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## March 2003

The following excerpts from the **Lamp** are available for your review:

[Rabbi's Desk](#)

[Cantor's Notes](#)

[Back to top](#)

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### From the Desk of Rabbi David E. Fass

#### *Just Right*

Poor Goldilocks. Not only did she ignore her parents who, I'm sure, told her to stay out of the houses of strangers, but when she did, nothing went right. Papa Bear's chair was too hard and Mama Bear's chair was too soft. Baby Bear's chair was just right, but when she sat in it, it broke. She tasted Papa Bear's porridge (too hot) and Mama Bear's porridge (too cold), and then had the poor manners not only to taste Baby Bear's porridge (just right) but to eat it all up. And the beds - another catastrophe! Papa's was too hard, Mama's was too soft, and Baby's was so just right that she fell fast asleep, leaving herself in the precarious position of being found out in her transgressions.

What a magnificent, multi-tiered story! Our children and grandchildren love the surface. But we can appreciate the much more profound wisdom beneath. What in our world is just right? Last year the reservoir was too low and we had to conserve water. This year it's too high, there have already been some floods and we are in danger of having more. A few years ago (it seems like a century now) some stock market analysts were warning that stocks were over-valued, that they were priced too high. Now the analysts (and everyone else) are complaining that they are too low. Not long ago in terms of human history, the little knowledge that there was, was limited to the elite. Now there is far too much knowledge to keep up with, and it's available to everyone. Too much or too little. Too high or too low. Too wide or too narrow. What is just right?

In the adult world, NOTHING! I think that's one of the things the Goldilocks story is saying. For this child, the adult world is one of extremes that exclude her. Yet even the baby things that she can use are temporary and soon wear out or break (the chairs), are adequate for a time but are soon used up (the porridge) or put her in danger if she stays with them too long (the beds). Gently, Goldilocks teaches our children that the search for

"just right" is an impossible task.

Sure, we want to keep our kids safe and happy. But we also need to prepare them for a grown-up world in which precious little, if anything, is just right, a world of extremes where wandering into someone else's house, or fanatical ideology, can be fatal.

These lessons need to be taught and learned subtly, gradually. That is how we try and do it in our Religious School: from myth to fact, from story to history, from children's ideals to adult reality. How unfortunate that some of our students leave before we have much of a chance to teach them the second part, the adult part, the part about the world that isn't just right but that we need to deal with all the rest of our adult lives.

It's not too late. Our program goes on through 12th grade. If you're beyond that, our adult education programs and our adult Bar/Bat Mitzvah program can help fill in some of the gaps.

Join us. Just right is a wonderful fairy tale. Reality requires a level of understanding and morality that Judaism has been dealing with for four thousand years. It's far beyond the capacity of little Goldilocks. But it's not beyond ours...

[Back to top](#)

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## Cantor's Notes

Last month, those who came to our Shabbat Shirah event enjoyed the Klezmer Concert after the Service. It was really a special event and I hope that in the future we will be able to enjoy their freilach (joyful) and uplifting music again.

On March 7, as you already probably know, our Temple will take part in Shabbat Across America. Our special service with participation of the Adult Choir will be preceded by a Shabbat dinner and will be followed by a Light Classical Music Concert. You will hear 40-45 minutes of easy listening music for the clarinet and piano. This time our guests will be two Master Program students of the Manhattan School of Music, Boris Shpitalnik (clarinet) and Karina Azatyan (piano). I have no doubt that you will enjoy this concert. Come and bring your friends. Our Friday night Concerts as you know, are absolutely free.

On Sunday, March 9 at 3 P.M., our Adult Choir will participate in the Regional Choral Festival, which will take place this year at Temple Beth El in Spring Valley. It is going to be a wonderful concert with participation of many Choirs from New Jersey and New York Temples. It is always an outstanding event. Come and support your friends and Temple and enjoy the music. By the way, if you still did not join our Adult Choir and would like to, please know that you are always welcome. You just have to love music and be able to carry a tune!

In the future, I am planning on having a young musician concert after one of our Family Services. If your child studies music and plays any musical instrument on a level that he or she can perform publicly, please contact me as soon as possible.

Using this opportunity I want to wish you a happy and joyful Purim. Come to the Temple on March 17 at 7 PM, listen to the Megillah, and don't forget your costume.

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<a href="#">Home</a>	<a href="#">Contacts</a>	<a href="#">Newsletter</a>	<a href="#">Calendar</a>	<a href="#">Rabbi</a>	<a href="#">President</a>	<a href="#">Brotherhood</a>
<a href="#">School</a>	<a href="#">Nursery</a>	<a href="#">Lamp Archives</a>	<a href="#">Simply Simchas</a>	<a href="#">Cantor</a>	<a href="#">Jewish Links</a>	<a href="#">Sisterhood</a>
<a href="#">Youth</a>		<a href="#">Bereavement</a>	<a href="#">Recovery</a>	<a href="#">Sponsors</a>	<a href="#">ChaiSociety</a>	<a href="#">Membership</a>
<a href="#">College</a>	<a href="#">Judaica</a>	<a href="#">Beautification</a>	<a href="#">Tzedakah</a>			

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