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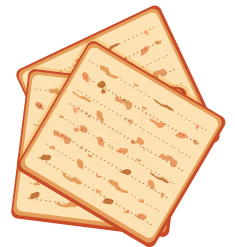
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Happy Passover



Gaby Weisman

As we gather around the seder table to retell the story of our ancestors' exodus from Egypt, we are reminded not only of our journey from bondage to freedom thousands of years ago, but of our constant need to fight against antisemitism.

In recent years, we have witnessed increased incidences, from hateful rhetoric to violent attacks, as Jews continue to face persecution simply for practicing their faith. For me, it is hard to believe that more than 170 days have passed after the terrorist invasion of Israel and the kidnapping of hundreds of civilians. As I write this editorial, there are more than one hundred people held captive in Gaza and thousands of Palestinians caught in this war.

I believe it is important to understand that what's at stake is not only the security of the state of Israel, but also the survival of the Jewish people around the world. Make no mistake, antisemitism didn't start on Oct. 7, it's just that now people have an excuse to reveal and justify their hate against Jews. That is why now more than ever, it is crucial for the Jewish community to come together and build strong alliances with like-minded individuals and organizations. By standing in solidarity with other marginalized groups, we not only strengthen our own community but also send a powerful message that hate and bigotry have no place in our society.

It is our duty as Jews to support these efforts and lend our voices to those who are silenced. Let us use the holiday of Passover as an opportunity to renew our dedication to tikkun olam, the Jewish value of repairing the world. Let us reach out to our allies and work hand in hand to create a world where all individuals can live with dignity, respect and peace.

In this edition you will find a variety of personal accounts of anti-semitism and reflections on the issue of freedom. As always I would like to thank contributors and advertisers who support our independent publication.

Wishing you a joyous and meaningful Passover.

Shirley Nigri Farber - Publisher



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Cheryl Anns' Bakery is Open

Fans of *Cheryl Anns' Bakery of Brookline* are rejoicing over the reopening of the beloved store. After over three years of closure, they have been lining up to pick up their Kosher certified parve (non dairy) pastries that made *Cheryl Anns'* famous: challah, hamentashen, babka, brownies, half moons, cakes and more.

Customers have been following every move in the reopening process, from the remodeling to getting a city permit. *Cheryl Anns' Bakery* products can also be found at area supermarkets. *Shalom Magazine* congratulates *Cheryl Anns'* on its reopening. The shop is at the same address, 1010 W Roxbury Parkway in The Shops at Putterham, Chestnut Hill. For more information, visit cherylannsbakery.com.



Pesach Kasher Vesameach Kosher and Happy Passover

Passover 2024 will be celebrated from the eve of Monday, April 22 to after nightfall on Tuesday, April 30. The first Seder will take place on the evening of Monday, April 22, and the second Seder will be on the evening of Tuesday, April 23. Prayer of *Yizkor* will take place on Tuesday, April 30.

During the eight days of the holiday (seven days in Israel), observers eat matzah, avoid any leavened products (*hametz*), and commemorate the Israelites' exodus from slavery in Egypt through Seder rituals such as eating the *matzah* as well as *charoseth* and bitter herbs, hiding the *afikomen*, drinking four cups of wine, and reading from the *Haggadah*.

Jewish families and friends gather for festive meals, and many synagogues organize community seders. Be sure to check with your local synagogue for details on community events.



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PURIM CELEBRATIONS



Megillah reading at Babson College



Young Adult Purim Party at Mishkan Tefila, Brookline



Carnival for kids at the Wellesley-Weston Chabad



Hamantaschen bake and dinner at Shalom House Chabad, Stoughton



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Face painting at Ahavat Torah Congregation, Stoughton



Megillah reading with rabbinic intern Carrie and musician Zach Mayer at The Boston Synagogue



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PURIM CELEBRATIONS



*The Young Jewish Professionals' Purim party took place at Southline Boston.
For more photos, visit www.yjpboston.org*



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PURIM CELEBRATIONS



photos: Bonnie Greenberg



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AJC NEW ENGLAND DIPLOMATS SEDER



Esther Lee, AJC New England Regional Director Rob Leikind, Colette Phillips, and Wilson Lee

On March 24, American Jewish Committee New England hosted its annual Diplomats Seder, co-chaired by Marla and Larry Curtis. With 400 attendees - including community dignitaries, civic leaders, diplomats representing 19 countries, and members of the New England Jewish community - the program featured three powerful testimonies about finding freedom in our current, challenging moment. These testimonies came from Noy Negbi and Ori Kohan, whose kibbutz was attacked on October 7; Mauricio Karchmer, a former MIT professor who resigned amidst rampant, unchecked antisemitism; and a former IDF soldier now at Harvard, committed to fostering dialogue among his peers about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Participants also heard the traditional Four Questions asked by four diplomats in their respective languages: Consul General Adrian Kubicki (Poland), Deputy Consul General Silvia Salomoni (Italy), Consul General Octávio Bento Gomes (Cabo Verde), and Honorary Consul Uldis Sipols (Latvia). The Consul General of Israel to New England, Amb. Meron Reuben, provided the Diplomatic Response, an inspiring message of resilience. Guiding attendees through the Seder was Temple Emanuel's Rabbi Michelle Robinson.



Ori Kohan and Noy Negbi



CG Adrian Kubicki (Poland), Rabbi Michelle Robinson, Deputy CG Silvia Salomoni (Italy), CG Octávio Bento Gomes (Cabo Verde), and Honorary Consul Uldis Sipols (Latvia)



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Embracing the Cup of Hope with Light in Times of Darkness

By Rus Devorah Wallen, LCSW, ACSW, CIMHP

In a world often marred by division and uncertainty, the timeless concepts of *tikva* (hope) and *bitachon* (trust) have served as unwavering beacons of guidance for generations within our tradition. These principles of faith have not only provided solace but have also been instrumental in sustaining the Jewish People through some of history's darkest chapters.

One of the most poignant rituals embodying hope within Jewish tradition is the setting of a place for Elijah during the Passover Seder. This symbolic act, accompanied by the Cup of Elijah, represents the enduring hope for the arrival of the Moshiach (*Messiah*) and the *Geulah* (ultimate redemption) of the Jewish people. The song *Eliyahu HaNavi* (Elijah the Prophet) sung during this ritual expresses the collective longing for Elijah's appearance, heralding a new era of peace and prosperity.

In Chassidic philosophy, the significance of *Eliyahu HaNavi* extends beyond a mere expectation of his physical presence. It is believed that Eliyahu embodies the essence of Divine revelation and serves as a conduit for spiritual awakening. His anticipated arrival symbolizes not just the redemption of the Jewish people but also a profound spiritual awakening for all humanity. Chabad teachings emphasize the importance of preparing oneself internally for the coming of Eliyahu by refining one's character and deepening one's connection to God through acts of kindness and Torah study.

Moreover, the Torah and other Jewish texts abound with verses that speak to the theme of hope and redemption. Isaiah 40:31 stands as a powerful reminder of the strength that comes from placing one's hope

in the divine, promising renewal and endurance even in the face of adversity: *"But they who trust in the LORD shall renew their strength, as eagles grow new plumes: they shall run and not grow weary, they shall march and not grow faint."*

Central in Judaism is the belief in the coming of the Moshiach and the ultimate redemption. This concept not only offers hope but also imbues life with purpose, emphasizing the transformative potential of a Messianic era as depicted in passages from the Talmud and Midrash. Beyond theological discourse, the theme of hope finds resonance in the lives of individuals grappling with personal struggles and societal upheaval. Countless stories abound of individuals drawing strength from their faith and hope in a better future, whether through acts of kindness, community engagement, or spiritual practices. In particular, during this very painful time for the Land and People of Israel, it seems that hope has never been so strong! We are unified more than ever in our modern world.

In today's tumultuous world, the Cup of Elijah and the enduring themes of hope and trust serve as reminders of resilience and perseverance. As we confront the complexities of modern life, may we find inspiration in the unwavering hope embedded within our tradition, guiding us through life's trials and tribulations toward a brighter tomorrow. May we stand together with pride and faith, trusting in the hope that through the unity of Our People, we merit the Ultimate Redemption, speedily in our days!

Rus Devorah (Darcy) Wallen, LCSW, ACSW, CIMHP, specializes in healing workshops, individual therapy, and coaching. For free relaxation exercises, visit her website Toratherapeutics.com or contact her at RD@Toratherapeutics.com.



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'GET OUR SISTERS OUT OF HELL' RALLY FOR THE HOSTAGES

On March 17 - which marked 163 days that the hostages have been in captivity - hundreds in the Boston community gathered at Harvard Chabad in a collective cry for Hamas to end its brutal sexual violence against women. Amid Women's History Month, speakers called out the hypocrisy and complicity of leaders who have remained silent, and issued powerful reminders of the October 7 horrors that must not be politicized. Family members of several hostages spoke, including Gal Bibas, cousin of Kfir, Ariel, Shiri and Yarden Bibas, and Moshe Emilio Lavi, brother-in-law of Omri Miran. Oz Davidian, who rescued 120 people from the Nova music festival, gave a harrowing account of the massacre.

In a moment of sheer moral clarity, State Representative Ruth Balsler said, "Anyone who calls for ceasefire... we make sure they call out and hold responsible the vicious people who attacked women on that day, and make sure they are held to account. Make sure that... every woman, everyone is brought home, and that nothing happens until that happens."

Dr. Alexandra Herzog, Deputy Director of Contemporary Jewish Life at American Jewish Committee (AJC), echoed this message, urging everyone to continue demanding the hostages' release. "Don't be silent," she said. "Be their voices." AJC cosponsored the event with Harvard Chabad, the Hostages and Missing Families Forum, and other Jewish organizations.



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YACHAD NEW ENGLAND

Yachad New England has been busy celebrating winter holidays with community partners, together spreading joy by hosting fun and inclusive programs.

Through the power of coming together, we had a beautiful *Tu B'Shvat* Seder in Newton with the Congregation Shaarei Tefillah community for our annual gathering, a tradition of over 20 years.

The evening was a special way to learn about the holiday, decorate flowerpots, eat all the traditional fruits of Israel with the appropriate blessings, and sing and dance. We took to heart Rabbi Samuels' message to add light during times of darkness by recalling that when the world around us seems dark, we gather inspiration and warmth from being together.

Our Purim celebrations kicked off with a Hamantasch bake at Northeastern University Hillel. Our Yachad young adult crew loved the opportunity to visit the campus and get in the Purim spirit together with our new friends. We are so thankful to the Hillel students for organizing the event.

Yachad's local Purim celebrations continued with our annual Purim party on our 384 Harvard Campus. It was a smashing success. The room was full of the excited sounds of graggers twirling as we heard a lively Megillah reading, the noisy chatter of good friends coming together to learn about the Purim story, creative expression decorating graggers and masks, making delicious ice cream sundaes (special thanks to J.P. Licks for sponsoring) and yummy hamantaschen, while dancing along to our favorite songs.



Year-round, we love partnering with local Jewish high schools, bringing neurotypical teens into our Yachad community. During the winter months this year, we were so fortunate to connect with teenagers from Gann Academy, Sharon High School, Yeshiva Ohr Yisrael, and The Maimonides School.

These eager teens bring great energy to our Yachad groups by joining us at the Yachad Community Center during weekday and Sunday programs, celebrating Shabbat with us at Young Israel of Sharon, jumping together at Launch Trampoline Park, and gathering for a musical Havdalah.

Each teen that joins us adds enthusiasm, kindness and positive Jewish role modeling for our participants with disabilities, helping create the strong and vibrant community that we strive to achieve at Yachad.

Everyone needs a place to feel comfortable and at home with people we mutually respect and enjoy spending time with. At Yachad New England, you get that special feeling of belonging the moment you walk through our doors. Experience Ya-

chad for yourself!

Yachad is a global organization dedicated to supporting individuals of all ages with intellectual, developmental disabilities and autism. Locally, Yachad New England operates a vibrant community center, offering daily social and recreational programs that enhance life skills, foster community bonds, provide respite for families, and combat social isolation.

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EXPLORE THE JEWISH HISTORY IN ISRAEL AND AMERICA WITH THE WALNUT STREET SYNAGOGUE

By Tom Barth

After completing the successful *Taste of Jewish Culture* online series last November, the historic Walnut Street Synagogue of Chelsea has launched two more online series: *Jerusalem: The Holy City's Development from Antiquity to Today*, and the *Spring Speaker Series - Jewish Experiences in America*. Two sessions remain in the Jerusalem series, which explores the growth of Jerusalem from its beginnings as a small town on a hillside to the modern city it has become.

Nachalot: 1875-1920 will be held on April 17. This program will examine the unique cluster of "micro-neighborhoods" that are unlike any other area of Jerusalem, which reflects the growth spurt of the New City. Nachalot has become a diverse area with numerous different communities represented, a rapidly developing architectural style, and many colorful characters who have been central to the overall progress in the nation.

Rechavia: 1920 to present will be held on May 15. Rechavia was the first modern neighborhood of Jerusalem, established during the British Mandate era that followed World War I. The program will explore how the city continued to develop and grow, from the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 through the present day.

Speaker Joel Haber will present this series live from his home in Jerusalem. Haber was born and raised in New Jersey and moved to Israel in 2009. He is a licensed tour guide, specializing in tours of his home city. He also guides tours around Israel. Those attending the previous series will remember Haber as the presenter on Jewish food traditions and the historical connections between Jews and food.

Two sessions remain in the speaker series, dedicated to the memory of Boston-area author and educator Norman H. Finkelstein, and features leading scholars discussing very different aspects of the Jewish experience in America.

Becoming American Jews: The Evidence in Art and Architecture will be held on April 10. The talk will track how and when immigrants adopted a new language, new symbols, new images, and new styles in art and architecture in order to express their identity as both Jews and Americans. The speaker will be Samuel Gruber, an accomplished researcher, author, curator and consultant, and founder and managing director of Gruber Heritage Global (GHG), a cultural resources consulting firm.

Overcoming Antisemitism in America will be held on May 22. The speaker will be Rabbi Charles Savenor, who will discuss Norman H. Finkelstein's final book, *Saying No to Hate: Overcoming Antisemitism in America*, to help understand the current crisis and the Jewish community's unending courage, perseverance, and hope. Rabbi Savenor is Executive Director of Civic Spirit and the former Director of Congregational Education at the Park Avenue Synagogue in New York. Both series are made possible by grants from the Congregation Ahabat Shalom Religious Fund.

The Walnut Street Synagogue was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1993. All are welcome, but advance registration is required. For more information and to register, please visit walnutstreetsynagogue.com. Contact the synagogue at info@walnutstreetsynagogue.com with any questions.

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100 JEWISH BRIDES

By Batia Shems

I was honored to be included in the recently published book *100 Jewish Brides*, which chronicles the experience of courtship, betrothal, and marriage of Jewish women from countries and cultures around the world.

I was born in Beirut, Lebanon and came to the United States after a five-day courtship that led to a marriage proposal and wedding. Writing about my experience brought back fond memories as a young bride in Beirut, and I hope readers enjoy learning about my story, the customs that were part of my wedding, and the traditions that both influenced me and against which I rebelled.

