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Magazine

PASSOVER / SPRING 2023
EDITION 42



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Happy Passover

As we gather together to celebrate, may we find deeper connection to our loved ones, each other, and our shared story.

Chag Pesach Sameach (Happy Passover holiday), from your friends at CJP!



THE WORLD'S NEWEST SYNAGOGUE

PASSOVER 2023

The Moses Ben Maimon Synagogue was officially opened on Feb. 17 and is located on the Saadiyat Island in Abu Dhabi, the capital of the United Arab Emirates. The synagogue was named after the 12th century Jewish philosopher Moses Ben Maimon (known as Maimonides) and is the first of its kind in the UAE.

The building is part of the Abrahamic Family House, a religious complex consisting of a mosque, a church and a synagogue, created with the goal to promote interfaith understanding and dialogue between different religions. Maimonides was one of the most prolific and influential Torah scholars of the Middle Ages. A doctor by profession, he spent years traveling before settling in Cairo. Among his notable writings were Mishneh Torah and The Guide for the Perplexed.

Photo: Wikipedia.



***Evening of Wednesday, April 5, 2023
- Evening of Thursday, April 13, 2023***

Passover 2023 will be celebrated from April 5 to April 13. The first Seder will be on the evening of April 5 and the second on the evening of April 6.

Passover is observed by eating *matzah* and avoiding any leaven (*chametz*) during the 8 days of the holiday (7 days in Israel). The Seder includes eating *matzah*, drinking four cups of wine, eating bitter herbs and reading from the *Haggadah* the story of the Israelites leaving slavery in Egypt.

Jewish people all over the world gather their family and friends for a festive meal. Many local synagogues organize communal Seders.

Happy Pesach!
from

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EDITORIAL

Happy Passover!



Gaby Weisman

As Passover approaches, Jews around the world prepare to celebrate our liberation from slavery in Egypt and our journey towards becoming a free people. Here at *Shalom Magazine*, we have much to celebrate as we reach our 14th anniversary, after a brief hiatus during the pandemic.

Passover is a time to gather with relatives and friends, enjoy delicious food and reflect on the history of the Jewish people. It is a time that we put aside our differences and look toward the beauty of the Seder rituals and traditions. As we learn from the inclusion of the four sons in the Passover *Haggadah*, we also get a chance to showcase each guest's individual personality, and bring their uniqueness to the table. After years of isolation and online seders, we can again celebrate the importance of being present and actively participating in the retelling of our story to the next generation.

I am proud and grateful to be able to appreciate and respect the challenges that lie within a diverse Jewish community, and to include in our publication a variety of contributors who are willing to share the multifaceted views of our people.

This year, we also commemorate the 75th anniversary of Israeli independence, *Yom Haatzmaut*. The establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 marked a momentous occasion in Jewish history, as Jews around the world finally had a homeland of their own.

For many Diaspora Jews, the land of Israel has always held a special place in their hearts. It has served as a symbol of hope, a deep connection with our faith, and a beacon of freedom and innovation. Israel has faced many threats to its security over the years, and has had to navigate complex political relationships with neighboring nations. But there is also an internal conflict, and we bring two articles that may help explore why Israeli citizens are protesting en masse on the streets.

In this edition you will see about a kaleidoscope of events that recently took place within our community all over the state of Massachusetts, and learn about future opportunities to mark holidays and special occasions with others. It is my hope that we all can be free to make our choices in life without being afraid, to proudly be Jewish in any way we see fit, and to celebrate being different, while at the same time remaining united in our goal for peace.

Wishing you and your family a happy and healthy Passover.

Shirley Nigri Farber - Publisher

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PURIM IN OUR COMMUNITY



A Central Massachusetts Community Purim-themed Hollywood at "Off the Rails," evening was sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Central Mass., Torah Center, Worcester JCC, and PJ Library of Central Mass.

Photos by Bruce Wahle.



The Jewish community in Cambridge and Somerville celebrated Purim with over 300 participants. The costume masquerade event was held on March 7 at the Armory Center for the Arts in Somerville.



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Passover will be here before we know it, and with Pesach comes a plethora of food-centric rituals to celebrate the Jewish people's liberation from Egypt. For 8 days, we give up leavened foods to commemorate the Israelites' last night as slaves. For all your upcoming Passover celebrations, KAYCO Kosher has your Seder table covered with delicious products from top kosher brands like **Manischewitz**, **Tuscanini**, **Gefen**, and **Haddar**. Read on to learn more about the latest and greatest Passover products.

NEW FOR PASSOVER

New to the table this Passover are two fantastic Kosher-for-Pasover products: **Tuscanini Sparkling Sicilian Lemonade** and **Gefen Sliced Pickled Red Beets**. The **Tuscanini Sparkling Lemonade** blends the perfect citrusy brightness with well-balanced flavor and sweetness. Served in an attractive glass bottle, the lemonade is made in Sicily, renowned as the “Lemon Riviera,” and cultivates the world’s finest lemons. As for the **Gefen Pickled Red Beets**, you really cannot go wrong with this delicious take on a Passover classic. Amazingly crisp and fresh tasting, these sliced beets make for the perfect health-conscious option to add versatility to many dishes and sides.



TIMELESS CLASSICS

While new is always exciting, there's nothing more comforting than the classic Kosher-for-Passover offerings from **Manischewitz**, **Tuscanini**, **Heaven & Earth**, and **Haddar**. Don't miss out on traditional favorites including: **Manischewitz Egg Matzo**, **Manischewitz Patties**, **Tuscanini Chopped Calabrian Chili Peppers**, **Heaven & Earth Grain Free Tortilla Chips**, **Haddar Pressed Pretzels**, and **Haddar Passover Pretzel Crumbs**.



Kayco Kosher products are available in stores across MA including Shaw's, Star Market, Market Basket, Big Y, Price Chopper, Wegmans, Whole Foods, Stop & Shop, and more. Products also available on Amazon [here](#).

Visit Kayco.com for additional information.

PURIM IN OUR COMMUNITY



A Purim spiel titled “Mordy Python and the Whole Megillah” was held on March 4 at Congregation Beth El in Sudbury.



Tobin Bridge Chabad, Temple Tifereth Israel of Winthrop and the Walnut Street Synagogue of Chelsea got together to celebrate Purim. “Brisket, Bourbon and Big Laughs: A Purim Feast to Remember” was held on March 7 at Temple Tifereth Israel. Guests enjoyed a brisket dinner, musical comedy, whiskey, hamentaschen, and a Megillah reading.



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PURIM IN OUR COMMUNITY



The Israeli-American Council (IAC) Purim party took place on March 2 at the Venu Nightclub in Boston.



The Young Jewish Professionals' Purim Unity party took place on March 6 at the Icon nightclub Boston. Hundreds of young professionals will come together to celebrate Purim at Boston's most anticipated social event of the year! For more photos, visit: [/www.yjpboston.org/events/purim2023/](http://www.yjpboston.org/events/purim2023/)



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In February, the Hornstein Jewish Professional Leadership Program at Brandeis University traveled to Israel with 16 students and three faculty (Barry Shrage, Fern Chertok and Marla Olsberg) for a ten-day educational tour to explore leadership and community, through the generous support of the Myra Kraft (z"l) Seminar in Israel.



MA'YAN TIKVAH



Nature art and fun during a Tu BiShvat celebration of trees with Ma'yan Tikvah, an outdoor congregation and Jewish learning program for children.



Happy Pesach from Hornstein!

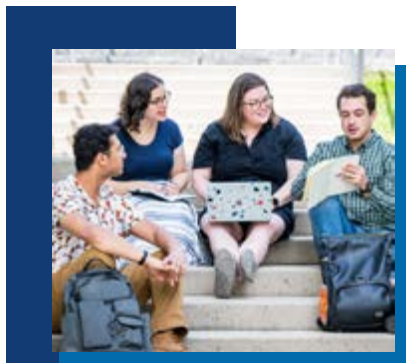
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YACHAD NEW ENGLAND

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This year with the support of The Miriam Fund, Yachad launched a new art therapy program, Y.E.S. “Your Expressive Self,” to support teen girls and young adult women (ages 16–34) with disabilities. Teen girls and young women with intellectual or developmental disabilities or autism may have difficulties with learning, communication, daily living skills, information processing, social functioning, and problem solving. Art and music therapy are well documented to promote physical, emotional, and social development in individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities and autism.

Combining the arts with therapeutic benefits from trained art educators and therapy practitioners provides a new venue for self-development in the Boston Jewish community. Yachad hosts these supportive activities in safe, non-threatening ways for young female clients to explore emotions, relieve stress, master new skills, and build self-esteem while having fun and making friends.

Y.E.S. activities have included a challah bake with students at Maimonides, Build-A-Bear workshop and a self-care afternoon workshop. Yachad has also begun home visits to Y.E.S. participants, some of whom aren't yet ready to come to the group and others as a supplement to the group activities. These home visits are based on Yachad’s successful Backyard Buddies Summer program that supported 60 children and adults in summer ‘22.

To learn more about Y.E.S., Backyard Buddies or Yachad, contact: newenglandyachad@ou.org or 617-209-6799.



Challah bake

Yachad’s Annual Purim party was celebrated on March 5 in Brookline.

Photos: Sunschein Photography



CHAG PESACH SAMEACH

from your Yachad Family.
Wishing a happy and healthy holiday from all of us.

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.

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SHALOH HOUSE STOUGHTON



Jews living in Knollsbrook Condominiums in Stoughton recently enjoyed a gathering among neighbors. Inspired by the fact that this is the year of “*Hakhel*,” a year of congregating, local resident Ralph Spiegel decided to organize the event. News spread, and over 20 neighbors gathered together for an evening of acquaintance, song, light refreshments and inspiring words by Rabbi Mendel Gurkow of Shaloh House Chabad in Stoughton.

“*Hakhel*” (gathering) was observed during the times of the Jerusalem Holy Temple once every seven years, as Jews from all over Israel would join together for the special occasion. Thus, Chabad centers around the world have hosted *Hakhel* gatherings. Spiegel, who attends Shaloh House, was inspired by the idea. Neighbors, some of whom met each other for the very first time, have discussed repeating this unity gathering. Other local neighborhood *Hakhel* events are being planned by Shaloh House members. Stuart Green is planning to arrange a *Hakhel* gathering in his neighborhood at Sharon Green, Stanley Spiegelman is arranging one for Jews living in Brockton, and there will be more to come.

CHELSEA JEWISH LIFECARE



Chelsea Jewish Lifecare celebrated COO Betsy Mullen, who received the coveted “Setting the Standard” Pinnacle Award from McKnight’s, the award-winning long-term care trade publication. The national award honors one-of-a-kind industry veterans who are setting the standards, driving change, providing guidance, and inspiring others. Betsy, along with the Chelsea Jewish Lifecare leadership team, will accept the award in March.

