



THE CARDOZIAN

NEWSLETTER OF THE DAVID CARDOZO ACADEMY

Machon Ohr Aaron & Betsy Spijer

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From the Dean's Desk

Dear Friends,

Human freedom can be a dangerous gift. Entire generations have been thrown into turmoil because they could not handle freedom. For many, it turned into passivity, meaninglessness and boredom.

It is most telling that the Jewish festival of freedom, Pesach, carries more restrictions and obligations than any other. A crumb of *chametz* (leaven) is a major spiritual hazard, and the many detailed rituals to be followed on the Seder night are often viewed by the modern soul as grueling.

But *real* freedom is a mission and requires great discipline and commitment.

Freedom needs to be conquered every day; otherwise it is nothing more than surrender to our basest instincts. Freedom is the will to be responsible. But it can only be *experienced* when it is put to spiritual music.

At the David Cardozo Academy we write this music so that it may capture every Jewish and non-Jewish soul.

Where there is music there can be no slavery.

Chag Sameach,


Nathan Lopes Cardozo

IDC Update: Recap of Latest at Cardozo-Kagan JLP

This semester participants in the Cardozo-Kagan Jewish Leadership Program discoursed with some of Israel's most prominent figures..... Nobel Prize Laureate Professor **Yisrael Aumann** discussed Judaism's emphasis on commandments between fellow human beings..... Rabbi Dr. **Nathan Lopes Cardozo** addressed pluralism in Jewish Law..... Justice Minister Professor **Ya'akov Ne'eman** spoke about the integration of Hebrew Law into Israel's judicial system..... Professor **Moshe Koppel** presented on the need for Israel to develop a constitution..... an open panel with Former Knesset Chairman **Avrum Burg** and activist and publisher **Dudi Zilbershlag** examined the future of the Jewish People and its relationship with the Jewish State of Israel..... Former Assistant Prime Minister, Justice Minister and Finance Minister **Moshe Nissim** explored Judaism's great contributions to society in the field of social welfare..... Yeshivat Har Etzion Rabbi **Yaakov Medan**, Knesset Member Rabbi **Chaim Amsalem** and Bar Ilan University Professor **Asher Cohen** debated the politics of conversion in Israel in a campus wide panel.....



Cardozo-Kagan JLP student **Adi Sadinski** with **Dudi Zilbershlag** and **Avrum Burg**. Credit: Hillel IDC.

Of Guinea Pigs and Jewish Law

Under the guidance of Rabbi Cardozo, the recent sessions of the DCA Think Tank centered on the "Halacha Lab," in which the Think Tank Fellows test out new methods of engagement with Jewish Law prior to exposure to the public. Four TT Fellows discussed their views, both intellectual and personal, about Halacha, followed by their visions of what they believe the approach to Halacha should be today.

Shavuot Scholar in Residency, Limmud Conference and Other Engagements on Speaking Circuit for DCA Dean

DCA Founder and Dean Rabbi Dr. Nathan Lopes Cardozo will serve as Shavuot Scholar-in-Residence at Bnai David-Judea in Los Angeles, California, congregation of Rabbi **Yosef Kanefsky**, as well as speak at several fundraising events in the Los Angeles area. Rabbi Cardozo will also serve as guest speaker at the Young Israel of Oak Park, Michigan, congregation of Rabbi **Michael Cohen**, and present to the Jewish Forum of West Bloomfield, Michigan and at other events in the Detroit area. Rabbi Cardozo has also been asked to present at Limmud, Johannesburg, South Africa and at the Mizrahi Conference in Holland.

More than Just a Thought

A recent *Thought to Ponder*, penned weekly by DCA Dean Rabbi Cardozo, struck a resounding chord in Israel and around the world. *A Letter of Protest to God, In Awe and Humility*, published in the acclaimed Hebrew weekly *Makor Rishon* and disseminated on the Web to thousands of DCA friends, reflected on the Fogel murders in Itamar and on the crisis in Japan. "The Tsunami in Japan, and brutal killing of the Fogels, cannot but raise questions for those who have faith," remarked Rabbi Cardozo recently. "But here at the David Cardozo Academy, we continue to believe that those questions should be asked. We also believe that Judaism has the power to teach us how to approach these questions, and how to live with them. While we may not be able to answer all of them, our belief in God makes us realize that we are part of a divine plan which has deep meaning."

All of the DCA's programs and publications embody this spirit of questioning and struggling with answers. To read Rabbi Cardozo's essay and others, please visit the DCA website.

