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EDITION 41

CHANUKAH / WINTER 2022

Magazine



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XXXII



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Please contact the organizer before attending any event.

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We the Jews and friends



The story of Chanukah reminds us of early antisemitism, when Jews were forbidden to practice our religion and forced to worship other gods. "In every generation they tried to destroy us," but we miraculously managed to continue with the Jewish faith. Even while some despised us, we humbly did our part to bring light to all the nations.

We have seen a recent increase in hostility against Jews around the world. Yet I believe that not all antisemitism is equal; some of it comes from jealousy, some from ignorance, and other incidents, from pure hate. There are those who wish to be one of us, and others who don't want us to exist.

While it's important to call attention to every form of antisemitism, I believe we run the risk of banalizing the actual concept of antisemitism, which could potentially divert our attention from the real threats. Because if every joke or delusional opinion is antisemitic, how do we recognize what is truly and dangerously evil?

American Jews have grown critical of Israel, but criticizing doesn't mean that Jews do not have the right to live safely in their own country. Jews in Israel and in the Diaspora are more like one big family – we may have differing opinions, we discuss and sometimes argue, but in times of trouble we are together against whoever wants to harm us.

In this edition of Shalom, you'll likewise find articles with varying perspectives, because contributors should always be welcome to express their views as long as they promote peaceful discussion. While American Jews manifest their Jewish values to support human rights together with friends outside the community, I hope we are able to engage them too in the battle against antisemitism, because we should not be fighting this alone. This is a time to check who our real friends are, and bring more people to our side.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our advertisers who made this magazine possible, many of them non-Jews, who wanted to show their support. I'm thankful also to our contributing writers and our readers who give us the incentive to continue to produce an inclusive publication.

We need to embrace the diversity among our own people and be able to engage Reform, Conservative, Orthodox, and immigrant communities, as well as Jews by Choice. Perhaps if we could be more welcoming to all, the greater populace might see us differently.

May you and your loved ones have a happy and healthy Chanukah.

Shirley Nigri Farber - Publisher

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Chanukah 2022

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Chanukah 2022 starts at nightfall on **Sunday, Dec. 18** and ends at nightfall on **Monday, Dec. 26**, beginning on the Hebrew calendar date of 25 Kislev, and lasting for eight days. Chanukah (also spelled Hanukkah) is an 8-day Jewish festival marking the miraculous victory of the Maccabees, Jewish freedom fighters, over the Seleucidian Greek occupiers in the year 139 BCE. After recapturing Jerusalem's Holy Temple, which had been converted into a place of idol worship, they searched for pure oil with which to light the Temple menorah. They found just enough to burn for one day, but miraculously it burned for eight days until more oil could be brought. (source: Chabad.org)

Cohen Florence Levine Estates resident Gaye Bennes once played with the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Today, she enjoys performing for the assisted living residents and staff, who often gather around the piano and sing to Gaye's impromptu medley of songs.



*(l to r): Kristen Donnelly, Executive Director
Cohen Florence Levine Estates; Gaye Bennes;
Jennifer Fazekas, Director of Marketing,
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JEWISH WAR VETERANS DAY TRIBUTE



Col. Irving Yarock JWV Post 32 in Worcester co-sponsored a Veterans Day Tribute with the Jewish Federation of Central Mass. and the Worcester JCC. More than 60 people attended the event on Nov. 13 at the Worcester JCC. The tribute included the Presentation of Colors by Assabet Valley Regional Technical High School Marine Corps, a welcome by Federation Executive Director Steven Schimmel, and remarks from Senator Michael Moore and Worcester City Counselor Moe Bergman.

WWII combat veteran David Sadick (97 years young) offered the Invocation and Benediction. Deputy Vice Commander Bruce Mendelsohn presented Sadick with a JWV Certificate of Appreciation and a copy of the book "The Ritchie Boys."

For more information, visit www.JWV.org.

Photos: Bruce Wahle.



*Senator Mike Moore and
Bruce Mendelsohn*



WWII veteran David Sadick



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Chanukah sameach. May the Festival of Lights be filled with blessings, joy, and prosperity for you and your family!

YACHAD AND REPAIR THE WORLD VOLUNTEER TOGETHER

On Sunday, Oct. 23, Yachad hosted the “Gleaning Project” at Allandale Farm in Brookline as an opportunity for their adults with disabilities and volunteers from Repair the World, Entwine, and Moishe House – all supported by Combined Jewish Philanthropies – to “glean” the edges of the farm, harvest unpicked produce for Rosie’s Place and the Kosher Food Pantry, and learn together about the connection between working the land and Torah.

“This initiative has been my dream for some time as a tangible way for our Yachad members to give back to the larger community” said Stuart Salzberg, Yachad’s Director of Community Programs and Volunteer Engagement.

“Adults with disabilities are the recipients of many kindnesses and supports, but we have heard repeatedly that they wanted to volunteer and help others, and so Yachad created this opportunity as a partnership program to promote inclusion and community service.”

Over 60 volunteers worked side by side at Allandale Farm to gather several thousand pounds of radishes to help feed hundreds of local families. “At Repair, grounded in Jewish values and learning, we connect young Jews with local service partners and with one another to meet the vital needs in their communities and to engage in meaningful service,” noted Jamie Drucker, Boston City Director, Repair the World.

Kelsey Soto, the Community Partnership Manager for Rosie’s Place, explained their needs. “Our food programs at Rosie’s Place provide access to meals and groceries for hundreds of women each day. We rely on the generosity and support of the community to help support these increased needs,” she said.

Following Sukkot, Yachad members and volunteers fulfilled the mitzvah of “*payah*” – an obligation to glean the corners of one’s field that have been left for those in need. This day of action was a unique opportunity for Yachad’s members, who receive so much support from the community, to give back – while forging and deepening partnerships with organizations throughout the Boston area to perform acts of loving kindness.

Marc Baker, CEO of Combined Jewish Philanthropies ardently supports this initiative: “The Gleaning Project is a beautiful and powerful example of how collaboration between dynamic organizations can engage different members of our community in new ways that inspire them, connect them to Jewish life, and make the world a better place,” he said. “CJP is proud to support and partner with all the organizations coming together at Allandale Farm for this meaningful service day.”

Liz Offen, Yachad’s National Director of Strategic partnerships, added, “This day is about mobilizing the Jewish community to take action and be hands-on, while also fulfilling the Jewish value of Tikkun Olam and pursuing justice to help heal our communities.”

Local businesses getting behind this effort include Allendale Farm, Local Motion Bus Company, and JDA Enterprises, who donated gloves to all volunteers.

For more information or to support future Yachad programs, contact Stuart Salzberg at SalzbergS@ou.org, or call 617-504-6091 or 617-209-6799, x3.



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Yachad is dedicated to enhancing the life opportunities of individuals with disabilities, ensuring their participation in the full spectrum of Jewish life. Yachad is a program of the Orthodox Union

SHALOH HOUSE CHABAD OF THE SOUTH AREA



Rabbi Mendel Gurkow of Shaloh House Chabad of the South Area (left) and Rabbi Levi Lezel from Chabad of the South Shore met with Quincy Mayor Thomas Koch on Nov. 8 in his office at Quincy City Hall. They discussed the rich history of the city of Quincy and its relationship with the local Jewish community, the growth of the Chabad community, the growth and development of public Menorah celebrations and displays, and the subject of the “Moment of Silence” in public schools. The mayor was presented with a glass Chanukah Menorah and a biography of Rabbi Menachem Schneerson, the Rebbe of Chabad. The mayor graciously hosted the Rabbis for nearly an hour, and they concluded with plans to meet again for further followup discussions.

THE BOSTON SYNAGOGUE



The Boston Synagogue is pleased to announce the appointment of Rabbi Navah Levine as its new rabbi-in-residence. Levine was ordained at Hebrew College and brings with her more than 10 years of rabbinic and community experience. “Rabbi Levine is a dynamic leader, and we are looking forward to working with her not only on a spiritual basis, but to develop and execute programs focused on meeting the needs of our growing, diverse, multi-generational community, conveniently located in downtown Boston,” said Synagogue Chair Susan Schreiner Weingarten.

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TEMPLE OHABEI SHALOM



On Oct. 28, US Rep. Jake Auchincloss addressed the congregation at Temple Ohabei Shalom, Brookline, during the synagogue's 180th Anniversary Learning Weekend. Founded in 1842, TOS is the oldest synagogue in Massachusetts.

Photos: Susie Davidson

TEMPLE REYIM



On Nov. 6, the American Association of Jewish Holocaust Survivors and Their Descendants held Cafe Europa, an occasional gathering sponsored by the German Consulate General Boston, at Temple Reyim in Newton. Entertainment included a full band, speakers, and Arnie Glick singing Yiddish songs, followed by Jack Porter doing the same.



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A commemoration of Kristallnacht took place on Nov. 10 at the Center Makor in Brookline. In the "Mischlinge Expose," a testimony by a German "half-Jew," Steinway Artist Carolyn Enger presented a multimedia program that combined piano, video and audio testimony from Enger's late father Horace J. Enger and her godmother, Rosemarie Steinfeld, both labeled *Mischling* (half-Jew) by the Nazis.



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Supported by CJP, and with the help of over 170 volunteers, staff and collaborative partners, Jewish Family Service (JFS) of Metrowest (Framingham, MA) coordinated the delivery of over 6,000 Kosher meals for Passover and Rosh Hashanah to families and older adults in need throughout Metrowest, Boston and North and South Shore communities. Visit JFSMW.org to learn more.



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Clients of the New England Soup Factory & Modern Rotisserie, Newton, received with their Rosh Hashanah meal package a copy of Shalom Magazine in their swag bag. Thank you for sharing our magazine.

When owner Marjorie Druker is not cooking, she is feeding the poor with prepared meal donations to the Newton Community Free food pantry.

*New England Soup Factory owner
Marjorie Druker with Shalom
Magazine publisher Shirley Farber*



MA'YAN TIKVAH

The children from Y'ladim BaTeva, the outdoor Jewish learning for kids program from Ma'yan Tikvah, had fun digging potatoes and helping put the garden beds on October 30 at the Framingham Community Farm to sleep for the winter. All the food from the farm is given to A Place to Turn in Natick to help combat food insecurity.



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JEWIS AND THE MIDTERM ELECTIONS

By Susie Davidson

It comes as no surprise that a majority of US Jews voted Democratic this midterm. According to an exit poll of 800 Jewish voters commissioned by J Street, GBAO consulting group reported a 74 percent Democratic and 25 percent Republican swing, with a 3.5 point margin of error. Another Fox/AP poll conducted by NORC with no margin of error sampled 2,107 Jewish voters out of 100,000 overall, and found a 63 percent Democratic and 33 percent Republican preference.

In a Nov. 10 JTA report, Ron Kampeas said the numbers were in line with past Jewish voting, which generally favors Democrats two-to-one. But that 33 percent is nonetheless a shift upward; according to JPost, Jews voted Republican 30 percent in 2020 and 24 percent in 2016.

