

# Opinions and Commentaries

## Is There a Boycott on Tourism?

By Dr. Marilyn Gootman

Are we American Jews fair weather friends of Israel? It certainly seems that way right now. More successful than any Arab boycott is the current boycott of Israel by American Jews.

Oh, how proud we have been of her economic and military accomplishments. Our self esteem shot up with the successful establishment of our own Jewish state. We "kvelled" as her outstanding agricultural products became known throughout the world.

But now, Israel's image has been tarnished. Israel has reacted with force to the Palestinian uprising. The media have sensationalized this tragic situation and have portrayed Israel as an oppressor who beats and tortures Palestinians. We have been appalled and raised our voices in protest.

And Israel has listened and continues to listen. But the media have neglected to portray Israeli efforts to rectify the situation. The media have neglected to portray the severity of the stresses that are overwhelming 18 and 19-year-old boys as well as the entire Jewish population of Israel.

No, we should not condone cruel and unjust behavior. No, we should not blindly agree with everything Israel does just because she is Israel. Yes, we must encourage a solution that acknowledges the rights of the Palestinian victims. But we must also not abandon the Jewish state.

We all know that loved ones need our help and support in times of trouble. Whether we condone their behavior or not, our presence is essential for successful recovery. Israel needs our presence now.

Fear not for your safety. Life proceeds as normal within the pre-1967 borders.

Visiting Israel is definitely safer than visiting many large cities throughout the United States. Would you cancel a trip to New York or Los Angeles because of elevated crime statistics? Unlikely. So why cancel a trip to Israel?

In fact, Tel Aviv is far safer than most major U.S. cities and even small towns. While my daughter was safely walking home from parties in Tel Aviv at 1 a.m. with her Israeli friends this spring, some of her friends were mugged at 9 p.m. right outside a downtown Athens, Georgia movie theater.

Yes, caution is necessary in

areas affected by the Intifada, but as a general rule, you can roam the streets of Israel far more safely than you can roam the streets of your own hometown.

Israel is suffering tremendous economic hardship because of the large decline in tourism by American Jews. (Europeans and Christian Americans are still coming though with some decline.) Shops are closing, hotels are on the verge of failure, and many workers in the tourist industry are losing their jobs.

By boycotting Israel at this crucial time, we are aiding the Intifada. Israel can survive the rocks and stones, but not the abandonment of American Jews.

Our Israeli brethren need our support. Now is the time to visit your friends and relatives. Talk with them. Discuss your concerns directly with the voters. Say what you like, but be with them. Now is the time to prove our commitment to a Jewish homeland. If not now, when?

*Dr. Gootman is on the faculty of the University of Georgia, specializing in early childhood development. She and her family recently spent several months in Israel, where her husband Dr. Elliott Gootman, professor, graduate studies-theoretical math of the University of Georgia, was a visiting professor at Hebrew University in Tel Aviv. The Gootmans are the niece and nephew of Charlotteans Baila and John Pransky.*



## Letters to the Editor

### CJN Was Great Help to Project

Thank you so much for printing HaLailah BBW's Soviet Jewry articles in their entirety. Your generous consideration has given us the attention that we need in order to make this a conscience subject not stored away as normal. Our letter writing was a success. We wrote 100 letters. People are getting responses from government officials. We also acquired three people to serve on the Soviet Jewry Task Force of the Federation.

Again, all this has happened with the help of our Jewish News articles. Thank you!

— Linda Spil

**We encourage our readers' viewpoints. Letters should be submitted typewritten and double-spaced and signed. Please include your address and phone number. We reserve the right to edit.**

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## When Jews are Suffering and Dying, It is Time to Act

In unprecedented unity, 15 key leaders of the Ethiopian community have met with the former Israeli Ambassador to Ethiopia, representatives from the World Union of Jewish students (WUJS) and other leading Jewish activists to launch a petition for family reunification of separated Ethiopian families.

A committee for the reunification of Ethiopian Jewish families was formed which hopes to set innovative and dramatic directions for an enhancement for quiet diplomacy. The Ethiopian community aims to motivate Israeli and Diaspora Jewry into taking a more active and vocal part in a family reunification campaign.

Currently, three and a half years after Operation Moses, an estimated 10,000 Ethiopian Jews are still trapped in Ethiopia. They are mostly women, children, the elderly and the infirm.

For those in Israel, separation from immediate family has caused severe emotional trauma. About 1500 children are separated from their parents; many husbands left behind wives; brothers and sisters have been parted. Their despair affects every aspect of their new life and positive absorption.

Already, 11,000 signatures to the petition have been collected by the American Association for Ethiopian Jews in the United States. The petition reads: "We, the undersigned, citizens \_\_\_\_\_, from all walks of life appeal to the government of Ethiopia to express our shock and deep concern about Ethiopian Jews who are denied their right to join their children, fathers and mothers living in other countries. Ethiopia, as a co-signatory of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the United Nations, is obliged to abide by its clause permitting and assisting the unification of families separated by migration — a principle accepted and respected by all civilized governments and members of the international community of nations. We implore the government of Ethiopia to heed the biblical supplication: Let my people go."

Support is needed for this world-wide effort. Those interested in distributing the petition and gathering signatures of support can contact: Committee for Family Reunification, P.O.B. 7914, Jerusalem, Israel, tel: 02-639-314; or Morton Marcus, 4995 SW 82d St., Miami, FL, tel: 305-665-2507.

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