predict, and Europe should have done more to strengthen the union as such, rather than its bureaucracy and its economic rationale. Brexit offers an opportunity for Europe to do exactly that. But it is no reason to celebrate.
Discontinuity and Uncertainty

Whither transatlantic relations?

By Michael S. Cullen

In 1933, the Marx Brothers filmed *Duck Soup*. There are two scenes in which Chicolino (Chico) disputes what another person has just ascertained. Chico is nothing but logical, taking a page from Lewis Carroll: “Who you gonna believe, me or your own eyes?” The best interpretation of Marxism.

I have never read Trump’s *The Art of the Deal*, and I don’t intend to. Aside from the fact that it was ghost-written by a man who just jotted down Trump’s exaggerations, at the end of the day, there has to be a handshake, a mazel and a broche to seal a deal. How can anyone shake this man’s hand? I am not meshugge.

We know much more about Trump than we need to know. He has no humility, no sense of history, and, until the gas attack, no empathy, and craves adulation; perhaps the worst thing for other sentient beings: he has no antenna for distinguishing nutty conspiracy theories by crackpot talk-radio slobs from verifiable information. He tweets against ‘fake news’, but he is both purveyor and victim, and he is ignorant of that. He is no role model – kids imitate him in school, teachers tear their hair out. Mothers are also warned: when Trump is on TV, keep the kids occupied with something else.

Facts are the result of agreements, spoken or tacit, learned or inherited, by which we regulate social and political life; many, if not most of them, have come down to us from the Decalogue and the Sermon on the Mount: ‘don’t lie’, ‘don’t murder’ are basic. Daniel Patrick Moynihan put it bluntly: “Everybody has the right to his own opinions, nobody has the right to his own facts.”

Agreeing on basics

If, as we must have learned from Orwell and Huxley, there is no way to know the truth or to agree on the days of the week, that left is left and right is right, that up is up and down is down, we cannot engage in rational discourse. A king cannot rule, a minister cannot preach, a chancellor cannot enforce laws, a parliament cannot decide on taxes. If we don’t agree on basics, we can’t agree on anything derived from them. But back to Carroll: “When I use a word,’ Humpty Dumpty said, in rather a scornful tone, ‘it means just what I choose it to mean – neither more nor less.’ The question is,” said Alice, ‘whether you can make words mean so many different things.’ The question is,” said Humpty Dumpty, ‘which is to be master – that’s all.’

As the *L. A. Times* wrote in early April, Trump has a ‘preternaturally deft grasp of his audience ... He has a remarkable instinct for discerning which conspiracy theories in which quasi-news source, or which of his own inner musings, will turn into ratings gold. He targets the darkness, anger and insecurity that hide in each of us and harnesses them for his own purposes. If one of his lies doesn’t work – well, then he lies about that.’

Medically speaking, we have several diagnoses and partial amnesia. The problem remains, and not only for the 62+ millions who voted for him and the others who didn’t, in the US and abroad: what can be done about it? Is there a cure? And is the cure worse than the disease?

How far apart are Europe and the United States? In many cases – see NATO – they are joined at the hip. In the question of human rights, they are further apart than New Zealand from Hammerfest.

There is, for instance, the 1st Amendment, which says that

We create chemistry that helps shrinking farmland love growing appetites.

With a growing population comes the need for more food. To ensure that everyone can enjoy a balanced diet, we are co-creating solutions to a number of different challenges across the food production and supply chain. When more food gets to where it’s needed, it becomes BASF’s mission: we create chemistry.
Discontinuity and Uncertainty

The sense of proximity is something YouTube has to its advantage. For popular YouTubers, the place where their opinions are formed is with them. This sense of proximity is one of the reasons behind their success. Unlike television or pop stars, YouTubers establish direct contact with their fans, speak without filters, and engage with them. This sense of proximity is what has led many young people to regard their YouTubers’ idols as role models and “true friends.”

But there is a problem: Jewish life in Germany remains largely invisible on social media. At the same time, these channels are being utilized very effectively by anti-Semites for propaganda purposes. Even obvious falsehoods remain unchallenged. With support from the German Ministry for Family Affairs, the newly founded association Sapere Aude in Berlin is now taking aim at this problem. The phrase “saper aude” was proclaimed by the philosopher Immanuel Kant as the motto for the Enlightenment: “Have the courage to use your own understanding.” This is precisely what the initiative aims to encourage in our age of digital communication, calling to life an “Enlightenment 2.0.”

Europe may feel neglected:
Trump has bigger fish to fry

Europe is very worried. For good reason: With few exceptions, 500 million Europeans have been at peace with each other for 70 years now – one of the longest periods of peace in the history of the “old world.” They credit this peace to several factors: to the generosity and good will of Americans who helped them get back on their feet after 1945; to Europeans like Jean Monnet and Robert Schuman, who forged the precursor of the EU. Most Europeans have everything Americans have and more. And Americans have everything Europeans love and admire America and Americans and wish to at least visit. This is certainly as good as it gets. Yes, it is, or perhaps was.

What changed this outlook was Brexit; first, on June 23, the Brits voted to leave the European Union. The double-whammy followed on November 8th and much of Europe felt devastated. Can’t everything stay the way it is? Why change a winning team? Why change horses in midstream?

But Brexit means that there will be discontinuity in Europe, and certain problems that have been cooking on the back burner will be brought up and cause headaches: Spain and Britain over Gibraltar; Scotland and England over Brexit; Cyprus divided between Greece and Turkey – to name a few.

And Trump is inconsistent: getting rid of TPP, although it would be his best card to challenge China; stoking trade wars, etc. Also he has no interest in issues important to Europe, such as education, history, the sciences, space exploration, research, the environment or consumer protection. It is an illusion to think that he will take up much time with Europe, especially when there is no political or other price to pay for neglect. To borrow a phrase: Even after September 11th, when Germany holds national elections, little will change in US-German relations. There is simply no vital or crucial problem that needs a well-considered and quick solution. Even Martin Schulz’s election would not turn much around.

Moreover, Europe has stricter laws to keep Russia, the EU’s new adversary, in check. In the case of the US, Trump is sitting pretty on the Crimean peninsula and breathing heavy in Ukraine and definitely working to destabilize the Baltic glacies or to bring it back into its military and economic orbit.

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For the foreseeable future, Europe may feel neglected: Trump has bigger fish to fry, in no particular order: Syria, North Korea, China, Iran, Iraq and ISIS. Not to mention the full plate at home, including the budget, energy, climate, health care, immigration, infrastructure, jobs, justice and prisons, police, guns, taxes and more.

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NAFFO

The Explainers
Middle East Peace Forum helps Germans understand the Israeli position

By Jardena Lunde

In all areas of politics it is a common challenge to turn the avalanches of information into something that is comprehensible, understandable and practical for parliamentarians. This is precisely where an NGO like the Nahost Friedensforum e.V. (NAFFO) can provide valuable input and assistance to politicians.

NAFFO acts as a facilitator for information and experts. It aims to advise German policymakers on developments in the Middle East and provides them with relevant background information and expertise to understand this complex region and its problems. NAFFO aims to do this in a balanced manner and bases its work on a set of core values, including the rule of law, secular democracy and universal human rights. The organization is open to all religious and political movements in the Middle East whose aim it is to work towards a fair peace and bases its work on a set of core values, including the rule of law, secular democracy and universal human rights. The organization is open to all religious and political movements in the Middle East whose aim it is to work towards a fair peace and subscribe to the principles of democracy and tolerance.

NAFFO sees the German-Israeli relationship as more than a historic responsibility. The organization views Israel as a natural partner for Germany, one who shares its democratic and liberal values and principles, and who fights on the same side in the struggle against terrorism.

Practical input

Through its diverse network and independent structure, NAFFO is in a position to assist German policymakers in ways that other institutions cannot. It delivers practical input and information on current topics tailored to politicians. NAFFO knows the relevant voices and enables a dialogue between the various parties. The approach is simple: through the provision of information and relevant conversational partners, NAFFO can help shed light onto complicated issues and assist politicians in drawing their own conclusions. This is achieved through various means, including the provision of position papers and analyses of “hot topics,” one-on-one discussions with parliamentarians, briefings and panel discussions with top experts and politicians from the region. At the heart of NAFFO’s work lie regular parliamentary delegations to Israel and the Palestinian Territories. The opportunity to see the situation on the ground and to speak with the involved parties is second to none in providing an understanding for the complexity of the problem. NAFFO has also organized its own panel at the prestigious Munich Security Conference for four years in a row.