I married in 1966 and immediately moved to New Jersey, because my husband Moise o.b.m., was in the middle of his medical training to be a urologist. We had originally planned to move back to Lebanon and our families, but the Middle East wars and the civil war in Lebanon made that impossible. After Moise finished his training, we settled in Newton, where I raised three children, ran a business, and joined a synagogue.

I have been connected with the Hadassah-Women's Institute at Brandeis for years. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, I participated in a speaker's series at Brandeis and talked about my experience as a Jewish woman being raised in an Arab land. As a result, when Barbara Vinick and Shulamit Reinharz began researching *100 Jewish Brides*, they reached out to me.

I married Moise when I was only 17, and there were many traditions and customs unique to our community that shaped my experience. However, as an often headstrong young woman, I was not always one to follow the rules!

In my excerpt, I share a few anecdotes about the traditions that were expected to be followed, such as the dowry offering. The dowry was often used to help provide for the newlyweds, and the negotiations for the dowry were always attended by the male elders and father of the bride. I rebelled against that tradition. Stating that I was not for sale, I demanded that my father refuse to negotiate. Luckily the families knew each other, and Moise wanted to marry me, not my dowry.

Another traditional hurdle we overcame was the certificate of bachelorhood. Moise was expected to have brought a letter from his rabbi in the US affirming his bachelor status, but our courtship, betrothal, and marriage occurred in a mere 4 months.

As I was waiting for my father to escort me from my home to the temple, where the entire community was preparing to greet me and celebrate, our fathers had to convince the rabbi who was to marry us that Moise was not

already married. Again, the families showed faith in each other, and despite a slight delay that may have caused some of our desserts to melt a bit in Beirut's August heat, Moise and I were married.

My history is one of many; *100 Jewish Brides* shares the stories of brides from other cultures and offers a glimpse into the interesting customs and experiences that have shaped the betrothal and wedding experience of Jewish brides around the world.

I am honored to have had the opportunity to share my story of being a young Jewish Sephardic bride in Beirut, Lebanon and am grateful for my marriage, which has lasted over 56 years.

Batia Shems is a wife, mother, grandmother, and former business owner. She resides in Wayland, where she delights her family and friends with her stories and Lebanese cooking.



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Unfolding the plagues

Sandra Lilienthal, Ed.D.

As we get closer to Pesach, we spend so much time preparing, cleaning, cooking and stressing, that we many times miss the opportunity to think about the story in a deeper way.

I believe that leaving Egypt is much more than what initially meets the eye: the story of the enslaved Israelites reaching freedom.

The Torah is a blueprint for life, a manual for the development of the human race – not merely a record of ancient tales. The episodes recorded in the Torah represent timeless, spiritual tales occurring continuously in the heart of each person. In that vein, I would like to examine the purpose of the plagues and how we can apply that event to our personal lives in the 21st century.

You may have heard that *mitzrayim*, the Hebrew word for Egypt, is related to “constraints,” and that each and every one of us has to leave behind, move away, from those things that oppress us, that make us feel as if we are in the situation of slavery, enslaved to outside forces.

Inspired by a lecture by Rabbi Y. Y. Jacobson on the kabbalistic understanding of the plagues, I say that Egypt, in our personal lives, represents the situations in which our ability to be who we are meant to be is hindered.

Blood represents excessive confidence. As important as confidence is, if excessive, it will lead to destruction and death. I need to go no further than the events of the last few months to explain this.

Frogs represent an emotional state of detachment. They are cold-blooded animals. When we are emotionally detached, we are unable to experience genuine emotional intimacy with any other person, be it friends or relatives, spouse or child.

The third plague, **lice**, represents unhealthy humility. As important as it is to be humble, being able to recognize our weaknesses and where we need to grow, excessive humility will ultimately lead to submission. When one thinks of oneself as being worthless, one is deprived of one’s vitality.




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Unfolding the plagues

The fourth plague is that of *arov*, a word that means mixture (of **wild animals**, as it's mostly understood). It represents unhealthy ambition. Of course, having ambition can drive a person to greatness. But excessive ambition turns a person into a "wild animal," devouring anyone who is standing in one's way.

Pestilence is deceitful compassion. When one presents oneself as compassionate in order to exploit others for selfish purposes, they damage the person they are pretending to be compassionate toward.

Boils are associated with fire, and kabbalah relates it to rejection. Rejection removes us from others and can easily turn into hate, bitterness and cruelty which affect both ourselves and those around us.

Hail, the seventh plague, is frozen water. Water is symbolic of generosity, which flows. But frozen water is love and generosity which has become cold and no longer nurtures.

Locusts represent a corrupted mind. How many times do we find ways to justify our actions intellectually, when we know they are morally questionable?

Darkness represents the darkness one's soul can feel in a world that pays so little attention to it. How many times do we deprive our soul from growth because we are more concerned with growing our bank accounts or our muscles?

The last plague, **the death of the firstborn**, represents the destruction of the purest instincts and motives of the soul.

As discussed by many commentators, the plagues undo Creation. Egypt, the strongest empire of the time, ends up in a state of darkness and chaos. Looking back at Egypt from the other side of the Sea of Reeds, one would see a land with no people, no animals, and no vegetation – a land that seems unformed and void exactly as the whole world was before Creation.

The plagues and the subsequent Exodus create a strong distinction between Israel and Egypt. G-d took chaos and ordered the universe

so that there would be light. Egypt led the world to darkness, and Israel will be called, shortly after the redemption from Egypt, to lead it back to light.

When they arrive at Sinai, the Israelites will be told to build a society that is almost the exact opposite of what Egypt was, especially in regard to *bein adam l'chavero*, the interaction between human beings. They are expected to create a society in which every human being is respected and valued.

If we are to build such a society (and such a world) we must leave Egypt; from a moral and practical standpoint, we must leave behind the chaos which the world presents as "normal."

If we have learned anything from the plagues, we have a lot of work to do – both on a personal, spiritual level, and on a communal level. We are being called to work on ourselves and to make our souls stronger as much as we are being called to follow G-d's instructions to build a better world, to be a light unto all nations. We will have 49 days, starting on the second night of Pesach, to work on ourselves. Let's take it seriously.

Let's understand that Pesach is not about an abstract freedom, a freedom from everything, a do whatever you want freedom. It is about bringing a redemptive freedom into the world, which cannot happen without inner and external work on our part. I hope all of us are committed to this and successful in our efforts. May we start building the days in which the world will see no wars, famine, destruction and will – instead – be restored to what it was meant to be.

May this be a meaningful holiday for you and your loved ones. *Chag Sameach!*

Sandra Lilienthal is an adult Jewish educator (www.sandralilienthal.com) and co-founder of Wisdom Without Walls: An Online Salon for Jewish Ideas (www.wisdomwithoutwalls.org).

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On March 19, Julia Schlozman, Senior Staff Attorney for the Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action (JALSA), received a prestigious Excellence in the Law 2024 'Up & Coming Lawyers' award from Massachusetts Lawyers Weekly, the Commonwealth's preeminent statewide legal news publication for more than 50 years.



The Hornstein Jewish Leadership Program at Brandeis University recently visited Israel on the Myra Kraft Seminar. The seminar focused on crisis management in nonprofits, as well as volunteer work (picking strawberries in the fields near Hadera) and bearing witness through the stories and actions of all who were deeply affected by the atrocities of October 7.



Since 2020, Jewish Family Service of Metrowest (JFS) has led the coordination of the CJP-sponsored *Holiday in a Box* program which, in collaboration with partner agencies, caterers and hundreds of volunteers, has provided over 16,500 Kosher Rosh Hashanah and Passover meals to community members in need. To learn more or make a donation, please visit JFSMW.org.

Photo: JFSMW CEO Lino Covarrubias helping with delivering Rosh Hashanah meal

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FREEDOM AND DETERMINISM



By Rabbi Jonathan Hausman

The holiday of Passover which will soon be upon us (Monday eve, April 22), above and beyond all else, is a celebration of human freedom. Man's ability to choose freely among various courses of action is the basis of moral responsibility, without which there could be no group life.

Human freedom, however, runs head-on into the religious belief that G-d possesses foreknowledge. If G-d knows what is going to happen, if the outcome is already a certifiable fact, then the future is perforce determined. But, if that is the case, how can man be conceived of as free. Actually, preserving a belief in human freedom is even a problem for the non-believer. After all, a cornerstone of scientific method is the principle of causality which affirms that every phenomenon is the consequence of an antecedent cause. Since people are part of nature, their existence and conduct must also be the result of multitudinous prior factors which determine who they are and what they do today. Hence, it is plausible to conclude that free will is an illusion.

But, the absence of free will releases man from accountability for

*Rabbi Akiva: "All is foreseen;
yet, freedom is given."*

his actions. If we have no control over what we do, the murderer and the thief do not deserve either rebuke or punishment; since they, too, were merely carrying out predestined enterprises. It doesn't take a genius to realize that the rejection of free will would play havoc with a society's capacity to maintain law and order by imposing rewards and punishments where and when they were deserved by its members.

Many efforts have been made to resolve the dichotomy between free will and determinism. Some scientists, for example, point out that scientific laws are merely statistical averages, incapable of predicting how any single member of a group may react. Thus, a mortality table may accurately foretell how many people per thousand will die of cancer in a given year; however, it cannot establish with certainty whether A or B will be in that group. Along the same lines, physicists cite Heisenberg's "principle of indeterminacy" which affirms that one cannot predict the path of any atom, but only that of the mass.

The unalterable fact is that we human beings constantly experience both freedom and determinism. Reconciling the two poses a serious paradox. A paradox, however, is not a contradiction. A contradiction exists when you have two opposing statements at least one of which cannot be true. A paradox involves two opposing statements, both of which are true, although we may not be able to harmonize them at our present stage of knowledge and understanding.



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FREEDOM AND DETERMINISM

Rabbi Akiva, the great 2nd century sage, expressed this paradox very effectively when he wrote: “All is foreseen; yet, freedom is given.” Samuel Johnson addressed the dilemma in his own way when he declared “with regard to freedom of the will, all philosophy is against it and all experience is for it.”

Freedom and determinism are forever interacting upon each other. Whenever a person resolves to carry out a certain action, whether positive or negative, he ignites a series of events which render him more likely to achieve the objective he has set for himself; thus, his freedom becomes a tool for determining his fate.

Quite similarly, the Spanish-Jewish master Moses Maimonides interpreted the Talmudic statement “The reward of a good deed is a good deed” to mean that every time we carry out a meritorious action we are thereby predisposed to perform another meritorious action. Hence, reciprocal stimulation characterizes the perennially creative tension between freedom and determinism.

No sensible and knowledgeable individual can ignore the impact of heredity and environment upon human behavior. Neither can one shunt aside the insights of Sigmund Freud regarding the role of the irrational and the subconscious. Economic factors can likewise constitute a pivotal force in determining a person's actions.

The preservation of human dignity requires, nevertheless, that after all these variables are taken into consideration, we continue to believe that there is a range, however narrow, within which a man is free to make his own decisions for which he remains responsible. It is that freedom which makes human beings the special creatures they are and which makes Passover a holiday worth celebrating.

Rabbi Jonathan Hausman serves Ahavath Torah Congregation in Stoughton.

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UNVEILING THE SPIRITUAL TAPESTRY OF PESACH



By Yosef Rodrigues

To better understand the importance of the Pesach festival, I decided to draw upon the teachings of Jewish texts such as the Talmud, Midrash, Mishnah, and Zohar. These sacred texts will help us delve deeper into Pesach's spiritual essence and enrich our experience. Let's unpack these teachings together as we journey through them and celebrate this festival with empathy and understanding.

The Talmud is an invaluable source of information when it comes to understanding the observance of Pesach.

The *Tractate Pesachim* explores various aspects of the holiday, offering intricate insights into topics such as the laws of chametz (leavened bread) and the procedures of the Seder. The passage below provides a wealth of information, shedding light on the nuances of the observance and helping followers gain a deeper understanding of the holiday's significance.

Rabbi Shimon ben Elazar says: "The Torah stated: 'And they shall eat the flesh in this night, roast with fire, and unleavened bread; with bitter herbs, they shall eat it.'" (Exodus 12:8)

"What does 'with bitter herb' mean? If the Israelites made the bitter herbs into a sauce and dipped the Passover offering, they have fulfilled their obligation."

These verses showcase the Talmud's exceptional focus on even the minutest of details when interpreting the laws and customs associated with Pesach. It emphasizes fulfilling the *mitzvot* (commandments) with the utmost precision and intentionality so that the highest

standards of Jewish law and tradition may carry them out. The Talmudic sages believed that one could cultivate a more profound spiritual mindfulness and reverence for the holiday's sense by being attentive to every detail of the Pesach observance.

While the festival is primarily associated with the story of Exodus, in addition to the traditional narrative, there is a vast collection of interpretive narratives and teachings in the Midrashic literature. These imaginative insights delve markedly into the spiritual dimensions of Pesach and offer a unique perspective on the festival. One such example can be found in *Tanhuma Bo* 6, which features a fascinating passage that sheds light on the holiday's spiritual implications:

"When Israel was redeemed from Egypt, they were redeemed not on the merit of their righteousness but on the merit of the Passover offering, as it is said, 'And the blood shall be to you for a token upon the houses where ye are; and when I see the blood, I will pass over you.'" (Exodus 12:13)

This passage in question highlights the remarkable transformative power of the Passover offering, which served as an essential conduit for divine redemption during the Exodus of the Israelites from Egypt. It also emphasizes the importance of trust and faith in G-d's deliverance, as the Israelites had to rely solely on G-d's protection and guidance to be saved from the oppression and tyranny of Pharaoh and his army.

Yet, it underscores the importance of the Passover offering as a symbol of the Israelites' unwavering faith and devotion to the Creator, who had vowed to free them from bondage and lead them to the Promised Land. Overall, the Midrashic text provides valuable insights into the spiritual and theological impact of the Passover gift and its enduring legacy as a testament to the power of faith and divine redemption.

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UNVEILING THE SPIRITUAL TAPESTRY OF PESACH

To ensure that these traditions are upheld, Jewish oral law has been documented in the Mishnah, considered the foundational text of Judaism. Therefore, these manuscripts serve as an invaluable resource for those seeking to uphold the traditions of Pesach. It offers guidance on the preparation of the home, the foods that should be consumed, and the order in which the Seder meal should be conducted.

One of the most notable passages from *Pesachim* 10:5 comprises specific instructions on how to consume the *Afikoman*, a piece of matzah that is eaten during the Seder meal:

“These are the things that must be said on Passover: On the first day of Passover, one recites, ‘On the first day there shall be a holy convocation for you....’ (Leviticus 23:7) On the second day, one recites, ‘You shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest....’” (Leviticus 23:10)

This Mishnaic excerpt serves as a poignant reminder of the deep-seated importance of Pesach, underscoring the crucial role that the recitation of specific Torah passages plays in reinforcing the bond between ritual observance and textual heritage.

Lastly, the Zohar, a foundational text of Jewish mysticism (Kabbalah), provides us with profound insights into the spiritual symbolism of the holiday. In Zohar II:188b, the text conveys a message beyond the surface level. The following passage comprises (comprises not comprises) a detailed examination of the holiday's spiritual meaning, providing us with the following:

“The lamb represents faith, for faith is called a lamb, as it is written: ‘He was oppressed, yet when he was afflicted he did not open his

mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.’” (Zohar II:188b)

This piece unveils the transcendent worth of the Passover lamb, identifying it as a symbol of faith and spiritual transformation, echoing the theme of redemption central to the Pesach narrative. Thus, by exploring these teachings, we can better appreciate the holiday's rich history and timeless wisdom.

