

establishment of Medinat Yisrael, the Six-Day War, et cetera. After reading the *derashot*, one not only walks away with a keen understanding of the *chagim*, but he also begins to visualize the mindset of the people living at that time. This makes for an incredibly powerful book.

Take, for example, Rabbi Kanotopsky's sermon delivered on Pesach, March 29, 1945. Note the date—Germany and Japan had not yet formerly surrendered, but it was clear to all that victory was in sight. US troops had already captured the Philippines, and the German troops were in retreat. While anticipating the end of the war and the freedom that awaited European Jewry, Rabbi Kanotopsky expresses reservations about the future, finding his fear best expressed in the Haggadah itself. "*Karev yom asher hu lo yom velo laylah*, A day is drawing nigh that is neither day nor night." Rabbi Kanotopsky goes on:

Yes, this is the picture the poet paints—and how appropriate it seems, in our day, for the period ahead, for the weeks and months that lie before us. It is not a period of a rising sun. It brings with it neither the sunlight of the day nor the dark shadows of the night. It brings with it only doubts and uncertainties.


At that tenuous time, Rabbi Kanotopsky was obviously troubled by what lay ahead, not certain what the future held for the Jewish people. Churchill was unsupportive of the creation of a Jewish state and of any significant Jewish migration to Palestine. He even refused to rescind the 1939 MacDonald White Paper that proposed the creation of a unitary Palestine state and severely limited Jewish immigration. In his *derashah*, Rabbi Kanotopsky quotes Megillat Esther: King Achashverosh asks Queen Esther, "What do you want, what is your petition? Even if it is half the kingdom it shall be fulfilled." Drawing on a *gemara*, Rabbi Kanotopsky explains that Achashverosh is really saying, "You [can] have half the kingdom but you cannot have Eretz Yisrael, you cannot have the *Beit Hamikdash*." Painting Churchill as

a modern-day Achashverosh, Rabbi Kanotopsky fears that the British prime minister will say that "the Jews can have freedom and tolerance and what they will ... but they cannot have the Bet Ha-Mikdash or the Land of Israel, which would split and destroy the British Empire." How fascinating it is to revisit history at a moment of time seen through the eyes of a great Torah scholar! Perhaps it is time, he says, not to let the Land of Israel lie in the hands of the Churchills or the Roosevelts.

Indeed, he says, it is time to follow the words of the Prophet Isaiah: "If you desire it, repent and come" (Isaiah 21:12). Urging the Jewish people to be proactive in the manner of Isaiah, Rabbi Kanotopsky writes:

We need to show the world. We need to demonstrate before the eyes of the entire world that our position is unequivocal and unbending.... The voice of Israel will not be quieted until Eretz Yisrael is restored to us.

Rabbi Kanotopsky urged his congregation to demonstrate and to lobby, to do what had to be done in order to ensure the eventual establishment of a Jewish state. Reading these passionate words more than sixty years later, I could almost envision the strong emotions that must have been felt that Pesach in the sanctuary in the Young Israel of Eastern Parkway.

This book contains thirty-eight *derashot* in total, each one a gem in its wisdom as well as in its ability to depict life in America during the formative years of American Orthodox Jewry. I strongly recommend it to anyone who enjoys probing the inner meaning of the holidays. I'm sure the thousands of congregants and *talmidim* that Rabbi Kanotopsky taught during his years as a *rav* and teacher would find the book even more meaningful. Upon hearing of the book's publication, I seized the opportunity to review it. I wanted to have the great *zechut* of revisiting with my former *rebbe*, who had a profound influence on me, and deepened my desire to spend as much time as I can in *limud haTorah*. 

God, Israel, & Shiloh: Returning to the Land

By David Rubin
Mazo Publishers
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185 pages

Reviewed by Ann Johnson

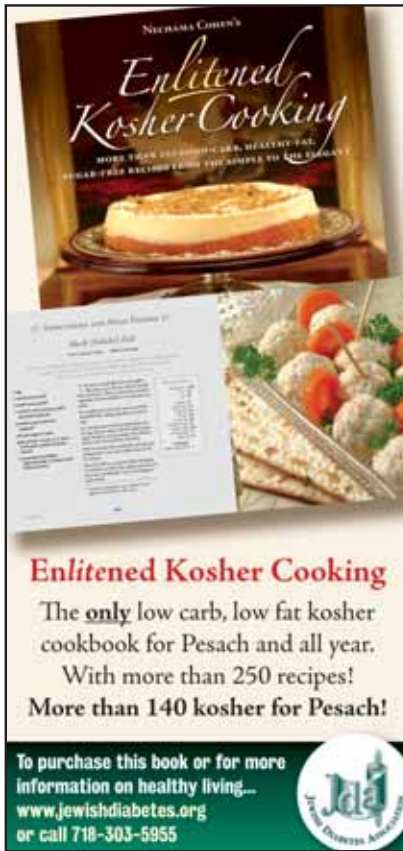


In the winter of 2001, David Rubin and his three-year-old son Reuven ("Ruby") were driving on Patriarch's Road from Jerusalem to their home in Shiloh, the route taken by Abraham and Sarah on their journey from Haran down into Egypt, when a hail of bullets suddenly sprayed into the car.

