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

[Rabbi's Desk](#)

[Cantor's Notes](#)

[Back to top](#)

From the Desk of Rabbi David E. Fass *Article from England*

[I believe the article below, published in a "notoriously left-wing" British newspaper that is not usually supportive of anything that takes place on our side of the Atlantic, is important for us to consider. Since deadlines require me to prepare this column about a month in advance, I pray that by the time you read this parts of our world are not in flames. If they are, the sentiments expressed below become even more important.]

Tony Parsons, DAILY MIRROR, September 11, 2002

ONE year ago, the world witnessed a unique kind of broadcasting ---- the mass murder of thousands, live on television. As a lesson in the pitiless cruelty of the human race, September 11 was up there with Pol Pot's mountain of skulls in Cambodia, or the skeletal bodies stacked like garbage in the Nazi concentration camps. An unspeakable act so cruel, so calculated and so utterly merciless that surely the world could agree on one thing - nobody deserves this fate. Surely there could be consensus: the victims were truly innocent, the perpetrators truly evil. But to the world's eternal shame, 9/11 is increasingly seen as America's comeuppance. Incredibly, anti-Americanism has increased over the last year. There has always been a simmering resentment to the USA in this country - too loud, too rich, too full of themselves and so much happier than Europeans - but it has become an epidemic. And it seems incredible to me. More than that, it turns my stomach.

America is this country's greatest friend and our staunchest ally. We are bonded to the US by culture, language and blood. A little over half a century ago, around half a million Americans died for our freedoms, as well as their own. Have we forgotten so soon? And exactly a year ago, thousands of ordinary men, women and children - not just Americans,

but from dozens of countries - were butchered by a small group of religious fanatics. Are we so quick to betray them?

What touched the heart about those who died in the twin towers and on the planes was that we recognized them. Young fathers and mothers, somebody's son and somebody's daughter, husbands and wives, and children, some unborn. And these people brought it on themselves? And their nation is to blame for their meticulously planned slaughter? These days you don't have to be some dust-encrusted nut job in Kabul or Karachi or Finsbury Park to see America as the Great Satan. The anti- American alliance is made up of self-loathing liberals who blame the Americans for every ill in the Third World, and conservatives suffering from power-envy, bitter that the world's only superpower can do what it likes without having to ask permission.

The truth is that America has behaved with enormous restraint since September 11. Remember, remember. Remember the gut-wrenching tapes of weeping men phoning their wives to say, "I love you," before they were burned alive. Remember those people leaping to their deaths from the top of burning skyscrapers. Remember the hundreds of firemen buried alive.

Remember the smiling face of that beautiful little girl who was on one of the planes with her mum. Remember, remember - and realize that America has never retaliated for 9/11 in anything like the way it could have. So a few al-Qaeda terrorists got locked without a trial in Camp X-ray? Pass the Kleenex...

So some Afghan wedding receptions were shot up after they merrily fired their semi-automatics in a sky full of American planes? A shame, but maybe next time they should stick to confetti.

America could have turned a large chunk of the world into a parking lot. That it didn't is a sign of strength. American voices are already being raised against attacking Iraq - that's what a democracy is for. How many in the Islamic world will have a minute's silence for the slaughtered innocents of 9/11? How many Islamic leaders will have the guts to say that the mass murder of 9/11 was an abomination? When the news of 9/11 broke on the West Bank, those freedom-loving Palestinians were dancing in the street. America watched all of that - and didn't push the button. We should thank the stars that America is the most powerful nation in the world. I still find it incredible that 9/11 did not provoke all-out war. Not a "war on terrorism." A real war.

The fundamentalist dudes are talking about "opening the gates of hell," if America attacks Iraq. Well, America could have opened the gates of hell like you wouldn't believe.

The US is the most militarily powerful nation that ever strode the face of the earth. The campaign in Afghanistan may have been less than perfect and the planned war on Iraq may be misconceived. But don't blame America for not bringing peace and light to these wretched countries. How many democracies are there in the Middle East, or in the Muslim world? You can count them on the fingers of one hand - assuming you haven't had any chopped off for minor shoplifting.

I love America, yet America is hated. I guess that makes me Bush's poodle. But I would rather be a dog in New York City than a Prince in Riyadh. Above all, America is hated because it is what every country wants to be - rich, free, strong, open, optimistic. Not ground down by the past, or religion, or some caste system. America is the best friend this country ever had and we should start remembering that. Or do you really think the USA is the root of all evil? Tell it to the loved ones of the men and women who leaped to their death from the burning towers. Tell it to the nursing mothers whose husbands died on one of the hijacked planes, or were ripped apart in a collapsing skyscraper. And tell it to the hundreds of young widows whose husbands worked for the New York Fire Department.

To our shame, George Bush gets a worse press than Saddam Hussein. Once we were told that Saddam gassed the Kurds, tortured his own people and set up rape-camps in Kuwait. Now we are told he likes Quality Street. Save me the orange center, oh mighty one!

Remember, remember, September 11. One of the greatest atrocities in human history was committed against America. No, do more than remember. Never forget.

[Back to top](#)

Cantor's Notes

Our adult choir has had quite an eventful several last weeks. First, it was a very successful performance at Brotherhood through music concert in RCC and then the Adult Choir performance.

I am writing this article on March 9 just after returning from the wonderful musical event that took place on this beautiful Sunday afternoon at Temple Beth El in Spring Valley. Our Adult Choir for a first time participated in the Sixth Annual New Jersey West Hudson Valley Festival.

What an event it was! Over 120 singers from eight different congregations of Teaneck, Mahwah, Franklin Lakes, Wayne, Upper Nyack, Hillsborough, Spring Valley and of course us having gathered together to enjoy beautiful examples of Jewish music. Every choir presented a program of two or three pieces. At the beginning and end of the concert, all of the combined choirs sang two pieces together. What a friendly and spiritual atmosphere was created! Our choir has received a wonderful response from listeners. All of us really enjoyed listening and learning new music presented by participant choirs. It is my great pleasure to congratulate and thank all our Choir members- Marian and Rabbi David Fass, Elein Feig, Nancy Goldberg, Gary Hochman, Scott Jones, Melinda Koss, Inna and Vlad Maltzev, Carol Pitkin, Lena Schwartz, Eva Simon, Risa Stern, Joyce and Peter Taub, Rita Weingold and Laurie Winston.

May we have many more such a wonderful events like these!

And now I am returning to the old topic. Yes, all eighteen of us really enjoyed singing together. But we can and it should be more of us. I am looking forward and dreaming of time when 25, 30 or may be 35 our members will be able to represent our Temple at such an events. More of us will be singing more interesting and sophisticated music. Why not become a member of the choir? Prior knowledge of Hebrew is not a requirement at all. If you do not read music we will have enough rehearsals for you to learn the material, and I always provide tapes with your part. If you read music, but are afraid that it will be too time-consuming, you can arrange to attend just part of rehearsals. Just come!!! Help us to create better music, to sing more professional music. It is never too late to join the choir and you can join us any time during the year. Our congregation is able to and deserves to have a great choir! I hope that I will see you at future rehearsals and concerts!

In the last issue of Lamp, I wrote that I am planning on having a concert by young musicians in June right after the Friday Family service. I have received several responses, but in order to go on with this program I need more participants. So, again, 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.

My wife Lena and Ziv join me in wishing you a happy and hopefully peaceful Pesach!

Cantor Sergei Schwartz

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