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INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF RABBIS

אחוד הרבנים בין-לאומי

# IFR NEWS Nissan 5763



Volume 2 Issue 4



## A Call to Understanding

The need for adding interfaith education to the full spectrum of Jewish education.

### Rabbi Roger Ross

Throughout the ages, it has been said that many of the most horrific wars have been fought in the name of God. People who lead their countries to war do it for power, possessions, and wealth, but the “common” people of these countries are convinced that it is a war of one faith against another. If only there was a way to teach the people the truth; the truth of the Shema, the truth that there is only one God and that we are all children of that God.

The call to war has usually included the words, “God is on our side,” and that statement has been used to justify killing or enslaving anyone who prays differently or follows any path that appears to be different.

The horrible events that have happened in the recent past have been perpetrated in the name of religion and one faith versus another. The wars in Africa, the World Trade center attack, the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, the terror in Northern Ireland, the Balkans, Chechnya and everywhere else in the world have usually been labeled a “Holy War” and include some form of ethnic cleansing that follows religious lines.

In Kunda, a small town in Nigeria, as reported in the New York Times on Friday, November 29<sup>th</sup>, after the removal of the Miss World Contest, the report read, “...there are no celebrations in this deeply troubled town, which has become a symbol of the difficulty in Nigeria – and throughout Africa – of reconciling people who worship separately.”

So, what can we, as Jews and as Rabbis, do to end this cycle? We can teach the truth. Interfaith, as well as Jewish education is the way to teach the truth and end this cycle of death and destruction planet wide and in our time. The process is simple, but the commitment is the challenge. Are we ready to do something different than we have in the past? We’ve all heard the saying, “If you always do what you’ve always done, you’ll always get what you’ve always gotten.” Is it not time to add interfaith perspectives to all that we teach about Judaism?

There are many lessons to be taught and learned.

In the history of Christianity and Islam as well as Judaism, Abraham is considered the Father of each. And yet, as Bruce Feiler, author of Abraham, A Journey to the Heart of Three Faiths, said, “He (Abraham) didn’t just live in his time. He has been reborn in every generation, in every religion, in century since he lived. I quickly realized that I was looking for hundreds of Abrahams.” Feiler continued, “Though we have violence, we can also find peace. There’s that haunting and often overlooked moment in Genesis 25:9 when Ishmael and Isaac, rivals since before they were born and estranged since childhood, stand side by side and bury their Father.

It’s so remarkable – he tried to kill both of them, and yet they can forgive him. And they can stand side by side.”

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## A Call to Understanding

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How can we not teach this lesson that HaShem has made so clear in Torah? How can we not teach our children that it is possible to forgive past perceived injuries and stand side by side as advocates for peace, tolerance and acceptance?

There are certainly parallels in all of the religions of the world, and if we do not teach the underlying truth, we will be doomed to only remember the stories that perpetuate anger and violence.

The value of adding interfaith education to what we teach has become more and more apparent. It is imperative that we teach the truths found in Judaism and the parallel truths found in all of the major religions of the world. We must teach everyone that we can to live the precept that is universally taught by all faiths; the lesson to love one another as you love yourself, and to recognize that we are all one.

After the tragedy of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the chaplains at Ground Zero were of many faiths including Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, and others. We all became aware that we had to minister to all the uniformed personnel, rescue workers and families with full knowledge that the truths of our faiths were the truths of those we were helping. Those chaplains who couldn't learn that lesson didn't last very long at that tragic and holy site.

I was a chaplain at Ground Zero from the first week of October of 2001 until the last piece of steel was removed in June of 2002. Every firefighter, policeperson, EMT and construction worker knew I was a Rabbi. For most of that time I was the only Rabbi present. There was never a time when I couldn't be present for a Catholic, Protestant, Muslim or Jew, nor was there any time that anyone of any faith couldn't pray with me or be comforted by me.

In most cases, when a body was recovered, there was no way to know that persons faith, and yet it was my responsibility to pray for each. Because of my training, I was able to create inclusive prayers that comforted all who were present.

