

Politics – March 2011

Peace hath her victories no less renowned than war.

~John Milton

Gilad is still in captivity. Veshavu banim legvulam.

~Raphael Cohen-Almagor

This month, we were humbled yet again in the face of powerful nature. How little and insignificant we feel watching the horrific scenes from Japan.

This month, Israel was affected by the ugly faces of terror: Knifing a sleeping family at its home; rocket attacks; bomb explosions. Bloody and nasty. Evoking unpleasant and traumatic memories from the not that distant past.

I'd be surprised if this wave of terror is not coordinated from above. Someone thinks it is time to push the nerves and twist them.

The unrest in the Arab world continues: War in Libya; chaos in Syria; unrest in Jordan; mass protests in Yemen and Bahrain. I reflect on Yemen and Bahrain below.

I fear for Israel's relationship with Egypt. The recent nominations to key political positions are all of people who have been critical of the peace with Israel. Prisoners involved in the Sadat's assassination were released from jail. The signs are not good. I won't be surprised if Egypt reconsiders its relationship with Israel. A very cold shoulder is expected. Warming up the relationship with the Palestinian Authority is next.

The USA should worry too. Not everything can be bought with money, especially when money does not help much at critical moments. Mubarak was a great ally of the US. The Leader of the Free World did not help him when he needed help. The new regime may opt to strike a different relationship with the USA, relying less on its money and develop independent thinking that does not serve American interests in the Middle East.

I also fear for Israel's deteriorating position in the international community. Mr Netanyahu's office looks like a train station. This has always been a Bibi trademark. People do not last long working with him. The new personal advisors are radicals who isolate him. **Yaacov Amidror**, hawkish former chief analyst for Israeli Military Intelligence, was recently named Netanyahu's national security adviser. The Israeli prime minister is *persona non grata* in many places, and has less and less places to visit, or even to call. A few weeks ago the media reported an unpleasant phone call between **Chancellor Angela Merkel** and Prime Minister Netanyahu. Israel is looking inward and in that respect increasingly feels like a pariah.

The relationships between Israel and the USA are motivated by inertia. Some senior Israeli politicians are not welcomed in Washington. **President Obama** made his position clear. Netanyahu made his position less clear, but he is judged by his actions and those are perceived as hostile to American interests. I think they are also hostile to Israel's interests but that's another matter. Last year I wrote that the American administration should drop the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from its agenda for the time being. President Obama really tried at first but then understood that there is not much point to piss against the wind. No more high-profile visits of senior American officials to Israel. There is simply nothing to talk about.

The signs on the wall are clear, and they are not good for Israel. Israel is residing now in a far tougher neighbourhood. Its leaders think that the answer is greater toughness. This answer is not perceived as right by Israel's friends: USA, Germany, France and the UK, to name a few. The European community is becoming increasingly hostile to Israel, while Mr. Netanyahu is busy bolstering his government by trying to lure more radical right-wing elements to his coalition.

I wish the Netanyahu government short life.

According to polls, Ehud Barak's new party will be short-lived with next to zero chances to enter the Knesset.

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Free Gilad Shalit. The government should invest in his release. It should be one of its top priorities. Veshavu banim legvulam.



Gilad Shalit

Reflections on February Newsletter

I thank all of you who conveyed condolences on the death of my mum. Your comforting words touch me and lend support. Thank you. It has been a difficult month.

Professor Joe Magnet, of Ottawa Law School, wrote:

Here is Shelley's translation of an epigram of Plato

Thou wert the morning star among the living,
 Ere thy fair light had fled;
 Now, having died, thou art as Hesperus, giving
 New splendour to the dead.

Itamar Murder

On the night of March 11, 2011, a cold-blooded murderer entered into a house in the settlement of Itamar armed with a knife. A family was sleeping inside. Udi Fogel, 36, Ruth Fogel, 35, and their children Yoav, 11, Elad, 4, and three-month-old Hadas were stabbed to death.

Shabbat morning. It is the sole resting day of the week in Israel. People do not go to work. They woke up in the morning to hear the terrible news. How much hatred does one contain within oneself to murder in cold blood a three-month-old baby? How much brain-washing is needed to make people forego humanity, compassion? How misguided can people be to commit such an atrocity believing that it may serve their best interests?

