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of the United States of America
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COMMANDER'S CORNER

by Michael Halperin

February has come and at this meeting we will have First Nominations for elected officers. The election will take place at the March meeting. I am dissatisfied with the lack of attendance by our membership. We only have 10 meetings during the year. The actual meeting usually takes place within 1 1/2 hours. That is between 10:00 am and 11:30 am. The time between 9:00 am and 10:00 am we have a breakfast. Usually we have bagels, lox, and its condiments. Also, we have Danish pastries.

We have tried to get speakers; however, it is embarrassing due to the lack of attendance. If attendance improves we will initiate more speakers.

Remember that February 14, 2019 will be Valentines Day. Remember your spouse, significant other, or your girlfriend for the occasion.

I hope to see more of you for the next few months.

Holidays in February

There are two holidays of significance in February. Valentines day on February 14th and President's Day on February 18th. There are three Jewish Holy Days this month which are Yom Kippur Katan, Rosh Hodash of Adar and Purim Katan. They are the 4th, 5-6th and the 19th of February, respectfully.

President's Day Presidents Day is an American holiday celebrated on the third Monday in February; Presidents Day 2019 occurs on Monday, February 18th. While several states still have individual holidays honoring the birthdays of Washington, Abraham Lincoln and other figures, Presidents Day is now the official holiday honoring all Presidents.

I hope that you enjoy the Month of February.

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Hit Israeli TV show 'Shtisel' pushes haredi community boundaries

By Esther D. Kustanowitz | January 14, 2019

What does it mean to be yourself in a world of uniformity? I spent the end of 2018 exploring this question undercover in several ultra-Orthodox neighborhoods in Jerusalem, thanks to the By engaging Israeli television drama "Shtisel." Both seasons of the hit series, which aired in 2013 and 2015-16, are now available on Netflix with English subtitles.

With 12 episodes per season, the series is slow but steadily paced, depicting an intensely religious (and internet-free) community in which members adhere to the established haredi norms.

When characters do find themselves deviating from that status quo, it throws their lives (and their families' lives) into chaos.

The Shtisel family grapples with imperfect relationships, personal identity crises and their commitment to maintaining the purity of Jewish tradition while living in the modern Zionist State of Israel that they consider, to varying degrees, to be an abomination.

Patriarch Reb Shulem Shtisel (Dova'le Glickman) is a 60ish, modern (and yet not-so-modern) Tevye, who loves Torah, his children (all adults), teaching in the cheder (children's school) and the memory of his late wife. He clashes with youngest son Akiva (Michael Aloni, also starring in the Israeli drama "When Heroes Fly" on Netflix), who's considered

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS



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a screw-up for rejecting proposed shidduchim (introductions for the purpose of marriage) and for pursuing his artistic side (paging Chaim Potok's "My Name Is Asher Lev").

Meanwhile, daughter Giti (Neta Riskin) copes with her collapsing marriage by pretending everything is fine; but her over-reliance on her oldest (teen) daughter to help manage her four younger children backfires in uncomfortable but riveting ways.

The show also touches on how the community deals with issues such as aging and women's health. It even approaches (and then abandons) mental-health issues.

In "Shtisel," the dead continue to inhabit the world of their loved ones through dreams: From the very beginning, Akiva dreams of his late mother, and later on, his father dreams of and speaks to her, too. Twice-widowed Elisheva (Ayelet Zurer of "Munich," "Angels & Demons" and Marvel's "Daredevil") regularly finds her two dead husbands in the kitchen, appreciatively consuming her cooking and talking about how best to raise her son. The

(Continued on Page 11)

On the Lighter Side

Tallis

Rosh Hashana was over and there was time until Yom Kippur, and Abie needed his tallis cleaned. He called his friend Max to ask what dry cleaner to take it to.

Max said, "I always take my tallis to Moishe the dry cleaner on W 4th. He only charges \$4.00" So Abie goes over to Moishe's and finds that the ownership has changed. He asks the new owner, Mr Jones, if he meets the old prices. Mr. Jones assures him that he does. Three days later, Abie goes to get his tallis and is given a bill for \$24.00. He storms at Mr Jones. "I thought you met Moishe's prices?"

"I did," said Mr Jones, "\$4.00 for the tallis, and \$20.00 to get all the knots out of the fringes!"