Because of my ability to be inclusive, when a body was recovered, more often than not they specifically requested that "the Rabbi" be present to pray, bless and escort the remains.

The most result part of adding an interfaith education to our Jewish education is imparting the ability to really see and hear the truths of all the faiths,

and how we all are living with the same precepts even if we define them with our own unique languages.

If we learn, through the addition of interfaith information to our Jewish education, to look and really see, we too will realize that each faith, and each human being that professes that faith, is a unique and sacred part of the whole scheme of existence. We will begin to remember that, beneath the words we have always heard before, the whole truth is there for us to see and learn.

So, how can each one of us begin to share the truth of the Shema, the knowledge that "G-d Is One?" We can teach our children not to fear, hate or judge out of hand. We can teach them that we are all one people, displayed in different colors, beliefs and cultures. We can teach tolerance. We can speak of the greatest goal of Judaism, that of Tikkun Olam, the healing of the world. We can share those same concepts with willing friends and family and create a small Tikkun Olam within our own community.

We will never escape the danger of the Tower of Babel and begin the healing of the world until we get to know each other and understand that, as Matthew Fox so aptly states in the title of one of his books, there is only "One River, Many Wells."

The path to that understanding is through adding an understanding of interfaith precepts and principles to the Jewish education we all teach.

**Rabbi Roger Ross is a Vice president and Board member of the International Federation of Rabbis. He is the Executive Director of the Rabbinical Seminary International as well as the Rabbinical Fellowship of America, International**

**Rabbi Ross is also the Director of the New Seminary, the oldest and most respected Interfaith Seminary in the world, where he also teaches the course presentation on Judaism. Rabbi Ross received his Bachelor's Degree in Psychology and Philosophy from New York University. He graduated from and received Semicha from the Rabbinical Seminary International, and he received his Certificate in Spiritual Counseling from the New Seminary in New York City.**

**Rabbi Ross has a private practice in Marital Counseling as well as Spiritual Counseling for couples and singles on the Upper West Side of Manhattan, and can be reached at 212-222-1475 or HaRavNYC@aol.com**

### IFR News Editor

Rabbi Suzanne H. Carter

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IFR Rabbis in the News

ENGAGEMENT ANNOUNCEMENT  
Hipper/Nerenberg

Elaine Shapiro of Brigantine, NJ and Barbara Leven of Havertown, PA announce the engagement of their brother, **Rabbi Yaakov (Paul) Nerenberg** of Boca Raton, Florida to **Sherry Hipper** of Deerfield Beach, Florida, daughter of Irving Axelrod of Queens, NY and Tamarac, FL. Nerenberg is a former student at Yishivas Bircas Ha-

Torah in Jerusalem and holds Semicha (ordination) from the Florida Academy of Miami Beach, Institute of Religion, Division of Religious Studies, serves as Rabbi of Temple B'nai Or of Boca Raton, Havurah Shechinah and Talmidim Beheder, Member of the Board of the International Federation of Rabbis, President of the South Florida Association of Rabbis, is a member of the International Conference of Police Chaplains and Hipper is with Broward County Mass Transit. A June wedding is planned.

**IFR DUES 2003**  
Now is the time to renew your membership in the IFR. Please make your check for \$150.00 payable to: **The International Federation of Rabbs**  
You may also pay your dues in two payments, \$75.00 now and \$75.00 on or before 29 Tammuz 5763 (July 29, 2003).  
Send checks to:  
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230 Riverside Drive, Suite 4D  
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Every Cop has a Rabbi

Rabbi Suzanne H Carter



**DBFD & PD Chaplains: Meridy, Desormeaux, Johnson, Horgan, Norman, Carter, Hickem, Cook**  
**Not in photo: Chaplains Busby, Alexandre, Smith and Aspinwhall.**

Sometime in the fall of 1996, I sat at a conference table in the Delray Beach Police Department, surrounded by 10 male clergy. Admittedly, I was somewhat intimidated, even though I was being welcomed into the DB Chaplain program.

