

A JEWISH FEDERATION
PUBLICATION

Attitudes

A Journal of Jewish Life and Style

FALL/WINTER 2006

**Judaism's Ethical Obligations ...
Repairing The World**

**The Philippines
Through A Jewish Lens**

A Son Comes Out

**Growth Seen
By Local
Orthodox
Community**

OHANIAN

A stylized illustration on a blue background with white stars. In the center is a large, abstract green and white shape representing the Earth. Three black silhouetted figures are shown repairing it. One figure on the left is painting a blue arc. A central figure stands on a ladder, using a hammer. Another figure on the right stands on a taller ladder, also painting a blue arc. At the bottom, there are two paint cans, one green and one blue, and a small black object resembling a camera or a tool.



On the cover:
Illustration by Nancy Ohanian



ATTITUDES™ is published twice a year by Jewish Federation Publications, an agency of The Jewish Federation of Southern New Jersey, 1301 Springdale Rd., Cherry Hill, N.J. 08003.

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Attitudes

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FEATURES

18 New Faces, New Places ... Signs of Local Orthodox Growth

BY DAVID PORTNOE

REPAIRING THE WORLD

41 For The Common Good ... When Jews, Catholics, Muslims Pursue Respect & Understanding

BY HARRIET KESSLER

42 Area Youngsters Want To Help — Everybody

BY HARRIET KESSLER

ESSAY

28 American Judaism At The Crossroads, Part III: The Spark Within

BY RABBI MENDEL MANGEL

DEPARTMENTS

14 Editor's Note

24 Jewish Family Life: A Son Comes Out ... A Loving Family Explores Its Feelings

BY MATT SCHUMAN

35 Profile: Chauffeur To The Stars ... Barbara Pick, The Consummate Volunteer

BY SALLY FRIEDMAN

52 Shopping: Chanukah Gifting

56 Travel: The Philippines: A Plucky Little Country Facing Thorny Challenges

BY STEVEN L. LUBETKIN

65 Cuisine: Potato Latke Purist Bites The Dust

BY JUDY STERN

66 Dining Out: Is It In The K.I.S.S. Or In The Details?

BY GERRI RUDNER

68 Restaurants

72 The Last Word: Of Chanukah & Children

BY RAHEL MUSLEAH



THE PHILIPPINES:

A Plucky Little Country Facing Thorny Challenges

By STEVEN L. LUBETKIN

Filipinos are friendly, resilient, and very resourceful.

This quickly became evident when Typhoon Xangsane, (local name “Milenyo”), the worst typhoon to strike Manila in 11 years, punctuated a visit to this nation of more than 7,000 islands.

The “Signal Three” storm, equivalent to a US Category 4 hurricane, packing winds of 182 km/hr., spread a swath of destruction across the main island of Luzon, scoring a direct hit on metro Manila.

More than 200 people died as a result of the storm—some of them crushed when towering billboard scaffolds ringing the main Edsa Highway, leading from the airport to the city, collapsed onto the road.

The typhoon left vast portions of the country without electric power or water for days. Local newspapers estimated some 10 million Filipinos were still without power when I left.

But the Philippine people maintained their stoic and cheerful good nature about these trials. Affluent families filled hotels whose electric generators still produced air conditioning and lighting.

The less fortunate (and there were many), flocked to the huge western style shopping malls like the Glorietta, near the Hotel InterContinental (the “Intercon,” to locals). Throughout the darkened mall, stores did a brisk business even without working cash registers.

