



THE Hebrew Watchman

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18 Noteworthy Jews Who Died in 2021



Clockwise, from top left: Jessica Walter, Ed Asner, Sylvia Weinstock, George Segal, Norton Juster, Joan Micklin Silver and Larry King. Credit: Getty Images

By Ben Harris, Ron Kampeas
(JTA) – Every year brings the deaths of Jewish icons who leave behind out-sized legacies, from the realms of art and culture, government, business, philanthropy and beyond. Here are 18 whom we lost in 2021 — none from COVID — presented in alphabetical order.

Sheldon Adelson
Few people have exerted as significant an influence on American and Israeli politics as Sheldon Adelson, the billionaire casino magnate who gave lavishly to Republican candidates and Israeli causes. The founder and CEO of the Las Vegas Sands Corporation and one of the world’s richest men, Adelson regularly set records for his donations. At \$25 million, he was the largest donor to Donald Trump’s successful 2016 presidential bid and the biggest giver in the 2012 American election cycle, at nearly \$93 million. He was also a major supporter of AIPAC and a principal backer of former Israeli Prime Minister

Benjamin Netanyahu. He died in January at 87.
Ed Asner
Ed Asner was an established character actor when he signed on to play the gruff TV station boss in “The Mary Tyler Moore Show” in 1970. He would go on to win an Emmy Award for his work on the sitcom, and another for playing the same character on a spinoff, becoming the only actor to win Emmys for playing the same character on two shows. Born to Jewish immigrant parents in Kansas City, Asner never shied from his Jewish roots, touring the country playing a Holocaust survivor in “The Soap Myth,” a run interrupted only by the coronavirus pandemic. He died in August at 91.
Sheila Bromberg
Sheila Bromberg turned up at the famed Abbey Road studio on a winter’s evening in 1967 because the in-demand harpist needed the cash as a single mom living in London. Her first clue that she was about to make history was a man with a Liverpool accent asking

her, “What you got on the dots?” Paul McCartney was asking her to play the sheet music to “She’s Leaving Home.” The gig, earning Bromberg about the equivalent of \$190 in today’s money, made her the first woman to perform on a Beatles track. She had a stellar career otherwise, recording with artists such as Frank Sinatra and the Bee Gees, and she did not want to be famous only for the Beatles milestone — but she eventually grew into it. “It does feel a bit good,” she said in 2011. She died in August at 92.
Helene Fortunoff
Helene Fortunoff became a powerful player in the jewelry industry long before many women had even entered the workplace. She helped turn her husband’s housewares business into a major player, which at its height operated six retail stores specializing in high-end giftware, including its flagship location on New York City’s Fifth Avenue. She was also a frequent donor to Jewish causes. Fortunoff died in November at 88 in Miami Beach.
Flory Jagoda
Flory Jagoda’s “Ocho Kandelikas,” a Ladino Hanukkah song, has become a holiday favorite widely covered by other artists. But it wasn’t written until 1983, when Jagoda was 60 years old. The Sarajevo-born singer-songwriter gained wide acclaim for her efforts to preserve Sephardic Jewish culture and Ladino music, winning a prestigious National Heritage Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 2002. She died in January at 97.
Norton Juster
“The Phantom Tollbooth,” one of the most beloved children’s books of all time, was written by a Jewish architect who fell in love with wordplay through Yiddish novels. Norton Juster said that his parents, Jewish immigrants

from Romania and Poland, had multiple shelves of thousand-page novels and other tomes translated from Yiddish and Russian. “I just loved the language and the way the words sounded,” he said. He died in March at 91.
Larry King
Television talk show legend Larry King was nearly as famous for the 50,000 interviews he claimed to have conducted in his career as he was for his romantic history, marrying eight times to seven women. With his trademark suspenders and oversized glasses, King was a gentle presence on the air, known for asking open-ended questions and letting his interviewees respond at length. He also made much of his modest Jewish upbringing in Brooklyn, claiming to have done his entire bar mitzvah in Hebrew and raising money for Jewish charities into his 80s. He died in Los Angeles in January at 87.
Carl Levin
Carl Levin was Michigan’s longest-serving senator, holding a seat in Congress’ upper chamber from 1978 until his retirement in 2015. He was also known as a relentless inquisitor. Hauling Goldman Sachs leaders before a committee on investigations following the carnage of the 2008 financial collapse, Levin repeatedly quoted an internal email in which executives admitted they misled their clients. Levin died in July at 87.
Karen Lewis
Lewis led the Chicago Teachers Union from 2010 to 2018, during which the group exploded into public awareness as a model for a new breed of public education organizing. Her teachers, and others across the country who followed in her footsteps, fought tooth

(See Noteworthy Page 3)

Program for Orthodox LGBTQ Youth Gets \$1 Million to Expand Nationwide



LGBTQ Jewish youth gather at the Jewish Queer Youth (JQY) Drop-In Center in New York City. Credit: Courtesy of JQY

By Andrew Silow-Carroll
(New York Jewish Week via JTA) – The New York City-based Jewish Queer Youth organization received a \$1 million donation to expand its social services to Orthodox LGBTQ youth nationwide. The gift comes from Toronto-based real estate developer Paul Austin, CEO of the Salpam Group, and his partner, Dalip Girdhar, who works in information technology at TD Bank. Theirs is JQY’s biggest donation since it launched as a nonprofit in 2012, according to a release from JQY. The organization will use the gift to bring its Drop-in Center initiative, an in-person clinical program that operates in New York, to local Orthodox communities in New Jersey, Baltimore, Chicago and

South Florida, and to expand the staffing for the organization’s crisis phone line. The clinical program and hotline will be renamed in honor of the donors. JQY Executive Director Rachael Fried said in a statement that during the pandemic, JQY pivoted to providing several of its key programs virtually, allowing youth from around the country to take part and underscoring the need for its services. In addition to direct outreach to LGBTQ Orthodox youth, JQY offers training programs for Jewish schools, camps, youth organizations, synagogues and mental health professionals. Nearly all Orthodox communities and institutions do not allow same-sex marriage or sexual relations between people of the same gender. **HW**

My Teen Israel Experience



Among her many volunteer activities, Yael Cooper (r) spent time with underprivileged Israeli children during her Teen Israel Experience.

By Yael Cooper

Yael Cooper, daughter of Aileen and Pace Cooper, is a senior at the Goldie Margolin School for Girls. Memphis Jewish Federation’s Lemsky Endowment Fund provided her with a Teen Israel Experience grant to offset the costs of her NCSY/GIVE (Girls Israel Volunteer Experience) program in Israel.

What an amazing summer I had with NCSY / Girls Israel Volunteer Experience (GIVE)! Not only did I have the opportunity to meet and make amazing new friends from all over the United States and Canada, but I travelled across Israel while doing chesed (volunteering) almost every day of my five-week trip. In Israel, I had the opportunity to give back to the land and people of Israel. When I travelled to Israel with my parents in the past, it was mostly for smachot (happy family occasions), and I mostly visited only Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. This summer, I was able to see more of Israel and go to many sites I have learned about in Chumash (Bible) classes at the Margolin Hebrew Academy. Some of the new places I visited were Tzfat, Efrat, Mearat Hamachpela, (Cave of the Patriarchs and Matriarchs), Hebron, Ein Gedi, Masada, and Eilat. Each day at GIVE I woke up to davening (prayers) and daily learning, constant touring with integrated chesed projects, and each evening, there were fun night activities.