NAFFO’s currency is trust. It fully understands the value of confidential conversations. Instead of aiming at publicity, it builds on a number of carefully nurtured reliable relationships. With this foundation, the organization has successfully built a solid reputation among key stakeholders that regularly ask for input or expert-referrals. Politicians know that NAFFO stands for serious research and analysis, balanced positions and access to top experts. Adding to its credible standing is NAFFO’s structure as a membership association, composed of German citizens with diverse backgrounds. It is an independent registered charity, financed by donations from its members, many of whom are enthusiastically involved in NAFFO’s activities. Parliamentarians value this interaction with engaged German citizens.

Thanks to these unique characteristics, NAFFO is in a position to assist and inform politicians for the benefit of all parties involved. NAFFO’s role is becoming even more crucial considering the recent shift in dynamics in the international arena.

Due to the unpredictability of a Trump administration in the US, the UK’s decision to leave the EU, and uncertainty regarding the French presidential election this year, Germany is taking an increasingly prominent role. Both within the European Union and globally – including the Middle East.

Germany’s Energiewende

A great piece of work.

Great for energy security. Great for secure jobs.

Germany has already made a great deal of progress, and every day is generating even more affordable, clean energy, secure jobs, expert knowledge for the future, sustainable growth and a better quality of life for everyone. Our energy transition is turning Germany into one of the most energy-conscious and environmentally friendly countries in the world. Find out what we have already achieved and where we still need to go in the newsletter “Energiewende direkt”.

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Self-driving cars can save lives and resources

By Lukas Hecht

Jerusalem, 13 Hartom Street. Here stands an inconspicuous office building of light brick with dark blue windows, one like many in the city. And yet this building is something special: It’s home to the renowned Israeli company Mobileye; it’s the place where tomorrow’s technology is being developed today – Mobileye is creating a brave new world of cars that drive without drivers.

In only a few years, the company has grown from start-up to global market leader in the field of driving assistance systems. Almost all modern cars use technology from Mobileye, with the company itself claiming a market share of 90 percent. Giants like BMW, Volkswagen, Audi and Ford are among the Israeli company’s customers. In 2016, the company recorded sales of USD 1.3 billion.

Mobileye is one of the few players on Israel’s colorful start-up scene to have made the leap to the international stage. The US chip maker Intel recently announced it would buy this small company bursting with great ideas for USD 15.3 billion – the largest deal in Israeli history. That makes Mobileye worth ten times more than Opel was when General Motors sold the unit to Peugeot. What is Mobileye’s secret? Who are the brains behind the hair, Shashua has little in common with the stereotype of the hip, baby-faced tech-company founder. He is a professor of computer sciences at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a leading expert in the field of artificial intelligence. Together with experienced businessman Ziv Aviram, he founded Mobileye in 1999 and quickly made the tech company a success.

Mobileye fare any better? “Artificial intelligence is the future, and the car is the ideal platform for that function,” says Professor Amnon Shashua, the ingenious software engineer behind Mobileye. “And we know how to optimize the technology.”

56 years of age, with clean-shaven face and dense black hair, Shashua has little in common with the stereotype of the hip, baby-faced tech-company founder. He is a professor of computer sciences at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a leading expert in the field of artificial intelligence. Together with experienced businessman Ziv Aviram, he founded Mobileye in 1999 and quickly made the tech company a success.

Three functions are vital for this. Mobileye uses sensors that interpret the fields of view and filter out extraneous data – magic eyes that can locate other road users, pedestrians, for example, or cyclists and motorists. Then, there is the processing of the data to ensure the system’s maps are as up to date as possible. And lastly, there’s the system’s ability to quickly transmit data and calculate a car’s handling.

There are some 35,000 road traffic deaths each year in the US. Shashua is convinced widespread use of self-driving cars could reduce this total by two thirds. “Autonomous driving saves lives,” he says. “The problem is that society accepts that people kill other people in road traffic accidents, but won’t accept people getting killed by robots. We need to learn to better deal with the existence of robotic cars. Because, put simply, the opportunities offered by the technology are limitless.”

Amnon Shashua can hardly contain himself when he talks about the possibilities of Mobileye’s technology: Cars that can recognize not only other vehicles, but also pedestrians and cyclists – and react intelligently to them; drivers relaxing in rush hour, in a traffic jam or in stop-go traffic – or reclining, reading a book, working, or making a phone call. When you arrive at the office, you simply send the car home so the family can continue to use it. What sounds like science fiction is in part already possible today.

Many things that motorists encounter in everyday life come from Mobileye – tracking assistants, distance monitors, or adaptive headlamps. Even the most mundane cars can be retrofitted with Mobileye technology without much effort. More and more fleet managers are using it to improve driver and vehicle safety, and to save costs by, for example, boosting car efficiency. Even the fantasy of a fully automated car could soon become real. BMW and Intel are co-operating to put robot cars on the road by 2022. “We’re just waiting for the technological revolution we can already see,” says Shashua. “We know the algorithms. We’re now only missing validation and testing.”

In an e-mail to their employees, Shashua and Aviram once wrote: “We always wanted to change the world.” Suddenly, they seem to be on the cusp of doing so – or they’re doing it already.
US POLICY

Trump Means Business

A new agenda for the world’s largest economic power?

By Christian Beuger

ow sustainable is the United States’ new economic policy, to the extent that it has yet been revealed? The agenda is “America First.” What does Donald Trump say he wants to do in order to secure and enhance the US’s status as the world’s leading economic power? Immediately after the elections in November 2016, the US stock markets responded with euphoria. Trump had promised extensive tax cuts. Though he did not present a coherent or comprehensive economic-policy program, he had a catchy slogan: “Make America Great Again!”

Trump boasted he would be the greatest jobs producer that God ever created and indicated he supported wage growth. He promised big tax cuts for businesses and the rich as well as for families and ordinary working people. He announced the biggest “tax revolution” since the tax reforms of President Ronald Reagan more than thirty years ago.

Trump said he wants to raise tariffs on imports and do more to shield the US economy from foreign competition in order to protect American jobs. He vowed to scrap two free-trade deals, the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP), and to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement. He said he would focus on bilateral trade deals with other countries.

Trump also said he wanted to radically reshape US foreign policy. During his campaign he accused China of artificially depressing its currency in order to attain unfair trade advantages. As to energy and climate policies, Trump announced radical changes. He wants to ease or reverse current regulations on the environment and emissions, champion fossil fuels and revive the coal industry. He has no problem with fracking, which has never been implemented and in earlier statements. It would seem that other countries adopted the same approach it would mean the end of destructive trade competition between jurisdictions.

Trump may have big ambitions, but it poses to the environment. Trump vowed a massive rise in defense spending and called on other members of NATO to spend more on their own defense. He said he would spend less on military operations overseas.

Delicious moments

All these promises and proposals are what triggered the euphoria on US markets in the aftermath of Trump’s election victory. The Dow (DJIA) reached a new high of 19,545 at the end of December. Even in the absence of legislation to implement these promises, the euphoria has not subsided. The Dow has remained above the 20,000 mark since February. Analysts predict Trump’s policies would trigger a boom in certain industries – construction, defense, IT, banking, energy, raw materials, gold mines and more.

One of the first things Trump did after taking office in January was to pull out of TPP, which had already been signed in early 2016 but not yet ratified, and to halt talks on TTIP, which were quite close to completion. For months he has been criticizing China and Germany for their large trade surpluses with the US. That has led to some delicious moments: At the World Economic Forum in January it was Chinese President Xi Jinping of all people who spoke out in favor of free trade, exhorting the global elites gathered in Davos to commit to open markets and international cooperation and to reject protectionism and isolationism.