The car radio went dead, as did the car's engine. I saw the sparks from what appeared to be four bullets zooming past me, as the car was slowly coasting down the hill. The bullets had tracers on them so they appeared as four orange sparks whizzing past, perhaps two inches in front of my eyes. Then I felt a terrible pain, like a concentrated ton of bricks crashing into my left leg, and the blood started gushing out fiercely, like an open fire hydrant.

Remembering his toddler strapped into his car seat, Rubin frantically checked to see if he was hurt. Eyes and mouth wide open, Ruby appeared to be okay but possibly in a state of shock. It was only later that the medics discovered a bullet in the base of Ruby's brain.

Ann Johnson is the author of A United Jerusalem: the Story of Ateret Cohanim (New Jersey, 1992). She has written several articles for Jewish Action.



I quickly tried to start the ignition, but with no success. ... the terrorists were still shooting. ... Finally, on the fourth or fifth attempt, the car started, and it started smoothly, as if there had never been a problem. An obvious miracle.

Rubin raced toward Ofrah, a nearby Jewish community, well aware that he could collapse from loss of blood at any moment. Swinging into the security guard station, he managed to lower the window and shout, "Ambulance!" One of the gas station attendants nearby ran to the car shouting, "I'm a medic!" He ripped off David's shirt and proceeded to affix a tourniquet to his leg. Yet another miracle.

Rubin tells of his and Ruby's traumatic experience in his powerful new book entitled *God, Israel, & Shiloh: Returning to the Land*. (Rubin and his son have since both fully recovered.) But the attack is only one part of a larger story that Ruben tells in this important book: the story of Shiloh. Written from the perspective of a pioneer, the

book details Rubin's love affair with Shiloh, the ancient city that was home to the Tabernacle for 369 years.

When Rubin first moved to Shiloh in 1992, he lived in a caravan-trailer in "the heart of the Land of God." Later, with his new wife, Lisa, he gave himself over to community work, becoming the volunteer mayor of the city.

Rubin spends much time in his book tracing Biblical and contemporary Jewish history in order to convey the significance and the sacredness of Shiloh. Chronicling the return of the Jews to their ancestral land, Rubin recalls the victory of the Six Day War.

While the United Nations condemned Israel ... many Bible-literate people from around the world were ecstatic, as the victory was rightly viewed as at least a partial fulfillment of the prophetic vision of the return of Israel to its Biblical heartland.

Rubin describes how the modern Jewish city of Shiloh was established. In January 1978, eight courageous religious families founded the new city, enduring enormous hardships while living on the isolated, barren hills.

Relying upon a noisy generator for electricity, the early settlers lived in tents and caravans without running water. Despite their difficulties, they felt privileged to be returning to the Biblical heartland. "Shiloh," Rubin writes, "had been waiting for its children to return home for close to two thousand years." Today, nearly a thousand families live among the towns and numerous hilltop neighborhoods that comprise the Shiloh bloc.

Rubin's greatest pleasure is simply walking up and down the ancient boulders in Shiloh and exploring the hills and the city's past with his children and visitors.

"In the Talmud," writes Rubin, "there are three things that are acquired through great suffering: Torah, the Land of Israel and the World to Come."

To Rubin and the other courageous pioneers like him, some things are worth suffering for. **IA**

MiNofet Tsuf, Iyunim B'Moreh HaNevuchim (Hebrew)

By Jonathan Blass
Kollel Ritson Yehudah
Petach Tikva, 2006
2 vols., 913 pages

Reviewed by Yehuda Gellman



In this rich two-volume work, entitled *MiNofet Tsuf, Iyunim B'Moreh HaNevuchim*, Rabbi Jonathan Blass proposes an overarching systematic structure to Rambam's (Maimonides) thought and discusses various important philosophical topics found in Rambam's writings. Rabbi Blass is to be praised for giving us this *melechet hakodesh*, which took him more than ten years to write. The author states that this *sefer*, which focuses almost exclusively on *Moreh HaNevuchim*, is a contrast to the treatment of Rambam's work by typical Maimonidean scholars. Drawing upon quotations from the late Professor Marvin Fox, Rabbi Blass accuses academics of regarding Rambam as an Aristotelian philosopher first and foremost and only then as a God-fearing Jew. In contrast, our author portrays Rambam as a rabbi with much more traditional views. Rabbi Blass' work includes approbations from three outstanding rabbis (who do not claim to be experts in *Moreh HaNevuchim*): the late Rabbi Abraham Shapiro, former *rosh yeshivah*

Professor Gellman teaches philosophy at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev.