

# The American Jewish World

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## Showcasing artists' curious passions



**Curious Passions: The Diverse Inquiries of Traffic Zone Artists** is described as a sampling of what art-making looks like "in this place, at this point in time." Among the artists included in the exhibition are Jantje Visscher, Bette Globus Goodman and Perci Chester, whose piece titled "Slinky Chick Rocks" is pictured above. "Each artist must have the chance to stake their artistic claim," says curator Robert Bowman, "to show us what fascinates them, to share with us their diverse and curious passions." The exhibit is on display through March 28 in the Miles Gallery at the Minnetonka Center for the Arts, 2240 North Shore Dr., Wayzata. For information, visit: [www.trafficzoneart.com](http://www.trafficzoneart.com). — E.E.B.

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# Israel braces for Syrian civil war

**On the Golan Heights, Israeli residents face two big security threats: missiles and refugees crossing the border**

By BEN SALES

ALONEI HABASHAN, Israel (JTA) — A fence made of chain links and rusted barbed wire once was enough to separate the Golan Heights from Syria. That's no longer the case.

A few feet away from what one area resident called a "cattle fence" — one easy to jump if not for the electric current running through it — a newer barrier of crisscrossing shiny steel bars towers high above the heads of nearby soldiers.

As Syria's civil war escalates next door, Israelis have grown concerned that spillover could undermine the sense of security that Golan residents have enjoyed since the end of the 1973 Yom Kippur War.

### JTA Special Report: The Syria Spillover

"The chaos presents a situation in Syria where there's no rule, and a lot of entities can enter that can put us in danger because they have no national or diplomatic responsibility," said Ori Kalner, deputy head of the Golan Regional Council.

Heightened security awareness is

a new feeling for residents of the Golan, the mountainous region in Israel's northeast corner captured from Syria in 1967's Six-Day War. The Bible mentions it as a place of refuge, and for many Israelis it is exactly that. Two hours from the country's congested center, filled with national parks and bed-and-breakfasts, the Golan has remained immune from the terrorists and



Ben Sales / JTA

Israel started construction on the new fence separating the Golan Heights from Syria, seen in front of the old one, in response to possible consequences from the Syrian civil war.

missiles that have bombarded Israel in recent decades.

But the sense of sanctuary is eroding. Mortar shells and gunfire from the Syrian civil war began spilling into the Golan in November. Israel returned fire — the first cross-border conflict on the Golan since 1973. One shell landed in a backyard in this agricultural village 500 yards from the border.

In January, Israel announced construction of the new fence to prevent Syrians from infiltrating the border. Last week, seven Syrians crossed into Israel to seek medical attention; they are hospitalized in the northern Israeli city of Safed.

Residents have tried to ignore their neighbors' conflict, but they say it's becoming more difficult. Some worry that if rebels succeed in toppling the regime of President Bashar Assad, Islamist groups will exploit the opportunity to attack Israel, as terrorists did following Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005.

"They'll turn this into another Gaza," said Yaron Dekel, a resident of Alonei Habashan. "I don't think what's happening here is different from what's happening in the rest of Israel."

Like many Golan towns, the 56-family Alonei Habashan is tightly knit. Residents are used to leaving their doors unlocked and the town's entrance gate open, Dekel said, though they have

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# Silenced no more

**World Without Genocide will host a lecture on March 18 about sexual violence during the Holocaust and other genocides of the 20th and 21st centuries**

(Editor's note: The following article discusses rape and sexual violence. It may not be suitable for younger readers.)

By ERIN ELLIOTT BRYAN  
Community News Editor

At a 2006 workshop for teachers at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem, Holocaust scholars Sonja M. Hedgpeth and Rochelle G. Saidel raised the subject of sexual violence during the Shoah. Saidel is the author of *The Jewish Women of Ravensbrück Concentration Camp* and when she mentioned rape there, another leading scholar interrupted her.

"He, in essence, said, 'Jewish women were not raped during the Holocaust,'" Hedgpeth told the AJW. "To my mind, it's simply a stand that he has taken, he has dug his heels in. He had conducted many, many interviews with Holocaust survivors, with women, and he said that there weren't any women who talked about that. They talked about issues that were

much more serious... and his line of thinking was that if they were willing to speak with him about something that horrific in their lives, they certainly would have mentioned rape."

