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Memphis Jewish Federation and Secure Community Network Work in Partnership to Protect Jewish Memphis





Memphis Jewish Federation Vice Chair of Security Craig Weiss (r), Regional Security Director Amanda Braswell (l), and Secure Community Network (SCN) National Training & Exercise Advisor Stuart Frisch (center) are part of the team behind the SCN/Federation partnership working around the clock to keep the people and places of Jewish Memphis safe.

Jewish communities around the world let out a sigh of relief when the hostage situation at Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas, ended with all hostages escaping with their lives. With an outcome that could have unfolded any number of ways based on any number of scenarios, a single factor can be credited with the happy ending. Their escape was the outcome of highly specialized training from Secure Community Network (SCN), the official homeland security initiative of the organized North American Jewish community and partner of Memphis Jewish Federation.

Through Federation's first-of-its-kind partnership with SCN, the Memphis Jewish community is protected by an intricate and far-reaching web of law enforcement agencies and professionals, high-tech countermeasures, and the same standardized and specialized training that saved Jewish lives in Texas.

"Jewish Americans represent 2% of the population but incurs 57.5% of the faith-based attacks," said Amanda Braswell, Federation's Regional Security Advisor, a collaborative position with SCN. "It was organic that the Jewish community was the first to organize a security initiative and was born from need, and now resources are available for your synagogue or your child's school that aren't available in other faith-based communities. They don't have the same need."

"Federation is the convener and strategic planner in Jewish Memphis. It's the only organization that can bring everyone from every corner of Jewish Memphis together to address crucial concerns, like the safety of our community members," said Craig Weiss, Federation's Vice Chair of Security. "SCN needs to be there for every agency, and assist every institution with security measures, and these factors make the two organizations perfect partners."

Memphis Jewish Federation and SCN's partnership was the first of its kind for Jewish communities in the United States, and in fact the first of its kind for any faith-based community.

Established in 2018 with the hiring of Stuart Frisch as the first Regional Security Director, the program has been providing vital services ever since, serving as a point of contact for all issues related to security, from monitoring, coordinating, and sharing information related to issues like public safety and terrorism to making regular visits to Jewish organizations to assess security needs. The training SCN provides and the role they serve as liaison between the community and law enforcement is invaluable.

"To lay out a list of security measures can be counterproductive to the goal of security. We also intentionally avoid security theater – things that are in place just for the sake of appearance," said Braswell, who stepped into the Regional Security Director role after 20-plus years in local law enforcement when Frisch became SCN's National Training & Exercise Advisor. "This means there is a fine line we walk in reassuring the community that they are being protected in all manners possible, without carelessly revealing our methods to threat actors."

Two tactics that have proven to be highly effective and can be shared freely are leveraging personal and professional relationships with local, regional, and federal law enforcement and intelligence, and what Frisch calls "saturated and standardized" training, meaning as many members of the community as possible are trained in exactly the same way by experts in their field.

"It doesn't help any community to be

saturated if the training isn't uniform and standardized to where everybody is trained not only at the same level but trained to do the same thing," said Frisch. "Prior to SCN's evolution into the national standard for training in the Jewish community, there were a lot of people seeking non-vetted training, which is actually more dangerous than not having any training. In the military world we call it burning bad reps, meaning getting really good at doing the wrong thing."

The SCN training model is built on two foundations: Situational Awareness Training and Counteracting Active Threat Training (CATT). First, you are trained to be observant of your surroundings, giving you vital reaction time. Then, you are taught the strategy of survival during an active threat.

"CATT is based on the strategy of run, hide, fight, in that order," said Braswell. "Run if you can, hide if you can't run, and as a last resort, be ready to fight. That's exactly what the rabbi in Texas did when he threw the chair at the hostage taker and yelled for the others to run. That was his last resort, and using a chair is absolutely a part of the training, in which we teach people to use what you have available when you need to act."

Relationships with law enforcement, from those officially mapped between SCN and organizations like the FBI and Department of Homeland Security, and personal relationships between people

Anshei Redevelopment Plans on Hold



Yard signs placed throughout the neighborhood of former Anshei Sphard - Beth El Emeth building

By Shoshan Cenker

Plans for the redevelopment of the four-acre property with Anshei Sphard's old building are in flux. There are two main reasons, one of which is because the required signage about the Thursday, Jan. 13 Land Use Control Board (LUCB) meeting to review the development plan application wasn't put in place 10 days before that meeting. That meeting has been tentatively rescheduled for Feb. 10 at City Hall. The second reason: The overwhelming majority of neighborhood residents are against the development plan, which calls for 41 houses surrounding a central half-acre green space.

So, a grassroots neighborhood group is taking action, pooling their "money, time, and talents with the aim of advocating for a construction that will be compatible with the neighborhood," said Lorraine Gagliano, who's helping lead the movement, which she coined Citizens for Compatible Construction for 120 N. East Yates. "I have not met a single neighbor in favor of PD 21-42. This planned development is entirely incompatible with the existing neighborhood, since the plot sizes for these single-family homes are a mere 2,500 square feet, while the lot sizes of other adjacent single-family homes are between 8,000-10,000 square feet. If you look closely at the plan of PD 21-42, anywhere between 4-6 houses would be built directly across from one existing single-family home. The property is currently zoned for R-10, which allows a maximum of 18 homes rather than the 41 homes in four acres proposed in PD 21-42."

It's not just the houses that area homeowners are worried about. "In addition, neighbors have serious concerns with how this planned development, which has only 20 parking spots for visitors, will affect neighborhood traffic," Lorraine added, "as well as enrollment at Richland Elementary and White Station Middle schools."

To combat the current proposed development plan from Gregory Griffin, who bought the property for \$1.5 million through his business, Worldwide Property Hub (WPH), in August 2020, the neighborhood group has distributed a petition on Nextdoor.com and Facebook that outlines their objections with PD 21-42. They've also held three drive-thru petition signings. At the time

(See **Redevelopment** Page 3)

My Teen Israel Experience



With a grant from Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemsky Endowment Fund offsetting costs for her summer program in Israel, Memphis teen Ava Jalenak connected with Jewish teens, as well as with her Jewish heritage and culture. She's pictured here second from right with friends on her trip.

By Ava Jalenak

Ava Jalenak, daughter of Monique and Charles Jalenak, is a junior at St. Mary's Episcopal School. Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemksy Endowment Fund provided her with a Teen Israel Experience grant to help offset the cost of her NFTY program in Israel.

This summer I went on the most amazing trip and made so many memories that I will never forget. Also, I created many deep connections with friends, and I am so thankful for the friendships.

I saw some of the most beautiful scenery ever and will never forget the beauty. As well as connecting with other Jewish teens, I also connected with my Jewish faith and identity throughout the trip. Everywhere we went was meaningful to how I view our faith and culture. One of my favorite places was the Negev desert. Even though the desert was extremely hot and exhausting to hike for hours, our surroundings and all the views were worth it. At night it was cool, and you could see all the stars in the sky. It was so peaceful, and I would do anything to go back there. On the last day of hiking in the desert, we went to the top of a mountain and the wind was so strong it made your eyes water. The view of three different countries was so amazing and I can still picture it.

Another one of my favorite places was Tel Aviv. The beaches were so pretty, and it was fun to see what the beaches were like in Israel. The city life was so cool to experience, and the food was amazing. During the day, sometimes we would go to markets for lunch and to buy things. It was cool to see how busy the markets were packed with tons of people.

Along being with my best friends

from camp, I met lots of new people and I immediately connected, and we all became friends. This included most of the people on my bus and people from the different buses in our Adventure One group. It was so much fun to share these connections with other Jewish teens my age. I also think sharing a faith, especially Judaism, creates an immediate bond between people before you even get to know them. I still keep in touch with a lot of the friends I made on this trip. I am so thankful to have made these friendships and connections with teens all over the U.S. I am also very thankful for meeting the Israeli teens my age and becoming friends with them as well! I am trying to stay connected with them even though they are across the world.

I also loved seeing the holy sites like the Western Wall and the old synagogues. I feel like experiencing those sites made me become more in touch with my Jewish faith and identity, and it made my love for my religion grow even more. Seeing the culture in Israel was also too cool and it made me fall in love with the country. My Israel experience was by far the best trip of my life, and I would go back to Israel in a heartbeat if I had the chance.

I am appreciative to Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemsky Endowment for helping to make my NFTY Israel trip possible.

All rising high school juniors and seniors in the Memphis Jewish community are eligible for grants up to \$3,000 to attend a recognized teen summer or semester program in Israel. Teen Israel Experience applications for Summer 2022 are now available online. To learn more and apply, please go to: www.jcpmemphis. org/lemsky-endowment-fund. HW

THF **Hebrew** Watch

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Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. Jan. 28, 2022 / 25 Shevat, 5782	5:06 p.m.
Havdalah, Sat. Jan. 29, 2022 / 26 Shevat, 5782	6:05 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Mishpatim

Stanford to Investigate Admission Policies in 1950s Obstructing Jewish Students

(JNS) - Stanford University has created a task force to investigate allegations that in the past, it had implemented quotas on the number of Jewish students admitted in the 1950s.

According to the Stanford Report, university president Marc Tessier-Lavigne appointed the tasks force of faculty, staff, trustees, alumni and students to report back to him and Provost Persis Dress by this spring.

The panel members will also look into enhancing Jewish life on campus.

"It is important to face our history as an institution and fully understand the impact of past actions," said Tessier-Lavigne, according to the report.

Ari Y. Kelman, an associate professor in the Graduate School of Education, will chair the 11-member panel, titled the Advisory Task Force on the History of Jewish Admissions and Experience at Stanford University. **HW**



Brian Lurie Broker, GRI, RENE, MMDC, CRS

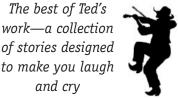
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SCN...

(Continued From Page 1)

like Braswell and Frisch and MPD officers and TBI agents, are also key to community security.

"As soon as news of the Texas situation broke, my local contacts with MPD and the FBI were proactive in their support, reaching out directly to offer their agency's support," said Braswell. "I'm so grateful for our local law enforcement partners.

"That was all due to the relationships that I've established with them. All day, I was talking with the MPD, Homeland Security, the FBI, and with security professionals at our local synagogues, to make sure we were all on the same page and looking out for each other," Braswell continued. "I have these people's personal phone numbers, and many are personal friends. That is from years and years as an established contact."

"Seeing the news from Texas, I thought of everything that we've been preparing for and training for and updating our security about, and the thought went through my head that these are our brothers and sisters, and it can happen anywhere," said Weiss. "That's the reason for the partnership, and the trainings, and everything else, it's the reason we do all of it so carefully and deliberately. It is not, unfortunately, some remote, far-fetched idea, it is something we have to deal with in reality." **HW**

Sam Weinreich to Speak Virtually at Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South Program

Lorraine Wolf, president of the Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South, announced that Sam Weinreich will give a special talk on Zoom on Sunday, February 6, 2022, at 2 p.m. Central Time.

Entitled "Coming to America: from Poland to Memphis," his presentation will include stories about his life before, during and after the Holocaust. The program is part of the Sumner Levine Speakers Series.

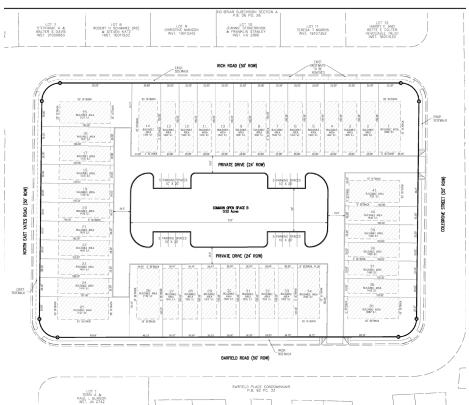
Sam is one of the oldest living Holocaust Survivors in the country and has spoken for many years about his experience, the history of Nazi Germany and the Holocaust to many schools, colleges, churches and synagogues throughout the city. Every year at the Memphis Jewish Federation's Yom Ha Shoah, Holocaust Memorial Program, he sings the Partisan song as a testament of survival, strength and faith. "He has a mission to make sure that people never forget what happened during that horrible time, so that it will never happen again," said Lorraine. "We are so fortunate that he will be our speaker and give everyone an opportunity to bear witness to his story. He is truly an inspiration."

Sam is married to Frieda Weinreich, who is also a Holocaust Survivor. The couple just celebrated their 75th anniversary. Together they raised many children in Memphis and have many grandchildren and great-grandchildren all over the country and in Israel.

He is a member of Baron Hirsch Congregation, Anshei Sphard Beth El Emeth and together, with his wife, was very active at the Margolin Hebrew Academy/ Finestone Yeshiva of the South.

The community is invited to participate. For more information and for the Zoom number, visit www.jhsmem.org. **HW**





of this writing, they had collected more than 340 neighborhood resident signatures through those efforts and nearly 400 signatures on the online petition – and those numbers are likely to grow.

When you drive by the area, you can't miss the "VOTE NO" signs in some residents' yards and outside the mandatory notification area of the planned development. "We've also encouraged residents to share their concerns with local officials," Lorraine said, "to encourage them to "Vote No" on this infill development."

By Feb. 4 – in advance of the rescheduled LUCB review meeting – Citizens for Compatible Construction for 120 N. East Yates will present the LUCB with the paper and online petitions signed by immediate neighbors. They also plan to attend the meeting to object to the proposed zoning changes.

While many neighbors would like the former Anshei synagogue to be repurposed, others would be OK with new houses being built – but far fewer than the proposed development plan.

"Ideally, we would love for the building to be used by another congregation rather than to be torn down. Many in the neighborhood have fond memories of ASBEE, despite the fact that they are not Jewish," said Lorraine. "My own family has fond memories of the ASBEE World Kosher BBQ Contest, including my older daughter, who won the kosher pickle eating contest twice, and my younger daughter, who loved riding the train around the parking lot. Other neighbors have told me that their children all learned how to ride their bicycles in the synagogue parking lot. Many of us would love for the building's history to be honored by another congregation rather than to demolish the building for a planned development that would be detrimental to the rest of the neighborhood."

"Personally, I would like to see the number of houses built more in line with the average block. I'm also concerned with another 80 cars being added to the surrounding streets, as well as drainage issues on sloping land. There is very little parking in the new subdivision, which means a lot of cars will be on the street. That will change the entire atmosphere of the neighborhood," said Sharon Nickol, who grew up on Barfield and has lived in her nearby neighborhood house with her family for 37 years. "I'm excited about





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Life Member, Multi-Million Dollar Club Memphis Area Association of Realtors Office 901.682.1868 • Cell 901.483.0546 shelrose@memphisrelocate.com the possibility of a new development that is appropriate for the area."

Neighbors have been vocal about their frustration with the proposed development plan. Some believe those involved in the redevelopment plan are simply interested in profits rather than enhancing the neighborhood. They claim none of their suggestions to the plan at a meeting with Mr. Griffin were incorporated into the plan at a follow-up meeting.

Mr. Griffin said he tried leasing the historic building to another congregation or church, but no one came through after a year on the market.

"For over 10 years, my family has lived in this quiet neighborhood, which is such a jewel in this corner of East Memphis," said Lorraine. "I and other neighbors are fighting as much as we can to preserve the character of our neighborhood, which we love."

Mr. Gregory Griffin did not respond to requests for comment on this story. **HW**

The First Urban Jewish Co-Housing Project in the U.S. Takes Shape in Berkeley



Architect's rendering of Berkeley Moshav. Credit: Courtesy of Berkeley Moshav

By Sue Fishkoff

(J. The Jewish News of Northern California via JTA) — Clean lines, a four-story building arranged around an open courtyard, and parking spaces for 50 bicycles are all part of the recently completed design for Berkeley Moshav, an intentional Jewish co-housing community planned for a 2024 opening in Berkeley, California.

The community submitted plans to the city in mid-December, and groundbreaking should begin in 18 months, said project organizer Roger Studley. The first residents should be able to move in by late 2024.

When they do, they will be moving into the country's first urban Jewish co-housing community.

No other location besides Berkeley was considered, Studley said. From the first living-room meeting of 19 interested families almost eight years ago, the idea was to build their future home walking distance from the city's two downtown synagogues – Netivot Shalom and Beth Israel – and to take advantage of Berkeley's growing Jewish population, as well as its history of social and spiritual innovation.

Upon completion, the project will have 36 to 39 units, depending on the final configuration of several one- and two-bedroom homes. Seven family units have committed to move in so far, and several more are being tabbed as "explorers," those taking a few months

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to meet their prospective neighbors and decide whether the community is right for them.

In a co-housing community, residents are expected to take part in certain communal activities. They all own the building and the land in common, so decisions about the community overall are decided in monthly meetings. Residents don't have to attend the meetings but must abide by the decisions.

The co-housing movement started in Denmark in the 1960s and came to the United States a generation later. Muir Commons, established in Davis, California, in 1991, is the oldest such community in the country. There are now some 170 co-housing communities nationwide, and while a few are faithbased, just one is intentionally Jewish: Living Tree Alliance, a kibbutz-inspired farmland in Moretown, Vermont, which comprises a handful of homes.

Berkeley Moshav is quite different, both in scale (large and urban) and in lifestyle (well, Berkeley).

Following the model of the Israeli moshav, members will own their own homes with all shared space held in common. That will include a 5,000-squarefoot outdoor courtyard; 3,000 square feet of indoor space for amenities such as art and fitness studios; a rooftop terrace for Jewish ritual celebrations; and two communal kitchens: one dairy and one meat. There will be 24 parking spac-

■ Want more news throughout the week? Like us on Facebook and Instagram @HebrewWatchman es, but 12 will be reserved for ride-share vehicles – that's both to keep expenses down and to honor the project's commitment to sustainability, Studley said.

Discussions are ongoing regarding the Jewish character of the community, which will be open to non-Jews as well. From the beginning, Studley said, the idea was to accommodate all observance levels and none, but that's more complicated than it sounds. He said there will be "a Shabbat vibe" in the common areas, but what does that mean in practice? And kashrut details for the communal kitchens will be worked out as membership evolves; what residents do in their private homes is up to them. These are all works in progress, to be decided and re-decided by the community itself.

That's part of what attracted Noah Brod, 35, and Hilary Jacobsen, 33, to the prospect. The couple served together in the Peace Corps in El Salvador, which is where they got their first taste of communal living: 14 people of multiple generations in a four-bedroom house.

"It was a pretty profound revelation to us," Brod said. "This is how most of the world lives. It made us more open to the idea of intentional communities."

And while that living style has its ups and downs, he said, "It's a rich way to live your life."

The idea of being multi-generational appeals to them. "We are looking for a place to raise a family, with other parents around," Brod said. The Jewish character is also key for them. Jacobsen has deep roots in the East Bay Jewish community; her grandmother, the late Ilene Weinreb, was a local philanthropist and activist, serving on the boards of the East Bay Jewish Federation and Berkeley Hillel, among others.

The two are still in the "explorer" stage with Berkeley Moshav, "crunching the numbers," as Brod put it.

Prices have gone up since the location on San Pablo Avenue was announced in 2019. They are now projected to range from \$880,000 for a one-bedroom to \$1.6 million for three-bedroom units. Studley explained that these are market-rate homes, and the prices are estimates of what they will go for three

years from now. Also, they are being built to the future homeowners' specifications, and will be sold at cost.

"What I like is that it's a discussion," Brod said of the process. "Everything else in the Bay Area is: 'Here's the price, take it or leave it, you're lucky to get anything.' I'm really happy there is this option for us even to explore."

Elly Valas, 72, signed on to Berkeley Moshav two years ago. A former small-business consultant, she lives in Denver, but has two sisters in Berkeley and a lot of other family in the state. She and some college friends have been talking about co-housing for decades, but now that she's single and getting older, it has become a priority.

"I don't want to age alone," she said. She's looked at some elder co-housing communities, but that doesn't appeal to her. "I don't want to live in an old-age home."

She has friends and family who have lived on kibbutz, some for years, and she said she's "always thought it was a great way to live. I've seen how it can work, and I'm familiar with the challenges.

