

A vibrant still life photograph featuring a teal background. In the foreground, a large, dark, polished shofar (ram's horn) is positioned diagonally. Behind it, a wooden honey dipper rests in a small metal bowl filled with golden honey. To the left, another small metal bowl contains bright red pomegranate seeds. Scattered around are several apples, including a green one and a red one, and a few more pomegranate seeds. The overall composition is festive and celebratory.

Shalom

Magazine

FREE

ROSH HASHANAH / FALL 2024

EDITION 46

Shana Tova
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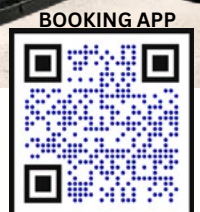
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Shalom Magazine 2024
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Design: Farber Marketing

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*Shalom Magazine has been published 3 to 4 times a year
since April 2009. Free copies are distributed in
Massachusetts and available at www.ShalomMA.com.
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EDITORIAL

Shanah Tovah!



Gaby Weisman

In this edition of Shalom Magazine, we are excited to welcome many new contributors who have brought fresh perspectives and showcased the diversity of our community. I am deeply grateful to individuals from around the world who took time from their busy schedules to write articles that resonate with our readers.

The concept of *kol Yisrael arevim zeh ba'zeh* — the idea that each Jew is responsible for one another — cannot be taken for granted. Regardless of where you stand on the current conflict, we all witnessed the world's unified outrage following the brutal killing of hostages held by Hamas in Gaza.

In this communal responsibility, we feel the sorrow as if these victims were our own family members. This is the key takeaway from these challenging times in Jewish history: we will not be divided, we will not abandon our traditions, and we will not be afraid to support our Jewish homeland while proudly upholding our Jewish identity.

Right now, there is a prevailing sense of abandonment within our community. In Israel, hundreds of thousands are protesting in the streets, screaming that the country's leadership is not doing enough to protect its citizens and prioritize the safe return of the hostages. Around the world, Jewish students feel their schools are failing to shield them from harassment. Jews in the US are struggling to see meaningful action from community leaders, and face mixed messages from politicians when dealing with antisemitism.

This is the time to shine light and dispel the darkness. The Jewish month of Elul, a time for connecting with G-d and seeking forgiveness, is the perfect moment to do so.

I hope the words in this edition inspire you to connect your soul with the lessons of Jewish history, and may we all be blessed with peace.

Wishing you a joyous and meaningful Jewish New Year.

Shirley Nigri Farber - Publisher



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On September 1, over 200 Jews and allies gathered at Newton Centre to remember the hostages murdered by Hamas terrorists in Gaza.



On August 19, the new Consul General of Israel to New England Benny Sharoni hosted members of the diplomatic corps and international organizations at the Hamas Tunnel Exhibit at Boston City Hall Plaza.

שנה טובה ומתוקה

Happy and Sweet New Year

*Jewish High Holiday 2024 schedule
(all Jewish holidays begin and end at sundown)
Elul 5784 - Tishrei 5785*

Rosh HaShanah

Begins sunset of *Wednesday, October 2*

Ends nightfall of *Friday, October 4*

Shofar blowing on both mornings of *October 3 and 4*

Tashlich recited *Thursday, October 3*

Fast of Gedalia is *Sunday, October 6*

Kaparot is *Thursday, October 10*

Yom Kippur

Begins sunset of *Friday, October 11*

Ends nightfall of *Saturday, October 12*

Yizkor is recited on Yom Kippur, *Saturday, October 12*

Shofar blowing at the end of Yom Kippur

Sukkot

Begins sunset of *Wednesday, October 16*

Ends nightfall of *Friday, October 25*

Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah

Begins sunset of *Wednesday, October 23*

Ends nightfall of *Friday, October 25*



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OUR COMMUNITY



Combating Antisemitism

On July 29, Governor Maura Healey signed the FY2025 budget. Among its many investments to build on Massachusetts' strengths and address our biggest challenges were provisions to establish a special commission on combating antisemitism and to provide schools with materials on antisemitism, ethnic, racial and religious hate, and discrimination.

Photo (l to r): House Ways and Means Chair Aaron Michlewitz, House Speaker Ron Mariano, Governor Healey, Senate President Karen Spilka, Senate Ways and Means Chair Michael Rodrigues and Lieutenant Governor Driscoll.

JALSA Annual Meeting

On June 17, the Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action (JALSA) held its 2024 Annual Meeting at WBUR CitySpace on Commonwealth Avenue in Boston. Hundreds of JALSA members gathered to celebrate the organization's accomplishments over the past year in its ongoing work for social justice. Among the awards handed out, JALSA bestowed Lifetime Recognition Awards to State Representatives Kay Khan and Ruth Balser, both from the City of Newton and both retiring from the state legislature this year. You can learn more about JALSA's work at www.JALSA.org.

Pictured left to right: State Representative Kay Khan, JALSA President & CEO Cindy Rowe, State Representative Ruth Balser.



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On August 18, over 350 young adults got to enjoy an evening with Young Jewish Professionals at the Tu Be Av Summer White Party at The Green in Boston. For more photos, visit www.yjpboston.org.



Tu Be Av (15th of the month of Av) is a day of joy, known as the holiday of love. According to the Mishna, the unmarried girls of Jerusalem dressed in white garments and went out to dance in the vineyards.







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LIFE ON CAMPUS

Rabbi Mendy and Mushky Bleich spent the weekend welcoming new Jewish students at Babson College, and reuniting with those who have returned. With a Shabbat dinner for freshman, putting up Mezuzot on students' doors and greeting students with welcome packages, it's been a busy week.



Rabbi Moshe Nigri of Chabad Lubavitch of Utah helps a student put on tefillin at the University of Utah, where there are an estimated 350 Jewish students.



Jewish students at Babson College



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Choosing Hope

Sandra Lilienthal, Ed.D.

October 7, 8:30 a.m. My husband comes into the women's side of the *mechitza* (the partition separating men and women in Orthodox synagogues) and calls me outside. He tells me Israel is under attack. My first reaction is one of complete fear and I burst out in tears, as two of my three children are in Israel at that time. I will have no access to a phone or computer for the next 36 hours or so. 36 hours of worry and concern for my children and for my People.

Sunday night, October 8, I am able to check the news. It is at that time that I realize the enormity of what happened the day before. My children are safe, thank G-d, but Israel has been attacked as never before. And I, who had always held the hope that we would find ways to live in peace with our neighbors, am terrified. Terrified because at this point, I see no solution, no bright future, no peace. I have completely lost hope of better days to come.

But G-d has an interesting sense of humor: among my classes that are to start that week is a 10-week course, "Choosing Hope." It is based on a book written in 2022 by David Arnow, and the premise is that Judaism has survived because our ancestors refused to respond to their circumstances with despair and instead, chose to be hopeful. In Arnow's words, "despair knows not; hope knows not yet."

And so together with my learners, I embark on this journey of exploring how Judaism has, over and over again, shown itself to be a religion of hope, of possibilities, of a belief that better times lie ahead and that our efforts to achieve that are not in vain, even when it seems they are. Let me share just a small part of this journey with you, and feel free to read the biblical stories literally or metaphorically – it works either way. Let us go to the very beginning of the Torah, when G-d creates the first family – Adam, Eve, Cain and Abel – He most likely expects things to work as planned. But they don't – it only goes downhill from there and by the time we get to the generation of Noah,

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Choosing Hope

G-d decided to send a flood and restart. But right after the flood, we hear about the Tower of Babel and once again, G-d brings destruction (of the tower) and dispersion. Having tried twice and seeing humanity not living up to the standards G-d had designed for them, G-d could have given up. And yet – G-d tries again, this time with Abraham. Either G-d is naïve, at best, or G-d is acting on hope that this time, it will be different.

Abraham and Sarah enter a covenantal relationship with G-d and are promised a brighter future: progeny and a land. But not only does Abraham have to leave the land shortly after getting there, but he also has no children with his wife. And then, when he does, G-d asks him to bring the child up to be sacrificed (or at least this is what Abraham understands). Most interpretations point to Abraham's complete submission to G-d, but a Talmudic passage and some *midrashim* offer the possibility that Abraham had hopes that Isaac would survive if G-d somehow decreed so. In other words, Abraham hoped either that G-d would not ultimately go through with his demand or that he, Abraham, had misunderstood what G-d has asked him to do.

On the first day of the upcoming holiday of Rosh Hashanah, we read the story of Hagar and Ishmael, where Hagar despairs in the desert, seeing her son in danger. On the second day, we read the story of Abraham and Isaac, pointing not to despair, but to hope.

But our focus on hope begins a month before Rosh Hashanah and does not stop there. During the entire month of Elul and all through the end of the Tishrei holidays, we focus on *teshuvah*, on becoming a better person. We begin with self-reflection, which will lead us to see the gap between who we are now and who we can become. And we make an effort to change because hope says we CAN change. This time of the year, we are also reminded that G-d has not lost his hope for us. Yom Kippur, which commemorates the day when G-d gave a second set of tablets to Moses forty days after the episode of the Golden Calf, reminds us that there is always hope that we will change, make amends, and return to a relationship with G-d and others from whom we may have been estranged.

I could also speak about how both the concept of *Tikkun Olam* – being able to repair the world – and the notion of a Messianic Era are intrinsically built on hope, but that can be the topic for another edition of this magazine.

This is all to say that as the holy days are approaching and I think of celebrating Shemini Atzeret and Simchat Torah this year, which will fall on the first anniversary of the tragic October 7, I will temper my sadness with my hope that the world can and will be better, and will promise myself to do that which is in my power to bring more kindness into it. It may just require an extra smile, an extra “good morning,” an extra “how are you doing?” If everyone makes small changes, we will go far. *L'Shanah Tovah* – may we have a year of peace both in America and in Israel and the whole Middle East.

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 August 25, Chabad of Cape Ann's Jewish Women's Circle held their annual Challah Bake. The Cape Ann Jewish Women's Circle provides a platform for women to socialize, learn, and explore Judaism through creative and engaging events.



On August 4, after reaching an incredible score of 11-0, the Wellesley-Weston Chabad, led by Rabbi Moshe Bleich, won the Men's Shul Softball League Championship game. The MSSSL is comprised of 35 Jewish teams.



Art Night at Minyah Darchei Shalom, Newton



Introduction of the new Board member of the New England Friends of March of the Living Susan Flashner-Fineman, pictured with Natan Fandel, Irv Kempner and Aaron Kischel at a recent MOTL Auschwitz visit.

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YACHAD NEW ENGLAND



By Laura Butler

We had a great summer of fun and friends at Yachad New England. We enjoyed having the opportunity to continue participating in the programs we love all year including our weekly Matzoh Ball Bowling League, Cooking Club, Torah Talk, and Art Appreciation. Our music group took advantage of Boston's summer evenings and enjoyed a few concerts in the courtyard of the Boston Public Library. Those beautiful evenings gave us a great feeling of community and belonging as did our annual trip to cheer on our favorite team- the Boston Red Sox. We were proud to sport our bright yellow jerseys at Fenway Park with "Boston" written in Hebrew, thanks to Boston Red Sox Jewish Heritage night giveaway. Our Backyard Buddies program was a remarkable success with over 50 visits each week, providing a unique opportunity for us to provide focused attention while having fun in a relaxed environment. Our staff brought crafts, games, and amazing energy to every visit.

We have a lot to be proud of and I am thankful for what we accomplished this past year at Yachad New England. We are looking forward to another year of fabulous programming, strengthened friendships, new and continued community partnerships, increased volunteer engagement, and exciting new initiatives. Shana Tova!

For more information, please contact NewEnglandYachad@ou.org.





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On May 21, Mosaic's Interfaith Environmental Justice Service Learning Day brought together members of the Christian, Jewish, Muslim, and Jain communities to explore how our faiths call us to be stewards of the Earth. United by a shared commitment to environmental justice, participants worked hand in hand to mitigate invasive species at the Blue Hills Reservation in Milton, putting their faith into action for a healthier planet.

To learn more, visit www.mosaicaction.org.

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State Representatives including Jeffrey Turco, Simon Cataldo and Ted Philips, pictured with Erin Gubert, were among supporters.

Israel's 76th Independence Day was celebrated on June 17 at Temple Emanuel of Newton. Friends and allies came together to show their unwavering support for Israel in these challenging times.

Consul General of Israel to New England Amb. Meron Reuben addressed the audience as he ends his term in Boston.



Shirley Farber, Senator Becca Rausch and Benjamin Sigel.



Temple Israel of Boston clergy (l to r): Rabbi Dan Slipakoff, Rabbi Andrew Oberstein, Cantor Alicia Stillman, Rabbi Elaine Zecher, Rabbi Suzie Jacobson (Photo: Axie Breen).

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NOT ALL SAINTS OR ALL SINNERS



By Elizabeth Samson

Heading into Fall of 2024, the weight of last year's Jewish holiday season looms large before us, and as of this writing, it is almost a year since the terrorist attacks of October 7, perpetrated on Simchat Torah, the day in which we celebrate, dance and sing with the Torah, the embodiment of the Jewish people's covenant with G-d.

This monumental time for our community coincides with one of the most contentious presidential campaigns in modern memory – former Republican President Donald Trump, arguably one the most polarizing figures in American political history, against Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris, a veteran politician who some say has yet to really define herself.

As we stand on the precipice of one of the greatest existential threats to Israel and the Jewish people, amid unbridled and rising antisemitism both at home and abroad, the American Jewish community is looking to the Republican and Democratic parties to see who will best pick up the mantle of our cause.

With the latest news on September 1 that six hostages had been found dead, murdered only three days before being rescued by the Israel Defense Forces, there is barely anything we can say to each other that we don't already feel and know. And as for the rest of the world, it's like the Jewish people are collectively screaming into the wind and one wonders if we have made any progress at all in rallying the powers that be to our struggle.

But the parties and their candidates who seek the highest office in the land know they need to listen – if they want our support and our votes. While this may seem cynically transactional, it is the nature

of the beast. The time given to the cause of Israel at this year's Republican and Democratic National Conventions is a reflection of that understanding.

The participation of the families of hostages at both conventions demonstrated an appreciation for the platform as an unparalleled opportunity to obtain nationwide coverage of the horror endured by their loved ones at the hands of Hamas in Gaza, as well as a chance for each party to demonstrate its support for Israel and the plight of the Israeli victims of terror.

A large swath of pro-Israel, Zionist leaning American Jews have supported Trump in the past, and especially in the wake of October 7, their efforts have been renewed with verbal daggers being thrown at Harris and the Biden Administration regarding its failure to assist Israel in obtaining a deal to release all the hostages and to secure Israeli territory and its borders.

Criticism of the Democrats also includes accusations of being overly sympathetic to the American Muslim community in the aftermath of October 7, a demographic that the Republicans are not actively courting. And although the Republicans tout themselves as the party of strength that unequivocally supports Israel, and which criticizes the Democrats for their alleged ambiguity in its support, there is enough doubt to go around.

The parents of American-Israeli hostage Omer Neutra addressed the Republican convention on July 17, saying that Trump called them “right after the attack when Omer was taken captive” and that they know Trump “stands with our American hostages.” Their devastating plea was heard throughout the world and the crowd at the convention filled the air with chants of “bring them home” – the rallying cry for releasing all the hostages who remain in captivity in Gaza.

The show of solidarity, though meaningful, must also be viewed in the context of the larger picture of who else was allowed to speak. Despite the mudslinging at the Democrats and accusations of a weak allegiance to Israel and American Jews, the Republicans' hands are hardly clean.

In what the New York Times called “a tricky two-step,” the Republican Convention on July 15 featured North Carolina lieutenant governor Mark Robinson who has a documented history of antisemitic comments and who has called the Holocaust “hogwash,” questioning the number of 6 million Jewish dead during WWII. Another highlighted guest on July 15 was conservative youth leader Charlie Kirk, who has a long history of flagrantly antisemitic statements, and whose organization Turning Point USA has profiled and promoted Candace Owens, a notorious purveyor of anti-Jewish conspiracy theories and racial prejudice. “Turning Point” hosted a rally for Donald Trump which he attended on August 23, an event in which many of the other guest speakers were antisemitic bedfellows as well.

While those in the Jewish community may choose to turn a blind eye to these facts so long as Trump also proclaims unequivocal support for Israel, the cognitive dissonance required to separate the two can make one's head spin.