Terror is terror is terror. It yields no positive results. It serves only the radical elements of society who seek revenge and blood for blood. Violence breeds more violence. A zero sum game exists between terror and peace, between terror and democracy. One comes at the expense of the other. There can never be peace when such atrocious incidents take place.

Israeli Response

The government responded in the way it knows best. On Sunday, March 13, 2011, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office announced that "ministers have decided to authorize construction" of a few hundred housing units in the West Bank settlement blocs of Gush Etzion, Ma'aleh Adumim, Ariel and Kiryat Sefer.

The PM office said the "measured" construction will take place in areas which are supposed to remain under Israeli sovereignty following any future peace agreement with the Palestinians.

Minister of the Interior, Elie Yishay (Shas) declared: There should be at least 1000 new housing units for each victim.

Source:

<http://www.ynetnews.com/Ext/Comp/ArticleLayout/CdaArticlePrintPreview/1,2506,L-4041351,00.html>

Gaza Warms the Border

Gaza militants resumed rocket fire on Israeli civilians. On the weekend of March 18-19, 2011, Israel was hit by more than 50 rockets. The barrage continued in the following days, attacking the Eshkol region of the western Negev, the Sha'ar Hanegev area. Terrorists continued to fire mortar shells and Grad rockets at Ashkelon and Be'er Sheva. One person was injured. The Israel Air Force retaliated by attacking targets in Gaza. At least four members of the Al Quds Brigade, the armed wing of Islamic Jihad, were killed. The exchanges are among the most serious since Israel's major offensive in the coastal strip between December 2008 and January 2009. I certainly do not wish to see an escalation into yet another war/military operation.

The Capital of the Negev, Be'er Sheva, was hit last month by two Grad rockets. Those rockets marked the first time that Be'er Sheva was hit since the Gaza war ended in 2009.

In response, the anti-rocket Iron Dome system has been installed around Gaza. I hope it will prove effective.

Israel has every right to defend itself against such terrorist acts. No sovereign country tolerates this and we should not as well. The response should be measured; hard on the terrorists, aiming to avoid killing Gaza civilians. Those terrorists should be deterred from continuing their evil deeds. Deterrence is a must; otherwise, rockets will resume flying from Lebanon as well.

Terror in Jerusalem

On March 23, 2011, a powerful bomb exploded at a bus stop outside the International Convention Center, just opposite the central bus station in Jerusalem.



One person died and 39 people were wounded in the incident, three of them seriously. The Popular Resistance Committees, a Gaza terror group, and Islamic Jihad lauded the attack.

Jerusalem is a soft spot in Israel's defence against terrorism as it is very difficult, if not impossible, to monitor every person who comes into the city.

This was not a suicide bombing. A terrorist left a bag full of explosives in a central place and left the scene. A passerby noticed the suspicious bag, called the police and as he was waiting for the police to arrive, the bomb exploded.

Violence is bound to erupt when Israel and Palestine are in constant confrontation. The Middle East is more volatile at present, thus pressuring Israel might yield repercussions that could have a broader effect.

Former President Moshe Katsav's Sentence

The long-awaited verdict of Moshe Katsav was aired on March 22, 2011. The former president was sentenced to seven years in prison for raping a former employee, sexually harassing two other women who worked for him, indecent acts and obstruction of justice.

The case is a victory for the women Katsav attacked, and for the Israeli legal system that withstood all kind of trickery and manipulation designed to obstruct justice. It is also a victory for women's rights in a decades-long struggle against a powerful politician who used his influence and affluence to evade prosecution and justice, to no avail. Justice was delayed but eventually came to light.



The former president, who resigned under public pressure just two weeks before his term was to end in 2007, went on trial after rejecting a plea bargain that would have kept him out of jail. He wanted to save his reputation and clean name, miscalculating what he did, his powers, and the forces that demanded payment for his wrongful deeds.

