



Israeli Education Minister advocates for ‘Gay’ conversion therapy.

✠ Israel’s Minister of Education, Rafael Peretz, has been very busy as of late; with little of it addressing the education of Israeli students. He sparked outrage when he referred to intermarriage as a second Holocaust. His harsh statements were not only skewed and inaccurate; it blasphemed the memory of all those innocent people consumed in the horror of the Nazi fire. While I admit, he has every right to personally object to intermarriage (my disagreeing with him notwithstanding) his unfortunate comments trivialize the events of those dark



Minister of Education, Rafael Peretz,

days and sullies the memory of its victims; and his attempt to paint unconditional love and abject hatred as affectively the same; is ludicrous.

Peretz, who leads the Jewish Home party as well as the United Right coalition, most recently made the news when he endorsed conversion therapy for Israeli youth.

Conversion therapy, or ‘gay’ conversion therapy, is a controversial and widely debunked program designed to straighten out teens who identify as gay; queer; lesbian; bisexual, or any other self-identification that might fall under the LGBTQ umbrella. Rafael Peretz, an Orthodox rabbi, who has held the position of Minister of Education for less than a month, said in an interview he believed it possible that a person could change their sexual orientation.

Peretz, not only endorsed gay therapy; but also claimed to have performed such treatments in the past, saying, “I have a very deep familiarity with this type of education and, “I have also done this.”

His remarks caused a huge uproar among LGBTQ advocates in Israel and throughout the United States.

Within a few days of growing criticism, Peretz walked back his statements, saying, “I am adamantly opposed to conversion therapy,” he called the practice “inappropriate,” but quickly added, “Individuals with a homosexual orientation have the right to receive professional help.”

What is Conversion therapy?

Think of gay conversion therapy as a form of, sexual identity exorcism; but instead of ridding the body of evil spirits, conversion therapy is reputed to rid the mind of sexually inappropriate impulses and aberrant behavior.

Conversion therapy is any of a number of practices and treatments designed to cure, cajole or shock a person out of their ‘deviant’ sexual orientation. A multitude of techniques can be used to achieve the goal of the therapy, including shaming, badgering, and counseling. Even the use of painful physical stimuli, have been employed attempting to “straighten” out the patient.

Though conversion therapy has been discredited by most medical and Psychiatric Associations, approximately 700,000 LGBTQ youths have been forced to undergo conversion therapy; another 80,000 are expected to be subjected to such therapy in the near future. Most will be sent by their own parents.

Not only have studies shown the conversion therapy practices are ineffective, it also cites such practices often do more harm than good. Conversion therapy has been associated with increased instances of depression, low self-esteem, drug abuse, and attempted suicide. In fact, in a study by San Francisco State University, LGBTQ youths who feel rejected by their families are eight-times more likely to attempt suicide than an LGBTQ youth who feels familiar acceptance. ☆

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National Jewish Health Launches Program to Help teens with

My Life, My Quit™ is the first comprehensive cessation program designed just for teens



Nearly 5 million teens across America are vaping and/ or using tobacco products, yet there are few resources available to teens who want to quit. This month, National Jewish Health, the nation's leading respiratory hospital and the largest non-profit tobacco quit-line provider, launched its The new My Life, My Quit program to aid teens in their effort to stop smoking and vaping. People who smoke traditional cigarettes, cigars

and other tobacco products are known as smokers, people, who use electronic cigarettes, or vapes, have become known as vapers.

The new My Life, My Quit program includes educational materials designed for teens that were created through focus groups with teens, subject matter experts and community stakeholders. Teens can text or call a toll-free number (1.855.891.9989) dedicated specifically for them, or they can visit mylifemyquit.com for real-time online

coaching. Through the program, teens work with a coach who listens and understands their unique needs, provides personalized support and helps them build a quit plan to become free from nicotine.

The program combines the best practices for youth tobacco cessation adapted to include vaping and incorporates new ways for teens to reach our quit coaches using real-time text messaging and online chat,” said Thomas Ylioja, PhD, clinical director of Health Initiatives at National Jewish Health. “While there are similarities, the teen quit experience is very different from the adult experience. This program allows us to meet teens where they are, to communicate with them via channels they are comfortable with and to support them through their quit journey,” said Dr. Ylioja. “Our coaches emphasize that the decision to quit is personal, and they help teens identify strategies to help them cope with stress, navigate social situations, and support developing a tobacco-free identity.”

What is Vaping?