Business

A man has been in business for many, many years and the business is going down the drain. He is seriously contemplating suicide and he doesn't know what to do. He goes to the Rabbi to seek his advice. He tells the Rabbi about all of his problems in the business and asks the Rabbi what he should do.

The Rabbi says "Take a beach chair and a bible and put them in your car and drive down to the edge of the ocean. Go to the water's edge. Take the beach chair out of the car, sit on it and take the bible out and open it up. The wind will rifle the pages for a while and eventually the bible will stay open at a particular page. Read the bible and it will tell you what to do."

The man does as he is told. He

laces a beach chair and a bible in his car and drives down to the beach. He sits on the chair at the water's edge and opens the bible. The wind rifles the pages of the bible and then stops at a particular page. He looks down at the bible and sees what he has to do. .

Three months later the man and his family come back to see the Rabbi. The man is wearing a \$1,000 Italian suit, The wife is all decked out with a full-length mink coat and the child is dressed in beautiful silk. The man hands the Rabbi a thick envelope full of money and tells him that he wants to donate this money to the synagogue in order to thank the Rabbi for his wonderful advice. The Rabbi is delighted. He recognizes the man and asks him what advice in the bible brought this good fortune to him.

The man replies: "Chapter 11. (Editor's: Chapter 11 is a business bankruptcy.)"

Gambling

A rabbi, a minister, and a priest were playing poker when the police raided the game. Turning to the priest, the lead police officer said, "Father Murphy, were you gambling?"

Turning his eyes to heaven, the priest whispered, "L*rd, forgive me for what I am about to do."

To the police officer, he then said, "No, officer; I was not gambling." The officer then asked the minister, "Pastor Johnson, were you gambling?"

Again, after an appeal to heaven, the minister replied, "No, officer; I was not gambling."

Turning to the rabbi, the officer again asked, "Rabbi Goldstein, were you gambling?"

The Rabbi answered, "With

whom?"

Praying at the Kotel

A female CNN journalist heard about a very old Jewish man who had been going to the Western Wall to pray, twice a day, every day, for a long, long time.

So she went to check it out. She went to the Western Wall and there he was, walking slowly up to the holy site.

She watched him pray and after about 45 minutes, when he turned to leave, using a cane and moving very slowly, she approached him for an interview.

"Pardon me, sir, I'm Rebecca Smith from CNN. What's your name?"

"Morris Feinberg," he replied.

"Sir, how long have you been coming to the Western Wall and praying?"

"For about 60 years."

"60 years! That's amazing! What do you pray for?"

"I pray for peace between the Christians, Jews and the Muslims."

"I pray for all the wars and all the hatred to stop."

"I pray for all our children to grow up safely as responsible adults and to love their fellow man."

"I pray that politicians tell us the truth and put the interests of the people ahead of their own interests."

And finally "I pray that everyone will be happy".

"How do you feel after doing this for 60 years?" Said the reporter.

"Like I'm talking to a wall." He answered.

Behind Europe's Anti-semitism 'Perception Gap'
by Ben Cohen / JNS.org

A comprehensive survey of European attitudes to antisemitism

released this month by the European Union displays what its authors call a “perception gap.” In this context, the term means that Jews in Europe regard the problem of antisemitism as far more immediate, pressing, and urgent than do their non-Jewish fellow citizens.

From a Jewish perspective, the survey — carried out in all 28 EU member states, and involving more than 27,000 respondents — is a welcome clarification on where Europeans stand on the matter of resurgent Jew-hatred, a trend that nearly two-thirds of respondents say has not increased over the past five years. It can also be seen as disturbing confirmation that opinion in Europe about “the Jews” and their troubles is much more divided than one might have hoped, despite all the memorials to the Holocaust, the Jewish museums, the restored synagogues, the Jewish film and food festivals, and the other historical and cultural markers that help to immunize the continent from a revival of Nazi barbarism.

Because of the vast scope of the survey, I want to focus here on what it reveals about the three EU countries with the largest Jewish communities in order of size: France, the United Kingdom, and Germany. Even when combined, the overall size of these Jewish communities is about half of the 1.5 million Jews in New York alone, but their modest presence in numbers is offset by the enormous contributions they have made to their respective countries, as well as the knowledge that the roots of modern Jewish political emancipation can be found in all three Western

European nations.