There was a truly wonderful mix of volunteer experiences, such as working on a kibbutz and painting a school. I volunteered at so many diverse places including a soup kitchen, a hospital

where I was able to help with medical clowning, spent time with underprivileged children, packed food at pantry packers, and made a carnival and danced with handicapped and disabled children.

I loved working with the people that live in Israel and physically working the land, and I especially enjoyed writing letters and packing treats for lone soldiers. My favorite chesed activity was making a three-day camp for siblings of children who have cancer. It provided these children a chance to escape their family’s trying challenges. Their parents were so appreciative as they are consistently short of time to spend with their healthy children because they must focus on the children with cancer who are in treatment programs. I loved watching the children smile and enjoyed creating fun projects to make their summer more uplifting. I also had a blast planning a bat mitzvah for seven girls who had simply never had one. Planning included decorating a facility, doing the girls’ hair and makeup, dancing and celebrating with each of them. Seeing the girls so thrilled at experiencing their bat mitzvah made all the effort worthwhile.

The summer included plenty of time to have fun with my new GIVE friends. Going to the De Karina chocolate factory, swimming in the Dead Sea, visiting the Kotel, swimming at Aqua Kef water park on the Kinneret, competing in a basketball game of GIVE versus Michelet (another NCSY program), and eating in the Shuk market are just a few of those special activities. I also enjoyed climbing Masada, sleeping in a

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Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. Jan. 7, 2022 / 4 Shevat, 5782.....4:46 p.m.
Havdalah, Sat. Jan. 8, 2022 / 5 Shevat, 5782 5:45 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Bo

Bedouin tent, even though it was exceptionally hot, and going on a salad trail where I was able to discover and taste of the agriculture in the Negev desert. I made real connections with the people I helped in my chesed activities, my GIVE friends, and the land of Israel. I am inspired by opportunities to share chesed and there is nothing better than giving back by helping those in need in Israel.

This summer was a wonderful hands-on experience with the people who live in Israel and my experience this summer

motivates me to enthusiastically commit to go back to Israel next year for a gap year after high school.

I appreciate Memphis Jewish Federation’s Lemsky Endowment Fund for helping to make my NCSY/ GIVE Israel summer experience possible.

All rising juniors and seniors are eligible for grants of up to \$3,000 to attend a recognized teen summer or semester program in Israel. Teen Israel Experience applications for Summer 2022 are open and can be accessed at jcpmemphis.org/lemsky-endowment-fund. HW



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Noteworthy...
(Continued From Page 1)

and nail not just for better pay but also significant policy changes. A widely covered seven-day strike in 2012 transformed Lewis into a public figure, and she briefly contemplated running for mayor of Chicago. Lewis felt herself drawn to Judaism in her 20s and became a regular at synagogue after converting. Although she feuded bitterly with Mayor Rahm Emanuel, the two reportedly became friends, in part bonding over their shared religion. She died in February at 67 from brain cancer.

Bernie Madoff
Bernie Madoff, the fraudster whose Ponzi scheme lost billions for investors — many of them major Jewish institutions — died in April while serving a 150-year sentence in a federal prison in North Carolina. The exposure of Madoff’s scam during the 2008 financial crisis rippled across the Jewish world. Yeshiva University, Hadassah and prominent Jews like Elie Wiesel and Sandy Koufax were among the thousands of investors who saw their profits wiped out overnight.

Janet Malcolm
The influential New Yorker writer Janet Malcolm, hailed as one of the 20th century’s pioneers of New Journalism, didn’t know she was Jewish until she was called an antisemitic slur in elementary school. Her family had changed its surname from Wiener to Winn and hid its Jewish identity. Besides a 2018 essay in which she delved into this family history, Malcolm — who had married fellow writer Donald Malcolm in the 1950s — did not tackle Jewish topics,

and instead often delved into the world of psychoanalysis and the journalism process. Her reputation took a hit after being sued for allegedly fabricating some quotes and distorting others for a series of articles and a book on the former director of the Sigmund Freud Archives, but after years of public scrutiny, a court ruled in her favor in 1994. She died in June at 86.

Joan Micklin Silver
Director Joan Micklin Silver was most famous for telling two love Jewish stories of New York’s Lower East Side, straddling both ends of the 20th century: “Hester Street,” almost entirely in Yiddish, was about a marriage of immigrants, and “Crossing Delancey,” made and set in the 1980s, was about a Jewish courtship involving a pickle seller. Both films, which her husband, Ray, helped produce, tackled the difficulties of assimilation. Her Hollywood ambitions were curtailed in part because of the Jewishness of her content, but also because of the challenges of being a female director in a sexist industry. She died in January at 85.

George Segal
George Segal’s long career, stretching from the 1960s to this decade, started with troubled heartthrob roles — many of them explicitly Jewish. He later transitioned into Jewish dad roles; he had played the patriarch on ABC’s “The Goldbergs” for eight seasons when he died. Segal heralded a generation of Jewish actors who were unabashed about their Jewishness. He told The New York Times in 1971 that neither his name nor his nose were “unwieldy,” so why change them? He died in March, aged 87.

Neal Sher
Neal Sher joined the Justice Department office tracking Nazi war criminals in the late 1970s and found it relied on tips from the public, which were not reliable. So he set about formulating a new system: Check immigration records against Nazi records. His methodology led to the removal of 69 Nazis (so far) who lied about their pasts when they immigrated. His research got former United Nations Secretary General Kurt Waldheim permanently uninvited from the United States. Sher never stopped being an advocate — he led the AIPAC pro-Israel lobby for a few years and pressed for compensation for the beneficiaries of Jews who took out insurance policies before and during the Holocaust. He also lobbied for Purple Hearts for 13 troops killed in a terrorist attack on a Texas military base. He died in October, aged 74.

Stephen Sondheim
Stephen Sondheim made his Broadway debut as the lyricist for “West Side Story” in 1957 and went on to redefine the American musical through a series of influential works that included “Into the Woods,” “Sweeney Todd,” “Follies,” “A Little Night Music” and “Sunday in the Park With George.” Sondheim avoided traditional Broadway formulas known to immediately draw audiences, instead crafting musicals about subjects that had not received treatments on mainstream stages: loneliness, despair and the artistic temperament. He died in November at 91.


Jessica Walter
Jessica Walter earned a cult following for her portrayal of the manipulative Bluth family matriarch Lucille Bluth in

the beloved TV comedy “Arrested Development.” But that role capped a long career in which she specialized in playing predatory women, beginning with “Bye Bye Braverman” in 1968. Another beloved character in recent years was Malory Archer, the mother to a dysfunctional secret agent in the animated sitcom “Archer,” to which Walter lent her voice. Walter died in March at the age of 80.

Sylvia Weinstock
Weinstock was a grade-school teacher living in Long Island until a bout with breast cancer at 50 led her into a career that would dub her the “Queen of Cakes.” She became famous for wedding cakes that were stunning handmade confabulations, among them a replica of Masada with the Dead Sea at its base. She paid close attention to detail and became a much sought-after baker to the stars. Her husband, Ben, an attorney who was handy with gadgets and who died in 2018, quit his job to build the devices that facilitated her masterpieces. She died in November, aged 91.

Shirley Zussman
While Shirley Zussman may not be as well-known as Dr. Ruth Westheimer, one of the world’s most famous sex therapists, Zussman served as an inspiration to her fellow Jewish New Yorker. After studying with the famed Masters and Johnson sex experts, Zussman and her husband ran the Human Sexuality Program at Long Island Jewish Hillside Medical Center together for a decade, wrote a book about sexuality for couples, worked for several clinics and advised young people about sex into her 90s. She died earlier this month at 107. **HW**

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The Hebrew Watchman will only consider Letters to the Editor that include the writer’s full name; anonymous letters and letters written under pseudonyms will not be considered. For verification purposes, the writer must also include their home address, email address and telephone numbers, including a daytime telephone number.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

December 28, 2021

To the editor:

In your recent addition of the Hebrew Watchman, December 23, 2021, you printed an article “Sarah Silverman’s very proud Jewish podcast has thoughtful advice for moms and daughters.”

I would like to suggest that this article does not deserve a place in your newspaper. It seems to me that the Hebrew Watchman has traditionally played a significant role in Memphis as a unifying force for the entire community. Its local, national, and international news is informative and usually family friendly. This recent Sarah Silverman article with its sexual content is coarse and vulgar and inappropriate for this publication!

Barbara Cooper Radinsky, Memphis

Desmond Tutu, Anti-Apartheid Leader Who Identified with Jews and Criticized Israel’s Treatment of Palestinians, Dies At 90



Nobel Peace Prize laureate and South African Archbishop Desmond Tutu attends a celebration for his 86th birthday in Cape Town, South Africa, Oct. 7, 2017. Credit: Gianluigi Guercia/AFP via Getty Images

By Shira Hanau

(JTA) — Desmond Tutu, the archbishop who identified closely with the historical suffering of the Jewish people in his forceful advocacy against apartheid in South Africa, died last Sunday at age 90.

Tutu, the first Black archbishop of Cape Town, used his role as a church leader to bring religion into the fight against apartheid, South Africa’s repressive system of racial segregation.

Advocating for nonviolence and, later, restorative justice, Tutu gained renown far beyond South Africa, earning a Nobel Peace Prize in 1984.

In the years preceding and during the negotiations to end apartheid in South Africa, Tutu frequently praised the many South African Jews who opposed the apartheid system and worked alongside Black South Africans to transition to an equitable system of governance. He often invoked the Holocaust, comparing the struggles of the Jews under Nazism to the struggles of Black South Africans under apartheid.

Speaking to a gathering of British Jews in 1987, he spoke of that shared experience of exclusion and persecution.

“Your people know what one’s talking about, having suffered because you belonged to a particular racial group. You were forced to wear arm bands. We

don’t carry arm bands ... they just have to look at us,” Tutu said, according to a Jewish Telegraphic Agency dispatch from the event.

But Tutu’s identification with the Jewish people did not spare them from his criticism. While consistently defending Israel’s right to exist and calling on Arab nations to recognize Israel, including when speaking to Palestinian audiences, Tutu was a frequent critic of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank and questioned how people who had survived the Holocaust could perpetrate an occupation of another people.

“The Arabs should recognize Israel, but a lot must change also. I am myself sad that Israel, with the kind of history and traditions her people have experienced, should make refugees of others. It is totally inconsistent with who she is as a people,” he said in a 1984 speech at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York.

Tutu also criticized Israel for continuing to work with South Africa on military matters despite apartheid.

“Israel’s integrity and existence must be guaranteed. But I cannot understand how a people with your history would have a state that would collaborate in military matters with South Africa and carry out policies that are a mirror image of some of the things from which

your people suffered,” he said in his 1987 speech to British Jews.

Those comparisons, along with remarks that some Jewish leaders called antisemitic, earned Tutu criticism from some Jewish leaders. In his 1984 JTS speech, he addressed some of that criticism while further fanning its flames with references to a “Jewish lobby.”

“I was immediately accused of being antisemitic,” Tutu said in his speech, referring to the reaction to an earlier speech. “I am sad because I think that it is a sensitivity in this instance that comes from an arrogance — the arrogance of power because Jews are a powerful lobby in this land and all kinds of people woo their support.”

In a 1989 visit to Israel and the West Bank, Tutu made the controversial suggestion during a visit to Yad Vashem, Israel’s Holocaust memorial, that the Nazis ought to be forgiven for their crimes against the Jewish people. The suggestion reflected Tutu’s role as the chair of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which aimed to move the country into a new era by allowing those who participated in apartheid to atone for their sins and to let victims of the system air their grievances and, in some cases, receive reparations.

“We pray for those who made it happen, forgive them and help us to forgive them, and help us so that we, in our turn, will not make others suffer,” he said, according to a JTA dispatch from the time.

Jewish leaders criticized Tutu for his remarks. “For anyone in Jerusalem, at Yad Vashem, to speak about forgiveness would be, in my view, a disturbing lack of sensitivity toward the Jewish victims

and their survivors. I hope that was not the intention of Bishop Tutu,” Elie Wiesel said at the time.

(Earlier that year, Tutu had suggested that he and Wiesel could work together to mediate peace in the Middle East.)

Despite his comments, Tutu was frequently honored by Jewish organizations. In 1989, he was honored for his work fighting racial discrimination by the Stephen Wise Free Synagogue in New York. In 2003, Yeshiva University’s Cardozo Law School gave him an award for furthering world peace.

In 2009, the same year that then-President Barack Obama awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, Tutu was disinvited from giving a speech at a Minnesota university over remarks he had made about Jews and Israel.

Abraham Foxman, then national director of the Anti-Defamation League, urged the university not to rescind the invitation.

“Tutu has certainly been an outspoken, sometimes very harsh critic of Israel and Israeli policies, and has sometimes also used examples, which may cross the line,” Foxman told JTA at the time. But Tutu “certainly is not an antisemite and should not be so characterized and therefore refused a platform.”

In 2015, Tutu addressed an event hosted by the Israeli organizations Combatants for Peace and the Parents Circle on Israel’s Memorial Day for Israeli and Palestinian parents who lost children to the conflict in a short video speech.

“If change seems impossible, consider our experience in South Africa,” he said. “You can make it happen in Palestine and Israel, too.” **HW**

Olympic Committee Says Competitions Must be Open to All Athletes, Including Israelis

(JNS) – The International Olympic Committee said sports federations worldwide must make competitions available to athletes from all countries, after a championship in Malaysia was canceled because it banned Israel’s participation.

“We urge all [international federations] to be extremely vigilant when allocating and organizing international sports competitions,” IOC’s sports director Kit McConnell and director of Olympic solidarity James Macleod wrote in a letter, The Jerusalem Post reported last Tuesday.

The IOC added that leaders of sports federations must get a written declaration from the government of a tournament’s host country, stating that all eligible athletes and teams will be able to compete and be treated without discrimination.