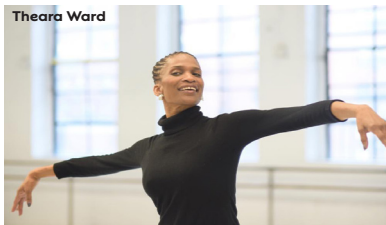
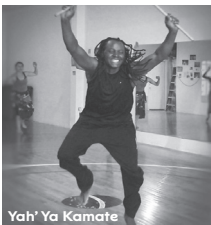
When introduced, electronic cigarettes were touted as a safe alternative to smoking tobacco products. While perhaps healthier than traditional cigarettes, electronic or e-cigarettes are far from safe. Electronic cigarettes produce a mist that the vapor (e-cigarette smoker) inhales; but that vapor, often confused with water vapor actually consists of an aerosol and other fine particles, many of these particles contain varying amounts of toxic chemicals, which

have been linked to cancer, as well as respiratory and heart disease. In light of growing evidence of the potential health issues associated with the use of electronic cigarettes, and their derivatives, health advocates now urge caution in using them ☆

✠ It is my sad responsibility to inform you of the death of our congregant Herbert Oppenheimer last night, July 17, 2019, 15 Tammuz, 5779. There will be a graveside service Friday, July 19, 2019, at Beth Israel Cemetery in Woodbridge, at 11 a.m. The family is not sitting shivah. We convey our condolences to Herb’s brother and sister, Leslie and Fay, and Herb’s two children, David and Julia, and to Herb’s long-time companion, Deborah Ellis, who has a connection to Ahavas Sholom. Ha-makom y’nachem etchem b’toch sh’ar availei tzion virushalayim. Herb brought his experience as a fire marshal and as a chef to Ahavas Sholom, and we all remember how proudly and loudly he sang the Torah b’rachot. ***He will be missed.*** Simon

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Simon Says

Weekly insights from Rabbi Simon Rosebach



Rabbi Simon Rosenbach

This week we revisit the tale of the talking ass, which causes us to wonder about miracles.

There is a midrash that enumerates the miracles that God created toward the end of the seventh day of creation. God put them, so to speak, in the bank, in the event of

future need, and one of them was Bilaam's talking ass. That God envisioned a need for a talking ass doesn't say much for free will, but that is another discussion.

The ancient Israelites, like us, probably never encountered a talking ass. Maybe our ancestors encountered talking birds (the ancient Egyptians kept parrots, but I could not discover whether the Egyptians taught the birds to speak), but they certainly did not encounter a talking horse, or a sheep, or a cow, or an ass. Why did our ancestors put a story of a talking ass, an animal that nobody had seen, in the Torah?

The Torah dispenses life-lessons. One of the life-lessons is that God is all-powerful. If God can turn the Nile into blood, if God can kill all the first-born of Egypt, if God can make the sun stand still (the Book of Joshua), if God make an old woman like Sarah get pregnant, making an ass talk is child's play. So the first lesson the talking ass teaches us is that God can make anything happen.

But the Torah does not merely describe a people's relationship to God. The Torah teaches practical lessons that guide human behavior as well. The episode of the talking ass teaches us that wisdom can come from the unlikely source. The episode of the talking ass

teaches us that you need to be prepared to hear and accept wisdom from the unlikely-est source. Bilaam was prevented from seeing the angel that blocked his way until later; you need to have open literally and figuratively. (By the way, why didn't the ass say to Bilaam, "There's an angel with a sword blocking my way. Don't you see it?") The episode of the talking ass teaches us that you need to think outside the box: if an animal talks to you in human speech, you need to reject the idea that an animal can't speak human speech. Finally (for our purposes), the episode of the talking ass teaches us you need to do the morally right thing whether

*You need to be
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& accept wisdom
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anybody is looking or not. I think that is the most important lesson.

We don't need any witnesses to approve of our actions. We should do the morally right thing even nobody is looking. Bilaam fell back on the old excuse, "I beat my ass because I didn't see you [the angel]." And then Bilaam compounded the moral error when he said, "If you still disapprove [of the mission that I was hired to complete], I will turn back." We don't need somebody else to tell us our course of action is wrong (although the angel directed Bilaam to continue). We should know what is right and wrong, and we should have the courage of our convictions. ☆



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It's been estimated it will take \$60,000 to properly renovate our kitchen.

April Modlinger, who has always been a pillar at Congregation Ahavas Sholom, has generously pledged \$10,000 to making this happen.

We have recently received another pledge for \$2,200, bringing the total to 12,200.

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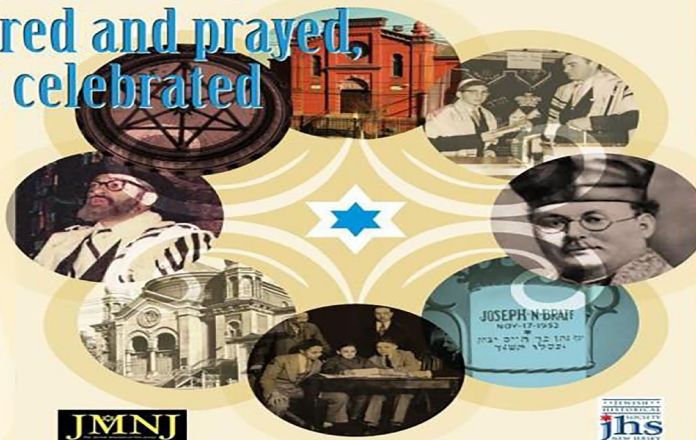
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Some entries may be duplications, if so I apologize.

Should Concentration camps be used to scoring political points?