German politicians and business leaders are also worried about trade relations with the US. Trump’s economic advisor Peter Navarro recently described Germany’s trade surplus with the US as a “serious issue”. He said it would be “useful to have candid discussions with Germany about ways that we could possibly get that deficit reduced outside the boundaries and restrictions that they claim that they are under.” That is a not so veiled accusation of currency manipulation and protectionism. In January Trump shocked German auto manufacturers with plants in Mexico when he said he intended to impose a 35 percent border tax on cars made in Mexico imported to the US.

As to tax, Trump has promised nothing but not cleaner...
It does not make for sensational headlines but one global problem has been with us for ages and it impacts millions. Now, its solution is within our reach. We’re talking about poverty and hunger in Africa. A look at the facts: Some 75 percent of the world’s poorest countries are located in Africa, with nearly 455 million people living in extreme poverty across sub-Saharan Africa. Nearly 50 percent of the sub-Saharan African population live on $1.90 a day or less, and about one in three people is malnourished. Poverty is the principal cause for hunger in Africa and elsewhere.

Moreover, some 70 percent of the world’s poorest people live in rural areas, and depend on agriculture and related activities for their livelihood. Half of the world’s hungry population are from farming families. Every ten seconds, a child dies from a hunger-related disease, and it’s estimated that about half of these children are African. The typical approach to addressing this problem is for Western governments and aid organizations to offer African governments charities, grain, fertilizer, farming machinery, and other forms of input. Unfortunately, this formula has not been a success.

As the Africa Commercial Head for Net- a-m – the pioneer of drip irrigation –, I offer a different perspective to combat the food scarcity issue. My company and I know what we’re talking about. After working in the West during its first 30 years of existence, Nettafm is now focusing on emerging markets such as India and Africa. I have had the chance to personally see how smallholders, medium-scale growers, and large corporations operate in Africa.

Most of the aid that reaches the continent serves, in the best-case scenario, as a temporary, Band-Aid solution that rarely ever focuses on the root cause of the problem. The African water and agriculture sectors, meanwhile, continue to struggle, and growers are barely surviving as subsistence farmers, let alone thriving as commercial farmers. This, in turn, leads many potentially productive Africans to emigrate to the West, especially to European countries. Here, they find work and send most of their earnings back home to support their families. Rather than contributing to their home economies, these emigrants are only making the wealthy countries wealthier.

At the same time, the West is confronting mass immigration challenges by spending tremendous resources on refugees by building camps and helping to absorb them into society. To make matters worse, those who elect to stay at home can become potential threats both within and beyond their borders, since hunger and poverty are a recipe for radicalization. The macro trends emanating from poverty and hunger are not localized, but have a domino effect worldwide, particularly in light of ever-increasing globalization. Clearly, a lose-lose situation for both the West and more importantly, for Africa.

Building infrastructure

We have to transform the model of traditional aid, and focus on three areas at the root of Africa’s hunger problem: lack of infrastructure, lack of financing and, last but not least, misguided decision maker mindsets. African governments need to invest the financial aid they receive in infrastructure that will facilitate agriculture. In Peru, for example, the government has channeled large sums of aid into infrastructure to make pressurized water accessible across tens of thousands of hectares of arable land. Rather than relying on charity and miracles, African countries need to create a foundation to ensure success during good and bad times. One way to achieve this is by investing in technological solutions. Nettafm’s drip technology is one such example. It is a proven, cost-effective irrigation method that has helped agricultural sectors in Israel, India, Brazil and elsewhere to flourish by enabling growers to overcome climatic and other basic constraints.

When it comes to financing, simple financial programs and schemes need to be developed that will enable African farmers and corporations to move from subsistence farming to commercially sustainable and growing businesses. International financing institutions, aid agencies, local banks and governments have to make financing for water and agriculture easily available, without draconian collateral demands. By implementing such a responsible approach, growers will be able to leverage technological solutions that have so far been out of reach. As for the changing of mindsets, African countries need to stop relying on aid. But the West is also called upon to transform its aid model from charity to impact investment, whereby investments can be monitored, evaluated and measured according to financial indicators such as an internal rate of return (IRR) and payback period. Rather than giving food and input, the West should be providing agriculture infrastructure and training. Instead of building refugee camps and multi-billion immigration integration programs in Europe, the West should create strong, sustainable economies.

In the 1950s, Israel developed the National Water Carrier and promoted Netafim’s drip irrigation technology. By making water easily accessible to farms throughout the country, the Israeli government enabled farmers to increase productivity and reduce water usage significantly. As a result, the country transformed itself from an importer of food to a world-renowned exporter of high-quality produce. India is following suit today with the introduction of micro-irrigation and communal schemes that bring millions of people out of poverty, improve individual and community livelihoods, and empower women and family units. And Ethiopia has committed itself to self-sufficient sugar production by investing in the Welkite project.

I believe that a holistic solution that addresses a country’s entire water and infrastructure ecosystem is required. In order to reach this solution, training/capacity building, education, as well as regional consultation centers for growers ought to be developed that will enable commercial viability to be increased by helping them sell produce at fair prices, monitoring prices, storing food in central locations, and ensuring that food does not rot when being transported from the field to the store. To make the most of government subsidies, any country needs to be intelligently reallocated to areas with long-term impact such as education.

Farmers will improve their livelihoods, women will be better empowered, young people will stay in agriculture

These changes will not only give everyone access to affordable, healthy food – a basic human need and a key to better society – but will also lead to macro changes. The economy will improve, emigration will drop, and governments will shift their focus on education and other growth-related issues. On an individual level, farmers will improve their livelihoods, women will be better empowered, young people will stay in agriculture due to easier farming techniques, and mothers will have more time to educate their children, leading to better standard of education and quality of life. Hunger and poverty need not be a destiny – they can be resolved once and for all.

By Elad Levi

Hunger Is Not A Destiny

Israeli technology can help feed the world

Elad Levi is Netafim’s Head of Commercial Activities & Business Development in Africa

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ANGELA MERKEL TOOK it all in stride. When the new US President Donald Trump failed to extend her the usual handshake for the camcorder during her state visit. The German chancellor only momentarily looked surprised. Her reaction was more evident when Trump criticized Germany’s export surplus and demanded that the chancellor do more for Germany’s domestic market – and buy more American cars. One of the captains of industry who accompanied Angela Merkel to Washington made an even more pointed comment: BMW CEO Harald Krüger said the demand of American consumers for larger cars in the US and the German plant in Spartanburg as ‘the biggest export hit’ for Germany.

For many in the German automotive industry, the visit to the US – and thewife of the new US president but also the impact of Brexit. “For the time being, carmakers will be proceeding with due caution, maintaining flexibility along their own supply chain, improving their organizations, and avoiding unnecessary rigidity when it comes to location and technology,” concludes Peter Fuss. — Klaus Dieter Oehler is financial editor at the daily Stuttgarter Zeitung

**European fuel and emissions standards are still more stringent than in the US – but not always observed**

European fuel and emissions standards are still more stringent than in the US – but not always observed. Even during the financial crisis, German automakers maintained their existing investment in research and development. According to Peter Fuss, the automotive industry is likely to remain cautious about major investments given the current political upheavals, which include not only the new US president but also the impact of Brexit. “For the time being, carmakers will be proceeding with due caution, maintaining flexibility along their own supply chain, improving their organizations, and avoiding unnecessary rigidity when it comes to location and technology,” concludes Peter Fuss. — Klaus Dieter Oehler is financial editor at the daily Stuttgarter Zeitung

**Made in Germany**

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**Challenges of e-mobility**

Currently, however, the automotive sector is in a holding pattern. This is not because the forecast is grim – rather, it is unclear. There has been political fallout from the diesel scandal, and some cities are considering a ban on diesel engines. It’s still unclear where all this will lead. According to the EY consultants, the outcome could be a renewed push in the area of electric mobility. Should this come to fruition it would raise the question of which cities will be the first to impose such limits. Fuss believes that this development may have a noticeable impact on the value chain. This hesitation is also apparent in the figures compiled by the EY consultants. From 2010 to 2015, the six largest carmakers made substantial investments in either modernization or the construction of new plants, achieving a record investment of €32.9 billion in 2015. This plummeted in the following year, with investment totaling only €6.3 billion in 2016. Between 2010 and 2016, the US was responsible for the largest share of investment, with a total value of €29.4 billion. However, €6.6 billion of that total went into long-term modernization of manufacturing plants. New plants were mainly launched by non-US manufacturers, including BMW and Daimler. At €24.4 billion, Germany occupied third place on this list, behind China (€25.1 billion), whereby a significantly larger share of German investment also went to modernization and expansion measures rather than new plant construction. However, Fuss notes, among German manufacturers, plant construction tends to be an ongoing process. By contrast, nearly €20 of the €25 billion investment in China’s automotive industry was devoted to the construction of new plants, with a significant share of that going to new German manufacturers.