Although they may not be courting anti-Israel and anti-Zionist Muslims who deny the tragedy of October 7, Trump and the Republicans are enthusiastically courting the antisemitic “everyone else” who can get them votes based on isolationism and fearmongering, and who, as has been reported in the New York Times, also propagate

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NOT ALL SAINTS OR ALL SINNERS

the “‘white replacement’ theory that Jews were orchestrating the dilution of white power by allegedly encouraging mass immigration.”

On August 21, the Democratic National Convention hosted the parents of American-Israeli hostage Hersh Goldberg-Polin, who was murdered shortly before his rescue by the IDF on September 1. The plea of Hersh’s parents, Jon and Rachel, to the Democratic party, the American people, and the world was nothing short of heartbreaking and many in the audience were visibly moved to tears.

President Biden and Vice President Harris have consistently and unwaveringly expressed their support for Israel’s war against Hamas, and in Vice President Harris’s acceptance speech of the Democratic party nomination on August 22, she stated “The people of Israel must never again face the horror that a terrorist organization called Hamas caused on October 7.” But the inclusion of Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, also the first Muslim elected to Congress, may have been a very quiet dog whistle to the leftist, pro-Palestinian elements in the Democratic party such as Rep. Ilhan Omar and Rep. Rashida Tlaib. Ellison’s speech fell short of criticizing Israel, but his past associations with the Nation of Islam and the antisemite Louis Farrakhan may not be quickly forgotten, as he echoed the Democratic party line of both needing a cease-fire in Gaza – often advocated without acknowledgement of the need to sustain Israeli security - and to bring the hostages home.

Harris’ mention of Israel in her speech was an outlier at the convention, as Ellison and many other speakers did not mention Israel by name since those in Democratic party leadership understand that the party’s Muslim constituency and others harbor sensitivity to the plight of Palestinians, oftentimes without regard for the suffering of Israelis. And many support terror-designated Hamas who are the leadership in Gaza, the perpetrators of the October 7 assault, and the root cause of suffering all around.

Just as the Democrats could have selected anyone but Ellison, the Republicans could have chosen any number of people to speak other than the unapologetically antisemitic Richardson and Kirk. The Republican and Democratic National Conventions are their parties most visible podiums during a presidential election year, and this year was no different. Those chosen to speak were carefully vetted and focus group tested to determine whether their presentations would evince the response and influence the parties were seeking. When it comes to support for Israel and the Jewish people, neither the Republicans nor the Democrats are all saints or all sinners.

In the lead-up to the November presidential election, we must have balance in our approach to hearing the candidates – both Harris and Trump – and listen carefully to what they are saying, who they support, who supports them, and examine who they are as people, in order to determine what they truly believe.

And, as we head into the Jewish holiday season and this important moment of reflection, meditation, and prayer, as Americans we must pray for guidance in making the choice as to who would best lead this country, fight antisemitism and ensure Israel’s survival through the next four years.

Elizabeth Samson is an Adjunct Professor of Political Science at Queens College-CUNY, a Writing Fellow at the Middle East Forum, and an Associate Research Fellow at the Henry Jackson Society. She is an international lawyer who holds a J.D from Fordham Law School and an LL.M. in International & European Law from the University of Amsterdam. Samson has authored several 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.

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THE SOUND OF THE SHOFAR

We are counting the days during this final month leading to the holiday season. This important month of Elul, which dovetails into the Holidays, is said to be a Hebrew acronym for the words *Ani L'Dodi V'Dodi Li* – “I am my beloved’s and my beloved is mine.”

We can certainly agree that it’s a beautiful concept. We relate this idea not only to our loved ones, but to our personal and communal relationships with G-d. It’s during this season and the weeks that lead up to it that we are meant to pursue a closeness to holiness and divinity. Yes, easier said than done....

So how do we go about most effectively pursuing this elusive holiness? During the month of Elul, we find ourselves taking a detailed inventory of what we did and did not do during the preceding year – our deeds of loving-kindness as well as the areas where we have fallen short.

Our method of returning to the correct path is called *Teshuvah*, directly translated as “return,” but informally understood to mean repentance. Of course, making right what was wrong is a worthy practice that can be done anytime, but it is truly emphasized during the days of the holidays. This is the principle idea of the High Holiday season and can be summed up in the closing prayer of Yom Kippur, when G-d tells us, “I do not desire the death of the wicked, rather the wicked’s return from the way that they live.”

We engage in deep preparation for this powerful and meaningful time. Many of our buildings will be prepared beautifully with our special holiday curtains and Torah covers. Many of our sanctuaries use white Torah and table coverings in place of our standard colorful ones to signify purity and a fresh start, or the “clean slate” which is gifted to everyone this time of year.

We look forward to the Holy Days when we hear the sound of the shofar, a ram’s horn’s piercing sound that reverberates in synagogues across the globe, ushering in a New Year. The shofar is sounded in three distinct blast styles.

The *Tekiah* blast is a single sound calling attention to the community,

and reminding us that there is something far more important than the daily routines of our lives. The *Shevarim*, three broken, swooping blows meant to imitate sobbing, in relation to true repentance. Finally, the *Truah*, the nine rapid blasts in quick succession, meant to be a full “wake up” call with its unique pattern and rhythm.

These sounds join together to bring us a connection to G-d, and steal away our *Yetzer Harah*, our evil inclinations.

There is an outdoor, natural element to the first day of Rosh Hashanah as well. Our community here in Hull will gather as we hold our Tashlich service on the sand of the beach. There we will ceremonially cast away past misdeeds into the ocean, represented by bits of bread.

In doing so, we remember that sins are not character flaws, rather they are mistakes that we regret and resolve to not repeat. While many congregations find lakes or streams for this purpose, we are blessed to be in close proximity to the great sea to observe this tradition. We marvel at the power and majesty of the landscape that we are so lucky to enjoy.

We also look ahead to Yom Kippur, our Day of Atonement, slightly more than a week after Rosh Hashanah. We will fast from sunset to the next sunset, taking in neither food nor water. Our fast is meant to remove the possibility of eating and drinking from our minds, clearing them for more meaningful thought. It is a profoundly moving day of deep self reflection, when we attempt one final time to recognize our shortcomings, our failures, to correct our wrongs from the past year, and return our faith to G-d as the true judge for forgiveness.

In no recent year have these upcoming days of awe been more critical. This time of year we will petition for G-d’s care and protection for our families and loved ones. Our thoughts and prayers also extend beyond our own borders, to our sisters and brothers worldwide in our hopes for safety and peace.

Shanah Tovah Umetukah! We at Temple Beth Sholom (TBS) wish everyone a happy and sweet New Year. Shanah tovah!

B'Shalom, Rabbis David and Joshua Grossman.

Shana Tovah!

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100 JEWISH BRIDES

This story is excerpted from *100 Jewish Brides: Stories from Around the World*, edited by Barbara Vinick and Shulamit Reinharz, Indiana University Press, 2024

Curaçao

Josette Capriles Goldish

The first Jews, originally from the Iberian peninsula, arrived in Curaçao in the 1600s from the Netherlands. They established historic Congregation Mikvé Israel-Emanuel, the oldest synagogue in continuous use in the Americas, where Josette and her husband were wed. The sand floor, one of four in the Caribbean, is well-known to thousands of tourists who visit the island each year; reminders of the desert wanderings of biblical Jews and homage to Jews of the Inquisition who used sand to muffle the sound of their prayers. If you thought that Jewish grooms universally step on a glass at the end of the wedding ceremony, think again. Josette's story documents unusual local customs regarding wedding glass-breaking, as well as inviting guests. Josette and her husband live in Chestnut Hill.

The strains of *Baruch Ha'ba* float down to the courtyard of the historic Mikvé Israel – Emanuel synagogue where I am waiting with my father to walk into the main sanctuary on the evening of my wedding. These first introductory notes coming from the organ are my cue. Remember to walk slowly, remember to smile, and for heaven's sake, don't trip when you walk in those high, high heels on the sand that covers the floor of the synagogue. Those are my main thoughts as my father pats my hand signaling that it is time to go. "Welcome in the name of G-d," sings the choir, and arm in arm we head inside where hundreds have gathered to watch the ceremony.

Although to the onlookers everything may seem to be as it is always done, he and I know how much it took to agree on all the little things that go into planning a wedding; particularly this wedding between an Orthodox Ashkenazi man and a fairly secular Sephardic woman. Yes - to him walking in the procession with both his parents. No - to me walking with both of mine instead of with only my father. My mother will be escorted by her brother-in-law instead of walking on the arm of my father-in-law as would have been customary here. No - to me walking around the groom seven times. Yes - to a small pre-reception wedding dinner in the *Sala Consistorial* – the social hall - followed by the *Sheva Brachot* (seven blessings) traditionally recited after a meal for the bride and groom. And what do you mean the groom has to pay for polishing the brass chandeliers in the synagogue? Well, that's how it is done here in Curaçao. These chandeliers with their many candles are lit only for *Kol Nidre* and at weddings... if the groom has them cleaned. The chandeliers shine and the candles are ablaze.

Following a custom from the nineteenth century, invitations to Curaçao weddings in the Jewish community were never mailed or hand-delivered through the 1960s. As was customary, ours too was printed in the newspapers and everybody who knew us or our parents showed up for the reception. We have pictures of many of the eight hundred relatives and friends who came to our reception in a private club that could accommodate the large crowd, but none of the procession into the synagogue and none of us under the chuppah. The



photographer, a dear friend of my father's, had a little too much champagne and whiskey at the reception, and ended up losing the rolls of film he took during the religious ceremony.

Maybe we can claim one of the dents in the silver platter as proof that our wedding actually took place in this historic synagogue. My husband thought he was going to be stepping on a wrapped-up glass item to recall the destruction of Jerusalem. Not here! In Curaçao's Sephardic community, the groom throws a fine crystal glass with a strong hand onto the platter, and the people standing in

front of the Holy Ark must turn away a bit, so that the shattered crystal does not harm them. The congregants accompany this act by shouting "Besiman tov!" – may this marriage be under a good sign – and even many of our non-Jewish guests will repeat that saying.

Note from the editor: the writer, Josette, was born and raised in Curaçao.

Photo by Fred Fischer: Sheva Brachot at Sala Consistorial, 1967.

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The North Shore Jewish Young Professionals got together for Mini Golf in September.



Members of the Volunteer Outreach Committee at NewBridge on the Charles collect donated items for many area nonprofits. Pictured here are (standing, left to right) Judy Brown, Betty Shapiro, Judy Weinberg, Anna Markus, Sharon Gouveia, NewBridge staff member Rabbi Judi Ehrlich and (seated, left to right) Mary Salkever, Fran Winneg, and Ruth Glazerman.

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A TIME FOR REPENTANCE, A TIME FOR FORGIVENESS

By Rabbi Jonathan Hausman

How are we supposed to repent, and from whom will we get forgiveness? Can only G-d forgive our misdoings, our sins? Does forgiveness from fellow humans count at all?

Jewish people all over the world will enter the holiest time of year, in Hebrew known as Yamim Nora'im, The Days of Awe, in October. This time begins on Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. That is a day on which we celebrate G-d's creation of the world. We pray that the New Year will be good and sweet for everyone.

Yet, there is a further depth to the day. It is also known as the Day of Judgment, for our tradition teaches that on Rosh Hashanah, G-d judges our actions of the past year. Indeed, we are taught that our fate is written in the Book of Life. In one sense, our fate seems determined.

However, it is not. During the days from Rosh Hashanah to Yom Kippur, we are supposed to approach anyone to whom we have done something wrong, repent and ask forgiveness.

If we expect G-d to forgive our sins and our wrong actions on Yom Kippur, we are required to make peace with our fellow humans.

Indeed, the Talmud, the 1,800-year-old elaboration of Jewish law, states the following: "For sins between man and G-d, Yom Kippur atones, but for sins between a man and his fellow, Yom Kippur does not atone, until he makes peace with his fellow."

The implication is clear. G-d will forgive you for not keeping the Shabbat, or for not keeping kosher or even for not worshipping G-d. These are sins against G-d. But, G-d will not forgive wrongdoing against another human, unless you make peace with that person, and ask them for forgiveness.

This confirms the Jewish emphasis on how we conduct our relations with each other. In answer to the question of what is the first thing G-d asks you when you appear for judgment after death, the Talmud states it is "Did you deal with integrity (with your fellow humans)?"

According to this teaching, G-d does not even bother to ask if

you have faith in G-d. G-d is not egotistical. All of the questions are focused on the quality and goodness of the life you lived. Your relationship with other people is what truly matters to G-d, not belief in particular theology.

The process we are supposed to follow during these days, which comes to a conclusion as we pray on Yom Kippur, is called *teshuvah*. The common translation is "repentance," but the literal meaning is "returning." By asking forgiveness for wrongdoings to fellow humans you are, according to Jewish tradition, returning to G-d.

The Torah (the first five books of the Bible) is clear about our obligations to fellow humans, seen in so many of G-d's commandments. These obviously include sins such as murder and theft, but a great example of our obligations to each other are found in *Exodus* 23:1 through 10. These commandments include: not lying, not being a false witness, making sure you leave some of what you grow for the poor, orphan and widow, you should even assist your enemy, and you should not oppress the alien living among you, as we need to remember we were aliens in the land of Egypt.

Judaism teaches we cannot sin against another person and think that G-d will somehow forgive us. We must reach out and make peace with that person in order to change our fate that G-d is considering on Rosh Hashanah.

The process of doing *teshuvah*, of repairing human relationships, is so important to G-d that one of our ancient rabbis taught, "Great is *teshuvah*, for on account of one individual who did it, the entire world is forgiven." As none of us can know if we are the person G-d considers to have done repentance with the greatest sincerity, all of us must partake in the process.

May we embrace each other in warm relationships as we enter this special time of year.

Rabbi Jonathan Hausman serves Ahavath Torah Congregation in Stoughton.

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FORGIVENESS: A PATH BACK TO MOVE FORWARD



By Yosef Rodrigues, Ph.D.

The themes of forgiveness and atonement are cornerstones of Jewish tradition, shaping our relationships with others, ourselves, and G-d. As we approach the High Holy Days, a time dedicated to introspection and repentance, these concepts take center stage in our spiritual journey.

The Torah and many other Judaic texts offer a wealth of teachings that guide us toward genuine forgiveness and atonement, reminding us of the power of reconciliation

and the sacredness of returning to our true selves. The genius of the wisdom of our beliefs and principles provides us with a framework for continuous self-improvement and striving for greater heights. It encourages us to assess and enhance ourselves annually to prepare for our aspirations.

The Torah contains many stories emphasizing the importance of forgiveness, with one of the most impactful being the tale of Joseph and his eleven brothers. Joseph, who was sold into slavery by his siblings, eventually ascended to power in Egypt. When his brothers come to him seeking food during a famine, Joseph chooses to forgive them instead of seeking revenge. He reassures them: “Do not be afraid; am I in the place of G-d? You meant to harm me, but G-d meant it for good” (*Genesis* 50:19-20).

This story teaches us that forgiveness isn't about making excuses for wrongdoing, but transcending personal pain and embracing a broader perspective on life's trials.

In the book of Jonah, when Jonah warned the people of Nineveh about G-d's impending destruction due to their wickedness, everyone, including the king, responded with genuine repentance. They fasted, put on sackcloth, and covered themselves in ashes (*Jonah* 3:5-7), demonstrating sincere humility and remorse.

Forgiveness in Judaism isn't just about letting go emotionally; it's a commandment, a mitzvah. *Leviticus* 19:18 says, “You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” This verse highlights that holding onto resentment is harmful to one's soul. Forgiveness allows us to break free from the chains of anger and bitterness, leading to inner healing and restoration.

That's why we refer to Yom Kippur as “The Day of Atonement.” While forgiveness often involves relationships with others, atonement in Judaism is a more internal, personal process.

Atonement, or kapparah, is closely tied to *teshuvah*, the act of returning or repentance. Maimonides beautifully discusses the concept of *teshuvah* in *Hilchot Teshuvah*, outlining the steps to repentance: recognizing one's sins, feeling genuine remorse, confessing before G-d, and forsaking the sin. The process of *teshuvah* is viewed as a spiritual realignment, a reset of divine essence. As the Talmud states, “Great is *teshuvah*, for it brings healing to the world” (*Yoma* 86b). This teaching accentuates the transformative power of repentance — not only for the individual but also for the collective — as the act of atonement creates far-reaching positive effects.