Could this be related to recent Israeli election analyses that stated that right-leaning Orthodox communities have lots of voting offspring? Future election stats will tell.

Jews also just tend to vote, and may have in even greater number this time given increases in antisemitism and concerns about democracy itself hanging in the balance. (And maybe, for Democratic Jews, due a little bit to having a Jewish *mamela*, as her stepdaughters call her, in the White House.)

In the J Street poll, 97 percent queried said they were concerned about antisemitism. For 55 percent, it was also “the state of democracy.” For 40 percent, it was abortion, for 27 percent, inflation, and for 16 percent, crime.

Although the predictable heated array of comments from opposing factors accompanied the Kampeas article, one senses that perhaps there is indeed much commonality on these issues among Jewish voters of all stripes.

Jews were not only active at voting booths, mail and drop boxes – they were prolific on actual ballots as well. Haimische names, both known and unknown, many yet to be more known, populated numerous local and national races. And in the proud Jewish tradition, sometimes they faced off against one another.

Such was the case in New York’s gubernatorial race, where Republican Lee Zeldin, focusing on the economy and crime, gave Democrat Kathy Hochul a surprisingly tough run for her incumbency. President Biden wound up appearing with Hochul, who won by a 5 percent margin (in the previous gubernatorial race, Andrew Cuomo won by 23 percent).

Republican George Santos, a self-described non-observant Jew who had visited Israel four times, became the first openly gay Representative for Long Island when he defeated Democrat Robert Zimmerman by 33 percent in New York’s 3rd district. (Interestingly, it was the first congressional general election race featuring two openly gay candidates in US history.)

In Pennsylvania’s 7th district, Democratic incumbent Susan Wild faced off against Republican Lisa Scheller. The Republican Jewish Coalition had hoped to flip the seat in this battleground state, especially given the district’s redrawn map, but Wild eked it out by about 5,000 votes, a 2 percent margin of victory.

Other Jewish midterm race standoffs included incumbent Democratic Connecticut Senator Richard Blumenthal (winner by 15 percent) vs. Republican candidate Leora Levy, who championed security between Israel and the US.

In California’s 26th district, Republican Matt Jacobs defeated Democrat Julia Brownley. And in Ohio’s 7th, Republican Max Miller beat Matthew Diemer, becoming the second Jewish Republican Representative ever from Ohio, and the first in 30 years.



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JEW S AND THE MIDTERM ELECTIONS

AIPAC PAC backed 26 Jewish candidates, from both parties.

The Jewish vote counts. Besides Wild, Jewish incumbents who defeated extremist Republican challengers included Rep. Elissa Slotkin in Michigan and Greg Landsman in Ohio, who flipped a long-time Republican seat from red to blue.

Keep an eye on Philadelphia governor-elect and rising Democratic star Josh Shapiro, an observant Conservative Jew who keeps Kosher. On the campaign trail, he embraced his Judaism and denounced Douglas Mastriano, a pro-Trump Christian nationalist and 2020 election denier, over his affiliation with antisemitic supporters.

As a youth, Shapiro, the son of pediatrician Steven Shapiro, launched the global letter-writing program "Children for Avi" to aid Russian Jewish refuseniks. He attended Akiba Hebrew Academy for high school, where he was a senior year basketball captain. There, he met his wife Lori in ninth grade. They reconnected after college and he proposed to her in Jerusalem in 1997; they have four children.

Shapiro was student body president of the University of Rochester, and earned a law degree at Georgetown. In 2017, as Pennsylvania's Attorney General, he issued a sharp statement condemning antisemitism. "Their perpetrators aim to spread fear, but we will



Sen. Richard Blumenthal



George Santos



Josh Shapiro

stand together to ensure they fail," he wrote. "Intimidation and threats against the people of any one faith are an affront to us all."

The recognized takeaway from the midterm elections is that most Americans, by generally rejecting extremists, are looking for something more in the middle. Perhaps American Jews can also now begin to look at the issues and concerns that we share, and rather than filling comments fields with more vitriol and division, try to come together halfway.

Susie Davidson, a longtime contributor to various news outlets, is the copy editor of Shalom Magazine.

Photos: Wikipedia.

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A BANKER'S JOURNEY

A Banker's Journey
How Edmond J. Safra Built a Global Financial Empire
 by Daniel Gross

When I saw an article about a book on Edmond Safra's life, I immediately shared it with my followers on social media. The Safra family is part of the history of the Lebanese Jews and my family in particular. In Beirut, my mother sat in the classroom next to Safra's sister Huguette, and my father with his brother Eli. That is why I was happily surprised when I got a call from author Daniel Gross, who mentioned our common Syrian/Lebanese heritage, and asked if I was interested in reviewing his book "A Banker's Journey." I had already included the Safra family in my lectures "Jews of Brazil" and "Jewish Immigration from Lebanon to Brazil," so the book will surely add interesting material to my research.

I read the book, taking notes and at the same time discussing it with my mother. The first question that came to my mind was regarding Safra assuming leadership of the family business, despite the fact that he wasn't the firstborn. The answer and many other interesting stories came later on in the book.

Here is a conversation between Shirley Farber and Daniel Gross.

SF: You write as if you knew Edmond Safra personally. How do you feel close to someone you have never met?

DG: I never met Edmond Safra personally, and he never really sat for long interviews or wrote a memoir. I couldn't find any tape recordings of him speaking. But over the past five years I feel I have come to know him quite well. Here's why. I had exclusive access to Edmond Safra's personal, family, and corporate archives - tens of thousands of letters, reports, documents, and photographs. And if you spend enough time with them, and look at them closely enough, you can start to hear his voice come through. There was another remarkable set of sources. In the years after his death, hundreds of interviews were conducted with people who knew him at every stage of his life, from elementary school in Beirut to Sao Paulo in the 1950s to New York in the 1960s and the South of France. Rabbis and bankers, politicians and artists, and people who simply crossed his path. And in their many recollections, about his habits, business practices, likes and dislikes, personal ties and interests - his personality emerged as well.



Sen. Robert F. Kennedy at the opening of Edmond Safra's Republic Bank in New York in 1966

SF: I love the fact that you tell Safra's story, and as an historian, you describe the history of the region throughout the years as well, including parts described in the Bible. I assume there will always be people saying that you didn't mention something important. I personally felt that you left out the history of the Jews in Sidon, and the established Jewish community in Brazil before WWII, who included my grandfather who founded Bnei Sidon synagogue in the 20s in Rio. Tell me about the responses you had from other community members.

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DG: Any time you write a book, it is as much an act of omissions as an act of commission. You have to leave 90% of your material out, otherwise the reader will get bogged down. In this case, it was more like 95% that was left out. And, of course, for the Syrian and Lebanese Jewish communities, the story of Edmond Safra is a deeply personal one to them. Given all the interconnections, the relationships, and the commonalities, people can't help but see their own story in his. The response from other community members has been remarkable. We did a launch event at the Sephardic Community Center in Brooklyn, and when I asked for a show of hands for how many people knew Edmond Safra in Beirut - about two dozen shot up. After every event I have done, someone comes to me and relates an anecdote that I had not come across about life in Aleppo or Beirut, corrects a small error in fact - or reassures me that, in fact, I got the story right.

SF: In the book, you mention the superstition with the number 5 (*hamsa*). When I entered the elevator of the Safra Bank in Sao Paulo, as they sponsored my "Shalom Israel" radio program, the first thing I noticed was the lack of the number 13th floor. Among all the curiosities, which one surprised you the most and which stayed in your mind?

DG: The lack of a 13th floor is actually a pretty common one throughout the world. But, again, as I write in the book, I don't see these as curiosities or superstitions. They're just part of life and custom - no different than knocking on wood, or saying *barukh hashem*. It's just that making the sign of the *hamsa*, or quoting from Ecclesiastes, or always wanting rabbis to be present at key events, or believe that the number 18 is propitious, or that you name your children directly after your living parents - all this is part of the rhythm of life for

Syrian Jews, and has been for centuries. Now, apparently, he had his suit pockets specially tailored so he could carry certain things around with him for good luck.

SF: You said that you were free to go through the archives of the Safra Foundation. Is there anything you are still curious about that was not available?

DG: They were really remarkably open - the archives had been digitized and were sent to me on a thumb drive.

SF: How did the process of writing this book make you reflect on your profession, family, or spiritually?

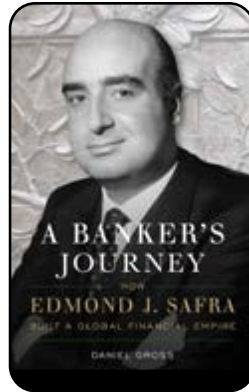
DG: Well, I've said that I have spent a lot of time going around looking for a story - I've reported from more than 25 countries. But sometimes, when you're very lucky, the story finds you right where you are. Of course, I had always valued my Syrian heritage. My grandparents were very important people to me. I thought I knew something about the global Syrian Jewish experience. But learning about Edmond Safra's remarkable life, and the lives of thousands of his fellow Halabis and Beirutis in greater detail, gave me not just a sense of appreciation but a sense of awe - as to what they endured and what they achieved,

and how they have stuck together.

You can see more about the book at: <https://abankersjourney.com>.

Daniel Gross is a bestselling author of eight books. He was educated at Cornell University and holds an MA in American history from Harvard University. His great-grandparents immigrated to the United States from Aleppo and Damascus.

Journalist Shirley Nigri Farber is the editor and publisher of Shalom Magazine. She was born in Brazil to Lebanese Jewish parents.



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ISRAELI ELECTIONS AND AMERICAN JEWS

Rabbi Jonathan Hausman

After holding 5 elections in 3 years, Israel appears to have finally elected a stable governing coalition led by its longest serving Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu (Bibi). 61 seats are required to form a government. Netanyahu has 64 potential seats depending on the success of coalition negotiations.

The existing coalition led by Prime Minister Yair Laid, attempted to govern with a collection of Knesset members from the far left and far left elements of Israeli politics who only agreed on a hatred of Bibi. It would be like America having a government with AOC, Bernie Sanders and their socialist acolytes with Marjorie Taylor Green, Matt Gaetz, and the Freedom Caucus who agreed on nothing other than a belief that there must be a change in how Washington “works.” As Prime Minister Lapid learned, this is a recipe for disaster.

Bibi’s coalition will be far more cohesive ideologically, but will have its share of controversial members. Particularly controversial is the leader of the Religious Zionism Party (RZP), Itamar Ben-Gvir. Because Bibi could not form a government without RZP’s 14 seats, Mr. Gvir is likely to be given a senior minister position. As such, his past statements about Palestinians and his opposition to a “two-state solution” have raised eyebrows not just in Israel, but in the Biden White House as well.

While concerns regarding his past statements and actions pertaining to the Palestinians are well placed, the hysteria regarding his opposition to the two-state solution is not.