The letter cited the cancellation of this month’s World Team Squash Championships in Kuala Lumpur, after Malaysia refused to allow Israeli athletes into the country, and Serbia not allowing Kosovo’s boxing team to compete in the AIBA World Boxing Championship that took place Oct. 24-Nov. 6.

The IOC said it will work with the National Olympic Committees of Malaysia and Serbia to determine a solution to their banning of certain countries, and that failure to do so would “exclude themselves from the right to host international sports events until all the necessary assurances can be obtained and respected.”

The guidelines stated in the letter are part of “the fundamental principles which govern the Olympic Movement,” the IOC said. **HW**

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David Krueger to Join Zoom Program on the History of Jewish Summer Camps in the South



David Krueger

Lorraine Wolf, president of the Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South, announced that communal leader David Krueger will represent the Conservative Movement’s Camp Ramah Darom and will join the panel highlighting the History of Jewish Summer Camps in the South to be held on Sunday afternoon, January 9, 2022, at 2 p.m. Central Time.

The program features Dr. Gary Zola, executive director of the Jacob Rader Marcus Center, American Jewish Archives. Rachael Brill, the North American director of the Israel Immersive Programs at the Union of Reform Judaism (URJ), will lead the panel discussion

after Dr. Zola’s presentation.

Other panelists are David Fleischhacker, representing Baron Hirsch Congregation’s Camp Darom; Anna Herman, representing Henry S. Jacobs Camp and Audrey Robbins Siskind, representing Camp Barney Medintz. After the panel discussion, participants will be invited to share their own camp experiences.

“We are so fortunate to have David Krueger join our special panel moderated by Rachael Brill with our noted speaker Dr. Gary Zola at this unique program,” said Lorraine. “It’s wonderful to have Jewish camps in the South that represent a diversity of philosophies with histories far richer than can be covered in one session. Also, we know there are so many other great Jewish camps in the South and beyond with their own unique brands that can be discovered. We hope this program will encourage people to find out more and to share their own camp stories after the panel.”

David Krueger was born in Dayton, Ohio, and was active in United Synagogue Youth both in Dayton and in CRUSY, serving as its treasurer. He attended Miami University (Ohio) graduating in 1972 and University of Wisconsin receiving his MBA in 1974. After

traveling through Europe and Israel, he began his career at Coopers & Lybrand, CPAs in New York and Columbus.

One of his clients was the TVA, which caused him to be stuck in Knoxville over Yom Kippur, which resulted in a silver lining of meeting Memphian Elaine Burson at Kol Nidre. They married in 1979 and moved to Memphis in 1985 when David joined Cooper Companies. Shortly thereafter, they became the parents of triplet daughters, Jennifer, Rachel and Alyson.

He has served as the Company’s Chief Financial Officer since 1989 and together with Elaine as grandparents to Rachel and Shaya Lerner’s daughters, Hannah and Emma since 2015. Elaine is a consultant in Non-Violent Communication (NVC) and has worked in the mental health field for many years.

David has been active in Jewish life and has served as president of Beth Sholom, Hillel of Memphis and Plough Towers. He joined the board of Ramah Darom in its early years and became its president from 2010-2012. All three daughters attended the Camp.

To Zoom this program, visit www.jhsmem.org – Zoom meeting ID: 850 8052 1657 Passcode: 465891 [HW](#)



Samantha Califf

Samantha Califf, daughter of Lindsay and Brian Califf, will become a bat mitzvah on January 8, 2022, at Temple Israel. Rabbi Micah Greenstein will officiate the service. To mark the occasion, Samantha will lead the congregation in prayer, read from the Torah, chant her Haftorah and deliver a D’var Torah.

Samantha is in seventh grade at Hutchison School where she serves on Peer Committee and played on the Tennis Team. Samantha is also on the competitive climbing team at High Point Climbing and plays bass and keyboard in the Performance Band at School of Rock Memphis. Samantha attends Jacobs Camp in Utica, Miss., and has done so every summer since 2016.

Samantha is the granddaughter of Jenny and Larry Baer and Debra and Cary Califf. She is the great-granddaughter of Doris and the late Butch Califf, the late Jackie and Robert Hirsh, the late Miriam and Isadore Baer, and the late Etta and Samuel Jacobson. [HW](#)

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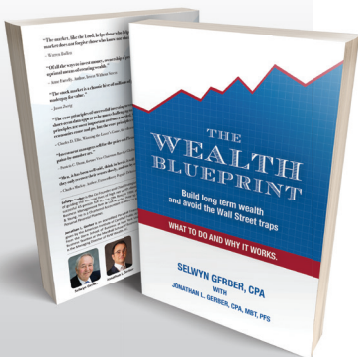
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David Ross to Take the Plunge for Special Olympics



David Ross participates each year in the Polar Bear Plunge to raise funds and awareness for Special Olympics

David Ross will be participating in the Special Olympics Polar Bear Plunge on Feb. 5, 2022, and will attempt his 10th straight event in which he will be the #1 fundraiser. Last year he raised over \$10,000 and he is attempting to top that amount this year.

The Special Olympics Polar Bear Plunge raises funds for local Special Olympics programming. One of the events the funds are used for supports the Special Olympics King Pins Bowling League, which David founded with his wife, Jane o.b.m., in the fall of 1999. The bowling league would meet weekly between September and May. Due to the Pandemic the league has been suspended but is hoping to start again in 2022.

The impetus of the league's beginning was due to their daughter, Julie's, love for bowling. And there was not a Special Olympics bowling league in Memphis at that time.

Not only does the league give local athletes another sport they can participate in, but it also serves as a social outlet for these athletes. In addition, it gives the opportunity for volunteers, both teenagers and adults, to interact with the athletes and their families.

If you would like to make a donation supporting David you may go to his website at www.classy.org/fundraiser/3619900 or send a check to David made payable to Special Olympics at 985 Village Oak Cove, Memphis, TN 38120. **HW**

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Attackers Call Jewish Men 'Dirty Jews,' Punch Victim for Wearing IDF Sweatshirt in Brooklyn



Still shots from video footage of the assailant in an anti-Semitic attack in New York City. Credit: NYPD's Hate Crimes Task Force.

(JNS) – The Anti-Defamation League is offering a \$5,000 reward for information leading to the arrest of a man who the New York City Police Department says punched a Jewish man in the face multiple times last Sunday morning.

Blake Zavadsky, 21, was wearing a sweatshirt with the Israel Defense Forces emblem on it at the time of the attack.

“We are outraged by this brazen attack and urge anyone with information to come forward. We hope this reward helps send a clear and unequivocal message that crimes like these are unacceptable and have consequences,” the New York/New Jersey ADL said in a release.

Last Sunday morning, Zavadsky and Ilan Kaganovich, also 21, were at a Foot Locker store in the Bay Ridge section of Brooklyn when they were approached by two assailants, they told the New York Post.

“They asked us what we were doing in their neighborhood. They called us ‘dirty Jews,’” Zavatsky recalled.

Zavodsky, who was wearing the IDF sweatshirt, said, “The one who punched me said if I don’t take my sweatshirt off, he’s going to rock me.” The same man also allegedly told them, “How can you support these dirty Jews?”