Yom Kippur, the most sacred day in the Jewish calendar, is dedicated entirely to seeking forgiveness from G-d. This day is also the pinnacle of atonement. The *vidui* (confession) prayers recited throughout Yom Kippur allow us to confront our shortcomings, not with shame but with honesty and humility. The prayers are recited in the plural form — “we have sinned, we have transgressed” — emphasizing that remorse is a communal endeavor. No one is alone in their struggles; we all share the human experience of imperfection.

The climax of Yom Kippur is the neilah service when the gates of heaven are said to be closing. It is a moment of intense spiritual urgency, a final plea for divine forgiveness. Yet, the emphasis is not on fear but on the hope that G-d's compassion will prevail. As we read in the liturgy, “For You are a G-d who desires repentance,” highlighting

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FORGIVENESS: A PATH BACK TO MOVE FORWARD

that G-d's greatest wish is for us to return to a path of righteousness.

Kabbalistic teachings provide deeper approaches to a mystical understanding of forgiveness and atonement, viewing these acts as ways to restore balance in the divine realms. According to Kabbalah, sin disrupts the harmonious flow of divine energy, creating spiritual blockages that affect the sinner and the entire world. The *Sefirot*, the ten emanations through which G-d interacts with the world, are seen as channels of divine light. Sin is understood to cause a break or imbalance within these channels, disrupting the connection between humanity and the Divine.

Rabbi Isaac Luria, also known as the Ari, was a renowned Kabbalist who believed that *teshuvah* could mend spiritual ruptures. According to him, repentance wasn't just about seeking forgiveness but also actively taking part in the universal task of *tikkun olam*, the repair of the world.

Through *teshuvah*, individuals could lift up the sparks of holiness trapped in their mistakes and restore them to their divine source. This perspective adds a profound layer to the act of repentance, transforming it into a sacred duty that impacts the spiritual essence of the universe.

Kabbalah also stresses the significance of intention, known as *kavanah*, in the process of forgiveness and atonement. Genuine repentance, together with deep reflection and sincere prayer, holds the potential to cross into the highest spiritual realms and invoke divine mercy. As expressed in the Zohar, the fundamental text of Kabbalah, "There is no gate in heaven that *teshuvah* cannot open." This metaphysical approach reinforces the belief that regardless of how far one has strayed, the path back to G-d remains accessible through authentic repentance.

Often overlooked in discussions of forgiveness is the need to forgive oneself. Judaism recognizes that self-forgiveness is as crucial as seeking forgiveness from others. The Hasidic master Rabbi Nachman of Breslov taught, "If you believe you can destroy, believe you can repair."

This profound teaching reminds us that no matter how far we feel we have strayed, there is always a way back through G-d's mercy. Self-forgiveness is the foundation of *teshuvah*, allowing us to release guilt and embrace our divine potential. Self-forgiveness does not mean ignoring our faults or justifying our mistakes. Rather, it is about acknowledging our humanity and permitting ourselves to move forward by repentance.

Another critical point to bear in mind is the lesson found in the *Midrash*: "Before creating the world, G-d created repentance" (*Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer* 3). This suggests that the capacity to atone and be forgiven is embedded within the very fabric of creation. We are meant to make mistakes, learn, and grow; this is the essence of being human, as *Proverbs* 28:13 reminds us, "Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy."

This is a powerful verse that encapsulates the essence of repentance and the importance of honesty in seeking forgiveness, resonating deeply within Jewish thought. It also serves as a timeless reminder that the path to mercy and forgiveness is paved with honesty, self-effacement, and a genuine desire to improve oneself.

Forgiveness and atonement are not one-time acts but ongoing processes that require courage, introspection, and faith. They remind us that while we cannot change the past, we have the power to shape our future. The Torah, along with many other Jewish texts and the mystical teachings of Kabbalah, offer us the tools to mend broken relationships, make amends, and return to our true selves. As we navigate the complexities of forgiveness, may we remember the wisdom of our tradition: that every act of forgiveness, every sincere atonement, brings us closer to the Divine and one another.

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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DON YITZCHAK ABARBANEL:

A SERVANT OF KINGS, A GUARDIAN OF HIS PEOPLE

By Rabbi Shlomo Pereira

This article presents a brief sketch of the life of R. Yitzchak Abarbanel, usually referred to with a mixture of formality and affection, as Don Abarbanel, and shares the story of his tireless efforts in 1471 to redeem Jewish captives sold into slavery in Portugal.

The immediate motivation for revisiting the life of Don Abarbanel is the recent death, in August 17, 2024, of Senor Abravanel, better known as Silvio Santos, a Brazilian media mogul who was his direct descendant. In turn, sharing the story about redeeming captives requires no justification in light of the events of October 7, 2023.

A statesman of affluence and influence

Don Abarbanel was born in Lisbon in 1437, where he received a Jewish education under R. Yosef Chayon and was groomed for a court position under the tutelage of his father, Yehudah, who himself served the courts of D. Duarte (r: 1433-1438) and D. Afonso V (r: 1438-1481). Indeed, upon his father's demise in 1471, he successfully served as treasurer and close advisor to D. Afonso V.

Early during the reign of D. João II (r: 1481-1495), however, Don Abarbanel was suspected of being part of a conspiracy against the crown led by the powerful House of Braganza, with whom the Abarbanel family had a very close association. In 1483, faced with an imminent threat to their lives, Don Abarbanel and most of his family were forced to flee Portugal.

Taking refuge in Castile, Don Abarbanel settled in Toledo and entered the service of Ferdinand of Aragon (r. 1479–1516) and Isabella of Castile (r. 1474–1504) as a tax farmer and financial advisor. For the next eight years, he played a prominent financial and advisory role in helping the monarchs end the centuries-old Muslim presence. And upon the promulgation of the decree of expulsion of the Jews in 1492, he did all within his power to have it reversed. After adamantly

refusing to convert, he and his family were once again forced to flee.

In early 1493, Don Abarbanel settled in Naples, where Ferdinand I (r. 1458-1494) promptly appointed him to a similar position. However, the monarch died in early 1494, the French forces invaded in 1495, and Don Abarbanel and his family were yet once again running for their lives. He eventually returned and dedicated much of the next eight years to writing.

A prolific and successful writer

Don Abarbanel was one of the most prolific of his generation. However, most of his literary output was produced after leaving Portugal in 1483. A notable exception is his commentary on Deuteronomy, which he began in Lisbon. It was published under the title *Merkevet HaMishev* (Second Chariot) in Sabbioneta in 1551. In turn, *Perush Al HaTorah*, the commentary on the whole Torah, was first printed in Venice in 1579.

Among his many other works, only a few were published during his lifetime: *Rosh Amanah* (Pinnacle of Faith), a discussion of theological questions relating to the Thirteen Principles of Faith by R. Moshe ben Maimon (1138-1204); *Zevach Pesach* (Passover Sacrifice), the first *Haggadah* ever published with a commentary; and *Nahalat Avot* (Inheritance of the Fathers), a commentary on Ethics of the Fathers. These three books were published together in Constantinople in 1505 by the printing shop of David and Shmuel ibn Nachmias, the Spanish refugee who introduced the printing press to the Ottoman Empire.

A redeemer of Jewish captives

In 1471, as part of its ongoing expansion in North Africa, the Portuguese captured the city of Arzila. D. Afonso V personally led the campaign, commanding an army of 30,000 soldiers and 400 vessels.

As they arrived at the Moroccan coast, a fierce storm erupted, causing heavy rainfall over the next three days that caused the loss

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DON YITZCHAK ABARBANEL:

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of several Portuguese ships and the death of over 200 men. Despite these challenges, the city was captured. The battle left 2,000 defenders dead. Five thousand residents were taken as captives and sold into slavery.

Among the thousands of captives were 250 Jews from Arzila, men, women, and children, who were sold into slavery throughout Portugal. Upon learning about the plight of these Jewish captives, Don Abarbanel formed a committee of twelve leaders from the Lisbon Jewish community with the goal of raising funds to redeem them from captivity.

On behalf of the Jewish community of Lisbon, Don Abarbanel traveled across the country. Going from town to town, he raised the enormous sum of 10,000 gold doubloons, enough to purchase the freedom of 150 captives. Notably, Don Abarbanel mentions that this amount was collected only from the Jewish community and that it represented the full price of the transactions.

For perspective, 10,000 gold doubloons would be enough to sponsor an entire fleet or to sustain a lifestyle of luxury and power at the highest level. The booty extracted from Arzila by the Portuguese forces, deemed particularly good, was estimated at 80,000 gold doubloons.

Despite these achievements, for Don Abarbanel, the challenges were far from over. There were still 100 Jews in captivity. Besides, the newly freed Jews, many destitute and unfamiliar with the local language, required clothing, shelter, and support.

Realizing that he could not ask for more help from the Portuguese Jewish community, Don Abarbanel turned to his friend and close business associate R. Yechiel of Pisa (d.1492), a banker and philanthropist and one of the most prominent Jews in Italy.



In March 1472, Don Abarbanel sent a lengthy letter in Hebrew to his Italian friend. This letter was delivered by ship through two Portuguese ambassadors on a diplomatic mission to Italy dispatched by Afonso V to pledge his obedience to the newly elected pope.

Despite all the success already achieved, Don Abarbanel could not ignore what still needed to be done. He did not rest or hesitate to engage his connections to find the funds necessary to redeem the remaining captives and to support the remaining fellow Jews

in need. This was a remarkable case of fulfillment of the mitzvah of “redeeming the captives.”

A life of achievements

Don Abarbanel passed away in Venice in 1508 and is buried in Padua. The last two and a half decades of his life were anything but easy, as he and his family were victims of three forced exiles: from Portugal in 1482; from Castile in 1492; and from Naples in 1495. With each exile, Don Abarbanel was left impoverished. Each time, he managed to recover and rebuild his life, influence, and affluence.

More importantly, throughout it all, Don Abarbanel managed to establish himself as a prolific writer, a prominent Jewish scholar, and a philanthropist whose heart was never oblivious to the suffering of his brethren.

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

Photos: Wikipedia.



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Clockwise: Joe and Lucy Press Food Pantry; welcoming a family at the airport; a Patient Navigator volunteer escorts a client to a medical appointment; Build-a-Backpack participants at Temple Shir Tikva, Wayland; a volunteer delivers a Passover meal. Learn about the many ways JFS supports our neighbors in need at JFSMW.org.



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ASHAMNU: THE VIRTUE OF BEING WRONG

By David Bernat, Ph.D.

As the denouement of our election cycle approaches, I have been reflecting on qualities and models of leadership, both ideal, and detrimental, against the background of the High Holidays and their core rituals and morays.

From my perspective, a glaring deficit is in evidence. On “both sides of the aisle,” and in arenas beyond the political, there is a conspicuous inability to acknowledge wrongdoing and error, alongside a widespread reluctance to apologize without equivocation. For example, some leaders in the medical and financial sector attempt to evade accountability for negative outcomes, either as an outgrowth of their own arrogance, or because of a society that has become uncompromisingly litigious.

Similarly, as Kathryn Schultz asserts in her incisive work *Being Wrong: Adventures in the Margin of Error*, our leaders have long valued certainty, and, at the same time, have viewed doubt as a deplorable weakness. She argues that we are healthier, as individuals and communities, if we eschew certainty to recognize, and even embrace, the inevitability of error.

Our strength, Schulz affirms, is not in our search for infallibility, but in the way we behave and interrelate in the face of our capacity to be wrong. In the same vein, as General Stanley McChrystal affirmed in a 2011 TED Talk, “...a leader isn’t good because they’re right; they’re good because they’re willing to learn and to trust...”

Corporate guru Jim Collins, in his treatise *Good to Great*, describes the most successful leaders as those who “display a compelling modesty, are self-effacing and understated...and embody a paradoxical mix of personal humility and professional will.”

Jewish tradition, and the ethos underlying Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, and the Ten Days of Penitence, anticipated the above

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ASHAMNU: THE VIRTUE OF BEING WRONG

conclusions millennia ago. For example, the process of *teshuvah* calls for a frank acknowledgment of our transgressions. We take a personal inventory, cognizant of our flawed nature, and the inevitability of error. Kol Nidre, a centerpiece of our liturgy, provides a poignant expression of this self-awareness. In the prayer, we ask to be absolved, *in advance*, for failing to live up to our commitments in the year to come.

Similarly, *Ashamnu* and *Al Chet* have us recite, communally, an A to Z litany of sins, many of which we may never have actually committed as individuals. The Torah's Yom HaKippurim mandates are emphatic: "*On the 7th month on the 10th day of the month, you shall abase yourselves...It shall be a Shabbat Shabbaton for you and you shall abase yourselves.*" (Leviticus 16:29-31).

Influential Medieval Jewish philosophers advanced a notion that G-d is omniscient, all knowing, omnipotent, all powerful, and infallible. As expressed in the poetic prayer *Yigdal*; *Lo yachalif ha'El velo yamir dato, le'olamim lezulato*: "G-d, exclusively and forever, will not reverse course or change his mind..." However, our foundational texts indicate otherwise, furnishing a counterintuitive model of a G-d who is capable of error and doubt.

According to the Torah, G-d creates humanity and is soon disappointed in the result: "*YHWH regretted that he made humanity on earth and was saddened in his heart*" (Genesis 6:6). G-d then resolves to eradicate humanity with a flood, and "reboot" with Noah and his family.

After this massive upheaval, and the fresh start, G-d is ultimately reconciled: "*Though the formation of the human heart is compromised from their youth, I will no longer strike all living things that I made*"

(Genesis 9:21). God falls short of perfection, and yet, through the uncertainty, makes peace with the flawed nature of the created world.

In *Isaiah* 54:8, G-d dramatically owns up to a temperamental nature: "*In a flash of fury I hid my face from you, but with everlasting loyalty will I be compassionate.*" The Talmudic Sages convey a profound psychological and theological insight, suggesting that God is sensitive to this aspect of God's own personality. In tractate *Berachot* 7a, they suggest that God prays, asking for the strength to suppress the inclination for anger and strict application of justice in favor of a posture of *Rachamim*, mercy, toward humanity. Therefore, G-d will be equipped to address our plea: *Avinu Malkeinu, choneinu va'aneinu, ki ein banu ma'asim*, "Our Father our King, be gracious to us and respond to us, though we do not merit it."

Our tradition emphasizes that humanity is created *BeTselem Elohim*, in the Divine Image. Thus, we mirror, among other qualities, G-d's capacity to "be wrong." Our imperative, underscored particularly during the *Yamim Nora'im*, Days of Awe, is to act with humility, generosity, and compassion, when, inevitably, we, and those in our community, tread "the margin of error."

I wish you a *Shanah Tovah uBriah* – A Healthy and Happy New Year. May we all be inscribed and sealed for good in the Book of Life.

שאלו שלום ירושלים

Seek Peace for Jerusalem

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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THE GREAT MEDIA SHIFT AROUND US

By Steven Schimmel

It has become increasingly difficult to keep from being inundated by the rising tide of anti-Israel activism. Ever more aggressively exaggerated, wholly-invented claims about war-crimes purportedly being committed by Israel are being broadcast incessantly.

It seems as though every week we are bombarded by some new and awful lie, and it's gotten worse each month since Oct. 7.

During the Summer Olympics in July, the claim was that Israel had killed over 300 would-be Palestinian Olympic athletes. This is all in addition to the persistent claim that Israel is seeking to expel, starve, or murder all of the Palestinians of Gaza and the West Bank, which is claimed to be the reason why, according to these anti-Zionist conspiracy theorists – Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu purposely allowed the Oct. 7 attack to happen. They also emphatically deny that systematic sexual assault was committed by Hamas on Oct. 7 and that no babies were beheaded (or they say maybe a few, but certainly not 40).

Anti-Zionists claim that it was Israel that killed many of the 1200 victims of the attack, and they justify Hamas' actions by stating that many of the Israeli victims had served in the IDF, so it's not as if Hamas killed civilians. But even more dangerous is the escalated effort to undermine the legitimacy of Israel.

Many of these voices go far beyond the scope of criticism of the war – they criticize the very notion of the State of Israel. All of this is so blatantly antisemitic, so obviously steeped in conspiracy theory, so deeply entwined with historic blood libels and pseudo-history that it is actually a challenge to confront these remarks in any serious way – and yet we so desperately need to.

The examples above, and many more like them and worse, are what the world hears and sees on social media. This is what our kids are exposed to both online and on campus; inexplicably, this is what political activists and even elected officials are promoting.

Even right here in Worcester, just look at the social media pages of

some of our city councilors. It is unacceptable. For every post that I or some other pro-Israel voice attempts to confront with rationality and facts, there are an exponential number of those who yell back at us and shout us down.