Disturbingly, Mr. Gvir has made positive statements about Baruch Goldstein. Goldstein is responsible for the 1994 murder of 29 Palestinian Muslims in Hebron in what became known as the Cave of the Patriarchs massacre. Minister Gvir has also called for the expulsion of Arab citizens of Israel who are not loyal to the Jewish State. It remains to be seen how Gvir will act in office. The obligations of governing should temper his rhetoric. It is incumbent on Prime Mi-

nister Netanyahu to insist these views do not become Israeli policy. To allow that will be a stain on Israel’s reputation and do significant damage within Israel and in the international community, including among some of Israel’s strongest supporters in the United States.

It is still possible other parties could join the new Coalition. One partner is the National Unity Party led by the current Defense Minister, Benny Gantz. His party won 12 seats. If Netanyahu invites Gantz into the government, it could alienate Mr. Gvir. However, if he refused to serve with Mr. Gantz, Bibi would still have 63 seats; enough to form a government. If both Mr. Gantz and Mr. Gvir serve in the government – giving Bibi 77 seats -- it will diminish Mr. Gvir’s influence because he cannot bring down the government by leaving it. Any threat to do so will be a virtual empty gesture.

Where the criticism of Gvir is misplaced is his opposition to a two-state solution. It is perfectly reasonable to ask if a two-state solution is workable. The burden is on those who advocate for such a result to explain how after 75 years of Palestinian rejectionism such an outcome is plausible or even desirable. The stronger and more reality-based position is that it is not. The history as to why that is, is well known. Just to name 4 inflection points:

- In 1948, the Jews said “Yes” to partition which would have created two states, one Jewish and one Arab. The Arabs said “No”, declared war and tried to destroy Israel.
- In 2000, Ehud Barack offered Yasir Arafat a Palestinian State. As President Bill Clinton makes clear, Arafat walked away and launched the Second Intifada.
- In 2005, Prime Minister Ariel Sharon unilaterally withdrew all Israelis from Gaza. In fact, he sent in the Israeli Defense Forces to physically remove Israeli settlers who refused to leave. Instead of trying to build a State of their own and coexist peacefully with Israel, the Palestinians elected Hamas – a terrorist organization calling for the extermination of all Jews in Israel – and promptly attacked Israel



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ISRAELI ELECTIONS AND AMERICAN JEWS

by indiscriminately launching rockets at Israeli civilians. To this day, there are no Jews in Gaza.

• In 2008, President Bush with the support of then Prime Minister Ehud Olmert offered Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas a Palestinian State. As President Bush makes clear, Mr. Abbas rejected the offer and launched the War of Knives. Since his election as President of the PA in 2005, Mr. Abbas has failed to hold new elections notwithstanding his four-year term expired in 2009. Moreover, at no time in those 17 years has Mr. Abbas (his Ph.D. is in Holocaust denial) taken the simple step of recognizing Israel's right to exist as a Jewish State.

Today, it is generally accepted by the international community – including the Arab and Muslim world -- that there is no Palestinian interlocutor with whom the Israelis can negotiate nor is there one on the horizon. The two-state solution is a pipedream. To question its wisdom is not just fair, it is essential. A very strong case can be made that such an outcome will create an existential threat to Israel's security.

For those concerned about what a new "extremist" and "right wing" Netanyahu government will do for the cause of peace, one need look no further than the Abraham Accords. These Accords were concluded and signed under Netanyahu, just as the "extreme right wing" Likud government of Menachem Begin made peace with Egypt in 1979. Perhaps, the right-wing extremists are really the party of peace.

Speaking of existential threats, Iran continues to loom large. Bibi's

election is not being welcomed in Tehran. They want discussions regarding the JCPOA to continue under the radar. Iran knows how unpopular they are in the United States on both sides of the aisle. It

is far easier to take advantage of the Biden Administration if the American public is not paying attention. Netanyahu was a very outspoken critic of the Iran Nuclear Deal during the Obama years. Lapid, who originally opposed the Nuclear Deal, accommodated President Biden by remaining relatively silent about Israel's opposition. Most of the Israeli electorate believes this to be a mistake and view this as appeasement of Iran. Many in Israel hold that anything which helps scuttle the JCPOA makes America, Israel, the Middle East at large, and the world, safer and more secure.

The election of a stable Israeli government is welcome news for the greater portion of Israel's electorate. That is particularly true when one considers Bibi's past successes not just internationally, but domestically as well. Israel's economic and technological miracles are no accident. They are the result of the policies implemented when Netanyahu was Economics Minister. Keep that in mind the next time you hear a Progressive rant about the "right wing extremists" in Israel and the "danger" they pose to peace. It should

make us wonder from whence the real dangers inhere.

Rabbi Jonathan Hausman has served Ahavath Torah Congregation in Stoughton since August 1996.

Photo: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.





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GOD IS DEAD

By Michael Wexler

“Do we hear nothing as yet of the noise of the gravediggers who are burying God? Do we smell nothing as yet of the divine decomposition? Gods, too, decompose. God is dead. God remains dead. And we have killed him.”

First in *The Gay Science* (1882) and more famously in *Thus Spake Zarathustra* (1883), German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche proclaimed to the world that “God is dead.” The origin of this bold assertion is tucked inside a passage called “The Parable of the Madman” in which a scraggly old nomad, complete with lantern and stomping feet, bursts into the town square in a desperate search for the Almighty. When his pleas are met with laughter and his mission foiled,

“...the madman fell silent and looked again at his listener; and they, too, were silent and stared at him in astonishment. At last he threw his lantern on the ground, and it broke into pieces and went out. ‘I have come too early,’ he said then; ‘my time is not yet. This tremendous event is still on its way, still wandering; it has not yet reached the ears of men.’”

Like many a Shakespearean “fool” character, the madman is, in fact, ahead of his time...ahead of his listeners, not lagging behind them. And the “tremendous event” the misfit alludes to, that thing that is “still on its way” and “has not yet reached the ears of men,” is, of course, the breaking news of God’s demise.

Perhaps we can forgive the villagers for their lack of information - this was before the 24-hour news cycle, internet, FOX and CNN, and the death is obviously a figurative one - traveling slower than literal divine death à la the New Testament. The madman is presumably in a state about the decline of God as a figure of true inspiration, a deity we can get behind, replaced instead by vapid air.

“...on the same day the madman forced his way into several churches and there struck up his *requiem aeternam deo*. Led out and called to account, he is said always to have replied nothing but: ‘What after all are these churches now if they are not the tombs and sepulchers of God?’”

In 1882, it may have been radical to declare the death of God, although in today’s day and age we can see that the tombs and sepulchers have only grown and eclipsed the luminescence they once held. The Madman was ahead of his time. He was right. But perhaps he was even further ahead of his time than we might have realized. Perhaps he is telling us not only that God is dead in the figurative sense, but that “God” is dead.

What does this mean? While the true personality of the man “behind blue eyes” may not have changed, the name that he goes by has. The word “God” (ironic, given the ubiquitous character of “the word” in biblical terms) has become depleted, old, cranky, and rife with baggage. If you ask a “rational actor,” a “normal person” what they think of “God,” they will look at you as if you have two heads, as if you are asking them if they believe in Rumpelstiltskin or The Tooth Fairy.

When people think of God these days (not all people, but many), they see the old visage...maybe not the man with the white beard and hair, but something close to that. He is still a guy (pretty much), still living somewhere “up there” and pulling the levers that control “down here,” and still adorned in beautiful white robes, drinking a goblet of red wine. Apparently, he also has something to do with touchdown catches in the NFL. But that’s a story for another time.

Ironically, it is not the actual personality of God that is under assault. If we dig down past the trappings, if we don’t judge a God by its cover, if we are willing to accept him/her/they warts and all, we’ll find a pretty beautiful “person.” But right now the wardrobe - the madras shorts, the bad penny loafers, that terrible hat - are ruining



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the entire proposition. If “God” were on social media, he wouldn’t have many followers.

Determining exactly who God is beyond those trappings is easier said than done. Einstein put it this way:

“In our endeavor to understand reality, we are somewhat like a man trying to understand the mechanism of a closed watch. He sees the face and the moving hands, even hears its ticking, but he has no way to open the case. If he is ingenious, he may form some picture of a mechanism which could be responsible for all of the things he observes, but he may never be quite sure his picture is the only one that could explain his observations. He will never be able to compare his picture with the real mechanism, and he cannot even imagine the possibility or the meaning of such a comparison.”

And so understanding or comprehending the mechanism is impossible, but we do have control over how we frame it over the picture of the mechanism. And unfortunately, like the aforementioned red wine, most wine, most Gods are bought, at least in part, due to their label. We do not have to reinvent God. We have to rebrand God, give him/her/they a makeover. Burger King, McDonald’s, Holiday Inn Express seem to do it all the time, but as in those cases, to really make substantive change we are going to have to change some of the interior as well.


Today is not the day to figure out the “new God,” but in revamping the profile, it might be nice to get rid of the “all-knowing dude who loves you and has your back” in the bio. Or, “I’m the man. I got this!” Or, “Don’t mess up too bad or you won’t get into the afterlife.” These notions are hyperbolic of course, but speak to the old *interior*. The new *interior*, suffice it to say, will have to ask better questions and provide better answers. Maybe instead of omniscience, we think of a more curious God. Instead of omnipotence, we think of a God willing to compromise. Instead of omnipresence, we think of God as someone who takes days off. Okay, maybe not that.

But in all seriousness, step #1 in the process is what the madman *may* have been pointing to. He may have been pointing to the death of an institution, or to the institutions that caused a death, but it’s just as likely/plausible that he was pointing to the death of an iteration of that entity. And so it brings us back to the penultimate question: If what’s in a name is important (we know that), then what should the new name be?

Robbie? Zelda? I had an Aunt Harriet? Or should it be something more complex? A symbol like the dearly departed rock star Prince, or Meta World Peace like the retired basketball player Ron Artest. Or many names to many people. Or something we haven’t thought of yet....

Whatever the name turns out to be, it’s a step in the right direction. “God” is dead, but not for very long.

Michael Wexler is the author of eight books, including “Social Vision: The Lubavitcher Rebbe’s Transformative Paradigm for the World” (Crossroad/Herder & Herder 2019) and the acclaimed “Seems” series (Bloomsbury 2007, 2008, 2009).



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AMERICAN JEWISH PERSPECTIVES ON THE ISRAELI ELECTIONS

By Denise J. Karlin

American Jews have always had a very special place in their hearts for Israel. It wasn't until the 1930s and the horrors of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust began devastating the Jews of Europe that this special place became a part of just about every single American Jew's psyche.

Prior to that time, Israel was a remote and vague, and primarily religious concept, except for a small number of mainly European – and some American – Jews who had already seen the devastating effects of antisemitism through the Dreyfus Affair in late 19th century France, and determined that the Jews needed a homeland of their own.

But the Holocaust and World War II changed all that. Practically all Jews in the United States, with certain small exceptions, saw the need for a Jewish homeland. Israel was first a concept that later became a reality in 1948 and again, practically every Jew in the United States was thrilled when it did.

Israel was this plucky, can-do nation that kept beating back impossibly overwhelming odds from unreasonable neighbors who sought to destroy it – first when attacked in 1948, then again in 1967, and in 1973. Each time, this tiny nation overcame insurmountable opposition and beat back enemies determined to destroy it.