Left to right: Adam Berman, Betsy Mullen, Barry Berman, and Gilda Richman

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**THE SAGA OF THE SASSOON
FAMILY EXHIBITION**



Cindy Rowe, Executive Director of the Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action (JALSA) and Rabbi Dr. Michael Shire of Central Reform Temple of Boston took part in an interfaith march on Boston Common on January 13 as part of the dedication ceremony for the new Embrace statue, which honors Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King. According to Rowe, the march “honored the longstanding relationship between the Black and Jewish communities, and the ongoing struggle to achieve equity.”



Photos: 1) Sassoon Haggadah, Spain or southern France, c. 1320. Purchased by the State of Israel; 2) Passover Haggadah Kolkata, India, 1868, Weitzman family Collection.

*March 3 – August 13, 2023
at the Jewish Museum in NYC*

The Jewish Museum presents *The Sassoons*, an exhibition that reveals the fascinating story of a remarkable Jewish family, highlighting their pioneering role in trade, art collecting, architectural patronage, and civic engagement from the early 19th century through World War II. On view from March 3 through August 13, the exhibition follows four generations from Iraq to India, China, and England, featuring a rich selection of works collected by family members over time.

The exhibition narrative begins in the early 1830s when David Sassoon, the patriarch of the family, was forced to leave his native Baghdad due to the increasing persecution of the city’s Jewish population. Establishing himself in Mumbai (then Bombay) and initially involved in the cotton trade, his vision led the family from Iraq to India, China, and finally England where his descendants gradually settled over the decades.

Numerous private and public collections contributed loans to the exhibition including His Majesty King Charles III.

Programs in conjunction with *The Sassoons* include a series of lectures, conversations, performances, and virtual courses. The Jewish Museum is located at 1109 Fifth Ave., New York. For more information, visit <https://thejewishmuseum.org/>.

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PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ISRAELI SUPREME COURT AND THEIR IMPACT ON ISRAELI DEMOCRACY

By Denise J. Karlin

There is currently a major governmental crisis occurring in Israel. This serious situation impacts the very core of Israel's existence as a democracy committed to the rights and liberties of all people living there. More importantly, however, the future of Israel, not only internally, but also around the world, is at stake.

Most people know that this crisis involves the Israeli Supreme Court and how authority over, and control of, the Court is manifested. You will find in this brief article an overview of the issues and what it means for those of us who do not live in Israel.

On Feb. 21, the Knesset (Israeli Parliament) voted to advance legislative changes to the powers of the Israeli judiciary, specifically the Supreme Court. The vote was 63-47 (61 is a majority). No Member of Knesset (MK) abstained, but 10 of them boycotted the vote.

These changes were introduced by Prime Minister Netanyahu's governing coalition, made up of Netanyahu's Likud Party and other right-wing parties led by such people as Itamar Ben-Gvir, head of the Otzma Yehudit (Jewish Power) Party who serves as Israel's Minister of National Security, and Bezalel Smotrich, head of the Religious Zionist Party, who serves as Israel's Minister of Finance.

The bill that passed on Feb. 21 gives the Knesset full control over the appointment of Supreme Court judges and would bar the Supreme Court from striking down legislation that conflicts with Israel's Basic Laws, the closest thing that Israel has to a Constitution. The legislation now returns to the Knesset's Constitution, Law, and Justice Committee for preparation for its second and third readings, which are expected by the end of March.

These actions are important because the legislation will fundamentally change the very nature of the Israeli Supreme Court. Unlike the U.S., Israel does not have a Constitution setting forth its basic governmental structure. While the U.S. has three clearly defined

independent branches of government, the Executive (President), Legislative (Congress), and Judicial (Supreme Court and other Federal Courts), Israel has a Parliamentary system of government where the Legislative authority is held by the Knesset, and the Executive authority is held by whichever party or coalition of parties holds a majority of seats in the Knesset.

The Israeli Supreme Court is created by the Knesset and only holds whatever powers are granted to it by the Knesset. And instead of a Constitution, Israel's Knesset has enacted a series of Basic Laws over the years, which enjoy a higher status than regular laws.

Over the course of the past 25 to 30 years, the Israeli Supreme Court has been viewed by those on the right wing as being obstructionist to their goals. Under the leadership of former Chief Justice Aharon Barak (1995 to 2006), a major shift in the Court occurred where the Court viewed its role as the defenders of human and civil rights in Israel in the absence of a written constitution.

During this time frame, the Court began to apply the power of judicial review to disqualify laws and government decisions based upon its interpretation of the Basic Laws. That power was not granted to the judiciary under any statute or other part of Israeli law; however, nothing by law prohibits the Court from exercising this judicial review.

The Israeli Supreme Court also began to impose a "reasonableness test" in many cases. This test is used regularly in the U.S. It asks whether public officials acted or would act in a manner that is reasonable, given the specifics of the situation.

Over the years, the Court would often affirm positions considered aligned with the Israeli left, such as when it reversed a bill which sought to block Palestinians from seeking compensation from the Israeli army for legal damages. Other rulings included the overturning of Israeli government decisions on incarceration or deportation of asylum seekers and/or illegal immigrants.

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PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ISRAELI SUPREME COURT AND THEIR IMPACT ON ISRAELI DEMOCRACY

Additionally, the Court has supported women's rights to pray and read from the Torah at the Western Wall, and has struck down laws exempting members of certain Orthodox groups from mandatory service in the military, while still receiving state stipends not to serve.

This has created the current tinderbox situation. Ultimately, it is the plan of the Netanyahu coalition to do the following:

- Change the selection process for judges to ensure politicians will dominate the process instead of judges and lawyers.
- Radically limit the Supreme Court's ability to overturn laws enacted by the Knesset by banning courts from reviewing Basic Laws, and require that regular laws can only be overturned by the Supreme Court when at least 80 percent of all 15 judges on the court vote to overturn such laws.
- Allows the Knesset to overrule a judicial decision when a majority of MKs vote against it. (That is completely incompatible with the concept of judicial independence and integrity.)
- Bar the use of the "reasonableness test" as the basis for judicial decisions.
- Change the status and powers of the legal advisors in Ministries and other government bodies. (Currently, these advisors are tenured career civil servants, but the legislation would convert them to "positions of public trust," essentially political appointees.)

While the final legislation that is ultimately passed may not contain all these provisions, or may contain new provisions not included above, this entire process is very alarming. This legislation essentially does not place any check upon the already unbridled power of the ruling party/coalition in the Knesset. When members of the current coalition have publicly stated their opposition to rights for non-Orthodox Jews, Arab/Palestinian Israeli citizens, and members of the LGBTQA+

community, and endorse votes to overrule Court decisions granting such rights, alarm bells must go off.

The current situation has prompted massive peaceful demonstrations of Israeli citizens from all walks of life, which have recently escalated with police and military using water cannons and stun grenades on the protesters. A civil war could be imminent. Top economists have predicted a financial meltdown. Israel is becoming a true pariah among the most reasonable countries of the world community.

Hundreds of thousands of people, including top Israeli Army officials and technology leaders, have strongly opposed this legislation and declared their support for saving Israel's future as a democracy that protects all of its citizens. Israeli leaders such as former Prime Minister and Opposition Leader Yair Lapid, former Prime Minister Ehud Barak, current Israeli President Isaac Herzog and Israel's outgoing army chief Lt. Gen. Aviv Kochavi have expressed grave concern as to the future of Israeli democracy and society under the new coalition government.

When looking at these efforts to eviscerate the Israeli Supreme Court, every American Jew should take the words of former Prime Minister Lapid to heart: "Members of the coalition: History will judge you for tonight. For the damage to democracy, for the damage to the economy, for the damage to security, for the fact that you're tearing the people of Israel to pieces and you just don't care."

Denise J. Karlin is a retired attorney who worked for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts for 36 years. She holds a Juris Doctor degree from Harvard Law School. She serves on the Board of Trustees and as President of the Sisterhood of Temple Ohabei Shalom in Brookline. 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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REMEMBERUS AND WELLESLEY-WESTON

CHABAD PARTNER UP TO HELP UKRAINE

By Ana Vandreev

On February 5, volunteers with RememberUs.org, a local non-profit organization, met at a private home to sort and pack clothes from a large received donation to send as humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

Volunteers of all ages and from many towns in the Boston area sorted and packed the clothes in boxes, which were shipped to Ukraine the next day. Once the shipment reaches its destination, it will be met by the organization's Ukrainian team of volunteers. The clothes will then be sorted, packaged, and delivered to civilians living in the war zones.

The power of community was evident. Many of us came together to make the shipment of 2000 pieces of clothing possible. The clothing was generously donated by a local small business, Wicked Dog Apparel, a company that is founded on the principles of community.

Rabbi Moshe Bleich, a director on the nonprofit's board, arranged for the group to meet at the home of one of the Wellesley-Weston Chabad's members, Charles J. Evan.

This is not RememberUs's first shipment to Ukraine. Since the start of the war, the nonprofit, which I became involved with last year, has provided aid to more than 50,000 residents. We are currently sending around 150 packages per week directly to families, and the packages consist of food, medicine, clothing, and other necessities. Food and medicine are purchased locally in Ukraine, while clothing and other items are sent from the U.S.

RememberUs.org was established nine years ago, with a focus on education and commemoration of the Ukrainian Holocaust. Once the war began, the organization shifted its efforts to providing humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable civilians: single mothers with multiple children, the elderly, families with critically ill kids, and the impoverished.



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I chose to get involved with RememberUS because the work we do is tangible. Each dollar donated, each piece of clothing, each box packed, goes directly to someone who needs it.

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All of us at RememberUs are incredibly grateful to everyone who has made it possible for us to help those who are living through unimaginable atrocities without access to food, water, and heat. We extend a special thank you to high school student and RememberUs.org volunteer Bella Werner from Sharon, who is a driving force behind a lot of the work behind the scenes.

Our focus and mission remain steadfast. We have been helping, we are helping, and we will continue to help.

The next project that Wellesley-Weston Chabad will be partnering up with is a toy collection to be sent to Ukrainian children. Please visit RememberUs.org or wwjewish.org for more information.



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THE FATE OF ISRAEL'S DEMOCRACY



By Daniel Pomerantz

Is Israel no longer a democracy? Is it shutting down the court system? Instituting apartheid? Are its leaders “literally Hitler”?

In a word: no.

There are serious questions being raised by serious people, yet Israel remains very much a modern, western, liberal democracy. To understand what’s really happening requires a bit of depth.

Extremism in Israeli government

The founders of the United States were concerned with avoiding tyranny, and so established a system of checks and balances to prevent any individual from gaining too much power.

Israel, on the other hand, had a different concern: that no one should be left out. And so Israel created a highly inclusive multi-party system, where even fringe political parties get to participate.

We’ve heard a lot of dramatic news about how the current Knesset (parliament) includes parties on the far right, such as Itamar Ben Gvir’s Otzma Yehudit and Bezalal Smotrich’s National Union party. Yet less well known is that the Knesset also includes leftist parties such as Labor, centrist parties like Yesh Atid, and Arab parties such as the United Arab List and Hadash Ta’al: all of which were part of the prior governing “administration,” which Israel calls the “coalition.”

