

# No need to watch replays to remember 9/11

by **Natasha Rosenstock**

As I avoid watching 9/11's 10th anniversary coverage (which should be over by the time you read this column), I'm reminded of my university Hillel commemoration for the one-year anniversary of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's assassination.

I asked a friend of mine from Hillel if he was attending. He explained that he'd been in Israel when Rabin was assassinated. He experienced the event, the people mourning in the streets, and didn't need to put himself in a space to remember. For the rest of us in Champaign, Ill., we needed a video, music and speeches to put ourselves in a space to commemorate the event. It was like the difference between

someone who had attended a funeral and felt the intense mourning that can lead to closure over a loved one's death and someone who was out of the country and couldn't get back until *shiva* was over. They would have to search for closure and a way to process their loss.

Not only do I not need to recreate the pain of Sept. 11 to feel like I'm properly respecting such a day, I am trying to avoid that pain. Therefore, I do not need to watch interviews of children who lost parents on TV all week. I feel plenty of pain

for them without checking out their memorial tattoos or learning what they do or don't remember about their parents.

In fact, I'm happy to be ensconced in the suburbs with my family, rather than single and downtown in my studio apartment, as I was 10 years ago. Hopefully, by the time this column is printed, the 10th anniversary terror threats will turn out to be just that and not any type of reality. Being downtown would only remind me of what I remember most about 9/11.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt called Pearl Harbor "a date that will live in infamy." But has it? I wonder, in 60 years, what children will know about 9/11. To me, the history that is most significant to impart is not the details of what time each plane hit, each building fell, or even the exact number of deaths at the Pentagon, the

World Trade Center and on a field in Pennsylvania. It's the feeling of the day. I can't speak for how people in Kansas felt that day. I know many in Chicago and Los Angeles thought they were next.

I only know how I felt, living and working blocks from the White House and State Department (where a car bomb was falsely reported to have gone off mid-morning). It's the closest many modern Americans will come to war: Unsure if one should stay in or leave their location



*Capital Schmoozing*  
Natasha Rosenstock

and if that would mean the difference between life and death. Even more than those immediate fears, there was something else that was most significant for me; something that, ironically, I was already thinking about this week.

Routines are supposed to be the bane of an exciting existence. They're supposed to be the boring and mind-numbing portion of adulthood. The snap decision to go to a concert, on a road trip, or even to a party, is the hallmark of young adulthood. With a family comes routine and responsibilities. I have come to the conclusion that, certainly with a family, routine can actually open up great peace and possibilities. That's because you can't do anything fun with an overtired or hungry, screaming child! With my daughter starting preschool this week, I've surrendered to this reality.

In this case, I'm consciously creating a routine. Again, this is contrary to the usual thinking that routines are something to be avoided. For children, however, routines create comfort and security. They need to know what is happening next and that they will be taken care of.

On 9/11, no one knew what was happening next — from whether their city would be standing at the end of the day to when our economic and transportation systems would reopen. Less important aspects of that day/week will illustrate to a future generation just how significantly time seemed to stop. Yes, it was significant that all the non-news cable channels ran scrolling memorial messages instead of TV shows that week and network chan-

nels only broadcast news. It's not important that we were unsure when *The Tonight Show* would come back on. It's important to remember and impart that we were unsure of whether humor itself would ever return to the world. Who can laugh in a world where evil men are capable of such acts and where people call their rabbis about choosing between being burned alive and jumping to their deaths?

It turns out, we can. This lesson of resilience is just as important to remember and communicate as are the specifics of the tragedy.

I often don't notice I'm in a routine until it's ending, like moving to a new apartment, job or town. Indeed, I never thought that expecting the existence of the world the next day was "routine" until one sunny day became dark with the ashes of people, buildings and faith in humanity.

Yes, this all reminds me of the Holocaust. As much as it pains me to hear about Holocaust survivors' experiences, I know that the world — and I — need to hear it. It will be just as important for future generations to hear about the experiences of 9/11 survivors. Right now, however, I'm not a future generation. I was there and I remember all too much without any assistance.

On Sept. 11, 2011, I'll have planned to put myself in "simcha space," celebrating the birth of my fellow columnist's new baby. May my readers and I share only simchas!

Natasha Rosenstock is a writer living in Potomac. Visit her at [www.natasharosenstock.com](http://www.natasharosenstock.com).

## LETTERS

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The idea of creating a U.N. protectorate for Jerusalem and Bethlehem has long been forgotten. But it lives on in the State Department's inconsistent treatment of West Jerusalem, seat of the government of Israel.

**RICHARD SCHIFTER**  
Chair, board of directors, American Jewish International Relations Institute

## Stupefied

While I agree that climate change is a serious concern as we contemplate our future, I was stupefied to read that a clergy member classified this phenomenon as "the great moral issue of our day" ("Crude arrests," *WJW*, Sept. 1).

The world is faced with so many "moral issues" that actively cause suffering every day, (war, poverty, abuse, cruelty, indifference to suffering, decline of values, etc.) that it is astounding that a rabbi could place climate change at the top of the list.

When our spiritual leaders prioritize concern for climate above all else, that is

a sign, unfortunately, that our future may truly be in peril.

**BRIAN GONDOS**  
Washington

## More stories on Yiddishkeit

Yes, small can be beautiful. Do I notice a trend to more openness to the multifaceted Orthodox community, or is it a sensitivity to the depressing *shanda* of the Youlus affair? In any event, I thoroughly enjoyed Richard Greenberg's delightful story about Rabbi Hirsh Chinn and the spirited chasidic style *shtiebel* he founded in Kemp Mill ("A house that's more than a home," *WJW*, Sept. 1).

Let's have many other perceptive stories about living examples of *yiddishkeit*. Rabbi Chinn's basement *shul* may seem to play just a minor role in the larger scheme of things, but who knows the ultimate outcome of such small ventures and the stories they inspire, especially when they may tap into the deeper longings of the Jewish soul.

Yes, small can be beautiful — and evidently, immensely fulfilling.

**JEROME SNYDER**  
Silver Spring

## Nonstarter

In his letter, "Nothing has changed" (*WJW*, Sept. 10), Melvin Farber asks why Israel should take risks to bring peace and lists many reasons why it should not. I thoroughly agree with him. Israel is well-justified in taking all steps to maintain and increase its security such as building the separation wall, securing checkpoints and maintaining the blockade against Hamas-controlled Gaza.

But how would a suspension of building settlements involve any risk whatsoever? In fact, more settlements require more Israeli soldiers to risk their lives defending them. The only conceivable reason for more settlements is to further the dream of a "Greater Israel" stretching to the Jordan River. This is as much a nonstarter for peace as is the Arab dream of a Palestine extending to the Mediterranean Sea.

I have very little hope that such a suspension will lead to anything, but it costs nothing and is worth a shot. At the very least, it would put an end to blaming Israel's settlement building as being the obstacle to peace.

**ABRAHAM FINKEL**  
Silver Spring

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