What impression has this history, on top of the turbulent present, made on how the non-Jewish population views the anti-semitism now manifesting in their societies? Here are some key indicators from the EU survey, which was conducted just last month.

In France, 71 percent of survey respondents agreed that anti-semitism was a problem on a scale from “fairly” to “very” serious. The equivalent figures for Germany and the UK were 66 percent and 62 percent, respectively. Those who thought the problem was “fairly serious” outweighed those who considered it “very serious.”

In France, which has a Jewish community of 460,000 out of a total population of 67 million, 36 percent of respondents said that they had Jewish friends or acquaintances. In the UK (with 270,000 Jews out of a total population of 66 million), that number was 32 percent, while in Germany (with 117,000 Jews out of a total population of 83 million) it was 11 percent.

Despite the consistent presence of the word “antisemitism” in the news cycles of all three countries, there was notable dissonance between them on whether antisemitism had increased over the past five years. Some 61 percent of Germans agreed that it had risen, compared to 51 percent of the French and 44 percent of the British respondents.

The “perception gap” identified by the EU becomes very stark when comparing these figures with the responses given by European Jews on the same subject to a separate EU survey of

12 countries published last month. A full 85 percent of the Jews surveyed regarded anti-semitism as a growing threat; broken down nationally, 95 percent of French Jews saw the problem in those terms, compared with 85 percent of Jews in Germany and 75 percent of those in the UK.

That survey also quoted from the daily experience of its Jewish respondents, much of which sounds distressingly familiar. Like the woman in her 60s living in Germany, who remarked that “for the past 12 years, anti-semitism has no longer been a taboo in Germany, and so it occurs more often — verbally and physically, on German streets and in social media.” Or the woman in her 40s living in France, who said that “at work and in the media and social media, anti-Semitism is a daily and unrepressed occurrence.” Or the woman in her 20s living in the United Kingdom, who revealed that she had to put up with “anti-Semitic comments made to me at work such as ‘all Jews are rich.’”

It is not, of course, surprising that non-Jews are less sensitive than are Jews to the prevalence of anti-semitism; non-Jews are not its targets. But in addressing that point, it needs pointing out that the anti-semitism “perception gap” is as significant in terms of demography as it is in terms of the political questions it raises.

What the EU’s 28-country survey revealed — and emphatically so in the case of the three countries under discussion — is that older, better-educated Europeans with friends and colleagues of different religious and ethnic back-

grounds are far more likely than any other demographic category to understand why Jews on the continent are so fearful these days. And this group, it must be stressed, is at best about 25 percent of the overall population. Meanwhile, about half of the population in France and Germany, and more than half in the UK, don't believe that the current manifestations of antisemitism are anything to be overly alarmed about. It is among these respondents — most of whom also say they are not familiar with the Jewish religion or Jewish history — that you will find the people who are most receptive to antisemitic messages in the future.

Jews on the other side of the Atlantic are likely wondering how to both close this gap and blunt antisemitism's appeal, while many Jews in the United States and Israel will conclude — much to the irritation of their European cousins — that Europe is a lost cause, and the sooner the Jews leave, the better.

Far more productive than handing out unsolicited advice is to concentrate on the nature of the problem. European antisemitism today is a social phenomenon from which Jews are in principle protected by the law. A significant minority of Europeans correctly understand that antisemitism is a social poison, but the younger and less educated they become, the less likely they are to grasp that. Most important of all, a majority of Europeans — even when confronted with daily headlines about antisemitism in the British Labour Party, in French inner cities, or in Italian soccer stadiums and so forth — remain un-

convinced that the problem is as bad as the continent's Jews believe it to be. That has to be the starting point for any response. Ben Cohen writes a weekly column for JNS on Jewish affairs and Middle Eastern politics. His writings have been published in Commentary, The New York Post, Haaretz, The Wall Street Journal, and many other publications.

The opinions presented by Algemeiner bloggers are solely theirs and do not represent those of The Algemeiner, its publishers or editors.

Irish bill advances to criminalize commercial activity with Israel

If enacted, it would make Ireland the first European Union nation to criminalize doing business beyond the pre-1967 lines, including eastern Jerusalem and the Golan Heights.

Ireland mulls boycott of Israeli products, while Irish airline seeks flight expansion

As the historic legislation by Ireland is under consideration, Ryanair CEO Michael O'Leary, on a tour of Israel this week, called Israel "one of the most refreshing destinations," saying "we can bring millions more to Israel; we will grow as fast as the authorities allow us to."