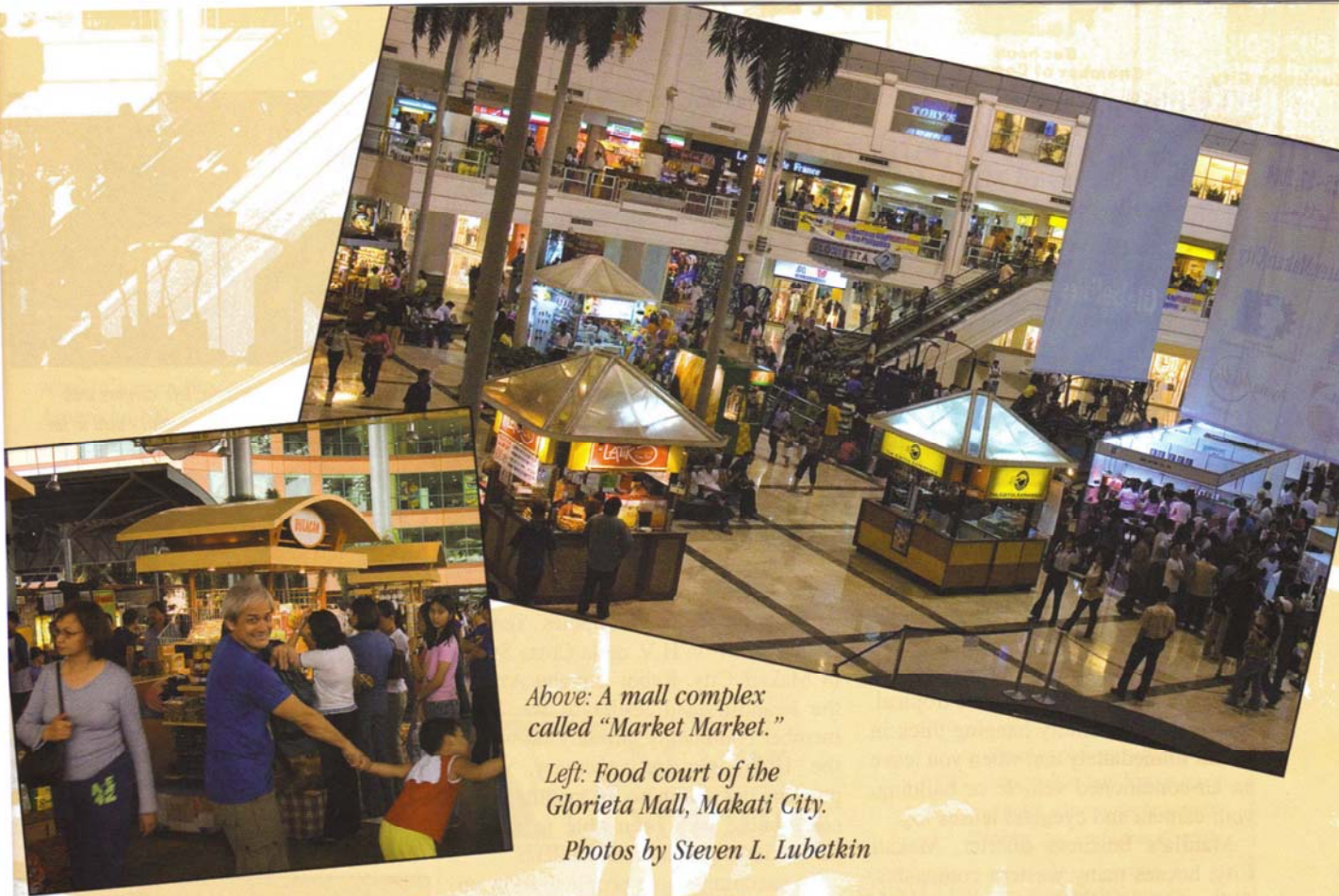
Malls have obligatory Starbucks Coffee and McDonald’s (serving a distinctive local special, “Rice McChicken” sandwiches, consisting of a chicken patty sandwiched between rice cakes). But because of scattered problems with terrorists in the southern islands about 900 miles from Manila, malls and hotels have security guards inspecting patrons and their bags before they are allowed in.

A sign on one mall prohibits dangerous and deadly weapons, and helpfully instructs customers to “check your dangerous and deadly weapons in our security office.”

At hotels, guards with mirrors on long sticks peer under every vehicle before opening the gate. But even the guards conduct their work with a friendly demeanor. Everyone, from hotel workers to business people, says “Hello, sir,” or “Good morning, ma’am,” before they ask a question or begin a conversation.

Filipinos have been figuring out how to get through hard times for a long time.

The country was, for centuries, a



Above: A mall complex called "Market Market."

Left: Food court of the Glorieta Mall, Makati City.

Photos by Steven L. Lubetkin

Spanish colony, finally ceded to the United States when the US won the Spanish-American War. For the next 60 years, it alternated between being a US possession, occupied by the Japanese Empire during World War II, and then liberated by the US.