"I'd say I'm the most involved" of the seven confirmed Berkeley Moshav members, she said, noting that she is on the marketing committee, the design and development committee, and writes the newsletter.

The challenge now is finding more people to commit to the project. Construction can begin once 75 percent of the homes are spoken for, which means they need 20 more families or individuals to sign on.

Word is spreading, however. Valas got a call last week from a man boarding a plane to Hawaii, who said he'd found out about Berkeley Moshav from the bulletin board at Congregation Beth El in Berkeley.

"I think there are many people waiting on the sidelines to see what it will look like, what kind of Jewish community it will be," she mused.

"I think this is the way we are meant to live," Studley said. "We are so much happier when we have a place to connect, where we belong."

A version of this piece originally ran in J. The Jewish News of Northern California and is reprinted with permission. **HW**

Congressman Cohen Reintroduces the Safer Streets Act

Congressman Steve Cohen (TN-09)

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on Jan. 19, 2022, re-introduced the Safer Streets Act, which would create a new grant program to support local communities with high rates of violent crime, including the hiring of additional law enforcement officers and providing resources to community-based violence prevention programs.

Congressman Cohen made the following statement:

"The Safer Streets Act is intended to provide additional funding to address violent crime in places where the rate is significantly above the national average – places like Memphis.

"With grants from this additional funding, local jurisdictions with crime

would be eligible for half of the funds; those with three times the national rate would be eligible for 20 percent of the funds and those with twice that national rate would be eligible for the 10 percent of funds.

"The bill dedicates the remaining funding for emergency grants to local jurisdictions that have spikes of violent crime."

The grants would be administered by the U.S. Department of Justice. Grants to local jurisdictions could be used for hiring additional law enforcement officers, investing in surveillance equipment, or crime and community violence prevention programs. **HW**

THE HEBREW WATCHMAN Serving the Memphis community for 96 Years

Michael Lang, Jewish Organizer of Woodstock Festival, Dead at 77



Woodstock Music Festival co-producer Michael Lang attends a celebration of the 40th Anniversary of Woodstock at the at Rock & Roll Hall of Fame Annex NYC in New York Clty, Aug. 13, 2009. Credit: Michael Loccisano/Getty Images

By Lisa Keys

(New York Jewish Week via JTA) – Michael Lang, the Jewish co-creator of 1969's legendary Woodstock Music and Art Fair, died on Saturday, Jan. 8, 2022, at Memorial Sloan-Kettering hospital in Manhattan. He was 77.

The cause, according to a family spokesperson, was a rare form of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma.

A concert promoter who was just 24 at the time, he was one of several Jewish collaborators who made the generation-defining festival, billed as "Three Days of Peace and Music," happen. Other key players included music executive and promoter Artie Kornfeld – another Brooklyn-born Jew – and businessman Joel Rosenman, a Jewish native of Long Island.

Perhaps most notably, when the initial plans to hold the festival in Woodstock, N.Y., fell apart, Max Yasgur, a Jewish dairy farmer in Bethel, N.Y., offered his land. Yet another Brooklyn-born Jew, Elliot Tiber, whose parents owned a motel in the area, wrote a memoir about the period saying he helped Lang land the new venue, although other accounts differ. Ang Lee adapted Tiber's memoir for the 2009 film "Taking Woodstock," with Jonathan Groff playing Lang.

Though the organizers had expected a crowd of 50,000, the Woodstock festival famously drew an estimated 400,000 people to Yasgur's farm between Aug. 15 and 18, 1969. The performers were a veritable "who's who" of rocks' biggest acts at the time, among them the Grateful Dead, Santana, Janis Joplin, Creedence Clearwater Revival, Joan Baez, The Who, the supergroup Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, and festival-closer Jimi Hendrix.

In his book, "The Road to Woodstock," Lang credited his Jewish parents, who were small-business owners, with teaching him the skills he needed to pull off an event of such scale. His father, he said, "always taught me to be self-reliant. That was his thing – just take care of it. Early on, he gave me a strategy for getting out of tough situations: take charge and keep moving. Step back just enough to think clearly and trust your instincts. That's how he dealt with things, and this would serve me well."

Lang was born in 1944 in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. He briefly attended New York University before dropping out and opening a head shop in Miami selling cannabis paraphernalia, reportedly using money he saved from his bar mitzvah. He then became a concert promoter, helping to organize the 1968 Miami Pop Festival.

The following year, Lang returned to New York and was inspired to create the Woodstock extravaganza.

World-class music aside, the festival became equally iconic for its bad weather and intense traffic, which Daily News reported at the time was "the largest traffic jam in the history of the Catskills."

Still, despite the mud and the food

Beth Sholom Charcuterie Plates Help Celebrate Tu B'shvat



There are many ways to celebrate Tu B'shvat, as members of Beth Sholom Synagogue discovered on Sunday evening, January 16.

Chef Marisa Baggett led a program on Zoom on how to arrange stunning charcuterie plates ladened with fruits and nuts typically enjoyed at a Tu B'shvat seder.

