

# DIAL INTO A NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING

Let each and every JWV Member be present and be a part of National Committee Meeting

All you do is to just make a COST FREE telephone call to

Telephone Number 1-800-820-4690

JWV Code Number 7020464#

All individual Post Members are an important part of the Jewish War Veterans. YOU, THE MEMBER, can attend a National Committee Meeting by dialing into any Teleconference below:

## PLEASE JOIN WITH US

- Oct. 8, 2003  
8:00 PM EST **Drug Abuse and Veterans Benefits**  
Discuss the health benefits available, the JWV Prescription Awareness Program
- Oct. 22, 2003  
8:00 PM EST **Veteran Benefits**  
Learn what they are and what they should be so that you can question Congressional and State candidates for election as to their positions on veterans proposals
- Nov. 19, 2003  
8:00 PM EST **Hospital and VAVS**  
A discussion of meeting the need of the confined Veteran
- Dec. 17, 2003  
8:00 PM EST **International Assembly of Jewish War Veterans (Feb. 9 to 20, 2004) and Allied Veterans Israel Mission (April 4-14, 2004) Why you, as a Jew, should participate**
- Jan. 7, 2004  
8:00 PM EST **Membership Committee**  
Perfect opportunity to start on RETENTION and new member projects in order to maintain your current Post Membership
- Feb. 4, 2004  
8:00 PM EST **Americanism and National Homeland Security and National Emergency Management**  
What it means and what our obligations are
- Feb. 25, 2004  
8:00 PM EST **National Museum of American Jewish Military History**  
Discuss the duties and responsibilities of Officers and Directors and suggestions on getting the message out
- Mar. 3-7, 2004 **Come join us in Washington, DC, for JWV's Congressional Reception (3/3), The National Commander's Congressional Testimony (3/4), the NEC and Museum Board meeting (3/5-7)**
- Mar. 24, 2004  
8:00 PM EST **Review of NEC and Museum Board of Director Meeting**  
Discuss the actions taken, Congressional Testimony, Reception
- April 14, 2004  
8:00 PM EST **A Conversation with Past National Commanders**  
As to where we were and where with your help we will be
- April 28, 2004  
8:00 PM EST **National Finance Board**  
To present a better understanding of need and procedures necessary to assure Post good standing
- May 12, 2004  
8:00 PM EST **National & State Conventions**  
Discuss the policy positions for consideration at State and National Conventions
- June 9, 2004  
8:00 PM EST **Membership Methods of Increasing and Retaining Members**  
Discuss the approaches available to Newly Elected Officers and their Staffs
- July 7, 2004  
8:00 PM EST **Newly Elected Department, County and Post Officers**  
What is expected of them and how to accomplish their programs
- Aug. 8 - 15, 2004 **National Convention - New Orleans Louisiana**  
8:00 PM EST A membership opportunity to participate in the development of JWV polices and procedures

We anticipate your participation by listening in and pursuing and making more valuable JWV policies and JWV programs in your local area and with your fellow veterans.

The important telephone number to remember in making the calls is:

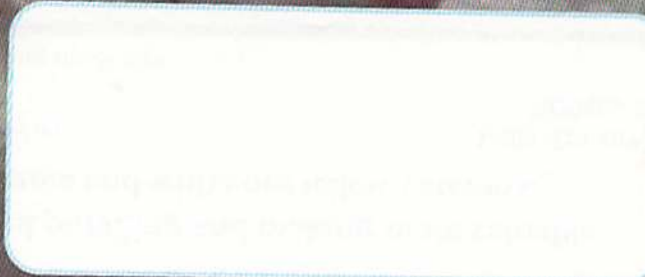
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# Seders in Iraq



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# PASSOVER IN IRAQ

## Letter from Mosul

by Rabbi Carlos Huerta

I am writing to you from the city of Nineveh, the same city of the Prophet Jonah. Its present name is Mosul. I have had the privilege to see its ancient walls, touch its stones, go to the Kever that present Islamic tradition says is the Prophet Jonah. There is a Mosque at the site but hundreds of years ago the Iraqis we work with tell me it was a Beit Keneset.

They tell me the reason that the site is so sacred is because of the sacredness that the Jews have held for it. Presently, there are no signs of this ancient synagogue.