Israel was then run by the seemingly sweet and noble people who reminded you of your bubbe and zayde, and was a social democracy that provided for health care, child care, education, and other important social services. What was not to love?

In the late 1970s, Israel even made peace with one of its threatening neighbors, and things were looking good. But all that began to unravel in the 1980s with the Israeli incursion into Lebanon. Israel, for the first time, had been the aggressor, and the glimmer was starting to fade for some American Jews.

In the 1990s there was hope yet again, when it looked like a true peace could be reached with the Palestinians through the Oslo Accords. But then Yitzchak Rabin was assassinated, and things have never recovered.

Rabin's assassin was an ultra-right-wing zealot who hated all Palestinians, and one could already see the schism in Israeli society growing. While Israel had been shifting rightward after Menachem Begin's Likud victory in 1977, the most recent Israeli election, held on November 1, showed that the far right was in ascendancy.

Former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party received the most seats with 32. He was able to put together a coalition of ultra-right wing, anti-Arab, and ultra-religious parties, to claim 64 of the 61 seats need to lead a government in Israel.

Netanyahu has until approximately December 10 to officially form this government, but the common wisdom is that it is highly likely to happen.

Since Netanyahu's ostensibly secular Likud Party received only 32 seats, that means that the remaining seats come from extreme right-wing parties.

Of greatest concern is the Religious Zionism Party, led by Itamar Ben-Gvir along with Bezalel Smotrich, followers of the extremist Meir Kahane and his Otzma Yehudit Party, which was banned in Israel as a terrorist organization. Kahane was assassinated in 1990 and espoused a philosophy that Israel must be free of all Arabs and that all territories occupied by Israel belonged to Israel.

Ben-Gvir, Smotrich, and their party also espouse these right-wing views and want to strip Israeli Arabs of their rights and exile them from "Greater Israel." They want to annex the occupied territories to form this Greater Israel. They also want to take away rights of LGBTQ people in Israel and to strip the secular courts of their independent powers. The Religious Zionism Party was third-highest vote-getter in

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the recent election, following only Netanyahu's Likud and Yair Lapid's Yesh Atid Party, which is centrist and a bit left-leaning.

Also part of this right-wing coalition are Shas and United Torah Judaism, which support the racist policies outlined above and are also concerned with protecting their Haredi constituency from serving in the IDF and ensuring that women do not have religious access to the Western Wall.

These parties are also interested in amending the Law of Return to allow only those who have Orthodox conversions to make Aliyah, and they also wish to eliminate the Grandparent Clause that allows anyone with one Jewish grandparent to make Aliyah.

So where does this result leave American Jews? Many over the years have stuck by Israel even when they did not agree with all of its policies, because of the special place that Israel held in their heart. Much of the support for Israel was emotional and went to the essence of who they were as Jews. But how far will American Jews go with that support now?

In reaction to the recent elections, when it became obvious that the hard right was going to dominate the Israeli government, most American Jewish organizations supported Israel but took a cautious approach to any policies of a new government.

Organizations on the left, such as J Street, were unequivocally opposed to the right-wing coalition that had been formed and stated such in strong language. Organizations on the right, such as the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) were highly supportive, discussing

how Ben-Gvir had changed his views, and urged the United States to fully support the new government.

However, organizations in the more mainstream middle tried to walk a fine line of support, with reservations.

It will still be some time before we know how large a role people like Ben-Gvir and Smotrich will play in the new Israeli government.

All American Jews who care about Israel as a liberal Western democracy must watch carefully as a new government is actually formed and takes power.

We American Jews are not Israelis, but Israel is a place we care deeply about. Unless we hold dual citizenship, we do not vote in Israeli elections, but do support Israel with our money and with our visits to the country. Each and every American will have to think long and hard about what is best for us as Americans and as Jews, and determine how to carry that out in a way that is meaningful to us.

While the statements of Jewish organizations are interesting, it is ultimately up to each of us to make our own choices, and then put them into action.

Denise J. Karlin is a retired attorney who worked for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for 36 years. She serves on the Board of Trustees and as President of the Sisterhood of Temple Ohabei Shalom in Brookline, Massachusetts. Any views expressed in this article are her own and do not represent the views of any organization with which she is affiliated.



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HOMEMADE CHANUKAH GELT

By Ronit Treatman

Did you know that the Hasmoneans minted the first Jewish coins in history?

Those ancient bronze coins have been reinvented as Chanukah Gelt, chocolate treats we eat during Chanukah. These mass-marketed Chanukah coins are beautifully molded and add a festive touch to the festivities.

This year, you can get creative and have fun making your own gourmet chocolate gelt for your Chanukah celebration.

For the Maccabees, minting their own coins was an expression of self-governance and freedom. In the Middle Ages, a tradition developed in Eastern Europe to give Chanukah gelt (money) to teachers and needy Yeshiva students. The connection was made between the Hebrew root for Chanukah and *Chinuch* (education), which is *Chanech*. *Chanech* means “educate,” or “mold.”

When I was a girl, this tradition was carried over to the types of gifts we received for Chanukah. They were educational gifts such as books, art supplies, and tickets to museum exhibits or concerts.

How were these ancient Maccabee coins transformed into the chocolate coins that are ubiquitous today?

The cacao tree originated in Central America, and for thousands of years, chocolate was consumed as a drink. The Olmecs, Mayans, and Aztecs prepared a bitter, spicy, frothy drink from the cacao beans. Then, when Christopher Columbus journeyed to America, he brought some cacao beans back to the Spanish court.

Many of the Spaniards who settled in America were Sephardic crypto Jews, fleeing the Spanish Inquisition. They were the first to create a sweet chocolate drink, by combining the cacao beans with cane sugar. They opened the first chocolate houses in Europe, where sweet, hot, frothy chocolate drinks were served out of special pots called chocolatières.

Solid chocolate bars were first produced in Switzerland in the

1840s, and in the 1920s, American chocolate producers were inspired to create chocolate coins for Chanukah. These coins were wrapped in gold and silver foil, and sold in little mesh bags.

Currently, the Israeli chocolatiers Elite and Carmit dominate the Chanukah gelt market. Their coins are molded with the image of the menorah that was found on the last coin minted by the Maccabees 2,000 years ago.

A fun, creative, and delicious activity during Chanukah is to make your own artisanal Chanukah coins. Here's how:



Chocolate Chanukah Gelt Recipe

- Chocolate Chips
- Toasted nuts
- Candied orange peels
- Fleur de sel (hand-harvested sea salt)
- Sprinkles or Jimmies
- Dried fruits
- Shredded, toasted coconut
- Mini marshmallows
- Toffee bits
- Crumbled pretzels
- Chopped-up cookies

Melt the chocolate chips in the microwave or over a hot-water bath. Spoon the melted chocolate onto a cookie sheet covered with parchment paper.

Personalize your gelt by adding the topping of your choice.

Allow the chocolate coins to harden at room temperature.

Carefully remove them from the parchment paper, and wrap them with gold or silver foil.

Ronit Treatman is the author of Hands-On Jewish Holidays, available at Amazon.




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WALNUT STREET SYNAGOGUE BRINGS A TASTE OF JEWISH CULTURE FROM ISRAEL TO CHELSEA AND BEYOND

By Tom Barth

The COVID-19 pandemic caused synagogues and other Jewish institutions to reevaluate how to connect with their communities when in-person gatherings were not possible.

The historic Walnut Street Synagogue of Chelsea faced this dilemma and had the unique situation of having a strong diaspora community across the country. While in-person gatherings are now possible, the congregation still sought a means to better connect with the entire community.

The synagogue began to sponsor its own programs online and to find partners who provide the best offerings of Jewish interest. This included an online film series in February and March of 2021, and the synagogue developed new partnerships with the Beverly-based Lappin Foundation and the Irvine, California-based Orange County Jewish Community Scholar Program (CSP).

Members of the congregational family, from Boston to San Diego, have strongly embraced these programs, as was confirmed in a recent congregational survey.

Starting in December, the synagogue is launching a free eight-part online series, "The Taste of Jewish Culture," featuring Jewish food researcher Joel Haber. The series will continue through November, 2023, with programs featured nearly every month.

The first session, entitled "The Original Culinary Movers and Shakers: Jews as Transporters of Food," will be held at 7 p.m. on Dec. 14. This program will explore how most foods today have spread beyond their birthplaces, from oranges to chocolate, wine to sugar. As the most globalized nation in the world, Jews have been intimately involved in their active transmission. Surprising stories will be shared of the wandering Jew's gastronomic impact and the themes that underlie our role in culinary history.

Joel Haber will be presenting this series live from his home in Jerusalem. Haber writes about and lectures on the topic of Jewish food history, with a focus on understanding Jewish culture and history through our foods. His writing appears on his blog (www.tasteofjew.com/), along with articles in such publications as The Nosh, Tablet, Tradition, and The Jewish Journal (Los Angeles). He has lectured extensively on the topic, in both online and in-person venues in multiple countries.

Additionally, Haber has worked as a licensed tour guide in Israel for nearly a decade. In addition to hundreds of tours of a general nature, his most popular single tour

is a culinary tasting and history tour in Jerusalem's famous outdoor market, Shuk Machane Yehuda. Approximately 3,500 individuals have already joined him on that tour, along with countless others who have joined a virtual version via Zoom.

This series is made possible by a grant from the Congregation Ahabat Shalom Religious Fund.

All are welcome, but advance registration is required. For more information and to register, please visit walnutstreetsynagogue.com/the-taste-of-jewish-culture. Contact the synagogue at info@walnutstreetsynagogue.com.



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[Dec 14, 2022](#) The Original Culinary Movers and Shakers: Jews as Transporters of Food

[Jan 18, 2023](#) Chulent and Hamin: The Stew with a Thousand Flavors

[Mar 15, 2023](#) Crackers, Crepes, and Cheese: Jewish Culinary Traditions from Passover to Shavuot

[Apr 19, 2023](#) A Land of Milk and Muffetta: At the Crossroads of Israel's Cuisine and Culture

[Jun 14, 2023](#) A Virtual Taste of Machane Yehuda Market

[Jul 19, 2023](#) They Tried to Kill Us, We Won, Let's Eat! Jewish Food Conquers Antisemitism

[Sep 6, 2023](#) Not Just Apples and Honey: Rosh Hashana Foods and Their Many Meanings

[Nov 15, 2023](#) Oil, Almonds, and... Ears?! The Customary Foods of Chanukkah, Tu B'Shvat and Purim

More Information and Registration at:

walnutstreetsynagogue.com/the-taste-of-jewish-culture

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By Brian Cohen

What is the only natural element that can be divided and shared without diminishing its own energy? Fire, and by extrapolation light. One primary theme of Chanukah, as we all know, is that of light – both literally and metaphorically. Judaism holds that each of us has a sacred soul, a light that is unique and important to the world. But it takes the right conditions for that light to be elucidated to one's self and to others.