As we traverse these unfathomable Jewish writings of Talmud, Midrash, Mishnah, and the Zohar, we gain a deeper understanding of the spiritual essence of Pesach. Each text, from the Talmud's meticulous legal discussions to the Midrash's imaginative narratives or from the Mishnah's practical guidance to the Zohar's mystical teachings, contributes to our appreciation of Pesach's profound influence on Jewish tradition.

Celebrating Pesach each year gives us the strength to draw upon the wisdom of these holy scripts, imbuing the holiday with depth, substance, and spiritual resonance. By doing so, we ensure that its timeless message of liberation and redemption continues to inspire and uplift us and future generations.

Yosef Rodrigues Ph.D. 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).



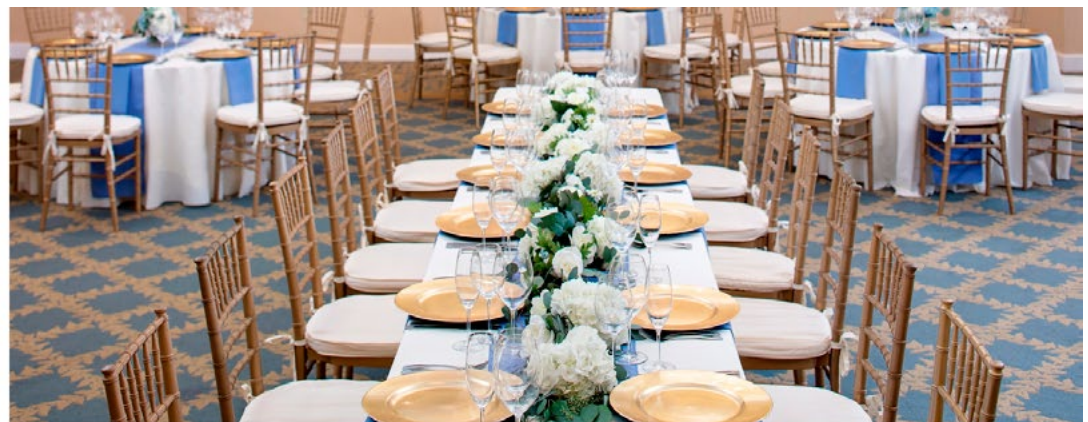
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Calendar Questions and Curiosities

By David Bernat, Ph.D.

Completing this column on the day between the Fast of Esther and Purim, exactly a month before Passover, has caused me to reflect on some questions and curiosities concerning the Jewish calendar. Such reflection is timely because this year, 5784, is a leap year in the Jewish calendar, when we add a whole month. Consequently, we are out of sync with the American, originally Roman, or Julian/Gregorian calendar, so much so that Easter and Passover are nearly a month apart.

My reflections generated the following questions; What is the origin and development of our traditional Jewish calendar? Why do we add a “leap” month? When does the Jewish year begin? Why isn’t Pesach the New Year?

What we consider to be our Jewish calendar, a Lunar calendar, set to the phases of the moon, actually originated in ancient Mesopotamia, among the Assyrians and Babylonians, located in what is present day Iraq and Syria. This calendar was in place before the Biblical period, and before the existence of the Jewish People altogether. The 12 names of our months; *Tishrei, Chesvan...Adar, Nissan, Ab*, etc., are not Hebrew, they are Akkadian, the Semitic language of the ancient Mesopotamians. For example, *Tammuz* is the name of a Mesopotamian god associated with sexuality, fertility, and mourning. Jewish communities in Judea and in the diaspora would have adopted that calendar at some point during the 6th century BCE, when the Babylonians controlled most of the world as far east as the Mediterranean, and when many Jewish lived in Babylonia, and across its empire, after the exiles of 600 and 586 BCE.

The story of our calendar is not so simple though. In the Tanakh, mostly written before Babylonian influence, the months were just called by number, 1st Month, 7th Month, etc. More significantly, there is fragmentary Biblical evidence of an older calendar about which little is known. We read that Solomon began constructing the Jerusalem



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Calendar Questions and Curiosities

Temple in the 2nd month of the year, called *Ziv* (1 Kings 6:1). Seven years later, the Temple was completed in month 8, *Bul* (1 Kings 6:37). Eventually, when the Temple was ready for use, Solomon gathered the people to celebrate Sukkot in the 7th month, *Eitanim* (1 Kings 8:2).

To complicate matters, in 1908, archaeologists unearthed, in the remains of the Biblical era city of Gezer, one of the oldest Hebrew inscriptions, dated to approximately 1000 BCE, the time of King David. It is a calendar whose months are named for seasonal harvests, e.g. "Month of Gathering, *Asif*" "Month of Reaping, *Katsir*" "Month of Seeding, *Zera*" "Month of Summer Fruit, *Qayitz*," and the like. Additionally, the Dead Sea Scrolls and other 2nd Temple period writings indicate that a 364 day solar calendar was in use by an indeterminate segment of the Jewish population. This calendar is fascinating, and very practical, because the holidays always occur on the same day of the week, and there is no need for "intercalation."

This last point leads to our next question; Why do we have an extra, or "leap" month? The Jewish calendar is a lunar calendar, tied to months and phases of the moon - full moon, half moon, new moon. Lunar cycle months are made up of 29 or 30 days and 12 of these comprise a year that is roughly 355 days long. A solar calendar, tied to the cycles of the sun, is 365 days and is fully synchronized with the 4 seasons. Since each year, the lunar calendar loses 10 days relative to the solar calendar, the lunar calendar also moves out of alignment with the seasons. Because our calendar includes festivals that are tied to seasons and their harvests, the misalignment causes a problem that is resolved by "intercalation," adding a month that brings the lunar and solar calendars back in tandem. The Mesopotamians referenced above devised the system of intercalation that adds a 2nd *Adar*, and Jews adopted that practice when we began utilizing the Babylonian calendar. This year, we have the 2nd *Adar*, or *Adar Bet*, during which we celebrate Purim. It is worth noting the Muslims also use a lunar

calendar, but do not intercalate. Thus, their sacred month of Ramadan, this year observed from March 10 - April 9, rotates through every season. As Ramadan includes a fast from sunup to sundown, in winter the fast is short, and in summer, long and more difficult.

Now to our final matter; when do we, or should we, begin the calendar year? The Babylonians had a New Year called *Akitu* which had much in common with our Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur rituals. It was observed in the spring month of *Nissan*. Similarly, according to the Torah, the 1st month of the year is in the spring, during which Passover is marked (Exodus 12, Leviticus 23). Thus, in many respects, Passover was our ancestors' New Year. Moreover, a fall New Year is nowhere mentioned in the Bible. That said, the Gezer agricultural calendar described earlier begins the year in the fall. At some point in antiquity, the holiday of Rosh HaShanah was instituted, and the Rabbis shifted the calendar to begin the year in the fall (see Mishnah tractate Rosh HaShanah).

We have adhered to this system ever since. Admittedly, there is logic to beginning the year in January, when the days get longer, or in the spring, when nature renews itself, or in the fall, when the summer heat recedes and the rains nourish the earth. Therefore, I leave you with a question...If you were in charge, when would you begin the calendar year? And, are there aspects of our Passover observance and Seder rituals that resonate as a celebration of the New Year?

However you answer the question, I wish you a *Chag Sameach*.

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David Bernat received his Ph.D. 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.

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Fighting the Oversimplification of Israel: Presenting Israel to Students as a Complex Reality

By Brian Cohen

We live in a “filterworld,” a term coined by Thomas DeLeon and the title of his recent book, which describes how modern algorithms are increasingly altering our tastes, amplifying our assumptions, and customizing our realities.

In this current state, we take in our information about what is happening around us, both locally and globally, and receive cues as to how we should feel or what we should be doing about it. It is as if we are pushed to see complex realities in a binary fashion as computers do – as sides that represent good and bad, right and wrong – and with less and less nuance to find a middle ground.

Never has this been more apparent than what we have been witnessing over the past number of months on social and popular media in their portrayal of Israel.

I have seen over the past several months a metamorphosis in the way many Americans and global citizens view the Israeli-Palestinian conflict - it has gone from a complex reality to what many may now deem a simpler case of good versus evil - and Jewish Israelis, or perhaps all Jews, are being pinned in the latter category. Current algorithms, often characterized by heavily unbalanced, partial, or unfounded “facts,” have made seemingly undeniable claims that Israel (i.e. the Jewish people) is committing genocide against the Palestinian people, and that to be a decent human being is to speak out and stand against Israel as a whole (or at the very least to like and comment on various articles and posts). In this view, Israel must be demonized and stopped at all costs. Where then does that leave our Jewish children today? Are they being put into a position where



they must choose between standing for Israel - and thus being labeled pro-genocide - or standing for humanity - and thus turning against the Jewish homeland?

The answer is to back the conversation away from that narrow set of choices, and to reframe the conversation away from “the danger of a single story” (a phrase used by Facing History and Ourselves). And though I am not an expert on the complicated historical and current dynamics of the land, I have found it necessary to dive into the reality



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Fighting the Oversimplification of Israel: Presenting Israel to Students as a Complex Reality

with students head-on. But to do so does not mean to delve into the story of Israel merely from a perspective of conflict. It means bringing students into the conversation from many pathways, guiding them as they explore what Israel is and has been in the context of the world today. To do this, several of my teachers and I use a set of units offered by IsraelLink and other sources for Israel education.

We discuss such topics as:

- **Identity** - who are you, how do you identify, and do you feel connected to Israel?
- **Continuity of Jewish presence** in the land of Israel for thousands of years.
- **Zionism** - what were the catalysts and mindsets that motivated Jews from around the world to create a Jewish state 75 years ago?
- **The land and its people** - understanding the various regions and diverse peoples of Israel and surrounding countries.
- **Jewish values** in action both within and outside of the land of Israel.
- **Israeli Innovation** and technology that has allowed for survival and thriving on the land and across the world.
- **Understanding the similarities** and differences between the lived experiences of Israeli Arabs and Israeli Jews.
- **Having complex conversations** that allow students to ask questions, share perspectives, and develop their own ways of understanding.



When we bring students into a conversation that openly recognizes there will be many questions along the way, we allow them to begin to learn for themselves the perspectives they will need in order to understand what Israel is, what it needs to be, and their roles in helping to make it so. We do not seek to narrowly educate our students according to our own algorithms, as this will not serve them well once they encounter other perspectives that challenge their fundamental understandings and beliefs. They deserve to have a multilayered and nuanced comprehension of why Israel matters to them and the world.

Brian Cohen is the Head of School at MetroWest Jewish Day School in Framingham. He received his Masters degree in School Leadership from the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

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COMPASS

FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION

By Julie B. Mendelsohn

In Sderot, When I was a little girl in the 1970s in Milwaukee, I rarely heard my grandparents complain. They didn't tell us about the difficulties they experienced moving to America, the hard work, the economic challenges, diseases, tragedies, and the deaths of young people.

They weren't Holocaust survivors, but my great grandmother was a pogrom survivor. I was a fourth generation American. Sometimes my great uncle Leonard told us about his three-year tour as a doctor in Normandy in World War II. But he spared us the gory details.

Only rarely did we hear a whisper about some country club or workplace that didn't accept Jews. I don't think they would have been surprised if things had turned darker. But because we did not suffer antisemitism and were living the American dream, we thought they were too black and white in their world view. They didn't understand why people didn't appreciate their good lives. They had no patience for the bad guys.

“There’s a war; where is your son?”

Some days during this difficult war, I wish I could talk to my grandparents. They understood the difference between good and evil. They would have understood the need for absolute victory over the enemy.

On October 7, our worlds were turned upside down. It started at the synagogue. The *gabbai* (synagogue caretaker) saw me enter and said, “There’s a war; where is your son?” It was just like the movies of the Yom Kippur War exactly 50 years earlier. The news started to seep into the prayer service...dozens killed, invasion by Hamas. It was hard to grasp the magnitude of the atrocities for many days.

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FROM GENERATION TO GENERATION



Our children had close friends who were killed that day. Immediately, my daughter and son-in-law flew back from medical school in Italy to serve in the Army and volunteer in hospitals. Two sons in their regular Army service served non-stop with few (wonderful) breaks for a Shabbat or midweek dinner! Another son in University went vegetable picking daily because classes were canceled and farmers in the north and south desperately needed help with the harvest.

The home front was mobilized. We scoured the local stores for supplies for reserve soldiers who were called up immediately and needed food, clothes, flashlights - literally everything. We helped harvest olives, pick strawberries, and planted a victory garden. (We still have pop-up farm markets when people are able to access their fields or chicken coops, and arrive with the produce on a moment's notice - 30 eggs for 30 shekels!)

We took first aid courses, stocked our safe rooms with water, food and radios. My daughter and I went to the hotel where evacuees were staying and made jewelry with girls from the Ethiopian community in Ashkelon. Some families have been staying in hotel rooms for 6 months! We attend funerals and shivas of those we knew, and lone soldiers we didn't know. We cook weekly for soldiers (thanks to our parents' donations) and volunteer at Army bases through Sar-el. During all of this time, there are weddings, engagements, babies and whatever routine people can manage.

Last month it was my son's turn to go to Gaza. During his service it was hard to focus on anything else besides *Tehillim*. It was a feeling of complete lack of control and at the same time utter faith in G-d. I was proud of him and his friends for their dedication to the country.

I know who the Israeli soldiers are, because they are my kids and my friends' kids. And I know who the Israelis are. What drives them is betterment of the world. They would like the world to agree to be improved, but those who support Hamas do not have positive goals, only one negative goal - to wipe out Israel. Israel is the good guy here. Period. I wouldn't have had to explain that to my grandparents more than once.

I worry that they are looking down on us with some sadness. They didn't want to see their grandchildren still suffering just for being Jews. But I want to tell them not to worry. They taught us resilience, clarity, staying power. They told us that victory can take time. We are living lives full of meaning. We are working together as Jews and Israelis. *Am Yisrael Chai!* The Nation of Israel lives! And G-d willing we will thrive again.

Julie B. Mendelsohn lives in Israel and Vermont. She has degrees from the University of Michigan, Harvard Law School, Johns Hopkins University and the University of Haifa.



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MY JOURNEY TO FREEDOM

My name is Mauricio Karchmer. I grew up in Mexico City. My grandparents moved there from Lithuania and Poland in the 1930's, just before Hitler's shadow spread across Europe. Growing up I attended a Jewish school, enjoyed playing soccer representing the JCC all over Mexico City, and celebrated the Shabbat with my family on Friday nights. Unlike my grandparents who left their countries of birth to escape antisemitism, in Mexico, I never felt threatened or even self-conscious because I was Jewish.

In the 1980's I relocated to Cambridge to study for a master's degree at Harvard. I went on to Hebrew University in Jerusalem, to obtain my PhD in computer science. On graduating, I became an assistant professor at MIT, left that role for a position in private industry, and finally returned to MIT in 2019 as a lecturer. I was thrilled to be back. Over 65% of students from each MIT undergraduate class enrolled in my Introduction to Algorithms class. For me it was a dream job, but this past December 13 I submitted my resignation.