We, the soldiers of the 101<sup>st</sup> Airborne Division, fought our way up from the south, from Kuwait. The battle took us past Ur, the city where Abraham Avinu was born. We maintained contact with the enemy, passed the site of the Great Talmudic Academies of Sura and Pumpaditya, to the city of Babylon where Daniel Hanavi was taken. There we engaged an Iraqi Armored Division known as the Nebuchadnezzar Division and obliterated them. We continued the battle to Baghdad where so many of our people lived and were massacred in the summer of 1948. It was the city of so many of our Sages to include the Ben Ish Chai. Now we are in Mosul. I ask about the Jews that lived here and very few remember them. Many say that Jews never lived here, but my heart tells me different. The old ones tell me that there was a Jewish quarter, synagogue, Betay Midrashot, and cemetery.

One day while I was searching the streets of the ancient city, I came across a building that was missing half of its roof. The site was a garbage dump and the inside of the building was filled three-quarters with rotting garbage, feces, and sewage. I had to crouch low to get into the building, as the doorway was almost completely buried. As I entered, the light came through the half-open roof and I could make out writing engraved on the walls. It was Hebrew, and then I knew that I had stumbled into the ancient synagogue of the city of Mosul/Nineveh.

My heart broke as I climbed over the garbage piles that filled the room, where for hundreds of years the prayers of Jews reached the heavens. I realized that I was probably the first Jew to enter this holy place in over 50 years. Over ten feet of garbage filled the main sanctuary and the ezrat nashim. I barely could make it out because of the filth, but there was Hebrew writing on many of the walls.

Many native Iraqis congregated around me and wanted to know what I was doing. My translator said that the American Army was interested in old archeological sites of all kinds. I asked them if they knew what this place was, and they all said in an instant that it was the house where the Jews prayed. They told me that the houses in the streets that surrounded the synagogue had been filled with Jews. They then took me to the children's Yeshiva, a marbled edifice that no longer had a roof. There were only walls and half rooms. There was a vagrant family living in there, and when I asked

them what this place was they said that it was a Jewish school for children. As I walked through the quarter I was shown the grave of the Prophet Daniel, once a synagogue. I saw that many of the door posts had the lion of Judah engraved on the top.

I felt the presence of our people, felt their daily lives as merchants, teachers, rabbis, doctors, and tailors. I felt their rush to get ready for Shabbath, felt their presence as they walked to the synagogue on Yom Kippur.

I could hear their singing in their courtyards, in their succahs as they invited the ushpizin in. I could hear their Passover seders echo through the narrow streets as they sang the songs of Pesach late into the night. And the children, I saw their shadows as they raced down the alleys, playing around the corners. I heard their voices learning the Aleph Beth in the Yeshivoh as they prepared for their Bar/Bat Mitsvahs.

But I also heard the babies crying and I saw the young daughters of Tzion cling to their mother's dresses asking why the bad people were killing them and making them leave their homes.

Tears came to my eyes but I had to hold them back. I had to pretend that I was mildly interested in what they were showing me lest I put myself and the soldier I was with, in a dangerous situation. How does one absorb this kind of experience? How do I convey the feeling of hearing all those voices reaching out in prayer at the synagogue as I stood on top of all that garbage? How do I recover our history? How do I bring honor to a holy place that has been so desecrated? I have no answers. I only have great sadness, pain, and loneliness.

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### *Wexler from page 10*

the fiscal year 2004 — to enhance Israel's security, prosperity and defense capabilities.

In light of the severe economic setbacks caused by the ongoing campaign of Palestinian terror, I believe Congress and the Bush Administration should increase U.S. military and economic aid to Israel. To this end, on April 3, 2003, I voted in support of the Emergency Wartime Supplemental Appropriations Act of 2003 that included \$1 billion dollars in military assistance and \$9 billion dollars in loan guarantees to Israel. At this time of conflict and economic despair, it is in America's best interest to assist in strengthening and defending Israel, our greatest partner, ally and friend in the Middle East.

In conclusion, I wish to thank you for the invaluable contributions you have bestowed upon our country. The efforts of Jewish war veterans will be forever remembered and appreciated, and it is my most sincere hope that in the future, all will receive the proper recognition they so rightly deserve.