That was my first taste of what lay ahead of me with the DBFD/PD chaplain program. The program includes 12 chaplains from various denominations with two female chaplains, I served as chief for 3 1/2 years-recently stepping down for a respite.

We chaplains, have become great friends and meet monthly for debriefing sessions. We recently added another soon to be ordained RSI rabbi, Howard Meridy, who has been a great help to me, as I have been the only Jewish chaplain for the past few years.

The officers call us out regularly to crime scenes, wherein we assist the officers in comforting the families of victims, often we assist families with informa-

tion on the Medical Examiner and in making funeral arrangements. We deliver death notifications and respond to all situations which may require a chaplain.

Police & Fire Chaplaincy is **Crisis Intervention** at its finest-all of us have been down the **trial by fire** path – whether we were ready for it or not! We cover the city 24/7 and there are always two chaplains on call.

DB Chaplains are members of the ICPC and FFC international organizations for police and fire chaplains. We train regularly and offer assistance in community training programs, such as CERT.

We are available for our officers and their families, deliver invocations at city commission meetings, city functions, including prayer services promoting unity in our city.

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**Every Cop has a Rabbi**

As a chaplain, my work is truly *trans- denominational* in that I am often called upon to serve those who are not Jewish. I recently performed the marriage of an African American Christian police officer and his fiancé at his request, three days prior to his leaving for Kuwait City, as an Army reservist for one year, and on New Years Day 2003, I performed the marriage ceremony of Delray Beach's Mayor.

I continue to maintain the Delray Beach Police Dept. web site, which I designed in 1997 and in April 2001, I was awarded the Chief's Administrative Excellence Award, an award given out only three times during Chief Overman's 10 years as Chief of Police.

The past 6 years I have been an instructor for the DBFD CERT Program and have been teaching with Boynton Beach's Fire Department's CERT program as well.

These days, as I walk through the halls of the PD & FD, officers, paramedics and firefighters, make a point of coming up to me with a hug and a warm "shalom rabbi", now after 7 years, I'm just "one of the guys"

I've come a long way since that initial meeting in 1996, and so has Delray Beach, Florida.



**Rabbi Suzanne Carter is the editor of the IFR newsletter and VP in charge of Communications of the IFR. Rabbi Carter, resides and practices as an independent rabbi in the City of Delray Beach, Florida. Rabbi Carter and her husband have six children and one daughter in law . Website: [www.tzedakahhouse.org](http://www.tzedakahhouse.org)**

**On Eve of War-Livermore rabbi gets taste of France**

**ABBY COHN** from the *Bulletin Staff*

A top American rabbi who chided the French for failing to back the American-led war on Iraq was met with scattered boos by a crowd at Paris' Hotel de Ville, the historic city hall.

Sitting in the audience during that chilly reception was Livermore rabbi **David Roller**. He was one of 36 American rabbis and the only Californian who went to Paris earlier this month with a delegation from the North American Boards of Rabbis for a conference aimed at addressing anti-Semitism in France along with the strained relations between the two countries. The event was also sponsored by the World Jewish Congress in cooperation with the European Catholic Church.

Roller got a small taste of that bad blood at the city hall event during a speech by Marc Schneier, a New York-based rabbi who serves as NABOR's president. The social-action group, formed in 1999, represents about 3,000 rabbis from all streams of Judaism.

Addressing a mostly French audience of about 1,500 people, Schneier "spoke out about France," said Roller, a 54-year-old non-congregational rabbi. NABOR's president was greeted by a smattering of boos when he told the crowd that "we're outraged that our oldest European friend and ally is speaking out against us," Roller said.

The East Bay rabbi said he "wasn't overwhelmingly surprised" by the response. "Overall, there are a lot of [French] people who feel the same as [President Jacques] Chirac does," he said.

Given the timing of the trip, just a week before the U.S. attack on Iraq, Roller admits to some jitters. "I was very, very nervous myself," he said. War "was in all our minds."

The rabbis on the trip held a spectrum of positions on U.S. military action, Roller said: "Three Jews, 10 opinions."