Filipinos say that the country "spent 200 years in a convent, and then the next 60 years in Hollywood."

But there is a genuine fondness for things American, and for Americans themselves. One Filipino was heard taking frequent calls on a cell phone whose ringtone was "The Star-Spangled Banner."

Filipinos remind visitors that they are "the texting capital of the world." Everywhere, you see Pinoys (what they sometimes call themselves) enthusiastically punching out messages, sometimes on more than one phone at a time.

World War II is never very far away. American forces under Gen. Douglas MacArthur liberated the Philippines from Japan. You can imagine MacArthur's ghost barking orders in
(Continued on next page)

If You Go...

Time Difference: The Philippines is in the GMT +8 time zone, meaning it is exactly 12 hours ahead of Cherry Hill. When it's 8 a.m. here, it's 8 p.m. in Manila, but it's 8 p.m. the day before.

Documents: No visa required for US passport holders for stays of less than 21 days. Valid US passport required, should have an expiration date longer than six months after your contemplated departure date from the Philippines.

Medical: Travelers are generally discouraged from drinking local tap water or eating fresh foods that may have been washed in tap water. Bottled water is freely available on request in hotels and restaurants.

Don't pour bottled water over ice made from tap water, and remind service people in restaurants not to pour canned soft drinks into glasses of local ice.

Consult your physician regarding appropriate immunizations, which will depend on your travel and activity plans.

Flights: NorthWest Airlines (www.nwa.com) offers a daily flight to Manila's Nino Aquino International Airport (NAIA). Connect from Philadelphia to Detroit to take NW 071. It's a Boeing 747-400, and World Business Class is the best way to spend the 18 hour flight.

The flight makes one stop in Nagoya, Japan, where you deplane, go through security metal detectors and carry-ons are x-rayed again. Then, at the gate, very polite security officials wearing white gloves once again conduct a thorough hand inspection of your carry-ons. The return flight is NW 072, and the route is simply the reverse of NW 071.

(continued on page 61)

The Philippines

(Continued from preceding page)

the halls of the storied Manila Hotel, which actually served as the General's headquarters during the war. Partly destroyed in the fighting, the rebuilt and restored suite where MacArthur held court—two bedrooms, a sitting room, library, dining room, and living room—is used for visiting dignitaries.

In the Bonifacio Global City section of Manila stands the 152-acre Manila American Cemetery and Memorial, sort of a Filipino version of Arlington National Cemetery. Here, graves of more than 17,000 military personnel ring a marble memorial to thousands of others missing in the battle to retake Manila. The memorial's colorful mosaic maps depict major Pacific Theater sea battles.

Weather in the Philippines is tropical. You feel the humidity hanging thick in the air immediately and when you leave an air-conditioned vehicle or building, your camera and eyeglass lenses fog.

Manila's business district, Makati City, houses many western companies. Citibank is a major employer, having just moved a 500-person customer service call center here from the US. Makati City is also where most of the western hotels are located, like the Intercon, the Peninsula, the Edsa Shangri-La, and the Dusit Hotel Nikko.



You may not know that Manila also granted safe haven to Jews fleeing Hitler's Europe. Although its story as a way station for Jews was overshadowed by that of Shanghai, many European

Jews came here on their way to safety. Some even stayed.

Frank Ephraim, an American engineer who made it to safety through Manila as a child, chronicled and identified all 1,318 European Jews who lived through this chapter of the Holocaust in his book *Escape to Manila: From Nazi Tyranny to Japanese Terror*. Ephraim, who died in August 2006, was decorated twice by The Philippines, and the World War II era Philippine President, Manuel L. Quezon, was named a "Righteous Gentile," at a 60th anniversary observance in Cincinnati earlier this year.

A community of about 100 expatriate Jews worships at the Jewish Association of the Philippines' Temple Beth Yaacov on H.V. de la Costa Street in Makati City. Rabbi Eliyahu Azaria, the Israeli-trained leader of the 100+ member community, proudly shows off the 1980s vintage sanctuary, while pointing out that in his 18 months in the community, he's been able to start a small kindergarten of six students.