By now it's all over the media that Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez has been under fire for her remarks (actually tweets) comparing migrant holding centers to concentration camps. Her remarks drew immediate and sharp rebuke from the conservative right and a multitude of Jews outraged over her insensitivity and apparent ignorant views on the Holocaust. To be truthful, her penchant for leading with her mouth, without fully considering the ramifications of her shoot from the hip speaking style, and her apparent inability to gauge the backlash her words might provoke, largely contribute to the reason her comments are scrutinized so closely. After all, she has made a number of missteps during her short tenure in the House of Representatives. However, we cannot ignore she is not the only rookie politician in Washington guilty of speaking before thinking, and even when considering the miscues, one must admit her so-called narcissism is actually age appropriate and she's at least attempting to learn how the game is played. Yet, because of the venomous and totally evil treatment Jews were subjected to in Nazi concentration camps throughout Europe, some of that outrage is understandable. After all, these immigrant detainees are not being forced to work as slave laborers, nor are they facing almost imminent death. They have not been stripped of their possessions, professions or livelihood; most important, America has no systematic plan nor is it devising a means to kill them.

Now, one could counter, that based on reports, they are facing family separation, and near starvation conditions in overcrowded facilities



of dubious sanitary integrity. They could point out that just this past week, the Department of Justice appeared before a judge to argue that depriving detainee children of the basic necessities of soap and toothbrushes did not create unsanitary conditions in the facilities. We can also debate the accuracy of the latest round of accusations that claimed detainees were being forced to drink water from a toilet. None of that; however, would address the apparent arrogance of Rep. Ocasio-Cortez's words, the callousness of her position or her insensitivity to the feelings of the whole of the Jewish people. But, we must be clear about the issues we're arguing. So, let's start by examining the root of the entire controversy. What she supposedly said – she never actually said. She didn't compare the immigrant detainment centers to Nazi Concentration camps; she compared the migrant holding centers to American concentration camps and

provided a link that led to an article that made the same point. American concentration camps, more aptly known as internment camps were the camps used to imprison more than 100,000 American citizens of Japanese descent during World War II. After all, people have been using American Concentration camps and internment camps pretty much interchangeably for decades.

Now, if you don't buy into Cortez's analogy; if you don't see the parallel between the internment centers and the immigrant detention centers, that's fine; but, just remember; that's the point you should be arguing.

To my knowledge, No one has ever seriously implied American internment camps were on par with Nazi camps; the abuse was not nearly as prevalent, and those interned there did not have a cloud of death hovering over their every step. Rep. Ocasio-Cortez compared the immigration holding centers to these American camps, not Triblinka, Dachau or Auschwitz. These American-based, Japanese internment camps didn't house a gas chamber, have a firing squad or perpetrate summary executions. The patent injustice of the camps may have been on par with that of the Nazi camps; however, the purpose, plan and operation were not; routine treatment of the inmates was not; and the absolute disregard for human life was not.

Still there were some similarities. Like Nazi Germany, America also established a system of camps. Like Nazi Germany, America established those camps with the intention of interning a portion of its own citizens. Like Nazi Germany, America targeted those citizens who were of a particular racial or ethnic background. Like Nazi Germany, America invoked the law to strip these citizens of their rights. Like Nazi Germany, America gathered these targeted citizens, stripped them of their assets, forced them to leave their homes and relocate to a camp. Like in Nazi Germany,

these citizens likely disagreed; but being law abiding people, complied. Like Nazi Germany, America, locked away fellow citizens without, charge, without a trial, without any evidence of wrongdoing what so ever. Like in Nazi Germany, American, government officials used a combination of fear and falsehoods to make their case for internment (they were even blamed for some down power lines in California that was actually caused by some very unpatriotic cattle.) Like in Nazi Germany, many of these interned citizens arrived to the camps via train.

None of this is meant to absolve Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez of the insensitive/offensive comments she has made all too often, during her first term in office (and I truly pray she improves in this area,) but, political hacks lurking in the bush obsessively looking for an Ocasio-Cortez comment upon which to pounce, is counterproductive. More important, using the Holocaust to score political points is just plain wrong; stroking fear, division and hatred to garner more votes is wrong; manufacturing or exploiting a national threat is wrong; yelling instead of talking is wrong; fighting instead of governing is wrong. Whatever your political leaning, these actions are wrong, and undermine the strength and character of the country we all love. ☆

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Sponsoring Kiddush is \$150, which barely covers the cost of the lunch. Our goal is to have every Kiddush sponsored. To sponsor a Kiddush, email Rabbi Rosenbach or contact Alla Eicheldinger at Alla7815@yahoo.com. You can also help us by shopping, which doesn't cost any money, just a little time. We'll give you a list of items, you shop and we'll reimburse you.

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Join us this Saturday for Shabbat services. Strangers, visitors, friends, old and new; our doors are open to you. Looking for a new home? New members are always welcome at Congregation Ahavas Sholom services starts at 9:00AM. Our congregation is open and welcoming, so feel free to pay us a visit.



This week's choir rehearsal will be held at Dubra Shenker's home this Sunday, July 21, 2019, at 10;am, contact Dubra or Fred for details.