Like the right, these parties have their own extremists, such as United Arab List’s Iman Khatib Yaseen, and Hadash Ta’al’s Ayman Odeh and Ahmed Tibi, who (variously) have supported internationally designated terror organizations, advocated for violence against Israeli Jews, and in some cases, even called for the destruction of the very country they lead. Extremism is par for the course in a diverse and

inclusive government, and it goes in both directions: a reality largely left out of the international narrative.

The most right wing government in Israel’s history
Some experts have referred to the current governing coalition as “the most right wing government in Israel’s history,” and this may be true if one focuses only on the coalition and ignores the numerous opposition parties, which are also in the Knesset. Even so, “right wing” has a different meaning in Israel, a country with nationalized healthcare, extremely strict gun control laws, safe and legal access to abortion, massively subsidized higher education, and more – all issues that aren’t even controversial. In Israel, the right/left divide is over other questions: holy sites, religious observance, whether to prosecute illegal monopolies, and other particularly Israeli issues. Even peace with the Palestinians is almost universally accepted by Israelis as a worthy goal: the debate is how to go about it in a manner that everyone can agree is ethical and safe.

Judicial reform

The proposals for new laws are changing by the day, but one of particular importance, and which makes a particularly apt case study of the whole, is that of judicial reform, in particular the “override law.”

The override law provides that if the Supreme Court were to strike down a law, the Knesset could override the Court, and pass the law anyway. This could potentially be a nightmare for democracy, or not, depending on how it’s carried out.

Almost every democracy has some kind of judicial override mechanism: in the United States it is the Constitutional amendment. By design, this is notoriously difficult to accomplish as it requires a three-fourths majority vote of the 50 state legislatures, a Herculean task that ensures that the Supreme Court remains independent, but not entirely disconnected, from the will of the people.

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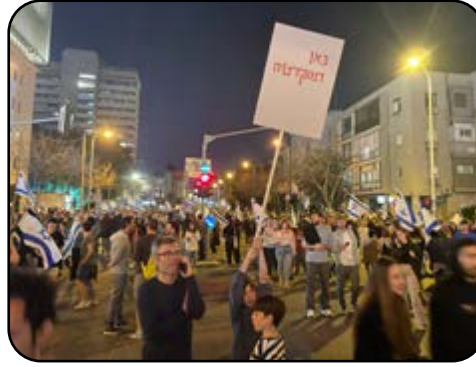
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A similarly difficult mechanism in Israel would actually be in keeping with how most democracies in the world already function. If, however, Israel were to pass a law that empowers a simple majority of the Knesset to override the court system, it is almost certain that the Supreme Court itself would strike down that law, rendering it no more than a political daydream.

In other words, there is a gap between the dramatic pronouncements that right-wing leadership is promising to its base, versus the realities of changing actual policy – especially in a country with a multiparty system and where arguing is practically the national sport.

Policy

The previous Israeli administration promised to lower the cost of living, but mostly failed. At least four administrations dedicated themselves to closing a peace deal with the Palestinians, which also hasn't happened. How many American politicians promise to end poverty, lower taxes, or a thousand other things?

This doesn't mean politicians are all opportunistic liars (though some are), but that carrying out policy is complex: it involves political

compromise, financial realities and multiple branches of government.

In short, Israel's dramatic-sounding policy ideas are up for debate. Some will be essentially impossible to pass, while others are, at best, far from certain.

The other week I joined an enormous protest in Tel Aviv with 100,000 other Israelis, in freedom and in safety, exercising a fundamental democratic right that is lacking in so much of the world. Even in disagreement, Israel continues to represent the very epitome of openness and freedom which is at the heart of modern, Western, liberal democracy.

Daniel Pomerantz is the CEO of RealityCheck (www.RealityCheckResearch.org), an organization dedicated to deepening public conversation through robust research studies and public speaking. He previously worked as a lawyer in the United States, and as CEO of HonestReporting. Daniel lives in Tel Aviv, where he lectures at Reichman and Bar Ilan Universities.

Photos: Protest in Tel Aviv by Daniel Pomerantz



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Peak TV's Unapologetic Jewish Woman

The Book *Peak TV's Unapologetic Jewish Woman: Exploring Jewish Female Representation in Contemporary Television Comedy* by Samantha Pickette analyzes the ways in which contemporary American television – with its unprecedented choice, diversity, and authenticity – is establishing a new version of the Jewish woman, and a new take on American Jewish female identity. This challenges the stereotypes of Jewish femininity that have proliferated on television since its inception.

This book features case studies of streaming, cable, and network comedy series from the past decade that were written and created by Jewish women, including *Broad City*, *Crazy Ex-Girlfriend*, *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, and others. They illustrate how this new Jewish woman has been given voice and agency by the bevy of Jewish female showrunners interested in telling stories about Jewish women for wider audiences. Pickette grew up in Stoughton, and attended Harvard as an undergraduate and Boston University for her graduate studies. She is currently an assistant professor of Instruction in Jewish Studies, and the assistant director of the Schusterman Center for Jewish Studies at the University of Texas at Austin.

Shirley Nigri Farber's interview with Samantha Pickette:

SF: In your book, you mention that a lot has changed in the new era of streaming. When you compare the portrait of female Jews on TV shows, what would you say are the main differences between the various mediums of network, cable and streaming?

Pickette: Network series tend to be the most traditional in terms of Jewish representation. Historically, Jewish characters were few and far between. Until the 1990s, for example, there were only two major Jewish female protagonists on American TV sitcoms: Molly Goldberg

from *The Goldbergs* and Rhoda Morgenstern from *The Mary Tyler Moore Show* and *Rhoda*. Even in the 90s, which featured a much larger proliferation of Jewish female characters (and Jewish characters in general), television's version of the Jewish woman largely revolved around Jewish difference, hyper-assimilation, a disconnect from religious observance, and an adherence to the Jewish Mother/JAP tropes that render her “too Jewish” even when other markers of Jewishness are absent. Even when she deviates from this paradigm – seen through something like Fran Fine’s softening of the classic JAP in *The Nanny*, for instance – she ultimately upholds the conflation of Jewish female identity and the inability to act like a “normal” (i.e. non-Jewish) woman. Jewish femininity, therefore, is embarrassing, unsuitable, vulgar, excessive, and comic in its inherent deviation from social convention. By comparison, the contemporary TV comedy series found on cable and especially streaming platforms offer an embarrassment of riches, both in terms of the sheer number of series with Jewish female showrunners and in terms of the diversity of the Jewish female protagonists that appear on these series.

In this moment of Peak TV, it seems that the lucky combination of 1) myriad platforms with seemingly unlimited content, 2) more diversity on- and off-screen, 3) an interest in “niche” storytelling, and 4) ample opportunities for self-representation have led to a reframing of television’s Jewish woman, one that emphasizes her humanity, interiority, well-roundedness, and, perhaps most strikingly, her clear and unapologetic connection to Jewish culture, outside the realms of stereotype or self-hatred.

SF: Is there a constant thread among Jewish female characters? Do you think the representation has changed along with the reality? Or is it because there are female writers, they want to portray themselves in a better view?

Pickette: The most significant change offered by the female-driven comedy series of the past decade is a diversification of television’s Jewish woman that eschews the idea of a singular model of Jewish female identity in favor of a varied spectrum of character traits, backgrounds, family dynamics, and relationships with Jewishness and Judaism. The common threads that tie these post-network Jewish women to each other – a positively framed unruliness that emphasizes subjectivity and originality, an unapologetic connection to Jewishness/Judaism unobscured by coding or self-consciousness, outward-facing humor rooted in action rather than in self-deprecation, open sexuality, and a defiance of gender norms – ultimately come together to serve two important functions.



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Peak TV's Unapologetic Jewish Woman

First, they undermine historical representations of Jewish femininity, complicating and, in many cases, bypassing altogether the Jewish Mother/JAP cul-de-sac of Jewish female representation in order to establish new tropes. Secondly, and perhaps more importantly, they humanize the Jewish woman by individualizing her. This reconception of the Jewish woman as representing only herself allows for more complex, nuanced representation that leaves room for character flaws, comic mishaps, and precarious choices without communicating blanket messages about what “all Jewish women” are like.

In this “Peak TV” moment, when television is meant to reflect life back at the audience, it stands to reason that television representations of Jewish women should get more diverse and nuanced to reflect the landscape of how actual Jews (and actual Jewish women) experience Judaism; the mechanics of the television industry have opened the door for more representation.

And that increased representation indicates a desire on the part of Jewish content creators to move beyond classical popular culture tropes of Jewishness – hyper-assimilation, coded Jewishness, stereotypes, cultural whitewashing – and towards a less self-conscious version of Jewish representation that engages more meaningfully with Jewish culture in many forms.

The progress made in the past decade towards reframing the Jewish woman on television suggests further variegation in the decades to come, and with that, perhaps the addition of even more multi-layered,

socially conscious, and female-driven storytelling that will continue to hone contemporary Jewish comedy and broaden the scope of the television medium by revealing a myriad of Jewish female characters representing an abundance of Jewish femininities.



SF: In the context of antisemitism do you think the portrait of Jewish women is more favorable than the stereotype of Jewish men?

Pickette: In the case of both male-driven and female-driven series, I think what we're seeing is a conscious shift away from one-dimensional stereotypes (in most cases – there are always outliers) and an attempt to portray Jewish masculinity and femininity with more nuance and complexity. Examples of this can be seen in series like *Broad City*, *Grace and Frankie*, and *Transparent*, where the showrunners make a clear effort to undermine

traditional stereotypes related to Jewish familial dysfunction and reframe the relationships between Jewish husbands, wives, sons, and daughters through a decidedly positive lens – a lens that often revolves around Judaism (or at least cultural Jewish identity) as a uniting force that the family relies on in times of trouble. These sorts of positive representations certainly help to counteract historically popular tropes that perpetuate antisemitic stereotypes about Jewish men and women.

Readers can purchase the book with a 30 percent discount using the code LXFANDF30 on the publisher's website: <https://rowman.com/ISBN/9781793633156/Peak-TV%E2%80%99s-Unapologetic-Jewish-Woman-Exploring-Jewish-F>

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THE FOUR CUPS OF WINE AND THEIR MYSTICAL POWER

By David Bernat, Ph.D.

The Four cups of wine play an important role in the Passover Seder. Though the origin of the observance is unknown, Jewish communities over time have attached diverse meanings to it. This article will highlight the power ascribed to the wine ritual in mystical, or Kabbalistic, tradition.

First, three pieces of background:

1) In early times, wine was produced and stored as a thick concentrate. When it came time for drinking, you added water. Thus, wine service in antiquity, and in the Passover *Haggadah*, is described as “mixing” rather than “pouring.” Even now, we add some water to our ceremonial wine, even though there is no longer the practical need. For one reason why, continue reading.