To recall, the case began nearly five years ago when Katsav complained that a female employee was trying to blackmail him. She went to the police with her side of the story, which immediately broke into the news; other women stepped forward with similar complaints of sexual assaults and harassment. Katsav was using his powers to satisfy his sexual whims. He was a serial women offender and abuser who showed no respect to those working under him and who did not take 'no' for an answer. The Israeli justice system clearly said that there are some things one cannot do, whatever means and powers one has. Rape cannot be condoned or accepted.

Sources:

http://www.jpost.com/NationalNews/Article.aspx?id=213254&utm_source=Pulseem&utm_medium=Email&utm_campaign=jpost_Newsletter_22/03;

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/mar/22/moshe-katsav-jailed-seven-years-rape>;

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12815941>

Poll Shows Widespread Antipathy for Israel in Europe

A German think tank recently released a report aimed to study the increasing levels of anti-Semitism in a range of selected countries across Europe. On the question "Israel is conducting a war of extermination against the Palestinians," 47.7 percent of the German respondents agreed, while 63.3 percent of the Poles said that Israel is seeking to obliterate the Palestinians. On the question, "I can understand why people do not like Jews," 35.6 percent of the German respondents answered in the affirmative, followed by 35.9 percent for Britain, 41.1 percent for the Netherlands and 55.2 percent for Poland. According to Dr Clemens Heni, a German scholar who has studied the phenomenon of secondary anti-Semitism, "the new anti-Semitism is spread not just by neo-Nazis, but also by mainstream left-wing members of parliament, left-wing activists, extremist Muslims and the European elites."

Source: "Hate-Monitor-Net" group

Conversations with Israelis

1.

During the mass demonstrations in Egypt against President Mubarak I took a taxi to Tel Aviv and embarked on a conversation with the driver. He talked politics, referring to Israel's neighbor. And then he said: Who knows, you know, people talk maybe soon there will also be mass demonstrations here too. Why? I asked. Well, you know, it is increasingly difficult to live here. Taxes are rising. Prices are rising. Unemployment is high. It is difficult to complete the month. People owe a lot of money to banks, living on overdraft, and the government does not care. Some people say it is time to do something about it. Taking this government down.

2.

Three weeks later, when Colonel Gaddafi was bombing his own people from the air, I had a conversation with an Israeli engineer who said: Obama is not a leader. He has no balls. If he were to have balls he would not let this happen.

I thought he meant he wouldn't let Gaddafi bomb his people but then the engineer continued:

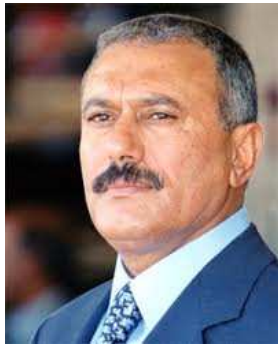
He would come to Gaddafi's help. Obama let Mubarak fall and now he lets Gaddafi fall. He fails to understand that these people are far better than the people who will seize power. Because who will get the power? Al Qaeda. The USA and the western world will pay a high price for letting this taking place. And we do not see the end of it. More extremists will take control over the region. This is a recipe for disaster.

3.

Discussion with an Israeli woman immediately after the terror attack in Jerusalem: We should hit them hard, she said referring to the Palestinians. So hard that they understand that violence is not the way; so hard that they will not raise their head. They should learn a lesson once and for all.

Three conversations that illustrate some modes of thinking in Israel today. They are not isolated. They represent some circles in Israeli society. I hope, in all instances, small minorities. I suspect, however, that my hopes are overly optimistic.

Yemen



In the February Newsletter I wrote that it is quite predictable to assume that the next stone in the Arab domino unrest is Yemen. Yemen is the Arab world's most impoverished nation. The literacy rate of the population is 61%. The Gross national income per head, according to the World Bank, was \$1,060 (£655) in 2009. President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who is in power since 1978, excelled only in one thing: survival. But now the people are demanding to bid him farewell. Now.

Saleh is negotiating the terms of his departure, and like Mubarak he tries to stall for time. Saleh says he will quit later this year but protesters say he must go immediately. Foreign Minister Abubakr al-Qirbi, a close ally of the president, said agreement was close on a transfer of power - seen as a clear sign that Mr Saleh's resignation is now a matter of time. In recent weeks, Saleh's power base has been eroded by top military figures and tribal leaders joining the opposition. The negotiations on Saleh's departure

involve Yemen's vice-president, the US ambassador and the defecting tribal and military leaders.