It is not something that I wanted to do. I am a computer scientist and have never been politically active. I believe that universities are places for enhancing knowledge, exchanging ideas, and encouraging free and open debates. For some time, however, I have observed a growing intolerance for diversity of thought on our campus. This past October 7, the curtain was pulled back and the full scope of the dangerous orthodoxy infecting MIT, and other American campuses, became apparent.

Jewish and Israeli students compose about 6% of MIT's student body, down from a much larger percentage just a few decades ago. Many of them knew people who had been killed, maimed or kidnapped that day. As Jews, we all felt victimized by those events, but my heart

broke for the students as they absorbed the horror of what had befallen their families, friends and country. To my amazement, however, it quickly became apparent that many fellow students, faculty, and even campus administrators, not only struggled to condemn the atrocities perpetrated against Israeli citizens. They actively applauded them.

On October 8, while the IDF was still battling terrorists inside Israel, a student group that dubs itself the Committee Against Apartheid,

issued an invitation to the entire student body to a "Victory is Ours" rally. Students started circulating images on social media, glorifying the murder of friends and families of Israeli and Jewish students. Protests calling for the destruction of the state of Israel started to sweep through the campus. An office that supports

internships in Israel was occupied, forcing some staff to retreat behind locked doors. Then a message appeared online offering an \$800 bounty for information that would help identify an Israeli student, who joined a counterprotest. Later, an anonymous post revealed the student's name and stated: "Zionism and Israel are the scourge of humanity. His head should be crushed wherever you find him." The student was forced to go into hiding.

These actions were a direct assault on a center of learning purportedly dedicated to supporting a humane and welcoming place for all members of its community. This made the response of university leadership all the more troubling. MIT security repeatedly failed to enforce campus regulations, enabling the continued harassment of Jewish students. I sent numerous letters to the president, chancellor, DEI head and others asking for action, but these were ignored. Subsequently, I learned that one of MIT's DEI officers was lending support to the October 7 massacre on social media. The same was

The student was forced to go into hiding



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MY JOURNEY TO FREEDOM



Mauricio Karchmer (center) with Lino Covarubias and Salomon Chiquiar-Rabinovich at the AJC New England event

true for many members of the faculty, who actively supported, and continue to support, the claims and tactics of student protesters.

Then came the catastrophic testimony of President Kornbluth before the United States Congress, in which she and the Presidents of Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania could not find the words with which to acknowledge that calls for the genocide of the Jewish people are antisemitic.

What really broke my heart, however, was to learn that some of my students, including one of my former teaching assistants, were among the participants and leaders of the Committee Against Apartheid,

which was actively promoting the genocide of Jews. They were talking about me and my family.

I knew that I could no longer participate in the education of students who one day may use their MIT diploma to advance and spread a hateful ideology that foments antisemitism. So, I responded in the only way I felt I could. I resigned and announced my decision in a post on LinkedIn. The following week, I wrote an essay detailing my story for The Free Press. The response surprised me. My LinkedIn account exploded with messages from people around the world, who applauded my action. I was also gratified to receive many offers to teach at other Schools.

In thinking about my next position, I knew it would be important that it be at a university with a clear mission and a well-defined set of values. I was deeply impressed by Yeshiva University's adherence to timeless Jewish moral values: truth, life, humanity, compassion, and redemption. These values align with humanistic values and resonate with me, even as a secular Jew. I decided to accept their offer for a visiting faculty position. There I hope to encourage a generation of students to become the leaders this country truly needs.

Just six months ago, I could not have imagined leaving MIT to teach at an orthodox Jewish institution. In the months since my resignation, I have tried to make sense of the pogrom of October 7 and subsequent events, and I came to realize that remaining at MIT would have meant tolerating what is intolerable for me. I have changed and found my voice and a more urgent need to advocate for Israel and to fight antisemitism, especially in American campuses. I now feel free - perhaps for the first time in decades - to speak my truth.

This has been my journey to freedom!

Mauricio Karchmer gave his testimonial at the AJC New England Diplomats Seder on March 24 at Temple Emanuel, Newton.

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A PAST EXODUS IN BOSTON

By Lew Finfer

In 1965, African Americans in Boston were faced with the schools in their neighborhoods being in the highest state of disrepair, and receiving less funding and having less experienced teachers compared to white schools. Further, the schools employed a tiny number of Black teachers, and no Black principals.

In response, Ellen Jackson organized *Operation Exodus*, inspired by the Passover story and the 1955 Montgomery Bus Boycott. The group carpooled Black children to better resourced white schools; overall, the program transported as many as 960 children.

In 1965, Jackson learned that a school she was sending students to claimed that they had no vacant seats. It turned out that the principal had asked the custodians to remove a certain number of desks in that classroom. Jackson went to that school and told the principal she wouldn't leave until he put back the seats. And he did.

That same year, Black community groups and white allies organized to pass the Racial Imbalance Law. It proposed that if any school was more than 50 percent Black, then it had to be desegregated and some students had to attend other schools.

Representing these community and civil rights groups at the State House were Helene LeVine, Ellen Feingold, and Dolores Mitchell; three Jewish women (LeVine wasn't Jewish, but was married to a Jew). On one occasion they were speaking with a very powerful legislator and LeVine and Feingold needed to leave. Mitchell remained with the legislator they had met with, who then made a crack asking if she always hung out with those Jewish ladies, and not meaning it as a compliment. Mitchell retorted, "I am Jewish too, and Helene is one of yours!"

For those of us who don't have names that are recognizably Jewish, we know the kinds of remarks we sometimes hear. An example: when a tenant of Dorchester absentee landlord George Wattendorf

complained about Jewish landlords, I told her that Wattendorf was actually a German Catholic. She was not to be turned around and shot back, "Well, he must have some Jewish blood in him."

For many decades, Ruth Batson was another key leader in the fight for desegregation and improving Boston schools in the Black community. While most of her work focused on reaching out to the Boston School Committee and the federal court, in 1968 she also founded the METCO program, which today buses 3300 children of color to 33 predominantly white suburbs (in another kind of Exodus).

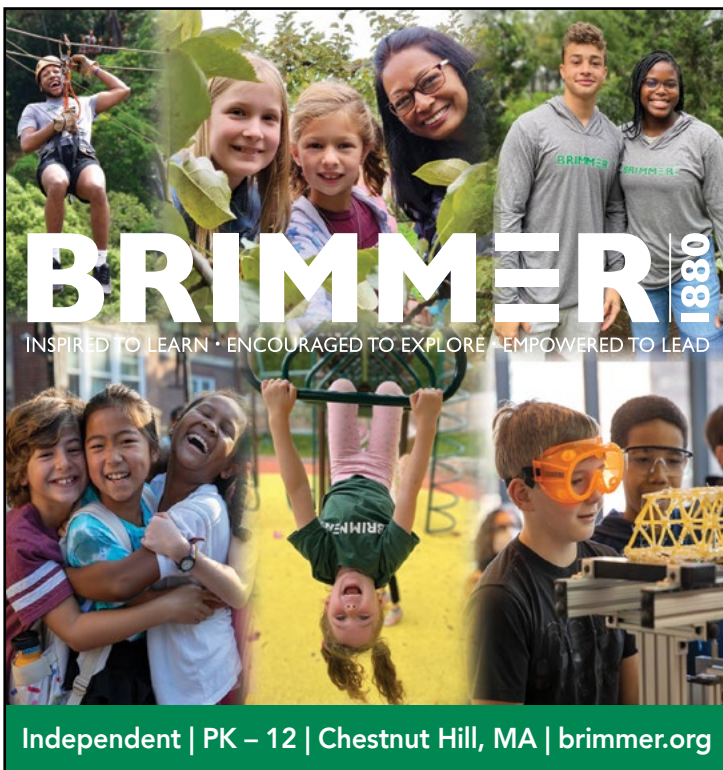
A strong supporter of the passage of the Racial Imbalance Law was Julie Bernstein, who headed the Jewish Labor Committee and was Chair of the Boston Advisory Committee on Civil Rights to the US Civil Rights Commission.

Mayor White appointed Bernstein to the Boston Housing Authority Board, and he soon regretted it. He joined with tenant board members Doris Bunte and John Connolly and formed the "Tenant Oriented Majority" that passed policies that enabled tenants to enjoy better living conditions in the public housing developments.

From these struggles in our city's history, we can see how the Exodus story can also inspire us to envision our history in Egypt as a model for taking needed action today.

As historian and political philosopher Michael Walzer wrote in his 1986 book *Exodus and Revolution*, these challenges are always with us: "First; that wherever you live, it is probably Egypt; second; that there is a better place, a world more attractive, a promised land; and third, that the way to the land is through the wilderness. There is no way to get from here to there except by joining together and marching."

Lew Finfer is a community organizer and lives in Dorchester. He can be reached at LewFinfer@gmail.com.



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CELEBRATING PASSOVER AS IF GLOBAL SURVIVAL MATTERS

By Richard H. Schwartz, Ph.D.

As I write this in mid-March, the war is raging in Gaza. Hence, our main focus must be on the devastation of Hamas, bringing all the hostages home safely, and reducing antisemitism. However, we should also address climate threats since they are an existential threat to the US, Israel, and the entire world.

February was declared the hottest February in recorded history, making it the ninth consecutive month to break a temperature record. The last nine years were the hottest since temperature records were widely recorded. This has resulted in a substantial increase in the frequency and severity of heat waves, droughts, wildfires, storms, and floods. Climate experts are issuing increasingly dire warnings, indicating that an irreversible tipping point may soon be reached when the climate spins out of control, with disastrous consequences.

Israel is especially threatened by climate change because the hotter, drier Middle East projected by climate experts makes instability, terrorism, and war more likely. Also, a rising Mediterranean Sea could inundate the coastal plain that includes much of Israel's population and infrastructure.

Hence, everything possible must be done to avert a global climate catastrophe. The most essential change is a shift away from animal-based diets, for two very important reasons. First, cows and other ruminants emit methane, a greenhouse gas over 80 times as potent as CO² per unit weight during the 10-15 years it is in the atmosphere.

Second, forests are being destroyed to create land for grazing and growing feed crops for animals, adding to the 43 percent of the world's ice-free land already being used for these purposes. If much of that land were reforested, much atmospheric CO² would be sequestered,

reducing it from its current very dangerous level to a much safer one. This would help leave a habitable, healthy, environmentally sustainable world for future generations.

Many Jews commendably spend many hours getting rid of *chometz* before Passover. Then they partake in the seder and other meals containing much meat and other animal products, contributing substantially to climate threats. If G-d is concerned about us getting rid of every speck of *chometz*, G-d surely must want our diets to avoid harming our health, inflicting suffering and violence on animals, damaging the environment, and depleting our natural resources.

It is time to apply Judaism's important teachings to our diets, demonstrating their relevance to current problems and helping shift our precious but imperiled planet onto a sustainable path.

Passover, the holiday of freedom, presents a wonderful opportunity to free ourselves from personally and globally harmful and destructive eating habits. Jewish teachings advocate protecting our health, treating animals with compassion, protecting the environment, conserving natural resources, reducing hunger, and pursuing peace.

It is easy to shift to plant-based diets today because in addition to a wide variety of fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes, nuts, and seeds, there are now many plant-based substitutes with appearances, textures, and tastes very similar to those for meat and other animal products.

Our well-being and survival depend on this. There is no Planet B or effective Plan B.

Richard H. Schwartz, Ph.D. is Professor Emeritus at College of Staten Island. He is the author of Vegan Revolution: Saving Our World, Revitalizing Judaism; Judaism and Vegetarianism; and over 250 articles at JewishVeg.org/schwartz.

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THE WAR IN GAZA: OVERCOMING THIS GENERATION'S EXISTENTIAL CHALLENGE



By Elizabeth Samson

With Israel's ongoing battle to neutralize Hamas and free the more than 130 remaining hostages held in Gaza in the aftermath of October 7, 2023, there are concerns about the serious humanitarian impact on Gaza's civilian population. Whether you accept the casualty numbers reported by Hamas - in the range of 30,000 - many Gazans have evidently been wounded and killed. In addition, due to delayed distribution of the much-needed relief from concern that Hamas

will confiscate supplies meant for civilians, many who have been displaced are also malnourished.

Given those facts, criticism of the Israel Defense Force's (IDF) tactics to eradicate Hamas may appear justified, particularly as Israel is being accused of violating the 1949 Geneva Conventions' laws of war, also known as international humanitarian law (IHL). Some may argue that while some casualties are to be expected, the sheer number of victims is an indicator of the IDF's excessive use of force and the intentional targeting of civilians.

Yet, neither the numbers nor the pervasiveness of criticism of Israel are true indicators of malfeasance and guilt, and numbers alone do not tell the whole story.

Military experts familiar with the complexity of asymmetric conflicts have defended Israel, describing her mission as nearly impossible to accomplish without civilian casualties, particularly as Hamas uses civilians to protect its terrorists. The IDF meticulously employs the principle military distinction which requires them "at all

times [to] distinguish between the civilian population and combatants and between civilian objects and military objectives." Lt. Gen. Mark Hertling (Ret.), former U.S. commander in Europe, said fighting Hamas is "more challenging" than fighting Al Qaeda or ISIS, and Col. John Spencer, Chair of West Point's Urban Warfare Studies has stated "Israel has implemented more measures to prevent civilian casualties in urban warfare than any other military in the history of war [, including] measures the U.S. has (or has not) taken..."

Nevertheless, the U.S. has become a self-appointed moral arbiter of the IDF's virtue in combat. But, unless we apply the hard-earned lessons of both Israeli and U.S. asymmetric conflicts with terror groups, the U.S. will be in for a rude awakening.

Recently, in his State of the Union address, President Biden announced a U.S. military "emergency mission to establish a temporary pier in the Mediterranean on the Gaza coast" to facilitate aid transfers to Palestinians, essentially accusing Israel of not doing enough to admit humanitarian convoys, despite rigorous security inspections which largely account for the delays.

Thus far, there are few concrete plans to develop this mission and build the pier to guarantee the safety of U.S. troops, the IDF and Palestinian civilians. Although the Biden administration has come down hard with its insistence that Israel exercise more restraint in its response to the October 7 assault, in taking on this "pier project" the U.S. government is sorely misguided in thinking that it can do any better than Israel has done to date, both with respect to providing aid and with respect to taking on Hamas while safeguarding civilian lives.

The conflict in Gaza is like no other, since Hamas - a designated Foreign Terrorist Organizations since 1997 - morphs from visibly

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THE WAR IN GAZA: OVERCOMING THIS GENERATION'S EXISTENTIAL CHALLENGE

obvious combatants to seemingly innocent civilians, and hides behind the local population to carry out their attacks. The terrorists prefer this tactic, since a high Gazan death toll arouses international sympathy and demonization of Israel, although Hamas effectively caused their demise.

To illustrate, Israel's March 2024 raid on Gaza's Al Shifa hospital was initiated after intelligence revealed Hamas's targeting of IDF troops from inside the hospital's burn unit, maternity ward, and emergency room. The IDF discovered a veritable arsenal hidden throughout the facility, including in the MRI center, such as 81 mortars, more than 55 pounds of explosives, and 33 assault rifles and 50 handguns - hardly typical medical equipment. Many have since died in Al Shifa and Israel claims to have killed more than 170 terrorists. Without a fact-finding process as the conflict rages on, it will be difficult to prove that, indeed, those individuals are terrorists, and that other civilian casualties are due to Hamas's use of human shields.