As a school leader, it is my responsibility to hold this ideal above all others: that helping children and adults identify and strengthen what most inspires them – their inspirational “flow” – and to create the conditions that allow them to connect with others in a way that helps them to do the same – is the essence of a supportive, nurturing, and compelling community.

Great schools understand that each of us has a flame that burns within us that wants to know and be known. But a flame needs air to strengthen. I see school faculty and staff as providing that air on a daily basis to their students.

Allow me to provide several examples of how some Jewish day schools in the Boston area have striven to create opportunities for self-discovery, productive risk taking, and empathetic action, the keys to having a “bright light.” Many Friday Oneg Shabbat programs center around not only appreciating and celebrating the impending Shabbat, but finding one's place and meaning within it. These include:

- Students in lower grades engaging each week in year-long project-based learning that has them identifying and implementing ways to improve some aspect of their school or community;
- Students in middle and high school engaging individually in “Passion Projects,” which require each student to take a deep learning



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dive into a particular topic or big question, and to end the year with complex exhibitions of their learning;

- Student-led initiatives such as improv, ultimate frisbee, arts and crafts, Talmud study, and gaming that result in clubs that meet during lunch or recess;

- Student leadership and voices being amplified during student government/ leadership meetings, which often lead to specific changes in the school that students feel improve their experience;

- Leisurely strolls into the woods that surround a school or in a field trip, during which students and adults alike can practice their skills of keen observation and comparison;

- Conducting science experiments that give students a richer appreciation of the natural processes and life, and engineering programs that allow students to think, design, and create prototypes so that they can test out new materials and processes to expand their understanding of what they can actually “make” in this world.

In these settings, students are with adults who they know will not just hear them, but listen intently to their hopes, concerns, and frustrations. This allows them to become more adept at self-expression.

Creating the conditions for students and faculty to share openly in the wonders and challenges of life through carefully constructed lessons allows schools to maintain a more positive and engaging atmosphere. And yet these lessons extend far beyond the school walls.

Those reading this article probably don’t get to be in a wonderful school full of inquiring minds on a daily basis, but that doesn’t mean readers can’t also take part in this inward and outward journey of



light-finding. Consider the experiences that multitudes of students have in local schools based on the above examples, and ask yourself how you might better find your inspiration, your light.

The greatest gift you can give another person is assistance in finding their light, and it is important to know that in doing so you not only don’t diminish your own light – you actually make it brighter.

Happy Chanukah, Chanukah Sameach,

Brian Cohen is the Head of School at MetroWest Jewish Day School in Framingham, Massachusetts. Prior to this role Brian was a teacher and instructional reform leader in public urban schools in San Francisco and Boston, and was the Middle School Principal at Maimonides School. He received his Masters degree in School Leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

Photos: MetroWest Jewish Day School.

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THE TOXIC THOUGHT

By Rabbi Manis Friedman

“Have you ever stopped to think – and forgot to start again?”

Have you ever had someone ask you a question and you try to answer but they don't seem to be available to your response? Sometimes, people ask philosophical questions but before you can give the answer you first have to help them think. They were not brought up to think; they were never taught to think.

A healthy mind can consider any subject objectively, unless one has been bribed. Then, those who can see clearly become blind and the righteous become twisted.

(The book of) Tanya says, “The mind governs the heart by nature.” The mind can disagree with its own heart and rule against the heart's desire.

The mind can disagree with its heart! That's a good description of a healthy person. But a toxic person has toxic thinking as the addicted person has addictive thinking.

In toxic thinking, though, the mind can be defied in a number of ways. Let's use this scenario: A woman is told, “The man is old enough to be your father. He has been married four times. He abuses women. He has no job and will take all your money!”

Toxin A – Will vs. thought:

“I don't care. I want to marry him!” In this instance the mind is silenced by the will.

A willful person is governed by his will, and “nothing can stand in the way of will.” Our will is a dictator, a bulldozer. It does not tolerate interference, not even the interference of thoughtful logic.

Toxin B – Opinion vs. thought:

“The man is old enough to be your father, he's been married four times etc.”

“You don't know him. I know him. His previous wives didn't



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THE TOXIC THOUGHT

understand him. I do. I know what I am doing!” The mind is fixed on an idea and can’t think further.

Toxin C – Love vs. thought:

“The man is old enough to be your father, etc.”

“But I love him. I can’t live without him! My heart will break if I can’t marry him!” And tears flow copiously. Emotion overwhelms the mind.

Toxin D – Compassion vs. thought:

“The man is old, etc.”

“I know, but he is so lonely. He has no one. Everyone judges him and rejects him. I’m the only one who can help him!” Here pity cancels logic.

In each case, when challenged, the response will be moral indignation:

“Are you telling me I can’t have what I want?!”

“Are you calling me stupid? Don’t you think I know that?!”

“How can you ignore my love? How can you be so insensitive?!”

“You don’t care about people like I do. You are too judgmental.”

And in each case the thinking has been shackled. The mind must agree with the demands of will and emotion or risk being dismissed altogether.

The mind can also be poisoned or drugged:

“There is nothing wrong with an older man – everyone gets old anyway.”

“He is not abusive – he hits women only when they deserve it.”

“He never hit his third wife – she hit him first.”

“He is not lazy. It’s just impossible to find a job under this corrupt government. We’re moving to Canada.”

Here the mind is not ignored: it is toxic. The mind is thrall to the bias of the heart, or addicted and inseparable from the feelings.

A healthy person should be able to think:

My heart tells me one thing but my mind does not agree.

I like this but should I do it?

I think I should, what do you think?

I want to go but maybe you don’t want to go.

This independence of mind from heart is what parents and teachers should be giving their children and students.

When a child says, “I don’t want to” and the mother says, “But you have to do what you have to do” she is helping the child free his mind from the immature emotions that govern a child’s behavior.

“You don’t feel like playing now but your friend is here and wants to play, so be nice.” The mother is showing the child that he can be bigger than his moods; that he can think beyond his impulse and actually consider another opinion, another’s option.

Without this training the child’s thinking will be addictive and toxic, and as an adult incapable of a relationship with a spouse.

By the way, we are all guilty of some toxic thinking. It’s just a matter of finding it in ourselves and detoxing.

Rabbi Manis Friedman is a philosopher, author and lecturer, is dean of Bais Chana Women’s Institute of Jewish Studies. This article was originally published at www.chabad.org, reproduced with permission.



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It's Not a Competition: A Chanukah and Christmas Perspective

By Rabbi Jessica Lowenthal



November 1 always brings a combination of happiness and frustration for me. As someone born and raised in America, there are many things during the Christmas season that I enjoy. I love how, during the darkest part of the year, we have lights lining the roads, beautiful trees in the town centers, and a feeling of joy that spreads organically.

I don't love the assumption that everyone celebrates Christmas, that it is somehow not a religious holiday, or that Jews are responsible for keeping the secret of Santa Claus. The music, much of it written by Jewish composers, I could take or leave.

I cannot remember ever being told to keep quiet about Santa. There were many Jews in my school and it seemed like everyone was somewhat aware that Santa was pretend, a character on TV or in the mall. My husband, however, remembers very clearly that he had to keep the secret and if he let it slip that Santa wasn't real, he would have done real damage. I cannot even imagine the pressure, especially when kids start asking what Santa will bring you, and having to explain, again, that your family doesn't celebrate Christmas.

For many years, the Jewish community seemed to buy into the idea that in order to make our kids feel better about not getting Christmas, we had to build up Chanukah as an equivalent, or even better holiday. We get eight whole nights of presents, not just one! But the truth is, Chanukah, while an important and meaningful holiday, does not compare with Christmas on many levels, not just around presents.

When kids talk about the holidays, they focus on presents, competing for the best one, inviting friends over to play with the new gaming system, etc. But truthfully, there is something bigger happening that kids don't often have the language to explain. Christmas is the most celebrated holiday of the year for most families. It is when everyone gets together, eats a big meal, creates fun and important memories. The intangibles of Christmas mean just as much to kids as the presents, but they won't realize that until they get a bit older.

Conversely, Chanukah is not a huge gathering. Local families probably get together on one or two nights to eat latkes and celebrate, but very few people are flying across the country to spend the holiday

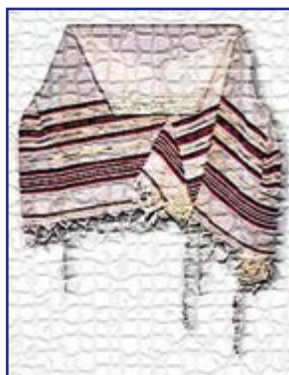
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Congressman Richard Neal

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It's Not a Competition: A Chanukah and Christmas Perspective

together. Kids get eight days of presents, but how many of those are socks and gelt? Ever since the Jewish community began fighting for Chanukah to have an equal standing with Christmas, we have been losing. Because it is a losing battle. If you put these two holidays side by side, Christmas will win every time.

Just because our bigger holidays do not coincide with Christmas does not mean they aren't meaningful, or that Judaism isn't as fun. It's quite the opposite! Our holidays are spread throughout the year, barely going a month without a major celebration! By focusing on Chanukah, we have left behind so many other opportunities to show our children the magic within Judaism. Family dinner for Rosh Hashanah, partying during Sukkot, dressing up for Purim, eating too much food during Passover Seder. All of these holidays bring joy and happiness to our families, if we give ourselves time to really celebrate.

We worry so often about the next generation of Jews, but in our panic we can easily diminish the joyful holidays that are not during December. By trying to compete with Christmas, we forget that our religion is not a competition- it is a lifestyle. It does not happen once a year, it is happening all the time.

This year, allow your children to support their friends' Christmas traditions in earnest, without scaling up Chanukah. And when Tu B'shvat comes around, invite your Christian friends to your Tu B'shvat Seder, exploring the renewal of life through great food! When Purim comes, bring your kids to a family friendly megillah reading, where they can be loud and silly (my synagogue's Purim tradition is to drink a sip of wine or juice when Mordechai's name is called, and eat a mini chocolate chip when Esther is called- it's a challenge!).

If we move our focus from competing with others to finding fulfillment within our own culture, we will all be winners.

Rabbi Jessica Lowenthal was ordained in June 2019 from Hebrew College. She now serves as the Rabbi at Temple Beth Shalom in Melrose.



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The *Bar Mitzvah and Wedding Show* was held on Oct. 30 at The VERVE Hotel in Natick. The event is produced every year by Walter Perlman and gathers a variety of party venues and vendors. Among them this year were Photographer Zvi Jalfin, Residence Inn Boston/Needham, Red Carpet Productions, Snapped Boston, Lorenzo Photo & Video, Marriot Residence Inn Natick (Broadmoor Ballroom), Smile Back Photo Booth and Zaide's. For more information, visit www.weddingandbarmitzvahexpo.com.

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EVERY DAY, WE REDEDICATE



By Tucker Lieberman

In the second century BCE, a Greek-Syrian king, Antiochus IV Epiphanes, tried to impose his culture on the Jews. He destroyed the Second Temple in Jerusalem to make his power known. In the Chanukah story, G-d gave a miracle of light to enable the Jews to physically restore and spiritually rededicate the Temple.