As for his, Roller, who once worked at the World Trade Center, said he considers Saddam Hussein "a danger" and feels the U.S. attack is "doing a job that should have been finished. I support our troops and pray for a speedy end to it."

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Rabbi Dr. Marc Ben Meir in the IDF Machzor May 1972



Rabbi Dr. Ben-Meir Lt Col in the USAF Reserve 2003

## What did you do in the war, daddy?

### Rabbi Marc Ben Meir

“What did you do in the war, daddy?” A question that many dads (and now, moms) hear from their children. “Ducked, mainly,” I answered. After a bit more cajoling, I retold the story of my Viet-Nam war service. I had served as a combat medic in a helicopter unit stationed in Saigon.

But what *did* I do in the war? I felt fear, cried when one of my buddies was killed. Froze in terror every time one of the “Huey’s” I was riding in started to take fire. What did I do in the war? I survived!!

How did I, a Viet-Nam war protester, long haired, pinko (their words, not mine) get into that predicament anyway??

The closest I had ever wanted to come to war was playing jungle fighter with my friends. We made the South Bronx into the jungles of Southeast Asia years before urban flight and the 60s had made the game into a reality.

During the 60s I was known a *Bucky the Folk Singer*. I played guitar and banjo, sang, and opened my guitar case for donations. That’s how I survived. Rather, survival was great during the warm New Jersey summer but when winter came, that was a different story. Having been ceremoniously kicked out of two junior colleges (remember, it was the 60s), I decided that I would become a troubadour. My heroes were Pete Seeger, Bob Dylan, and Woody Guthrie and there was no reason why I couldn’t become famous. Except, of course, I had no talent.

Finally the day of decision arrived. I was hungry, cold, and tired of charity (or lack of charity). I had *schnooded* my last meal at Rutgers’ Hillel and my singing had reached a new low. I went to the army reserve recruiting station. “Oh, yeah, sign right here,” the friendly recruiter smiled at me. “But I don’t wanna go to Viet-Nam,” I responded. “Hey,” he said confidentially, “we have a program. We need first aid instructors. Sign up now and after training you’ll go to Fort Dix and teach first aid to basic trainees, you know, like a teacher?” And I swallowed that, hook, line, and sinker.

After eight grueling weeks of basic training, and 16 weeks of training at the army medical specialist training center in San Antonio, TX, I was ready. I was coming back to New Jersey a new man.

The flight back to McGuire air force base was on a C-130 cargo plane. It caught every ripple of turbulence and threw us all over the sky. I didn’t care, though. I was going to be a teacher. And, most importantly, I wasn’t going to the dreaded Viet-Nam.

As the plane lost altitude heading towards McGuire, I looked out of my port and saw Ft. Dix. Dix and McGuire were right next to each other. How convenient. We landed. *Shecheanu!!*. As I deplaned I saw a second lieutenant checking our orders at the bottom of the stairway.

When he checked mine he pointed to a large, jet aircraft, a C-5, and said “hop on.” “no,” I said. “I’m going to teach first aid. Here are my orders.”

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**On the eve of war**

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Despite the backdrop of impending war and fears about a rise of anti-Jewish sentiment in France, Roller said the trip also produced some unexpected moments of solidarity.

One came in a meeting with the iman of the Muslim Institute of the Mosque of Paris. "He walked the walk," said Roller of Muslim leader Dalil Doubakeur, whose mosque sheltered Jews during the Holocaust. "I felt this is a brother."

Noting that Doubakeur expressed outrage over the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11, Roller, who lost friends in New York, said he left the meeting with a "tremendous kinship. I felt we have a friend here we ought to cultivate."

In contrast, Roller was troubled by comments made by Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, the converted son of Polish Jews who is the archbishop of Paris.

Roller, who lost relatives in the Holocaust, was disturbed when the archbishop said anti-Semitism was an outgrowth of general urban violence. "Anti-Semitism is anti-Semitism," Roller said. "It's not caused by quote unquote urban violence."

Roller said he considered the comment a dodge of responsibility by a key member of the church.