The DCA Greatly Depends on Your Support!

Your contribution makes possible the training of future rabbis, educators and community leaders to communicate and develop the Jewish tradition in the language of the new millennium! Please consider marking a special anniversary or continuing the memory of a loved one by sending a gift to the Cardozo Academy. We welcome your gift online at www.cardozoschool.org/contribution.asp. To send a check, for more information, or to process via phone, please contact us at our Friends network across the globe:

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Los Angeles Youth Explore Different Outlook on Judaism, Enrich Yeshiva Year in Israel through Study at the DCA

It began with an innocent invitation. A group of post high school students from Los Angeles, studying at an Israeli Yeshiva for the year, were welcomed to DCA Dean Rabbi Cardozo's home for a Shabbat weekend. But the open discussion, debate and even disagreement was so different from what the students ever encountered. They did not want it to end. And it didn't. The group continued to study one evening a week at the DCA for the duration of their Israel year.

"I've seen a new, beautiful side to Judaism I never experienced," commented **Noah Small**, the catalyst of the group. "Judaism can be very confusing, and Rabbi Cardozo taught me the ability to see the beauty behind every facet of it. I hope to implement into my own Judaism the values and beauty that have been shown to me."

Nathaniel Barzideh agreed. "Rabbi Cardozo's approach breathed fresh air into my Judaism. Unfortunately today, so many young people just go through the Jewish motions without Judaism really having a profound religious meaning to them. Judaism soon becomes meaningless - it happened to me, and many of my friends. Daily routines like putting on Tefilin or reciting blessings become errands."

Noah, Nathaniel and friends appreciated the DCA approach presenting Jewish tradition in a positive and empowering light, one that gives religious meaning and spirituality, instead of preaching ideology and dogma. "If anyone takes an honest look around them, they can see that Judaism is already failing," said Nathaniel. "Rabbi Cardozo's approach is so beautiful because it does not compromise one iota of the tenets of our faith, but simultaneously reinvigorates the religious experience and reinspires with originality that penetrates the essence of a Jew."

Thanks to the wonders of audio and video technology, the group has plans for long distance study with Rabbi Cardozo after their return to the US, and will explore additional DCA learning opportunities for their college campus communities.



Rabbi Cardozo, center, with (front row from left) **Nathaniel Barzideh** and **Jonathan Sassoon**, (back row from left) **Noah Small**, **Kenny Marks**, **Yitzchak Hier**, **Jed Segura** and **Jonah Berg**. Not shown: **Adam Blank**, **Gabe Polack** and **Yitzy Rohatiner**.

A Megillah Reading Full of Spirits and Other Alcoholic Beverages: Alternative Purim at the Cardozo-Kagan Jewish Leadership Program at IDC, Herzliya

By **Mai Hermann**, Participant in the Cardozo-Kagan Jewish Leadership Program

Gragger? Check. Megillah? Check. Bar and liquor? Check for both. Sounds like an unconventional Purim. And that's exactly what it was. Organized by the DCA's Cardozo-Kagan Jewish Leadership Program, the IDC Hillel and other student campus organizations, over 150 students gathered at Theodor Bar in Herzliya for an alternative reading of the scroll of Esther.



Cardozo-Kagan Jewish Leadership Program's Purim at Theodor Bar. Credit: Hillel IDC.

The unusual venue was part of a creative attempt to reach out to students not usually celebrating Purim with any spiritual element, other than the potable kind. The wafting aroma of alcohol amid the big screen projection of the Megillat Esther text certainly got the students into a festive mood. **Chanan Atlas**, director of the Cardozo-Kagan Jewish Leadership Program, kept the students interested with his theatrical megillah reading by changing his voice for each character in the story. And if that wasn't enough, every ten times Haman was mentioned, the crowd was treated to a chaser. The event certainly put the holiday of Purim in a new perspective for everyone.

Spotlight on Shmuel Ta'ir, DCA Think Tank Member

The DCA's Jerusalem Think Tank, a forum of Jewish thinkers, educators and leaders, explores a wide range of Jewish topics. Think Tank Fellows present issues from their own lives - matters they struggle with every day - with the hope that exploring uncharted realms of Judaism in these challenging sessions will further invigorate authentic religious living.