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**Global diversity is a key advantage**

Global diversity is a key advantage for the US automotive industry. By focusing on market differences in geography, US highways, which extend for many kilometers with surprising three-way battles in the luxury category, while American manufacturers are competing in the mid-range. This global diversity is one of the major strengths of the German automotive industry, says EY partner Peter Fuss. Even during the financial crisis, German automakers maintained their existing investment in research and development, as well as in modernization and the construction of new plants. Fuss believes that this development may have a noticeable impact on the value chain. This hesitation is also apparent in the figures compiled by the EY consultants. From 2010 to 2015, the six largest carmakers made substantial investments in either modernization or the construction of new plants, achieving a record investment of €32.9 billion in 2015. This plummeted in the following year, with investment totaling only €6.3 billion in 2016. Between 2010 and 2016, the US was responsible for the largest share of investment, with a total value of €29.4 billion. However, €6.6 billion of that total went into long-term modernization of manufacturing plants. New plants were mainly launched by non-US manufacturers, including BMW and Daimler. At €24.4 billion, Germany occupied third place on this list, behind China (€25.1 billion), whereby a significantly larger share of German investment also went to modernization and expansion measures rather than new plant construction. However, Fuss notes, among German manufacturers, plant construction tends to be an ongoing process. By contrast, nearly €20 of the €25 billion investment in China’s automotive industry was devoted to the construction of new plants, with a significant share of that going to new German manufacturers.

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**On German executives is beside the point: hardly anyone in Germany drives American cars. Some have a simple explanation for this – American cars just aren’t all that good.**

Indeed, many German drivers demand higher quality standards than their US counterparts. This in part has to do with differences in geography. US highways, which extend for many kilometers with narrow a curve or bend, don’t require the same level of automotive agility and stability as the historic districts of European cities, with their narrow streets and sharp corners. The diesel emissions scandal from the Wolfsburg-based Volkswagen company has done massive damage to the reputation of German carmakers in this respect. But European fuel and emissions standards are still more stringent than in the US.

According to experts, this fact will continue to determine the future of the automotive industry worldwide. “All technological innovations come from the luxury class, carmakers who don’t have a presence in the luxury class must rely on mass production,” says Peter Fuss, partner at the Stuttgart office of EY. But a few facts about today’s global automotive industry still appear to have escaped Trump’s notice. For one, Trump has still failed to recognize that many American cars are not built exclusively in the US – and in some cases, are hardly built there at all. During the election campaign, the current US president had already criticized the fact that German executives seem to prefer American cars just aren’t all that good. Some have a simple explanation for this – American cars just aren’t all that good.

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Desert City, Cyber Dust

Beer Sheva is set to become the nation’s IT R&D capital

By Franziska Knüpfer

It’s a special morning in Beer Sheva. Here, in southern Israel, the sunlight is usually swallowed by thick desert dust. It floats in the air, seeps into everything, stains the windows, in your mouth, on every windshield. Yet, today, the sky is clear and blue; not only the weather, but once the region’s potential will unfold, the whole dynamic will change, says Roy Zwebner, CEO of the Technology Park. Seven years ago, Zwebner left his start-up in Tel Aviv in order to work on the vision of turning the city of the Negev into a modern innovation hub. In only three years, thirty-seven companies have moved into the freshly built Tech Park, including IT-giants such as PayPal, WeWork, IBM, Deutsche Telekom or Wix. The buildings are supposed to be entirely filled by 2020, with the majority of companies coming from the cyber security or telecommunications sector. “We will be creating 10,000 jobs in the south in the next five years,” Zwebner says with a trace of pride. “Three years ago there was nothing here except sand dunes and camels. Once construction is finished we will be looking at twelve multilevel buildings.”

Incentives for companies

A national initiative, comprised of the Israel National Cyber Bureau (INCB), Beer-Sheva Municipality and Ben Gurion University (BGU), promotes the city as the new national cyber center, only a hundred kilometers south of Tel Aviv and Silicon Wadi. Beer-Sheva will not only be the cyber capital of Israel, but one of the most important places in the cyber security field in the world, declared Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the Israeli Cyber Innovation Arena in January 2014. The vision is to create an ecosystem that combines academic research, private industry and military, all while being in close proximity to each other. “There clearly is also the Zionist vision of making the desert bloom,” adds Roy Zwebner. Already Israel’s Finance minister, David Ben-Gurion, coined several famous phrases addressing the country’s dry south such as “The Negev offers the greatest opportunity to accomplish everything from the very beginning.” Israel’s desert includes sixty percent of the country’s landmass but less than ten percent of its population.

It comes as no surprise that the government seeks to develop this region and creates incentives for companies to move their businesses to the Capital of the Negev. “The Negev offers the greatest opportunity to accomplish everything from the very beginning.” Israeli famous phrases addressing the country’s dry south such as “The Negev offers the greatest opportunity to accomplish everything from the very beginning.” Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, for example with the Internet of Things or self-driving cars – the more cyber security becomes an integral part of our research and development. The world is changing and it also changes the way we fight.”

New ecosystem

The Israel Export and International Cooperation Institute recently announced that Israel sold three billion dollars of cyber technology in exports in 2014. The institute foresees a ten percent increase in revenue of nearly 250 Israeli firms in the sector for this year. “In my opinion Israel is one of the best when it comes to cyber security,” Shapira, mother of five children and wife of an Israeli officer, adds. “We rely on our knowledge, on our intelligence, on our top-notch research through cyber security, sometimes it is also pro-active security. And sometimes, nobody says it, but I guess it also applies to us.”

As a researcher, she emphasizes, she is interested only in the functionality of the systems. She does not see controlling and reporting as a separate task for the end user, the academy, as well as for any government request. She regards collaboration between military, academy and private industry as being indispensable – for everyone involved. Originally from Tel Aviv, she arrived in Beer Sheva in order to finish her doctoral thesis. “There was nothing here!”, her voice pitches in excitement. “But now, let’s take my son for example. He graduated in computer engineering, found a job here, and is paid the same salary as he would be in Tel Aviv, yet the living costs are much lower.” She pauses as to give her words the appropriate weight: “Once the technological units of the IDF move to Beer Sheva, it will create a whole new ecosystem here in the Negev.”

Controlling and Reporting

Be it Brexit, Trump, Erdogan or Le Pen, it still remains to be seen what influences the current political developments and, in particular, the waves of nationalism and populism will have in the coming years on the economies of developed countries, and global trade.

Yet one thing is already for sure: market uncertainty and volatility are becoming even more prevalent, and this is only going to continue. Certain, too, is that assets become more complex and the political and economic situation more volatile, effective strategies for managing, and monitoring assets become increasingly more important.

The current lack of trust surrounding economic stability therefore poses particular challenges for asset holders. They are hardly in a position to themselves to be continuously monitoring their assets with the depth necessary while simultaneously observing the social, political, fiscal, economic, and critical context in such a way as to be able to appropriately react to changes and reach decisions.

These tasks should in no way be underestimated, and there are many indicators that the price of doing so on one’s own would be too high. The holder should always have someone at their side who keeps a regular eye on the assets, using both a neutral and critical perspective. This largely rules out asset managers who directly influence how assets perform. Experienced controlling and reporting specialists, in contrast, can establish an effective early warning system enabling holders to reach as informed a decision as possible.

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This allows for a quick overview and enables one to reach as informed a decision as possible. Asset holders are thus well placed not only to best protect their assets but potentially even to benefit from confusing conditions.