Yemen has a population of 24.3m. It is a key ally in the US-led fight against al-Qaeda, which has established a strong presence there. Two recent bomb plots against US targets - two American cargo planes in October and a Detroit-bound airliner in December 2009 - originated in Yemen. The US has a vested interest to see that the poor country which occupies 536,869 sq km will not fall into the hands of Muslim extremists.

Source: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12870584>

Bahrain

Bahrain is an oil-rich country with approximately 1.2 million inhabitants, located near the western shores of the Persian Gulf. The country has a poor human rights record and, as customary in the Arab world and more so in the Persian Gulf, very uneven distribution of wealth. The unrest in Bahrain is the result of years of systematic discrimination of the 70% Shia majority, despite a 10-year reform process that opened up the political system with elections for parliament in 2002. Those reforms brought to an end a period of turmoil in the 1990s, marked by security crackdowns and Shia riots amid a low-level insurgency against the ruling Khalifa family. The Shia say they do not get the same access to government jobs as the Sunni minority and are denied access to the security services, a major employer. About a third of Bahrain's budget is spent on security. Bahraini security forces who are keeping the Shia in check are non-Bahraini Sunnis recruited from Pakistan, Jordan, Yemen and Syria. Some of them have been given Bahraini citizenship.

The Shia also complain that the Khalifa family continues to dominate government, with parliament's powers limited. The ruling family's control of vast tracts of the island, as well as its control over the reclamation projects on public land, have compounded allegations of corruption, which centre on Prime Minister Sheikh Khalifa bin Salman Al Khalifa, who has been in office for the past 40 years.



The Shia also say voting districts are gerrymandered to keep the main Shia group Al-Wefaq in a minority. These grievances have coalesced into a youth-driven popular movement aiming to effect regime change, while the traditional opposition has watched from the sidelines, calling for the introduction of a democratic constitutional monarchy.

The USA and Saudi Arabia watch the events carefully. As in Egypt, US policy has been to ignore the often legitimate grievances of Bahrainis in favour of stability and support for a repressive regime. Bahrain is the home to the U.S. Navy's Fifth Fleet. Both countries

benefit from the friendly relationships and both have a lot to lose. But President Obama will not be able to lend support to the government if it resorts to excessive violence against civilians.

Bahrain's neighbour, Saudi Arabia, is even more nervous. In Saudi Arabia, the Shia are some 15% of the population. The Saudi government announced that it will intervene if the situation "gets out of hand". Shortly afterwards, on March 14, 2011, 1,000, Saudi troops have arrived to protect oil, power facilities and the banking centre. The Bahrain government welcomed them.

Sources: <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/547d0a42-4f1a-11e0-9c25-00144feab49a.html#axzz1Hmkw2jAO>;

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-12471243>;

<http://globalvoicesonline.org/specialcoverage/bahrain-protests-2011/>;

<http://www.businessinsider.com/saudi-troops-bahrain-2011-3>

Human Rights Annual Report

Human Rights Watch published its 21st annual World Report. The Report summarizes human rights conditions in more than 90 countries and territories worldwide. It reflects extensive investigative work undertaken in 2010 by Human Rights Watch staff, usually in close partnership with domestic human rights activists.

With regard to Israel, the Report says that Bedouin citizens suffered discriminatory home demolitions. From July to October police and the Israel Land Administration destroyed the Bedouin village of Al-Araqib six times, displacing 300 people. At the time residents were contesting in court the state's claims that they had never owned lands in the area. Some 90,000 Bedouin live in "unrecognized" villages with no basic services and at risk of demolitions.



Israel also refused to recognize the legal status of thousands of homes owned by Palestinian citizens of Israel, including the 600-person village of Dahmash in central Israel, which without legal status lacks any basic services. While residents legally own the land on which their homes sit, Israel refuses to rezone the land from its current agricultural status to residential, thereby rendering their homes illegal.