2) In simple terms, Jewish mystical, or Kabbalistic, circles espouse a holistic world view, such that the Divine Presence, the Cosmos, Humanity, and Nature, are fully connected, and reflective of each other. Part and parcel of this connectedness is the notion of binarism or duality. Thus G-d, and the Universe, have two different yet complementary sides: one feminine, and one masculine. The Divine Feminine was named “*Shechinah*.” Kabbalists also believe that our chaotic and imperfect world, filled with all manner of evil and hostility, manifests a breach between the two aspects of G-d. Our job, as Jews, is to perform *mitzvot*, commandments, both ethical and religious, in order to re-unify the Divine Presence, and, at the same time, heal our broken world.

3) Many rituals entail both word and action. The words bring meaning and intentionality to the actions, and the actions bring the words to life. In Judaism, our ritual activity is typically accompanied by a *brachah*, “blessing,” and/or *kavanah*, “meditation.”

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Back to the main point, the mystical power of the Seder's wine ritual. As with many activities of daily living, and the consumption of foods and beverages, a *brachah*, in this instance *borei pri haGafen*, acknowledging G-d as creator of "the fruit of the vine," is recited with each of the four cups. The blessing over the first cup, consistent with wine blessings on Shabbat and other festivals, includes an extended *Kiddush*, voicing the idea that the wine ritual is meant to signal the occasion's particular holiness.

These prayers are fairly uniform across all communities and denominations. However, the Kabbalists precede the *kiddush* and *brachot* for the subsequent cups with a Hebrew *kavanah*, which can be transliterated and translated as follows: *Hineni muchan umzuman lekayem mitzvat kos rishonah me'arbah kosot leshem qudshah brich hu' ushechinteh al yedei hahu' temir vene'elam beshem kol Yisrael*, or "Here I am, ready and willing, in the name of all Israel, to fulfill the commandment of the first (or second, third or fourth, as the case may be) cup among the four cups, in the name of unifying the Holy One, Blessed be He, and His *Shechinah*, because it (the unity) is hidden and disappeared."

To complete the ritual, these words are embodied, made flesh, with two actions; First, the mixing of the water, representing the feminine, with the wine. Second, when reciting *kiddush*, we lift the cup with both hands, uniting the left, which, for the Kabbalists symbolizes femininity, with the right, indicating masculinity. We see here that word and deed empower us to direct our bodies and minds toward a singular goal, unifying the complementary and mutually necessary aspects of The Cosmic Divine Presence and, in the same manner, producing peace and tranquility in the human realm.




Now, the Seder is quite widely celebrated by many, if not most participants who do not accept or adhere to the tenets of traditional Kabbalism. Nonetheless, I suggest that the framework I offer for the Four Cups can be powerfully and universally resonant. For example, if we are uncomfortable with such a distinctly gendered

theology, we can easily adapt the liturgy, in Hebrew and in translation, with more neutral language, while aspiring to a harmonious universe.

Similarly, if we do not believe in G-d, or are unsure, we can still raise the cup, and drink the wine (or grape juice) as a sign of our intention to better our world, individually and communally, locally or globally.

And with that, I wish you a joyous Pesach and a fulfilling Seder. *Chag Sameach!*

David Bernat received his PhD in Biblical Interpretation from Brandeis, and much of his writing and research has centered on Jewish ritual from antiquity to today. Bernat has held faculty positions at Wellesley College, Hebrew College, and UMass Amherst. He has a background in the wine industry and uses that expertise to lead tastings with a Jewish educational focus.



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Home Is Where the Heart Is – Or Where Moishe Is

By Maddie Solomon

In summer 2022, I took a leap of faith and moved from Los Angeles to Boston, trading burning sunsets and street tacos for deep history and cannoli. A Denver native who went to school in LA, I was attracted to Boston because it was a hub for young people. Boston had a magical energy to it; you could feel it when you were walking down Commonwealth, dancing with friends at bars in Fenway, sightseeing in art museums and getting lost on Newbury Street.

But the main reason I moved was to become a resident for the Brookline Moishe House, which introduced me to the world I now call my own, the friends I celebrate life with. I live with three other Moishe residents. We put on events five times a month for the Jewish community here and in return receive a generous rent subsidy from Moishe.

There was something incredibly special about Moishe – the emphasis on sharing your home. *Hachnasat orchim*, which means hospitality in Hebrew, was guiding me before I knew it was a Jewish value. Since my dad was a chef and small business owner, I grew


up serving tables, and hosting neighborhood dinner parties with my family in Denver. In college, I led interfaith discussions, social justice events, and vibrant Shabbat dinners. So much of Jewish history is suffering, marked by celebration of survival; for me, sharing your home is part of carrying on that tradition.

Our Moishe House has done everything from hosting a rom com night, to a Jewish text study, to a beach clean up, to a pottery event. Just this week, I hosted a flower party where guests could make their own bouquets; a good friend of mine helped me make baklava infused with rose water, and we served sparkling tea. Last month, I led a cookies and playlist exchange where guests were paired with others with similar music taste, and everyone went home with cookies. Next month, I'm holding an event with Repair the World and the other Moishe Houses in the area, where we will cook a meal for a local homeless shelter followed by a Jewish-learning discussion about food injustice.

The more events I host, the more friends I meet. At the first event I hosted here, I met my best friend who lives down the street. An interfaith Jew like me, and also working in public service, we hit it off instantly. From there, I continued to make more and more friends – one at a book exchange our house organized, another at a crepes and *parsha* study I hosted, another dancing in the street at Simchas Torah, another at the retreat I led, and so on. We have a group chat called “*Kvelling*.”

We're celebrating Judaism, but we're also sharing it. I met my upstairs neighbors while taking out the recycling and invited them inside for our house's painting and *parsha* study; they later invited us to their Christmas party.

A big challenge we face is creating meaningful programming for folks from all levels of Judaism. And how do we create inclusive spaces for all? While I don't have the magic bullet, I feel that the best events we've hosted offer room for everyone to join in – whether it's



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Home Is Where the Heart Is – Or Where Moishe Is

a *parsha* study paired with wine and cheese, a pottery event where we integrate Jewish values, or the Purim Party we're planning around the corner.

Part of being a host is learning what I call "room awareness". I find whoever is sitting by themselves, and make sure the new people feel welcome. I also use personal outreach as a tool to create community and make people feel valued. One of my friends told me recently that he only started coming to events because I reached out to him personally rather than just simply posting the Facebook event. I always reach out to guests after events to thank them for coming. It sounds simple, but it makes a difference.

Moishe serves as a strong center for young people who are often new to cities, fresh out of college, or feeling lost. In Boston alone, there are Moishe Houses in Brookline, Cambridge, Kendall Square, Fenway, Somerville – and this doesn't include Moishe pods. The events we host have the power to be the touchstone into a world of friends, their own Judaism, and their relationship to that city.

You truly get what you put into Moishe. I've brought joy and love to the table, and I've emerged a leader. It's being in charge of a series of dinner parties and soirees, where folks come in prom dresses and friends and I adorn the table in bruschetta, pastas, and cocktails. It's leading Jewish text studies about housing inequity, giving young

people the opportunity to discuss long standing issues in our community. It's leading a retreat on Jewish identity and antisemitism for Jewish adults at a historic farmhouse in Vermont. It's hosting a Hanukkah party at a local art gallery where 50 people fill the room, dancing the night away with glow sticks in one hand and jelly donuts in the other.

Boston is now my home. But I know that no matter whatever city I find myself in, there is a Moishe House there I can connect with. Through Moishe, I went to a retreat in the middle of Connecticut, stayed with a Moishe pod in Milwaukee – and took a cruise to the Caribbean, without knowing anyone beforehand. We may all come from different locales, traditions, and Jewish backgrounds, but we are connected by this common thread.

Hospitality is in my blood, and it's how I define my Judaism. What I love about Moishe is that it gives me the space to do so. When people leave my house, they ask for a recipe – or to be connected to another friend they met that night – or when our next event is. That's all I need to hear.

Maddie Solomon is the national Coordinator of Jewish Outreach & Partnerships with the Anti-Defamation League and lives in a Moishe House residence in Brookline. She is a graduate of Occidental College, where she majored in political science.



Cookies and Playlist exchange hosted by Maddie Solomon in January

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DIVORCE – THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN JEWISH AND CIVIL LAW

By Rabbi Stanley Helinski, Esq.



With all of the importance placed on marriage in Jewish law and customs, it is hard to imagine circumstances where a divorce would be recognized. After all, every country in the world recognizes some form of divorce. Nevertheless, the rabbinical court (*Bet Din*) does recognize circumstances in which parties may divorce and, in fact, Jewish law (halachah) has specific rules about divorcing parties.

Jewish law and civil law share some areas of significant difference, and some areas of significant similarity. A question may also arise as to how, in modern culture, does one obtain a Jewish divorce and have it recognized by the government, in cases where Jewish law and civil law disagree significantly.

The process is only procedural in nature and may be done quite easily. In fact, a Massachusetts court will accept the decision of a *Bet Din* in dissolving a marriage. If a couple were married through a Jewish ceremony (*chatunah*), the state will recognize the wedding regardless of its ceremony. The parties need only obtain a marriage license and are married by a person licensed to conduct marriages in the state in order for the marriage to be recognized.

For parties to be divorced under Jewish law such that they may consider remarriage without running into unlawful bigamy or run into tax filing issues, the divorce must be recognized as legal by the state. It is actually not that complicated for this to be done. To be divorced under Jewish law and to have the government recognize the divorce, parties would still need to file a complaint for divorce in a family court.

What most would likely view as the major difference between Jewish law and civil law as it pertains to divorcing involves the decision to divorce. This is not to say that both parties in both scenarios do not have the right to want a divorce. The difference involves how a divorce may be initiated. In civil law, Massachusetts (and most other states) offers some form of a “no fault” divorce. Either party need only state that there has been an irretrievable breakdown of the marriage. That is sufficient to grant a divorce under civil law, at least in Massachusetts. Even if the other party disagrees, if the court finds that there has been an irretrievable breakdown of the marriage, it will divorce the parties.

Under Jewish law, the circumstances are very different. Both Orthodox and Conservative circles recognize that a divorce may only be initiated by virtue of the husband

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presenting to his wife a proper instrument called a *get* (bill of divorce). The decision to present this document is solely the husband's. The husband does not need a good reason to deny the *get*, and it is sometimes abused or made a condition of lowered child support or a monetary bribe from the wife's family. In limited circumstances, a woman may petition a rabbinical court to force the husband to provide a *get* but, even if the Court does so, the ruling is often unenforceable except in Israel. In Orthodox circles, the refusal of a husband to provide his wife with a *get* will often mark the woman as a *mesorevet get* (refused of a divorce) or *aguna* (chained woman). She has no path to divorce, should she so desire.