This past spring, a speaker at Worcester State University who was visiting to recount his experiences as an IDF first responder during Oct. 7 was aggressively shouted down, and his presentation was halted twice for fire alarms pulled to stop him from speaking. The voices promoting these anti-Israel narratives also aren't just crass online trolls and aren't only people who pull fire alarms.

More often, the most ardent anti-Israel leaders are otherwise respected people who parrot propaganda from social media accounts that look like news sources that operate in sophisticated ways that exemplify how psychology and propaganda work most effectively.

Over the last 20 years I've watched how we moved from condemning mainstream media's coverage of Israel to the realization that the mainstream media has been replaced by far more sinister social media sources, purposefully destructive outlets that reach a more vulnerable audience more effectively. Ze'ev Jabotinsky toured Europe in the years preceding the Holocaust warning that the Jewish communities were atop a volcano about to blow.

We must take seriously the threat we are facing or we too will find ourselves atop a volcano. The next generation, those in college and high-school right now are being bombarded by anti-Israel narratives, and many of the political voices they respect and listen to are the kind of people who actively promote lies about Israel.

We must condemn those who engage in this action and behavior; we must stand up for ourselves now and with a strong voice. The war in Gaza will eventually come to a conclusion, but I fear that the impact of the exposure to this propaganda will be felt for a long time.

Steven Schimmel is the Executive Director of Jewish Federation of Central Massachusetts. This article expresses his opinion not of the Federation.



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MUSIC, MEMORY, AND RETURNING

By Cantor Alicia Stillman

In a few short weeks, as our summer wanes, Jews throughout the world will begin to hum the familiar folk melody that has lulled and led us into the High Holidays for generations: *Avinu Malkeinu, chaneinu va'aneinu, ki ein banu ma'asim.... Avinu Malkeinu* have mercy on us and answer us, for our deeds are insufficient, deal with us charitably and lovingly, and redeem us.

From the North End of Boston to the beautiful Berkshire Mountains, the collective musical memory is the same. Inwardly it taps against a hardened shell protecting our interior life – the season reawakens us to reclaim our spiritual north star, softening us to one another and the potential for deepened meaning in our lives.

Every holiday season we point ourselves in the same direction, and the ensuing year wears itself on us with pain as well as joy, unexpected disaster as well as unbelievably good fortune. The work of being a human walking through the world is exhilarating and filled with challenges, and each holiday that offers the opportunity to spiritually course correct is a welcome one.

Many of us are reluctantly getting back to our “real lives” – we are closing up summer cabins and unpacking suitcases, bidding farewell to visitors, taking sweaters out of storage. All of these activities lead us to and prepare us for t’shuvah, t’filah, and tzedakah: to return, to reflect, to come home.

Getting back to our real lives is exactly what the chagim do for us and to us. In Hebrew, the concept of t’shuvah laces our liturgical arc through the weeks of introspection and reckoning, apologies and forgiveness, a belief that the inner light of our soul is pure and good – and that we have the ability to recognize it as such, and to turn back toward that goodness. We bathe in hope and potential for sweetness, kindness, community, and generosity. It is the essence of optimism.

And yet, the mentioning of these familiar phrases dust off memories of sermons and of parents and grandparents who no longer sit beside

us as we sing these words. The musical phrases and lessons that attach themselves to them usher in lifetimes of holidays and relationships: singing *b’rosh hashanah yikatevun u’vyom tzom kippur yichateivun* – the plaintiff and reflective refrain that on Rosh Hashanah the fate of the coming year is written and on Yom Kippur it is sealed.

But in spite of that judgment, we have the power and agency to shift our actions and relationships to change the outcome as well as the world around us. No matter what the year holds for us, we are not passive actors within it. We have the ability to reflect, to help, and to heal. That is Judaism’s promise.

On Saturday, September 28, our communities gather for *S’lichot*, the candle lit, late-night gathering that puts us back into the Days of Awe with its desperate words of yearning to allow our prayers to be heard and answered.

With a midnight theological shakedown held by the spiritual CPR of *Ashamnu*, the season of return truly has begun, the serious reckoning of our behavior and who we are. *Shema Koleinu*. Hear our voice Adonai, spare us and be compassionate to us, and accept –with compassion and favor – our prayer.

The inner poetry of this prayer is most poignant and for many captures the main work of our lives: “Do not cast us away from You; do not take Your holy presence from us. Do not cast us away or desert us as we grow old and our energy wanes.” There it is - the whole vulnerable human condition no matter your beliefs – I do not want to grow old scared and alone.

Cantors are beginning to massage these words in our mouths, songs, and sermons. And we hope that you will as well. Wherever you are this new year – may these words be meaningful for you, may their melodies lift you into the transformative experiences you seek, and may you find joy and safety in your beloved community.

Shana Tovah.

Alicia Stillman is the Cantor at Temple Israel of Boston.

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ANTISEMITISM ON CAMPUS

CAMERA on Campus Advisor, Seth Mendel, interviewed Angelina Palumbo, CAMERA Fellow at State University of New York (SUNY) Binghamton, about her experiences with antisemitism within the SUNY system.

1. Why did you transfer from SUNY New Paltz to Binghamton after your sophomore year?

Antisemitism had been normalized at New Paltz in the past, but following October 7, it felt like openly hating Jews was an ordinary part of campus culture, like Greek life or rooting for the basketball team.

At first, I thought someone would intervene. Someone would say that Jews have a right to mourn the tremendous loss we experienced on October 7, and remind students that antisemitism is wrong.

Soon I realized I needed to step up, but the more I advocated for Israel the more I was isolated. After being publicly labeled a "Zionist," friends started distancing themselves from me for fear of being harassed. I moved off campus after fall semester 2023, and still received threats online to "get this girl off campus." I didn't know how far people would go to make good on these threats. By the end of sophomore year, I decided that fighting systemic antisemitism at New

Paltz was not worth the sacrifice to my academic career. Binghamton, however, has a thriving Jewish campus community where I can be proactive and I am surrounded by students who speak out with me.

2. Did you experience antisemitism prior to October 7?

The first incident happened when I was a freshman in fall 2022. I was alone in an elevator wearing a pendant with the outline of Israel and my Magen David necklace. Two boys entered, looked at my necklaces, started yelling "Free Palestine," and blocked the exit. The encounter only lasted as long as the elevator ride but it felt like an eternity. Despite reporting the incident to the administration, no action was taken.

Widespread hostility towards Jewish students at New Paltz was an open secret for years. After October 7, people no longer had to be discreet because antisemitism was tolerated by the university. A friend of mine was falsely accused of violently attacking a protestor, and within minutes he was doxxed by multiple students and a professor.

3. What made you feel targeted as a Jewish student?

In November, I hung up over 100 posters of the hostages on campus. In under an hour, most of them had been ripped down. I later discovered that the perpetrators coordinated how to tear them down to prevent the spread of "Zionist propaganda."

When protests were held to "globalize the intifada" and called for a "student intifada," I published a post explaining the violent history of the term "intifada." I received an influx of comments like, "I can't wait until the oppressor falls," and, "How do we get her and the Zionists off our campus?" My photo was spread online with captions like, "Why don't you use that Zionist money to get a nose job?" and, "Save some oxygen for the rest of us."

Last spring, I hosted a talk with three IDF reservists responding to a recent anti-Israel rally. Before the event, the New Paltz mayor promoted an ad featuring a member of Hamas demanding the event's cancellation and that whoever was in charge should be ashamed.

After getting the runaround from the head of Student Affairs, over

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ANTISEMITISM ON CAMPUS

300 angry protestors marched on campus, holding signs saying “F*** Zionists” and chanting “SSI You Can’t Hide,” referring to the Students Supporting Israel group I founded. Jewish students had to be escorted to the parking lot because of the mob. Later that day, some of them chased me across campus and called me “Little Miss Zionist.”

4. How did the university respond?

Instead of addressing antisemitic incidents, the administration chose to minimize and deflect. For months, I sent weekly updates to everyone from the president to professors, outlining the antisemitic events occurring that week. I submitted incident and bias reports about instances that directly violated school policies. The professor who doxxed my friend was fired. But for the hundreds of other reports I filled out, I received few responses. The common response was to assure me that “an investigation” would occur and I should go to counseling services if I felt distressed.

After months of trying to speak directly with President Wheeler, I was finally able to meet with him. When I told him that the antisemitic harassment I faced was so severe that the university’s police department contacted me about my safety on campus, he shrugged off my concerns. He compared my experience to his living as a Black and Gay man, and at times I may be uncomfortable in life and that I will have to “learn how to deal with it.” It seemed to me that he wouldn’t use his power to help because no one helped him when he was unfairly targeted.

Even the vice-president, who I had come to trust, advised me against organizing a counter-protest when the anti-Israel encampment emerged because it might “give them the media attention they wanted.” No genuine concern was shown for students like me, who feared inaction would embolden those defending terrorism.

5. Did you find any support from local Jewish institutions?

Chabad was the only Jewish institution on campus, and the only

place I felt welcomed and safe. They offered comfort and showed me which forms to fill out when I had incidents to report. They held a vigil and wrapped Tefillin in front of the encampment. Unfortunately, there was a general understanding that focusing on Jewish events rather than Israel would keep more peace on campus.

6. How was your participation in campus life affected?

I went to college to receive an education and be a student, not to be an activist. I was stripped of my right to an education free of fear. I expected to hang out with friends on a Saturday night, not file incident reports. I

imagined making new friends instead of fighting to hold on to the few I had left. Nobody wanted to be associated with me because they feared that the harassment I faced would target them. I felt like public enemy number one.

I didn’t have a social life. I attended class and immediately returned home off-campus. By spring 2023, I had been doxxed enough times that anti-Israel activists recognized me. I couldn’t study in the library because students wearing Keffiyehs would accost me. Joining a new club was out of the question since most of them signed a solidarity letter implying “Little Miss Zionist” was unanimously unwelcome.

7. What advice would you give to students facing similar challenges?

My advice is twofold. First, it is so important never to lose your pride or change your beliefs to fit in. Second, you need to decide how much you’re willing to sacrifice to right the wrongs plaguing your community. It is not any single student’s responsibility, and only you can make the decision for yourself. I chose to transfer to take back control of my college narrative. Thankfully, I’ve found a welcoming home at Binghamton to continue advocating for my peers’ and my people’s safety.

Ultimately, our best response to hatred is to grow and thrive in spite of it.

I was stripped of my right to an education free of fear.



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JEWISH BROOKLINE, PAST AND PRESENT

By Zvi A. Sesling

Back in the 1980s Brookline was in its second decade of rent control, and seniors who could not afford otherwise rising rents comprised a large block of the town's population.

Then in the 1990s, with rents rising along with property taxes, rent control went on the statewide ballot and voters determined it should be prohibited. At the time, Brookline's Jewish population represented over 50 percent of the town. With the demise of rent control, landlords were able to raise rents to market rates. Students bunched up in groups of four, each paying what one or two seniors were paying, causing lower income residents to leave town.

While it was not at first obvious, a number of changes came to the town. More senior housing was necessary. Restaurants that catered to older people slowly lost business and eventually closed, replaced by eateries that appealed to a younger set. Coolidge Corner saw a number of businesses come and go, as did Washington Square and Brookline Village.

Churches remained fairly stable as did synagogues, except for Kehillath Israel which merged with Congregation Mishkan Tefila and built senior housing at the corner of Harvard and Williams Streets.

The late Robert Basile built not only in the Coolidge Corner area, but extensively throughout the town. Another developer is now constructing housing at the site of a retail building that housed a restaurant on Green Street. There is talk of future construction over existing buildings in the Village, with more housing on the way at Boylston and Hammond Streets, and possibly more at Boylston and Reservoir Road.

Newbury College is being replaced by more housing, and the town benefits from all the construction because the new projects are exempt from Proposition 2 1/2.

Then there are the schools. Brookline has seen the high school freshman building expand over the MBTA tracks, a revised front entrance and reconstructed science department. Add to that the rebuilt Ridley School, formerly the Devotion, which has been reconstructed twice. The new Driscoll and Lincoln schools also replaced older iterations and soon, for the second time in the last 40 or 50 years, the Pierce School will be leveled and rebuilt.

With so many changes Brookline is shedding its past and looking to the future. Around town some homes are being torn down and replaced by modern, architecturally updated houses. Some older buildings are

having their facades redone and the historic Waldo Garage is about to be demolished.

And what of the Jewish population? A quick review reveals that the Modern Orthodox community is thriving and even increasing. The Conservative sector is stable and the Reform appears healthy. But following the elimination of rent control, many older Jewish residents have left Brookline.

Also consider that in the 1980s when the Jewish population was at its peak, we often saw a Select Board with a Jewish majority. Yet today the Board has a Jewish minority which reflects the Town's overall population.

Even with all these changes Brookline still has some particularly Jewish establishments. While Eagerman's Bagels is long gone, Kupel's remains. Although Jack & Marion's is but a fond memory for longtime residents, there is now Zaftigs in Coolidge Corner. The long gone B&D in Washington Square has been replaced by Mamaleh's. In addition, all of the kosher butcher shops in the North Brookline area like Shafran's and Handler's are but memories. However, the Butcherie (originally Cape Kosher in Mattapan) has survived the many changes in town. Abe and Marcia's on Washington Street in the Village is now a Turkish eatery.

Many longtime Brookline residents go with the flow of change. Some like the updated town, while others wistfully wish for the old days.

Zvi A. Sesling has lived in Brookline for over 60 years and has served in varied Town capacities. He edits the publications "10 By 10 Flash Fiction Stories" and the "Muddy River Poetry Review." He lives with his wife Susan J. Dechter, a retired Brookline High School educator.

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UNAPOLOGETICALLY ZIONIST

The following is a sermon given at Temple Sinai, a Reform synagogue in Sharon, on August 9, 2024.

I hope our mission at Temple Sinai is clear: to pass on deep Jewish living *lador vador* – from generation to generation – with joyful Judaism, to engage in *tikkun olam* – the repair of the world by giving back to our community, and to instill of love of Zion, care for and support of the State of Israel. None of these objectives are at the expense of the other. In fact, each one complements and accents the other goal.

Even before October 7, support for the State of Israel was under fire. For certain, the State of Israel is far from perfect: ultra-Orthodox radicalism, corrupt politics, and gender discrimination – especially at the Western Wall – have all been met with large protests. However, the fact that there are protests demonstrate that Israel is still a vibrant democracy. No such protests would be allowed in any of Israel's neighboring countries.

At the heart of everyone's concerns is the humanitarian situation in Gaza. Yes, our hearts break as well. War is hell. Sparing civilian life in war is not just a matter of international law; it is an ethical issue that is discussed deeply in the Talmud and Jewish law. But we reject swallowing and regurgitating Hamas' propaganda as much of the media has done. We place the responsibility for this situation on Hamas that has embedded itself literally underneath hospitals, schools, and so-called "humanitarian" centers. Civilians are also hostage-takers. Journalists having been holding hostages in their homes, and doctors are hiding weapons. Hamas wants as much carnage as possible, and the overwhelming majority of the Israeli Defense Forces has conducted itself admirably, full stop.

None of these challenges should make us apologetic about our Zionism. *Libi b'mizrach* – "My heart is in the East even if I am on the edge of the West," wrote Yehuda HaLevi in the 12th century, and the same is true for us.

The State of Israel, like the United States, is a work in progress. Just as we can recognize that the United States is still working to be "a more perfect union" and still be proud Americans, so can we be Lovers of Zion even with Israel's flaws. Now is the time to stand unambiguously by Israel's side, even if we don't like the current Israeli government. We are here for the long haul, trying to make Israel into not just the Promised Land, but the Land

of Promise. And not just JNF-USA, Hadassah, Friends of the IDF, and Magen David Adom but also our Israeli Reform congregations through ARZA need our solidarity.

When Israeli paramedic Noa Abitbul visited us in June, she said that internal discord in Israel is like a fierce family fight. "No, you cannot borrow my sweater, but I will give you my kidney." That is what family means.

As I write this, Israel is bracing for more war. Be unapologetic in your love of Israel. It is part of our mission, just as much as life cycle celebrations and cooking for homeless shelters. "All of the people Israel are responsible for each other" (*Shevuot 39a*).

Am Yisrael Chai, Od Avinu Chai.

Rabbi Joseph B. Meszler is the spiritual leader of Temple Sinai in Sharon, and a noted Jewish educator and activist. He is an active leader with the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism (RAC), the Sharon Interfaith Clergy Association, Project Bread, the Greater Boston Food Bank, Magen David Adom, and Jewish National Fund-USA. He is the author of several books, educational manuals, and illustrated children's books through Prospective Press which he authors with his sister, Joelle M. Reizes.