Best wishes,  
Congressman Robert Wexler, D-Florida



## PASSOVER IN IRAQ

addition to wine, grape juice, matzah, and maror, our meal consisted of a few cans of gefilte fish, some Pesach candy, and a can of pickled vegetables someone had sent me from Israel.

The wonderful thing was that we didn't care. We were all together, we were all healthy, and we were celebrating the Feast of Freedom, surrounded by a people who were just beginning to taste the sweetness of being a people no longer oppressed. Our Seder progressed amidst the darkness and the sound of machine gun and sniper rifle fire. It was truly an amazing couple of nights. I went to sleep that second night, looking at stars and affirming the words of Jacob in the Torah, "Surely, G-d was in the place, and I did not know it!"

Our return to Kuwait and Camp Commando was also quite providential. I was not looking forward to a long return trip via helo, C-130, and HUMVEE. But as luck would have it, we stumbled upon a helo returning directly to Kuwait. We did not mind the 5 hr flight back and the three fuel stops. As we flew over the Iraqi countryside at 50 feet, I reflected on what our marines, sailors, soldiers and airmen had accomplished. We had been partners with the Almighty in doing for the Iraqi people what He had done for us in Egypt. This, indeed, was a season of freedom and redemption.

### A Seder Somewhere in Iraq

Dear Family and Friends,

This morning started with a cold rain. This was a blessing, as it padded the loose sand and made for a clear, crisp day. Two other Jewish soldiers, the wonderful duo of Chaplain Yacovac, 3rd Infantry Division, and Chaplain Waynick, 24th Support Command, and I gathered the necessary six security personnel and four vehicles to convoy us the 40 minutes from our classified base at Logistic Support Area Dogwood to Objective Grady for a Passover Seder in the desert.

As we arrived, we were warmly greeted by ten other Jewish soldiers from the 101st Airborne Division and Chaplain (Rabbi) Carlos Huerta. Together, we made a motley group of infantrymen, pilots, medics, and truck drivers into a minyan and a

family. Our table was meager but festive. Dispel all rumors of Army soldiers having Seder in palaces. That was not us. Our tent was small and non-descript from the outside. We used mess hall provided paper plates, flatware, and cups. No meat or main course. The simple Passover supplies of Matzah, gefilte fish and grape juice from the Aleph Institute and the Jewish Welfare Board, combined with generous packages of

cookies, dried fruit, and candy mailed by Lynne from Arizona and my cousin Stephen Hirsch of Long Island, NY, constituted a table fit for a meal. We even used Army issued Louisiana hot sauce for the bitter herbs.

Rabbi Huerta motivated us all to a higher plane. Despite our soldierly harsh living conditions



sleeping outside on the ground, without showers or toilets, there are always people who have it harsher. We the Jewish people were once slaves. On a similar idea, the Iraqi people were oppressed for over a generation by Saddam Hussein. And now, we are both free. The 10 plagues the Lord cast upon Pharaoh were cast upon Saddam Hussein with embargos, restrictions, war, and perhaps death. Now, like the Jews who crossed the Red Sea, the Iraqi people must rebuild their lives and teach their children about freedom.

During the meal, soldiers talked about missing family and friends back in Pasadena, California; Pittsburgh, PA; Phoenix, Arizona; Brooklyn, New York; Orlando, Florida; and other home towns across the USA. Each participant was glad to get a few moments away from their military post and remember previous Seders with wives, children, parents, and friends. 1st Lt. Abraham Falkowitz remarked "I was surprised to see this much Judaism in the middle of a war zone." Others agreed. We laughed, cried, and had fun. The service concluded with songs and psalms, like this quote Rabbi Huerta read from Psalm 118, "The Lord is on my side, I have no fear."

Together, our unit made this tent a house; this house a home; a piece of Judaism; and a piece of America.

Chag Sameach,

Jonas (Jonas Vogelhut, is a Major in the U.S. Army.)