For those quick to denounce Israel for the hospital raid, a protected civilian structure under the Geneva Convention (Art. 18), they must understand that protection is not limitless. Hospitals cease to be protected when "they are used to commit, outside their humanitarian duties, acts harmful to the enemy" (Art. 19) and the instant circumstances certainly qualify. Likewise, the U.S. pier for the import of humanitarian aid is instinctively a civilian structure, but if Hamas terrorists storm the pier disguised as civilians, what was once civilian instantly becomes a legitimate military battleground.

The application of IHL is fluid and dynamic, particularly when fighting terrorists; the rules of engagement morph as conditions change. Consequently, it is nearly impossible to distinguish between

civilians and combatants, especially when Hamas masquerades as civilians and, on occasion, as medical personnel.

Despite evidence of terrorists effectively militarizing an important civilian structure, using a hospital and its civilians as human shields, the world seems to only focus on Israel's reprisal. This global myopia in demonizing Israel and repeated calls for a premature ceasefire are foolhardy, failing to address the victimization of Palestinians by their own people and that the way to truly save them is by eliminating the terrorist group that has endangered and controlled them for years.

Criticizing from a safe distance is easy, though. Once inside the Mediterranean arena, U.S. troops will be under that same microscope, participating in a conflict they hardly understand, embroiling them far beyond what they have planned. Faced with scrutiny and the near certainty that their mission will be far more complex than anticipated, the hope is that they will then remember that the U.S. and Israel are on the same side, and they must work together with Israel to eradicate the greatest existential threat to this generation of the Jewish people.

Elizabeth Samson is an Associate Research Fellow at the Henry Jackson Society and an international lawyer who holds a J.D from Fordham Law School, an LL.M. in International & European Law from the University of Amsterdam, and a B.A. in Political Science from Queens College. Ms. Samson has authored several peer-reviewed legal publications on topics of comparative international law and humanitarian law and her writings have appeared in The New York Times, Wall Street Journal, The Guardian, and the New York Post. She can be reached through LinkedIn.com.



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A WAKE UP CALL



By Rabbi Stanley Helinski, Esq.

One would wonder if what followed October 7, 2023, could have been foreseen or were even perhaps contemplated. For a short time, Israel was pitied. The world surrounded our people. As history has shown us, it seldom lasts.

If the United States were attacked in a manner similar to those children and in Eretz Yisrael, we no doubt would have seen the familiar phrase, “shock and awe” that we have seen in the past.

The perpetrators would have been rubble in days. The American people would have demanded it. The writer of this essay is a longtime attorney - a civil rights lawyer who bathes in the brilliant principles of our democracy and the Bill of Rights. Were it not for the ideas of a true democracy, historical figures such as Galileo would never have even been known.

However, what actually happened on October 7 and all of the opinions giving rise to this worldwide crisis? America - the most powerful and influential country on the planet - is split down the middle over the circumstances that are presently taking place in the Middle East. This is not, necessarily, a bad thing. That is America - a place where opinions generally go unpunished no matter how radical. But for the first time since probably the Jim Crow era, students in colleges around the country are mobilizing against the State of Israel.

On March 24, 2024, twelve students of Emerson College were arrested for protesting against Israel. While the school has requested for the Suffolk District Attorney’s office to dismiss the charges against those protestors, the arrests are indicative of a much larger problem growing at colleges and universities in the United States. This author was able to sit down with Emerson College professor Dr. Robert E. Brown, Ph.D. - an educator with twenty-four years of experience

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A WAKE UP CALL

teaching at Harvard University as well as Salem State College - about his observations regarding antisemitism on college campuses.

Dr. Brown reports that he sees a shift in Jewish sentiment on college campus since October 7. Jewish students who choose to highlight injustices brought upon the Jewish people are newly met with odd silence and cautiousness. Dr. Brown reports that painting of swastikas - the symbol of unambiguous hatred and evil - were found on college campuses in prior institutions in which he has instructed. Dr. Brown believes that college administrations are historically slow to investigate these incidents for what he believes may be a view of pro-Jewish sentiment. He reports that he has a Jewish student who will no longer wear a Star of David because she is afraid. Dr. Brown (himself Jewish) has seen a significant trend away from Israeli sentiment as the war in the Middle East rages on.

The discussion of antisemitism in this country and abroad has typically been a topic freely open to honest discussion on college campuses as one that is deeply rooted in World History. It is a topic believed to be necessary if nothing more than to avoid repetition - much like studying the people of the Congo overtaken by Belgium - a time we can never forget. But, as we pass Purim and remember (and with some names of that era, of course, are Commanded to forget) this refrain of attacks on the Jewish people (for no other reason but for being Jewish) in this particular moment in history seems have created a unique and unexpected but familiar circumstance: some leaders in Congress and students on college campus once again appear to be



aligning themselves against the Jewish people. The anti-Israeli sentiments on college campuses are growing, and administrations are reluctant to be involved. The recent resignations of Ivy League institutional leaders shed some light on something that Jewish people find hard to believe: that antisemitism is on the rise at a grassroots level. Did Hamas and the other terror groups contemplate or plan this as part of their attacks on Israel? We will never likely know. But the problem may no longer be ignored. Large groups of people in this country are aligning themselves against Israel and, thus, against the Jewish nation. While this author does not support the casualties of civilians, which include children, the Jewish people have had to defend themselves since the time of Abraham (if not longer). We find ourselves, once again, faced with opposition and growing anti-Israel sentiment.

Like the story of the people of the Congo (look this up if you have not heard), we must not let history be written by those with an agenda that differs from the truth. The cacophony of anti-Israel voices on college campuses is growing according to longtime professor, Dr. Brown. He pleads with us to take every opportunity to educate our younger generation against the great weight of disinformation polluting our college campuses. Please hear his voice and help combat this growing acceptance of antisemitism in this new generation of thinkers.

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.

Photo: flyer posted at Northeastern University on March 2024.

THE PASSOVER AND MUSIC CONNECTION

By Shirley Nigri Farber

The memories that I have from Passover are always associated with beautiful songs from the *Haggadah*. Songs like *Avadim Hayinu*, *Dayenu*, and *Ma Nishtana* are ingrained in my memory from Jewish school to family seders. When I had my radio program *Shalom Israel* in Rio de Janeiro in the late 90s, I began to study the importance of music in Judaism.

Music is present at important moments throughout our history and helps us in some way to be resilient and survive adversities. Sometimes it is a form to thank G-d for miracles, to praise, to ask for blessings, or just to express joy or make us feel better.

One song, *Shirat Hayam*, is cited in the Torah exactly during what might be the most significant part of our history: the crossing of the Red Sea, a text we read during the days of Passover and also as part of the *Haggadah*. The saying is: “*Az yashir Moshe u’vnei Yisrael*” - then Moses and the children of Israel will sing. The scene was the Israelites crossing the Red Sea on dry land, leaving behind the Egyptians. The soldiers of Pharaoh drowned, and the Jewish people, en route to the promised land, left the days of slavery behind.

The Midrash says that people sang at that moment to express the joy that they were witnessing. They didn’t sing when they heard the news that we would be free from slavery. It was an even bigger joy, because this is a miracle that all the people had witnessed, felt in their hearts, and therefore needed a song to express the moment.

Every word is measured in the Bible. *Az Yashir* (then we will sing) refers to the future, not the past. We remember the exit of Egypt as a time of gratefulness for having been saved and for bringing our people to the Holy Land, and also, as an expression of the final redemption that will come with the arrival of the Messiah, an expression of hope in the future.

In all generations, it is necessary to remember this miracle. The Passover Seder is made in a way that children (our future) will participate in, by singing songs and asking questions.

In the *Haggadah*, we read that each Jew must feel as if they themselves had left Egypt (*Mitzrayim*). Why is this episode so important for us today? We live so far from Egypt’s slavery, but at the same time, there are Jewish people having to hide their religion in fear of antisemitism. Unless you are held captive by Hamas in Gaza, most people are free to move.

Since the Exodus of Egypt to the present day, there is always someone “making the crossing of the Red Sea,” trying to leave a place where they feel oppressed and escape to be themselves. Think of all the Jews who left everything and ran away from Egypt in the 1950s, of those Jews who escaped Iran when the new regime took power, of the Russian Jews who tried to flee and were sent to Siberia as punishment. Think of all the Jews who were seen as enemies while living in Arab countries.

And now, keep in mind the Israelis who have been held hostage in Gaza for more than 170 days. Whatever oppresses you (work, health, family, money), it is important to keep in mind the hope for a better future.



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THE PASSOVER AND MUSIC CONNECTION



When I had my radio program, my idea was to bring in Jewish music to help people relax, and slowly I understood that music can touch people in a very deep way. Each song causes a different emotion in people. I would receive letters and phone calls from listeners in various cities, sometimes far away from the Jewish community, saying that they had been woken up spiritually by a song. An Israeli once told me that the music reminded him of when he had served his country. A female listener once said that a song in Yiddish reminded her of her mother lighting Shabbat candles and now she decided to light them herself.

The Israeli rock that I played took a young person back to the time when he was volunteering in a *kibbutz* decades earlier. An elderly woman told me that she cried every time she heard *My Yiddish Mama* by Dudu Fisher, because it reminded her of the time she lived in a ghetto in Europe. One woman said that she had goosebumps when listening to a song that her mother used to sing while preparing *kneidlach* (matzah ball) for Passover.

Important and happy events in Jewish life are always followed by music, as occurs during marriages and *mitzvahs*. Music has the power

to get people involved and transmit emotion. How many times have we liked a song that we don't even understand the meaning of? Music has the power to connect people from all over the world in different languages because it reaches the soul.

If on one hand music is synonymous with joy, its absence is required at moments of sadness. During the *Sefirat HaOmer*, the counting of the *Omer*, and on sad dates of the Jewish calendar, our Sages forbade us from hearing songs accompanied by musical instrumentals. The counting of the *Omer* begins on the second day of Passover and ends 49 days later on Shavuot. We have a one day break in between, *Lag B'Omer*, the 33rd day. Customs differ in different communities, some observed only until *Lag B'Omer*.

However you enjoy, appreciate, or remember songs and prayers, we wish you could sing your way to a happy Passover!

Journalist Shirley Nigri Farber is editor and publisher of Shalom Magazine. From 1997 to 2000 she hosted and produced the radio program Shalom Israel in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Photo: Tel Aviv Opera Hall - Omaggio alla Musica Mural by Daniel Schinasi o.b.m. <https://danielschinasi.com>.



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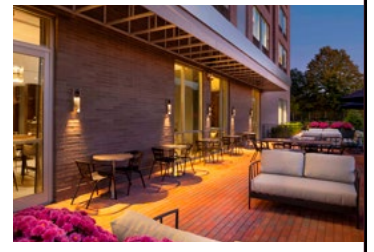
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FREE SPEECH AND THE LAW

By Denise J. Karlin

The First Amendment to the US Constitution states:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

Since October 7, 2023, with the rise of antisemitic incidents in the US, there have been movements to curtail what some view as antisemitic, or hate, speech, especially on college campuses. This is a complex issue, with many moving parts to it. This article will serve as an overview as to where the American legal system stands regarding antisemitic speech, especially on college and university campuses.

The first thing to keep in mind is that the First Amendment’s prohibition against the restriction of freedom of speech only applies to the government and not private entities. However, the Supreme Court has interpreted the definition of “Congress” in the text of the First Amendment broadly. It also applies to state and local government, the federal Executive and Judicial branches, and, most importantly, for the purposes of this article, to private entities receiving federal funds. Most colleges and universities receive some sort of federal funding and, therefore, it is a settled legal principle that the First Amendment does apply to actions restricting speech taken by institutions of higher education.

The second thing to keep in mind is that there is no legal definition of “hate speech.” While many jurisdictions have passed laws regarding “hate crimes,” those laws involve specific actions, such as the defacing of property or physical assault, and are not directed to speech only. As it has been said by many, there is no legal definition of hate speech, there is just speech you hate.

Given those parameters, this article will look at what Courts have said about when it is proper to restrict speech and how this applies to various incidents occurring on college campuses.

Just because speech is offensive or hateful does not mean that is prohibited. Over the years, the Supreme Court has set forth criteria that define speech that is NOT protected by the First Amendment.

These parameters, are outlined in the Feb., 2023 article “Is hate speech protected by the First Amendment?” by David Hudson of the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression as:

Incitement to imminent lawless action (incitement); Speech that threatens serious bodily harm (true threats); or Speech that causes an immediate breach of the peace (fighting words).

Over the years, the Supreme Court and lower courts have interpreted these exceptions quite narrowly.



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FREE SPEECH AND THE LAW

For example, in 1969, the Ku Klux Klan was allowed to hold a public cross burning and display signs advocating generalized violence toward Black and Jewish people; in 1977 the Nazi party was allowed to hold a parade while carrying swastikas and antisemitic signs in Skokie, a Chicago suburb with a large Jewish population, many of whom were Holocaust survivors; and in 2011, the Westboro Baptist Church was allowed to picket the funeral of a soldier while carrying signs like “Thank God for dead soldiers” and “God hates fags.” In these seminal cases, the Court found that the language did not fall within a limited exception to First Amendment protection.

Since the unjustified, heinous, and horrific attacks coordinated and perpetrated by Hamas on Oct. 7, there have been many pro-Palestinian protests held on college and university campuses. Many of the signs carried by the protesters espouse sentiments which some, but certainly not all, would find as antisemitic. Such signs include statements such as “From the River to the Sea, Palestine must be Free,” which some, but not all, interpret as antisemitic. A number of lawsuits filed by Jewish students against major colleges and universities such as Harvard, MIT, Columbia, and U.C. Berkeley have sought damages because these institutions have allowed students to be put in fear when they are exposed various pro-Palestinian demonstrations.

However, if one analyzes the history of the Supreme Court decisions over the years, one must realize that these lawsuits will ultimately fail, as any restriction on such protests must according to law be found to be unconstitutional.

Denise J. Karlin, a retired attorney living in Brookline, is a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School.



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PLANTING SEEDS AT PASSOVER

By Rabbi Katy Z. Allen

People often plant parsley seeds at Tu BiShvat in order to have home-grown parsley on their seder plates to dip in salt water during the seder. In Biblical times, the barley seeds planted at Sukkot had grown into barley that was harvested at Passover.

Passover in New England falls during garden planting time, a time when gardeners are busy planting vegetable and flower seeds. But what other kinds of “seeds” might you plant this Passover? Seeds of family connection? Seeds of love? Seeds of wisdom? Seeds of courage and strength? Seeds about getting along with those with whom you might not agree? Here are some ways that you might be planting seeds as you prepare for and experience your seder.

Food - What is the meaning behind each dish you prepare, share or eat? Is it something new? If so, why are you adding a new dish? Are some foods you serve a family tradition? Do they give you a feeling of connection to a loved one who is gone? What are the messages and meanings, perhaps hidden, of each food?

Tradition - Do you always do certain things the same way every year? What is the meaning to you and to others about each aspect of your seder? What is the impact of following your traditional-to-your-family way of having your seder? How do different people feel about each part of it? Does it bring comfort or cause conflict? What new traditions might you like to start? What seeds would they sow?