At the very latest, during uncertain times, asset holders are well advised to hand over these challenging tasks to experts, who are characterized not only by their expertise and popularity, but also by their accuracy and loyalty.

Jens Spudy is executive partner of Spudy Invest: www.spudy-invest.com
AUGSBOURG SYNAGOGUE

Against All Odds

The Bavarian city celebrates the centenary of its Jewish hub

W

hile the framework of Jewish history, one hundred years are not a long time, and yet this hundred-year history of our synagogue is a reason to celebrate, although it is with mixed feelings,” says Rabbi Henry G. Brandt, who has been serving the Jewish Community of Augsburg since 2004. “Designed in peace and dedicated, so to speak, in shell hail, our forefathers and mothers could not have known which terrible events these walls must bear witness in its future.”

The Augsburg Temple is one of the few synagogue buildings in Germany that survived the Nazi period and that are still in use today. Although set on fire and vandalized, the synagogue was not completely destroyed in the November pogroms of 1938 because it was located across the street from a gas station; the risk of torching the synagogue from a gas station; the two rings of skylights in the dome, and four brass lamp-globes bathe the sanctuary in a hushed, mystical light. The atypical, richly iconographic decoration includes a colored mosaic above the Torah ark. Pictorial depictions of the High Holidays in five round panels on the east arch and of the Twelve Tribes on the gallery railings, as well as four stucco reliefs surrounding the dome together portray the Torah as the tree of life. The connection between the reliefs is conveyed by biblical quotes in decorative Hebrew script.”

Today, the synagogue, with its grand dome, is considered one of the most beautiful in Europe and an impressive testament to Liberal Judaism.

The building saw the heyday of the Augustin Synagogue-Swabia, which seated 700 congregants, incorporates Byzantine, Oriental and Art Nouveau elements, explains Benigna Schön-hagen, director of the Jewish Culture Museum: “The presence of an organ gallery still indicates that the synagogue served a proud Liberal Jewish community. The sanctuary, which seated 700 congrégants, incorporates Byzantine, Oriental and Art Nouveau elements, explains Benigna Schön-hagen, director of the Jewish Culture Museum: “The central room is shaped like a Byzantine cross, with barrel vaults over each of the four cross arms, and is enclosed by a domed 95-foot high ceiling. Green-gold mosaic covers the reinforced concrete dome, a highly advanced construction for its time. Elaborate traceried windows, two rings of skylights in the dome, and four brass lamp-globes bathe the sanctuary in a hushed, mystical light. The atypical, richly iconographic decoration includes a colored mosaic above the Torah ark. Pictorial depictions of the High Holidays in five round panels on the east arch and of the Twelve Tribes on the gallery railings, as well as four stucco reliefs surrounding the dome together portray the Torah as the tree of life. The connection between the reliefs is conveyed by biblical quotes in decorative Hebrew script.”

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DESTINATION: GERMANY
Explore its modern architecture and vibrant culture.
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Cosmopolitan Classroom With A Heimishe Flavor
Summer schools address various facets of Jewish culture in Berlin

Time and again, synagogue members all over the world complain bitterly about the lack of vision amid the local Jewish leadership and among the audience engagement of the Jewish youth. This summer, a new program of the University of Potsdam seeks to make a difference. The Jewish Activism Summer School, “Social Engagement in Theory and Practice,” aims to help young Jews and non-Jews to reflect on ways to effectively address collective challenges on local, national and global levels.

“It is my aim to inspire, educate and organize young Jews into zikhru olam, helping to repair the world,” explains initiator and creative director Jonathan Schoruch, who holds the chair in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History at the Potsdam School of Jewish Theology. “We have a phenomenal roster of instructors and will be visiting local organizations that do effective, innovative work, learning from texts, ideas and real-world examples.

The project is designed to strengthen young adults’ intuitive urge to work toward social change and their personal desire to become responsible and engaged members of their communities. Participants will be housed in Kreuzberg, a cultural hub and hipster neighborhood of Berlin that still has a revolutionary streak. This year, universities in Berlin are offering two more exciting summer school courses with a Jewish flavor. The first summer program of Yiddish Language and Literature at the Free University of Berlin will take place between August 14 and September 1, 2017. The program is organized by the Paris Yiddish Center-Medem in cooperation with the Institute of Jewish Studies at the Free University of Berlin and the Institute for East European Studies at the Free University of Berlin, and the archives of the Jewish Labor Bund were transferred to Berlin in 1919, that in 1925, YIVO (Yidisher Visnshaftelekher Institut) was founded here, and that many Yiddish writers in Weimar Berlin acknowledged the city in their literary work. Berlin offers a setting that is unrivaled in its historical significance for the history of modern Jewish culture. Since 2007, the Leo Baeck Institute has been a unique intellectual and cultural meeting point. A six-week summer school in Jewish studies, conducted in English at Berlin’s Humboldt University, it focuses on Jewish life in Germany from the 19th to 20th century and its relationship to other Jewish communities worldwide.

This time, the emphasis of the program is on the interaction and exchange between Jews in Germany and Eastern Europe over a period of more than 200 years. What happened when 19th century Orthodox Jews from Eastern Europe met their Reform and secular brethren in Germany? What clashes and synergies resulted? And how has the influx of Jews from the former Soviet Union since 1989 impacted post-war Jewish life and the broader German culture? These are among the questions participants will explore from June 23 to August 12, 2017.

Against all odds, Jewish Berlin is much more than just a past phenomenon to be remembered and commemorated; it is an active part of the city’s present-day identity. These three summer courses are an exciting way to discover how Jewish traditions and experiences are intertwined with the cultural fabric of this urban magnet.
Seismograph for the Turmoils of Modernity
On the German philosopher’s life and writings

By Dieter Sattler

Transformation will once again emerge from what is enslaved and down-trodden – but the class that today exercises thought is the class of the literati. In these early musings, written when he was just 20 years old, Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) posited that intellectuals would be the revolutionaries of his time. Later Benjamin would go on to become arguably the foremost thinker of the Frankfurt School. He was a philosopher, art critic and essayist – and the “imperfect genius” of the Freudian-Marxist collection of philosophers who centered around Max Horkheimer. After an academic career eluded him, Benjamin scraped out a precarious existence as a freelance writer – this despite the fact that Theodor W. Adorno, eleven years his junior and himself regarded as one of the unforgiving prodigies of the Frankfurt School, tended to regard Benjamin almost like a father. As Adorno would later describe Benjamin: “I have never encountered another person whose entire existence, including his outward appearance, was so profoundly characterized by an intellectual spirit.” Despite the esteem in which he was held, Benjamin would remain a kind of “problem child” who was only stowed upon the inner circle by the Institute for Social Research. This also left him followed during his life were always directly experienced its impact. The angel’s gaze is directed towards Paradise, from which a storm is stretched.” The angel’s gaze is directed towards Paradise, from which a storm is blowing that is pushing the angel away. It is the storm of history, which is heavy with catastrophe – a history whose path and future the angel cannot know or control – signaling a conception of history that represents a marked break with the intellectual traditions of both Marxism and the Enlightenment. The vision that opens Benjamin’s essay is an expression of the despair and resignation that had overcome the Frankfurt School after Nazi Germany made its initial conquests. But Benjamin, who had already spent three months in a French internment camp after the war broke out in 1939, was the one who had most directly experienced its impact. In his highly lauded new biography of Walter Benjamin, Lorenz Jäger, who has for many years been editor at the culture desk of the daily newspaper Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung, deftly and knowledgeably describes how Benjamin’s personal and intellectual worlds – as they might be expected from a “literatus” – were intertwined. Benjamin, it seems, was always more a man of letters than an academic at heart. Like a true artist, the paths that Benjamin followed during his life were always strongly influenced and inspired by his personal encounters. People who fascinated him often opened up new horizons of thought. This was the case with the educational reformer Gustav Wyneken (who, however, would later fall into disrepute due to pedophilia) and for Gershom Scholem, who awakened Benjamin’s interest in Kabbalah, Jewish myth and Jewish messianism. The same applied to the women Benjamin loved. “I have met three different women in my life and three different men within me,” Benjamin would comment in 1939. The first of these three women was Luise von Landau, who awakened Benjamin’s interest in the idea of nobility; the second the Russian revolutionary Asja Lacis, who “electrified” Benjamin with her communism; the third was the Parian courtesan Hélène Léger, who Benjamin venerated as a “sexual commodity.” Other important women in Benjamin’s life would certainly have included his fiancée Greta Radt as well as Dora Kellner, his wife of many years. Benjamin had a tendency to overinfl ate the personal dimension and to attribute world-historical significance to the twists and turns of his own biography. This is also true of his political intentions. As was true for Adorno, some of the figures of thought that Benjamin identified as dialectic were more properly a paradox. In this new biography, as well, there are repeated discussions about whether Benjamin’s dedication to revolution was more a matter of verbal radicalism than real conviction. Indeed, Benjamin’s activist impulses remained always within the mode of language. Literatur and prostitutes