Zavatsky was allegedly punched in the face twice by one of the men, who also spilled iced coffee on him when he

didn't take off the sweatshirt. The attackers threatened to harm Kaganovich if he intervened and bystanders did not try to help the victims, according to the Jewish men.

"I can't believe this happened," said Kaganovich. "We should be able to wear whatever we want to wear. Blake and I are Jewish – we should support Israel without it being a problem."

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul last Monday called the attack “abhorrent and unacceptable,” adding that “anti-Semitism and all hate has no home in New York,” while the city’s mayor Bill De Blasio tweeted “anti-Semitism anywhere is an attack on our city.”

The NYPD's Hate Crimes Task Force is investigating the crime, and has released photos and video footage of Zavadsky's attacker.

Zavadsky told the New York Post he will continue wearing his IDF hoodie in public because “you can’t be scared to walk outside and say you’re Jewish. You have to be proud of who you are and stand up for what you believe – and not be intimidated.”

In the wake of the anti-Semitic attack, people are being encouraged to show their support by posting photos of themselves online in their IDF shirts as part of the “#IDFshirtchallenge” social media campaign. [HW](#)



British Jews Have Harsh Words for the BBC Following its Coverage of an Antisemitic Incident in London

By Cnaan Liphshiz

(JTA) – The Board of Deputies of British Jews, the main body representing the interests of Jews in the UK, has accused the BBC of falsely alleging that victims of a recent antisemitic incident in London had provoked their attackers with an anti-Muslim slur.

The Board’s president, Marie van der Zyl, published an op-ed last Thursday in the Jewish Chronicle of London saying the BBC had made a “colossal error” in its coverage of the Nov. 29 incident. The public broadcaster had previously reported that several young men caught on video harassing a Chabad-affiliated bus of Jews publicly celebrating Hanukkah were reacting to an anti-Muslim slur from one of the Jews on the bus; the Board’s own analysis of video from the scene determined that none of the Jews on the bus had said anything Islamophobic.

“The supposed slur, which the BBC insists is there, is nothing but fiction,” van der Zyl wrote in the Jewish Chronicle. “This raises serious questions about deep-seated biases within the BBC towards Israelis, and towards Jews in general.”

The Board has criticized the BBC occasionally in the past over its coverage of Israel, but van der Zyl’s op-ed marked its harshest critique yet of the broadcaster. It followed a Dec. 14 protest outside the BBC headquarters organized by an antisemitism watchdog group, at which attendees held signs reading, “BBC News: Stop Blaming Jews!”

In the original video, several men can be seen pounding on the windows of the bus with their hands and shoes while shouting “Free Palestine,” spitting on

the bus and flipping their middle fingers at the passengers as the bus drives away. At least one of the men performs what appears to be a Nazi salute.

The BBC’s claims about an anti-Muslim slur are false, van der Zyl wrote, and are probably based on a mistranslation of a sentence uttered in Hebrew meaning “call someone, it’s urgent,” according to the Board’s report.

“That misreporting is a colossal error on the part of the BBC. It has added insult to injury in accusing victims of antisemitism of being guilty of bigotry themselves,” van der Zyl wrote.

“But what takes this from an egregious failure to something far more sinister is the BBC’s behaviour when confronted with its mistake. Instead of admitting it was wrong, it has doubled and tripled down on insisting that a Hebrew cry for help must be an anti-Muslim slur, despite the concerted outcry from our community,” she added.

A spokesperson for the BBC told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency via email: “There was a brief reference to a slur, captured in a video recording, that appeared to come from the bus. We consulted a number of Hebrew speakers in determining that the slur was spoken in English. The brief reference to this was included so the fullest account of the incident was reported.”

The BBC spokesperson did not provide any further details on the nature of the alleged anti-Muslim slur.

The BBC’s Director General, Tim Davie, is scheduled to meet with representatives from the Board next month to discuss its coverage of the incident. [HW](#)

Chabad of Poway Killer Given Life Sentence in Federal Court

(JNS) – The man convicted of the deadly 2019 shooting at Chabad of Poway in California was given another life sentence and an additional 30 years in prison last Tuesday in a federal court hearing in San Diego.

John Earnest, 22, of Rancho Peñasquitos, previously pleaded guilty to a 113-count federal indictment according to a U.S. Justice Department news release.

“All people deserve to live and worship peacefully,” U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland, who is Jewish, said in the release. “This defendant’s conduct was an attempt to damage what makes our nation so great – our diversity. The Department of Justice stands with our Jewish and Muslim community members, we reject hate in all forms, and we are committed to prosecuting bias-motivated violence to the fullest extent.”

According to court documents, on the morning of April 27, 2019, the then 19-year-old Earnest drove to Chabad of Poway Synagogue where congregants were assembled for Passover Shabbat morning services.

Earnest entered the building armed with a fully loaded Smith and Wesson M&P 15 assault rifle with a 10-round magazine and a chest rig containing five more 10-round magazines. He then opened fire on the congregants.

Earnest killed Lori Gilbert-Kaye, 60, and wounded Rabbi Yisroel Goldstein, 8-year-old Noya Dahan and her 34-year-old uncle, Almog Peretz.

After emptying the magazine, he was rushed by several congregants. He fled in his car and shortly after called 911

and said that he had “just shot up a synagogue.” He was apprehended by law enforcement, which found the rifle and additional ammunition in his car.

Earnest was a nursing student at Cal State San Marcos who had become radicalized with white supremacy, posting a manifesto on the internet expressing his hatred for Jews and Muslims.

“I can only kill so many Jews,” he wrote, “I only wish I killed more.”

“Hate has no place in our society and bias-motivated violence will not be tolerated,” said Assistant Attorney General Kristen Clarke of the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division in the release. “By committing these heinous and senseless acts of violence against Jewish and Muslim community members, this defendant violated our most basic American ideal: all persons are created equal.”

Last Tuesday’s decision is the final step in Earnest’s prosecution. He previously pleaded guilty to state charges of murder, attempted murder and hate crimes in the San Diego Superior Court in July, by reaching a deal with prosecutors that allowed him to avoid the death penalty and receive life in prison without parole according to the Los Angeles Times.

It is still unknown whether Earnest will serve his sentence in a state or federal prison.

U.S. District Court Judge Anthony Battaglia recommended Earnest serve the sentence in federal custody but that it would be up to the U.S. Bureau of Prisons to accept him, according to the Times. [HW](#)



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What About Financial Aid for College?

Provided by Mike Stein, Managing Director - Investments, Wells Fargo Advisors

Financial aid for college consists of loans, grants, scholarships, and work study. Grants and scholarships are worth searching for because they don't have to be paid back, unlike student loans, which require an ongoing financial obligation, or work study, which requires a work commitment. There are generally three sources for college grant aid; the federal government, state higher-education agencies, and colleges.

In order to be considered for any type of grant aid, you or your child should file the federal government's financial aid application, the FAFSA. In addition, private colleges typically require the CSS Profile form or their own individual aid form. The FAFSA and CSS Profile can be filled out and submitted online (the FAFSA is free but the CSS Profile has a fee). These forms do require some time to complete, but the time spent is worth it. Not only are these forms a prerequisite to various types of grant aid, but some colleges may require them in order for students to be eligible for college merit scholarships. Keep in mind that students must reapply for financial aid every year.