Family Connection - Whether you are with your family or apart from them, either intentionally or due to circumstances, family connections are part of the seder experience. What connections do you cherish? What connections are difficult? What parts of the seder are most meaningful to you in providing connection within your family, or your chosen family? What pieces are most meaningful to others in your family?

As you approach Passover this year, what new “seeds” might you plant? In many families divisions as a result of the war may add onto existing tensions. Considering the impact of seeds that have been planted in the past and that flourish at your seder today, as well as new seeds to plant can help you find common ground and go beyond the politics to the underlying love and connections. To help your family gathering be the best it can be, considering each aspect of the seder through the lens of seeds can help you identify ways to build strength and resilience and a sense of connection.

Returning to actual physical seeds, a suggestion for a new ritual is to plant seeds together. Before lighting candles - or whenever works best for your family - give each person a pot of soil. Have a variety of vegetable, herb, and native annual flowers seed options on hand. Some easy-to-grow possibilities include lettuce, microgreens, radishes (in deep pots), basil, black-eyed Susan (*Rudbeckia hirta*), and partridge pea (*Chamaecrista fasciculata*). Invite each person to sow the seeds of their choice and speak of what the seeds they are sowing represent for them.

May all your seeds bear fruit!

Rabbi Katy Z. Allen is the founder and rabbi of Ma'yan Tikvah - A Wellspring of Hope, www.mayantikvah.org.

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PASSOVER PERSPECTIVES: EMBRACING TRADITION AND UNITY THROUGH THE LENS OF SHARED HISTORY

By Colette A. M. Phillips

As a Jew of color, as I prepare to commemorate Passover, a significant Jewish holiday that symbolizes the freedom and liberation of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, I find myself reflecting on the shared history and experiences of my Jewish and Black cultures.

The journey of the Jewish people from Egypt to the promised land serves as a powerful reminder of resilience, liberation, and the pursuit of justice. This Passover season offers an opportunity to reflect on the shared struggles of both communities and to honor the legacy of mutual support and solidarity.

The relationship between the Black and Jewish communities holds a rich tapestry of shared experiences and historical significance. Reflecting on this shared history, one powerful representation can be found in the documentary "From the Swastika to Jim Crow." This film sheds light on the parallel struggles faced by Blacks and Jews during the 20th century in the face of discrimination, antisemitism, racism, and bigotry.

The journey from oppression to resilience is a theme that resonates deeply within both communities. Just as the Jewish people faced persecution in Europe under the shadow of Nazism, African Americans endured the horrors of Jim Crow laws and segregation in America. Despite the geographical and cultural differences, the shared experiences of discrimination highlight the resilience and solidarity that emerged between these two communities.

The relationship is characterized by deep reciprocity and mutual support that has spanned over a century. The Jewish community played a significant role supporting the civil rights movement and contributing to organizations like the NAACP, but there is also the often-overlooked aspect of the vital role that Black institutions played in providing refuge and opportunities for Jewish academics fleeing persecution in Nazi Germany and Europe.

At a time when mainstream and elite higher education institutions turned away Jewish scholars, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) opened their doors and hearts to welcome Jewish scholars, offering them a platform to teach and contribute to academia. This act of kindness and solidarity exemplifies the essence of reciprocity between Blacks and Jews. It highlights a shared history



of resilience, support, collaboration, and unity in the face of adversity.

At this inflection time when the world is grappling with rising antisemitism and anti-Black racism, it is more important than ever for the two communities to come together. This Passover as we sit at the Seder table recalling the exodus from Egypt, let's also remember the trauma and horror that befell Israel on October 7, 2023, which was a stark reminder of the consistent and ongoing bigotry faced by Jews, Blacks and other vulnerable populations around the world.

Let us also remember the hostages, the families and innocent Israeli and Palestinian lives lost to acts of terrorism and senseless violence orchestrated by Hamas. In the spirit of unity and shared resilience let us

stand in solidarity with one another. Dr. Martin Luther King's vision of the beloved community calls on us to work tirelessly towards justice and peace, fostering a world where all can live safely without fear and discrimination.

May this Passover serve as a time for reflection, compassion, and a renewed commitment to building a future founded on understanding, empathy, love, peace, and unity.

Colette Phillips is President and CEO of Colette Phillips Communications and Founder and President of Get Connected! and The GK Fund. Her new book is The Includers: The 7 Traits of Culturally Savvy, Anti-Racist Leaders.



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We are completely lay-led and are blessed with many knowledgeable participants who can *leyn*/read Torah, chant *Haftara*. We currently *daven*/pray two or three times per month for Shabbat and on holidays. New service leaders are always welcome.

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WHOSE STORY DO WE TELL?

By Rabbi Jessica Lowenthal

Over the past many years, I have noticed an interesting trend in Passover Seders. There are dozens of supplemental seder materials that focus on issues outside of the traditional story. I have inserts for labor justice, LGBTQIA+ rights, women's rights, prison reform, and the list goes on. The traditional story of slavery to freedom of course resonates with all of these causes, and it makes perfect sense to incorporate modern issues into what many see as an ancient story that our people have fully moved past.

I have long been somewhat uncomfortable with using these supplements. They are beautifully done, with important information and facts that we should absolutely be aware of, but it has always bothered me that, instead of adding this to the existing ritual, the materials often supplant the traditional story. Not many families are holding 3-4 hour long seders these days, and fitting everything in under 2 hours requires some sacrifice. But why is the sacrifice the Jewish struggle?

I am concerned that so many of us living in America over the last few decades have felt so secure and safe that the Passover story no longer resonates as an important memory to uphold. It feels like many have said, consciously or unconsciously, "yes, we all know about slavery in Egypt and now we are free, but that was 'so long ago,' and did it even really happen? We should focus on real people who are in need of freedom and stop focusing so much on our distant past."

To some degree, I agree that we have come to a place of privilege in America and there are many people who are suffering much more than us today. The mistake, I believe, is thinking that this is permanent. That now that we are accepted in America, that we are able to achieve so many of our dreams, that we will never be in a place of persecution again.

There have been many times in our history that the Jewish community felt safe and secure, where we were thriving. However, each of those periods ended in some type of trauma, exile, or persecution. Even after hundreds of good years in Spain, Poland, and the Middle East, eventually something happened and our communities had to flee. For those who have studied Jewish history, this is a given. We measure the



Jewish experience in centuries, not decades. But for the majority of American Jews, it is not a part of their picture.

I pray that this year, after seeing such a dramatic increase in antisemitism not only in America but the broader world as well, that we refocus our seder to really tell our own story and understand the reason we have repeated our warnings over and over. Nothing is permanent, and everything can change quickly.

The rest of the year, I agree, we should focus on those who are in the struggle for freedom right now. As Jews, it is imperative that we stand for those who cannot stand up for themselves. But on Passover, may we take a few hours to focus on our own story and struggle, and heed the warnings our thousands of years of history have taught us?

Rabbi Jessica Lowenthal is the Rabbi and Education Director at Temple Beth Shalom of Melrose.

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THE PROBLEM OF THE 'AS A JEW'

By Elishama Marmon

When I speak to my fellow Jews (™), I begin every conversation with the traditional phrase: “As a Jew, how are you doing today?” “As a Jew, I’m doing well,” the reply might go. A follow-up: “As a Jew, what are your thoughts on pizza?” “As a Jew, I need to deny, explain away, and obfuscate the slaughter of over a thousand Jews in order to make a political point that I do not understand. Genocide?” “Genocide. As a Jew.” Such conversations happen often.

Of course, no one who is secure in their Judaism or their opinion has ever actually spoken like that. And yet I see statements beginning with that formulation regularly, invariably followed by something that undermines one of the premises of Judaism.

Every now and then, I come across something that I just have to write something about. Such is the case with “Safety is Not Transactional,” a statement and petition published by JOOT (Judaism on Our Own Terms). JOOT, formerly Open Hillel, began with the stated goal of resisting the Zionist stance of Hillel, promoting “open discourse on Israel-Palestine.” In fact, it is a rabidly anti-Zionist organization.

Anti-Zionist Jews who seem incapable of realizing that their new allies who call for their murder and deny the Holocaust are a dime a dozen. Its signatories include such groups as National Jewish Voice for Peace, a chapter of *IfNotNow*, and National Students for Justice in Palestine (or “SJP,” who aren’t Jewish, but are one of the “Non-Jewish Endorsements”), as well as many faculty members from major universities.

The statement manages to avoid all mention of October 7th or what prompted the current war and all mention of Hamas, the terrorist organization Israel is currently fighting.

Instead, it cites “the end of the ceasefire on December 1st,” not bothering to ask who agreed to that ceasefire (Israel), who broke it (Hamas), or who has blocked ceasefire offers since then (Hamas). It emphasizes the deaths of 20,000 Palestinians, again failing to note that surely at least some of them were members of Hamas and the rest were being used as human shields for Hamas terrorists, rockets and weaponry.

They claim that police presence at their protests makes them feel endangered. Given that the police are there to ensure that violence doesn’t spread, this feeling may be very telling. Jews who screamed their anti-Zionist bona fides slightly less loudly would be grateful indeed for police to protect them from their “allies.”

For example, pro-Israel Jewish protestor Paul Kessler was killed by an anti-Zionist protestor with a megaphone in early November. The statement further denies the spike in antisemitism that has occurred on campuses, much as the fish denies the water it swims in. They encourage ceasing “reliance on state policing to combat antisemitism” in favor of “exploring new ways to practice communal safety centering the needs and experiences of Black Jews and other Jews of Color.”

In short, the group that put together this statement has an overtly political set of goals that have no relationship to Zionism, Palestinians or, most obviously, Judaism.

There is nothing wrong with having political goals, but these organizations, claiming to stand for “Jewish Safety,” have chosen to align “as a Jew” with a group - SJP - which posted a picture advertising a “Day of Resistance” with a picture of a paraglider on it - meant, of course, to be reminiscent of the terrorists who dropped in by paraglider to massacre innocent people at a music festival in Israel. Not only that, but they profess the exact same views.

Between accusing Israel of “state-sanctioned violence” and genocide and denying antisemitism on campus, they cannot resist falling all the way down the hole of antisemitism.

The subsidiaries of SJP “stand wholly behind the resistance” (posted on Oct. 9 while the blood of those massacred had barely cooled), find the attack of Oct. 7 “justifiably prompted” (also posted Oct. 9), and proclaim “Glory to Our Martyrs.”

There is nothing Jewish about supporting the slaughter of innocents or glorifying and celebrating those who carry it out. There is nothing Jewish about reveling in the deaths of Jews and non-Jews at the hands of terrorists. There is nothing Jewish about going to Congress to attack Israel and the Jewish people. There is nothing Jewish about supporting terrorism.

No legitimacy should be given to those people who proclaim their Judaism when it suits their interests, wear prayer shawls performatively to emphasize their Judaism and seem incapable of having any sympathy for innocent Jewish lives that were lost to terrorism. As a Jew - one whose religion exists beyond the bounds of politics and whose opinions encompass more than just the desire to see other Jews killed - I repudiate their vile actions. You do not get to use your Judaism as cover to support the murder of Jews. No one does. Never Again.

Elishama Marmon is a 2023-2024 CAMERA Fellow at Yeshiva University. This article was originally published in the Yeshiva University campus paper, The Commentator.

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Photo: Passover (undated). Stanley and Mary Ann Snider Papers, from the Wyner Jewish Family Heritage Center archives.

A tale of two Passovers: Celebrating freedom under captivity In Portugal, c. 1500

By Rabbi Shlomo Pereira

Passover, the Festival of Freedom, in 1497 and 1506, was marked in Portugal by serious tragedies for the Jewish people. In 1497, Jews suffered spiritual slaughter through kidnapping and forced conversion of children. In 1506, Jews suffered physical slaughter during the Lisbon Pogrom. Where do Jews find the reserve of strength to withstand these challenges to the point of celebrating freedom even under captivity?

I. Passover - celebrating freedom

On Passover, Jews have, throughout time and space, celebrated freedom. To this effect, we retell the story of the Exodus from Egypt and the deliverance of the Jewish people from Egyptian slavery.

More importantly, Jews were now free to follow the mission G-d was to give them 50 days later at Sinai. As such, Passover also assumes the role of the origin story for the Jewish people. It marks the formal beginning of a relationship between the Jews as a people and G-d.

It is, then, hardly surprising that Passover is arguably the most observed holiday among Jews across the whole spectrum of Jewish observance and affiliation. Yet, we have often been confronted in Jewish history with times and places in which many of us were not free to celebrate our freedom. At the very moment we were supposed to celebrate freedom, we were confronted with spiritual or physical captivity.

We focus here on two such moments in Jewish history: Passover in Portugal, first in 1497 and then in 1506.

For context, in Portugal in the 1490s, there were about 200,000 Jews in a population of just over a million. Furthermore, significantly more than half of these Jews were refugees from the Expulsion from Spain in 1492. The Jews of Portugal at the time were arguably the cream of the crop, but also all that was left of Iberian Jewry.

II. Passover, 1497

Passover in 1497 would always be a difficult one for the Jews of Portugal. But they did not anticipate how heartbreaking it would be.

The Decree of Expulsion of the Jews from Portugal had been enacted on December 5, 1496, to take effect by the end of October 1497.

On December 15, 1496, laws were enacted meant to immediately start dismantling Jewish communal institutions, religious institutions such as synagogues and schools, and social institutions such as charities, hospitals, and even cemeteries. Communal property and

its contents, including Hebrew books, were to be confiscated. Jewish life and organization at a communal level was to end immediately.

At about the same time, and although the specifics of the legislation and its date are not known, ritual objects and Hebrew books in the private possession of individual Jews were systematically confiscated by the authorities. This was, therefore, a community under complete spiritual siege and plagued by a deep uncertainty about the future. But the worst was yet to come.

Unbeknownst to the Jews of Portugal, these decrees were followed by deliberations on the best strategies to persuade them or, if need be, to force them to convert to Christianity.

By late February, it was decreed that on March 26, 1497, Easter Sunday, all Jewish children under age 14 would be forcibly taken away from their families and given to families throughout the country for adoption to be raised as Christians. The hope was that by converting the children, the parents would decide to stay and convert to avoid expulsion.

As it turned out, out of fear that Jews could become aware of the plan and flee, the orders were anticipated in about one week to be carried starting on Saturday, March 15, 1497.

It was the 14th of Nissan, it was *Shabbat HaGadol*, and the first Seder would take place that evening after Shabbat. What was already a subdued celebration soon became a nightmare of indescribably brutal pain.

As the enforcement of these decrees came into full swing, zealotry led enforcers to raise the age of the children to be kidnapped, in some cases to 23 years old. As to the Jews, the reactions ranged from sheer impotence to dire despondency to extreme desperation as children were violently taken away from their parents. Multiple cases are recorded of families committing collective suicide in the face of a situation they could not endure.

Christian chronicles of the events, often hardly sympathetic towards the Jews, cannot avoid describing these horrors as such. Jewish chronicles of the events describe families pathetically searching for their children in convents and parents who eventually had to make the heartbreaking decision of fleeing the country, leaving their children behind, and never seeing them again.

Passover of 1497 in Portugal was a time of widespread spiritual slaughter. At this stage, however, Judaism was the target for elimination, not individual Jews.