**Let Us Not Abandon Our Troops When They Return Home***(A speech delivered to the House of Representatives)**by Representative Bob Filner (D-CA)*

I rise to express my concern for the men and women of our armed services who will be returning and are returning from Iraq. My colleagues are aware that our troops were funded during the period of fighting last month at the rate of about \$1 billion, \$1 billion, every 2 or 3 days. Now, we did not want our troops to go without having everything that they needed for success, but if we have the money to send our troops to war, we must, Mr. Speaker, have the money for them when they return. To abandon them upon their return shows disrespect for those who have willingly risked all when their Nation called them to serve. In the next few months, Congress will be voting on the veterans' budget. The House Republican budget that came through this House was outrageous. It cut veterans' benefits by \$25 billion over the next 10 years, and they took that vote right after a resolution expressing support for our troops. Now, the final budget resolution we passed corrected some of the most glaring problems in that budget, but it is still \$1 billion less for the health care for our veterans in the coming year. One billion dollars. That would fund approximately 5,000 doctors, 10,000 nurses, or three million additional outpatient visits. Over the next 10 years, the budget falls far short of what will be needed to keep up with inflation and with the growing number of veterans who were using the veterans health care system. We must fight during the appropriation process for a budget that is worthy of our returning veterans. We cannot ignore their rights and their needs. Veterans' health care is one of the most important issues that we fund.

We hope and pray that we do not have veterans from the current conflict who become ill with Gulf War illness, but we must prepare for that possibility. And we must not forget the warriors of the first Gulf War who are sick, tens of thousands of them, and are still waiting to learn the cause and the cure for their illnesses.

Of course, Mr. Speaker, we need to change the whole process of funding our veterans' health care. Right now, each year in Congress, as we are doing this year, we have to fight for a health care budget. In the last session, there was legislation to change VA health care funding so that the amount of funding would automatically rise each year to accommodate inflation and new enrollees, that is, for example, to accommodate the returning veterans from Iraq. I will again, and I urge all my colleagues, to cosponsor this bill when it is reintroduced this session. And we must work hard for its passage.

Right now, Mr. Speaker, 200,000 veterans are waiting more than 6 months for their first health care appointment. In fact, veterans will die while waiting for that first appointment. We must resolve to change this immoral situation.

When our active-duty soldiers from the war in Iraq leave service, many are qualified for educational benefits under the Montgomery GI bill. This is an earned benefit that allows them

to reenter civilian life as educated and productive members. But the current GI bill benefits are woefully inadequate to do the job. Back in 1944, this bill paid for the full cost of college tuition. But now it barely pays for two-thirds of the average cost of attending a 4-year public college. We must work to provide funding for the full cost of tuition fees, books, and supplies for those who do serve 4 years of active duty in the military service. I could go on and on, Mr. Speaker, because there are so many other areas that need more funding than is currently budgeted. We will soon be commemorating Memorial Day. We will be hearing words of support for our veterans from all Members of Congress as they speak to Memorial Day crowds. But words can be cheap. What is important is how we vote.

We have the money. We have the resources. It is a question of priorities. It is a question of will. Let us make our veterans, who are returning from war, proud of us. There is one final thing I want to say. A substantive way we can assist our veterans is to guarantee them jobs with companies that are awarded government contracts to rebuild Iraq, and I have introduced a bill to do just that. It is called the Let U.S. Veterans Rebuild Iraq Act, which will treat our veterans with the respect they deserve and provide a tangible way to better their lives. They fought for freedom in Iraq, who better to get involved in securing the future for Iraq?




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## New Members

**NO DEPARTMENT**

Norman Hoffman 100, Ferderick Snyder 100, Robert Solomon 100

**DEPARTMENT OF ARIZ./NEV.**

Leonard Flax 201, Alice M. Fierstein 619, Howard A. Fierstein 619, Jeanette D. Fierstein 619, Roy Fine 619, Michale Koller 619, Jim R. Pomush 619, Jack Rzepnik 619, Jacqueline R. Silver 619, Lillian Weiss 619, R. Zev Wellins 619

**DEPARTMENT OF CALIFORNIA**

George Benson 123, Alan Gurvitz 123, Martin S. Rose 123, Richard Paul Ehrig 603, Bernard Farbman 603, Sam Jack Fox 603, Marvin James Handel 603, Edward Klein 603, Arthur Major 603, Joyce Perlstein 603, Earl Rubin 603, Harry Stockser 603, Sam Weinberg 603, Sandra Cumings-Malamed 617, Alvin Reingold 617, Jayson B. Rome 680, Paul H. Rubenstein 680, Dionne R. Hightower 760

**DEPARTMENT OF FLORIDA**

Alexander Kostbar 172, Lester Cohen 266, Herbert Goldwasser 300, Semyon Prilutsky 300, Theodore Rubin 300, Malcolm N.