However, Lorenz Jäger decisively refutes the claim that Benjamin’s political engagement might have been less than serious in its intent. In Jäger’s words: “The intellectual engages on a political level by working with concepts and transforming them. How else is an intellectual to live? Throughout his life, Benjamin remained fascinated by the topic of prostitution. From his book Berlin Childhood Around 1900 to the essay “On Some Motifs in Baudelaire,” Benjamin continued to draw parallels between prostitutes and the fate of the “literati,” whom by 1912 he had elevated to the true revolutionaries. As Benjamin wrote in an essay dedicated to Karl Kraus: “It is, fundamentally, on the complete agreement of two forms of existence – life under the aegis of mere sexuality and life under the aegis of mere sexuality – that the solidarity of the man of letters with the solidarity to which Baudelaire’s existence is the most inviolable testimony.” (Walter Benjamin: Selected Writings, Vol. 2, Part 2, Ed. Michael W. Jennings et al, 1999) Both forms of street existence – the whore and the urban man of letters – were propelled to commodify themselves, body and soul, to survive. Many of Benjamin’s insights are still valuable today. Perhaps his work continues to exert such fascination because, like the romantic theory of the fragment, it remained unfinished, and thus its concepts could remain unfixed. After all, it was Benjamin who said the finished work is the “death mask of its conception.” Nonetheless, the Frankfurt-based literary critic Martin Lüdiwke warns against the urge to over-interpret Ben- jamin’s unfinished life and work. In his early academic years, Benjamin did indeed explore the idea of producing a systematic work. According to Lüdiwke, “The fragmentary character of [Benjamin’s] later work certainly also had something to do with his precarious circumstances after the failure of his academic career.” Ultimately, however, Walter Benjamin’s life was a tragedy. We should therefore be all the more grateful for the “brief redemptions” that Benjamin’s writings grant to us.
Like in Old Times
Traces of German Christian pioneers in the Promised Land

By Gideon Wollberg

T
his Bethlehem is not full of pilgrims or souvenir merchants or the sound of Palestinian pop music. This is not the famous Bethlehem where Jesus is said to have been born, but Beit Lekhem ha-Gilit, Bethlemmeh in Galilee, a village beside an oak forest between Haifa and Nazareth in northern Israel. Its well-preserved stone houses were built by German Templers who settled here more than a century ago. They were dairy farmers and their community survived until the Second World War. Now the village is a moskov, a cooperative agricultural community, founded in April 1948. It has restaurants, art galleries, guest houses and an herb farm, and attracts tourists seeking tranquility in the countryside.

The Templers emerged from the Pietist movement in the German state of Württemberg and attracted Turkish dominion for more than three hundred and half of the 19th century, Christians from various countries and nations wanted to resettle to the Holy Land, which had been under Turkish domination for more than three hundred and fifty years. In the 1850s the first attempts by colonists from Wuppertal failed after eight years; attempts by colonists from Philadelphia failed after four. And another attempt at colonization by Americans from Maine between 1855 and 1860 also failed... The only Christians who succeeded in settling permanently in Palestine were the Templers from Württemberg."

In about 1890, the Templers built a new neighborhood in a pine forest on Mount Carmel in Haifa, with residential buildings, hotels and convalescence homes. Keller House, which had been the residence of the first German consul in Haifa, Friedrich Keller, is home to the Gottlieb Schumacher Institute for Research of the Christian Presence in Palestine in the Modern Era at the University of Haifa. Schumacher was a Templer and an engineer and architect who left his mark on the city.

For the Jewish settlers who started arriving in greater numbers in 1882, the Templers, about three thousand in all at the time, were at first role models and living proof that it was indeed possible for Europeans to live, work and thrive in the Land of Israel. Later, the Templers’ rather universalist faith gave way to a fervent German patriotism. In the early 1930s, more and more of them turned to Nazism. During the Second World War, Britain, as Mandate power in Palestine, interned the Templers and then either sent them to Germany or deported them to Australia. The last remaining Templers had to leave the country in 1948 at the time of the foundation of the state of Israel. Nowadays, the Templers are no longer German settlers across Israel – homes with red-tiled roofs, schools, community centres – and their cemeteries are slowly being declared heritage sites and carefully restored. Nowadays, the former Templer colony of Sarona in the heart of Tel Aviv, with its 37 buildings, is like an open-air museum. Swedish explorer Sven Hedin wrote about Sarona in 1906: “Many plants were in blossom... They mainly grow grapes, oranges and vegetables. Like in old times – in the land of milk and honey.”
The German Roots of Zionism

Documenting the development from utopian dream to matter of survival

By William H. Weitzer

At the same time, romantic nationalist movements linked the struggle for liberal reforms with the idea that sovereignty was the right of free peoples united by a national heritage. German Jews were deeply involved in these movements – civil rights for Jews were among the demands of the failed revolution of 1848 – and soon Jewish thinkers began to apply similar ideas to the Jewish people. If the German people deserved self-determination in a national home, then why not the Jews?

These liberal and nationalist political movements contributed to the gradual emancipation of Jews in Germany and Austria, so that by the time Germany was unified in 1871, Jews across Central Europe enjoyed full rights of citizenship and prospered to an unprecedented degree.

Nevertheless, two factors coalesced to stoke the dream of a different Jewish future for some intellectuals. First, the situation of Jews in Eastern Europe was little improved, and some were concerned for the welfare of their brethren in the Russian Empire. Second, and closer to home, nationalism and emancipation had failed to extinguish prejudice but rather gave rise to a more virulent strain of anti-Semitism that was typified by the wrongful conviction of French Jewish artillery captain, Alfred Dreyfus, for espionage in 1894.

Dreyfus Affair

German-speaking Jewish thinkers – mesianic rabbis, socialist utopians, and Jewish cultural partisans – had already proposed a Jewish homeland in Palestine, and even coined the term “Zionism”, but the idea and the movement crystallized around the peak of the Dreyfus Affair in 1896, when the Viennese journalist Theodor Herzl published The Jewish State. Herzl was a typical assimilated Austrian Jew whose journalistic interests had not been particularly Jewish, or even political, but the experience of life under Vienna’s anti-Semitic mayor Karl Lueger and the false prosecution of Dreyfus galvanized him. The issue of anti-Semitism would not be solved even in the “civilized” countries of Western Europe until the Jews had a homeland, he now argued.

In the ensuing decades, Zionism would remain a primarily German-speaking movement. The early Zionist Congresses moved between Basel and a series of other German-speaking cities. German was the language of the Zionist movement and its administration was headquartered in Berlin. The Zionische Vereinigung für Deutschland (Zionist Union for Germany, ZVJD), founded in 1897, was a crucial source of financial support for the International Zionist movement.

As rooted in German-speaking culture as it was, the Zionist movement never found mainstream support among German Jews. Plans to hold the first Zionist Congress in Munich were scuttled when the local Jewish Community protested a movement they viewed as “antithetical to the spirit of Judaism,” according to an editorial in the local paper. “The Jewish identifies with his fatherland and becomes absorbed by the nation in whose midst he lives,” was the official position of Jewish community leaders in Munich. Left out of the official position statement, but much discussed, was the notion that such troublemaking would only provoke the anti-Semites. The Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith, or Central-Verein, approached Zionism with essentially the same attitude, instead of pursuing a strategy of defending Jewish civil rights in courts of law and touting the contributions of Jews to German society in the court of public opinion. The Orthodox rabbinate, except for a small minority of supporters, condemned Zionism as incompatible with the universality of the Jewish religion.