"The Catholic Church in my view is trying to clean up its act and it's 50 years too little and too late." Overall, Roller described interfaith communications in Europe as "30 to 40 years behind where we are."

The rabbi was more reassured by comments from Nicolas Sarkozy, the French interior minister, who told the group that his government was taking a hard line against anti-Semitic acts.

"He came out stating they are not going to put up with this garbage at all," Roller said, noting that Sarkozy cited beefed-up police presence.

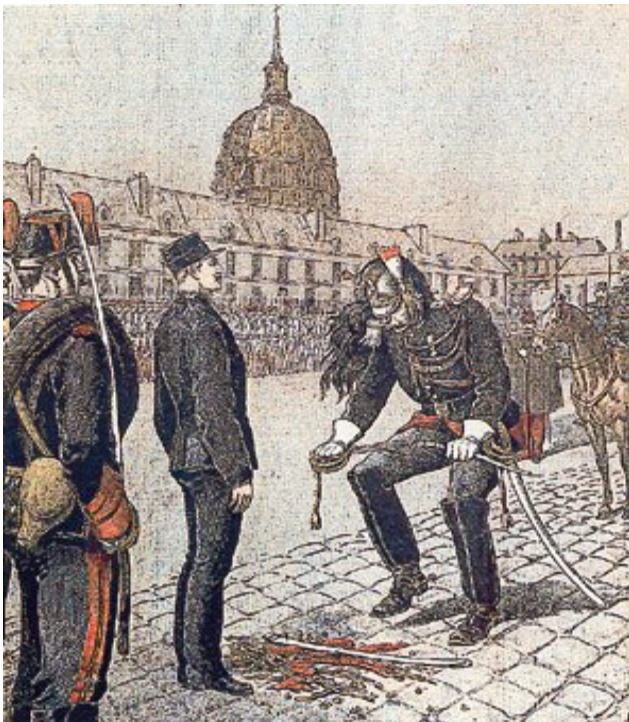
The rabbis made other stops not normally included on an American tourist's itinerary. They traveled to a suburban day school and a synagogue hit by separate firebomb attacks about a year ago.

"They're more cautious now," Roller said of the French Jews he met.

Before taking the trip, Roller and others received warnings from acquaintances. "Some people were told not to wear kippahs in public," he said. But the rabbis, who had a motorcycle escort during their stay, disregarded that advice.

Apart from the boos at the Hotel de Ville, Roller, who speaks French, described his interactions as "very warm." French Jews welcomed the American rabbis but also appeared puzzled by their trip, Roller said. "They're happy to know they have world support from their brethren."

**Rabbi's 2 Cents-Rabbi David Degani**



*In a small crowded room near the city of Paris, a military court-martial is in progress. Many people want to witness the trial but, according to the state official explanation, the small room can accommodate only the parties involved and the court personnel. The mob outside is growing restless. Many came to support the military and to encourage the judge to make the "right" decision...*

*Lieutenant Alfred Dreyfus the Jew is the defendant. Everyone hated Dreyfus, the "Jew traitor," who "sold" sensitive documents to the German enemy. "We should spit on his face and then kill him," shouted the growing crowd. A familiar tune was heard everywhere: "Death to Dreyfus! Death to the Jews!"*

*In a small park near Paris, a statue of Dreyfus has been standing for many years now. "Death to the Jews" "Death to Israel" Viva les Palestinians," shout thousands of proud Frenchmen in a recent large demonstration as they decorate Dreyfus' bronze face with Swastikas.*

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## What did you do in the war, daddy?

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The lieutenant checked my name again. "You have new orders, private. Please get on that plane."

Well, at least he said please.

The next 13 months were spent in a hell called Viet-Nam. It was 24 hours a day, seven days a week of pure terror. You never knew when the base you were on was going to be visited by "Charlie." Mid-night helicopter rides to a fresh battlefield to rescue wounded, ours and theirs, were something out of a Clyde Barkley nightmare.

No one could imagine the screaming and moaning from the wounded or watch helplessly as the life drained out of a comrade. No one knew I would live with these scenes for the rest of my life. Unlike many of the friends I had made, the end of my Viet-Nam experience came in a wonderful way.