Shmuel Ta'ir (Georgiy Krasavtsev) was born in Moscow in 1981 to a Jewish but assimilated family. "My parents experienced anti-Semitism in their lives, so they concealed my Jewish heritage to shield me from potential fights at school," said Shmuel. "Only at age 12, after we immigrated to the US, did I learn I was a Jew."

Since Shmuel had not grown up identifying as a Jew, the revelation about his heritage upon his family's New York arrival made little impression. "There still was little tangible about my Jewishness," he recalled. "Only after reading American Jewish novels by Chaim Potok and others, did my Jewish identity begin to develop."

It was in college in Upstate New York where Shmuel began to wonder about the meaning of life and God, as a result of his study of philosophy. "One of my biggest questions was, is there a higher meaning to our human existence? It bothered me that life and its values seemed random and essentially meaningless," noted Shmuel. "I concluded there had to be something else - some other force or power that could account for these drives in us."

Shmuel's searching drove him to visit Israel with Birthright, then to an Israeli yeshiva for the next 5 years. Yeshiva was not so much a culture shock, but a value shock. "I couldn't stop being bothered by the constant ridicule of other religions, by the hatred of other Jewish denominations, by the things I heard taught about women and their place in the world of Yeshivish Orthodoxy. I was disturbed by the culture of xenophobia, separateness, and distrust of individuality and creativity that I saw in Jewish religious circles." Shmuel began to search for the Judaism he would genuinely love to be a part of.

And he is still searching, along with his wife, Gabby, when they somehow find the time between orders from their all-natural catering company. But Shmuel feels he is getting closer, thanks to the DCA Think Tank. "It's the first framework where the different values I treasure can coexist. I want to keep what I learned in yeshiva - the ability to speak to God, faith, the value of family, the importance of distinguishing between my animal and my human desires, - and at the same time respect those ideals like feminism, individuality and questioning."

For Shmuel, the Think Tank is a paragon of what Judaism could be. "I see the Think Tank as a model community of thinkers who support each other in Jewish learning and growth, a community of values and inquiry, as opposed to religious observance or Kippa colors; and that is something I would like to see more of in Judaism. For me it's a model of what to work for - a vision of how the Jewish world could function."



Rabbi Prof. Sperber Slaughters Sacred Cow, Rabbi Grumet Bends Boundaries at Winter Jerusalem Lecture Series

A *Daring Judaism* aptly describes the theme of the 5771/2011 Jerusalem Lecture Series. No, there was no blood spilled as a result of Rabbi Prof. **Daniel Sperber's** conclusion in his presentation, *Is Hinduism Considered Avoda Zara?*, that it is not idolatry. But Rabbi Prof. Sperber's remarks, which surveyed some Hindu sacred texts, and Jewish Law sources defining idolatry, may have shattered some taboos by exploring a subject rarely discussed publicly in observant Jewish circles.

The DCA's own Rabbi Dr. **Nathan Lopes Cardozo** also ventured into sacrosanct territory with his talk, *Is an Orthodox Conversion Kosher? New Solutions for an Unsolvable Problem*. Rabbi Cardozo addressed the shortcomings of today's conversion process in Israel, which often places candidates in ethical dilemmas as they seek to "beat the system" in order to convert successfully. And he proposed creating a new status for converts to eliminate many of the Halachic and social obstacles to this crisis which severely threatens the unity of the Jewish people today. Rabbi Cardozo also discussed the concept of a Jewish non-Jew and the possibility for gentiles to observe some of the Torah's commandments.

Even over 3,000 years ago the unity of the Jewish people was at stake, posited Rabbi **Zvi Grumet** in his lecture, *Who is Jewish Enough? Moshe Rabbeinu Bends the Boundaries*. Through a close text reading of the Reuven, Gad and half of Menashe Tribes' request to settle east of the Jordan River, Rabbi Grumet demonstrated how Moshe made difficult concessions in order to retain the unity of *Bnei Yisrael*.

A *Daring Judaism* series will conclude this spring with three final lectures by Professor **Moshe Koppel** on *A Return to 'Heimish' Judaism: How Ideologies Suffocate Religion*; Professor **William Kolbrener** on *Caught in the Act: Torah and Desire*; and Rabbi Dr. **Eliezer Shore** on *Moving Beyond Denominational Judaism?* Rabbi Cardozo will also debate Dr. **Geert Cohen Stuart**, a Dutch, non-Jewish theologian, on God's righteousness and the status of non-Jews in Jewish Law.



Rabbi Dr. **Nathan Lopes Cardozo** presents at the DCA Jerusalem Lecture Series

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