III. Passover, 1506

In 1506, Passover for the Jews of Portugal would always have been very dangerous and on the verge of being impossible to observe. But they did not anticipate how bloody it would be.

As Passover 1506 approached, the situation had severely deteriorated for the Jews of Portugal, compared to Passover 1497. By the end of October, 1497, most Jews had been forcibly baptized. A small number were killed or died for the sanctification of the name. An even smaller number managed to escape.

The newly baptized Jews, now officially referred to as New Christians, found themselves in uncharted waters. They were forced to adopt a religion they were not familiar with and to abandon the faith that defined them. Leaving Portugal was not an option, either

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A tale of two Passovers: Celebrating freedom under captivity In Portugal, c. 1500



because of a lack of resources or because leaving the country was forbidden and subject to severe penalties.

The glimmer of hope remaining came from royal decrees promising protection for a couple of decades for their lapses in their Christian observance and relapses into Jewish practices.

And this is where the situation stood in 1506. The large contingent of Jews who had been forcibly baptized less than ten years before were now New Christians struggling to either retain whatever they could of their faith or assimilate.

Either way, they faced enormous resentment and popular resistance to integrate into the general society. They were perceived as ignorant about the basics of their new religion and as lacking a modicum of devotion in its observance. In fact, they seemed to continue observing some of their Jewish practices with impunity.

To make matters worse, as nominal Christians, they now had unimpeded access to all activities and positions in society. The fact that they were now rising to prominence in society was just a manifestation of their opportunism and hypocrisy. They were irredeemable.

April 19, 1506, was Easter Sunday. In addition to the typical frenzy against the Christ-killers coming with the Christian Holy Week, the New Christians were now being blamed for the rather adverse economic conditions prevalent in the country and the deadly plagues raging the land. What else could be causing these calamities but the hypocrisy of the New Christians?

The Passover holiday had finished just a couple of days before. During Passover, a number of New Christians were accused of holding seders and otherwise trying to observe Passover. Despite the royal protections, popular indignation led to arrests, but to the chagrin of many, by Easter Sunday, they had all been released. And then, the situation went out of control. During the celebration in a church in downtown Lisbon, what the Old Christians considered a miraculous happening was dismissed by some New Christians as merely a natural phenomenon.

This was the spark that ignited a pogrom. Starting in the church itself, it quickly spread to the New Christian residential areas and the rest of the city. After five days, when the crown regained control

of the situation, 4,000 Jews/New Christians had been tortured and murdered by the mobs. Countless Jewish/New Christian property had been destroyed or confiscated.

Passover of 1506 in Portugal was immediately followed by widespread physical slaughter. At this stage, Judaism was no longer the target for elimination. Individual Jews were now the target.

IV. The strength that Passover brings

One might wonder where these Jews of Portugal, as many Jews under similar circumstances in other places and times, found the strength even to attempt to celebrate Passover, the strength to celebrate freedom under captivity. Interestingly enough, the inner source of our strength comes from Passover itself.

Passover is not just about the events of the past, the Exodus from Egypt. Passover is not just about freedom from slavery. It is about Jews internalizing the sense of peoplehood with a shared mission and destiny. It is about internalizing freedom from human masters as an essential state of mind.

Ultimately, Passover is about internalizing that time is not static and that there is an inexorable progression in the direction of a Final Redemption that is foreshadowed by the Redemption from Egypt.

And this is why we conclude the Seders with a promising and hopeful utterance, a message of the inevitability of hope regardless of the present circumstances: "Next Year in Jerusalem."

Rabbi Shlomo Pereira is the director of adult education at the Chabad of Virginia, Richmond. He can be reached at shlomo@chabadofva.org.

Photo: Expulsion of the Jews in 1497, in a 1917 watercolour by Alfredo Roque Gameiro, Wikipedia.

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Four Questions to Ask Ourselves this Year

By Seth Spiegel

We are heading into Passover, the sacred holiday celebrating our freedom from bondage in Egypt and ultimately, the delivery from G-d of our Ten Commandments. At Passover Seders all over the globe and all through millennia, four questions are asked.

For this year's Passover, here are four questions Jews might wish to ask themselves:

1) Is Israel safer the longer it puts up roadblocks to a Palestinians state in Fatah-governed areas?

Safety is of paramount importance to the Jewish people. Throughout our existence, it has been threatened. Perhaps now is the time to consider a peaceful, separate, two state solution with both sides living independently and equally. This ideal has been advanced by President Joe Biden and other world leaders. Given the war torn, traumatic state that Israel now finds itself in, can we begin to work toward it?

2) Do the West Bank settlements really make Israel safer?

Settlers have committed regular acts of violence against West Bank civilians since before October 7. Their actions have been condemned by the US and other countries who have imposed travel bans and financial freezing of assets. Is it time to think about living in harmony and stopping the encroachment upon the West Bank?

3) Why is the response to October 7 vastly different than the proven response to Munich in 1972?

After the horrific taking of Israeli hostages at the 1972 Olympics, Israel targeted the ranking members of the group responsible; it did not go on a long, heavy-handed, broad military campaign. No Israeli teams have been taken hostage since then.

4) Do those in power in Israel hate Palestinians more than they love Israel?

Think about it. We all love Israel and want Israel to be a safe and secure Jewish state. How about focusing on that instead of proactively preparing for attacks and incursions and expecting a constant state of war?

Instead, we might want to ponder the words of our eminent Jewish leader Albert Einstein, who said: "You cannot simultaneously prevent and prepare for war. The very prevention of war requires more faith, courage, and resolution than are needed to prepare for war. We must all do our share, that we may be equal to the task of peace."

Perhaps, difficult as it is, we might wish to put more of a focus on prevention and less on preparing.

These questions are about who we are and where we need to go. We might wish to deeply reflect on them this Passover.

Seth Spiegel, an M.B.A and historian, lives in New Hampshire.



SUDBURY

Coping in Community with Joyful Noise

By Barbara Miller

At Beth El Sudbury, Rabbi Breindel and Cantor Broekhuysen, have brought us together this year for festive Shabbats with song, study and prayer. Concerts provided inspiring songs and stories of Jewish culture, strength and survival.

We hosted Trio Sefardi. Noah Aronson and friends performed for our official welcome for Cantor Vera Broekhuysen. Our HIAS weekend welcomed member Belle Linda Halpern regaling us in a high energy cabaret performance of songs by Martha Schlamme. Hazzan Jessi Roemer and her ensemble graced a Sunday afternoon. Vocalist and composer Anthony Tzvi Russell joined us for a Shabbat afternoon. One Saturday night we even had a chocolate tasting lead by member Mathew Block of Prophecy Chocolate.

We took some time to laugh together enjoying the talent and creativity displayed at our Barbie themed Purim Schpiel. Now we're on to study Israel and count the omer. We await the time when a new normal may actually feel normal.

We hosted Trio Sefardi. Noah Aronson and friends performed for our official welcome for Cantor Vera Broekhuysen. Our HIAS weekend welcomed member Belle Linda Halpern regaling us in a high energy cabaret performance of songs by Martha Schlamme. Hazzan Jessi Roemer and her ensemble graced a Sunday afternoon. Vocalist and composer Anthony Tzvi Russell joined us for a Shabbat afternoon. One Saturday night we even had a chocolate tasting lead by member Mathew Block of Prophecy Chocolate.



ANDOVER

Temple Emanuel of Andover, the largest Reform Congregation north of Boston, is thrilled to announce Rabbi David Wilfond has been selected as the new rabbi following unanimous approval by the temple's search committee, the Board of Governors and the congregation. Rabbi Wilfond will assume his new position on July 1, 2024.

Wisdom Without Walls

Wisdom Without Walls: An Online Salon for Jewish Ideas is a new online community for Jews and others who seek to be part of a much-needed conversation in a post-October 7 Jewish world. What does Judaism have to say to us at a time like this? A space where people gather for deep conversation, poetry, and socializing, our "salon" happens on the screen. It inspires Jews who are living in challenging times. It engages them in meaningful conversations with some of the most prominent voices in the contemporary Jewish world. What does Judaism have to say to us, at this most challenging moment in world Jewish history?

Our next Conversations are:

May 1 - Rabbi Isaiah Rothstein - October 7th and 21st Century Black Jewish Relations

May 22 - Rabbi Shai Held - Judaism is About Love

June 5 - Rabbi Shmuly Yanklowitz - Am Yisrael under Attack: Cultivating the Inner Spiritual Tools to Weather the Storm

June 19 - Liel Leibovitz - Talmudic Teachings for Difficult Times (tentative topic)

For more information, www.wisdomwithoutwalls.org.




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THE HUNTINGTON'S 24/25 SEASON:

Leopoldstadt by Tom Stoppard

Directed by Carey Perloff

at the The Huntington Theatre

September 12 – October 13, 2024

Produced in association with Shakespeare Theatre Company

The latest masterpiece and most personal play from Tom Stoppard, *Leopoldstadt* is a stirring and epic story of love, family, and enduring bravery. In Vienna, the heart of European culture at the rise of the 20th century, two brothers have conflicting visions of prosperity - both for their family and the Jewish people - a tension that will echo through the generations that follow.

The London production's triumphant Broadway run won Stoppard his fifth Tony Award for Best Play, and now The Huntington is proud to mount the first American production, directed by Stoppard's longtime friend and collaborator Carey Perloff.

From director Carey Perloff: "My mother is a Viennese refugee who fled the Nazis in March 1938, so Stoppard's gorgeous and heartbreaking play has enormous resonance for me personally. *Leopoldstadt* is a family play, a play about the choices we make and fail to make as history hurdles forward, carrying us along. It is also Stoppard's most deeply personal play, in which he reckons with the impact of his own Jewish heritage on his life and work, and he will be a crucial part of our collaboration at The Huntington."

For more information, visit <https://www.huntingtontheatre.org>. Ticketing Services: 617-266-0800.



Auschwitz. Not Long Ago. Not Far Away.

The world-renowned traveling exhibition, *Auschwitz. Not Long Ago. Not Far Away.*, has opened in Boston for its exclusive New England premiere. The acclaimed exhibition features over 700 original artifacts and objects from the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial, the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, and over 15 other international museums and lenders. This exhibition marks the first time a collection this immense has been brought together to tell the story of Auschwitz and the Holocaust to audiences across the world. Visitors have the unique opportunity to view genuine artifacts that are rarely on display. These artifacts have great historical value, but more importantly, they hold profound personal significance. The artifacts include concrete posts from the fence of the Auschwitz II-Birkenau camp; a gas mask used by the SS garrison members; prisoners' personal items, including journals, shoes, and suitcases that had been packed by Auschwitz deportees in the hopes of one day returning to their lives and so much more. This exhibition forever changes visitors through the first-hand stories it tells of those who lived, worked, perished, and survived Auschwitz.

Auschwitz. Not Long Ago. Not Far Away. is now open at The Castle at Park Plaza for a limited time. To purchase tickets starting at \$34.95 and learn more about this exhibition, please visit TheAuschwitzExhibition.com.

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Finding New Relevance:

Golda's Balcony's 2024 Boston Run Underscored the Power of Education

Twenty-two years after its premiere at Shakespeare & Company, *Golda's Balcony* by William Gibson seemed newly relevant during its sold-out run in the Berkshires last summer, when discussions about Israel typically centered around Benjamin Netanyahu's controversial judicial reform.

Following Hamas' October 7 attack and the beginning of the Israel-Hamas War, *Golda's Balcony* made another timely resurgence this winter at Boston's Jackie Liebergott Black Box Theatre at the Emerson Paramount Center. Annette Miller returned to portray Golda Meir - a role she originated in 2002, earning the Elliot Norton Award and an IRNE (Independent Reviewers of New England) Award for Outstanding Actor in a Solo Performance. The production's original director, Daniel Gidron, also returned.

The play begins on the eve of the 1973 Yom Kippur War, with Meir confronting her choices and reflecting on the formation of the state. In a new director's note, Gidron wrote that since October 7, Meir's lines in the play "became so much more ominous... And Golda's last word, 'Shalom,' is what is most needed now."

To address the possibilities and challenges of 'Shalom,' this latest production staged several matinees exclusively for school groups in the Boston area. These allowed more than 300 students to see the performance, engage with Miller and Gidron during post-show discussions, and to collectively discuss key questions from a study guide devised to contextualize the events of the play.

The production also featured a guest speaker series, bringing influential academics, rabbis, business leaders, and other luminaries from Boston's Jewish community into conversation.

In one talkback, Dr. Marla Brettschneider, professor of Political Theory with a joint appointment in Politics and Feminist Studies at the University of New Hampshire, joined Miller and Gidron to discuss the power of theater as a tool for bringing history to life. In another, Jonathan D. Sarna, a professor in the Department of Near Eastern and Judaic Studies and director of the Schusterman Center for Israel Studies at Brandeis University, brought his expertise in American Jewish history to bear on the current divisions within American Jewry, with regard to the Israeli response in Gaza. In the final talkback on Saturday, March 9, Miller and Gidron were joined by Rabbi Marc Baker, president and CEO of Combined Jewish Philanthropies of Greater Boston, to discuss the struggles that come with having power.

Although *Golda's Balcony* already has its place in theater history as the longest-running one-woman show ever on Broadway, its latest production cemented its place not only in history, but in ongoing conversation. Through Miller's captivating performance, Gidron's smart direction, and their willingness to spend hours in conversation with expert guests and students alike, the play is sure to be remembered and revisited in Boston and the Berkshires for at least another 20 years.



Artistic Director Allyn Burrows, Annette Miller, Director Daniel Gidron, and Consul General of Israel Meron Reuben

Chag Pesach Sameach

Wishing you a happy and meaningful Passover.

As we gather to celebrate with our loved ones, may the Passover story remind us of our collective resilience and give us hope for the future.



PASSOVER RECIPE

By Ronit Treatman

The cooks in Israel's kibbutzim have always had to be creative to prepare meals for the members of their communities. Baking delicious cakes for Passover, sometimes with limited ingredients, is just one of those challenges. The *olim* (immigrants) from Europe brought their tradition of rolled cakes to the kibbutz, and they adapted their recipes for the communal Seder.

Sponge cake was invented during the Renaissance in Italy. Cooks from Genoa were hired by upper class families in other European countries, they brought their sponge cake recipes with them, and the cakes became known as Genoese. In Victorian England, a duchess introduced the custom of taking afternoon tea with sponge cake. Queen Victoria liked it so much that it was named the Victoria Sponge.

It became fashionable to roll and fill the cakes. First, the batter was poured to bake a thin cake. It had the flexibility to be filled with cream, jam, or any other filling that the baker could imagine. Bakers of the early kibbutzim eventually prepared what is now a classic Israeli Passover cake, the Israeli Passover chocolate roll.

ISRAELI PASSOVER CHOCOLATE ROLL

For the cake:

- 6 eggs, separated
- 2/3 cup sugar
- 3/4 cup dark chocolate chips
- 1/4 tsp. salt
- 1 T. Dutch cocoa



Preheat the oven to 350 degrees Fahrenheit. Melt the chocolate chips in a double boiler. Beat egg yolks with 1/3 cup sugar and the salt. Mix in the melted chocolate. In a separate bowl, whip egg whites with the remaining sugar. When the egg whites are stiff, fold into the chocolate mixture. Oil a cookie sheet and cover with parchment paper. Spread the batter evenly over the cookie sheet. Bake for 15 minutes. Remove from the oven, and cover cake with two clean, damp kitchen towels. After 5 minutes, remove the towels and cut around the edges of the cake with a sharp knife. Invert the cake over a new piece of parchment paper. Remove the parchment paper that the cake was baked on. Sprinkle one tablespoon of cocoa over the cake. Roll the cake with the parchment in place. Allow to cool completely.