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THE JEWISH HOMELAND TODAY

By Bruce Mendelsohn

The Southwestern Israeli villages of Kfar Aza, Nahal Oz, and Kissufim are as close as Israeli civilians and visitors can get to the border of Gaza. Today, these once-vibrant villages are mostly empty and silent: Orange, lemon, and pomegranate tree branches bend under the weight of unharvested fruit; stray cats stalk rodents in the tall, brown grass; birds sing. The air is redolent with the scent of flowers, rosemary, citrus, and death.

Death came to Kfar Aza with the dawn of October 7. It came to Nahal Oz, Nir Oz, Re'im, Be'eri, Erez, Yad Mordechai, Karmiya, Zikim, and Sderot. On the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust, everyone in Israel knows someone who was murdered or taken hostage that day or who has died since Israel declared war on October 8.

In late August, I visited several towns overrun by Hamas. Escorted by a senior Israeli law enforcement officer, I accessed areas closed to most Israelis and foreigners and met with leaders of village Security Councils. They told their tragic stories slowly, lurchingly, angrily, and with resolve.

While most official accounts of October 7 are missing crucial details about the sequence of events, one fact is clear to all Israelis: The country's intelligence and operational systems collapsed. Another fact has become increasingly evident as the war drags on: The economic fallout is adversely affecting Israel's construction, agriculture, tourism, hospitality, and entertainment sectors.

In the months since the Simchat Torah massacre, more than 120,000 residents have been evacuated from a 10 kilometer archipelago of kibbutzim, moshavim, kfarim, and cities that stretches from the Mediterranean Sea in the West to Kerem Shalom in the South to Ofakim in the East.

Although the refugee "crisis" in Gaza garners media attention,

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THE JEWISH HOMELAND TODAY



reporting about Israel's hundreds of thousands of internally displaced citizens — the largest displacement of Israeli citizens in the sovereign state's history — is minimal.

For example, Kfar Aza — a major producer of corn, citrus, and dairy — was once home to 500 residents; its population is now less than 50. Down the road in Nir Oz, Hamas militants machine-gunned Thai workers alongside the cows that they helped the villages' 438 residents care for. About 38 Nir Oz residents were killed by Hamas and another 75 seized as hostages. Will the residents return? No one seems to know.

And a key question is, do they even want to? Signs of Hamas' rampage are everywhere. While the charred frames of modest houses and bullet holes can be repaired to remove the physical manifestations of terror; the memories of those who live there today will take far longer to repair. Asking about the holes scattered randomly throughout the detritus-strewn combat zone, we're told they represent the Sisyphean efforts of a father who searches for his son's head and tries to bury it in a grave dug months ago.

Crouched on a berm looking across the border at the destroyed

village of Jabaliya, I hear the whine of drones and the distant boom of artillery. As a US Army veteran, I know these sounds well. As a Jew, I appreciate these sounds.

I welcome these sounds, because they communicate that the IDF — which includes two of my nephews — is fighting back. These sounds tell me that the phrase "never again" isn't merely said to console thousands of years of heartbreak. Today, "never again means now" reflects the strength of the Jewish homeland.

To those who protest Israel's actions — the actions of a sovereign state — I say: Come to Kfar Aza. Come to Yad Mordechai. Come to the Nova Festival site. Come to

Erez, Be'eri, Nir Oz, Netiv Ha'asara, Alumim. Come. See the carnage and devastation wrought by so-called "Freedom Fighters." Perhaps then you will reconsider those for whom you protest and why.

Bruce Mendelsohn is Deputy Vice Commander of Jewish War Veterans Department of Massachusetts. He owns The Hired Pen, a boutique content creation and management agency.

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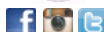
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ALL JEWELRY REPAIRS DONE ON PREMISES



By Rabbi Stanley Helinski, Esq.

I have no idea what it is like to live in an active war zone. I recall the events of 9/11 and the surreal nature of seeing armed troops outside of buildings in Boston. I felt vulnerable and unsafe. The events of October 7 in Israel led me to ponder the same questions I had back then, but from the perspective of an Israeli – our people.

It made me question not only what it was like to live in an area where people were trying to kill you, but also what it would be like to grow up like in such an area.

So I jumped on a Zoom call with my friend, Chani (a pseudonym), who was born in Israel and has lived there her entire 72 years. She lives in Haifa near her daughter, who just finished college in Israel. Chani has taught online classes from Israel for decades. Her mother's parents were murdered by the Nazis, as were three of her mother's sisters. Her father's father was also murdered, as were three of his brothers. After the Holocaust, Chani's parents fled to Israel to escape those who wanted to kill them for being Jewish. That goal did not exactly succeed, as people are still trying to kill Chani and her daughter even from within Israel.

Chani described growing up in Israel as "living from war to war." She recounted the many: 1964 when terrorist attacks began in Israel; 1967 and the Six Day War; 1973 with the Yom Kippur War; 1979 with Begin; 1982 with the first Lebanon war; and of course, the second Lebanon war, which began in 2006. And now, from the past 20 years of conflict to what appears to be heading toward a wider war, the strife continues.

Chani explained that death was very much a part of growing up as a kid in Israel. Her peers were often missing classes because they would be attending funerals of family members. Despite its close proximity to its enemies, Israel did not begin to have shelters until 1967, and did not require them in buildings until 1974. Before that time, when Israelis heard the ominous sound of air raid sirens descending on their neighborhoods, there was really nowhere to hide.

I have been on Zoom calls with Chani over the years when the sirens would go off and she would need to leave our session in order to get herself and her daughter to a shelter.

Chani recalled enemy fighter jets flying over her neighborhood when she was young. Families were required to turn off their lights and place paper over their windows, so that the fighter jets would not see a potential target at night. In fact, she recounts that, if one's lights were still on, Israeli police would knock at their door to remind them to turn them off. This simple yet effective task was a standard Israeli defense.

Chani does not remember living in fear, because Israelis have become acclimated to this lifestyle despite the fact that everyone in those days knew of someone who had been killed.

We talked about Israel since October 7, when Hamas murdered, kidnapped and raped young people and Israeli citizens. Chani's love for Israel remains unwavering. She told me that Israel is her country and that despite what is happening now, she continues to have a sense of pride in Israel and its people, of whom she is most proud. They are kind and warm, different from those in other areas of the world.



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LIFE UNDER CONSTANT WAR

She noticeably sat up when telling me that they are brilliant and good people, that the young are open minded and motivated, and that Israel itself is beautiful like no other place on Earth. Having spent time in Israel, myself, these are the very same descriptions that I would use to describe Israel and Israelis.

Chani believes that present-day problems in Israel are rooted within the divides between Ashkenazi and Sephardic, as well as between ultra-Orthodox (charedim) and secular Israelis. She is worried that her country is becoming more of a dictatorship than a democracy, and was very much a part of the protests before October 7 over issues including the proposed changes in the judiciary.

She wants to see a government that works for all and not for just sectors of her people, and a country united, not where the left is against the right and the right is against the left (sound familiar?).

I asked her whether people were talking – in public and on the streets – about everything that is going on in the country. Surprisingly, she told me that nobody speaks about it. People, she explained, do not wish to start up a conversation with a stranger because they don't know the stranger's perspective. And whatever that perspective, people in Israel are passionate about their viewpoint. So they just stay quiet.

Chani's daughter, who is now in her mid-20s, lost her best friend on October 7. For some time, Chani's daughter did not know whether or not her friend was alive, dead or captured. Each day, she and the family would browse Instagram posts on dead bodies to see if they could recognize her friend's, just for closure. After about eight months of this excruciating daily search, government officials came to her friend's parents' door and told them that she was dead. Nobody knows how this could be known, as there is still no body, no photographs or any other documentation. Just another funeral.

I asked Chani if she would ever consider moving to a different country, given the current and escalating conflict. She would not. This is her home. It's where she has lived her entire life, and she would never leave it, despite living just 17 miles from the Lebanese border.

While we were speaking, Chani received a text message from her daughter asking her when she believed that the Iranians would attack Israel. Chani shrugged. "I have no idea," she responded.

Chani is, in many ways, an Israeli heroine. She volunteers to help the elderly – at 72 years old herself – and lives a simple and gracious life. She lives each day not knowing if the Iron Dome will allow a missile through that will strike her neighborhood or, G-d forbid, her building. She wakes up every day not only as an Israeli, but as a proud Israeli and a proud Jew.

It is this resiliency, this persistence, that has kept Jews on the globe for each generation, one after the other, despite so many genocidal campaigns against them. Please say a prayer for Chani, her daughter and all Israelis for their health and for their safety, as I do each week when we light Shabbat candles in our home. L'Shana Tovah.

Rabbi Stanley Helinski, Esq. is a family law attorney in Massachusetts.



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I BELONG HERE, AND SO DO YOU: JEWISH RESILIENCE AND COPING WITH ANTISEMITISM GROUPS

By Hadassah Margolis, MSW, LICSW

"Since October 7, I've realized that I have never felt so profoundly alone as a Jew."

I was leading a workshop at a local synagogue on Jewish resilience and coping with antisemitism. One man shared in his breakout group that he had this intense feeling of isolation. His neighbor replied, "Really? Since October 7, I have never felt less alone as a Jew. I feel so much more connected to my Jewish community than ever before."

The man leaned towards her and asked, "Can you say more?" The two of them went back and forth, sharing their experiences over the harrowing months.

When I asked the small groups to come back to the main space and offer takeaways, the man raised his hand: "We just had this amazing discussion, how I shared that I felt so alone and she" — he kindly pointed to the woman — "she shared that she feels completely not alone. It just goes to show that both can be true."

This opportunity to learn through listening to others is one of the biggest reasons why I love being a group therapist. There is power in talking out loud about your experiences — and in hearing how others cope with or make meaning of similar experiences.

Since 2018, I have had the privilege of working with close to 30 area synagogues on this intersection of spirituality and mental health, providing these communal spaces.

After October 7, I tried to figure out what I could do. A clinical social worker by training, I have consistently been in action mode. I ask my clients to brainstorm and try out new behaviors or coping strategies, and not to do so in isolation. So I decided to do what I do

Shana Tova

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best: hold online and in-person spaces for Jews to come together to ask how are we **each** to make meaning of our experience of how we see ourselves and the world?

A collective trauma like October 7 requires collective spaces, to both sit with the pain and uncertainty, and explore ways of healing.

I've had parents describe how their college students are being harassed on campuses. I've had nonagenarians express a sense of dread that they never felt before, even during WWII. I've had twenty-somethings vent about coworkers making hurtful antisemitic comments in meetings. I've had people in their 50s cry over losing deep, long standing friendships. I've worked with people who have put on their chai necklaces and people who have taken down their mezuzahs. I've sat with people as they questioned how they were going to incorporate the hostages into their Pesach seders.

I've witnessed people grapple with holding both the horror of 1200 Israeli lives cut short and the ongoing devastation in Gaza. I've seen people reduce their news intake or decide to attend the Auschwitz exhibit.

And they disagreed. Disagreed on how they interpreted situations and how they managed them. Groups don't have to be echo chambers to be helpful. In fact, one of the goals of a group is tolerating different perspectives or opinions. One woman, when reflecting on what participating in the group meant for her, said, "What I love about this group is that this is the one hour a week that I can show up as myself. I don't have to hold back. And even when we disagree, we respect each other. I belong here."

At the end of each session, I asked people the same question: Now that I have learned about myself and others after these weeks together, how do I want to respond? Everyone has had a different

answer, ranging from "reminding myself to bring more light into the world, needing space to grieve the friendships I have lost, being more religiously observant, going to Israel, learning more about my Jewish heritage and joining more groups like this, to adding *more semitism*."

There has been one golden thread throughout: We are all still here. We are all proud to be Jewish.

Even in the face of all this traumatic uncertainty, hope entails being seen as fully human, tolerating different opinions, sitting with the unknown and welcoming questions, and to do so in community in these groups.

And if that isn't profoundly Jewish, I don't know what is.






Hadassah Margolis, MSW, LICSW is the Director of Inpatient Group Therapy at McLean Hospital. For more information, visit <https://hadassahmargolis.com/> or email margolis.hadassah@gmail.com.

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EXCLUSIVE ALTRUISM – PROLONGING THE CONFLICT

By Benny Hirschel

The quote from Animal Farm, “All animals are equal, but some are more equal than others,” captures the irony of organizations that end up betraying their own ideals.

NGOs and UN-related institutions, for example, have historically displayed virulent anti-Israel rhetoric and bias in their actions. From Day One of the October 7 war, however, hypocrisy has become the norm, with extreme global outrage regarding treatment of the Palestinians unmatched in earlier and even larger conflicts.

These humanitarians have stopped heeding their main principle, “Do no harm.” Where Effective Altruists try to do the largest amount of good for the many, modern humanitarians have frequently become “Exclusive Altruists” – only portraying concern for some. It appears that during this conflict, humanitarians the world over have undeniably shown little or no concern for Israelis or Jews.

Israel is a young country that operates within a complex arena. Still, Israel has imperfectly tried to further peace. Israel also tries to stay ethical in war, even with a barbaric opponent with stated genocidal intentions. The intense criticism Israel receives has left many Israelis and Jews across the world feeling isolated, baffled and betrayed.

Why does Israel, the most liberal country in the Middle East, get such disproportionate rebuke? Is this due to antisemitism or other factors? Below are seven thoughts, which represent a combination of rational and irrational factors, that seem to influence this new phenomenon: care for the oppressed cloaked in carelessness for some: Zionists/Israelis (A/K/A Jews).

Caveat: This writing in no way seeks to minimize the deaths of innocent people in this conflict.

News and Information

Journalistic Overexposure

Garbage in, garbage out. The media’s overexposure of Israel blurs

the picture for outside observers. Israel’s constant presence in the news is due to its historic nature and influenced by geopolitical and religious interests. The extensive coverage of Israel often brushes over the complexities and challenges Israel faces, which are primarily fueled by Iranian terror funding and radical Islam. Sometimes it comes from lack of information and/or lack of context.

Reliable Disinformation – Third Party “Independent” Verification

Humanitarians primarily rely on data from entities that have long proven unreliable at best. This creates a snowball of disinformation for Exclusive Altruists to use as a reputable sounding source (e.g., Gaza Health ministry/UNRWA “teachers.”) Similarly with regard to donor aid, there is a tendency among aid organizations to rely on others to perform the “dirty work,” where proper oversight is often lacking.

Donations frequently pass through intermediaries that pledge not to support terrorism. The effectiveness of such pledges is questionable, as the lack of rigorous cross-checks ensures that terrorists can easily exploit foreign donations.

The Subconscious/Psychology

Underdog Perception and Scapegoating of Israel

The “underdog perception” also plays a significant role. Many individuals blindly support the underdog and avoid answering pertinent questions. This sympathy from NGOs and well-meaning individuals has led to long-term dependency on aid, as seen in Gaza, where the population has become reliant on international assistance.

While the suffering of innocent Palestinians is undeniable, blaming Israel for their hardships ignores the role of their own (elected!) leaders in ignoring an Egyptian border, Gazan territory, and the UN-confirmed Israel’s right to exist and right of self defense.

Mental Biases – Empty Vessels Sound the Loudest

Pro-Hamas protestors frequently exhibit a lack of historic and factual knowledge of the conflict. The combination of politics, disinformation, language barriers and our mental biases makes the conflict complicated to understand.

The Dunning-Kruger effect describes the psychological phenomenon where people with limited knowledge tend to overestimate their understanding. In the age of the internet, where everyone has access to information but not necessarily the skills to interpret it correctly, it is easy to believe one has attained sufficient knowledge of the subject.

Philosophical Pragmatism

Calculated Choice of Victims

In moral philosophy, the “trolley problem” describes conflicting



EXCLUSIVE ALTRUISM – PROLONGING THE CONFLICT

choices – for instance, when steering a train-trolley into one of two groups of people. Similarly, in the Israeli-Hamas conflict, aid organizations may rationalize supporting Palestinians living in dire conditions, even when this support might indirectly harm Israelis, as in the case of the UNRWA-funded educators who turned out to be terrorists.

Ten thousand poor Gazan deaths by bombs is surely worse than a few thousand Israelis/Zionists/Jews that have an army? This recalls similar outrage about German civilian deaths in WWII that was never publicized, for an undefined reason.