My first sergeant sought me out one morning. He found me sleeping in my "hooch" fully clothed with three days growth of beard and the dirt of "Nam" under my nails. "Hey Marc," he shouted, "Freedom train. Got your orders."

Freedom train was the Viet-Nam nickname for the plane ride home. It was over. I had survived. I grabbed my duffle bag, my orders, and my hat, and ran out onto the flight line. The first plane I saw was another C-130. This time it looked like a dream come true. The pilot was doing his pre-flight engine run up when I ran up the plane screaming "Freedom

train." One of the crew members opened the bottom hatch and I threw my stuff and my self into the belly of the plane. After a brief check of my orders we were off. America bound. I hadn't even waited long enough to collect my Bronze Star.

Four months later (after a three month drunk) I expatriated myself. I rode around Europe on a K-100 BMW motorcycle for nine months (it was still the 60s) and ended up in Israel. Freedom, peace, my place in the world. Of course that feeling lasted long enough for me to get drafted into the IDF. Here we go again.

***Rabbi Ben-Meir served in Viet-Nam during the '68 Tet offensive. After surviving the experience he went to Israel where he saw military service in the IDF. Currently, Rabbi Ben-Meir still serves as a chaplain (Lieutenant Colonel) in the U.S. Air Force reserve.***

***At the time of this publication Rabbi Ben-Meir has been activated and is now located at Carswell AFB in Texas.***

## Kol HaNasi

### Voice of the President

*Shalom IFR Rabbanim,*

I am happy to report that our IFR Board meeting held from March 3 through March 4th, 2003 was very positive and productive. We were able to generate much excitement about the future of the IFR.

Our meeting was held in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida at Cantor Jerry Cohn's law offices who not only was a gracious host but also served as our legal consultant.

The Executive Committee of the IFR Board of Directors for the year 2003 are:

President, Rabbi Gary Golbart

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Vice President, Rabbi Roger Ross

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-Communications Technology: R. Suzanne Carter

-Convention Chair: R. Judy Epstein, Ph.D.

-Ethics Committee: R. Roger Ross, R. Gary Golbart

## Rabbi's 2 Cents

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*No reporters were allowed in the court room where Dreyfus was being tried for treason. A young reporter named Theodor Herzl who represented an Austrian magazine in Paris desperately tried to witness the trial, to capture not only what would be said, but the atmosphere in the room and people's expressions. Since the state was claiming "security reasons" for not allowing reporters into the court room, he would have to report on the trial without actually being in the room.*

*In his mid 30's, Theodor Herzl was an accomplished reporter and playwright. Much of his work had been published. His writing career was moving forward rapidly. As a young reporter Herzl had heard much about the 20th century which would be ushered in, in a few years. It was called in the French media, "The Century of Hope." As people grew more sophisticated and industry developed, wonderful machines began to appear. People were talking about a machine that moved with no horses and machines that could fly. "In the 20th century," people were saying, "there will be no hatred no bigotry. People will understand the economical and humane values of tolerance and brotherhood of nations." Young Theodor was optimistic as well.*

That was more than 100 years ago.

Now, as the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis is intensifying, incidents of anti Semitic acts are becoming commonplace in many cities across France as well as other cities in Europe. Jews are being attacked in the streets, synagogues are being set ablaze, Jewish cemeteries are being desecrated everywhere. It is *Kristalnacht* all over again, all over Europe.

Not far from the old statue of Dreyfus, now decorated with anti Semitic "pearls," the well publicized, well attended, anti - Jewish demonstration is going well. It looks like Jews are no longer welcomed in France. "The state of Israel," one of the speakers announces, "is a Pariah State and should be dismantled."

That was a few weeks ago.

With the beginning of the 21st century only a few short years ago, many of us were hoping, that with

all our technological advancements and as countries become well intra-connected, nations will finally grow to appreciate peace and tolerance as the best contributor to prosperity. But in France as well as many other European countries, bigotry and hatred remain a way of life, it seems.

