



Science-Fiction Fanzine

Vol. XXII, No. 12; December, 2010

### The Israeli Society for Science Fiction and Fantasy

#### מועדון הקריאה

במרכז דיוני מועדון הקריאה בחודש דצמבר יעמוד הספר "כתבי אייזק אסימוב – כרך 1" מאת אייזק אסימוב. מועדון הקריאה בתל אביב יתקיים ביום חמישי, 23 בדצמבר, בשעה 20:00. המנחה: שי ברנשטיין. לצורך היערכות למספר המשתתפים, מומלץ להירשם מראש באמצעות הדוא"ל, בכתובת [studiober@gmail.com](mailto:studiober@gmail.com), כמו כן רצוי להביא למפגש עותק של הספר. ההשתתפות במועדון הקריאה אינה כרוכה בתשלום, אינה מותנית בהגעה למפגשים נוספים, ופתוחה גם למי שאינם חברי אגודה. בחודש ינואר יוקדש מועדון הקריאה לספר "הדרור" מאת מרי דוריה ראסל, בהוצאת אופוס. פרטים על מפגשי המועדון העוסקים בספר זה יתפרסמו באתר האגודה ובמכתב החודשי. המעוניינים להנחות מועדוני קריאה בכל רחבי הארץ מוזמנים לפנות בדוא"ל למרכזת הפרויקט, ליאת שחר: [liat42@gmail.com](mailto:liat42@gmail.com).

#### החיים על פי כריסטופר נולאן – ערב עיון בין-תחומי בעקבות הסרט "התחלה"

מה קורה בעולם שבו הטכנולוגיה מסוגלת לחדור לתוך המוח האנושי ולפלוש לתוך חלומות? ערב העיון יעסוק במגוון נושאים טכנולוגיים, אתיים ומוסריים, העולים מתוך הסרט "התחלה", סרט פעולה ומדע בדיוני המתקיים בתוך הארכיטקטורה של התודעה, כאשר המוח הוא זירת הפשע. ערב העיון יתקיים ביום חמישי, 30.12.2010, בשעה 19:30 במרכז התרבות בבית אריאלה, שדרות שאול המלך 25, בתל אביב. מחיר הכרטיס – 40 ש"ח. לחברי האגודה, לחיילים ולסטודנטים – 30 ש"ח. פרטים נוספים [באתר האגודה](#).

#### הרצאת החודש בסדרה "בין מדע למדע בדיוני": מסעות בזמן – מדע או מד"ב?

המדריך השלם לנוסע בזמן. על פי תורת היחסות, מסע אל העתיד אפשרי, ומה לגבי מסע אל העבר? כיצד לבנות מכונת זמן? על פרדוקס הסבא ועקרון הסיבתיות והקשר בין מסע בזמן לבין רצון חופשי. המפגש יתקיים ב-26 בדצמבר, 2010, וירצה בו פרופסור יורם קירש, מקבוצת הפיסיקה באוניברסיטה הפתוחה, מחבר הספר "היקום על פי הפיסיקה המודרנית". מפגשי הסדרה יתקיימו בפקולטה לחקלאות ברחובות בימי א', בשעות: 20:00–21:30. לפרטים והרשמה פנו אל מירי צעדי-עדן, בטלפון: 08-9489996/510, בדוא"ל: [miritz@savion.huji.ac.il](mailto:miritz@savion.huji.ac.il), או בפקס: 08-9470171.

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

### Letter to the Editor

**Editor's Note:** Still another response to the October, 2010 issue of *CyberCozen*:  
Aharon,

Yes, the Captain in the "Menagerie" was not Picard, but Christopher Pike.

I also read *CyberCozen*. Every time I get it.

And Ted Henderson is wrong to think of those two portals as holo-type devices. The holosuite is a device that creates holographic images in OUR time and space. Those two portals did not create holographs, and they actually transported people -- not mere images -- into other times and spaces. I see no connection between those two concepts other than that they were both in *Star Trek* episodes.

**Mordechai Housman**

## TV Episode Review by Gary Roth *Star Trek: Enterprise* review: episode “Dead Stop”

I am not a fan of *Star Trek: Enterprise*, which is a television series "predating" the original series, even though it was produced recently; in other words, the episodes take place in time earlier than the Kirk/Spock era – a time when space travel was still relatively new, and the technology not terribly advanced (weaponry, medicine, communication, etc.). The series is set 100 years before the original *Star Trek* series, which focuses on the early years of Starfleet, leading up to the formation of the Federation and the Earth-Romulan Wars. The series is set aboard the Earth ship *Enterprise* NX-01, captained by Jonathan Archer. It ran from 2001 to 2005 (4 seasons). (Editor's Note: As far as I know, it never appeared on Israeli TV. But then, what does?) However, I watched an episode that was quite worth reporting on, so here goes:

The **YouTube** description: Suffering from damage inflicted by a Romulan minefield, and unable to complete repairs on their own, (Capt.) Archer orders a distress call to be sent out. A response leads *Enterprise* to a repair station, which surprisingly had no crew aboard it, and is run by computer. Repairs on the *Enterprise* are carried out quite efficiently and quickly, though the price for all this is much higher than the crew could have guessed.