Although Zionism never became a mass movement in Germany or Austria, the early days of political Zionism were firmly rooted in the German-speaking world. Apart from ZVJD, other Zionist organizations also retained a firm, if marginal place among German-Jewish communities throughout the early 20th century. The “Blue and White” youth and sports organizations and agricultural training camps known as Hachsharot worked to foster a generation that was up to the challenge of Jewish nationhood, and Zionist newspapers like the Robert Welsh’s Jüdische Rundschau advanced the intellectual project of Zionism.

World War I transformed the political landscape of Europe and the course of the Zionist movement as well. After the war, the leadership shifted mainly to Eastern European leaders such as Chaim Weizmann, a British citizen of Russian origin. The end of the Ottoman Empire and the Balfour Declaration of 1917 brought an end to the dominant organizational role of German-speaking Jews, but their intellectual and or-
CREATIVE POWERS

Music as Spiritual Resistance
Preserving humanity under inhuman conditions

By Jascha Nemtsov

Under the conditions of extreme brutal oppression, especially under National Socialism and Stalinism, with the ultimate goal of the destruction of human life, active resistance of the victims was only possible in exceptional cases. Disen-gaged, isolated, and robbed of elementary living conditions, men and women could express their resistance, if at all, only through their spirit. This included above all the preservation of humanity despite inhuman conditions. Although the struggle for physical survival under these circumstances should have absorbed all their energy, many of them still found the energy for spiritual activity, which in turn provided essential moral support to their resilience.

Although research about music under the conditions of dictatorship has been a part of German musicological discourse since the 1960s, the first fundamental works in this area by Joseph Wulf and Fred K. Prieberg were hardly noticed. After German reunification, the topic was given new impetus. In particular, the history of the Theresienstadt ghett-o, its rich cultural life, which was partly abused by the Nazis for propaganda purposes, and the works of the composers imprisoned in Theresienstadt attracted the attention of the general public. Over the past 25 years, a number of scientific publications and artistic projects, editions, television and radio productions, exhibitions and documentaries have been published. One initiative among others was the student research group Exile Music at the Hamburg University, which existed between 1985 and 2005, devoting itself to exploring German and Austrian Jewish musicians active in exile during the Nazi rule and the conditions of the Jews under National Socialism and Stalinism.

Music and Singing in Fascist Concentration Camps from 1933 to 1945, published by the University of Music Franz Liszt Weimar in 2010, is an important chapter in the history of the Theresienstadt ghetto within Nazi Germany. Founded in 1941, it was fully prepared for its premiere in Karlsruhe for his oratorio Vom jüdisch-schicksal (About the Jewish Fate). It was fully prepared for its premiere in 1937, which, however, had to be canceled at the last moment due to prohibition by Nazi authorities. To this day, the composition has not been performed. The manuscript lies in an archive in New Zealand. One of the most important sources for music practice in concentration camps is the archive collection of Aleksander Kuliliewicz (1918–1982), which is shared between the memorial and museum Sachsenhausen and the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington and has so far hardly been explored. Kuliliewicz was imprisoned in Sachsenhausen concentration camp from 1940 to 1945. His archive contains over 700 pages of the unpublished manuscript in Polish on Music and Singing in Fascist Concentration Camps from 1933 to 1945 as well as more than 100,000 other documents and manuscripts on the subject.

Self-assertion

Hardly explored is the musical life in the Jewish Cultural Associations (Jüdische Kulturbünde) – a kind of Jewish cultural ghetto within Nazi Germany. Founded in 1933, as a self-help organization to support Jewish artists who had lost their jobs due to the occupational ban pronounced by the government, these Jewish Cultural Associations were tolerated until 1941. Although music events organized by local Cultural Associations in some major cities such as Berlin, Dresden or Hamburg are partially documented, there is still very little known about the musicians who actually shaped Jewish musical life at the time, especially in the provincial cities. Even less attention has been given to compositions created under the conditions of Nazi rule and promoted by the Jewish Cultural Associations. But the creative activity of German-Jewish composers in the 1930s, despite their persecution, was extremely rich and pro-active. Among other things a composition competition, carried out in 1936 by the Reichs Federation of Jewish Cultural Associations (Reichswerbund der Jüdischen Kulturbünde), is proof of this creativity.

One year after the Nuremberg racial laws were passed, when anti-Semitic measures were increased, it was a daring undertaking to appeal to the creativity of Jewish composers. Quite unexpectedly, a total of 122 works were submitted. Apart from their quality, all these compositions were more than anything else testimony to the spiritual strength and cultural creativity of their creators. The first prize was awarded to Richard Fuchs from Karlsruhe for his oratorio Vom jüdisch-

in the ghettos in Warsaw, Lodz, Lublin, Vilna, Kaunas, among others, concerts and other musical activities took place in the first months of their existence – and beyond. Also life in the concentration camps was not silent. There was music. Until recently, musicology has also completely ignored the topic Music in the Gulag. But in 2014, the young musicologist Inna Klause published her doctoral thesis The Sound of the Gulag, which is a meritorious entry into present research in this particular field. During the decades of Stalinism, musical activities took place in many Soviet camps. In addition to the prescribed music, there were also independent artistic activities, which helped to preserve the courage and human integrity of the prisoners. It would be an important task to continue and deepen this research. Among the prisoners of the gulag were world-class musicians, such as Vsevolod Zaderatsky (1894–1935), who composed a cycle of 24 preludes and fugues for piano in a camp in the Kolyma River in north-eastern Siberia between 1937 and 1938. Zaderatsky was exposed to political persecution throughout his entire life in the Soviet Union; his music was outlawed by a total ban of performance. One CD anthology with piano works by Zaderatsky recorded by the author of this article, among them also the cycle of preludes and fugues, will be released in the summer of 2017.

The manifold traces of this spiritual resistance, which have largely disappeared in the past decades, are not only of aesthetic importance. They are also a testament to humanity and the European humanistic values that have been maintained in the decades of barbarism. The musical creativity under the conditions of the dictatorships can help current and future generations in search of their own cultural roots and their spiritual location, thus strengthening the foundations of our democracies.

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A MENTSCH: MIRJAM ROSENSTEIN

In the Tradition of Judaism

By Rafael Seligmann

At first glance, Mirjam Rosenstein looks like an almost biblical figure – tall, slender, and almost fragile in appearance. Her brown-brown doe-like eyes radiate warmth and compassion. This biblical impression becomes even more apparent in a conversation. Not in an abstract time-bound sense, but rather in the sense of an affinity with the women of the Bible – the mothers of the patriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, but also Hannah, who became mother to the prophet Samuel at an advanced age, and the judge Deborah. All of them women who were motherly and beneficent, but with a formidable streak. Mirjam Rosenstein speaks in a quiet voice that reveals her Swiss sense, but it is clear that this delicate-seeming woman knows exactly what she wants. A trained economist from Zurich, she followed her husband back home to Germany. She is mother of two children, four-year-old Raphael and his younger sister Lea. At the same time, Mirjam Rosenstein, who grew up in an observant Jewish home, represents the interests of a Swiss pharmaceutical company in Germany. Operating at the intersection of research, business and politics, she is demanding work which requires intensive exchange with members of parliament, with ministerial bureaucracies, and with a variety of social groups and associations.