U.S. government grants

There are two main federal grants for college; Pell Grants and Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOGs). Both are based on financial need.

The Pell Grant program is Uncle Sam's largest financial aid grant program. Pell Grants are available to undergraduate students with exceptional financial need, and are the foundation of every undergraduate student's financial aid package (for those who qualify). Graduate students are not eligible. Pell Grants are administered by the federal government and awarded on the basis of college costs and a financial need. Financial need is based on factors such as family income and assets, family size, and the number of college students in the family.

The FSEOG is the federal government's second-largest program. An FSEOG is available to undergraduate students who demonstrate the greatest financial need. (i.e., those students with the lowest expected family contributions). Priority is given to Pell Grant recipients. The FSEOG is a campus-based

program, which means that the financial aid office at each college administers it. Every college receives a certain amount of FSEOG funding from the federal government each year, and when the funds are awarded, there are no more until the following year. So even though a student might be eligible for an FSEOG based on his or her financial need, the funds may have already been expended for that year. The federal maximum FSEOG award is \$4,000 per academic year, and awards can range from \$100 to \$4,000.

State grants

Many states offer grant programs as well. Each state's grant program is different, many give special preference to state residents planning to attend an in-state school. For more information, contact your state's higher-education agency.

College grants

Finally, many colleges offer specialized grant programs. This is particularly true of older schools with many alumni and large endowments. These grants are usually based on financial need or scholastic ability. Consult your college financial aid office for more details.

* Source: U.S. Department of Education
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Immigration to Israel Surges in 2021 by 30 Percent

(JNS) – New figures from the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, The Jewish Agency, and Nefesh B'Nefesh show the highest aliyah from France in four years, a dramatic increase in arrivals from South Africa, and the continued trend of rising aliyah among youth.

There were 27,050 new immigrants to Israel in 2021, a 30 percent increase from the previous year's 21,820 immigrants.

This past year also brought a record-breaking 4,000 immigrants from the United States who arrived in Israel with the assistance of Nefesh B'Nefesh.

This immigration from the U.S. constituted a 30 percent increase from 2020 and the highest annual number since 1973. In addition, another 400 immigrants arrived this year from Canada, bringing the expected total of immigrants from North America to over 4,400.

Interestingly, aliyah from France jumped 40 percent with 3,500 new arrivals, the largest number in the past four years.

Immigration from Russia stood at 7,500, 3,000 from Ukraine, and 1,636 from Ethiopia.

Another significant number came from Argentina (900), a jump of 55 percent from last year.

The growing immigration from the younger generation continued with 14,620 (55 percent) of all immigrants under the age of 35.

Aliyah is facilitated by the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration and The Jewish Agency, with Nefesh B'Nefesh, Ofek Israeli, The Jewish Federations of North America, Keren Hayesod, The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, and friends of Israel from around the world. **HW**

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Soccer Fans Filmed Singing About Killing Jews in Belgium



Soccer fans scuffle during a match between the Beerschot team and Royal Antwerp FC at Olympisch Stadion in Antwerp, Belgium, Dec. 5, 2021. Credit: Orange Pictures

By Cnaan Liphshiz

(JTA) – Dozens of soccer fans in Antwerp, Belgium, were filmed giving Nazi salutes while chanting about Hamas and gassing and burning Jews.

Police are investigating the videos, which appeared on social media earlier last week. The incident appeared to have taken place at or outside Café Stadion, a restaurant near a soccer stadium.

The men chanted: “My father was in the commandos, my mother was in the SS, together they burned Jews’ cause Jews burn the best,” as well as “Hamas, Jews to the gas” while making the Nazi salutes. They appear to be fans of the Beerschot soccer team of Antwerp, the *Gazet van Antwerpen* reported.

Such soccer chants occur regularly in Europe, and in the Netherlands and

Belgium especially, ahead of matches between teams that fans of rival soccer clubs label as “Jewish.” Sometimes, as in the case of the Ajax team of Amsterdam, supporters of those teams call themselves and their teams Jewish.

But in recent years, these soccer chants increasingly have been occurring also outside the context of sports, including at a graduation party of high school students in the Netherlands in 2016.

Separately, the ethics board of the Royal Belgian Soccer Association last week fined the Club Brugge Belgian soccer team to the tune of \$2,226 for chants heard at three recent matches.

Fans of Brugge shouted, "Whoever doesn't jump is a Jew," as they sprang up and down during the matches. **HW**

Jewish Leaders Condemn United Nations Open-Ended Investigation into 'War Crimes' by Israel

(JNS) – Jewish leaders in the United States are outraged at a recent vote by the United Nations General Assembly to fund an open-ended Commission of Inquiry (COI) into alleged war crimes perpetrated by Israel during the May 2021 conflict with Palestinian terror groups in the Gaza Strip.

In a news release last Monday, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations called the move appalling as the commission does not mention the actions of the Hamas terrorist organization, which intentionally shot over 4,000 rockets at civilians within Israel in May and has never opened an open-ended Commission of Inquiry on any other nation in its history.

“We vehemently oppose this one-sided farce of a probe, which again demonstrates the clear anti-Israel bias in the UN body. Israel is the only member state in the history of the U.N. to be singled out for taking defensive military action to ensure the security of its civilian population,” the release stated. “Indeed, throughout the history of UN actions, no other investigation received authorization to spend unlimited resources without an explicit mandate. The unprecedented UNGA vote presupposes wrongdoing, while unfairly challenging Israel’s right to self-defense in accordance with international law.”

The funding for the COI was approved on Dec. 23 by the UNGA with the support of 125 member nations,

while the United States, Israel and six other nations voted against it, and 34 – including some traditional allies of Israel – abstained from the vote.

“We are grateful for the support of the Biden Administration, Hungary, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Palau, and Papua New Guinea who joined with Israel to vote against this discriminatory commission,” the Conference’s statement read. “We are also disappointed that the key Western allies of Australia, Austria, Canada, Brazil and Germany chose to abstain, rather than to oppose this immoral and destructive measure.” **HW**

Singapore Opens First Jewish Museum, Highlighting 200 Years of History



Singapore. Credit: Noppasin Wongchum/Shutterstock.

(JNS) – The first Jewish museum in Singapore opened earlier this month, highlighting the 200-year history of the country's Jewish community.

The Jews of Singapore Museum is located inside the Jacob Ballas Centre and next to the Maghain Aboth Synagogue, Asia's second-largest and Southeast Asia's oldest synagogue, reported The Straits Times.

The museum also spotlights Jewish figures who made an impact on Singapore's history, including David Saul Marshall, Singapore's first elected chief minister.

Others included are pioneering surgeon Yahya Cohen; former Supreme Court Judge Joseph Grimberg; and stockbroker and philanthropist Jacob Ballas, who was a well-known figure in Singapore's Jewish community, as well as the former chairman of the Malaysia and Singapore Stock Exchange.

“They are a reminder that greatness sometimes comes in small numbers,” said Nash Benjamin, president of the Jewish Welfare Board of Singapore, which has around 300 members.