This process in the modern world has become a centrifuge of dispute among Jewish people. The problem may be circumvented by the use of a prenuptial (or antenuptial) agreement. However, one should consult with an experienced attorney before giving this a try, as such agreements may be easily invalidated if not done correctly.

Despite this major distinction between a Jewish and civil divorce, there are also aspects of a divorce that have significant similarities, such as those involving the children of a marriage. One of the most difficult concepts of human life relates to the fate of divorcing parties' children after the parties have separated from one another. While the children are often too young to make decisions about where they will live after their parents separate, it is certain that, regardless of what law is applied, the children are no longer able to live with both parents, all of the time.

In both civil law and Jewish law, the standard for child custody is generally the same. The decision about where the children will reside after the parties have separated is grounded in what is in the best interests of the children. That standard is as difficult to apply as it is to settle.

There is a well-known story taken from the Torah (1 *Melach* [Kings]) regarding this principle of child custody that involves a situation brought to King Solomon for his judgment. Two women living under the same roof claimed ownership to a remaining son after one had been tragically killed. The true mother of the remaining child was unknown, but both claimed to be the true mother.

King Solomon had no other information upon which to make his decision as to whom to give the child, so he decided that he had no choice but to split the baby in half and to give one half to each mother. King Solomon announced his decision to both mothers. One mother accepted the disposition, believing it to be fair, while the other mother objected and acquiesced for the child to be given to the other mother in order to preserve his life. King Solomon then ordered that the child be given to the second mother, as the true mother would rather lose the child to another than to see harm come to him.

While the passage of thousands of years of time has not revealed a better (or different) standard for custodial disputes of a divorcing family, it has revealed a very different method of divorcing. Even in civil law before "no fault" divorces became mainstream, a party seeking to divorce carried a burden of proof that he or she held in order to be granted a divorce, and the courts could deny a parties' petition to divorce and order that the parties remain married.

Both the changes in the divorce practices in civil law over the decades and the consistency of divorce practices in Jewish law demonstrate a significant distinction between a society that seeks to track the ideology of its people versus a society who maintains the religious ideology that are believed to be Biblical commandments. Nevertheless, they coexist.

Rabbi Stanley Helinski, Esq. is a family law attorney in Massachusetts who practices in most courts of the Commonwealth and also practices law in Framingham. He received his semikhah (rabbinic ordination) in 2019.



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Mimouna: Celebrating the Conclusion of Passover



El Mouffetta (Wikipedia)

By Ronit Treatman

As the sun sets on the last day of Passover, the North African Jewish community holds a very special festivity. The Mimouna is an observance of the transition from Passover to the beginning of a new Jewish year. This is described in *Exodus 12:2*: “This month shall be unto you the beginning of months; it shall be the first month of the year to you.”

At the Passover Seder, participants read from the Haggadah, “let all who are hungry come and eat.” The Mimouna is a beautiful open house where this sentiment is reiterated. North African Jewish families end Passover by sharing their first leavened bread and delicious symbolic foods with all visitors.

The day’s rituals begin with an early morning immersion in a river or stream. Wearing festive embroidered kaftans, a minyan gathers in an orchard or other natural setting to say a special blessing for the trees. Jewish families decorate their homes with spring flowers and sheaves of wheat.



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Mimouna: Celebrating the Conclusion of Passover

The table is beautifully set with the best tablecloths, heirloom candlesticks, and colorful ceramic serving platters. The doors of the houses are thrown open, and every visitor is greeted with the phrase, “*Bracha ve Mazal*” or “Blessings and Luck”. Each guest is treated to special symbolic foods.

SYMBOLS OF THE MIMOUNA

Bread

The first food offered to Mimouna guests is a special type of leavened pancake called *el mouffletta*. It is a yeast crepe served with butter and honey. This is the first leavened food eaten after Passover by North African Jews.

El Mouffletta (photo)

Adapted from Moroccan Cooking by Rivka Levy-Melul

Ingredients:

2 Lbs. flour
4 tbsp. active, dry, rapid rise yeast
3 cups warm water
1/4 cup vegetable oil
1/8 tsp. salt
Butter
Honey

Instructions: Combine all the ingredients in a large bowl. Divide the dough into 30 small balls. Heat some oil in a large skillet over a low flame. Flatten the balls of dough between the palms of your hands. Fry each pancake over low heat, until both sides are golden-brown. Spread each *el mouffletta* with butter and honey. Roll it up like a cigar. Place on a serving platter and offer to every guest as soon as they arrive.

Sweetness

Marzipan, honey, dried fruits, cakes, nougats of nuts and honey, cookies, jams, and crystalized citrus peels are served in hopes of a sweet new year. It is traditional to prepare a sweet confection called Zbib, where raisins and sugar are simmered together, resulting in a thick, caramel-colored delicacy.

Renewal

Fresh green stalks of wheat, fava beans, or other greenery decorate the table. They symbolize the new growth of spring.

Prosperity

The number five is believed to be auspicious for protection against the evil eye. Amulets shaped like a hand, called *chamsa* (from the Hebrew word *chamesh*, meaning five) are displayed. This symbol is found in Kabbalistic manuscripts, where it doubles as the Hebrew letter “*Shin*” which is the first letter of “*Shaddai*”, one of the names that refers to God. A plate of pure white flour is placed in the middle of the table. Five silver coins, five dates, and five fava beans are arranged in the flour.

Purity

White foods, such as milk and plain yogurt, are served to symbolize purity. Jaban, a traditional confection, is prepared with egg whites, rose water,

and sugar. It is usually garnished with almonds and walnuts.

Fertility

Fish and fava beans symbolize fertility. Fish are very fecund, laying many eggs, and fava beans grow in poor, rocky soil. They both manage to procreate under adverse conditions.

The Mimouna was unique to North Africa until 1956. With the large immigration to Israel, Moroccan Jews brought this joyous celebration with them, and introduced it to everyone else. *Bracha ve mazal*, Blessings and luck!

Photo: Mouffletta from Wikipedia.

Ronit Treatman is the author of Hands-On Jewish Holidays, <https://www.handsonjewishholidays.com>

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THE RISE IN GLOBAL ANTISEMITISM

By Steven Schimmel

If you have listened to Jewish leaders or read Jewish publications over the past several years, you're aware of the urgent and growing concern that Jewish lives here in the U.S. and around the world appear to be under increasing threat. The rise in global antisemitism has been palpable, felt even in our own region with attacks and threats on Jewish institutions, including at our Worcester JCC and a synagogue in our community. Swastikas have been painted on public structures, and numbers of other serious incidents in recent years. Antisemitic incidents have been on the rise for much of the past decade.

We are a people all too accustomed to hate. It has been at the center of our history for more than 2,000 years. Antisemitism today is in some ways not very different from the hostility we have faced since the destruction of the Temple in the First Century CE – the beginning of our tragic diaspora. And whether it was the Inquisition or the Nazis, the hatred of our people is and always has been irrational.

It can't be reasoned away; it makes no difference if we try to submit to our haters or fight back. We need only to look at the tremendous success of the German Jewish community in the years before the Holocaust when Jews were leaders in business and politics, which was followed by the very darkest days of hatred. It doesn't seem to matter if we assimilate, if we are rich or poor, educated or not, and this has always been the case.

Rising antisemitism should concern us all – not only because innocent men, women, and children are targeted, but also because a society that embraces the conspiracy theories, the hate and the vitriol of antisemitism is a society that has deep faults and serious issues. Antisemitism finds fertile ground when there is discord among a population. This form of hatred points to societal illness; through history it has been a sign of civilization in peril.

It should come as no surprise that the rise in antisemitic incidents corresponds with the advent of social media. Leading online platforms have taken a stance on limiting counterfactual information about the pandemic and election fraud, but have failed to curb conspiracy theorists from spreading hate about Jews. At a time when more people are turning to social media sources for their news, and traditional news sources are facing irrelevance and declining viewership, tens of millions of social media users are routinely exposed to antisemitic material masquerading as factual news.

This is also happening at the same time that there has been a renewed push to end online censorship, with disastrous results. As



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THE RISE IN GLOBAL ANTISEMITISM

an example, the Twitter platform has recently exploded with hate messaging. Just as there was concern in the years after 9/11 that future terrorists were being indoctrinated online, there is fear today that antisemitic indoctrination is happening online.

One would think that the world our children will inherit should be a better one. The existence of Israel, the assurances of religious freedom and the alliances we have built should ensure security – but it isn't enough. The modern-day mission of the Jewish people must be to turn to the strength of the global Jewish community and direct it to ensure that the threats against our people won't impact the next generation.

Jewish life can and will thrive despite the threats, through a strengthening of community-building through fostering more intentional connections, and by ensuring the protection and security of Jews everywhere.

The ultimate good news may be that the current situation, both abroad and in the United States, has compelled us to refocus on a more enduring Jewish world, which will be more suitable to our current state of affairs and the one we will likely continue to face in the 21st century. Perhaps these external pressures will strengthen our resolve and encourage us to rededicate ourselves to securing Jewish peoplehood.

Steven Schimmel is the Executive Director of the Jewish Federation of Central Mass. The views expressed here do not necessarily reflect the views of the Jewish Federation of Central Massachusetts.

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What the Hallel?

By Rabbi Jessica Lowenthal

I have such fond memories of Seders in my childhood. I grew up to be a rabbi, so it makes sense that I enjoyed the stories and songs that spread out over an hour or three. We would start the night with the “Seder” song, which was just the order of the whole evening.

The word “Seder” itself means order, so focusing on the precise stages was essential. For the first half of the Seder, we went through each section and read each word of the Haggadah. But once the meal was served, it was a bit of a free for all. We eventually remembered to find the afikomen, and most years we quickly read enough to drink the last two glasses of wine, but it was generally an afterthought.

While flipping through the pages to get to the end, we always skipped over Hallel. Absolutely no one knew the actual Hallel prayers or tunes. We had a general understanding that it was something musical, so we sang another round of the “frog song” and called it a night. I had no idea what I was missing!

Hallel is a series of prayers and psalms that date back to the beginnings of the Talmud. We are instructed to recite it, either the Great Hallel, full or half Hallel on specific days – Rosh Hodesh, Sukkot (including Simchat Torah), Hanukkah, Shavuot, and Passover. Some have added it to more recent holidays, such as Israeli Independence Day.

Hallel is a beautiful composition that blends euphoric joy with a deep plea for protection and help from the Divine.

Since the main focus during these psalms is joyful praise, one might expect to say Hallel on Rosh Hashanah, but we do not. In the Talmud, the ministering angels ask G-d why humans do not recite Hallel on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur. G-d responds, “Is it possible that while the King (G-d) is sitting on the throne of judgment and the books of life and the books of death are open in front of Him, the Jewish people are reciting joyful songs of praise?”

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What the Hallel?



Clearly, while there is a tinge of concern in Hallel, there is no question that these selections appear only on the most joyful and happy of days.