Economic Pragmatism

Humanitarian Aid “Spray and Pray”

Humanitarian aid organizations, too, are not immune to these biases. In some cases, the sheer scale of their operations leads to a “size effect,” where thorough due diligence is sacrificed for efficiency. Aid is often distributed without robust assessments, especially in complex regions like Gaza, where intermediary companies handle the distribution. This approach, sometimes dubbed “spray and pray,” can result in aid inadvertently supporting corrupt governments or terrorist organizations like Hamas, which controls much of Gaza and actively promotes violence against Israel.

Aid Justifies the Means

Machiavelli’s principle “the end justifies the means” also seems to be applied by the humanitarian sector during this war. Aid organizations will sometimes simplify their messaging in order to rally support and secure donations, therefore portray conflicts in black-and-white terms.

This oversimplification leads to biased actions that prioritize the organization’s relevance over accurately assessing the damage that aid

causes. Israel is thus careless about civilians’ lives, whereas Hamas’ continued rockets directly aimed at exclusive civilian areas for years are not mentioned, or scarcely condemned.

NGOs and UN (-related) Institutions need to be Reformed

For some *Exclusive Altruists*, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. For the majority, cynical *Effective Altruists*, lofty sounding terms like Human Rights, aid and International Law simply provide cover for antisemitism. Their singular focus and simplified version of the conflict is unique, their lack of interest in discerning the required questions in the face of real consequences to Israelis and Jews cannot be explained. In effect, it becomes appeasement of radical Islam/terrorism. The result is to the detriment of Israelis and innocent Palestinians alike.

At a national level, Western nations try to retain cohesion in their own society and geopolitics by feigning even-handedness. Other, small, often-autocratic nations have hijacked global NGOs to cover up their own internal failings.

To truly adhere to humanitarian principles, aid organizations must move beyond simplistic virtue signaling. This finger-pointing at Israel – often in a forced effort to show even-handedness - ultimately prolongs the conflict and harms the Palestinians that *Exclusive Altruists* claim to care about.

The writer, who uses a pseudonym, is a “Wondering European Jew” who has lived in four countries across three continents and now calls Tel Aviv home. To read more about him, visit <https://bennyhirschel.substack.com/p/exclusive-altruism-refined>



Amid challenges and heartache and miracles and joy, the story of the Jewish People is inspiring. As we continue to meet this moment, may the passage of time enhance the strength and resilience of our community.

Wishing you and your loved ones a new year filled with sweetness, hope, and healing.

Shanah Tovah.



He thought he would live forever

By Isha Yiras Hashem

I asked the Polish Uber driver who drove me and my son home from school if he had ever heard of King Nebuchadnezzar.

He frowned and said, "Excuse me?" I repeated, "Have you ever heard of Nebuchadnezzar?" He shook his head, no.

On January 22, 2022, I again asked an Uber driver, from Moldova this time, if he knows who the great Nebuchadnezzar was. He said that he was sorry, but he did not know of him. This was actually very okay with me. It would be more worrisome if he said that he did know about him.

My son asked me why I always ask people about Nebuchadnezzar. I explained to him that it is for research purposes, and he accepted this matter of factly, without argument. It's a good thing he's not a teenager yet.

That day, I also asked the Uber driver driving me to the dentist, who said he was from China, after ascertaining that he spoke enough English to grasp the question at hand. "Have you ever heard of Nebuchadnezzar?" "No, I'm sorry," he said. I thought some context might help him. "You know, king of Babylon? Long time ago?" "No, sorry. I don't know about it."

Upon exiting the Uber, I accosted the next person I saw on the street, an elderly Jewish lady from Pennsylvania, and asked her if she was familiar with Nebuchadnezzar. She said, "No, I'm sorry," and took the stairs instead of the elevator I was waiting for. Probably likes exercise.

I also asked a FedEx guy from Liberty, who was stuck in the elevator with me while it was going up to the dentist's office, if he knew who Nebuchadnezzar was. He also didn't know, and took to staring at his package.

I even asked the receptionist at my dentist about Nebuchadnezzar. She said, "No. Am I supposed to?" I said no, that's fine. Turned out the lady from Pennsylvania was going to the same dentist, and when she came in, I thanked her for helping me with my research, and rewarded her and the receptionist with portions of the story. I kept

on offering to stop, but they wanted me to keep on talking, so it must be interesting enough.

Just to be safe, I decided to ask the other lady in the waiting room, who looked young and friendly. She was from Cape Verde, an island off the coast of Africa. She also didn't know. Finally, I asked my Uber driver on the way home. He was from Haiti, his name was Love, and he had a voodoo priest father and churchgoing mother. He also didn't know. But he did give me permission to include his real name and fascinating personal information.

This research may have cost me some intrapersonal respect along the way, but it was thoroughly done. No matter what the country, age, nationality, religion, or language of the people I asked, they had no idea who Nebuchadnezzar was. Some even thought it sounded like an odd name.

I should note that on January 26, an Armenian Uber driver, who turned out to be a history buff, did know who he was. I explained about this research, and asked if there was any chance that we have to worry that Nebuchadnezzar might still be the king of the world. He said not to worry, Nebuchadnezzar is not king of the world, in fact he is long dead and gone, and I trusted him, because no one else even knew who he was.

On the basis of this research, it is safe to conclude that Nebuchadnezzar is no longer powerful, and certainly not the king of the world, and has failed to achieve his goal of reigning forever.

Reprinted with permission from Isha Yiras Hashem, which is the pseudonym of Tzipora Zuckerman, a wife and mother in Boston. Subscribe to <https://ishayirashashem.substack.com/> to read more warm and humorous articles about Judaism, family, and spirituality.

Note from the editor: The king of the Babylonian Empire, Nebuchadnezzar II, laid siege to Jerusalem in 587 BCE. By the following year, Judah and Jerusalem, including the Temple of Solomon, had been conquered and destroyed. Nebuchadnezzar deported the Jews to Babylon, an event known as the Babylonian Exile.



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FRANCES SWEENEY, CATHOLIC CRUSADER AGAINST ANTISEMITISM IN BOSTON

By Lew Finfer

In reading *Boston Boy*, the autobiography of nationally prominent political journalist, jazz historian, civil libertarian, and contrarian Nat Hentoff who died in 2017, I discovered the story of the crusading Boston journalist Frances Sweeney.

When Hentoff was a student at Boston Latin, Sweeney gave him a job on the paper she edited, the *Boston City Reporter*, which was published during the 1930s and into the 1940s. It started out focused on political corruption and then worked at exposing antisemitism that was connected to pro-fascist activities.

This daughter of a saloon keeper campaigned vigorously against Fr. Charles Coughlin, the radio priest whose weekly radio broadcasts drew tens of millions of followers in the 1930s and whose newspaper "Social Justice" was sold after Mass outside of many Catholic churches in Boston.

From 1932 to 1934, Coughlin was an ardent supporter of President Roosevelt and would say that "the New Deal is Christ's Deal." But by 1936, he had turned against Roosevelt completely and went on the attack against communists while asserting that Jewish bankers were running the world.

Coughlin reprinted the infamous and false *Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a made-up text about a meeting of Jews conspiring to take over the world that played prominently in Nazi propaganda. Coughlin favored backing the fascism of Hitler and Mussolini as the best way to fight communism. And for many years, leaders in the Irish-Catholic establishment in Boston backed him. Boston Mayor James Michael Curley at one point even claimed that Boston was the most pro-Coughlin city in America.

Coughlin's writings and an organization he backed, the Catholic Front, were part of a movement that led to physical attacks on Jews in Boston. Gangs of Catholic teens would enter Jewish neighborhoods with blackjacks and brass knuckles, beat up the residents, and vandalize stores.

This wasn't just a turf issue; these gangs went on rampages through Jewish sections of Dorchester and Roxbury. Contemptuously, they called Blue Hill Avenue, which ran through the Jewish parts of Roxbury, Dorchester, and Mattapan, "Jew Hill Avenue."

Frances Sweeney took on the Catholic Church, in particular, Cardinal William O'Connell, and politicians for not condemning these attacks. She was angry that Catholics, who had been discriminated against only decades earlier by the Yankees with their "No Irish Need Apply" signs, turned around and discriminated against the Jews, who had arrived in the next wave of immigrants following the Irish.

It was O'Connell's silence that Sweeney took great issue with. The Cardinal was an immensely powerful figure in this era when Catholics controlled local government, when 95 percent of them attended Mass every week, and when the Church ran parochial schools in every parish, sponsored youth activities, and owned hospitals.

Irritated by her criticism, O'Connell demanded she come to meet with him and threatened to excommunicate her if she continued her writings. That was an incredible threat to make against any Catholic. She did not back down in the meeting. Hentoff wrote that she told the Cardinal that "the facts are the facts." She continued her campaign and he ultimately did not move to excommunicate her.

She also took on antisemitism within the Boston Police Department, which contributed to the firing of the Boston Police Commissioner in 1943.

Sweeney also focused on alerting the public and the government about profascist activities of the Christian Front, which distributed Nazi propaganda before World War II and tried to continue that work after we went to war with Germany. She also got the Boston Herald to run a "Rumor Clinic" column that exposed negative false rumors that could undermine morale during World War II.

In 1944, Sweeney died of rheumatic heart failure at just age 36.

The famed muckraking journalist of the second half of the 20th century I.F. Stone said of her: "Fran Sweeney could not be discouraged, could not be beaten down, could not be frightened, could not be put in her place. She was a one-man crusade. She burned with some of the hottest and most inextinguishable passion for social justice that I have ever seen." In his turn, Nat Hentoff fittingly dedicated his book *Boston Boy* to her. What a heroine she was.

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



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A 166 YEAR-OLD STARTUP



By Rabbi David B. Starr, Ph.D.

A great historian liked to say that “history is open.” Indeed, it often surprises us by taking us in new directions, and not always positive ones. To thrive, all living things must change: people, relationships, and communities.

The congregation I lead, Mishkan Tefila in Brookline, is a part of the story of the changing fortunes of the Jews of Boston and the US.

Founded before the Civil War in the South End, the congregation moved to the streetcar suburbs of Roxbury, Blue Hill Avenue and Franklin Park around the turn of the century, in time to greet Jewish immigrants arriving from Eastern Europe. In 1958, Mishkan then joined the post-WWII expansion into the suburbs when it traveled west to Hammond Pond Parkway in Chestnut Hill.

But the shul’s story isn’t just about geography, it’s also about the varieties of change that congregations experience. Is it the case that synagogues are like people: creation, birth, growth that lead to one’s apex, which then give way to aging, decline, and death? Or can synagogues live in chaos and decline, but persist and even thrive as they innovate? Are innovation and regeneration necessary and integral to what makes any successful organization?

Sometimes we like where change takes us, and sometimes not. As a character in Hemingway’s novel *The Sun Also Rises* responded when asked how he went bankrupt, “Two ways. Gradually, then suddenly.”

Macro and micro trends and decisions had consequences. The congregation aged just like the rest of the Conservative movement. Six decades of rabbinic stability and continuity gave way to having five clergy in the past thirty years. Lay leadership made questionable decisions about supporting congregational education. What had been a community of a thousand attending Friday night services became a

much smaller cohort that needed to sell its property because it could no longer pay its bills.

A decade ago after a difficult process, the congregation – now fewer than 200 families — relocated to Coolidge Corner, in a home on a campus that housed several other religious communities. But that decision wasn’t preordained. Many questioned: why does Mishkan still exist? Some thought it was time to close. Others believed that a merger was the most prudent course.

But we are now a start-up. Synagogues must figure out their core values, decide if that’s what they continue to believe, and then be prepared to innovate pretty much everything else.

Stress – discomfort with change – is a part of congregational debate, and that can be the price of a viewpoint that sees opportunity more than risk. Our tradition is about originality, not just origins, as it should be. In my judgment, Judaism rests on three core values: G-d, Torah, and Israel. A shul must be a place for the spirit. For the ongoing relevance of our books. And a place of love of the Jewish people. Any organization that can figure out how to expose people to meaning in those ways may still not survive change, but it won’t go down without a fight.

No such organizations patently deserve to exist; none were created at Sinai. Congregations earn the right to exist by providing value to their congregants. And it’s the other way around as well: Jews must serve and sacrifice for one another, and for the organizations they build.

Community serves the individual, and visa versa. And I believe that’s a good message for Elul: We often change, and have to think about where we’re going, not just why and how we change.

History is open. It’s time for the new to revitalize the old.

Rabbi David B. Starr, Ph.D. is the rabbi at Congregation Mishkan Tefila, Brookline.



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WHY JEWS SHOULD VOTE FOR HARRIS

By Richard H. Schwartz, Ph.D.

In what will likely be the most consequential US presidential election ever, there are many reasons why Vice President Kamala Harris should be elected president. Since this is a Jewish publication, I, as an American who made *aliyah* eight years ago, will focus on issues of special concern to Jews and Israel.

Harris and her Jewish husband have been leaders in efforts to combat antisemitism. In sharp contrast, Trump hosted notorious antisemites for dinner at Mar-a-Lago, forwarded antisemitic posts from white supremacist groups, described as “very fine people” white supremacists who paraded through Charlottesville, Virginia, shouting “Jews will not replace us,” and made antisemitic statements including that US Jews care more about Israel than they do about the US and that Jews who do not support him are disloyal to Israel and Judaism.

While climate change is an existential threat to Israel, the US, and, indeed, the entire world, Trump and his vice presidential nominee J. D. Vance are both in denial about it. They ignore the overwhelming consensus among climate experts that the world is in great peril due to climate change.

Alarming and predictably, there has been a recent significant increase in the frequency and severity of heat waves, wildfires, storms, floods, and other climate events. Yet, Trump considers human-induced climate change a hoax. He would likely appoint other climate deniers to key environmental posts and make every effort to roll back regulations designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions if reelected, just as he did during his presidency.

He recently told a meeting of fossil fuel executives that he would continue carrying out their bidding if they collectively donated a billion dollars to his election campaign. He regularly promises to “drill, baby, drill,” expand fuel pipelines, block electrical vehicle production, and oppose additional renewable energy sources.

Israelis should be especially concerned about climate threats. The state is heating up faster than the world average, and the hotter and drier Israel becomes, increases the likelihood of instability, terrorism, and war. Also, its coastal plain, which contains much of its population and infrastructure, might be inundated by a rising Mediterranean Sea.

While Israel depends on a strong US democracy, Trump’s statements and actions threaten it. Amazingly, he told a Christian group that if they vote for him and he is elected, he will “fix things” so they won’t have to vote in future elections. Consistent with this assertion, he stated that he would like to be a dictator on Day One if he is reelected. He has shown steadfast admiration for dictators, including Russia’s Vladimir Putin, North Korea’s Kim Jong Un, China’s Xi Jinping and Hungary’s Viktor Orbán, and fascist-leaning parties in France, Germany, Italy, and other countries.

Trump has made common cause with anti-democratic elements within Israel. He sparked a violent insurrection at the US Capitol on January 6, 2021 that attempted to overturn the results of the 2020

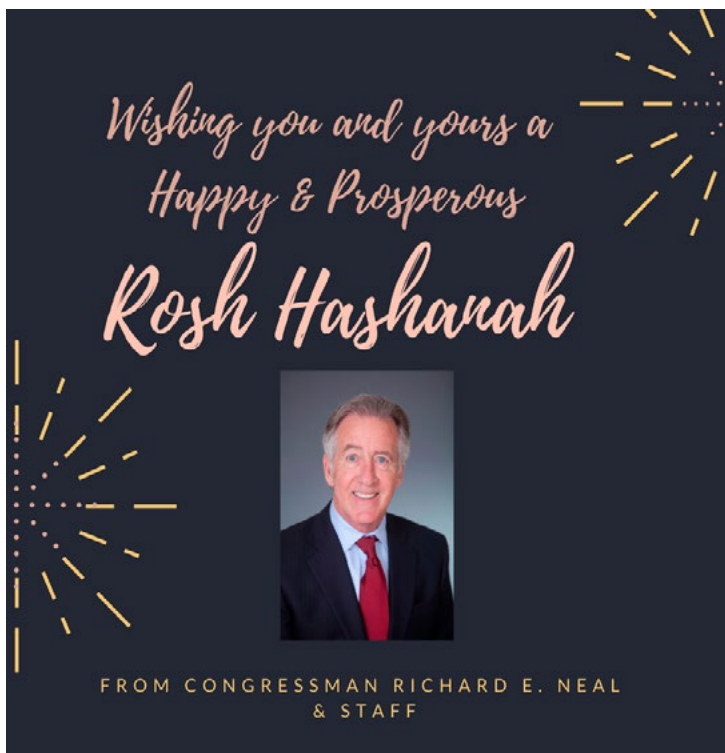


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WHY JEWS SHOULD VOTE FOR HARRIS

presidential election. He now says he would pardon those convicted of participating in that onslaught, who assaulted police officers and hunted down the vice president, House speaker, and lawmakers. He also encouraged his vice president to overturn the election results.