There are an estimated 200,000 migrant workers in Israel, many of whom work in abusive conditions; employers' withholding of wages and underpayment is also reportedly common. The majority of workers are indebted to recruiting agencies and beholden to a single employer for their livelihood, and are unable to transfer their employment without their employer's consent. The government has deported migrant workers and their children born in Israel, pursuant to policies that restrict migrant workers from forming families.



Israel is the largest overall recipient of foreign aid from the United States since World War II, receiving US\$2.775 billion in military aid in 2010. The Obama administration pushed for a resumption of direct peace negotiations between Israel and the PA in September, and offered Israel additional aid to renew a partial “freeze” on settlement construction. The US continued to train and equip Palestinian security forces, providing \$350 million for security and program assistance and an additional \$150 million to the PA in direct budgetary support, while the EU gave the PA \$315 million as of October.

Both the HRC and the UN General Assembly passed follow-up resolutions calling for Israel and Hamas to investigate serious laws-of-war violations. The PA, apparently due to external pressure related to negotiations with Israel, conspicuously failed to refer a Human Rights Council expert report on accountability measures after the Gaza war to higher-level UN bodies for consideration.

Source: <http://www.hrw.org/en/world-report-2011>

Academic Freedom

I was relieved to hear that a French court dismissed a criminal-libel charge brought against a journal editor over a negative book review and ordered the plaintiff to pay punitive damages.

The case started in 2007, when Joseph H.H. Weiler, a professor at New York University's School of Law, Editor of *The European Journal of International Law*, and Editor of a related website, *Global Law Books*, published on the journal website Web site a short review of a book by Ms. Calvo-Goller. The reviewer was Thomas Weigend, a professor of law at the University of Cologne. You may read his review here: <http://www.globallawbooks.org/reviews/detail.asp?id=298>.



Dr. Calvo-Goller did not like the review. She thought it was defamatory and asked Prof. Weiler to take it down. Prof. Weiler, quite rightly, refused. The review was not libelous, was written in bona fide academic manner, and Weiler saw no reason to accept Dr. Calvo-Goller's most unusual appeal. At the same time, Weiler offered her the chance to respond to the review on the journal's website, an opportunity Dr. Calvo-Goller declined. Instead she brought a criminal-libel complaint against him in France.

This case is most alarming. A decision in Ms. Calvo-Goller's favor would have a chilling effect on scholars' and editors' willingness to publish reviews. They would have felt comfortable publishing only favourable reviews.

The case lingered for a few years. The entire situation was most troubling to Prof. Weiler who felt that he was put in the frontline not only to protect his journal's interests but also the interests of the entire academic community. On January 20, 2011, the case was heard by the Tribunal de Grand Instance de Paris, and handed down a decision on March 3, 2011. See

<http://chronicle.com/items/biz/pdf/judgement%203%20mars%202011.pdf>

The court said the review expressed a scientific opinion of the book and did not go beyond the kind of criticism to which all authors of intellectual work subject themselves when they publish. It agreed with Mr. Weiler's contention that the case did not properly fall within its jurisdiction anyway. The court asserted:

"Karine Calvo-Goller failed to comprehend [respect] the scope of French Press law stating that the Review which was made the subject of the proceedings could be held to be defamatory.... [I]n effect, the Review of her book does not contain words damaging her honor or her reputation, and only expresses, what is more, in moderate terms, a scientific opinion on [her book] without ever exceeding the limits of free criticism to which all authors of intellectual works expose themselves;
... The bad faith of the Complainant –a lawyer, moreover one familiar with French law given her indication that she pursued her law studies in France- is therefore undeniably established".

The court concluded that Dr. Calvo-Goller had engaged in forum shopping and had shown bad faith in bringing the complaint. It said it was ordering the plaintiff to pay the 8,000 Euro to Mr. Weiler in reparation for the harm caused by the improper nature of her action. This is hardly an appropriate compensation for the wrong-doing suffered by Prof. Weiler.

