



Science-Fiction Fanzine

Vol. XX, No. 4; April, 2008

## Have a Kosher and Happy Pesah -- חג פסח כשר ושמח

### The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

#### סופר המדע הבדיוני ארתור סי. קלארק הלך לעולמו

האגודה אבלה על מותו של אחד מגדולי ספרות המדע הבדיוני, שהלך לעולמו לפני כשבועיים, והוא רק בן 90. בין ספריו הידועים נכללים **2001: אודיסיאה בחלל**, **קץ הילדות מפגש עם ראמה**. עוד נודע קלארק כאדם הראשון שהציע, עוד בשנת 1945, שליחת לווייני תקשורת למסלול גיאוסטנכרוני סביב כדור הארץ. יהי זכרו ברוך.

#### כנס עולמות 2008

כנס עולמות, הנערך בשיתוף עם שגרירות סאנידייל בישראל ועמותת טולקין הישראלית זו השנה הרביעית, יתקיים **בחול המועד פסח, 21-23 באפריל 2008, במרכז בארבור, רחוב ההגנה 135, בתל-אביב**. השנה מוקדש הכנס לנושא "מלחמה ושלום", נושא אשר יידון על שלל היבטיו השונים, בהרצאות, סדנאות, מפגשי קהילה והפקות מקור. במתחם הכנס, שהכניסה אליו בחינם, תמצאו דוכנים למכירת ספרים חדשים ומשומשים, דוכני קומיקס, משחקי תפקידים, כתבי-עת, מוצרי "מרצ'נדייז" ועוד. פרטים נוספים באתר הכנס: <http://www.olamot-con.org>

#### מועדון הקריאה

בלב מועדון הקריאה של אפריל יעמוד הספר זוכה פרס גפן **ילד מלחמה של קארין לואצ'י** (הוצאת אופוס). מועדון הקריאה בתל אביב יתקיים כחלק מאירועי כנס עולמות 2008, ביום ד', 23.4, בשעה 20:00, באולם 3 שבמרכז הקהילתי בארבור. פרטים נוספים לגבי מפגשי מועדון הקריאה העוסקים בספר זה יתפרסמו באתר האגודה. ספר החודש של המועדון בחודש מאי יהיה **אם החיטה של מיקי בן כנען**. פרטים יופיעו באתר האגודה לקראת סוף אפריל. בנוסף, תתקיים בכנס עולמות סדנה למנחי מועדון קריאה, שמטרתה לעודד קיום מועדוני קריאה בכל רחבי הארץ. הסדנה פתוחה לקהל ובמהלכה יודגם מודל להנחייה פשוטה וקלה של מועדון קריאה.

#### בדין 2008

"בדין 2008", כנס הספרות הספקולטיבית של האגודה יתקיים השנה כחלק מאירועי שבוע הספר העברי, ביום **חמישי, 29 במאי 2008 בקמפוס גבעת רם** של האוניברסיטה העברית בירושלים. נושא הכנס: מין ומיניות במדע הבדיוני ובפנטסיה. הכנס מתקיים בשיתוף פעולה עם התא לתרבות אלטרנטיבית באוניברסיטה העברית, ובחסות הוצאת גרף וכתב העת חלומות באספמיה. פרטים נוספים יופיעו בקרוב באתר הכנס: <http://bidyon.sf-f.org.il>.

### חוג מדע בדיוני ברחובות – SFIR - Rehovot Science Fiction Club

*The witches* -27.4.08

כל פעילויות התא הרחובותי מתקיימות בימי א' בשעה 20:00 בפקולטה לחקלאות ברחובות, חדר 2 (הבניין שליח הבריקה). הכניסה לכל הפעילויות אינה כרוכה בתשלום. לפרטים נוספים, כתבו אל ([Sfir42@yahoo.com](mailto:Sfir42@yahoo.com)).

More Society information is available (in Hebrew) at the Society's site: <http://www.sf-f.org.il>

<b>In Memoriam</b>
<b>Arthur C. Clarke [1917-2008]</b>
<p>Arthur C. Clarke, one of the greats of science fiction literature, died about three weeks ago, and he only 90 years old. Among his best known books are <i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i> (with Stanley Kubrick), <i>Childhood's End</i>, and <i>Rendezvous with Rama</i>. There are more than 70 sf titles to his name, including more than ten short story collections. He was also known as one of the first to suggest, in 1945 (long before there were any artificial satellites), putting up communications satellites in geostationary orbit around the Earth. Today, the geostationary orbit at 36,000 kilometers above the equator is named The Clarke Orbit by the International Astronomical Union.</p>

**40 YEARS OF '2001 – A SPACE ODYSSEY'**

**OR**

**'SUPERMAN' MEETS H.A.L.**

by **Yaakov Macales**

The recent death of Arthur C. Clarke, which almost exactly coincided with the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the release of the epic film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) made in collaboration with legendary movie producer Stanley Kubrick, brought me recently to view this classic film once again, which although controversial at the time of its release, is now considered one of the greatest films of all time. Those who praise it rightly point out the absolutely amazing special effects which don't look dated at all. The spacecraft and its computer controls and displays look as modern as possible, especially taking into consideration that the film came out before any of the Apollo moon missions had flown. The only thing we see that gives away the true age of the film is the 1960's-style hairdos of the women who appear, and corporate logos like those of PAN AM airlines (the space clipper) and Bell Telephone which have passed into history. Technical advisor for the film was Marshall Space Center Frederick Ordway, one of space visionary (and former Captain in the Nazi SS) Wernher von Braun lackeys. The only modernistic space structure we see that is now

considered unworkable is the spinning wheel space station which von Braun described in his legendary early 1950's articles in Collier's Magazine. Although it would create artificial gravity, as is shown in the film, the rotation would cause disorientation of those on board.