Venezuela's Jews describe chaos, uncertain future

Jewish community leader Elias Farache: "We hope and pray there will be peace" • Resident Juan Carlos López says streets are quiet, but tense • Journalist

Gabriel Chocron: "The Jewish community doesn't want to get caught up in the situation."

BY SHIMON YAISH

Juan Guaidó has been sworn in as temporary president of Venezuela—two weeks after Nicolás Maduro, the president elected in a disputed vote last year took the oath of office—and Venezuela is in chaos.

Venezuela is home to some 5,000 Jews. About 20,000 Jewish Venezuelans have left the country in the past decade because of economic conditions and in particular because of how the Jewish community has been treated since 2009.

"Operation Cast Lead" (in the winter of 2008-09) was a turning point for the country's Jews. They faced discrimination from anti-Israel activists, and synagogues were vandalized.

The prejudice peaked when then-President Hugo Chávez—known for his pro-Palestinian stance—demanded that the Israeli ambassador leave over the "Holocaust that Israel was perpetrating in Gaza," as Chávez put it. Since then, Israel has had no diplomatic presence in Venezuela.

"There is a really confusing situation here, two presidents, and the situation of the Jewish community, like that of the other residents, isn't good," Elias Farache, president of the Confederación de Asociaciones Israelitas de Venezuela (CAIV), the umbrella organization for the Venezuelan Jewish community tells Israel Hayom.

Members of the community are biding their time to see what will happen and hoping that the cur-

rent crisis passes.

“There is a really bad economic crisis here. We hope that all sides will resolve their problems peacefully,” says Farache.

“We as a community do not officially support anyone. We hope and pray that there will be peace in the country and no violence. As of now, there are a few thousand Jews in the country, and for Jews, the situation is tolerable. The government tries to respect us and gives us freedom to live as Jews. There are synagogues, schools and all the Jewish services are fine. It disturbs us that there are no diplomatic relations with Israel,” he says.

Juan Carlos López’s children have all left Venezuela for Israel in the past few years, but he still lives in his home in Caracas.

“The general situation in the streets of Venezuela is one of confusion and total chaos,” says López.

“Right now there are two presidents in the country, two supreme courts, two parliaments. With the support of a fake, illegal supreme court, Maduro rules the country, like Chávez before him. There is a very tense quiet in the streets. The people are trying to maintain their routines, but it’s clear that the political mess is affecting everyone.”

Q: How do you maintain your routine?

“People still behave with caution because this regime uses force, both the army, which still supports it, and violent civilian commando groups who are paid for their actions. Thus far, as far as we know, 16 people have been shot to death by supporters of President Maduro.

“I’m involved in the Jewish com-

munity, and it’s clear that this isn’t an easy time for us. The community here has influence in business, in medicine, and is very involved, and as such suffers from anti-Semitism, especially under the past few governments, which have been anti-Zionist. Many Jews have left the country because of the economic collapse of recent years. People get paid, and if they don’t use the money immediately, they lose at least 10 percent of its value in a day,” says López.

“The protests are going in the poorer parts of the city, even though that’s the area that identifies with Maduro,” he observes. He says that the residents of those neighborhoods are clashing with the army and the other security forces, “who for now are on Maduro’s side.”

López says that Maduro has given American diplomats 72 hours to leave the country and that the next few days will be pivotal. The United States has refused to recognize the expulsion of its diplomatic staff because it does not recognize Maduro as the leader of Venezuela. The United States has officially recognized opposition leader Juan Guaidó as head of state.

The people of Venezuela are confused and fearful.

“Most of the people now are clearly behind Guaidó, not Maduro,” says Venezuelan journalist Gabriel Chocron, the executive director of Aurora, a Spanish-language news website based in Israel.

Chocron says that in the last presidential election, held a year-and-a-half ago, Maduro “won by a wide margin because the opposition didn’t run against him.

They knew that everything was corrupt, but about 70 percent of the people didn’t vote. That says a lot about the situation. Two weeks ago he was sworn in, and 13 of the 14 Latin American nations did not recognize Maduro’s new government because they said the election was illegitimate.”