Which brings us back to the Passover Seder. Passover is actually a very complicated and nuanced holiday. It is not wholly a celebration. The Seder is constructed so that we feel as if we are slaves at the beginning of Seder, and move to freedom by the end.

We take time to recognize the pain and suffering of the Egyptians who were harmed and killed by the 10 plagues.

So how is it possible that Rosh Hashanah, a generally happy day, is too distressing to sing Hallel, but Passover is not?

We find one answer in the *Midrash*. The ministering angels in heaven wanted to sing with joy upon the Exodus from Egypt. As they were preparing, G-d admonished them, saying, "The work of my hands (the Egyptians) are drowning at sea, and you wish to sing songs?" (*Megillah* 10b).

However, there was no such admonishment towards the people. There is a recognition that as human beings, sometimes we need to celebrate, even when the victory is not picture perfect. Indeed, there are very few victories where someone is not left injured or negatively impacted.

Passover is one of those times. Yes, the plagues were tragic and terrible and absolutely harmed so many Egyptians. But the Israelites had spent 400 years as slaves, and this is what G-d determined to be necessary for their freedom and subsequent nation-building. So we sing and celebrate and are thankful for the freedom we have today. Next week we can return to the difficult nuances of life, but for Seder, we sing Hallel.

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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TRAVELING TO SYRIA




By Howard Kaplan

In the spring of 1971, during my junior year abroad at Hebrew University, an American classmate and I decided to travel to Arab countries to see the other side. At the American Embassy in Cyprus, they issued us new passports, as ours had Israeli visas in them. With these crisp passports, we flew to Beirut.


In a Cyprus youth hostel, someone mentioned that an American from UC Santa Barbara named Cary was studying at American University in Beirut (AUB).

And so that Friday at AUB, we knocked at Cary's dorm room. His Syrian roommate opened the door. Cary was away for the weekend. We exaggerated and explained we were from the same university in California. I was, in fact, at Berkeley. We had sleeping bags and the Syrian invited us to spend the weekend until Cary returned. Arab culture has a vast tradition of welcoming the stranger. I first learned then that this was an outgrowth of the desert, when wanderers in the sands were always welcomed into one's tent. The Syrian explained that we could take a shared taxi to Damascus, 50 miles away, and easily obtain visas at the border.

At that time, just 5,000 of Syria's Jews, who once numbered 75,000, remained. In Damascus, they lived in a ghetto in the eastern part of the city, farthest from the cooling Mediterranean breezes. Not long ago, Bashar al-Assad promoted a cross-city bike riding event to show that "Syria pulses with life." It concluded at the Bab Sharqi, the Gate of the Sun, the nearest of the still standing seven ancient Roman gates of the Old City to the morning sunrise, in the once-Jewish quarter. And so in 1971, after hitting some tourist spots like the Great Umayyad Mosque, we headed for the Jewish ghetto. My friend Steve, who was just outside the entrance, grabbed my arm. (Well he probably didn't, but he was very concerned.) He had spotted someone near us at the Great Umayyad Mosque, now across the street, who was clearly following us. We immediately headed to Marjeh Square, where the Israeli spy Eli Cohen had been hung in 1966, his intelligence crucial a year later in the Six Day War when Israel conquered the Golan Heights from Syria. We headed hurriedly by shared taxi to Beirut. Cary returned and talked to us at length about the awful Israelis. Since we were in



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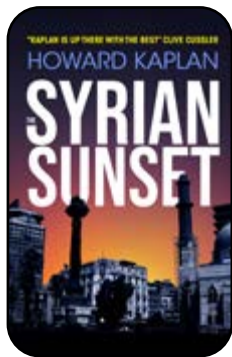
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TRAVELING TO SYRIA



an Arab country, we listened rather than spoke. At the Egyptian Embassy in Beirut, our less-new passports were festooned with Lebanese and Syrian entry and exit stamps, and the Egyptian Embassy added their imprimatur to visit Egypt.

From the Beirut airport I wrote a letter to Cary, confessing I was in Jerusalem for a few more months, a hop away, and asked him why didn't he come down sometime, and I'd show him the sights. In Cairo, all the glass exhibits in the great Egyptian Museum were crisscrossed by masking tape, as Israeli air

strikes continued to hit Egypt into the 1970s. Somehow, we had the name of Hassan Fathy, the famous Egyptian architect, and showed up, ragged and with intestinal distress from the blinding heat and food in the Valley of the Kings, at his front door, uninvited. He clapped his hands twice, and his tall Nubian servant made us grilled chicken over white rice.

When I returned to my dorm in Jerusalem, there was Cary sleeping in my bed. He had explained to my Israeli roommate, who knew I had been trying to get into the Arab countries, that I had just visited him in Beirut. My Orthodox scientist roommate took him into the Occupied Territories, which were far friendlier then, and showed him around.

For me, during that spring of 1971, began a lifelong fascination, interest, and passion with Syria. A few years later, I started to write *The Damascus Cover*, a spy novel about the rescue of Jewish children from the ghetto in Damascus. Published in 1977, it hung onto the lower rungs of the *Los Angeles Times*' bestseller list for some months. Four decades later, a film director in Los Angeles asked an acquaintance of mine if she knew of any good Middle East novels. *The Damascus Cover* was thus filmed in Morocco and Israel with Jonathan Rhys Meyers and Sir John Hurt, in his final picture, and seven Israeli actors - rather a surprise in all aspects.

A few years ago on Facebook I met Brooks Newmark, a former Conservative member of the British Parliament who had advocated for the bombing of Bashar al-Assad's barrel bomb capacity, to give the Free Syrian Army, a robust outfit at the time, a fighting chance against the murderous regime. Some months later, walking on Pico Boulevard in Los Angeles, he said, "It's time for you to go back to Syria." He meant to a new novel. Since my last three books about the Israeli-Palestinian conundrum had exhausted me due to the lack of political progress, I thought, "Good idea." Brooks believed and promoted his belief that the opportunity to dislodge Bashar al-Assad was there, if the Americans and British could muster the will.

He pointed me to books, research and some of his own writings.

At the end of 2022, *The Syrian Sunset*, my new novel about the Syrian Civil War, the failure of the West to save the Syrian people, and how that inaction against the Russian incursion in Syria emboldened Vladimir Putin to invade Ukraine, was published. The protagonists are an Israeli intelligence officer and a Syrian Military Intelligence officer who were both interested, often against their superiors' wishes, in working for the greater good. These and other fictional characters move through actual historical events. By now, all Syrian Jews have left the country, many bribed out by a lone Jewish woman in Toronto who in turn bribed Syrian officials to free them. Their former presence and heritage play a central role in *The Syrian Sunset*. The early reviews regularly remarked that the novel is unexpectedly funny. I felt that the balance of humor and barbarity would both entertain and inform.

Howard Kaplan is the author of five Middle East novels. The film adaptation of "The Damascus Cover" can be seen on the free streaming service Tubi.

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FREEDOM IS YOUR FOCUS, APPRECIATION IS YOUR GIFT



By Yosef Rodrigues

One verse in the Torah (*Numbers* 11:4-10) has been crucial for me, as an observant Modern Orthodox Jew, to grasp. It regards one of the best approaches for the definition of “Pesach Equals Freedom,” when G-d nourished the Jewish people with “manna from heaven” while they were in the desert.

Who will feed us meat? We remember the fish that we ate in Egypt [...], but now [...] we have nothing [...] but the manna [...]. And the wrath of G-d flared greatly [...]

Our Sages remind us of the taste of this exquisite food, as good as anything the Jews ever craved. It was plentifully available and free, yet they still complained. Why would a group of people who had just been unchained after several years of slavery forget to focus on what they had?

G-d knew how difficult it would be to make the Israelites happy. The issue lies in the complex and fascinating way Hashem wired us. He wired our minds effortlessly to focus on what we do not have. After all these centuries, this pattern bears repeating. Thus, it takes real focus to ponder the blessings of what we do have. Because they were instead distracted by what they didn't have, G-d recognized that there was no way He could ever make the Israelites blissful, and the ire of G-d subsequently widened.

Not too long ago, during one of my recent Passovers, someone gave a beautiful analogy about when G-d provided many blessings to Jewish people in the desert. Providing the Jewish people with freedom



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and all their physical needs, with little or no effort on their part, was like when someone spends hours cooking loved ones a full-course meal with all their favorite foods.

In each case, they can dismiss it for rather petty reasons, instead of demonstrating gratitude. How frustrated would you be if there was just no making this person gratified, or genuinely appreciative, or even in acknowledgement of your hard work?

While many interpreters of this biblical story differ in their stridency, most recognize that the Jewish people had been given everything from *HaShem* at that moment. But rather than relishing Hashem over what they “now” had, they permitted their minds to trick them into their own easy and egotistical needs. The Jewish people ended up being ungrateful, and inherently grumbled about all they didn’t have.

Passover memorializes the emancipation of the Israelites from slavery in ancient Egypt, and is observed by avoiding leaven and highlighted by the *Seder* (literally “order”), which includes drinking the four cups of wine, eating matzah and bitter herbs, and retelling the story of the Exodus. We have great meals full of meaning, but we also eat *matzah* – flat unleavened bread – which is a *mitzvah* (command, precept, good deed) to celebrate the most remarkable series of miracles ever experienced. It’s a moment to prompt us to reach above nature, to the miraculous.

Flat and unflavored? Yes, as it embodies humility. By liberating ourselves of inflated egos, we can tap into the extraordinary well of divine energy we all have within our souls, the same power G-d instilled in us “to pass over” our lacks and doubts. Every symbolic food on the *Seder* plate thrives in sense and reference.

Pesach is also known as the Festival *Matzos* (*Matzot*). The fleeing Israelites left their bondage so hastily that they didn’t even wait for their bread dough to rise. The Holy One, blessed is He, refers to

the Festival as *Chag ha-Matzos*, for He seeks to praise Israel, who followed Him into the desert without asking where they were headed, and without waiting for their dough to rise.

Personally, every Pesach has this powerful life-changing lesson, for a “full plate” can’t be taken for granted. Hence, it’s utterly mandatory to take time every day to contemplate the blessings G-d showers us with. Pesach also reminds us that a lack of appreciation and awareness is the first step toward unhappiness and thanklessness.

The lesson I would like to highlight vis-à-vis this ancient feast celebrating the Israelites’ Exodus from Egyptian slavery in the 1200s BCE is its importance in today’s modern lives. Yet Pesach represents the beginning of the harvest season as well. It is also called *Zeman Herutenu* (“The Time of Our Freedom”). Once we reframe things in this light, we will joyously engage selflessly and embrace freedom of choice as a focus, and appreciation as a gift.

While it might sound harsh, it’s precisely what G-d wanted. We can make choices and do what’s right over choosing “leavened body picks,” which are easy and egotistical. Pesach is a holiday when we can take the time to thank the One who gives and gives, and stop focusing on the things we don’t have. It’s a time when we can fill our hunger with the right kinds of thoughts, and appreciate, in amazement, how grateful we can be over all that we have.