Congratulations to the programming committee, led by Lindsay Rossen, and to Jaime Krone, who hosted the Zoom, for organizing this Covid-safe way to observe the holiday. **HW**



Prepared by Susan Levko and daughter Liza

shortages, a spirit of unity prevailed among the attendees. "Your producers have done a mammoth job to see that you're taken care of... they'd enjoy a vote of thanks," farmer Yasgur told the sodden crowd on Day Three. "But above that, the important thing that you've proven to the world is that a half a million kids – and I call you kids because I have children that are older than you are – a half million young people can get together and have three days of fun and music, and I – God bless you for it!"

Lang's involvement with Woodstock endured for decades: He produced the



Prepared by Illysa Wertheimer



Prepared by Jaime Krone

Woodstock '94 festival and the ill-fated Woodstock '99, which was marred by violence, sexual assault and three-digit temperatures. Lang had also hoped to produce Woodstock 50, a 2019 festival in honor of the original concert's 50th anniversary, but various legal and venue issues meant that it never got off the ground.

Following the cancellation of Woodstock 50, Lang was asked by Rolling Stone if he worried about tarnishing Woodstock's legacy. "It's not something I consider," he said in 2019. "What we did in 1969 was in 1969 and that's what has endured and will continue to endure. We're not going away." **HW**



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Temple U. Rower Says She Will Quit Team and Transfer Because of Antisemitic Harassment



Left: Temple University freshman Sasha Westrick received this text from her roommate on Sept. 16, 2021. It shows Westrick and typed across the bottom of the photo is the phrase "I hate Jews." Center: Sasha and her mother, Amy Weistrick. Right: Sasha in family photo. Credit: courtesy Sasha Weistrick

By Lauren Markoe

This origanally appeared in Forward, reprinted with permission.

Shortly after their first year at Temple University began this past summer, Sasha Westrick said, her roommate began teasing her about being Jewish. Westrick said the roommate made comments about her dressing up for Shabbat and believing in God, and once asked her for money because she said she thought Jewish people had a lot of it.

After the High Holidays, things got worse. The two were in a study hall together, Westrick said, when she got a text from the roommate's number with a picture of Westrick, seemingly taken minutes before and from a few feet away, the words "I hate Jews" emblazoned across the bottom.

Westrick, who is 18, said she looked up and asked, "Did you send this?"

"Yeah," she recounted the roommate replying. "It was almost like she wanted to see how I would react."

Shocked and rattled, she brought the matter to one of her rowing coaches both young women had been recruited to Temple's team.

The coach asked if she had any evidence, Westrick said, and didn't seem upset by what she had just been told.

In the months since, Westrick has moved out of the dorm room and filed a complaint with the Temple University police, which passed it on to university officials. The school conducted an investigation, produced a 71-page report and held a hearing last month; it is unclear what discipline, if any, the roommate faced.

Dissatisfied by the response and feeling isolated, Westrick stopped going to rowing practice and plans to transfer to another university in the fall because she does not feel Temple is a good place to be Jewish and "doesn't share the values I have." Her mother, Amy Westrick, said the family is considering filing a lawsuit.

"I work with refugees, homeless people. I was taught from a very young age that you need to be kind and accepting of other people," Sasha Westrick said in an interview Friday, Jan. 14. "I don't get that feeling from Temple."

comment. The Forward could not find an email address, phone number or social media accounts to contact the roommate, and therefore is not naming her, since she has not had an opportunity to respond.

A spokesman for Temple, a public university of 35,000 in Philadelphia, released a statement in response to the Forward's request for comment, saying that "the incident has been addressed and appropriate remedies have been applied." It condemned antisemitism and other discrimination, said harassment and threats are not tolerated, and encouraged people to report any violations of those policies.

"We prioritize fostering a campus climate where all students can live and study without fear, hate and intimidation," it said.

"The students have been separated, and they no longer share living space and are no longer together in a team setting" the statement added, citing privacy laws that barred the school from sharing more details. "Additionally, we have been actively engaged in supporting the impacted students since we became aware of the situation."

Rabbi Baruch S. Kantor, who runs the Chabad center on campus where Westrick is a regular at services, said the situation was "very concerning to us" but also an aberration.

"Our experience is that the overwhelming majority of students at Temple are good people who understand that bigotry is unacceptable," he said via email. "We have tried to support Sasha in any way possible, and we're also working with the university to make sure something like this doesn't happen again."

Dorm life gone bad

Westrick said she and her roommate got along fine at the very beginning of the school year. They shared a two-bedroom suite with two other girls – also rowers.

Once she complained about the antisemitic remarks, Westrick said, her friends on the team shunned her, and made it clear that they were not on her side. The harassment continued, she said, with others joining in alongside the roommate.

At the end of September, Westrick's mother, a chiropractor from Rhode Island, went to Temple for a visit, and found her daughter distraught. "She would be crying as I was leaving her," because she didn't feel safe in her own room, Amy Westrick said in an interview. "I contacted the coach and said please get her out of there."

Alone at a hearing

Westrick said that a few days before the hearing, she was given a list of people who could attend: she and her former roommate, of course, the roommate's friend, the roommate's father, the roommate's boyfriend and a rowing coach. Not Amy Westrick.