Truth is an important Jewish value, one of the three pillars that sustain the world, along with peace and justice (*Pirkei Avot 1:18*). Yet, Trump made more than 30,000 false or misleading statements during his administration and about 30 more during the recent presidential debate. He is still telling the big lie that he won the US 2020 presidential election despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.

It is obvious that Trump has no regard for the truth. This is incompatible with ethical leadership. How can anyone support Trump, a pathological liar?

Trump's few positive actions regarding Israel deserve praise, but they are dwarfed by his endangering Israel and, indeed, the entire world by his denial of climate threats and by pulling the US out of the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, which was working well according to professional inspectors and most nuclear and strategic experts. This has enabled Iran to now be much closer to being able to create nuclear weapons and to be in a much better bargaining position for future negotiations.

In addition, Trump's policies are contrary to basic Jewish values of kindness, compassion, and concern for the disadvantaged, the stranger, the hungry, and the poor. His views and actions discussed above and his being a sexual predator and convicted felon are certainly not consistent with Jewish values. His views on many issues, including health care, human rights, taxes, and environmental sustainability, are also inconsistent with basic Jewish teachings.

Contrary to all of the negatives mentioned above, Kamala Harris has a long record of supporting Israel, strongly opposes antisemitism, as mentioned above, recognizes climate threats, has Passover seders and other events celebrating Jewish holidays at her vice presidential office, and, along with Tim Walz, has positions on issues that are aligned with basic Jewish values.

For all of the above reasons and more, Jews, Israel, the US, and the world need Harris-Walz and can't afford Trump-Vance. The above reasons are also why a strong majority of US Jews vote for Democrats, and a strong majority of Jewish legislators are Democrats.

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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Music-Centered Shabbat

Over the past year, Congregation Beth El in Sudbury has been enriched by many participatory musical events that have spanned all genres, complementing the shul's already vigorous activities addressing social justice issues.

In September alone, Beth El hosted "Sea Shanty Shabbat," a series of drumming circles, and "Singing our Supplications: Musical Traditions for a Song of Selichot." Earlier in the year, attendees were treated to "Wade in the Water: The Possibilities of Black Music in the Synagogue," which featured Anthony Russell, Sephardic music by Susan Gaeta, Julia Cash and the Pro Arte Chamber Orchestra, Aly Halpert and Molly Bajgot.

Beth El also features a monthly music-centered Friday evening Shabbat service, the Shir El chorus, and a parody musical written and performed each year for Purim. To learn more, see www.bethelsudbury.org/jewish-living/music-at-beth-el.

The driving force behind many of these events is Cantor Vera Broekhuysen, who came to Beth El in July, 2023. The programs often reflect her twin passions for music and social justice — "Singing Songs About the Climate," and "Pride Rinah (Joyful Songs)" are two examples.

"Humans sing to connect with each other, to express emotion and shared values, and to organize our breath and hearts so that we can work effectively together," Cantor Vera said. "It's exciting to bring together Beth El's robust traditions of communal singing and engaging in *tikkun olam* (repairing the world) through these participatory musical opportunities where we learn from distinguished guests and each other."

Rabbi Joshua Breindel agrees. "Music is a transcendent language — it lifts us up while drawing us close."

Beth El's *Tikkun Olam* focus includes groups that are energetically working toward "going green" and mitigating climate change, fighting racism and antisemitism, and helping recent immigrants. See www.bethelsudbury.org/repair-the-world for details.

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Poland / Israel Trip Promises A Life-Changing Adventure March of the Living Trip Set for April 21-May 4

By Stan Hurwitz

Recruitment is underway for the 2025 Teen Trip to Poland and Israel sponsored by the N. E. Friends of March of the Living, set for April 21-May 4. During 2024, 5700 high schoolers from 52 countries participated in this annual event. "Traveling to Israel offers insights into the complex challenges facing Israel, fosters empathy and understanding for the experiences of those affected by violence, and promotes peace-building," said Irv Kempner, Chair of NEF MOTL and the son of Holocaust survivors.

Since 1988, a total of 300,000 teens have participated in MOTL. "Visiting Poland and Israel provides a comprehensive understanding of history, global issues, human rights, and strengthens support for Israel," Kempner added. "Participants, as they begin college, become knowledgeable 'goodwill ambassadors' for Israel."

Some of the 2025 highlights:

- 77th Anniversary of Israel Independence
- 80th Anniversary of the Liberation of Auschwitz
- 82nd Anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising
- 81st Anniversary of D-Day
- 37th Anniversary of the March of the Living

Group leaders are Irv Kempner of Sharon, Mass., NEF MOTL Chair; Susan Flashner-Fineman, NEF MOTL Associate Director; and Aaron Kischel, N. E. Director.

For information about the 2025 MOTL, which is for students who will be high school seniors, and for information about donating toward trip stipends, contact Irv Kempner at lkempner@aol.com, 617.285.8620 or visit <https://motlnewengland.org>.

Generous scholarships enable every qualified teen to participate. Scholarships may be available from local organizations and synagogues.

Temple Hillel B'nai Torah Welcomes Rabbi Aliza Schwartz



Temple Hillel B'nai Torah is excited to welcome Rabbi Aliza Schwartz as the congregation's new rabbi. With deep roots in the Boston area and extensive experience in both community leadership, spiritual guidance, and deep Torah study, Rabbi Aliza is poised to lead the HBT community into a new era of spiritual growth and engagement.

Rabbi Aliza is dedicated to creating a welcoming environment that includes traditional services, song, engaging children's programs and thoughtful teen discussions. Rabbi Aliza will lead services that are accessible and meaningful for everyone, ensuring that families and individuals can participate fully.

The High Holy Days at Temple HBT will feature music and learning, and emphasize how the concept of second chances is in the very DNA of our Torah and our peoples' story.

May the community be blessed with the warmth and wisdom that Rabbi Aliza is bringing to Temple Hillel B'nai Torah, guiding all through shared growth and spiritual renewal.

For more information about upcoming events at Temple Hillel B'nai Torah, please visit templehbt.org.

Temple Hillel B'nai Torah Welcomes the High Holy Days 2024/5785

Temple Hillel B'nai Torah (HBT), a Progressive Reconstructionist Congregation centrally located in West Roxbury, invites both members and non-members to join in the observance of the High Holy Days. HBT is a community where every voice is heard, every hand is held, and everyone is welcome—embracing individuals and families of all ages, Jewish practices, gender identities, races, and cultural backgrounds.

This year, services will be led by Rabbi Aliza Schwartz, marking a new chapter of growth and spiritual enrichment for the community.

HBT offers engaging children's services and special programs for its youngest members, along with convenient childcare options, allowing families to have a meaningful spiritual experience together. Teens are invited to participate in discussion groups tailored to their age group.

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Wednesday October 2,

Erev Rosh Hashanah service

Thursday October 3,

Rosh Hashanah Day 1 service

Thursday October 3,

Tashlich at Millenium Park

Friday October 4, Rosh Hashanah

Day 2 service



Yom Kippur

Friday October 11

Kol Nidre service

Saturday October 12

Yom Kippur service



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ShalomBASE: A New Innovation in Jewish Educational Programming

By Denise J. Karlin

At this time of year, many families are faced with the question of how to ensure that their children are kept safe and engaged during that awkward time period between when school gets out for the day and parents get off work, whether they be working out of the home or virtually.

This year, thanks to a grant from the national Jewish After School Accelerator (JASA), Temple Ohabei Shalom (TOS) will be providing licensed afterschool care with a Jewish theme. Beginning Sept. 3, ShalomBASE (Brookline Afterschool Program) will meet each day that school is in session, and during certain scheduled school vacation weeks.

TOS's ShalomBASE is only one of eight such programs nationwide selected to receive a competitive, three year grant of matching JASA funds to cover development and startup costs.

ShalomBASE is among the second cohort of such programs ever selected by JASA, and is the only one in New England. (The first cohort of four nationwide programs was funded in 2023.)

These programs are part of a new concept in Jewish educational programming for families who seek something between private Jewish day, and once or twice a week religious school. They encompass all aspects of Jewish life using innovative curricula. According to JASA research, Hebrew school enrollment has dropped 40 percent between 2006 and 2019. Yet, families want to learn more about their Jewish traditions.

Since, according to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics, the number of families with two working parents is now approximately 45 percent of all families and 23 percent of all families are single parent households, the need for afterschool programming has grown.

ShalomBASE and similar programs can fill the intersecting need for childcare and Jewish education.

ShalomBASE Director Ali Moss is excited to be welcoming eleven students in grades K-2 for the school year. The program will begin with one classroom, and hopes to grow over the next several years to daily afterschool care for children through grade 5. It will be closely tied to TOS's once a week Ansin Religious School.

ShalomBASE is fully licensed by the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) and is part of TOS's general afterschool program of 10 years, HomeBASE. Children enrolled in ShalomBASE are sure to embark on an exciting and unique journey that will enrich their Jewish lives.

Denise J. Karlin is a retired attorney, member of the Board of Trustees and Recording Secretary of Temple Ohabei Shalom.

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Thanks in part to funding provided by CJP's The Miriam Fund, JFS seeks opportunities to bring older adult women from the community together to share housing expenses.

If you would like to learn more, visit JFSMW.org or contact Diana O'Brien via email dobrien@jfsmw.org or by phone at 508-875-3100 x 700. There is no obligation to participate.

Contact JFS today to learn how you can lower your housing costs while also helping a community member in need.

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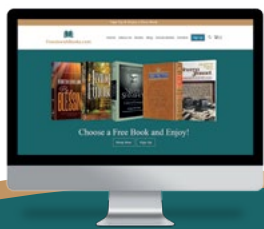
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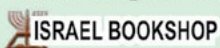
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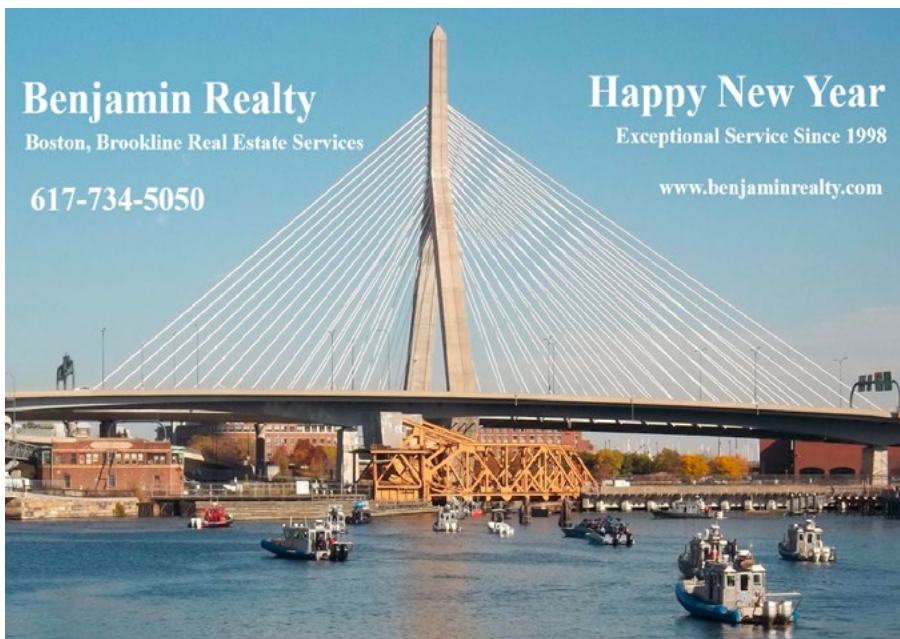
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Book Review

Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas: Hispanic Moroccan Jews and their Globalizing Community

by Dr. Aviad Moreno

Dr. Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah

Until recently the history, culture, and legacy of Middle Eastern and North African Jewry has, overall, been woefully underappreciated and under explored within North America. Luckily in the past decade there has been growing interest in these communities. Today thankfully, numerous publications and cultural projects have begun to introduce American Jewry to the fascinating and important history of the Sephardic world. In particular, Moroccan Jewry has received a great deal of attention due to the long history of Jewish presence in Morocco, the large size of its linguistically and culturally diverse Jewish community (which at its height in the 1940s numbered over 280,000), and more recently the establishment of formal diplomatic relations between Morocco and Israel in 2020.

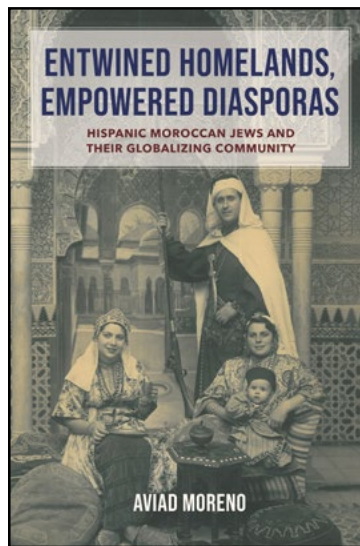
One such example of this, is the very sophisticated and nuanced volume recently published by Dr. Aviad Moreno of Ben Gurion University of the Negev, a specialist on Jews in and of the Islamic World in which he reconstructs the migratory history of the Hispanophone (Spanish speaking) Jewish communities of Northern Morocco in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In *Entwined Homelands, Empowered Diasporas*, Dr. Moreno specifically considered how Jews in Northern Morocco saw themselves as connected to both modern Spain and historic al-Andalus (the birthplace of Sephardic Judaism), in addition to the wider Hispanophone world. Moreno's work is all the more important as the majority of recent publications on Moroccan Jewry in English focus on the areas of Morocco which

were part of the French protectorate (1912-1956), and thus many Jews in these areas came to identify with French language and culture. Moreno's focus on Hispanophone Morocco is the first of its kind, integrating the historic past of the community, with its modern transnational networks, providing an important comparative study to other works which focus on Francophone Moroccan Jews and their transnational networks. This is not to say that there was a strict divide between Hispanophone and Francophone colonial Morocco. Indeed, many Jews in cities such as tangiers, for example, spoke both French and Spanish, in addition to Arabic.

Chronologically, the book begins with the

process of “re-hispanization” stemming from the involvement of Spain in Northern Morocco after the 1859-1860 Spanish-Moroccan War, zeroing in on this moment when Jews in the north of Morocco began to (re)strengthen their connection to Hispanophone culture as an consequence of colonization. The book then continues to study the evolution of this dynamic community through the Spanish Protectorate (1912-1956), Franco’s regime (1939-1975), Moroccan independence (1956), and finally Spain’s decision to embrace its “lost” Jewish brethren by offering a pathway to reclaim Spanish citizenship. In doing so, Moreno also explores the advent of the global Moroccan Hispanophone diaspora with specific cases studies on Venezuela (although Moroccan Jews settled across Central and South America) and Israel considering the Diaspora both before and after 1948. This is an important departure from many other studies which often conclude in 1948, although these networks continued to exist well after the creation of the state of Israel.

By dedicating significant space to the centrality of the Spanish language in the identity construction of this community Moreno makes two important observations. Firstly, he demonstrates the indivisible connectedness of identity and language, even when a community is delocalized, in this case Spanish even after the decolonization of Morocco or emigration to Israel and how it can germinate new identities such an imagined connection to Europe or facilitate integration into a new homeland in the Americas. Secondly, Moreno



traces the elevation for Haketia (the version of Judeo-Spanish spoken in Northern Morocco) from its position as a lowly symbol of backwardness, to a culture marker celebrated and studied by the community.

Beyond the providing an important, and until recently understudied history of the Hispanic Moroccan Jewish Diaspora, Dr. Moreno’s work provides important food for thought on how we think both about Jewish diaspora and identity by painstakingly reconstructed the ways in which this community articulated their connections to both Spain and Morocco as homelands while also engaging with Jewish nationalism. In doing so he demonstrates both the pervasiveness of trans-national/imperial Jewish networks both before and after the creation of the state of Israel, and that identifying with multiple homelands, cultures, languages, and traditions is central to the modern

Jewish experience. In doing so, the book provides new insight on how other Jews communities have also related to overlapping places and communities across time and space. In summary, Moreno’s work is an important study demonstrating how Spanish speaking Moroccan Jews felt connected to multiple places and communities, including Morocco, historic al-Andalus, modern Spain, the larger Sephardic diaspora, and finally the modern state of Israel.

