

Editorial

Helping Hands Offered During Hurricane Hugo's Havoc

Everyone has experienced first-hand the havoc that Hurricane Hugo brought to the Carolinas. The only good thing that came out of it was the "brotherhood" that was shown to all its victims. Neighbors helped neighbors, work crews came in from near and far, food, clothing and money were distributed to those in need. People are still helping in many capacities and it will probably take a year or years in some cases to get back to normal. All those who have given unselfishly of their time and resources must be commended for all that they have done.

Among the many individuals and groups who have aided residents in Charlotte and Charleston has been B'nai B'rith Women.

Here in Charlotte, BBW's Charlotte Chapter had its members call other members, friends and neighbors to determine whom they could help. They collected food and clothing for our community and have been sending necessities to Charleston. Abbe Bryan, a steering committee member of the chapter, said, "We're working with other groups that have rented 18-wheelers to take clothes, food and baby food to centers." The members have donated the food, clothing and money to the effort.

BBW's HaLailah Chapter has sent gift baskets of food and staples to Jewish families in Charleston which helped them celebrate Rosh Hashanah. Randy DeFilipp, chairman of the project, said that gift baskets were prepared with the contributions of Jewish merchants across the country and sent to families within two days after the hurricane. The baskets included salamis, challahs, honey cakes and sabbath candles. Other Jewish merchants across the country have been contacted for further contributions.

Members of BBW's Columbia, S.C. chapter made hundreds of phone calls in conjunction with local synagogue sisterhoods to determine what was needed in Charleston. Three van loads of food and supplies were delivered to Charleston within a week after the hurricane. Leaders of the effort drove five hours to bring eight cases of wine, 300 challahs, bushels of apples, batteries, charcoal, and bandaids to the Charleston Jewish Community Center. "It was wonderful to see how fast people came and brought," Heidi Lovit, president of the Columbia Chapter said. "We felt strong, especially because of the Jewish holidays. I think they needed a little spirit lifting. Just showing them we cared helped."

The Charlotte Jewish Community Center played an important role during the electrical outages by providing shower facilities for all in the community who needed it. They also had food available for the many people who availed themselves of the JCC's facilities. Special camps were held for the children while school was out. The JCC was like a "home away from home."

The Jewish Family Services was busy collecting food and money for families who were hard hit during Hugo's reign. The Temples also put out pleas for donations of food and collected tons for the needy.

We had many heroes and heroines during the storm. Too many to recognize and thank individually. There were some who took families into their homes; others who gave their time to cook meals, to babysit, to cut down trees, to put tarps on roofs. Our hats go off to the tireless efforts of Duke Power, Southern Bell, Cablevision and their crews as well as the work crews from out-of-town. They have and are still doing a magnificent job in all this upheaval.

With all the bad that is happening in this world, all the destruction that transpires, there is still a glimmer of hope when we see "neighbor helping neighbor" and the "brotherly love" that still prevails.

— Rita Mond

Bytes of Holy

By Rabbi Marc H. Wilson

I was not cut out for theology. I must have been absent on the day they taught us in seminary about how to define "holy." Nearly two decades have passed, and it has not gotten any easier. I have read hundreds of books and articles on the subject, written by everyone from Sigmund Freud to the Grand Rabbi of Lubavitch. They have all been nice, philosophically subtle, linguistically rich, but frankly, they have bored me to tears. Worse, they have frustrated me terribly. In my childish simplicity, I always figured that if God wanted everyone to be holy — and "everyone" included accountants, short-order cooks and truck drivers, along with theologians and philosophers — He would not have, just out of spite, created a definition for holy that was so confusing and abstract and unattainable.

Yes, it is easier to define holy by its negation. Certain images of life instinctively set off an internal alarm that shouts "Not Holy!" Jessica Hahn writhing around with Sam Kennison on

MTV — Not Holy. Muammar Khaddafi, despite numerous pilgrimages to Mecca — Not Holy. Slick televangelists bilking the elderly out of Social Security checks with promises of Heaven — Not Holy. People bashing people's heads in the name of religion or a twisted sense of national honor — Not Holy. Marc Wilson, when he acts arrogant or nasty or spiteful or cruel — Not Holy.