“As far as the Jewish community goes,” says Chocron, “the chief Sephardi rabbi, Yitzhak Cohen, met with Maduro a month-and-a-half ago because the Jewish community wants to keep living in the country as a community whose safety is ensured, and can keep importing kosher products and maintain its Jewish lifestyle. The community keeps pretty much out of politics. Most of the members of the community hold very clear opinions—most of them oppose Maduro—but don’t want to take a chance and get caught up in the situation. Venezuela has very good relations with the Palestinian Authority.”

Germany vows to prevent BDS activity at Berlin Jewish museum

The Israeli government sent the authorities in Berlin a document detailing publicly funded organizations that promote anti-Israel activity, mentioning the Jewish museum as one of them.

By Eldad Beck, Erez Linn and Israel Hayom Staff

German Chancellor Angela Merkel during a joint press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the King David Hotel in Jerusalem on Oct. 4, 2018.

(January 25, 2019 / JNS) The German government vowed this week that it would not let the Jewish Museum Berlin serve as a platform for the BDS movement, Israel Hayom has learned. Federal Government Commissioner for Culture and the Media Monika Grütters, who heads the museum's board, announced the decision in response to a query on the matter after criticism emerged over the anti-Israel content in the museum.

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In the response, Grütters said, "We have no intention of having the museum become a venue for BDS supporters," but she refused to concede that the state-funded museum had been promoting anti-Israel propaganda or collaborating with BDS supporters.

The Jewish Museum Berlin—one of the main tourist attractions in the German capital—is unaffiliated with the local Jewish community, but rather a public institution funded by the German government and the Berlin Municipality.

The Israeli government has recently sent the authorities in Berlin a document detailing the publicly funded organizations that promote anti-Israel activity, mentioning the museum as one of them.

The document was leaked to the German press and led to accusations that Israel was trying to interfere with domestic German affairs.

Just recently, the museum was harshly criticized for using a controversial poster to advertise an exhibition on Jerusalem. The

poster, which ironically highlighted the city's Muslim symbols rather than its Jewish ones, sparked outrage among Germany's Jewish community.

Other advertisements for the exhibition also shockingly downplay the Jewish character of Jerusalem. A model of Al-Aqsa mosque is touted in a promotional brochure as one of the exhibition's main attractions, instead of any Jewish site. Likewise, the Zionist movement and Israel were portrayed as aggressors that wrested control over Jerusalem from the Palestinians. Legislation targets Israel in the Irish parliament

Meanwhile, the Israeli government lambasted Ireland on Thursday after lawmakers in Dublin voted to criminalize the import of products from Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria.

The Prime Minister's Office issued a harsh statement saying the Irish ambassador to Israel would be summoned to the foreign office in order to lodge an official protest.

"Israel is outraged over the legislation targeting Israel in the Irish parliament that rings of hypocrisy and anti-Semitism," the statement read. "Instead of condemning Syria for slaughtering hundreds of thousands of civilians, Turkey for the occupation of northern Cyprus, and terrorist organizations for murdering thousands of Israelis, Ireland attacks Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East. What a disgrace."

Under the provisions of the bill, people who trade with Jewish settlements could be fined up to €250,000 (\$283,000) and be sent to prison for up to five years.

The Irish bill, which passed the upper house several months ago, still has several hurdles to clear before it can be enacted. The Irish right-wing ruling party, Fine Gael, has tried to shelve the bill, but it lacks a majority in parliament to do so.

Ireland's Foreign Minister Simon Coveney warned Thursday that the bill contravenes European Union rules since member states cannot set their own trade policy. If the bill becomes law, Coveney warned, Ireland might be heavily penalized by Brussels.

The bill might also prompt companies that currently trade with Israel to close shop in Ireland, ultimately hurting the Irish economy.

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Jews of color stake their claim to mainstream leadership roles

By Rob Gloster | January 25, 2019

Rabbi Jacqueline Mates-Muchin was in college when someone asked her boyfriend (and now husband) how he would deal with an interfaith marriage. Both partners in the relationship were Jewish, but the questioner made the assumption she was not because she is Asian.

"And that was hurtful," said Mates-Muchin, the senior rabbi at Oakland's Temple Sinai since 2015 and the first Chinese American rabbi. "When people focus on how you look, I think that dis-

counts who I am and my knowledge and my feeling of belonging.”

Jews of color, who make up an ever-increasing slice of the American Jewish population, deal with overt and subtle prejudice on a regular basis.