Sasha Goldstein-Sabbah is assistant professor of Middle Eastern Studies at the University of Groningen in The Netherlands, she is specialized in the modern history of Middle Eastern and North African Jewry. (s.r.goldstein@rug.nl)

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ROSH HASHANAH SEVEN SPECIES SALAD

By Ronit Treatman

Ancient Israel was not just a land flowing with milk and honey. It was noted for the plants that gave sustenance to its people. In the Torah, G-d brings the Ancient Israelites, "...into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths, springing forth in valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and vines and fig-trees and pomegranates; a land of olive-trees and honey;" (Deuteronomy 8:7-8).

These are the Seven Species of the Land of Israel. It is customary to eat the Seven Species during Rosh Hashanah.

The Seven Species nourished the Ancient Israelites. They are listed in the order in which they ripen during the year. They could be eaten fresh or preserved, stored for later use, and transformed into wine or oil.

Wheat and barley are harvested in the spring. These ancient grains were the staples of the Near Eastern diet. They formed the basis of every meal, eaten roasted, cooked into a porridge or stew, or baked as a flatbread. Barley was also brewed to make beer.

Vines were grape vines. Grapes are harvested during the summer and



fall. Every part of the plant was used. Grapes were eaten fresh, or dried until they became raisins. They were cooked with water to make grape molasses.

The grapes were pressed for wine and vinegar. The leaves were used in various dishes, and the trunk and branches used for fuel and basket weaving.

Figs were both wild and cultivated in ancient Israel. They are harvested in the summer. They were eaten fresh or dried. Dried figs were pressed into cakes. These cakes were easy to transport.

Originating in Iran and Afghanistan, the pomegranate was introduced to the Middle

East by Phoenician traders.

Pomegranates are harvested during the summer and fall. They were eaten raw, sun dried, pressed into juice and wine, and cooked with water to prepare pomegranate molasses.

Olive trees grew wild in ancient Israel. These tough trees are the ultimate survivors. Even if they are burned, the roots remain alive underground, and the trees reemerge. Olives are harvested in the fall. They were pressed into olive oil. Olives were also eaten raw with salt, pickled in seawater, mixed with meal and baked into cakes.

There is a question about what exactly "honey" means in ancient Israel. Many scholars believe that in this context "honey" means dates. Date palms grew wild in Ancient Israel. They are harvested in the summer and fall. Dates were eaten fresh or dried. They were cooked with water to make a thick, sweet syrup. The Tanakh does mention honey from bees. Samson eats honey that he finds in a beehive inside the carcass of a lion (*Book of Judges 14:8-9*).

One delicious and easy way of incorporating the Seven Species of the Land of Israel into your Rosh Hashanah cuisine is by tossing them into a delicious salad.

Seven Species Salad

- Mixed baby lettuce
- Seeds from 1 ripe pomegranate
- 8 figs quartered
- 12 seedless grapes, halved or quartered
- 4 dates, sliced
- Olive oil
- Balsamic vinegar
- Barley and wheat croutons:

1. To make the croutons, get some bread (preferably sliced) that has both wheat and barley flour and cut it into bite-sized pieces (2 cm to 3 cm square) and place on a baking tray or casserole dish. In a bowl, combine olive oil and some favorite spices, oregano, basil, and/or thyme. Brush the oil and herb mixture over the bread pieces and bake at 400°F until the bread feels like croutons.

One can also skip the olive oil and herbs on the croutons and just bake the bread.

2. Combine everything and enjoy!

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

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New Year, New Opportunities

By Rabbi Danny Burkeman

When we approach the secular New Year alongside countdowns, parties, and the ball drop the major way that we mark the transition is through the making of resolutions. These can have varying levels of success, although they often do not prove to be particularly “sticky.” The poet Shane Ward wrote about New Year’s resolutions, and his final verse is telling:

*Most New Year's Resolutions start to fall
for reasons that are trivial or small.*

*Like the corn before the thresher
you can sense the looming pressure.*

So why stress yourself? Just don't make them at all!

When I think about the New Year, I often think about being presented with a new and clean book, the pages are empty for us to write whatever we want upon them. And then I recall a vivid memory from an elementary school art class when I was about 7 years old. In this class we each had a book full of plain white pages, and all we were expected to do was to draw or paint something on each new page. For some reason, in this particular class I wanted to be the first to complete my book (I have no recollection of why, but I can be rather competitive). I wanted to fill up all of the pages as quickly as possible so that I could get a brand-new book.

And so I did what any sensible 7 year old would do, I drew pictures in pencil (much quicker and less mess and drying time), and I probably drew enough to get through at least four pages a minute. Less than halfway through the class, I went up to the teacher to ask for a brand-new book. I had finished first. Instead of presenting me with the new book, which I was certain I merited, the teacher flicked through the book and looked unimpressed at my sparse squiggles, inadequate line drawings, and semi-empty pages. I was told to sit back down and draw proper pictures with the care and attention that they warranted.

With the ending of old books and the beginning of new ones, there can be a desire to rush through the old, to close the book as quickly as possible, to start a new book immediately. But Rosh Hashanah

and the New Year, while providing transitions, also remind us of the continuity of time, the way that time cycles and flows.

The New Year can feel like a brand-new book; but this is not the way that Judaism approaches New Years, and I think it’s part of the reason why we don’t make resolutions as part of our Rosh Hashanah practice. We do not begin turning the page on the first of Tishrei (the month of Rosh Hashanah), instead we begin turning the page a full month earlier with the start of Elul. During the month of Elul we sound the shofar every morning, as a way of reminding ourselves that Rosh Hashanah is coming. We take a full 30 days to prepare ourselves mentally and spiritually for the year which lies ahead. And then, we give ourselves an additional ten days at the start of the year, as we prepare for Yom Kippur. We do not leap headfirst into the new Jewish year, instead we start it gradually with ten days of reflection, preparation and renewal.

We don’t make resolutions out of the blue, we give ourselves 40 days for reflection – 30 in the year that is ending and 10 at the start of the New Year. In this way it is not so much a new book, as a new chapter in a book that goes on indefinitely.

One of the lessons of the month of Elul comes from the name of the month itself. Elul is spelled – *aleph-lamed-vav-lamed* – and is said to be an acronym for the phrase – *Ani Ledodi Vedodi Li* – I am my beloved and my beloved is mine. This line from Song of Songs is often considered to be symbolic of our relationship with God, and so in this way during the month of Elul we are encouraged to find our way back to God, or back to a relationship with God. But I think it can also be about our relationship with the Divine spark that is present inside all of us, and so *Ani Ledodi Vedodi Li* can be about repairing our relationships with our fellow person. As we enter this Rosh Hashanah, rather than making resolutions for what will be different, I hope that we can all use Elul to reflect on the year that has been and enter the New Year in renewed relationship with each other.

Rabbi Danny Burkeman is the Senior Rabbi at Temple Shir Tikva, Wayland.



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The Rosh Hashanah retreat spans four days October 2 through 6 and will feature Traditional Egalitarian davening, led by Rabbi Ravid Tilles, Director of Jewish Life and Learning at Schechter Boston, and an Orthodox *mechitza* minyan led by Rabbinical students and graduates of Yeshivat Chovevei Torah (YCT).

Sukkot, which celebrates the fall harvest, gives guests the opportunity to come to Isabella Freedman for *Sukkahfest* (October 16-20) or *Simchafest* (October 23-27)...or both. *Sukkahfest* is unique in that one can commute for the day to eat in the gorgeous outdoor sukkah or swim out to the floating sukkah on the lake. There are also multiple prayer options, including a Renewal *minyan* led by Beit Kohenet, and a Partnership *mechitza* minyan with several guest leaders.

Simchafest will be celebrated with a Traditional Egalitarian minyan and an Orthodox *mechitza* minyan. This Simchat Torah retreat is designed to help reclaim the capacity for joy exactly one year after experiencing profound trauma on this very holiday. Rabbi Menachem Creditor, the Pearl and Ira Meyer Scholar-in-Residence at UJA-Federation New York, will be sharing inspirational learning, reflective practices, and communal support.

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Latino Jews Leading the Way to Combat Antisemitism

By Mathew Helman, JALSA Communications Director

For several years now, the Jewish Alliance for Law and Social Action (JALSA) has been working with our members to build a unique space for Jews of Color, the Americas, and the Diaspora throughout the country to explore some really complicated public policy issues. Just imagine what it is like for someone who is Black and Jewish, or Latino and Jewish, or frankly anything other than a white Ashkenazi Jew, to navigate a situation where Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion programs are under attack. Or where people are being denied the freedom to vote, and the impact is being felt most acutely in communities of color.

As a result of this work, several of JALSA's Latino Jewish members came to us a few months ago alarmed by a study that had just been released by the American Jewish Committee showing that there was a rise in antisemitism in the younger Latino community. The study showed that a majority of younger Latinos thought that Jewish people did not encounter significant levels of discrimination, despite a growing number of antisemitic incidents over the past several years. Additionally, more young Latinos responded that the Jewish community could fend for itself than responded that Jewish people could benefit from the support and collaboration of the Hispanic community. In that moment, they turned to JALSA and knew that we had to take action.

From JALSA's experience, we know that, to change hearts and minds, it takes much more than a PowerPoint presentation. It takes getting to know people one-on-one, bringing them together, figuring out our shared values, and then going in to work with them side-by-side. That's the way you develop true allyship, and the way you educate people.

So that's exactly what we did. Over the course of the last few months, JALSA's Latino members have reached out to the Greater

Boston Latino community. We've held dinners to get to know one another, sharing similar stories about where people have grown up, family relationships, and how food was prepared in their houses. We've also shared concerns about public policy in our state, with many people commenting on the high cost of housing, the low wages in the childcare industry (60% of childcare workers are Latinas) and the lack of availability of child care, the need for more investment in small businesses, and voting rights.

Through these discussions, we are focusing on ways that JALSA and the greater Latino community can work together on joint areas of interest. Our JALSA agenda, deeply ingrained with our Jewish values, allows us to work on social, economic, environmental, and racial justice issues. The issues that have surfaced so far all involve a component of our agenda and are aimed at creating a world in which every individual is treated with dignity and respect.

Through this joint endeavor, our Latino Jewish members, people from the greater Latino community, and our general JALSA membership will more deeply get to know one another. And, based on these relationships, we will be able to dispel the underlying misinformation that has led to antisemitism rising in the Latino community. We hope to keep expanding this work so that we can reach greater numbers of people and have a real impact on moving hearts and minds throughout our state. And, if successful, this can be a national model for how to address antisemitism in any community.

More roundtables and opportunities for engagement are in the works. If you or someone you know may be interested in getting involved in this project to help build bridges between communities – particularly people who share both Latino and Jewish identities – in order to combat antisemitism, please contact JALSA's Jews of Color, the Americas, and the Diaspora Coordinator Ellen VanDyke Bell at ellen@jalsa.org.

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The Rosh Rush

An excerpt from THE COUNCIL OF WISE WOMEN by Izzy Abrahmson.

For Benjamin Cohen, the tailor of Chelm, the New Year always presented overwhelming problems. For weeks before the holidays, there were huge rushes of urgent repairs.

There were “The Sprouts,” youngsters whose new suits and dresses needed to be drastically altered because of sudden and unexpected growth spurts.

Some clients, he dubbed, “The Expanders.” These were usually older men and women who had gained weight, so that when they tried on their best outfits, the squeeze was tight — if not impossible.

Benjamin Cohen wanted his son, Yakov, to learn the trade, but the Rosh Rush was no time to teach. So, mostly, Yakov sat around waiting and watching.

On the morning before the New Year, Benjamin was finishing a pure white cotton underskirt for the merchant’s wife. He got careless, and he pricked his finger with the needle.

“Ow!” he yelped.

Immediately, Yakov leapt into action. He snatched the white skirt from his father’s bleeding hand, and ran from the shop.

“You fool!” his father yelled. “What are you doing? Where are you going?”

Yakov didn’t answer. With cotton, Yakov knew, you have to quickly rinse off the blood. The Cantors had the only indoor hand-pump in the village. He dashed across the village, careful to keep the skirt from dragging in the dirt. He raced up the steps to the merchant’s house and pounded on the door.

Reb Cantor’s youngest daughter, Gittel, opened the door. “Where’s the fire?”

“May I use your water pump?” Yakov panted. “It’s urgent!”

Gittel Cantor immediately leapt to the wrong conclusion. She ran past Yakov screaming, “Our house is on fire.”

Hearing her shouts, her mother, father, brother, and two sisters also fled into the street.

Yakov, however, was still on his brave mission to help his father. He sped through the (imaginary) flames, into the Cantors’ kitchen, ran to their sink, and began pumping furiously.

Meanwhile, outside, the Cantor family’s wails and shrieks attracted attention. Everyone in earshot grabbed a bucket and made a line that weaved from the well all the way to the Cantors’ house.

In the kitchen, Yakov was getting hot from yanking the pump’s handle, up and down, and he imagined that the flames were getting closer.

When one of the Schlemiel twins told Benjamin Cohen that his son was trapped inside a burning building, he raced to the merchant’s house and tore at his hair. (Fortunately, his wife and daughter were off in the woods searching for mushrooms, so they didn’t share his panic until much later.)

“What have I done?” he moaned. “I’ve cursed my son!”

At that moment, Yakov stumbled out the front door.

“My boy!” Benjamin rushed forward.

“Stand back!” shouted Rabbi Yohon Abrahms, the schoolteacher, (and leader of the fire brigade,) as he splashed Yakov with a bucketful of water.

Panting and drenched, the young boy fell into his father’s arms. “Are you all right?” Benjamin asked. “I’m sorry. I am so sorry.”

“I’m hot and I’m wet,” Yakov said.

“The fire is out!” Gittel Cantor said.

The entire village cheered. Yakov was lifted from his father’s hug and hoisted onto the schoolteacher’s shoulders.

“Papa!” Yakov shouted. “I got the stain out!”

“What stain?” Benjamin called back as the crowd carried Yakov away.

“The blood stain!” Yakov shouted. “Catch!” He threw the skirt to his father.

Benjamin almost caught it, but he stumbled, and dropped the cleaned white skirt in the muddy street. Sighing, he bent down and pried it from the muck. It had been a lovely piece of work.

He knocked on the merchant’s door.

Shoshana Cantor, the merchant’s wife, who had been searching her house for signs of damage, answered. “Is there another fire?”

“No,” Benjamin Cohen said. “I finished your skirt, but it got a little dirty.”

He squeezed out some of the water before handing it to her.

Shoshana Cantor held the limp soggy garment between two fingers. “This is a little dirty?”

“I’m sorry,” the tailor said. “I’ll buy you a new one.”

“Forget about it.” The merchant’s wife waved her other hand. “My husband often buys me clothes that are just too nice. It will make a change to wear something I don’t have to worry about keeping clean. Besides, your son just saved our home from a fire. Consider it a fair trade.”

“Thank you,” Reb Cohen said.

He turned to go back home and realized that his son was safe and all his work was done. The Rosh Rush was finally over! A feeling of lightness and joy began to fill his heart. He started to hum, and naturally his feet began to move.

Shoshana Cantor watched the tailor hop from her doorsteps, dance into the road, and slip in the mud. He fell and splashed flat on his tuchas.

“Are you all right?” she called.

“I’m wonderful!” Benjamin Cohen grinned, as he jumped to his feet, and danced all the way home.

THE END

THE COUNCIL OF WISE WOMEN by Izzy Abrahmson is available in print, ebook and audiobook. More information at lightpublications.com/council

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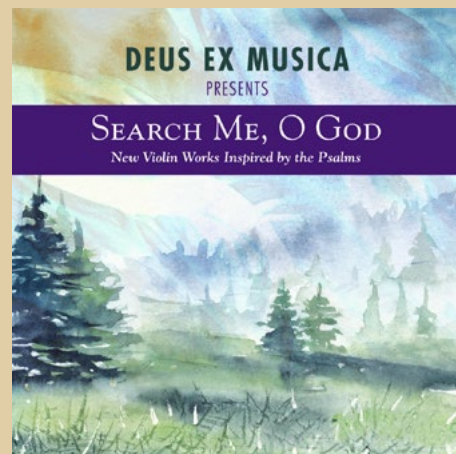
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