For the filling:

- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon pure vanilla extract

Whip all the ingredients together.

To assemble:

Unroll the cake, unpeeling the parchment as you go. Spread the whipped cream evenly over the cake. Roll it up like a jelly roll and carefully place on a serving platter. Garnish with more whipped cream, strawberries and chocolate shavings.

Note: If you are intimidated by the idea of making a rolled cake, you can just bake the batter in a 9½ inch pan for 35 minutes. After the cake has cooled completely, top it with the whipped cream, strawberries and chocolate shavings.

For a nondairy cake, whipping cream can be substituted with coconut milk or almond milk and 1 teaspoon almond oil.

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

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Chag Pesach Sameach!

May your Passover celebrations be filled with love and joy

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Jewish Writers' Trip to Israel

This March, as part of a year-long fellowship with the Jewish Writers' Initiative (JWI) aimed at incubating Jewish-themed screenplays, I joined a group of screenwriters in Israel to explore Israel's vibrant entertainment industry.

In recent decades, Israel has made its mark on global entertainment, with series like *In Treatment*, *Homeland*, *Euphoria*, and *Your Honor* showcasing the country's knack for universally relatable storytelling.

When the JWI Screenwriters Lab was planned last year, our week in Israel was meant to give us an opportunity to interface with some of the creators of these shows, to learn a bit about what makes these Israeli stories uniquely universal. Our visit, shadowed by the outbreak of war, shifted our discussions with Israeli creators towards the immediate relevance and reception of their work in this extremely difficult time.

Content creators shared their struggle to align their work with the needs of the Israeli audience. Veteran producer Chilik Michaeli told us about how his hard-hitting series, *The Stronghold*, set during the Yom Kippur War, was pulled off the broadcast schedule during the early days of the war. There were plenty of war stories on TV already. Itai Raicher, head-writer of the SNL-like hit, *Eretz Nehederet*, shared some of the tough questions his team faced when they prepared to return to the air three weeks after the war began. Are Israelis ready to laugh? Is it an appropriate time for satire?

On the business end of the industry, producers and studio heads who rely on Israel's global audience reported a sudden and dramatic cooling of interest in Israeli content from international buyers. One producer, during his preparations to come to the US for the Sundance Film Festival, was contacted by friends in major US entertainment companies. They advised him not to bother with the trip. "No one will buy an Israeli show these days." Without international buyers, Israeli studios and producers face a difficult and uncertain future for their new content.

But not everyone is pessimistic. No one we spoke with on our trip is quitting the industry. Everyone has ideas for the shows and films they want to work on next. Some are optimistic that the chilled market will thaw over time. Others are doing what Israel seems to do best: innovating to meet the challenges of the day.

After a packed week of meetings, I returned to my home in the Boston suburbs inspired by the passion I saw in the industry. Israeli film and TV creators are all fueled by a desire to entertain the world - seem irrational, but it is also uniquely Israeli. Perhaps that passion is the secret to their success?

Arnon Z. Shorr is a filmmaker, screenwriter and author. He is a 2023-24 fellow of the Jewish Writers' Initiative Screenwriting Lab. He lives and writes in a sleepy town outside Boston. For more about Arnon, visit www.arnonshorr.com. For more about JWI, visit www.jwinitiative.com.



AJC and Hillel Launch Historic Partnership to Combat Antisemitism on Campus

On March 28, AJC announced a partnership expansion with Hillel International to engage university administrators to combat rising antisemitism on campus. Harnessing the expertise of both organizations will be vital to improving campus climate and ensuring that every campus is not only safe for Jewish life but is a place where the Jewish community can grow and thrive.

AJC CEO Ted Deutch said: "Jewish students on campuses across the country are standing up for themselves and their communities under incredible pressure and intense antisemitism. The work that we are doing, now made more far-reaching through this partnership, will only bolster these students' efforts to create the campus environments that they deserve."

Visit www.ajc.org to learn more about this partnership, and how AJC and Hillel International will work together to improve the campus climate for Jewish and pro-Israel students.



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Happy Passover

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Wishing you and yours a meaningful Pesach holiday of love, joy, and peace.

SENATOR BECCA RAUSCH

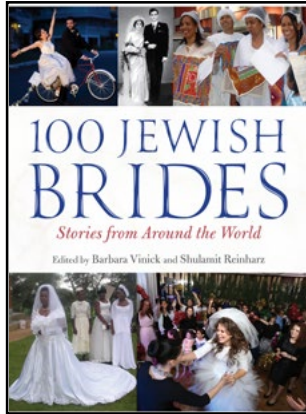
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100 Jewish Brides: Stories from Around the World
by Barbara Vinick and Shulamit Reinharz
Published by Indiana University Press

100 Jewish Brides is a captivating anthology that celebrates Judaism and wedding traditions with a global perspective. What makes it truly remarkable is its inclusivity.

Authors Barbara Vinick and Shulamit Reinharz were able to collect personal accounts from couples in Africa, Asia, the Middle East, Europe and the Americas. Each story unfolds with rich cultural detail, offering insights into the beauty of Jewish weddings and the unique journeys of each couple from a different part of the world.

From traditional ceremonies to modern interpretations, the book showcases the richness and diversity of Jewish culture. It is a testament of how diverse the Jewish people are, and how the countries where they live have an influence on their rituals.

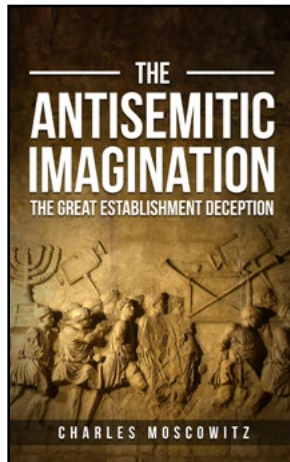


***The Antisemitic Imagination:
 The Great Establishment Deception***
by Charles Moscovitz

The Antisemitic Imagination examines various forms of antisemitism historically and presently, including the Christian, Islamic, Leftist, Right-Wing and Nazi variants, analyzing how these variations have often been advanced and in some cases manufactured by governments and influential institutional establishments to divert attention from their own malfeasance.

As a faith that advocates knowing G-d and as a people with a longstanding reputation for success, family values, education and independence, Judaism and the Jewish people have often stood as obstacles to those who seek to advance state power and utopianism.

Moscovitz offers novel solutions that have to do with an internal examination and a re-working from within of Jewish society that involves a better understanding of what it means to be a Jew. (Independently published)



My Name is Barbra
by Barbra Streisand
Published by Viking

Reviewed by Shirley Nigri Farber

Upon hearing about the long-awaited memoir by the legendary singer Barbra Streisand, my curiosity was piqued. I admired her but didn't know much about her life.

While waiting for the book to arrive, I stumbled upon a TV interview with Streisand by Fran Drescher on the occasion of the SAG 2024 Life Achievement Awards. They discussed the unique aspect of the audiobook where Barbra sings while describing her songs. As one of the Yiddish words she uses in her book was *Bashert*, meaning it was meant to be, I had to listen to the book in her own voice.

Anyway, given my time constraints, opting for the 48-hour audiobook seemed more feasible than delving into nearly 1000 pages of text.

Streisand reflects on her insecurities growing up without a father and a mother who didn't show much affection. She is a talented singer and performer but also a nice Jewish girl from Brooklyn yearning for genuine affection.

From a young girl at *yeshiva* (Jewish religious school) to being on the cover of *Playboy* magazine, Streisand candidly recounts her journey, shedding light on her successes and personal relationships with world-famous figures. While listening to her beautiful voice, I felt that I had some similarities with her: a sense of Jewish pride, feminist ideals, the need to always have food around, and a multifaceted career. And yes, I also had a different nose, but thank G-d, it didn't bother me, and I was never bullied like her, ending up having plastic surgery at the age of 30.

While Streisand presents her memoir as the truth about her life, we must acknowledge the fallibility of memory, especially when recounting events involving others. She goes into detail about each person she had met either at work or in her personal life and reveals that she gets furious when seeing articles or books showing another version of her story.

Every person looks at a situation through their own lens. I understood that because of her insistence on creative control, she had faced a lot of criticism.

In recounting her experiences, Streisand sheds light on enduring societal prejudices, underscoring the need for continued progress in the entertainment industry and beyond.



BOOKS

As a director and producer, she challenged gender norms in a male-dominated industry long before recent controversies like the Barbie movie snub at the Oscars.

While working on *Yentl* and films involving other Jewish characters, she addressed prevalent issues such as antisemitism in Hollywood: "Everybody is afraid of being Jewish," she writes.

While describing how her desire for certain achievements led to that realization, she frequently uses an inspiring quote from Goethe: "At the moment of commitment, the entire universe conspires."

After years of therapy, Streisand came to terms with her upbringing, accepting that her father did not abandon her after he died and her mother's coldness was a reflection of her own struggles as a young widow who needed to please a new husband in order to survive. Even while attaining recognition, she always seems to return to her mother's criticism and lack of appreciation.

In the book we get to learn about all her successes and details about the creation of each movie, music and play that helped turn her into a beloved icon. But she doesn't want to be loved for her talent alone, but for her personality as well. Unfortunately, we don't get to choose. People see us the way they want to see us.

She is a strong Democrat who likes to get involved in politics and fight for human causes. Because she is also a feminist, I was curious

to see her take on an issue related to her friend Bill Clinton: the Monica Lewinsky affair (she doesn't mention by the name). Like with many other bad things happening around the country, she blames it on Republicans. Unfortunately, as we know from the polls, half of this country's population doesn't agree with her political views. Luckily, the number of people who admire her for her talent is larger than the ones who agree with her politics.

As I always do when reading a book, I started to contact friends who would benefit from reading it. From aspiring actors to people in the media, to those seeking insights into family dynamics, Streisand's candid exploration of her relationships resonates deeply.

This book is a valuable resource for students of film and theater, deserving a place in any art class syllabus.

I can't decide which one to recommend, the book or the audio, as listening to her descriptions of scenes, people, and costumes made me curious to see photos. I ended up with both.

Perhaps the two together should be offered as an individual encyclopedia, given their numerous detailed and enlightening references about classic movies and plays, and of course, Streisand's remarkable career.



Journalist Shirley Nigri Farber is editor and publisher of Shalom Magazine. Like Streisand, she also has fond memories of her time at a yeshiva in Brooklyn.

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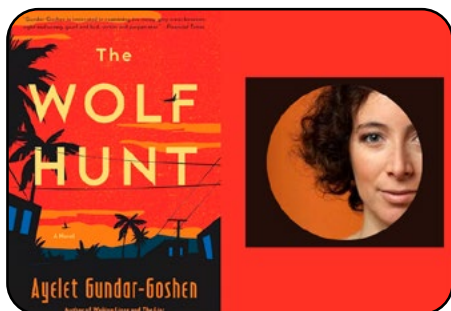
- Congresswoman Katherine Clark

Paid for by Katherine Clark for Congress

EVENT LISTING

Seize the Dream Gala

Attend the (Jewish Family Services of Metrowest) JFS Seize the Dream Celebration. You are cordially invited to attend the 34th annual *Seize the Dream Gala* to be held on Wednesday, **May 15, 2024, 6 p.m.** at the Westin Waltham Boston. *Seize the Dream* honors area leaders and volunteers who have demonstrated an unflinching commitment and personal dedication to supporting vulnerable children, families, and older adults in the local community and beyond. This year, JFS is excited to celebrate its 45th anniversary with honorees Martin "Marty" Cohen and JFS Max Michelson Humanitarian Awardees Yale Appliance Company and Yale Appliance Foundation. These honorees have made it their life's work to stand up for those left behind and it is a privilege to recognize these exceptional individuals. Tickets are on sale now - visit <https://jfsmw.org> to learn more.



Sandra Seltzer Silberman HBI Conversations Series Featuring Ayelet Gundar-Goshen, author of *The Wolf Hunt*
April 17, 12:30 p.m.

Join the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute/HBI online as we speak with award-winning Israeli author Ayelet Gundar-Goshen about her newest novel, *The Wolf Hunt*, a head-on collision between the American dream and the Jewish longing for the promised land. Free and open to all. <https://bit.ly/HBIConversationsWolfHunt>

Sandra Seltzer Silberman HBI Conversations Series Featuring Shulamit Reinharz and Barbara Vinick, Editors, 100 Jewish Brides: Stories from Around the World

May 22, 7 p.m.

Hybrid: In-Person at HBI and Online

Join the Hadassah-Brandeis Institute/HBI as we speak with HBI Founding Director, Shulamit Reinharz, and Barbara Vinick about their expansive and colorful first person collection, *100 Jewish Brides: Stories from Around the World*. The collection features stories of Jewish brides from six continents and highlights diverse rituals related to weddings then and now. <https://bit.ly/HBIEVENTS>

June 16, 7:30 p.m.

Israeli superstar **David Broza** will perform at the Berklee Performance Center. Raised in Israel, Spain, and England, Broza is a passionate peace advocate and music industry innovator. From whirlwind fingerpicking to Flamenco percussion and rhythms, to his signature rock-and-roll sound, Broza has wowed audiences across the globe with his charismatic and energetic performances. For tickets starting at \$99, visit: <https://new.starvozent.com/david-broza/>

For more events, follow us at www.facebook.com/shalommagazine

SUPPORT FOR ISRAEL

Some of the organizations raising money and supporting Israel:
CJP ISRAEL EMERGENCY FUND: <https://ma.cjp.org>
 100% of your donation will go toward supporting victims of terror and addressing the unprecedented levels of trauma caused by these horrific attacks.

American Friends of Magen Dayid Adom: <https://afmda.org>
 Israelis depend on Magen David Adom to save lives every day.

ZAKA: <https://zaka.org.il>

Haredi-operated organization of unpaid volunteers, which handles the holy burial of Israel's murdered and fallen.

Friends of the Israel Defense Forces: www.fidf.org

Champion the courageous men and women of the IDF and care for their needs as they protect the State of Israel and her people. <https://>

United Hatzalah in Israel: <https://israelrescue.org>

Committed to providing the fastest response to medical emergencies across Israel via 6,500 volunteers.

American Jewish Committee: Visit AJC.org/AttackOnIsrael

AJC's Israel Emergency Campaign 100% of donations received will be distributed to frontline Israeli NGOs.

Keren Hayesod: <https://www.kh-ua.org.il/soi-war>

United Jewish Appeal: Brother's Keeper Emergency Campaign.

KKL-Jewish National Fund: Support communities impacted by terror. <https://my.jnf.org/gaza-emergency>

The Association for Israel's Soldiers: <https://www.ufis.org.il/en>

Jewish Family Service of Metrowest: Visit JFSMW.org

Israeli American Council: Visit israeliamerican.org

Wartime Community Resources.

Feed Israel: <https://donate.feedisrael.org>

ORT America: <https://ortamerica.org/israel-emergency-response/>



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Chag Pesach sameach!

May we all perform acts of kindness to perfect and repair the world and enjoy the sweet company of family and friends this holiday season.

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