Advocating peace

Her husband, children, career and her hobby of riding, which she has pursued since she was a young girl, as well as many trips to visit her family in Zurich, occupy much of Mirjam Rosenstein’s time and emotional energy. Nonetheless, for the past several years she has still managed to pursue another endeavor, working on behalf of NAFFO, a German initiative founded in 2009 that advocates peace in the Middle East. Why yet another Jewish association? It recalls the old, self-deprecating joke: three Jews will get you five political parties, and six associations. But NAFFO expressly does not wish to be a political party, nor does it wish to be co-opted by one. It is, as its name suggests, a forum – an open platform for all who seek peace, while refus-

Understanding for Israel

Today, it has become commonplace to speak about Europe’s Judeo-Christian tradition. Just a few years ago, when an international conference of Jews, Protestants and Catholics gathered in Switzerland to confront the reality of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, such a statement was inconceivable. In summer 1947, just over 50 years ago, Jerusalem dispatched outstanding representatives to Bonn and later to Berlin. Yohanan Meroz, a descendant of the illustrious Marcuse family, spoke such excellent German that he made a profound impression on his German listeners, competent in the realms of politics and beyond. Itzhak Ben Ari, who was born in Vienna, was known for his irresistible charm, which won him many friends, both among German politicians and the broader public. A confidant of Helmut Kohl, was a born “fisher of men.” His successor, Shimon Stein, who is still a trusted friend of Chancellor Angela Merkel, won over both political and business Germans with his passionate advocacy for Israel.

A public voice

In recent years, however, Israel has faced a problem: though it has spent time and resources in the past, it has not been able to market itself to the public, to the general public, to the broader public. Avi Primor, a member of the Marcuse family, spoke such excellent German that he made a profound impression on his German listeners, competent in the realms of politics and beyond. Itzhak Ben Ari, who was born in Vienna, was known for his irresistible charm, which won him many friends, both among German politicians and the broader public. A confidant of Helmut Kohl, was a born “fisher of men.” His successor, Shimon Stein, who is still a trusted friend of Chancellor Angela Merkel, won over both political and business Germans with his passionate advocacy for Israel.

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Advocating peace

Her husband, children, career and her hobby of riding, which she has pursued since she was a young girl, as well as many trips to visit her family in Zurich, occupy much of Mirjam Rosenstein’s time and emotional energy. Nonetheless, for the past several years she has still managed to pursue another endeavor, working on behalf of NAFFO, a German initiative founded in 2009 that advocates peace in the Middle East. Why yet another Jewish association? It recalls the old, self-deprecating joke: three Jews will get you five political parties, and six associations. But NAFFO expressly does not wish to be a political party, nor does it wish to be co-opted by one. It is, as its name suggests, a forum – an open platform for all who seek peace, while refus-

Peter Kassel}

Today, it has become commonplace to speak about Europe’s Judeo-Christian tradition. Just a few years ago, when an international conference of Jews, Protestants and Catholics gathered in Switzerland to confront the reality of anti-Semitism and the Holocaust, such a statement was inconceivable. In summer 1947, just over 50 years ago, Jerusalem dispatched outstanding representatives to Bonn and later to Berlin. Yohanan Meroz, a descendant of the illustrious Marcuse family, spoke such excellent German that he made a profound impression on his German listeners, competent in the realms of politics and beyond. Itzhak Ben Ari, who was born in Vienna, was known for his irresistible charm, which won him many friends, both among German politicians and the broader public. A confidant of Helmut Kohl, was a born “fisher of men.” His successor, Shimon Stein, who is still a trusted friend of Chancellor Angela Merkel, won over both political and business Germans with his passionate advocacy for Israel.

A public voice

In recent years, however, Israel has faced a problem: though it has spent time and resources in the past, it has not been able to market itself to the public, to the general public, to the broader public. Avi Primor, a member of the Marcuse family, spoke such excellent German that he made a profound impression on his German listeners, competent in the realms of politics and beyond. Itzhak Ben Ari, who was born in Vienna, was known for his irresistible charm, which won him many friends, both among German politicians and the broader public. A confidant of Helmut Kohl, was a born “fisher of men.” His successor, Shimon Stein, who is still a trusted friend of Chancellor Angela Merkel, won over both political and business Germans with his passionate advocacy for Israel.

In the Tradition of Judaism

By Rafael Seligmann

At first glance, Mirjam Rosenstein looks like an almost biblical figure – tall, slender, and almost fragile in appearance. Her brown-brown doe-like eyes radiate warmth and compassion. This biblical impression becomes even more apparent in a conversation. Not in an abstract time-bound sense, but rather in the sense of an affinity with the women of the Bible – the mothers of the patriarchs, Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah, but also Hannah, who became mother to the prophet Samuel at an advanced age, and the judge Deborah. All of them women who were motherly and beneficent, but with a formidable streak. Mirjam Rosenstein speaks in a quiet voice that reveals her Swiss sense, but it is clear that this delicate-seeming woman knows exactly what she wants. A trained economist from Zurich, she followed her husband back home to Germany. She is mother of two children, four-year-old Raphael and his younger sister Lea. At the same time, Mirjam Rosenstein, who grew up in an observant Jewish home, represents the interests of a Swiss pharmaceutical company in Germany. Operating at the intersection of research, business and politics, it is demanding work which requires intensive exchange with members of parliament, with ministerial bureaucracies, and with a variety of social groups and associations.

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Yes, Israel does have an emerging public voice. For the most part found it unnecessary to possess a majority of German Jews, but the present generation, in particular, finds it difficult to convey Jerusalem’s position in a convincing manner in Germany. This is nothing but a declaration of political bankruptcy.

Pugging this gap and promoting an understanding of Israel’s needs is NAFFO’s true purpose. This is a matter of patient and meticulous work rather than splashy public appearances. Mirjam Rosenstein has taken this task with thoughtful and charm, but also with determination. She considers it her duty as a Jew to advocate Israel and peace, especially among politicians and journalists. In so doing, she is continuing one of the humanistic traditions of Judaism.
Next Year in Jerusalem
Making hope a reality

By Rabbi Walter Homolka

Passover, which just ended on April 18, is the first of three festivals of pilgrimage during which Jews, both during the time of the Temples and in the later Diaspora, made an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The Passover festival recalls the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt, an event which also marked the emergence of the Israelites as a people. It was King Hezekiah who renewed the Passover feast, upon which “there was great joy in Jerusalem” (2 Chron 30: 25-26).

On Passover eve, we recount the Hagadah which tells the story of the Exodus and says, “Whoever is in need, let him come and conduct the Seder of Passover. This year we are here; next year in the land of Israel. This year we are slaves; next year we will be free people.” Ever since the Middle Ages, the Seder evening ends with the phrase “Next year in Jerusalem.” This wish is an expression of a yearning that has been preserved for more than two thousand years. And the yearning also has an eschatological element: according to Isaiah 22, at the “end of the earth” all people will go to Jerusalem to greet the Kingdom of Peace.

It was the Viennese Rabbi Shalom of Neustadt (who died around 1415) who incorporated the Hasal Seder Pesach, a poetic compilation of all the rules of the Seder evening, as the culmination of the festival liturgy. From his student, Isaac of Tyrnau, who was born in Vienna, we know that initially it was customary to say “next year in Jerusalem” immediately before Hasal Seder Pesach. The phrase was first mentioned in Rabbi Tyrnau’s “Book of Customs” (Sefer ha-Minhagim), suggesting that by the late 14th century it had become customary in the Duchy of Austria, the Kingdom of Hungary, and Styria.

Around the world, when Jews celebrate Passover, they conclude the Seder with the wish “L’Shana Haba’ah B’Yerushalayim.” In so doing, we recall the journey that brought us from Egypt to Jerusalem. The Hebrew name for Egypt is Mitzrayim, which can also mean “boundaries,” “limits” or “restrictions,” while Yerushalayim means “City of Peace.” The path to Jerusalem thus leads from the concrete to the abstract; from the profane to the holy.

But what do we say if we already live in Jerusalem? With the settlement of more and more Jews in the Land of Israel in the 19th century, it became traditional to end the Seder by exclaiming “Next year in the rebuilt Jerusalem.” This expression, for example, was employed in the 1920s by the first Ashkenazi chief rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook. However, the phrase Yerushalayim ha-Benuyah does not presume the construction of the Third Temple and the re-introduction of the sacrificial service. Rather it is our duty to work for a better Jerusalem, the Jerusalem of our ideals. This is the Jerusalem envisioned in Israel’s Declaration of Independence – of a state based in “freedom, justice and peace as envisaged by the prophets of Israel.” Next year in Jerusalem? If we take the social obligation articulated by the prophets seriously, we will have taken a further step toward making this hope a reality.

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