"She's got people. I've got people," Westrick recalled thinking. "Am I allowed my mom for support? Can I have anybody on my side?" she recalled asking. "They said 'no," A lawyer her mother had hired, a family friend from Rhode Island, was allowed to listen to the proceedings but, according to Amy Westrick, not to speak.

Sasha Westrick said that the roommate said at the hearing that she had just been joking, and that she was sorry.

"I don't really believe it," Westrick said. "I don't want to hear from her again."

She does want to know what discipline resulted. She has heard that the roommate was ordered to take a class on diversity and tolerance, but she doesn't know the nature of the course or how long it lasts.

A friend on Instagram

On Jan. 3, an Instagram account called @JewishonCampus posted a story about the situation from Westrick's point of view. The account has more than 35,000 followers and says in its bio, "Amplifying Jewish voices. Striving for university action. Join us in fighting antisemitism."

Westrick, who is now seeing a therapist for depression and suffers from insomnia, said she does not know who posted the story, but was buoyed as it got more than 4,000 likes, making her feel she had allies. Then, nasty comments began to flow, and the post was removed.

Still, the outpouring of support from the post inspired Westrick to tell her story to others.

So she went on a local television news program [mid-January] and has begun talking to reporters. The feedback has been gratifying, she said. People tell her how sorry they are for her experience, and some have shared their own.

When she filed the complaint Westrick said, "holding people accountable is what I went in thinking I wanted. Now, though, "knowing that this could help other people feel less alone is probably the best outcome I could have hoped for." HW

Casket Draped in Nazi Swastika Flag at Catholic **Church Funeral** Sparks Outrage in Rome



By Orge Castellano

(JTA) - A funeral procession outside a local church in Rome featured a casket wrapped in a Nazi swastika flag, sparking outrage in the Italian capital.

The Roman Catholic Church strongly condemned the incident on [Jan. 11]. In a statement, the Vicariate of Rome described the incident as "serious, offensive, and unacceptable."

The Italian news site Open was the first to release photos and videos of the scene from the St. Lucia church in the Prati district. A group of about two dozen individuals can be seen lining up on both sides of the churchyard to greet the swastika-draped casket of Alessia "Tungsy" Augello, 44, a member of the far-right New Force Italian political party. Augello died in a hospital on Jan. 7 due to thrombosis complications.

After the mass, Augello's casket was hailed as it emerged from the cathedral with shouts and Nazi-style salutes.

In a statement, a Roman Jewish community organization said the incident was "even more outrageous because it took place in front of a church," according to Reuters.

"It is unacceptable that a flag with a swastika can still be shown in public in this day and age, especially in a city that saw the deportation of its Jews by the Nazis and their fascist collaborators," the statement continued.

The reverend and priest of the parish, Alessandro Zenobbi and Paolo Emilio, who officiated at the funeral, said they were unaware of the swastika flag. 'Unfortunately, what happened outside the church at the end of the celebration occurred without any authorization on the part of the parish priest or the celebrant priest, both of whom were unaware of what was about to occur," they wrote in a joint statement on the church's official Facebook page. "The diocese of Rome, in its various ecclesial components, has been working with determination for some time to form, educate, and therefore deactivate every mechanism of hatred, opposition, violent ideological, and discriminatory temptation." The ultra-conservative and anti-immigrant New Force party purports to be nonviolent, but some of its supporters have committed violent acts, including at protests against COVID-19 public health measures.

The coach could not be reached for



Police are investigating the incident as a possible hate crime, Reuters reported. HW

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Should You Speed Up Your Retirement **Plans?**

Provided By Mike Stein, Managing Director - Investments, Wells **Fargo** Advisors

According to a March 2021 survey, an estimated 2.8 million Americans age 55 and older decided to file for Social Security benefits earlier than they expected because of COVID-19. This was about double the 1.4 million people in the same age group who said they expected to work longer, presumably due to pandemic-related financial losses.¹

Many older workers were pushed into retirement after losing their jobs, and others may have had health concerns. Still, it appears that work-related stress and the emotional toll of the pandemic caused a lot of people to rethink their priorities and their retirement timelines.

How do you know if you can realistically afford to retire early? First and foremost, determine whether you will have enough income to support the lifestyle you envision. Instead of accumulating assets, you may have to start draining your life savings to cover living expenses. Here are four important factors to consider.

Lost Income and Savings

You may be sacrificing years of future earnings and contributions to your retirement accounts. For example, an early retiree who was making \$80,000 per year would forgo about \$400,000 of salary over five years or \$800,000 over a decade, not counting cost-of-living or merit increases. The 10-year total rises to nearly \$1 million when annual raises averaging just 3% are included.

If the same retiree could have contributed 5% of salary to an employer-sponsored retirement plan with a 100% match, he or she would also miss out on \$8,000 in contributions in the first year, more than \$40,000 over five years, and almost \$100,000 over 10 years.

Debt and Other Financial Responsibilities

If you are still paying a mortgage, have other debts, or are supporting children or aging parents, you may not be ready to retire. Ideally, you should be free of "extra" financial responsibilities so you can focus on meeting your own living expenses without a regular paycheck.