As the trial progressed and the injustice against Dreyfus the Jew became very apparent, young Theodor entered into a state of shock. Coming from a non practicing family he knew he was Jewish but not much more. He believed in justice and freedom. He believed in France. The continuing deep hatred of the Jewish people on the brink of the 20th century, the "Century of Hope," suddenly shattered his entire belief system. His hopes for the 20th century were fading away. As he was covering the trial he saw the deeply rooted bigotry in the faces of the uncontrolled masses. His shock grew deeper with the news about the pogroms in Russia and other places in Europe. Like thunder exploding on a bright shiny day, he suddenly understood that the "Century of Hope" would bring explosions of anti-Semitism - not containment. It was not only Dreyfus that the French mobs were after. It was the Jewish people, including him. To his dismay he realized that nothing had changed when it came to hating Jews. That, he concluded, will never change. For many nights he could not sleep. In his vision he saw what was awaiting the Jews in Europe. In a matter of days his life was completely changed. He was changed.

The speakers in that recent mass demonstration near the park where the old bronze statue of Dreyfus stands, grow very vile. They compare the state of Israel and the rest of the Jews to Nazis, to the delight of their audience.

Upon hearing complaints about the many anti-Semitic incidents in France, our good friend, premier Jack Chirac denied that there is any anti-Semitism in France at all. He said that the demonstrations are purely against the policies of the state of Israel. Oh, the burning of synagogues and beating Jews in the streets of Europe are random acts of violence with no connection to anti-Semitism.....He said.

The many acts of anti-Semitism in France and across Europe, the shouting of the mob, "Death to Dreyfus! Death to the Jews" transformed young Theodor Herzl from an ambitious young writer who cared little about being Jewish to something else.

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## Rabbi's 2 cents

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Like a madman in an uncontrolled frenzy, he sat days and nights and wrote "Altneuland" "Old new land" - a road map for the Jewish people to establish a state of their own in the Promised Land. He sent the book all across Europe and launched the first Zionist congress in Basel, Switzerland which led to the

birth of the Zionist movement. He single handedly started the process which eventually brought us the state of Israel.

Herzl somehow understood very well the gravity of the event, the Dreyfus trial, which he was witnessing. Something changed in him and made him the father of the state of Israel. Our own George Washington, John Adams and Thomas Jefferson combined into one person.

After many tribulations, years of trials and retrials and only after the real perpetrator was found (and was not punished...) Lieutenant Dreyfus was eventually acquitted. He was returned to full military service and was promoted to the rank of captain. A statue was erected in his honor by some kind and honest Frenchmen who were instrumental in his acquittal (the famous writer Emil Zola and others).

Not far from the old statue of Dreyfus an anti Jewish mass demonstration is getting stronger by the minute. It is 2003, the dawn of a new century and a new millennium. It is a cold winter morning in Paris but the crowd does not mind the January freezing air. Hatred and bigotry give out a nice fuzzy feeling, I guess.

Like Herzl, you and I had great hope for this newly ushered in, 21st century. Perhaps we even had better reasons to hope things will change. After all, Europe is drenched in our brothers' and sisters' blood of the last Holocaust. Should I mention other holocausts like the pogroms of centuries past all over Europe, the Inquisition, crusades, forced conversion - to name a few?

If Herzl was in a state of shock witnessing the anti-Semitic mob years before the destruction of European Jewry in the 20th century, we should all practically have heart attacks seeing that Jew hating in

post holocaust Europe is very much alive and well. But there is a good reason why we are not in shock. What has been happening in Europe simply reaffirms what our elders have been telling us all along. We simply thought they were exaggerating. In too much of Europe, bigotry and hatred is as old as the land itself. It will never change. It cannot change. For the most part, Jews will never be safe there.

Now I too am convinced that "liberte" is the European expression for liberty to all but the Jews. If one listens carefully to the stories of Holocaust survivors who managed to escape the horror and/or joined the partisans, one will quickly realize that, with very few exceptions, many European nations were not terribly upset with Nazi atrocities. They claimed they "didn't know." Didn't know? - One had to be deaf and blind to not see what was going on.