Of course, we might ask: Why did G-d allow any of this to happen in the first place? Did the king have to destroy the Temple just so the Jews could rededicate it? It's a specific example of a general question: Why does G-d allow people to do evil things to each other?

I don't think there is an answer when the question is phrased that way. I think it's more constructive to ask a question like: How are we going to create hope?

The "how-to" question is clearer. We have a chance at answering it. We already know the basics of what hope is, so that's somewhere to start. When we're hopeful, we look at what's happened, assess our current situation, and envision what we'd like to see next. Past, present, future.

That's it, isn't it?

Hope is about time: understanding who we are across time, giving meaning to time.

Hope is an active virtue

Hope doesn't necessarily mean we aren't worried, nor that we assume a good outcome. It means we're ready to try. When we



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are meaningfully hopeful, we make an effort, pay attention to what our emotions tell us, and stay grounded in reality while imagining something new.

We need virtues (*middot*) on this path. Some of them are:

- responsibility (*achrayut*)
- patience (*savlanut*)
- trust (*bitachon*)

These virtues are described by Alan Morinis in “Everyday Holiness: The Jewish Spiritual Path of Mussar.” I wrote about them for Shalom’s Chanukah issue four years ago. Time has passed, yet the observation still feels true to me.

Hope is how we balance ourselves with responsibility, patience, and trust. In this way, we guide ourselves through a more complete experience of time.

It takes time to do our part.

My Chanukah reading this year is a fictional story: “The 12th Commandment” by Daniel Torday, a novelist who grew up in Newton and Needham. It’s about a cult of religiously observant Jews, some of whom carry rifles to scare off outsiders. The cult’s leader has been jailed for a year, accused of murdering his own son. He believes that commandments are really predictions. He promises his followers he’ll work a miracle. It’s a story partly about Jewish armed defense and waiting for a spiritual sign. So, you see, even though the story’s action happens later in winter, it could be read as a Chanukah story.

I was reminded of the deep meaning of hope. We never can quite explain what “evil” is, why people “must” suffer, whether we have

“free will,” and what G-d might have to do with any of this. Still, we can hope. We can stay with each other, be present, listen, tell our stories, and wait for a “miracle” - a rupture when, for a brief moment, everything is beautiful and makes sense.

I was reminded of time. It takes time to wait for someone else’s miracle, or to make our own. Whether we’re passive or active, we need responsibility, patience, and trust. It’s a balance. We know we’re balancing because we sway from side to side and don’t fall over. We find out over the long term if it’s working. The hope-work we do takes lots and lots of time.

Rededication

Chanukah is a holiday about rededication. We learn our past, observe our present, plan a future. We develop some kind of faith, at least in ourselves and each other.

We’ve dedicated before. Every day, we rededicate. The future will come whether we’re ready or not, but still we light a candle to nudge our world into the future we want.

Tucker Lieberman wrote Most Famous Short Film of All Time, a novel about antisemitism, friendship, the film of the JFK assassination, and time. He grew up in Sudbury, studied journalism at Boston University, and has worked in Newton. Visit tuckerlieberman.com.



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BETH EL ONE-OF-A-KIND MENORAH

Chanukah 5783 will be an extra special time to gather and celebrate at Beth El in Sudbury. This year, the congregation celebrates 50 years of lighting a very special outdoor Chanukah menorah. This one-of-a-kind stainless steel and bronze menorah was designed and crafted by artist DovBer Marchette in 1972. Marchette was a synagogue member and Sudbury Artist-in-Residence at the time. That Fall, Rabbi Lawrence Kushner asked Marchette to create a menorah for Chanukah, which was only a few months away. Marchette began sketching.

Beth El has a tradition of congregants stepping up to bring beauty into our midst. And they have, in building a menorah, crafting the *ner tamid* and *mezuzot*, a portable ark, woven *talitot*, even a continuously used gender neutral prayer book which is in use (with occasional revisions) since 1978, right up to today.

During Chanukah 2020, I interviewed DovBer on Zoom about building the menorah. This project provided a much-needed opportunity to schmooze during the pandemic. And a few audience members were in attendance for that first lighting in 1972!

Ahead of the presentation, I lit the menorah at sunset. The *shamas* is approximately 6 feet high. I recall returning it to position with an outstretched arm, on tippy-toes. The creation of the menorah is a wonderful story, not only about the design concept and materials, but about everything, from DovBer immersing in Torah study, gaining inspiration from Bezalel, to the significance of the metal tubes that are built to signify return, as in return to the Temple.

The *shamas* is the only light requiring a candle. The other eight lights are fueled with oil. During the past 50 years, each night a different group kindles the lights. It can be cold, windy, snowy, drizzly,

unseasonably warm, framed in a snow drift or darkened by the new moon closest to the winter solstice. They show up – as do committees, school kids, teens, staff, clergy, families, even the MahJong Club.

During the weeks before our presentation, I was in touch with the Marchettes to review the material. Every time we spoke, I learned something new. DovBer had built the menorah at a metal fabrication facility of someone he met at the beach the previous summer, and they donated the materials. By the time he was done, they enjoyed working with him so much that they offered him work. He took it as a compliment, and declined the position. There was a metallurgist from MIT who told DovBer that it wasn't possible to weld together two particular metals. DovBer found a way. (He never heard back from the metallurgist after he let him know he made it work.)

When we spoke earlier during the day of the presentation, I found out that the first time the congregation gathered to light this unique menorah, it was lit inside the building, in the Sanctuary!

The decision was quickly made to relocate it outside, in front of the building. It has remained there, ever since the second night of Chanukah in 1972. It continues to hold a unique place in the congregational landscape, both ritually and

visually. This menorah stands poised and ready for celebration at Beth El, year after year, *dor v' dor*.

Barbara Miller serves on the Board of Congregation Beth El Sudbury of the Sudbury River Valley. For information, please visit bethelsudbury.org. DovBer Marchette continues to exhibit his art; learn about it at dovbermarchette.com.





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Happy Chanukah

STRETCHING THE OIL: CHANUKAH AND VEGANISM

By Richard H. Schwartz, Ph.D.

The Jewish festival of Chanukah commemorates the miracle of the oil that was enough for only one day, but miraculously lasted for eight days in the liberated Temple in Jerusalem. Hence, this holiday is a good time to consider our own use of fuel and other resources.

Like Chanukah's miraculous extension of scarce resources, veganism also allows the increasingly scarce resources of our contemporary world to go much further. This is no trivial matter, since it is expected that many future conflicts between nations may involve scarcity of oil, water and other resources.

Noting that the Hebrew words for bread (*lechem*) and war (*milchamah*) come from the same root, the Jewish sages deduced that when there is a shortage of grain and other resources, people are more likely to go to war. History has borne out this conclusion, whether it is in struggles over water in biblical times or struggles over oil in modern times.

Far less oil, water, land, topsoil, chemicals, labor, and other agricultural resources are required for plant-based than for animal-centered diets, and far less waste and pollution are produced. To produce one pound of steak (500 calories of food energy) requires 20,000 calories of fossil fuels, most of which is expended in producing and providing feed crops. It requires 78 calories of fossil fuel for each calorie of protein obtained from feedlot-produced beef, but only 2 calories of fossil fuel to produce a calorie of protein from soybeans.

Grains and beans require only two to five percent as much fossil fuel as beef. The energy needed to produce a pound of grain-fed beef is equivalent to one gallon of gasoline.

It is interesting that the ratio of eight days that the oil burned compared to the one day of burning capacity that the oil had in the restored Temple is the same ratio (8 to 1) that is often given for the

pounds of grain that are necessary to add a pound of flesh to a cow raised in a feed lot.

Based on the oil lasting an additional seven days, the Shalom Center, a Jewish environmental, social justice and peace organization (www.shalomctr.org), urged that the US cut oil consumption by seven-eighths and replace that amount of oil as an energy source by conservation and by the use of non-fossil, non-CO2-producing, non-nuclear sources of renewable, sustainable energy. The Shalom Center and other environmental groups are increasingly considering the adverse and dramatic impacts of animal-based agriculture on energy usage, climate change, and other environmental issues. While the US is far from that goal, there has been a major increase in the use of wind, solar, and other forms of renewable energy, and their costs have decreased substantially.

Reducing our use of oil by shifting away from the mass production and consumption of meat makes our oil supplies last longer. It frees us from our dangerous dependence on oil, and on oil-producing authoritarian governments. Surely this would be a fitting way to celebrate the miracle of Chanukah, while simultaneously improving our health and helping to shift our imperiled planet onto a sustainable path. This is especially important at a time when the war in Ukraine has caused energy shortages in many countries, with the result that fuel costs have sharply increased.

An ancient miracle can still speak for us today. Let's all try to conserve oil and lay the groundwork for a better tomorrow.

*Richard H. Schwartz, Ph.D. is president Emeritus of Jewish Veg (www.JewishVeg.org). His most recent book is **Vegan Revolution: Saving Our World, Revitalizing Judaism**.*

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THE ANTISEMITIC CONSPIRACY THEORY THAT SHALL NOT BE NAMED

David Bernstein

Whenever a Jewish person tells me they've never experienced antisemitism I'm always stunned. Not only have I experienced it, I've experienced just about every form of it.

In high school, students drew swastikas in my books. Bullying/schoolyard variant, check.

In college, black "Afrocentric" student leaders told me I'm a fake Jew who stole the covenant from Black people. Black nationalist variant (think NBA star Kyrie Irving's film recommendations), check.



As a Jewish advocacy professional who supports Israel, I've been told more times than I can count that the Jewish state has no right to exist and that Zionism is evil. Leftwing/anti-Zionist variant, check.

Recently, when I posted on several Facebook groups about my book *Woke Antisemitism: How a Progressive Ideology Harms Jews*, several people said "you Jews should quit whining. You created Wokeness in the first place!" White supremacist variant, check.

Each of these forms of antisemitism manifests differently but is the same in one critical respect: they all grow out of conspiracy theories in which the Jew plays a role in harming society. And because in today's hyper-polarized environment radical ideologies and their attendant conspiracy theories are on the rise, so too is antisemitism. The crazier society becomes the more antisemitism we experience.

My book, *Woke Antisemitism*, attempts to explain how one set of conspiracy theories, Woke ideology, fuels progressive antisemitism. And for naming the underlying conspiracy theory that animates antisemitism on the left, I have become a heretic in the eyes of many Jewish progressives. For many on the left, wokeness is the ideology that shall not be named. Until, however, we name the ideology at the root of the growth of leftwing antisemitism, we will not be effective in combatting it.

Woke or radical social justice ideology (or whatever other forbidden term one might call it) holds that bigotry is not just a matter of personal attitude but is embedded in the very systems of society and that only victims of such bigotry have the "lived experience" and insight to define it for the rest of society. In this binary worldview, your identity either is a source of privilege or oppression. If you're black or a woman, oppression. If you're white and male, privilege. This ideology conflates success with power and privilege. In this worldview, certain groups of people do better than others because they either actively oppress others or just derive their success from being part of the dominant class. There's no other acceptable explanation for why certain people, groups, countries and even regions of the world might outperform other groups of people.