My review: The nearest known repair station is a decade away, and the long-range antenna is damaged, so a short-range general distress call is issued for minor repairs. A Telerite freighter, barely within communication range, sends co-ordinates of a repair station 3.5 days away at warp 2 speed. T'Pol reports that the Telerites are not the most agreeable people, but can be trusted. (Commander T'Pol (pronounced /ti□pl/) is a Vulcan who

serves as the science officer aboard the *Enterprise*.)

Upon nearing the station, the ship is scanned by a biomolecular probe – both its physical condition as well as its computer database. The docking area and inner station atmosphere are then reconfigured/modified to accompany the *Enterprise* and crew. Once inside the station, the ship's officers are awed by a 3-D diagram showing each part of *Enterprise* that needs fixing, right down to a paint scratch on the outer hull (even a squeak is eventually fixed!). Via some sort of medical laser, crewmember Mr. Reid's injured left leg is repaired with amazing speed and accuracy. The station's computer requests compensation, to be delivered at the conclusion of the work 34.2 hours later, from one of the following: 3 warp coils, 5 deuterium injectors, or 200 liters of warp plasma. The chief engineer suggests the last option, since it is easier to replace than hardware. The crew is warned to keep away from those areas under repair, and the repairs end up exceeding Starfleet specifications.

Meanwhile, crewmembers are invited to take advantage of the station's recreation facility, which contains food replicators (matter-energy converters, containing molecular synthesizers, according to the science officer). They are amazed when their requests for cold water and baked fish are instantly fulfilled.

Back aboard his ship, Archer is bothered by the low price of compensation ("one hell of a bargain") demanded by the computer/station – that something doesn't smell right. T'pol consoles him with the thought that the original builders of the station perhaps simply wanted to help others, and that some cultures are not based on the acquisition of wealth. Nonetheless, his

gut feeling/instinct still bothers him – to be borne out in truth later!

Two officers at the rec center are amazed by the transtator that was replaced in 15 minutes – humans would have taken 1 week to do the job. They wistfully remark that if Starfleet had the same technology, there wouldn't be a need for (much of) a crew. They can't figure out how the station's computer can do billions of calculations every nanosecond, and yet still be much smaller than their own most advanced computer. The two decide to climb into the ceiling, remove an access port, and follow the cooling duct into the area where the computer must be housed. However, as they approach an entranceway close to their goal, an alarm sounds, followed by a sudden closure of the passageway and their immediate transport (via invisible transporter) to the *Enterprise*. The officers are soon thereafter berated by the captain for such irresponsible exploring, but then are quizzically asked if they saw anything interesting over there!

Trouble starts when Ensign Travis Mayweather gets a summons via intercom from the Captain to meet in Bay #1 for help with a repair.

Mayweather notes that that area is off-limits, but the captain replies "not any more". The Ensign calls out to the Captain upon arrival, to be greeted only by a burned out panel with a flashing, noisy short-circuit. A little while later his dead body is carried to sickbay, and the doctor (who is probably the actor of the character "Fraser" from *Cheers*)

invites Archer to come witness the cause of death – an isolytic shock due to an overloaded relay when attempting to tap into the electrical system. The shock caused subcutaneous burns and ventricular fibrillation. But wait a minute – the autopsy revealed a lack of genetically-altered microbes from an inoculation two weeks earlier – they should have thrived on the isolytic shock! Thus, it must be that the station snatched the real body and that it left a facsimile in its place.

Archer takes T'pol and other crewmembers on a rescue mission to the area where the station's computer must be located. The two officers from before recreate their exploration, and this time Archer et al. deactivate the transporter mechanism. Upon entering the large central room, they are stunned to see many prone bodies, at various levels, connected by wires to some sort of device. They quickly disconnect Mayweather and stagger back to the ship with him.

In the meantime, payment time has arrived, but the Starfleeters have booby-trapped the warp plasma with a remote-controlled bomb. After the bomb is triggered, the station attempts to hold the *Enterprise* in one of its repair "claws", but the ship manages to fire a missile and break free. The show ends with the damaged station beginning to fix itself as the good guys make their getaway.

Bottom line – you gotta see it to believe it! Great acting, great plot, great scenery and special effects – definitely grade A!

## Book Review by Aharon Sheer:

*EarthWeb* by Marc Stiegler (1999), 308 pages.

This is a war novel without a war atmosphere. This is Earth battling for survival, in a cheery and friendly presentation. Twenty-five years ago Earth was attacked by a huge spaceship. Earth's space capabilities were better

than they are in 2010, but not good enough. They called the attacking spaceship *Shiva*, after the Hindu god of destruction. The first *Shiva* spaceship wiped out Beijing, and Moscow. It could not be harmed by any weapons

fired at it. No counterattacks on *Shiva*'s exterior had any effect. *Shiva* was stopped by finding a small entrance, going inside and destroying crucial control circuits from within. But all those who went inside died.