Rabbi Jacqueline Mates-Muchin They are made to feel like outsiders at High Holiday services. They are bombarded with quizzical stares and questions at synagogues. They are underrepresented in leadership roles at mainstream Jewish institutions, from JCCs and Federations to philanthropic organizations. “Racism has not allowed the Jewish community to understand ourselves as multiracial,” said Ilana Kaufman, who launched the Jews of Color Field Building Initiative last August to address some of the inequities.

Editor’s note: The Askenazic Jews of this world better wake up to the fact that they are not the only Jews in this world.

Court rules VA must pay disability benefits to ‘blue water’ Vietnam veterans

WASHINGTON — A federal court ruled Tuesday that the Department of Veterans Affairs cannot deny disability benefits to thousands of Vietnam veterans who claim exposure to cancer-causing chemical defoliants simply because those vets served in the waters off the country’s coastline, and not inland.

The ruling marks a major victory for so-called “blue water” Navy veterans who have fought the department for years over the denials. VA officials have said the

existing scientific evidence doesn’t justify the presumption of toxic exposure for the group and have strongly opposed legislative efforts to overturn their decision.

But the 9-2 decision by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit overturns past court opinions backing up VA, saying that Congress never intended to exclude servicemembers in the seas around Vietnam when they awarded presumptive benefits for certain illnesses related to Agent Orange exposure.

Lawmakers hope for swift action this year on ‘blue water’ Vietnam veterans benefits

Lawmakers hope for swift action this year on ‘blue water’ Vietnam veterans benefits

Both leaders of the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee are trying to revive the legislative effort that stalled last month.

By: Leo Shane III

Under current department rules, the blue water veterans can receive medical care for their illnesses through VA. But to receive disability benefits — worth up to several thousand dollars a month — they must prove that their ailments are directly connected to toxic exposure while on duty.

That’s not the case for other Vietnam veterans, who are presumed to have been exposed to Agent Orange and other defoliants known to cause serious and rare cancers.

So while a veteran who served on the shoreline could receive disability payouts after contract-

ing Parkinson’s Disease or prostate cancer, another vet who served on a ship a few miles away would have to provide evidence of direct contact with hazardous chemicals.

Advocates have said that, given the time that has passed since the war, obtaining such proof is impossible and unfair. In their ruling, the federal judges agreed.

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“These statutes cast no doubt on our conclusion that, by using the formal term ‘Republic of Vietnam,’ Congress unambiguously referred, consistent with uniform international law, to both its landmass and its 12-nautical-mile territorial sea,” the ruling states.

If VA officials opt not to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court in the next 90 days — or if the court decides not to hear the case — the result means that up to 90,000 blue water veterans could see disability payouts as early as this year.

In a statement, VA spokesman Curt Cashour said the department is reviewing this decision and “will determine an appropriate response.”

Advocates hailed the news as a major step ahead in their effort to win benefits for the aging veterans.

“This is a big win,” said John Wells, retired Navy commander and the executive director of Military-Veterans Advocacy, which

helped file the lawsuit. "We want to work with VA on how to implement this as painlessly as possible, but making sure these veterans get all they deserve."

Bart Stichman, executive director of the National Veterans Legal Services Program, said the decision "unequivocally rights a wrong that is a terrible injustice to all veterans who were exposed to Agent Orange in the waters of Vietnam."

New research could lead to disability benefits for Vietnam veterans with high blood pressure
New research could lead to disability benefits for Vietnam veterans with high blood pressure

Researchers are upgrading the link between Agent Orange exposure and hypertension.

By: Leo Shane III

Legislation that would have awarded presumptive status to the blue water veterans was blocked by a small group of senators at the end of last year, disappointing advocates who saw the legislative momentum as their best chance for a victory in years.

Now, instead of granting the benefits to veterans, lawmakers may be forced to scramble new bills to cover the cost of the court-ordered awards.

Congressional Budget Office officials had estimated that awarding the benefits to the blue water veterans could total about \$1.1 billion over 10 years, but VA officials have insisted the total is closer to \$5.5 billion. Disagreements over whether to use new home loan fees to pay for the costs stalled the previous legislation.

If the court order stands, VA will be forced to cover the costs regardless of whether an offset is agreed upon, a potential drain on the department's annual budget. Several new bills on the issue are already pending before Congress, and the chairmen of both the House and Senate Veterans' Affairs Committees have promised to deal with the topic quickly this year. In a statement, Senate chairman Johnny Isakson, R-Ga., said that he was pleased with the court decision and would work closely with VA on the next steps.