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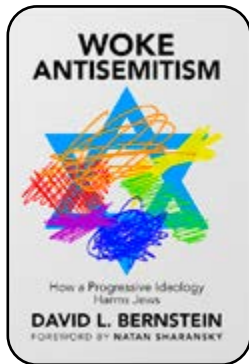
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THE ANTISEMITIC CONSPIRACY THEORY THAT SHALL NOT BE NAMED



“I am concerned that many of my good friends in the American Jewish community who for all the right reasons want to be part of the human rights and social justice movements of their time, do not fully recognize the danger of this ideology, both in how it will impact the US and how it will influence attitudes towards Jews and Israel.”

Excerpt from the foreword by Natan Sharansky

It should surprise no one that an ideology that views success as oppression would foment antisemitism. Jews, on average, succeed above the mean in just about every category and in every profession. In this ideological framework, white Jews (we are deemed white by deriving benefit from whiteness) are told that they’ve been “complicit in white supremacy,” in holding down marginalized communities. By the same token, Israel, the state of the Jewish people, is automatically blamed for the conflict with Palestinians because it is the stronger party. The weaker party cannot be held culpable.

Because this ideology is becoming more popular, more widely embraced in progressive “justice” movements and more ingrained in American institutional life in the form of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) trainings and initiatives, we are seeing rapidly growing antisemitism on the left.

That the ideological underpinnings of left-wing antisemitism are so hard to talk about should be considered very strange. When we speak of rightwing antisemitism, we talk about the growing popularity of “replacement theory” in rightwing politics, which holds that ordinary Americans are being replaced by immigrants (which Jews are orchestrating); when we speak of Muslim antisemitism, we talk about the role of the “infidel” Jew in the radical Muslim imagination oppressing Islam. Yet when we speak of progressive antisemitism, we are expected to talk about a symptom without a cause.

Wokeness has spread like wildfire precisely because it demands that we not challenge it. Anyone who even uses the term “woke” can be labeled a bigot. And because we cannot speak about it we cannot effectively counter it.

Indeed, woke antisemitism is too hot to handle for even many Jewish professionals whose job it is monitor and counter antisemitism in all its manifestations, too hot to be named by numerous Jewish leaders whose job it is to warn of the threats facing the Jewish people and to prepare our community to face them down.

Yet if we don’t name the problem -- if we continue to pretend that unlike every other form of antisemitism the leftwing variant has no underlying ideology -- how will we ever fight it?

David Bernstein is the founder of the Jewish Institute for Liberal Values (JILV.org).





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CHANUKAH HOPE

By Norman H. Finkelstein

By the twenty-first century, Jews, believing anything was possible in America, achieved successes unparalleled in Jewish history. American Jews firmly established themselves in all aspects of life from business to academia. Despite the obstacles faced by earlier generations, Jews found themselves in the boardrooms of America's leading corporations, and at the helm of the country's Ivy League universities. Jews are visible in sports, entertainment, literature, and the arts. In political service, they have often greatly exceeded their percentage in the American population. In the year 2000, Senator Joseph Lieberman, the Democratic Party nominee for vice president of the United States, and the first Jew on a major political party's presidential ticket, could say, "Anything is possible in America."

Yet sadly, antisemitism has also been part of the American Jewish experience. Various tragic incidents over the years have revealed the vulnerabilities of Jews and Jewish institutions. In the last few years, Jews have witnessed a rise in antisemitic activity including tragic attacks in Pittsburgh and Poway.

A bright spot for communities affected by antisemitic events has been the support of non-Jewish neighbors. Two Chanukah period incidents demonstrate that love can overcome hate. Both events occurred in Montana, a state with a Jewish population under 2,000. On the evening of December 2, 1993, a cinder block was thrown through the bedroom window of a five-year-old Jewish boy in Billings, Montana, who was not harmed. Chanukah was approaching, and the boy had placed a menorah on the windowsill viewable from the street. Billings, population 80,000, including about 100 Jewish residents, had recently become a hotbed for Ku Klux Klan and white nationalist activity against Asians, Blacks, and Jews.

The attack shocked the city. Local churches and civic organizations quickly responded by offering their support to the Jewish community. A local store displayed a large sign reading "Not in Our Town! No Hate. No Violence. Peace on Earth." In an act of solidarity with the small Jewish community, the local newspaper printed a full-page drawing of a menorah for readers to cut out. Along with churches, thousands of homes in the city displayed images of menorahs in their windows as a sign of solidarity with their Jewish neighbors. Even they were not immune from attack. Vandals broke the windows of two churches displaying the images. That did not stop local citizens: while Jews attended Kabbalat Shabbat services on Friday evening a large group of their Christian neighbors staged a candlelight vigil across from the synagogue.

Montanans again rose to the occasion in 2016 when a business dispute escalated between a Jewish real estate agent and the mother of an avowed antisemite and white nationalist in Whitefish, Montana. The resort town, with fewer than 10,000 residents, was home to a tiny Jewish community numbering about 100 families. Neo-Nazis soon involved themselves, threatening to march in the town with loaded guns. Alluding to the real estate agent and local Jews, the

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CHANUKAH HOPE

editor of the Nazi website, the *Daily Stormer* wrote, “The Jews are a vicious, evil race of hate-filled psychopaths...so then...let’s hit ‘em up.” Death threats followed. The site posted the telephone numbers and email addresses of local Jews and even non-Jews with Jewish sounding names.

The town was overwhelmingly supportive of the Jewish residents. It was Chanukah time, and like in Billings years earlier, paper menorahs were displayed in town windows along with a logo that read “Love Lives Here.” Political leaders, including the state’s governor, issued a joint statement decrying antisemitism. An anti-hate rally drew 600 participants in zero-degree weather. The Nazi march never happened and the antisemitic activity largely disappeared. In appreciation for the local support, Whitefish Jews hosted a chicken and matzo ball soup party for the community. Meanwhile, the Jewish



real estate agent sued the *Daily Stormer* editor for invasion of privacy and violation of Montana’s Anti-Intimidation Act. A court awarded her \$14 million in damages. “The best way to respond to hate and cyber terrorism in your community,” said Rabbi Francine Green Roston of The Jewish Community of Flathead Valley, “is through solidarity.” Another big principle, she added, “is to take threats seriously, and prepare for the worst.”

Since those Chanukah episodes in Montana, the American Jewish community has experienced a growing level of hatred. When a gunman killed 11 worshipers at the Tree of Life building in Pittsburgh on

October 27, 2018, the local community galvanized around its Jewish neighbors. That evening, more than 3,000 people spontaneously gathered at the intersection of Murray and Forbes Avenues in Squirrel Hill, the heart of Jewish Pittsburgh, for a solemn vigil. Reverend Vincent Kolb of the Sixth Presbyterian Church across the street told

the crowd, “We gather because we are heartbroken but also to show zero tolerance for anti-Semitic speech, anti-Semitic behavior and anti-Semitic violence.” The following day, an overflow crowd at Soldiers and Sailors Hall gathered in solemn tribute. Christian, Muslim, and Jewish clergy offered prayers while civic leaders mourned the tragedy. Across the country, similar events showed support for their Jewish communities.

The message was clear. While Jews must maintain vigilance against a minority wishing to harm them, they should be comforted by knowing that an overwhelming majority of their neighbors continue

to support them.

Norman H. Finkelstein is a retired public school librarian and Prozdor faculty member at Hebrew College. He is the author of over twenty nonfiction books and the recipient of two National Jewish Book Awards. His latest book, Saying No to Hate: Overcoming Antisemitism in America, from which this article is adapted, is forthcoming from the Jewish Publication Society/University of Nebraska Press.

Photo: Vigil for the victims of the Tree of Life massacre held in York Pennsylvania, Sunday, October 28, 2018. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.



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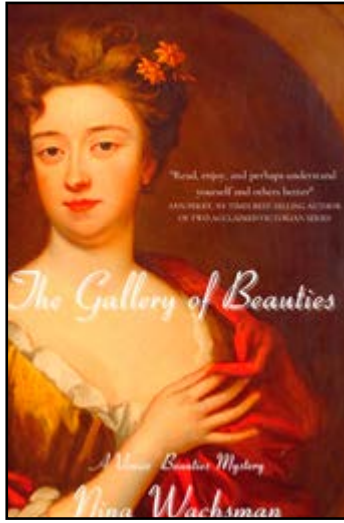


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Boston College



Dr. Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski is the newly appointed Kraft Family Professor and Director of the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College. An Episcopal priest, Dr. Joslyn-Siemiatkoski earned his Ph.D. in Theology from BC in 2005 and is a recognized scholar in Christian-Jewish relations and comparative theology. "I am grateful and honored to have come full circle back to Boston College and to lead the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning, which helped to form my own identity as a scholar," Dr. Joslyn-Siemiatkoski said. "The Center is the premier hub for Christian-Jewish relations – not only studying it, but promoting it – in North America," he added. Joslyn-Siemiatkoski holds that the work of the center and others like it has taken on greater significance amid rising antisemitic incidents in the US and other countries. "We are at a moment where we need to be aware that progress is never a given, and relationships that foster a common good always need tending," he said. "Part of the work of the Center going forward is to look back on the many positive outcomes we have developed and look ahead to where we still need to be vigilant, and to engage in the work of education for the sake of our current and future generations." As director, Joslyn-Siemiatkoski has plans to expand the scope of the Center's efforts, especially to address the intersections of antisemitism, racism, and nationalism.

LAJSA Conference

The Latin American Jewish Studies Association (LAJSA) 20th International Research Conference will to be held in two formats. There will be a Virtual Conference Day **July 6, 2023** and an In-Person Conference at Brandeis University, **July 9-11, 2023**, hosted by the Brandeis Initiative on the Jews of the Americas. For further information, visit: <https://lajsa.org>.

Congress of Sephardic Studies

The second edition of CIES (Portuguese acronym for International Congress of Sephardic Studies), an initiative of CEJA (Center of Jewish Studies of the Amazon), will take place on **August 16-20, 2023**, in person, in the city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. For more information, visit www.amazoniajudaica.com.br or email: cies.ceja@gmail.com.

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The Chanukah Business

Once a week in the village of Chelm, Reb Cantor, the merchant, and Rabbi Yohon Abrahms, the schoolteacher, went for an early morning walk.

“Tell me,” Reb Cantor asked. “What do you think of Chanukah?”

“I like the latkes,” Rabbi Abrahms grinned. “Are you inviting me to your house?”

“Of course, you’re invited,” Reb Cantor smiled back. “But what do you think of it as a holiday?”

Rabbi Abrahms shrugged. “Not much. It’s not in the Torah. The Book of Maccabees is fascinating. It’s nice to know that every so often Jewish people win a battle. Why do you ask?”