“Singapore’s Jewish community is the oldest continuing Jewish community in Southeast Asia, which has unfortunately witnessed the disappearance of various Jewish communities, leaving behind memories of what was,” he added. “In all this, Singapore is a singular exception. We can never take this for granted.”

Singapore's Law and Home Affairs Minister K. Shanmugam was a guest of honor at the museum's opening on Dec. 2.

Speaking at the event, he noted that Jews have made “a tremendous contribution” to Singapore over the years. “They’ve added to the richness of our history and our society, and I’m very glad that this museum showcases the history for future generations.” **HW**

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*Editor's note:
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By Ted Roberts

I tell you what I like about our Chumash. It's so credible the characters are not masqueraded. It's like the guy selling you the used car who shows you that small dent in the fender. Or tells you the battery is four years old.

There's no cover up – our ancestors, our patriarchs, are revealed in the full light of truth. Even Abraham, in a petty lie, describes Sarah to Avimelech as his voluptuous sister. Who wants to tempt a powerful king to knock him off and grab Sarah?

But that's minor league stuff compared to the conspiracy of Rebecca and Jacob to grab Esau's inheritance. And lo and behold the book later praises the tolerance of Esau. Now that's telling it like

it is. Then there's the wisdom and grandeur we have somehow fabricated of David, the murderer of Uriah the Hittite (and other peccadilloes). David is not one of my Chumash heroes. And Solomon, who never met a heathen street-walker he didn't adore. And just to make them comfortable, decorated the Temple with pagan statues. Imperfect, I'd say.

The Chumash goes on to tell of flocks of kings "who walked not in the ways of the Lord." Our book tells us the way it was – there's no gilding the poison ivy.

But we do have two blue ribbon heroes, which even the Chumash author, the Lord, finds absolutely – well almost – perfect. There's Moses – but can you see the devil peering over the author's shoulder looking for character flaws: "Hey, he didn't marry an Israelite. He's in Midian – full of Jews. How come? In fact, her father, Jethro, was a pagan priest!" Waitamminute, even ignoramus-es like me recall that Abraham had three, not two, wives. Sarah, Hagar, and Keturah; and one of Keturah's offspring was Midian. So, one could make an argument that Zipporah was of the stock

of Abraham, a kinsman. Nevertheless, the Chumash tells us that neither Aaron nor Miriam were ecstatic over the match "because of the Cushite woman." The reason is unclear, and G-d punishes both of them attributing their motives to jealousy.

Our other blue-ribbon candidate for most virtuous bible character is – RAH TA TA – who else but Joseph – not a single imperfection. Remember when he told Potiphar's wife to take a walk instead of a cuddly nap. Remember when he saved Jews and Egyptians from starvation. Unlike David, he never surveyed rooftops for bathing beauties. One small mistake and quite understandable – he married On, daughter of a priest. Just like Moses, come to think about it. And changes his name from Yoseph to Zape-nath Pancah – a game our own old-world ancestors understood well. A great aid to integration! Yosef isn't exactly a comfortable name at a Cairo cocktail party. So, that's understandable. And where could he find a mikvah or a Hadassah chapter or even a storefront synagogue in 2nd millennium Egypt. (And don't

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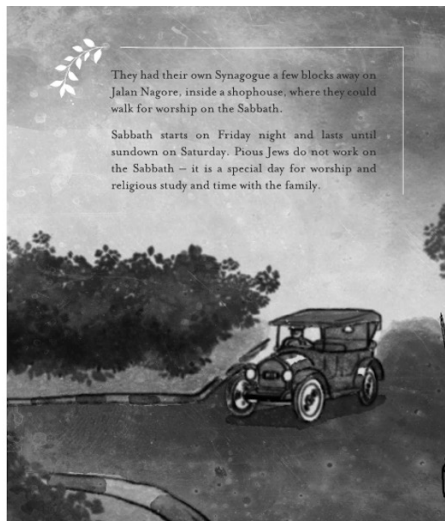
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forget his brother Judah marries a Canaanite. And even worse, ends up over-friendly with his own daughter-in-law.) Oh, if only we were all like Moses and Joseph.

The syndicated humor of Ted, the Scribbler on the roof, has appeared in newspapers around the U.S., on National Public Radio, and numerous websites. HW

New Graphic Novel Tells the Story of Malaysia's Lost Jewish Community



Pages from "The Last Jews of Penang" show the Malaysian Jewish community's former synagogue. Credit: Matahari Books

By Jordyn Haime

(JTA) – Scholars do not know exactly when Jews first came to Penang, one of the smaller states in Malaysia, located on the Southeast Asian nation's western island.



The Jewish cemetery in the region's capital city of George Town, on a street formerly called Jalan Yahudi — "Jewish Way" — gives an estimate: its first burial was of a Mrs. Shoshan Levi, in 1835.

By the turn of the 20th century, a census showed a Jewish population of 172.

But Jews no longer roam the streets of George Town and haven't in large numbers for decades. Jalan Yehudi has since been renamed for a Malay writer, Zainal Abidin, and the former synagogue around the corner has not been inhabited by Jews since it closed in 1976. Without enough Jews to fulfill a minyan, or Jewish prayer group of 10 men, the building is now a trendy coffee shop.

And in recent years, Malaysia has been identified by the Anti-Defamation League as among the most antisemitic nations outside of the Middle East and North Africa. Much of that hatred can be credited to its former prime minister, Mahathir Mohamad, who famously declared himself proud to be antisemitic. Israel and Malaysia do not maintain diplomatic relations and Israelis are barred from visiting.

"The only thing that does exist [in Malaysia today] are people of Jewish origin, say, people who have a Jewish ancestry somewhere in the family tree, but those people converted to Islam in order to intermarry into the Malay community," said Zayn Gregory.

Gregory, an American who himself is a half-Jewish convert to Islam and now lives in the Malaysian city of Kuching, has recently penned a book about Penang's Jews. "The Last Jews of Penang," which was published this fall, is a short, all-ages graphic novel, complete with colorful watercolor illustrations of old George Town streets and synagogue scenes by artist Arif Rafhan.

It profiles the history of the once-vibrant Jewish community that occupied old George Town, explaining Jewish ways of life for readers who may have never met a Jew, and highlighting some of its famous figures like David Marshall, who would go on to become the first chief minister of Singapore (under British Commonwealth rule).

"The book is sort of a requiem for the community that used to be – those who are aware of the vanished community have a sense of the way in which we have been diminished by their passing. The hope is this book will bring more awareness to the rich multicultural reality of the Malaya [the name of the re-

gion until the early 1960s] that used to be," said Gregory, who is a lecturer in landscape architecture at the University of Malaysia Sarawak and a writer and translator of Malay poems.

He became fascinated about the little-known history of Jews in Malaysia through stories he read in local news outlets and was later approached about the idea by the book's publisher, Matahari Books.

Gregory converted to Islam at age 17, a decision he credits to being caught in the middle of a mixed Jewish and Christian family, not strongly identifying with either. He later made the decision to move to Malaysia with his wife, whom he had met in the United States but was born and raised in Malaysia. The country is more than 60 percent Muslim, with nearly 40 percent of people identifying with other faiths.