On the other hand, critics of the film point out that this is one of a series of films by Kubrick which shows his misanthropic tendencies. These include *Dr. Strangelove* which gives a light-hearted look at nuclear annihilation and *A Clockwork Orange* which delights in violence and sadism. *2001* has very little dialogue (except for what, by the film's standards, is a lengthy discussion of the quality of the sandwiches provided by the institutional food service at Clavius Base), no real character development and few humans visible at all. For example, although they show us Dr Heywood Floyd flying to the Space Station in the PAN AM Space Clipper, we see he is the only passenger aboard. On his subsequent flight to the Moon, we see only one other passenger.

The one part of the film where we do see a lot of characters is in the beginning

segment called "The Dawn of Man", which I have to admit is my favorite. Here we see a large number of ape-like creatures living in an extremely harsh desert environment (which for them is something like the space environment is for our generation). Clarke's mystery black monolith makes its appearance at this point and one ape-clan's contact with it imbues them with a new, higher level of intelligence the other ape-clans are lacking. So how do these super-apes respond? They discover how to use weapons and eat meat. This gives them a new food source and the ability to drive away other ape-clans who are competing for their resources while, at the same time, expressing joy at the feeling of power they have by killing an opponent. I would think that if the film were made today, such non-politically-correct ideas (i.e., mankind's intelligence is manifested in it being carnivorous and war-like) would not be included in the film ... but more about that later.

A minor nit-pick about the scenes at Clavius Base is something I wrote several years ago in *CyberCozen* ... it is not possible to walk normally on the Moon as we do here on Earth due to the low gravity ... it is necessary to hop, even indoors. Since the film was made before the first moon landings, they were not aware of this problem, so I will overlook it.

The most disturbing part of the film is the long segment where the "Discovery I" spacecraft is headed to Jupiter, manned by Dr Frank Poole (played by Gary Lockwood) and Dr Dave Bowman (Keir Dullea), who I think looks a lot like the then unknown Neil Armstrong. Kubrick makes everything in the spacecraft look sterile and inhuman. The containers in which the three other crewmen had been placed in suspended animation before the flight look like coffins. The food we see Poole and Bowman eating looks like different colored paints on an artist's pallet and not very appetizing. The two men talk to each other and the H.A.L.

computer in unemotional monotonous. Poole shows no emotional response whatsoever on seeing his parents' recorded birthday greetings.

The climax of this segment of the film is where the H.A.L. computer, which has advanced, almost human-like artificial intelligence, goes crazy and decides to get rid of the humans on board. A similar story was made at the same time in the original Star Trek (S.T.) television series called "The Ultimate Computer". I find S.T.'s story to be much superior because, in that one, we also see an advanced computer take over a spacecraft and try to eliminate its human crew, but there we find out that this happens because the computer's designer projected his own paranoiac personality into the computer resulting in it becoming a mirror image of himself. In **2001** is it not clear at all why H.A.L. does what he does, other than the fact that he says that there are "strange things" about their mission.

The most controversial part of the film is the long ending-segment that has a lot of 60's-style "psychedelic" colors and bizarre scenes. For many years, I didn't try to extract some deep message from it, but in thinking about the dramatic music used in the film, I finally came to realize what Kubrick's and Clarke's message is ... and it might be titled "Friedrich Nietzsche Makes It To Hollywood". It is well-known that the opening theme of the film, which reappears several times, is taken from Richard Strauss' "Also Sprach Zarathustra", which is based on Nietzsche's famous book of the same name. However, this music was not chosen just for its dramatic effect, but also for the message it is conveying. It is in this book that Nietzsche expounds his famous doctrines of "The Superman", the death of traditional religious morality, "The Eternal Recurrence" and "The Will to Power". In the film, each time the monolith appears and proto-men (the apes) or men come in contact with it, we hear Strauss' theme, and these men reach

a new, higher state of consciousness, although not necessarily more peaceful, as I indicated earlier referring to the Superman-ape rejoicing in killing one of his fellows. Nietzsche's "Superman" is a man who, because of his innate superiority, throws off the bonds of convention and existing morality and limitations to place himself on a higher plane which will then serve as an example for everyone else.

At the end, we have Bowman watching himself dying as an old man reaching out to the monolith, leading to his rebirth. This is symbolic of the "Eternal Recurrence", Nietzsche's idea about how a person ends up reliving his life over and over. Nietzsche came up with this "Endless Recurrence" idea while walking in the woods in Switzerland and seeing a massive, towering rock (!).

