

# THE UNITED JEWISH CONGREGATION OF HONG KONG SHABBAT SHALOM

28 - 29 August, 2009

9 Elul 5769

Parashat Ki Teitzei  
(Deuteronomy 21:10–25:19)

Rabbi Stan Zamek  
Cantorial Soloist Shani Ben Or

## From the Rabbi's desk

At the end of every session at Henry S. Jacobs Camp, the URJ Camp my daughter attended in Utica, Mississippi, the songleader does a “top ten” countdown. Here is a selection of an extremely irritating song that consistently makes the list:

*Wherever you go there's always someone Jewish  
You're never alone when you say you're a Jew  
So when you're not home  
And you're somewhere kind of 'newish'  
The odds are—don't look far--'cause they're Jewish, too.*

It is even worse with the music, trust me.

Whatever the song lacks in artistry, it does convey an undeniable truth. We Jews do get around. Jacobs Camp had kids from Dothan, Alabama, Opelousas, Louisiana, and Pine Bluff, Arkansas. This summer I bought a felafel from Elad, an Israeli who runs a middle eastern diner out of an old trailer in El Prado, New Mexico. Wherever you go. . . Oh no, now its in my head again!

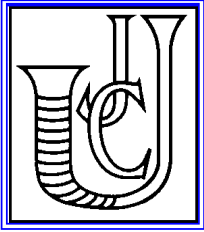
Actually, I have been involuntarily humming this camp song since I read a fascinating anecdote in Douglas Preston's book, Cities of Gold. The book is Preston's account of his horseback trek retracing Coronado's route through the American Southwest. Given its importance in the sad story of the Spanish conquest of the Americas, Acoma Pueblo was an important stop on Preston's journey and he provides a good survey of its history. I was familiar with most of this material from other sources. What I did not know is that the Acoma once had a Jewish chief. Preston provides the outline of the story, but this was a man I had to learn more about.

Solomon Bibo was a German Jew who came west on the Santa Fe trail to join his brothers in the Indian trade in the New Mexico Territory. The Bibos had a reputation among the tribes they dealt with for honesty and fairness, rare qualities among trading post operators in those days. Solomon Bibo's respect for the people he did business with was reflected in his willingness to learn their languages. He spoke Navajo, Zuni, and two dialects of Keresan, the language of the Acoma.

Acoma is a place that tests the limits of the “wherever you go” principle. Even by today's standards it is in a remote part of Western New Mexico. Bibo established the first trading post at the village in 1885. That same year he married an Acoma woman, Juana Valle, thereby becoming a member of the tribe himself.

Shortly after marrying Juana, Solomon Bibo was elected governor of Acoma for the first of four (or perhaps six) one year terms. He was not only the sole non-Acoma to ever hold this position, but also the only Jew to ever lead a Native American nation. Bibo's association with Acoma is itself of historical interest, but his record of advocacy for the land rights of the Acoma people, his efforts to bring education to the Pueblo, and his work mediating disputes between the tribe and their Hispano neighbors make his story much more than a footnote in American Jewish history.

..../Page 2



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Page 2

Juana and Solomon Bibo did not live out their days in the Acoma nation. In 1898 the Bibos moved their family to San Francisco. The reasons for the move are not entirely clear. Bibo led the progressive faction at Acoma which fell out of favor after his time in office, so Acoma politics were probably a factor. Historians also believe that he wanted a more Jewish environment for his children. This seems likely as Bibo was described as an observant Jew and family tradition holds that Juana converted to Judaism. Most telling is the fact that the Bibos joined a shul. They were life-long members of San Francisco's Temple Emanu-El.

Both Juana and Solomon are buried at Home of Peace in Colma, California, Temple Emanu-El's cemetery. This bit of information blew me away. Home of Peace shares space with Hills of Eternity, the cemetery of Sherith Israel where I served as Associate Rabbi. I have been there many times. I thought the cemetery's only claim to fame was the fact that Wyatt Earp is buried there (his wife was Jewish). I had no idea that Don Solomono, Governor of Acoma is buried there as well.

The next CCAR Convention is in San Francisco. If I attend I think a field trip to Hills of Eternity/Home of Peace is in order. I would like to pay my respects to the remarkable lives of Solomon and Juana Bibo. And when I return to New Mexico I really need to make the trip out to the towering mesa-top village that is the center of the Acoma nation. That a Jew once governed the Sky City is one more reason to marvel at the adventurous spirit of our people. It has taken us to so many unlikely and wondrous places. So many that wherever you go. . .

All Blessings

Rabbi Z

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