

Chairman's Message




By *Gerald M. Schreck*

The past few months have been extraordinarily tumultuous for Israel, a country not unaccustomed to instability. The disengagement, the demise of Sharon's political life, the stunning Hamas victory and the violence at Amona have served to repeatedly remind Israeli and American Jews alike of the truth of the old Yiddish adage "*A mentsch tracht un Gott lacht*, Man plans and God laughs." In this issue, we sought to bring together some of the most prominent writers and thinkers in the Religious Zionist world to help us grasp the dramatic developments of the past few months and their impact on Religious Zionism. We tried to obtain a range of opinions and perspectives, which we hope will provide greater clarity and food for thought. While the articles were written prior to Ariel Sharon's stroke, the analyses and interpretations concerning the political and theological direction of Religious Zionism in the post-disengagement world transcend any single person or event.

In this issue, we also focus on the increasing number of Orthodox adoptive families. How does one adopt a child? Are there Jewish children up for adoption? What are the halachic issues surrounding adoption? Bayla Sheva Brenner, senior writer in the OU Communications and Marketing Department and a frequent contributor to *Jewish Action*, addresses these and other questions in her thoroughly researched and emotionally compelling article "Filling the Void: Creating Jewish Families Through Adoption."

On a somewhat lighter note, we get a glimpse into the personal life and character of Nobel Prize winner Professor Robert J. Aumann. Dr. Moshe Koppel, a colleague of Professor Aumann's who teaches computer science at Bar-Ilan University, briefly explores the professor's past while offering a taste of the Nobel Prize winner's unique understanding of the interface between mathematics and Torah. Shira Leibowitz Schmidt, a writer from Jerusalem, takes us behind-the-scenes for a fascinating look at how the organizers of the Nobel Prize ceremony catered to the professor's religious needs and concerns.

Finally, this issue includes a number of important Pesach-related articles to get us into the spirit of the holiday, including a photo essay of Pesach observance in early America and a brief look at the famous machine matzah controversy of the nineteenth century. As always, I encourage you to send your questions and comments to ja@ou.org. 

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