See *The European Journal of International Law* Vol. 20 no. 4 (2009),
<http://www.ejil.org/pdfs/20/4/1952.pdf>;
<http://www.ejiltalk.org/in-the-dock-in-paris-%E2%80%93-the-judgment-by-joseph-weiler-2/>;
<http://chronicle.com/article/French-Court-Finds-in-Favor-of/126599/>

The Future of the Global Muslim Population Projections for 2010-2030

Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, February 1, 2011

The world's Muslim population is expected to increase by about 35% in the next 20 years, rising from 1.6 billion in 2010 to 2.2 billion by 2030, according to new population projections by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion & Public Life.

Globally, the Muslim population is forecast to grow at about twice the rate of the non-Muslim population over the next two decades -- an average annual growth rate of 1.5% for Muslims, compared with 0.7% for non-Muslims. If current trends continue, Muslims will make up 26.4% of the world's total projected population of 8.3 billion in 2030, up from 23.4% of the estimated 2010 world population of 6.9 billion.

While the global Muslim population is expected to grow at a faster rate than the non-Muslim population, the Muslim population nevertheless is expected to grow at a slower pace in the next two decades than it did in the previous two decades.

Middle East-North Africa

- The Middle East-North Africa will continue to have the highest percentage of Muslim-majority countries. Of the 20 countries and territories in this region, all but Israel are projected to be at least 50% Muslim in 2030, and 17 are expected to have a population that is more than 75% Muslim in 2030, with Israel, Lebanon and Sudan (as currently demarcated) being the only exceptions.
- Nearly a quarter (23.2%) of Israel's population is expected to be Muslim in 2030, up from 17.7% in 2010 and 14.1% in 1990. During the past 20 years, the Muslim population in Israel has more than doubled, growing from 0.6 million in 1990 to 1.3 million in 2010. The Muslim population in Israel (including Jerusalem but not the West Bank and Gaza) is expected to reach 2.1 million by 2030.
- Egypt, Algeria and Morocco currently have the largest Muslim populations in the Middle East-North Africa. By 2030, however, Iraq is expected to have the second-largest Muslim population in the region – exceeded only by Egypt – largely because Iraq has a higher fertility rate than Algeria or Morocco.

Israel needs to find a way to live in this developing region in peace and tranquility.

See <http://pewforum.org/The-Future-of-the-Global-Muslim-Population.aspx>

Nominations accepted for International Hrant Dink Award

The Hrant Dink Award is presented to individuals, organisations or groups that work for a just world, free from discrimination, racism and violence, who take personal risks to achieve those goals. As the Hrant Dink Foundation calls for this year's nominations, it aims to remind all those who struggle for these ideals that their voices are heard and their work is visible.

Each year the award is presented to two individuals: one from Turkey and one from abroad. The deadline for nominations is 15 April.

Journalist Hrant Dink launched the first Turkish-Armenian weekly, "Agos" in 1996. He wrote critically about Turkish-Armenian relations in an attempt to broaden the debate on several issues. On 19 January 2007 he was shot dead in front of his newspaper office.

For information about the nomination process, please visit: <http://www.hrantdinkodulu.org/>

Elitzur Ramle Wins the EuroCup

Great achievement for women basketball. On March 24, 2011, Elitzur Ramle won the EuroCup after beating the French club Arras in the EuroCup final 61-53 in France. The victory came a week after the first game, in Israel, which ended in a tie 61:61. Ramle needed an extra effort to win the cup in France, and its players gave all they had to return to the game after a terrible first quarter (5:13) and to win it decisively. With the victory, Elitzur Ramle becomes the first Israeli team in the history of Israeli women's basketball to capture a European trophy.

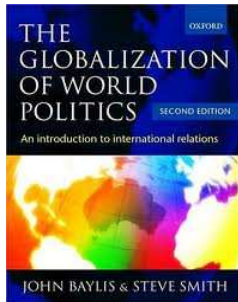


Photo: Ynet

The Israeli club had four players in double figures. Captain and team leader Shai Doron scored 14 points and grabbed seven rebounds; Laine Selwyn scored 15 points and grabbed six rebounds and LeCoe Willingham also scored 15 points and collected seven rebounds. Wonderful achievement. Hearty congratulations and Mazal Tov to the team and to the city of Ramle. Many happy returns.