Nietzsche had little use for the common man. Nietzsche was one of the first "post-Moderns" in that he attempted to find meaning to life and existence for people who had lost traditional religious

faith and belief in divinely-ordained morality (I presume both Kubrick and Clarke fit into this category) so he replaces these things with "The Superman" and his "Will To Power". It seems that the misanthropy Kubrick and Clarke show us in the film is a manifestation of their adoption of Nietzsche's ideas. This leads to an authoritarianism which we see exemplified in Dr Floyd's words to the people at Clavius Base regarding the discovery of the monolith on the Moon. He says secrecy is mandatory because the population has to be "prepared and conditioned" before receiving news of the discovery. This is language straight out of "Big Brother" and it is important to note that various 20<sup>th</sup> century authoritarians such as the Nazis attempted to adopt some of Nietzsche's ideas (although he would have been appalled since he opposed antisemitism and German nationalism). Thus, I feel this memorable film leaves a very problematic legacy.

### Quote of the Month:

"Segments of DNA that code for working proteins are called genes. Segments that don't, rejoice in a variety of names. Some of them code for proteins that control when a given gene 'switches on', that is, starts to make proteins: these are known as regulatory (or homeotic) genes. Some bits are colloquially called 'junk DNA', a scientific term meaning 'we don't know what these bits are for'. Some literal minded scientists read this as 'they're not for anything', thereby getting the horse of nature neatly aligned with the rear end of the cart of human understanding. Most likely they are a mix of different things: DNA that used to have some function way back in evolution but currently does not (and might possibly be revived if, say, an ancient parasite reappeared), DNA that controls how genes switch their protein manufacturing on and off, DNA that controls those, and so on. Some may actually be genuine junk. And some (so the joke goes) may encode a message like 'It was me, I'm God, I existed all along, ha ha.'"

From *The Science of Discworld* by Terry Pratchett, Ian Stewart and Jack Cohen, p. 210

### Book Review by Aharon Sheer

***Return to Mars*** by Ben Bova (1999), 548 pages.

This is, of course, the sequel to Bova's *Mars* (1992), which I reviewed in the December 2007 *CyberCozen*. Surprisingly, it is even better than *Mars*. For one thing, it has a lot more characters,

well-drawn. The only character shared with *Mars* is half-Navaho geologist Jamie Waterman, who in this book is the director of the expedition (it's the only way they would let him join the

expedition). For another, this Mars expedition is designed to spend a year and a half on Mars, far more than the two months spent on Mars by the first expedition. This expedition will stay all of the spring and summer of a long Martian year. One reason is that this expedition is not a government enterprise intended to bring glory to the politicians who supported it. It is jointly privately financed, intended to make money for its sponsors, and university consortium supported, intended to spend enough time on Mars to do serious research. One of the reasons this book is better (for me) is that a lot less time is spent on Earth, and a lot more time spent exploring Mars.

Jamie is perhaps the only person on the expedition who is not afraid of being on Mars. The terrible cold, the poisonous atmosphere, the threatening sand storms, do not frighten him.

"There's nothing to fear here on Mars, Jamie thought. We've got the proper equipment, we can protect ourselves and live and work here. Mars doesn't want to harm us. As long as we don't do anything foolish. Mars will be good to us.

"The real dangers are those we carry with us: envy, ambition, jealousy, fear and greed and hate. We carry it all with us, locked in our hearts. Even here on Mars, we haven't changed. It's all here with us because we brought it ourselves." [p. 51]

They are able to use the same dome used by the first expedition to live in, left in working condition. Just had to refill it with air. Travel on Mars is mainly in rover vehicles.

"The [two] rovers were exactly the same as those used in the first expedition: each was a trio of cylindrical aluminum

modules, mounted on springy loose-jointed wheels that could crawl over fair-sized rocks without upsetting the vehicle. They represented a considerable financial saving for the expedition: the cost of developing and testing them had already been absorbed by the first expedition, so the second expedition merely had to order two more of them to be built." [p. 65]

While the first expedition had to bring everything with it needed for the two-month stay, the second expedition borrowed ideas from Robert Zubrin. Zubrin is best known for his advocacy of manned Mars exploration. [See his book, *The Case for Mars: The Plan to Settle the Red Planet and Why We Must* (1996). No, I didn't read it. But Bova did.] One key idea is to use the Martian atmosphere to produce oxygen, water, and rocket propellant for the surface stay and return journey.

Another idea, an old one in science fiction stories, is to build a domed-in fruit and vegetable garden. Grow your own food. The expedition can be self-sufficient for as long as it stays.

As in the first novel, the principle, "If anything can go wrong, it will" makes the story exciting. It's a page-turner. What will happen next? How will they solve the next problem that arises? I don't have to tell you that they can solve all the problems that the Martian environment faces them with, but how they do it makes good reading.

And again, as in the first novel, the search for signs of life, past or present, is an important part of the book. In this novel they get even luckier than in the first one. But I leave it to the reader to read *Return to Mars* and find out for him/herself. Recommended.

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