The full decision is available at the appeals court's web site.

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Letters to the Editor

I would like to initiate a "Letters to the Editor" page. This page would include your opinions about articles printed in this newsletter. What you would like to see printed in the monthly newsletter and whatever is on your mind. The only thing I require is good proper English.



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(Continued from Page 2)

active presence of these ghosts in providing input on challenging moments to the living characters is a deeply resonant commentary on the lingering presence of grief.

Because I speak Hebrew (but need a little translation help), I was both grateful for and critical of the subtitles. When one woman says, "I can't wait until my friends in the women's section hear you sing," the translation omits "the women's section," dampening viewers' understanding of how segregated Jewish life is in this closed-off world. And this community invokes God as grand overseer and arbiter of their fates, which you can hear in the language, but only if your Hebrew is good enough to catch it. Chas v'shalom, an expression meaning "God forbid," was weakly subtitled as "of course not" or "not at all."

The drama also contains a lot of comedy, if you know where to look. Akiva is charming in a stammering, funny, artistic way that endears him to the ladies and frustrates his father. Yiddish curses — "may you swallow an umbrella that will open in your gut" — make cameo appearances. Shulem's mother, living in a senior center, falls in love with television, which is off-limits to the haredi community. And one narcoleptic local is named Farshlufen, a riff on the Yiddish for "sleep."

Throughout, the characters question whether a person's priorities should lie with the community or with the self, and grapples with how community members represent their community in more modern spaces. Akiva

plays both sides, wanting to develop his artistic talent but still respectful of the family he has no desire (or ability) to actually leave.

In one scene, Akiva's art dealer refers to Akiva's community as *etzlechem*, translated as "you people." "Who is 'etzlechem'?" Akiva retorts, in a way that recalls Robert de Niro. "I'm the only one here."

Producer Marta Kauffman ("Friends," "Grace & Frankie") is said to be developing a U.S. version of this show, but no update was available at press time.

As for the Israeli show, there is no Season 3 planned. But these two seasons of "Shtisel" remind us that in a crowd of people who may appear to be dressed the same, there are individuals who are invisibly carving their own paths, perhaps to someday intersect with our own.

Editor's note: You can watch this program on Roku. I have seen the entire series and found this program interesting.

Services Offered by the Phoenix Regional Office
VA's Phoenix Regional Office (RO) administers a variety of services, including Compensation, Education, Insurance, Loan Guaranty, Pension, and Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment for Veterans, Service members, their families and survivors in Arizona. We offer the following additional services:

Counseling about eligibility for VA benefits and how to apply
Information about VA health

care and memorial benefits
Outreach to Veterans, including those who are homeless or at risk for homelessness and older, minority, and women Veterans
Public affairs.

Administration of VA's Loan Guaranty program for Arizona, California, Nevada, and New Mexico
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Operating VA's Home Loan Guaranty Program for Veterans in Four States

The Phoenix RO is one of eight VA regional loan centers (RLCs) administering VA's Loan Guaranty program, which helps Veterans obtain mortgage loans from private lenders by guaranteeing a portion of the loan against loss. This program can also prevent Veterans from losing their homes during temporary financial difficulties. We serve Veterans in these four states: Arizona, California, Nevada, and New Mexico. We also assist with delinquent VA loans on a nationwide basis. The Phoenix RO also actively supports VA's mission to provide outstanding service to our newest Veteran population: Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF)/Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF)/Operation New Dawn (OND) Veterans. On the first and third Wednesday of every month, the RO sends two experienced employees to the Phoenix VA Medical Center to brief and assist these Veterans with the claims process. RO employees provide individual claims assistance in a private, safe environment. Attendees are also encouraged to frequent recurring sessions for information about the status of their claims or to ask questions about VA benefits.



JEWISH WAR VETERANS

**of the United States of America
Valley of the Sun — Post 194
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Sun City West, AZ 85375**

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BEGINNING AT 9:00 A.M.**

**FEBRUARY 3, 2019
10:00 A.M.
THE MEETING WILL BE
HELD
IN THE ARIZONA VETERANS
HOME CONFERENCE ROOM
4141 N.S. HERRERA WAY
3RD STREET NORTH OF
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