But Hedgpeth and Saidel didn't agree with their colleague — whom they have agreed not to name — and knew they wanted to write a book on the subject, particularly since they had been hearing of research by younger, newer scholars who were also addressing the issue.

Hedgpeth and Saidel are co-editors of *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, an anthology of 16 scholarly essays about the many ways Jewish women were assaulted during the Shoah. It is believed to be the first book in English to focus exclusively on this subject.

Hedgpeth will speak about her book 7 p.m. Monday, March 18 at Mount Zion Temple, 1300 St. Paul Ave., St. Paul. The event will be hosted by World Without Genocide, at William Mitchell College of Law, and co-sponsored by Mount Zion, Temple



**Sonja M. Hedgpeth and Rochelle G. Saidel are co-editors of *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, an anthology of scholarly essays about the many ways Jewish women were assaulted during the Shoah.**

Israel and Shir Tikvah Congregation.

"We've been doing a lot of programming on sex trafficking, from the global to the local," said Dr. Ellen J. Kennedy, executive director of World Without Genocide. "Sonja's talk is part of this initiative that we have to raise awareness, so she'll be talking about the historical context. This topic of sexual violence against Jewish women during the Holocaust is something that has been silenced or muted for a couple of generations now. So the work that she and her co-editor Rochelle have done is really path breaking."

Kennedy said that Hedge-

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## George W. Bush's Mideast policy

*Tested by Zion: The Bush Administration and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, by Elliott Abrams, Cambridge, 288 pages, \$30

Reviewed by NEAL GENDLER

"The remarkable assumption that the issues in the Israel-Palestinian conflict are actually pretty simple to resolve is simply a fallacy," says Elliott Abrams, who specialized in Middle East affairs for eight years in George W. Bush's White House. "It was never accurate that 'everyone understands what the final deal will look like'... The 'obvious' solution was unacceptable to both sides."

Abrams was a deputy assistant to Bush, then deputy national security adviser under Steve Hadley, who replaced Condoleezza Rice when she became secretary of state in Bush's second term.

"This book is not a defense of all we did," Abrams says. "The usual criticism of Bush's policy... was that we tilted toward Israel. I am inclined to plead guilty."

Reasons included Bush's desire to promote democracy and his expressed belief, recounted to Abrams by defense official Douglas Feith, that the United States and Israel "stood shoulder to shoulder in the same war" against terrorism. Bush despised Yasser Arafat as a terrorist

preventing progress.

Abrams, now a senior fellow for Middle Eastern studies at the Council on Foreign Relations, says things I didn't expect. For example: Vice President Richard Cheney, from Jew-sparse Wyoming, became "one of the most pro-Israel officials in the Bush administration." Abrams contradicts the "gray eminence" image of a puppeteer Cheney manipulating a hapless Bush, instead calling Bush engaged, in command of issues and facts, and very much in charge — if perhaps too influenced by Rice in his last two years.

In Bush's second term, at least, "hardly a day went by when Israeli and Palestinian issues were not discussed with the president," Abrams says.

He debunks the belief that in 1998 then-Gov. Bush and then-Minister Ariel Sharon forged a close relationship during a brief helicopter tour of Israel. The ride was too short, Abrams says, but Bush gained uncommon understanding of Israel's vulnerability. Abrams depicts Bush often talking so forcefully to Sharon that he's almost giving him orders.

Abrams is the man who, facing felony indictment, pleaded guilty to misdemeanor counts of withholding information from and lying to Congress about the Iran-Contra



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# Nazis, collaborators perpetrated many types of sexual violence

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path's talk will serve as a basis for a discussion that will also explore gender-based violence in Bosnia, Rwanda and all major genocides that have taken place in the 20th and 21st centuries, as well as gender-based violence that is currently taking place in Minnesota.