“Well,” Reb Cantor hesitated. “Ever since the Schlemiels invented the Chanukah present*, people have been buying things from me to give as Chanukah presents.”

“So?” said Rabbi Abrahms. “That sounds like a good business.”

“It is!” Reb Cantor agreed. “And keeps getting better every year. I got a letter from my cousin Richard in America. He wants to start selling Chanukah presents too.”

“Again, so?”

“So, Richard wants to trademark the phrase ‘Chanukah Present’ so we can make some money every time somebody calls something a Chanukah present.”

Rabbi Abrahms began trotting up the side of East Hill. “Can you do that?”

Reb Cantor sighed and lumbered after the young rabbi. “In America, you can trademark anything. You can sell anything. Especially around Christmastime.”

“I’m confused,” said Rabbi Abrahms. “I thought we were talking about Chanukah.”

“Yes, that’s the point!” Reb Cantor said, panting. “Chanukah would not be a present-giving holiday if it wasn’t so close to Christmas. Should we be giving gifts just to keep up with the Joneses?”

Rabbi Abrahms looked puzzled. “Who are the Joneses?”

“The Christian family that lives next door to my cousin Richard in Brooklyn. They give their children Christmas presents. Now Richard’s children want eight Chanukah presents, one for each night. And it’s not that much of a holiday!”

“There’s a miracle and there’s latkes,” Rabbi Abrahms said. “What more do you need for a holiday?”

“I’m having an ethical problem,” Reb Cantor groaned, “I can make a lot of money selling Chanukah presents. I’m just not sure I should.”

Rabbi Abrahms tugged his beard. “Do people enjoy giving and receiving gifts?”

“Of course,” said Reb Cantor.

“And you can profit from this?”

“Hoo boy, yes,” said Reb Cantor. He was still puffing and huffing from the climb.

“So,” Rabbi Abrahms said, “sell the gifts, make the money.”

“But,” panted Reb Cantor, “what about the Christianization of a Jewish holiday?”

“What Christianization?” Rabbi Abrahms raised his hands, palms up. “On Chanukah you tell the story of the Maccabees. You tell the story of the miracle. You light the menorah. You eat the latkes. You spin the dreidles. You give and you get some presents. Where’s the Christian part of that?”

“The gifts!” Reb Cantor coughed. “The gifts.”

Rabbi Abrahms shook his head. “Do you think that the Maccabees ate latkes on Chanukah? No. Potatoes came from America. Some enterprising potato farmer decided the tradition of potato pancakes was good for business. Who are we to complain? They taste good – except for Mrs. Chaipul’s.”

Both men paused to shudder at the thought of Mrs. Chaipul’s infamously lethal latkes**.

Reb Cantor sighed. “I suppose you are right. But how can we avoid doing it to excess? If there’s one thing the Christians do, they go all out celebrating their holiday. It’s crazy-making.”

“Last year I went to the Schlemiel house for latkes,” said Rabbi Abrahms, licking his lips. “They were delicious. I ate so many, I almost plotzed. And I felt sick to my stomach for three days. You know what? This year, when I come to your house for latkes, I’m not going to eat as many. You have to let people learn from their

mistakes and set their own limits. Now let’s go back.”

Without another word, Rabbi Abrahms set down the hill at a jog.

“Wait!” shouted Reb Cantor after him. “Richard also wants to know how you should spell it in English, ‘Hanukkah’ with an H or ‘Chanukah’ with a CH?”

But the young rabbi was already far down the hill, and Reb Cantor decided that it probably didn’t matter anyway, and set off after him, but at a much slower pace.

*See the story, “A Present? For Chanukah.”

**See “The Lethal Latkes”

Abridged from the book Winter Blessings by Izzy Abrahamson

Izzy Abrahamson is the pen name for the Jewish storyteller Mark Binder.

Winter Blessings was the runner up for The National Jewish Book Award for Family Literature. It includes ten Chanukah stories and a novella. It is a wonderful read and a great gift regardless of the time of year and is available in print, ebook and audiobook on Amazon, Audible and for signed copies at IzzyAbe.com.



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EVENT LISTING

Walnut Street Synagogue

Join the Walnut Street Synagogue of Chelsea for an online presentation. Our speaker will be Joel Haber, a Jewish food researcher and tour guide based in Jerusalem. No charge, advance registration required at walnutstreetsynagogue.com/the-taste-of-jewish-culture.



Wednesday, Jan. 18, 7 p.m. – Chulent and Hamen: The Stew with a Thousand Flavors.

Wednesday, March 15, 7 p.m. – Crackers, Crepes, and Cheese: Jewish Culinary Traditions From Passover to Shavuot.

Temple Israel of Sharon

Saturday, January 7, 2023 at 8 p.m.
Neshama Carlebach
Live in Concert

Temple Israel of Sharon is pleased to present Neshama Carlebach in her first post-pandemic appearance in the Boston area. Neshama Carlebach is an award-winning singer/songwriter – a four-time Independent Music Awards nominee and winner and silver Global Music Award winner for Outstanding Performance by a female vocalist. With one million records sold, she is one of today's best-selling Jewish artists in the world.



Carlebach began training as a singer at the age of five, and as a teenager performed alongside her father, the

late Rabbi Shlomo Carlebach. For additional information and to purchase tickets, visit www.tisharon.org/event/carlebach.

Chabad at Chestnut Hill

Saturday, December 24, 6-8 p.m.

Join the Chanukah On Ice event at the Jim Roche Community Ice Arena, 1275 VFW Pkwy, West Roxbury. Cost: \$10 per person plus skate rental fee. There will be music and Chanukah treats. For more information, visit www.chabadch.com/chanukah or email info@chabadch.com.

Gala Jimmy Fund Benefit Concert

Sunday, March 26 at 3 p.m.

Newton resident Sarah Boling passed away on March 24 after a year of battling glioblastoma, a brain cancer, leaving her husband and three children, aged 9 to 14. Her husband, Jordan Lee Wagner, is producing a Gala Jimmy Fund Benefit Concert in her memory to raise money for glioblastoma brain tumor research at the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. The Concert in Memory of Sarah Jane Boling will take place **Sunday, March 26, 2023, at 3 p.m.** at Temple Emanuel in Newton, and livestreamed on the internet. Performing ensembles recruited so far include The Zamir Chorale of Boston, Koleinu, and several fine chamber ensembles.

Thanks to the generosity of the community, Dana-Farber has made unparalleled progress in cancer science and treatment. For tickets, to sponsor or for more information, please visit <https://jimmy.fund/concert> or contact Wagner at manager@concert-2023.jimmy.fund or 617-953-6787.

The Boston Synagogue

Sunday, Dec. 18, 11 a.m. Family Fun Celebration. There will be arts and crafts, dreidel playing, games and music, along with latkes, donuts, and refreshments for the parents. Please register at family-fun-chanukah-2022.eventbrite.com. At 4 p.m., NexGen will get together to make latkes, donuts and lanterns. It's for 20s-40ish! Please register at nexgen-chanukah.eventbrite.com

Wednesday, Dec. 21, 7 p.m. Join us at BackRoom Boston, the home of the Festival for New Jewish Music, presenting Mathew Shifrin, for a delightful evening of Yiddish parody, opera and song. Light reception follows. Please register at bit.ly/mattshifrin

For more information go to www.bostonsynagogue.org or contact us at office@bostonsynagogue.org or call 617-523-0453



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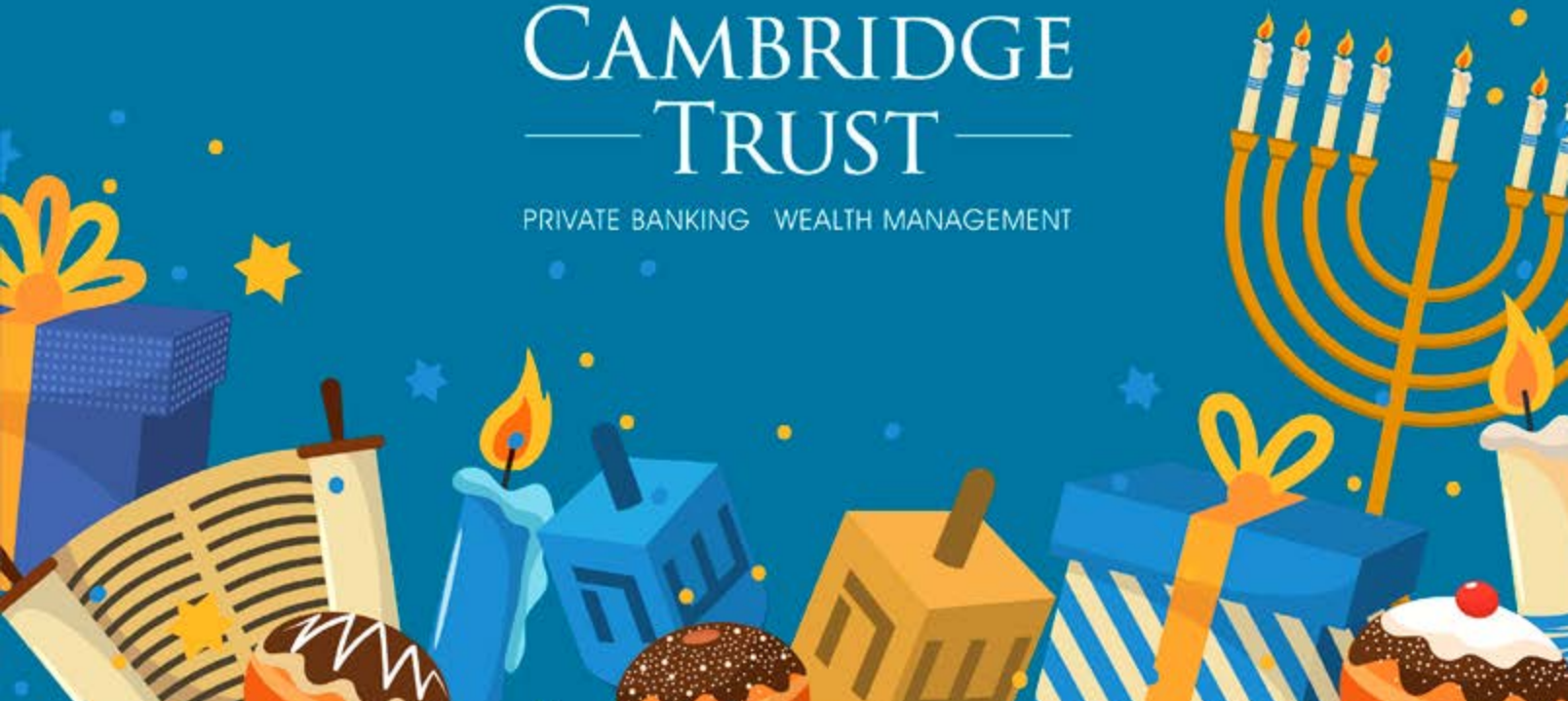
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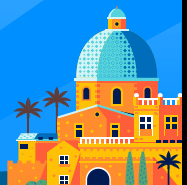
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