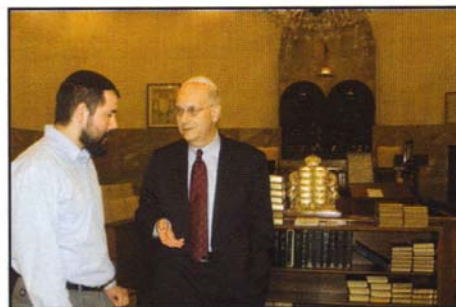
To encourage more people to show up for the minyan, Rabbi Azaria says the synagogue offers a very nice Kiddush, "like a big breakfast."



A good example of the extraordinary Filipino entrepreneurial spirit is the "Jeepney."

After World War II, enterprising Filipinos turned thousands of abandoned military Jeeps into local versions of stretch limos. By extending the flatbeds, adding benches and steel or

(Continued on page 62)



Rabbi Eliyahu Azaria, left, confers with Steve Lubetkin during Lubetkin's visit to the Jewish Association of the Philippines' synagogue, Temple Beth Yaacov.



One of thousands of brightly colored "Jeepneys" works the streets of Manila.



The Manila-American Cemetery and Memorial. The fallen and missing in action from World War II are commemorated here. Damage from Typhoon Milenyo is visible.

Every Traveler's Worst Nightmare

You're 8,000 miles from home and you're having a serious medical emergency. It happened to me as I prepared to leave the Philippines on Saturday, Sept. 30 so I could be back in time for Yom Kippur.

NorthWest Flight 072 leaves at 6:55 a.m., so I arose at 3 a.m. to get ready. The Embassy driver, Edwin Lao, was picking me up in a half hour.

I'll spare you the details, but let's say that's when I found myself in seri-

ous need of medical care. It was a pre-existing condition I'd been meaning to have fixed in the US, but time just ran out. Suddenly it couldn't be put off.



The hotel nurse escorted me by hotel car to Makati Medical Center, a 10-minute ride from the InterContinental Hotel. In the emergency room, a nurse quickly took my vital signs and ushered me into the primary care area of

the emergency room, where a young doctor examined me, treated me and prescribed some medication. He also gave me a referral to the surgical staff for later in the day. My Embassy host, First Secretary and Press Spokesman Matthew Lussenhop, exhausted from dealing with the effects of Typhoon Milenyo on his own family (no power and water for two days, and two small children), nevertheless met me at the

(Continued on next page)

Traveler's Nightmare

(Continued from preceding page)

hospital to assure me that the Makati Medical Center is the hospital of choice for Embassy employees.

When I left the hospital, I settled the emergency room bill at the front desk. Total cost for the treatment: 1,000 Philippine Pesos (about \$20). That wouldn't even buy you an aspirin in an American ER.

I returned to the hotel, but the problem quickly got worse, so it was back to the hospital, where the doctors recommended admitting me for surgery. Arrangements were made, and surgery was scheduled for Saturday afternoon. I was sent for a chest x-ray, and the orderly who took me to radiology apologized.

"There are a lot of people in x-ray, sir," he said. "You're probably going to have to wait a long time."

There were a lot of people, but it wasn't a long wait. In less than 10 minutes I was taken to the x-ray room and 10 minutes later, I was being wheeled back to the ER (my room wasn't ready yet) with the x-rays resting on my legs.

Next they took an EKG, and the cardiologist, Dr. Lyn Rivera, came to review it with me, and check my heart herself. When she was done, she offered her cell phone number if I had any questions, and to make sure I had it, she personally punched it into my international cell phone.

In the Philippines, you get to select the class of hospital room you prefer, ranging from semi-private up to "presidential suite." The "presidential" room is priced around 19,000 pesos (\$380 a day). I chose the small private room, for 1,900 pesos (about \$38 a day).

Soon, it was time, and I was wheeled up to a modern surgical pavilion with wood paneled hallways, where I met Dr. Apolinario C. Esquivel Jr., the surgeon who would perform my procedure, and anesthesiologist Dr. Filologo C. Felix.

Dr. Felix easily and cheerily agreed to my request for anesthesia that wouldn't put me completely to sleep. I had a regional block and sedation. I knew someone was poking around somewhere, but I was way too happy to care. In less than 90 minutes I was in recovery, and within 15 minutes of my arrival

(Continued on next page)

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Traveler's Nightmare

(Continued from preceding page)

there, I was able to call home to report that everything went fine.