See *New Members* page 31



## Passover in Iraq

Passover, Baghdad, Liberated Iraq, April 2003

by Commander Irving Elson, Chaplain, 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Expeditionary Force

For the first forty-two years of my life I have been celebrating Passover as a Jew who had been liberated from Egypt, but this year I had the privilege of observing this festival not only as one who had been liberated but as a liberator. This year I spent this Festival of Freedom with the men and women of the First Marine Expeditionary Force in Baghdad.

My Passover journey began the Monday before Pesach. Four days prior, I had returned from Iraq to Camp Commando Kuwait, long enough to take a shower, eat some hot food, and most important, pick up supplies for Passover before returning to Iraq. Through the generosity of the Jewish Chaplains Council, the Aleph Institute, family and friends, and countless other Jewish organizations, I found myself transporting 12 boxes of matzah, grape juice, gefilte fish, and the famous solo-seder kits to those marines who would not be able to attend a Seder. To understand the scope of



this mission, you have to realize that the sailors, marines, soldiers and airmen in Iraq are literally scattered throughout the country, some in areas that are hours away by vehicle through sectors not 100% secured. The logistics of getting myself, my RP (chaplain's assistant) and the supplies up to Baghdad were quite mind boggling. The G-4 (Logistics) and G-3 (Operations) of the MEF had been instrumental, lining up C-130 transports, helos and HUMVEEs to get to our destination. The 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division Chaplain and the various Regimental Chaplains also would play a key role in getting us to where we needed to be and getting the supplies to locations not on our schedule so that marines could do their own sederim.

The first step of our amazing journey began late Monday afternoon. We took a HUMVEE to an expeditionary airfield north of Kuwait City. From this field, a piece of desert where our C-130s can land, we took a "Herc" C-130 cargo plane to another field, actually a road turn airfield in the outskirts of Baghdad. Since we did not arrive until 2:00 am, we pulled out

our sleeping bags and spent what was left of the night on the side of the road. At 6:00 am the next morning, we were promptly awakened by the noise of two CH-46 helos coming to get us and take us to Baghdad.

After a short ride, we found ourselves in the field by a huge, bombed out compound. We were met by the 1<sup>st</sup> MarDiv Division Chaplain who welcomed us to the former Special Republican Guard Headquarters, now home of the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine

Division in Baghdad. The Division Chaplain told us of the busy schedule he had set up for us, doing what turned out to be a total of four sederim, two on each of the first nights of Pesach.

Regimental Chaplains from around the Division brought their Marines and sailors to the different Sedarim. Each was held in a different location around Baghdad. One was held in the lobby of one of the buildings in the compound, the Headquarters of the Iraqi Secret Police, the other in the

Republican Guards Headquarters, while the other two were held in the Iraqi Military Academy and in the official residence of the Minister of Information, the infamous "Baghdad Bob."

This last Seder was particularly meaningful to me. Held in the area held by the 7<sup>th</sup> Marines, it was the largest Seder I would lead. As we pulled into their compound, one of the Jewish marines reminded me, "Hey Rabbi, you promised us you would be with us in Baghdad for Pesach, and here you are!!!" Indeed, G-d had made it possible for me to keep my promise. There were several challenges to meet in setting up the Seder. First, the residence had no water or power. Promptly, the Regimental Chaplain, Father Bill Devine, pulled out a box of sacramental candles. "Use these," he said with a smile! Our Seder table looked like a combination of Pesach and Hannukah, all wrapped up into one. The second challenge involved security. The windows were covered, in fear of snipers. And finally, the Shulckha Oreckh, the main Passover meal. Since all we had to eat was MREs, we pulled whatever kosher goodies I could find from care packages from home. In