Yosef Rodrigues earned a Ph.D. in Portuguese Studies from Aberta University in partnership with Brown University with a dissertation on Fernando Pessoa’s poetry and Jewish mysticism. He is the Director of the Portuguese Language Center Camões, I.P. at UMass Boston. He is a faculty member at Boston College and UMass Boston and the author of the Portuguese book “À Luz da Kabbalah” (publ. Guerra & Paz).



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**JALSA HELPS THE FEED KIDS COALITION
PASS A SCHOOL MEALS BILL**

By Susie Davidson

When you're malnourished, you can't fulfill your potential. And sadly, one in five households with children in Massachusetts currently face food insecurity. But a bill currently going through the legislature aims to address this problem, right in the classroom.

The Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action (JALSA) has teamed up with the Feed Kids Coalition, an East Boston-based affiliate of Project Bread USM, to help pass "School Meals for All" legislation that would make sure that no matter what may be happening in kids' schools, communities, or in public health altogether, they will have access to nutritious school breakfasts and lunches.

"Massachusetts is one of only five states that, on June 30, 2022, agreed to provide funding to extend school lunch beyond the end of the COVID emergency federal funding," said JALSA Executive Director Cindy Rowe.

This is, of course, a Jewish issue. But why specifically Jewish?

"We know the experience of being stigmatized in school for being different," said Rabbi Tom Alpert of Temple Etz Chaim in Franklin, who is in the Feed Kids Coalition and sits on JALSA's Clergy Advisory Committee.

"School meals for all will remove the stigma, actual or perceived, from those who take free or reduced price school meals," Alpert said. "More people will participate, which means that more children will eat a vital and nutritious meal." He quoted from Pirkei Avot: "You are not required to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it."

Rabbi Joseph Meszler from Temple Sinai in Sharon is also in the Coalition. The Feed Kids website stresses that school meals are a critical source of nutrition for many children, which helps them learn and be active. Well-fed kids, it states, do better academically, emotionally, and physically: "They also establish lifelong healthy eating habits that can reduce the cases and severity of type 2 diabetes, heart disease, and obesity, and the costs associated with these diseases."

Under An Act Relative to Universal School Meals (S.314/H.714), all schools would make school breakfast and lunch available to all students at no charge, and the cost of providing school meals not covered by the National School Lunch Program federal reimbursement would be covered by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. S.314/H.714 would also maximize federal reimbursements by encouraging schools to support Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) outreach



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**JALSA HELPS THE FEED KIDS COALITION
PASS A SCHOOL MEALS BILL**

to families, because students in households enrolled in SNAP receive free school meals reimbursed by the federal government.

“This has been an absolute game-changer for students,” said Doug Dias, director of finance and operations for Marlborough public schools. “They are all used to having free meals, and reverting to paid meals would be very detrimental to food service programs and low-income students.”

The effort has been long in waiting. On Nov. 15, 2021, JALSA submitted testimony at the State House before Jason M. Lewis, Senate Chair and Alice H. Peisch House Chair of the Joint Committee on Education. “The Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action (JALSA) is a membership-based non-profit organization based in Boston, with many hundreds of members and supporters statewide. Inspired by Jewish teachings and values,” it began.

“The Torah specifically instructs farmers: ‘When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap all the way to the edges of your field.’ (Lev. 19:9),” the testimony stated. “The corners of the fields are to be left unharvested so that the poor may eat from them. This is interpreted to mean that we have a perpetual obligation to feed those who are hungry, which will not be satisfied until every person is fully fed.”

The testimony cited the benefits of school meals, and lamented that 27 percent of food insecure children in Massachusetts are not eligible for free or reduced-price meals. JALSA also participated in a Jan. 23 Action Day at the State House, which included distributing a letter to every legislator at an event at the State House. The Coalition’s impact is clear. 56,665 more kids ate school lunch daily in Oct., 2022, compared to in Oct., 2019. Federal standards have also recently been updated for school meals, limiting added sugars, decreasing sodium and increasing whole grains.

“This bill would create a new system for feeding Massachusetts children,” JALSA’s testimony read. “One without paperwork to show a family’s income; one without meal debt; one without stigma. One that is equitable. A system where the focus is squarely on feeding kids quality school meals.”

To connect with JALSA about participating in the Feed Kids campaign, email office@jalsa.org or call 617-227-3000. For more information about the issue, go to <https://feedkidsma.org/>

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



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A TIME FOR SOLIDARITY

By Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski, Ph.D.



Looming on the calendar for both Jews and Christians are the great spring festivals of Passover and Easter. In the world of Jewish-Christian relations in which I work, much has been made of the potential that this season has for drawing Jewish and Christian communities closer together. After all, the story of redemption and liberation from Exodus did much to shape early

Christian interpretations of the meaning of Jesus' life and death. Many of the core teaching and ideals that animate Jewish and Christian traditions draw on the retelling and remembrance of these grand narratives of Passover and Easter. In the modern era of Jewish-Christian relations, we have learned that much can be gained from listening to one another. We can develop a deeper appreciation for our neighbor when we perceive how these stories shape and inform their collective and individual ways of making sense of the world we live in together.

Of course, this season has not always held out such hope. For too many centuries, the intersecting seasons of Passover and Easter carried danger for Jews living in Christian lands. Popular Christian teaching and preaching around Palm Sunday and Good Friday led too often to various forms of violence against local Jews, culminating sometimes in riots, forced conversions, and murder. In some medieval territories, local authorities issued laws compelling Jews to remain indoors during the Christian observance of Holy Week due to the threat of violence. The remembrance of God's liberation at Passover by Jews in medieval Europe was an act of resistance and resilience in light of such hostility.

Even if today such threats of violence are not common, Christians still have a legacy to reckon with. As part of their repentance for complicity in the Shoah and antisemitism, many Christian denominations

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have issued clear sets of teachings and guidelines that renounce all forms of antisemitism and violence perpetuated against Jews. Special care is now taken by many Christian leaders during Holy Week and Easter to not repeat the slanders against the Jewish people about the death of Jesus that have been a stain on Christian life and practice.

In light of this work of Christian repentance, Jewish communities have responded in good faith, perhaps cautiously at first, but gradually, resulting in growth of trust and good will. Throughout the greater Boston region, there are many examples now of churches and synagogues working together in common cause to have a positive effect on their local communities. As the director of the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College, I have seen first-hand the legacy of this work and the potential it has for the future.

A decade ago, it would have been possible to think that there was an inexorable trajectory of Jews in America living in security and safety. But the waves of violent antisemitic attacks against Jews in this country in recent years tell another story. Antisemitic violence and rhetoric are on the rise nationally and has occurred here in Boston and eastern Massachusetts. There are now openly Nazi and fascists active in the region who are not afraid to show up at public events to intimidate and threaten others. It feels like the clocks have turned back a century.

Given our current reality, this is a moment for Jews and Christians to make a renewed commitment to stand together in solidarity. Christians ought to explicitly ally themselves with their Jewish neighbors and to let them know that they are not alone. Antisemitism is alive and well and given their collective history, Christians have a particular moral duty to make a public stand against this. Especially during this Holy Week, Christians should raise their voices in rejection of all forms of antisemitism and hatred aimed against Jews.

It is my hope that by doing this, Christians will renew their commitment to their Jewish neighbors and that this commitment will be reciprocated. Solidarity between Jews and Christians can lead to renewed collaboration on the local level. It can move our people towards making common cause to stand with other vulnerable and marginalized communities. During this special season of proclaiming liberation, redemption, and new life, it is my hope that the seeds for standing together in solidarity will be planted and spring forth as a sign and a promise.

Daniel Joslyn-Siemiatkoski is the director of the Center for Christian-Jewish Learning at Boston College.

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Unmatched:
An Orthodox Woman's Mystifying Journey to Find Marriage and Meaning
 by Sarah Lavane, Sifria Publishing, 2023

When author Sarah Lavane (not her real name) asked me to review her book *Unmatched*, I was interested but also hesitant. Deep inside I was a bit uncomfortable seeing my own story, just like that happened when I watched the Israeli TV series *Srugim*. As a formerly Orthodox woman who went on *shidduchim* (blind dates set up by a matchmaker) for about six years, I know the struggle of going out with strangers hoping to find “the perfect match” in a husband. But many Jews go out on *shidduchim* and keep it private, because no one needs to know the reasons why the match did not work.

People are talking about Prince Harry's tell-all memoir *Spare*, where he trashes his royal family for the sake of expressing his side of the story and getting over his trauma. So I wanted to understand Sarah's goal in exposing her life and the people she met. How was she going to depict her version of the story, while avoiding *lashon hara* (gossip) and not sounding revengeful?

While she protects her book subjects' identity by not using her real name, she also disguises theirs with funny nicknames, such as the YeshivaGuy, Accent, Ponytail, GothGuy, and Singular.

Sarah conveys the pressure of being single in an Orthodox environment while seeing schoolmates getting married. She is candid about interacting with non-Jewish guys and pursuing a higher education in a community where girls don't learn past high school. She explains her embarrassment when lectured by matchmakers, and being questioned about her age or her level of religious observance.

I had mixed emotions while reading the book, because I would remember how emotionally draining it was to be single in a milieu where the goal was to form a family. Now that I'm married, I may have deleted the bad dates from my memory, but thank G-d I didn't have the traumatizing experiences that Sarah had. She describes being left alone at a restaurant, having a guy limit her order to the cheapest item on the menu, waiting on the street for about an hour for another, and having a guy say to her face that she was ugly. On top of that, she was always blamed for being picky.

Nonetheless, instead of sympathizing with her distress, I found myself getting tired of all the *kvetching*, the finding faults on each date, and the nitpicking over every situation. I understand she was sensitive about being seen in public with older men, or with someone who looked like a beggar. But it felt more like a dripping faucet, all the *kvetching* about the mens' looks, the places they brought her to, their mannerisms, their means of transportation. I started to wonder if the reason I did not marry at a younger age was because I was choosy like her.

The most inspiring part is to see that throughout Sarah's ordeal, she did not lose her faith or diminish her level of observance of Jewish laws. Even when she starts developing feelings for a non-Jew, she counterbalances and increases her good deeds and her Judaism. I eventually felt a deep connection with her when she kept bumping into the same guy who already rejected her, and when the guy who said she was not his match (*bashert*) wanted to continue talking to and seeing her. It took me a while to perceive the fine line between being hopeful and being a masochist.

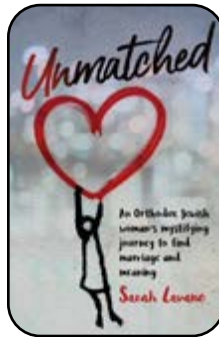
While she reflects on humility, I think that she forgot to show gratitude. Sometimes women are not thankful for the person who is giving their time to meet you and often, his hard-earned money to take you out and make an impression, while overcoming his inhibitions.