Earth succeeded in saving itself from *Shiva*, but at enormous cost. Five years later, *Shiva II* arrived. Again Earth succeeded in stopping it, before only after it had destroyed Montreal, and attacked San Francisco, again by finding a way to get inside and destroy it. But *Shiva II*'s internal defenses were better than *Shiva I*'s had been, and Earth's losses were great. Again all those who volunteered to go inside died. "Over two million men in five thousand ships had died creating the covering fire for these doomed assaults." [p. 21]

Five years later, *Shiva III* appeared. And five years after that *Shiva IV*.

"The battles with *Shiva III* and *IV* had gone well in comparison [with *Shiva II*]. Scary and terrible though they'd been, no more cities had been turned into charnel houses. And with the defeat of every *Shiva*, the percentage of lost souls fell. People were, in a billion different and private ways, getting used to the idea that the world faced sudden and total annihilation once every five years." [p. 21]

The story in this book describes the preparations and the battle against *Shiva V*. As before, Earth knows that failing to stop this *Shiva* will mean terrifying destruction to Earth.

How does Earth defend itself? I don't pretend to understand much of this. There is a short appendix at the end pointing to Internet sites describing the ideas in this book. The principle is world-wide cooperation through the Internet. People make money by betting on ideas. You put an idea on a site and ask people to bid on it. A sort of gambling. If the millions of Internet users think the idea is a good one, they

bid on it, and drive its value up. Smart people all over the world put up ideas for ways to attack *Shiva*. Other people suggest problems and ask for possible solutions. People bid on the chance to design (and maybe later build) the solution to the proposed problem. The best solution gets the contract to build. How the idea will be used against *Shiva* may not be clear to the person providing the solution – that person only has to concentrate on providing that solution. The person who put out the request knows how it might be used.

By making full use of the EarthWeb the intellectual and creative capabilities of billions of people on Earth are put to work trying to help defend Earth against *Shiva*, often without the participant having any idea that the problem they are bidding to solve has anything to do with *Shiva*.

The whole world participates in the battle against *Shiva*. The suicide teams that go inside it broadcast to billions of people everything they see and hear. The invaders to *Shiva* run experiments suggested by viewers and the leaders on Earth of the team inside pay for the information that comes from the experiment. Unexpected ways to attack and understand *Shiva*'s defenses come from these viewers. The ones with proven records of success get the most money and contribute the most to Earth's defense.

Among the future technologies used in this novel are skycars, rotons, capability-based security, idea futures and castpoints.

**From Wikipedia:** "... **idea futures** ... are speculative markets created for the purpose of making predictions. Assets are created whose final cash value is tied to a particular event ... or parameter .... The current market prices can then be interpreted as predictions of the probability of the event or the expected value of the parameter....

People who buy low and sell high are rewarded for improving the market prediction, while those who buy high and sell low are punished for degrading the market prediction.”

Each of these things either contributes to life on Earth in this future, or to the defense of Earth against the successive *Shivas*, by putting the best brains all over Earth to work.

Author Marc Stiegler is a software developer who started out also writing

sf. In 1999 he stopped writing sf and began devoting himself solely to software development, particularly “capability-based security”. In the HP site (2009) it says, “Marc is a researcher in the Exascale Computing Lab, focused on inventing compute fabrics for next-generation IT solutions using a cross-layer, inter-disciplinary approach.” I suppose writing sf was fun while it lasted, but since then I imagine he has been making a lot more money, as well as having fun.

**Commentary** by Miriam Ben-Loulu (September 1997): Many science-fiction writers have based stories on sentient computers. Are computers already sentient? And will a sentient computer necessarily have **human** characteristics? In the following commentary I have suggested some of the possibilities. If your opinion differs or if you have discovered other characteristics give them to Aharon for the next issue!

**Man or Beast**

To some people a computer is just "that damn machine" or "a very versatile invention". But if you have spent any amount of time with a computer you are probably aware that it can develop a certain personality.

My problem is that I haven't been able to decide whether my computer is a man or a beast. Many times it seems almost human. There are pleasant sounds when it is satisfied with what I am doing. It makes rude noises whenever I make a mistake. It also makes mistakes occasionally and is so embarrassed by them that it refuses to continue any action ("To err is human"!!!!). When it feels the work load is too heavy it slows down and takes it easy. It can play chess or Backgammon with me.

On the other hand, it also reminds me of a member of the cat family. Like all cats it

cooperates better with people who like it, yet it still retains an independence of action that can have even experts biting their fingernails. It insists on being treated gently and if it feels you are not behaving properly toward it, it will refuse to have anything to do with you. Definitely feline characteristics! Time is not important to it. When challenged to a game of wits (for example chess) it will play with you like a cat with a mouse allowing you to think that this time you might actually win.

Of course it might be some other type of animal. Some of the noises I have heard it make do not seem to be either human nor feline. Could it be a stubborn mule, a rooting pig, or Tinker Bell? What do the rest of you computer users think?

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