"We know that there are horrific statistics about the numbers of women, and some men, who are brutalized in domestic situations. And we know that there are women and men who are sex trafficked here in Minnesota, both people who are brought in from other parts of the country or parts of the world, but also people who are Minnesotans and who are being trafficked in Minnesota or the surrounding region," Kennedy said. "If we don't tolerate these crimes locally, then we also will stand up against these crimes globally. When we tolerate rape and domestic abuse and domestic violence here, then we certainly turn a blind eye to it elsewhere."

A response to Hedgepeth and Saidel's book in part prompted feminist activist, journalist and Women's Media Center co-founder Gloria Steinem to launch Women Under Siege, an initiative to document sexual violence as a tool of war and genocide.

"Why had it taken 65 years to reveal these facts?" Steinem asked in an interview on the Women's Media Center blog. "Why were they ignored at Nuremberg? If we'd known, might it have helped prevent rape camps in the former Yugoslavia? Or rape as a weapon of genocide in the Congo?"

The USC Shoah Foundation Institute for Visual History and Education houses about 52,000 video testimonies from Holocaust survivors in 32 languages and from 56 countries. According to a 2011 CNN.com story by Jessica Ravitz, more than 1,700 of those testimonies refer to sexual assaults, an umbrella term that includes sexual harassment, abuse, molestation

and rape.

The essays in Hedgepeth and Saidel's book address many types of sexual violence during the Holocaust, including rape, humiliation, forced sterilization and abortion, prostitution, exploitation or even consensual sex in exchange for food. The Nazis and their collaborators perpetrated most of the violence, but some also took place at the hands of other Jews and even rescuers.

The volume also explores psychological trauma, gender identity issues and depictions of violence in literature and film.

Hedgepeth, who is Jewish, is a professor of foreign languages and literature at Middle Tennessee State University. She said she wants her talk in St. Paul to bring this and other related topics into the conversation about Holocaust studies, as well as serve as an invitation to survivors who experienced sexual violence to come forward.

"Our take on it is that we don't want to continue to shame women, but that we hope that, through more knowledge and conversation, we can encourage women to open up discussion and, that way, discuss what is happening now," Hedgepeth said. "We hope that our approach is one of love and understanding, and we hope to look at this with compassion for the women it happened to. We have to remember that most of the women who were raped by Nazis and their collaborators did not live to tell their story; it was quite all right to murder them. They have been silenced."

But Hedgepeth and Saidel's book has been met with a fair amount of criticism. Like the leading Holocaust scholar who challenged their comments at the 2006 Yad Vashem conference, others have pointed to *Rassenschande* — translated as "racial shame," "racial defilement" or "racial pollution" — the Nazi law forbidding sexual relations between Aryans and Jews.

"That is an extreme view that has been held for a long time. One would think that a law would prevent rape, but we know today we have laws against rape... and we see stories about rape all the time," Hedgepeth said. "Also, the Rassenschande laws were meant for sexual consent and did not really address rape, per se. That is something that is embedded in that [law] if one looks at it very closely."

Other critics of the book fear that by focusing on gender-specific experiences, it takes away from the overall human and Jewish experience of the Holocaust. Others feel that the book gives the impression that sexual violence was common. And others believe it's wrong to bring further shame to survivors and their families.

But Hedgepeth believes the time is right to bring this subject to the forefront, especially as younger generations are more open to discussions about sexuality.

"Can knowledge of the past prevent what is going on now?" Hedgepeth asked. "Obviously, one can't really say that it could prevent something that's going on now, but it surely can't hurt for us to discuss it, and it certainly is time to expose this topic."

According to Kennedy, rape and gender-based violence has "largely been assumed to just be something that happens during war and other conflict." But during the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), rape was prosecuted for the first time under the heading of crimes against humanity. And with the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), the trial of Jean-Paul Akayesu established precedent that rape is a crime of genocide.

"From time immemorial, rape has been regarded as spoils of war," ICTR presiding judge Navanethem Pillay said in a statement after the verdict. "Now it will be considered a war crime. We want to send out a strong message that rape is no longer a trophy of war."

Kennedy said more women are

coming forward to testify about their experiences of sexual violence, most at great danger to themselves or their families, and more female prosecutors and judges are willing to listen — around the world and in Minnesota.