When I read a book, I like to imagine who else might enjoy it. Sarah includes many terms that even secular Jews would not be able to understand without flipping to the glossary. For example, *kiruv* (to bring someone close to Judaism), *chazal* (our sages), or *hishtadlus* (personal effort). But then, people around the world enjoyed watching *Shtisel*, and *Unorthodox*, so they might enjoy reading Sarah's perspective.

I believe that girls in the same situation might either feel represented, or rethink the way they choose a soulmate. Parents and matchmakers might be able to see through the eyes of single girls, and better guide them. I felt that perhaps compatibility was overrated as I read her descriptions of getting along with men who had nothing to do with her lifestyle – some were not religious; others were not even Jews.

I just hope that this cathartic experience of writing a memoir brings the writer some kind of relief. Even when we cannot see the point of going through so many bad encounters, we need to forget the past suffering and begin a potential new relationship encounter with a happy face. Our match doesn't need to check all the boxes on our wishlist, as he could be someone who shares the same goal for the future, in terms of starting a Jewish family.

The book is available on Amazon.





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Yom HaShoah Commemoration

Sunday, April 16, 2 p.m., Faneuil Hall, Boston. “Remembering Our Past, Meeting This Moment, Ensuring Our Future,” *Yom HaShoah* Commemoration with candle lighting, speakers and student essay contest winners. Featuring Holocaust survivor Jack Trompetter.

Live and in-person, livestream will also be conducted and simulcast on many area local cable access channels.

For information, contact Emily Reichman at the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston at ereichman@jrcrboston.org, call 617-457-8600, or visit @BostonJCRC on Twitter, or facebook.com/BostonJCRC.



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Dara Horn, “People Love Dead Jews” In commemoration of Holocaust Remembrance Day

Tuesday, April 18, 5-6:15 p.m. Boston College Heights Room, Corcoran Commons (Hybrid event). In her latest book, acclaimed author Dara Horn explores a pointed question: Why do far too many people seem to love dead Jews, but ignore the living ones? In 2022, the Holocaust continues to make headlines, fill our films and fiction, and generate extraordinary interest far beyond our community. Yet ignorance and indifference towards Jew-hatred today seems to be higher than ever. What’s going on?

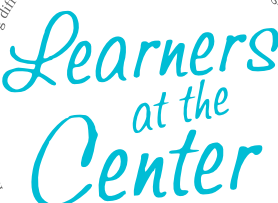
Dara Horn is the award-winning author of six books, including the novels *A Guide for the Perplexed* (Norton 2013), and *Eternal Life* (Norton 2018), and the essay collection *People Love Dead Jews* (Norton 2021). Horn received her doctorate in Yiddish and Hebrew literature from Harvard University. Co-sponsored by the Boisi Center for Religion and American Public Life and the Jewish Studies Program at Boston College. Reception sponsored by Boston College Hillel / Hillel Council of New England. Email cjlearning@bc.edu to attend in-person or to register to join by Zoom.



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Yom HaShoah Commemoration

In commemoration of Yom HaShoah, the Central Massachusetts Jewish Theatre Company presents “*Survivors*,” a cautionary tale on the risks of normalized hate. This inspirational and uplifting play ensures that the voices of Holocaust survivors will never be silenced. **April 15 and 16** at the BrickBox Theater, Worcester. For details, go to www.cmjtc.org.



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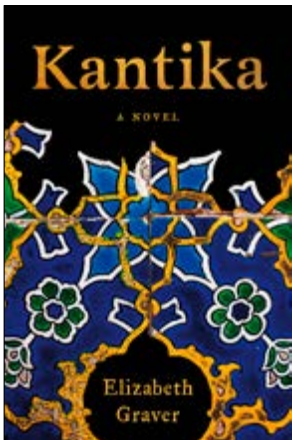
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EVENT LISTING

Sandra Seltzer Silberman HBI Conversations Series



May 3, 7 p.m.

Join the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute online as we speak with Elizabeth Graver, author of *Kantika*, a dazzling Sephardic multigenerational saga that moves from Istanbul to Barcelona, Havana, and New York, exploring displacement, endurance, and family as home.

Free and open to all.
Information: <https://bit.ly/HBIConversationsElizabethGraver>

Moroccan Mimouna Celebration

Join the Israeli American Council in Newton on *April 13* to celebrate the Jewish holiday of Mimouna! This holiday is celebrated in North African communities after Passover ends. It is a time to celebrate the end of the holiday and the return to eating chametz. Enjoy festive music, delicious Moroccan desserts (all homemade in a Kosher kitchen), and a lovely atmosphere. Tickets are \$25, \$30 on the day of, and can be reserved at iac360.org/iac-events/mimouna

Beth El Sudbury "Aleinu: It's on Us!"

Sunday, April 23 from 3-5 p.m. at Congregation Beth El, 105 Hudson Rd., Sudbury. Recited at the end of services, *Aleinu* (literally "it's on us" or "it's up to us") calls on us to discover where the brokenness of the world overlaps with our particular human gifts.

Join Rabbi Tiferet Berenbaum of Temple Beth Zion in Brookline for a discussion of *Aleinu* in a liturgical and historical context, as well as to explore how we use its charge to discover our individual role in mitigating the problems in our world. Sponsored by the Adult Education Committee. For more information, visit <https://bethelsudbury.org/events/aleinu-its-on-us/>

for more events, visit
www.ShalomMA.com

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Spring Breaks Up

By Izzy Abrahamson

“Do you want to hear something funny?” Doodle the orphan asked Rabbi Kibbitz.

The old man waited.

They were sitting on the bench outside the Rabbi’s study, watching for the spring thaw, the first moment when sprigs of fresh parsley would push up through the snow and just-softened earth.

Winters in the Village of Chelm were cold and dark and gray, and so so serious. Even though Passover was approaching, the old man and the young boy were bundled up in heavy coats and fur hats.

“Do you want to hear something funny?”

The parsley didn’t grow.

At last Rabbi Kibbitz sighed. “Yes, I want to hear something funny.”

“Me too!” Doodle said, before breaking up in hysterical laughter. “Me too!”

Rabbi Kibbitz tried to hold himself back, but Doodle’s silliness was infectious and soon he was laughing along, davening side to side, as was his habit, with guffaws.

A moment later, Reb Cantor, the merchant, came running up, huffing and puffing. “Rabbi Kibbitz. Are you all right?”

“Am I all right?” the old man sputtered between convulsions.

“Are you having a fit?”

“Am I having a fit?”

Reb Cantor looked at Doodle. “Why is he echoing everything I say?”

Doodle giggled. “Why is he echoing everything you say?”

“I don’t know!” Reb Cantor snarled. “I was asking you.”

Rabbi Kibbitz and Doodle exchanged looks and continued to snigger.

In a rage, Reb Cantor shouted, “Why are you laughing at me?”

This stunned the two laughers into silence.

“Isaac, we are not laughing at you.” Rabbi Kibbitz said. “Doodle asked me if I wanted to hear something funny?”

“And?” Reb Cantor demanded. “And?!”

Both Rabbi Kibbitz and young Doodle felt their stomachs clench and vibrate. Smirks quivered on their lips.

Exasperated, Reb Cantor yelled, “Doodle, what did you say that was so funny?”

“What did I say?” Doodle’s eyes twinkled at the rabbi, who nodded back. “Me too!”

“Me too!” Rabbi Kibbitz echoed.

And again they devolved into hilarious laughter.

For exactly thirteen moments, Reb Cantor stood with his hands

on his enormous hips. Then his frown began to twitch and turn, and soon his booming laugh joined Doodle’s high-pitched chortles and the Rabbi’s deeper peals.

By noon, most of the village was standing around outside the Rabbi’s study. Half were laughing uncontrollably, while the other half were asking, “What’s the joke?” or “Is it contagious?”

Between titters, Reb Schlemiel, the carpenter, told Mrs. Rosen the washerwoman, “Should I get a hammer? You see? A hammer?”

Mrs. Rosen didn’t see at all. How could a hammer possibly help? Maybe a bucket of warm water was thrown... And the moment she imagined the look on Reb Cantor’s face as he got doused, she too joined in the hilarity.

* * * *

Standing behind the counter in her restaurant, Mrs. Chaipul wondered why her dining room was completely empty. Was there a fire? She sniffed the air, but smelled only her chicken matzah ball soup, which simmered on the stove for at least three weeks before the Seder.

She looked out the window, but the round village square was deserted.

She opened the door and heard a chorus of chaos coming from the far side of the synagogue.

“Oy.” Mrs. Chaipul shook her head. After months of staying indoors to keep warm, sometimes the villagers went a little mad. She armed herself with a saucepan and a long wooden spoon, and strode out into the crisp sunshine.

Soon, Mrs. Chaipul saw a striking tableau of helpless mirth. Men were leaning against the synagogue’s walls. Women were holding their sides. Children were rolling on the ground that was just on the edge from frozen to mud.

“What’s going on?” she asked.

Everyone pointed every which way, but she followed their fingers to the epicenter. No big surprise - Doodle and her husband*. (*Yes, Rabbi Kibbitz and Mrs. Chaipul were married, but she kept her name. It’s another story.)

“Oy,” Mrs. Chaipul sighed. Then, without hesitation, she began banging the pot with the spoon.

“Clang! Clang! Clang!” The reverberations echoed, as the villagers of Chelm came to their senses. Reb Cantor wiped tears from his cheeks.

Rabbi Kibbitz and Doodle looked up at Mrs. Chaipul.

“You want to hear something funny?” Rabbi Kibbitz snorted.

Stone-faced, Mrs. Chaipul nodded.

“Me too!” Rabbi Kibbitz grinned. “Me too.”

Mrs. Chaipul waited. The rabbi waited. The villagers waited.

No one laughed.

“Is it lunch time already?” the rabbi asked quietly.

Mrs. Chaipul nodded, turned, and strode back to her restaurant.

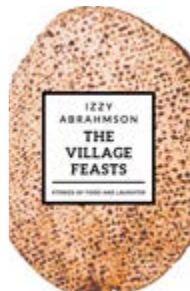
Reb Cantor helped the old rabbi to his feet. One by one the other villagers wandered off.

At last, only the young orphan was left sitting on the bench.

Doodle looked down and spotted three bright green parsley leaves springing up through the melting snow and damp soil.

He smiled, and began to giggle.

Abridged from the book The Village Feasts by Izzy Abrahamson. Izzy Abrahamson is the pen name for the Jewish storyteller Mark Binder. Available on Amazon and at IzzyAbe.com.



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A vibrant, colorful illustration celebrating Passover. The scene is framed by a red border and filled with various symbols: matzah (unleavened bread) is shown in several places, including a stack on the left and a large piece on the right. A Seder plate is prominently featured at the top, containing a hard-boiled egg, a fish, a carrot, and other traditional items. There are also bottles of wine and glasses of wine at the bottom, along with a large orange egg. The background is decorated with floral patterns and greenery.

Happy Passover

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