New Books

John Baylis, Steve Smith and Patricia Owens (eds.), *The Globalization of World Politics: An Introduction to International Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).



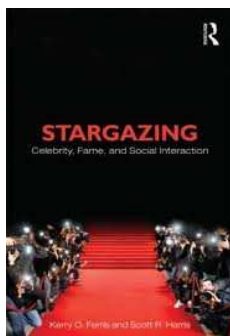
This is the fifth edition of this most comprehensive textbook. Its 600 pages are rich in content and very accessible to students. As the world is becoming a global village, people travel, media bring the world to our screens live, and modern transportation enables us to travel long distances in a relatively short time, we increasingly become citizens of the world. Following a short introduction about globalization and global politics, Part One of this book provides historical context. Part Two acquaints us with theories of world politics. Part Three and Four concern modern economy, environment, nationalism, culture, human rights and global security, while Part Five is about globalization in the future.

Each chapter begins with a reader's guide. Definitions and key points are put in distinct boxes; case studies are provided to make the reading clear and down-to-earth; diagrams and photos enrich the eyes, and each chapter concludes with suggestions for further reading. This is the best textbook on globalization I know at present. It is a valuable asset for anyone who is interested in current global concerns.

I thank OUP for sending me a copy of this most valuable book.

Kerry O. Ferris and Scott r. Harris, *Stargazing* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

The book provides an interesting sociological perspective on celebrity, fame and social interaction. It discusses the interaction between the glitz and the fans, how does it feel to be a star, on the red carpet and in the constant limelight.



It is a focused book about a modern phenomenon – celeb stardom. If you are a celebrity, would like to be a celebrity, or a fan, this one is for you.

I thank Routledge for a copy of this book.

Purim in Hull

This Purim event at the local synagogue was "interesting". Memorable or forgettable, for you to decide. There were some 20 people present. The Master of the Ceremony (MC), the leader of the synagogue, looked agitated and troubled upon arrival. He came in and out, somewhat confused. The service was running late. There were five tables, with some refreshments at the back of the room. We took our seats in the front rows. MC went up the stage and said the following: I gave Megilat Esther (The Story of Esther, what is read on Purim) to my daughter (No, you didn't, shouted his daughter from the front row). OK, OK, MC answered. Anyway, the book went astray. We cannot find it. Let's open the Sidur (a prayer book for all holidays) at page 385. There was a short blessing for Purim, which we read. That is, said MC, in short the story of Megilat Esther. He added a few words, and the service was finished.



Five minutes. A new record for a Purim service.

Then we sat at the tables and played horse racing, placing bets on horses and using monopoly money.

Monthly Poems

Spring, the Sweet Spring

Spring, the sweet spring, is the year's pleasant king,
Then blooms each thing, then maids dance in a ring,
Cold doth not sting, the pretty birds do sing:
Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!



The palm and may make country houses gay,
 Lambs frisk and play, the shepherds pipe all day,
 And we hear aye birds tune this merry lay:
 Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to-witta-woo!

The fields breathe sweet, the daisies kiss our feet,
 Young lovers meet, old wives a-sunning sit,
 In every street these tunes our ears do greet:
 Cuckoo, jug-jug, pu-we, to witta-woo!

Thomas Nashe

[More poems from Thomas Nashe](#)

Aesthetics



External cover
 Finishing
 Glorify beauty and grace
 What there is in essence.
 On its own it is nothing
 Without it – flagrant content.

Raphael Cohen-Almagor

Light Side

We, academics, know the frustration when an article is rejected after many months of deliberation, for reasons that are not altogether clear. This journal saves you all anxieties. Result is assured. Surprises avoided. Details can be found at:

<http://www.universalrejection.org/>

Hebrew speakers may enjoy the talented Miki Kam, one of a kind Israeli comedian, singer, dancer and more, in <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQ4h6SC0hkc>

As Pesach/Passover is approaching, may I wish you and your loved ones happy time together celebrating freedom and tranquility in safety and peace.

Peace and love, always.

Rafi

My last communications are available on <http://almagor.blogspot.com/>

Earlier posts at my home page: <http://hcc.haifa.ac.il/~rca/>

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