Judaism wasn't a big part of Gregory's life before moving to Malaysia, he said. "But being here, it's a country where Judaism is not widely known or understood. Most people have never met a Jew in their life. And there's unfortunately a lot of misunderstanding and, you know, sort of prejudices born out of ignorance."

Doing the research and writing the book brought him closer to his Jewish roots. When he learned that there was once a Jewish community in Malaysia, "that really clobbered me. I was so amazed," Gregory said. "I felt like it was really an opportunity for me to share something about myself that is still very much a part of me."

Little research or significant writing has been done about the Penang Jews – Gregory used mostly local newspaper and magazine articles, in addition to one study written by Australia-based researcher Raimy Che-Ross. According to that paper, the Zionist nationalist Israel Cohen paid a visit to Penang in 1920, then under British control, where he met a man named Ezekiel Aaron Manasseh, who claimed that he was until recently the only religious Jew there.

Trade interests, antisemitism in their home countries, and World War I had brought "a few other Jews from Bagh-

(See Malaysia Page 11)

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Malaysia...

(Continued From Page 10)

dad, mostly poor peddlers, who consort-
ed with Chinese and Malay women, and
lived debased lives,” claimed Manasseh,
who was Orthodox. It wasn’t all true,
as census data shows – but Manasseh
showed that even in a place as small and
distant from a major Jewish community
as Penang was over a century ago, time-
less Jewish turf wars persisted.

Many Jews began leaving Malaysia
during World War II with the help of the
British. Those who stayed mostly left by
the 1970s as antisemitism became more
pervasive in everyday life.

In a 1970 book, Mahathir Mohamad,
the former prime minister, wrote that
Jews are “hook-nosed” and “understand
money instinctively.” He was ousted
from office in 2020 during his second
stint as prime minister, by which time
the Jewish population of Malaysia had
all but vanished.

Of his antisemitism, Mohamad said in
2012, “How can I be otherwise, when
the Jews who so often talk of the horrors
they suffered during the Holocaust show
the same Nazi cruelty and hardhearted-
ness towards not just their enemies but
even towards their allies should any try
to stop the senseless killing of their Pal-
estinian enemies.”

Those who fled Malaysia went to
Australia, Israel and the United States;
many others would go to nearby Singa-
pore, including Marshall.

The last known ethnic Jew in Penang
was David Mordecai, a well-known hotel
manager whose family first came from
Baghdad in 1895 and who died in 2011.
He is buried in Penang’s only Jewish
cemetery, which has been cared for by
the same Muslim family for generations.

Scholars have said the loud voices of
politicians do not necessarily reflect the
opinions of everyday Malaysians; they
argue that many who reject the country’s
religious nationalism have begun to re-
ject the country’s tradition of Jew hatred.

Gregory agrees and hopes his book
will help build bridges with the faraway
Jewish people that he still considers
a major part of his life, and who once
called Penang their home.

“The many times that I have shared
here with people about my own back-
ground, I have never experienced any-
thing remotely hostile,” Gregory says.
“Some amazement sometimes – cer-
tainly the idea of a person of Jewish
background becoming Muslim is just as
surprising to a Muslim as it might be to
a Jew.” **HW**



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A TV Series Celebrates a Brazilian’s Rescue of Jews During the Holocaust. Is Her Story True?



Actors Sophie Charlotte and Rodrigo Lombardi portray Aracy de Carvalho and the Brazilian writer and diplomat João Guimarães Rosa during the filming of “Passports to Freedom” in Germany in 2020. Credit: Globo

By Cnaan Liphshiz

(JTA) – A historical drama series that premiered last Sunday in Brazil was supposed to give belated recognition to a woman nicknamed “the angel of Hamburg” for her actions during the Holocaust.

Titled “Passports to Freedom,” the show produced by the South American media giant Globo and Sony Pictures has significantly amplified the little-known story of Aracy de Carvalho, who is credited with saving several Jews while working at Brazil’s consulate in Hamburg until 1942.

But two respected Brazilian historians are calling the story an exaggeration, arguing that de Carvalho followed orders during her time at the consulate, incurring little to no personal risk in issuing standard visas to German Jews who escaped.

As a consulate worker, de Carvalho helped at least five Jewish families flee in 1938-1939, facilitating their departure to Brazil, according to her file at Israel’s Yad Vashem Holocaust museum. In 1982, the museum recognized her as a Righteous Among the Nations – a title for non-Jews who risked their lives to save Jews. She died in 2011.

Historians Fábio Koifman and Rui Afonso questioned her claim to the title in a book published this year titled “Jews in Brazil: History and Historiography.”

In interviews in the days leading up to the TV series’ release, the pair triggered a debate in Brazilian media about her legacy. De Carvalho had not spoken much about the actions attributed to her during her lifetime but has received growing recognition in recent years.

“The evidence shows there was no

heroine in this story,” Koifman told the Portuguese-language edition of the BBC’s website last week. The fanfare around de Carvalho’s actions is part of a “creation of a myth,” the OUL news site quoted Koifman as saying.

Koifman told the BBC that de Carvalho did not have the authority to hand out visas, none of which bore her name or signature. The ones issued show no signs of falsification and were handed out in compliance with official Brazilian policy. All visas were signed by the consul, Joaquim Antônio de Souza Ribeiro, or his deputy, João Guimarães Rosa, who met de Carvalho at the consulate and later married her.

All visas were issued in compliance with the restrictive visa policy of the Brazilian government, the historians wrote.

Like many other countries, Brazil introduced restrictions to immigration that seemed designed to block the heavily Jewish flood of refugees from Europe. According to some historians, authorities in Brazil were especially discriminatory toward Jewish prospective immigrants.

In the 1930s, the Brazilian government required applicants to deposit a sizable sum of money into its national bank to be let in. This excluded many Eastern European Jews living in poverty, and also many German Jews whose possessions had already been stolen by the Nazis.

De Carvalho was involved in obtaining several tourist visas for Jews who fled Germany. The visas were instrumental to their escape flights, but the historians argue that de Carvalho acted as expected of her by her government,

incurring little personal risk.

“You could say there was goodwill, or another motive behind the issuing of those visas but there’s no proof of this being the case,” Koifman and Afonso wrote in their book.

Rumors that de Carvalho removed the letter J from the German passports of the applicants were only that, the historians wrote. “All the passports had J in them,” Koifman told the BBC.

Several people whom de Carvalho assisted testified about her actions to Yad Vashem, which relied on those testimonies in recognizing her as a Righteous Among the Nations. But the visas issued to those people, including one woman named Margarethe Levy mentioned in the Yad Vashem file about de Carvalho, show no irregular action on the part of the consulate, the historians wrote. They call Yad Vashem’s recognition of de Carvalho as a Righteous Among the Nation “an error.”

“These situations, where myths are created, occur when memory does not correlate with history,” they wrote in their book.

The creators of the show defended its narrative.

“We have access to countless testimonies of descendants of survivors who spoke with great emotion about what they had heard from their parents, grandparents and great-grandparents,” Mario Teixeira told OUL. He also cited the “very profound research done” by Yad Vashem.

Yad Vashem did not immediately reply to a request for a comment on the issues raised by Koifman and Afonso. [HW](#)



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