An entire catalogue of sight-and-sound bytes, snippets and vignettes of disreputable people and events, second-naturedly comes to mind the moment we hear "Not Holy." Could the converse also be true? Could it be, with apologies to Justice Potter Stewart, that holy is one of those things that we might never be able to define, but that we recognize instinctively the moment we see it? Could it be that the real pursuit of holy is the decidedly unphilosophical task of cultivating a rich lexicon of sight-and-sound bytes that etch themselves indelibly in our brain, shouting out "Holy!"?

Maybe holy does not emanate from extravagant cathedrals or

a life of asceticism and self-denial. Maybe holy is simply to be witnessed in little snippets through which we see the drab, humdrum mundanities of life elevated to the majestic. Maybe holy is nothing more mystical than doing what is right because it is right. Not because someone is looking. Not because it will bring fame and fortune. Not because you expect to get a good return on your investment. But because right is right, and because the balance of decency tilts a little more favorably when we do things right, and it tilts a little more askew when we do things that are wrong and dishonorable.

"The world is full of wonders and miracles," said Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov, "but we take our little hands and we cover our eyes and we see nothing." Bytes of holy are all around us in the most unsuspecting places, if we would just move our hands away from our eyes. Take last Thursday:

My mother has just been wheeled back from cataract surgery to a cubicle in the recovery room. She has had nothing to eat for 14 hours. The appropriately perky nurse promptly brings her breakfast. She apologetically makes an extra trip for the skim milk and Sweet 'n Low, confiscating a verboten raspberry danish. The IV is still dripping in my mother's arm. She is still a little groggy, a bulky patch over one eye. She is propped up on the gurney in that ridiculous wisp of a hospital gown, no one else in the cubicle but my father and me. Her breakfast is sitting in front of her, but we see that she is not eating. We want to know what is wrong, but it is not until

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On Reflection...By Ira Gissen, Va/NC ADL Dir.

"Is Anti-Semitism Increasing?"

While having dinner the other night with one of my friends, who is an active leader in the Jewish community, he asked me the question "Is anti-Semitism increasing?" I paused before answering, because going through my mind were two recently published, nationally syndicated newspaper columns that were the nastiest examples of anti-Semitic propaganda that I have seen in a very long time. What was so appalling about them, was that they were not written by professional hate-mongers nor were they published in the anti-Semitic press. I read them in local, widely circulated daily newspapers.

Both of these nationally circulated columnists used the Carmelite convent at Auschwitz as the peg on which they hung their polemics.

By far, in my opinion, the more insidious of the two columns was written by Georgie Anne Geyer. Here is a small sample of her diatribe:

"Is the involved, organized Jewish community intent on focusing so much world attention on this issue as a matter of conscience? Or is the abnormal amount of international attention a matter of political gain, a means of implanting a self-righteous guilt that then allows you to go your own way with

less danger of your own acts being criticized?"

"If moving the convent is a matter of universal conscience, then there would be an equal awareness that other groups and nations also have sacred places that should be kept appropriate to a people's national history, as with the Holocaust Memorial being built on the very Washington Mall that houses America's most sacred symbols."

With a viciousness rarely found in the daily press, she wrote in her penultimate paragraph:

"If it is political, then one would understand waiting and waiting to hear rabbis in the United States, Europe or Israel speak out publicly against the atrocities on the West Bank. Then one would use the Holo-

caust, which is and should be sacred, as simply a vehicle to instill guilt, to raise funds."

A more intemperate, indeed a more strident, tone was struck by Patrick J. Buchanan in his column. A short sample of his vitriol will suffice:

"That empty building the Carmelite nuns occupied quietly five years ago is outside the walls of Auschwitz, kilometers away from the killing field at Birkenau. The 13-foot cross world Jewry finds so offensive is set in a ditch used by Nazi soldiers to execute Polish Catholic prisoners in 1940, before the trains arrived.

"To orthodox Catholics, the demand that we be more 'sensitive' to Jewish concerns is becoming a joke."

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