"The opportunity then to really acknowledge the severity of what rape does, not just to the individual victim, but also to the entire community, is happening because women are coming forward in all of these different ways," Kennedy said. "We really hope that to raise these issues publicly will help women and girls, and men and boys, to have courage to speak the truth. And then we also hope that this event will encourage people to perhaps participate a little further, to come to some of these other events where they will

learn more hands-on steps that they themselves can take so that the young boys and girls they know don't become victims of the predators in our state, so that they will know what they can do to advocate at a national or global level to end gender violence."

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**Author Sonja M. Hedgepeth will speak about her book *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust* 7 p.m. Monday, March 18 at Mount Zion Temple, 1300 Summit Ave., St. Paul. Cost is \$10 for the general public, \$5 for seniors and free for students.**

**For information, e-mail: [admin@worldwithoutgenocide.org](mailto:admin@worldwithoutgenocide.org) or call 651-695-7621.**

## Israel hit by Gaza rocket for first time in three months

(JTA) — A rocket fired from Gaza hit southern Israel for the first time in three months, causing some damage. A long-range Grad rocket struck early Tuesday morning in the industrial zone of Ashkelon.

The al-Aksa Martyrs' Brigades, the military wing of the Fatah party led by Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, claimed responsibility, saying it was in response to the death of Arafat Jaradat, a Palestinian man who died in an Israeli jail.

Palestinians have rioted in several areas of the West Bank since Jaradat's death on Feb. 23, and two Palestinian children were injured in riots on Monday following the funeral. The Palestinians claim Jaradat died as a result of Israeli torture; Israel refutes the claim.

"We will never be free without fighting, and we must struggle in every way possible, including

armed struggle, against the Israeli enemy," said a statement issued by the al-Aksa Martyrs' Brigades following the attack.

The last time a rocket fired from Gaza struck Israel was during last November's Pillar of Defense, an eight-day defensive operation by the Israeli army. Some 1,500 rockets were fired from Gaza on southern Israel during the operation.

No Color Red alert was sounded to warn residents of the approaching rocket. A military source told Ynet that the alert did not sound because it was believed the rocket would hit an unpopulated area.

There was no Iron Dome anti-missile battery in the vicinity either, as it had been redeployed since the threat of rockets being fired from Gaza had been determined to be low.

## Beth El hosting 'Passoverama'

In honor of the completion of the Beth El Synagogue Gift Shop, the shop is hosting Passoverama. Passover specials will be offered each Sunday in March in the gift shop at

the synagogue, 5224 W. 26th St., St. Louis Park.

According to a press release, the gift shop has the largest selection of seder plates and matzo trays in Min-

neapolis, as well as a special section of sale Passover items. Artists include Shraga Landesman, Sara Beames, Adi Sidler and many others.

For information, call Linda Estrin at 763-545-4301 or Sara Zuk at 763-529-1285.

## Beth El to host Prime Minister Ehud Barak

"An Evening with Ehud Barak" will take place 6 p.m. Sunday, March 17 at Beth El Synagogue, 5224 W. 26th St., St. Louis Park. Barak, Israel's 10th prime minister, will speak about leading the country out of prolonged recession and into an economic boom.

However, the core of the Barak government's effort was devoted to the peace process. In May 2000, Barak ordered the withdrawal of the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) from South Lebanon, ending 18 tragic and bloody years of Israel's presence there. He also led far-reaching efforts to negotiate peace agreements, first with Syria and later with the Palestinian authority, with the active participation of President Bill Clinton and his administration, though those negotiations did not

result in the breakthroughs necessary to conclude final agreements.

Before being elected prime minister, Barak completed a 36-year career in the IDF as the most decorated soldier in its history. He was a key architect of the June 1976 Entebbe Operation for the rescue of passengers on the Air France aircraft hijacked by terrorists and forced to land at the Entebbe Airport in Uganda; and served as chief of the general staff of the IDF where he was involved in the negotiation and implementation of the 1994 peace treaty with Jordan.

Barak also served as minister of the interior, minister of foreign affairs and defense minister.

For tickets and information, call 952-873-7300.

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