I spent the rest of Saturday and all day Sunday in my little private room. It was actually a little better than the hotel, because the typhoon had knocked out the hotel's cable TV connection. At least in the hospital, the cable TV was working. The emergency room and the ward reminded me of some of the older urban hospitals in Philadelphia. The facilities were old and looked dilapidated, but the care was quite good. Every time a medical care giver came to see me, the first thing they did before actually doing anything was to explain what they were about to do. It was refreshing and reassuring.

New friends and embassy hosts stopped by throughout the next day and a half. The recovery was relatively pleasant and uneventful.

I was visited twice by Dr. Raoul DeJesus, the senior medical consultant, sort of a chief of staff, who also consults for the Embassy. Dr. DeJesus trained at the University of Vermont Medical School and then spent 18 years at Columbia University Medical Center before returning to the Philippines.

The surgeon, the surgeon's resident, the cardiologist, and anesthesiologist all visited me on Sunday. They decided that I could be discharged on Monday, Oct. 2, and the Embassy rescheduled my flight for Tuesday.

When you leave a hospital in the Philippines, they load you up with the actual medications they are prescribing for your post-hospital treatment. In the US, you only get prescriptions and have to make a stop at the pharmacy on the way home. Here, they give you a little paper bag with all your meds, clearly labeled along with written instructions for post-op care.

The hospital bill was settled with a credit card (the equivalent of about \$800 for the three days). The doctors and anesthesiologist asked to be paid in cash, and after making arrangements for a wire transfer from the U.S., we got that accomplished too. The surgeon's bill was about \$1,300, the anesthesiologist was \$250, and the cardiologist about the same. *iii*

If You Go

(Continued from page 57)

Hotels: InterContinental Hotel, Makati City, No. 1 Ayala Avenue, Makati City, Manila, Philippines; Hotel Front Desk: +63-2-8159711 or toll-free reservations, +1-888 424-6835, or on the web at <http://www.ichotelsgroup.com>

Edsa Shangri-La Hotel, 1 Garden Way, Ortigas Centre, Mandaluyong City : 1650, Metro Manila, Philippines. Phone: + 63-2-633-8888 or in the US, toll-free +1-866-565-5050. On the web at www.shangri-la.com.

Manila Hotel, One Rizal Park, Roxas Boulevard, Manila. Telephone: +632-527-0011. On the web at www.manila-hotel.com.

Attractions: Manila American Cemetery—Fort Bonifacio, Makati City, is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., closed Dec. 25 and Jan. 1. Office: +632-844-0212.

Malls: Ayala Land owns several of the major malls, including Greenbelt, Glorietta, and Market Market, where traditional stores and open air food stalls compete with predominantly Muslim pearl dealers. Expect to bargain on the price.

Electronics: Broadband Internet is available in hotels for a small daily charge, and it remained available even after Typhoon Milenyo knocked out hotel cable TV for five days. Hotels generally offer 220V and 110V service. Make sure your appliances handle varying voltages, because the outlets that sometimes look like US 110V service are actually 220V. Hotels can provide adapters or converters if you don't pack them.

Religion: The Philippines is predominantly a Roman Catholic country, due to its long colonial history under Spain. Despite news reports about Islamic terrorists, the Muslim population of The Philippines is less than three percent of the population.

The Jewish community is small, about 100 families, mostly in Manila. The Jewish Association of the Philippines and Temple Beth Yaakov Synagogue are in the same building, 110 H.V. de la Costa Street, Salcedo Village, Makati City. The synagogue is Sephardic, so services are Orthodox. Visitors should call in advance: The phone number is +632-815-0265. *iii*

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Bob Stearn, Branch Manager of Weichert Realtors Cherry Hill office, is pleased to recognize Arlene and Bonnie Schwartz of the Schwartz Team, as the office's top sales associates for 2005.

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Million Dollar Sales and Marketed Clubs. In 2005, she qualified for the New Jersey Association of REALTORS (NJAR) Circle of

Excellence at the prestigious gold level and has previously been the recipient of the NJAR Distinguished Sales Club Award. She, and daughter Bonnie, are consistently recognized as the top sales producers in the office and have been honored at the office, regional and company levels for their outstanding performances.

The Schwartz Team can be reached for real estate transactions in Weichert's Cherry Hill Office at (856)

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