Nothing has changed in much of Europeans' attitudes towards the Jews since Theodor Herzl's time. It makes no difference if it is the 20th, 21st or 25th century. Bigotry has no time limit.

But now we have our own Jewish state, strong and proud. I would urge all our brethren in Europe to leave that (Jewish) blood soaked continent, leave that one big Jewish cemetery called Russia, Poland, Rumania, Bulgaria, France and all the others, that land inflicted with so much hate and bigotry, that snake den. If you find that life in Israel is too hard to live in right now, go elsewhere. There are places in the world that are not infested with racist vermin that are sanctioned or ignored by governments.

In two weeks we will be celebrating Passover, as we have been doing for thousands of years. Wouldn't that be an appropriate time for another exodus, a European one?

As we celebrate freedom this year, let us pray for our brethren who are facing the horrors of anti-Semitism and for our soldiers who are facing the horrors of war so that we may continue to celebrate our freedom.

***Happy and kosher Pesach to all of us.***

**Rabbi David Degani and his wife, Lee are the spiritual leaders of Congregation Shirat Shalom and Hebrew School located in Boca Raton Florida. Website: [www.shiratshalom.org](http://www.shiratshalom.org)**

**Kol HaNasi**

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We also were blessed by having Rabbi Joseph H. Gelberman as a guest and Advisor during our first day's meeting.

Thanks to our Recording Secretary, Rabbi Lisa Bensinger-Bushnell and our Vice-President and Technical Balabusta, Rabbi Suzanne Carter, our Board minutes may viewed on our website in the password protected pages.

We examined our history and analyzed our past to lead us in our direction for the future. We spent our time planning short-term and long-term programs and offerings for our members. When someone new wants to know what IFR can do for them, we now have a nice list of membership benefits and many more to be implemented soon. Of course, we also want to remind our members and future members, to paraphrase President Kennedy, Ask not what the organization can do for you, ask what can you do for the organization!

It is a valid point because each of us brings to the IFR particular expertise, talents, perspectives, and experience that can benefit others in the IFR. We are the only professional rabbinical organization that is truly open to a wide "flavor" of rabbanim that can support and make a difference in members' professional lives.

Our best and most efficient manor of advertising is, has been, and will continue in the short run word of mouth from our own established members. We are also going to revisit some who have resigned for various reasons and look to remedy the causes of their departure if it is reasonable and desirable for us to do so.

We are looking forward to our IFR Convention, May 2-4, 2004, Chaired by R. Epstein in the Boston area. As former chairs, R. Carter and I will assist with plans from afar, and Rabbi Epstein will gain local assistance from her area.

We are depending on Rabbis Epstein and Degani in the pursuit of continued enrichment in educational opportunities for our members. There has already been much research by R. David Degani as reported last year at the Convention in Las Vegas and more programs to come.

Insurance; board insurance; pension plan; and medical insurance are being researched for benefits to our members.

Our website and use of the Internet is expertly being handled by R. Suzanne Carter and we are fortunate to have someone with her ability and knowledge heading up this field in an ever competitive area.

The Board will be meeting by Chat room monthly to keep us on top of our duties and planning efforts. We are also hoping to establish a membership chat availability to exchange ideas and support.

Our Referral list along with other specific areas in our website are password protected and we insist that only members in good-standing are allowed into our protected pages.

I, along with the other members of the Board of Directors, look to a wonderful year of growth and support for our organization. Please feel free to lend your suggestions and expertise to our endeavors.

*B'Shalom,*

**Rabbi Gary M. Golbart,  
President, IFR**

**IFR Mission Statement**

The IFR is a professional organization of rabbis united by a commitment to Jewish tradition and a desire to facilitate the Jewish spiritual growth and life cycle needs of all.

IFR provides a progressive, pluralistic forum, linking member rabbis in a spirit of friendship and a sense of community.

IFR provides support for members in their professional endeavors and offers continuing education. IFR encourages professional relationships with rabbis and other rabbinic organizations.