Reduced Social Security Benefits

The earliest age you can file for Social Security is 62, but your benefit would be reduced to 70% or 75% of your full retirement benefit – for the rest of your life. So even if you do decide to retire, you might think about waiting to claim your benefit until you reach full retirement age (66 or 67, depending on the year you were born) or longer if you have enough income and/or savings to cover your expenses. For every year you wait past your full retirement age, your benefits will increase by 8% (up to age 70).

Annual increase in the number of retired baby boomers (in millions)

Source: Pew Research Center, 2020 **Higher Medical Costs**

If you retire before you (or a spouse) become eligible for Medicare at age 65, you could lose access to an affordable employer-provided health plan. You can purchase health insurance through the Health Insurance Marketplace or a broker, but the age-based premiums are more expensive for older applicants. For two 60-year-olds with a household income of \$100,000, the average premium for a silver Marketplace plan in 2021 is \$708 per month (\$8,500 per year), after subsidies. And if you seek medical treatment, you'll typically need to cover copays, deductibles, coinsurance, and some other expenses (up to the plan's out-of-pocket maximum).2

Even with Medicare, it's estimated that a married couple who retired at age 65 in 2020, with median expenses for prescription drugs, would need \$270,000 to have a 90% chance of paying their health-care costs throughout retirement.3

The bottom line is that some people might be giving up more than they realize when they retire early. Before you say goodbye to the working world, be sure you have the resources to carry you through the next phase of your life.

1) U.S. Census Bureau, 2021

2) Kaiser Family Foundation, 2021

3) Employee Benefit Research Institute, 2020

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STORIES AND ADS WEDNESDAYS AT NOON

Inflation Hits **10-Year High** in Israel As CPI, **Housing Prices** Edge Up



Israeli currency. Credit: Pixabay.

By Sonia Gorodeisky

(Israel Hayom via JNS) – Inflation in Israel hit its highest rate in 10 years in 2021, and at 2.8% is edging closer to the 3% projection set by the Bank of Israel.

The Central Bureau of Statistics said last Thursday that the Consumer Price Index rose by 0.3% in December 2021, exceeding analysts' projections of 0.1-0.2%.

Overall, the CPI rose by 2.8% across 2021 – within the central bank's target range for inflation of between 1% and 3%. The CBS said that significant price hikes were noted in December in apparel (1.1%), housing costs (0.8%), furniture and household equipment (0.7%), and foods (0.5%).

The price of fresh produce dropped by 2.7%, as did personal expenditure for culture and entertainment (0.8%).

The CBS further noted a 1.4% rise in the Housing Price Index during October and November.

Overall, housing prices rose by 10.6% over the past 12 months, and by 18% since January 2019.

Preliminary data released by the Bank of Israel further said that Israelis took a record 116 billion shekels (\$37 billion) in mortgages in 2021.

The figure is 50% higher than in 2020, financial daily Globes reported.

This article first appeared in Israel Hayom. HW

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Lauren Boebert Asked Jews Visiting U.S. Capitol if They Were Doing 'Reconnaissance'



Rep. Lauren Boebert pays her respects at the casket of Bob Dole in the Capitol rotunda, Dec. 9, 2021. Credit: Michael Reynolds/Pool/AFP via Getty Images

By Gabe Friedman

(JTA) — Rep. Lauren Boebert asked a group of kippah-wearing Jewish visitors in a U.S. Capitol building elevator last Thursday if they were there to do "reconnaissance," Buzzfeed News reported.

The outspoken Colorado Republican claimed the comment was a joke tied to criticism she has received over Capitol tours she reportedly gave in the days before the Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection there. Some in the elevator "got it," she told Buzzfeed.

But an unnamed rabbi who was part of the group, which was visiting with Democratic House Rep. Tom Suozzi to mark the 41st anniversary of the end of the Iran hostage crisis, said he was left "very confused."

"When I heard that, I actually turned to the person standing next to me and asked, 'Did you just hear that?"" the rabbi said.

The rabbi added that "people are very sensitive" in the wake of the hourslong hostage situation that unfolded last weekend at a synagogue in Texas. Another unnamed witness said Boebert looked over the group from "head to toe," suggesting that she understood she was speaking to Jews when she made the comment. She told Buzzfeed, "I'm too short to see anyone's yarmulkes."

The unidentified group supports Suozzi's efforts to get the Iran hostage survivors Congressional Gold Medals, Buzzfeed reported.

"The bottom line is that everyone, especially members of Congress, have to be very, very thoughtful in the language they use," Suozzi said in a statement. "You can't be cavalier in the comments you make especially if they could be perceived as being antisemitic, or discriminatory."

Boebert has taken heat several times in her short tenure in the House so far, including for suggesting that Democratic Rep. Ilhan Omar was a terrorist. In July, the Auschwitz museum condemned her rhetoric after she called public health employees working to combat COVID-19 "needle Nazis." **HW**

Netanyahu is Considering a Plea Deal in His Corruption Cases That Could Bar Him From Politics for Years, Reports Claim



Benjamin Netanyahu seen during a plenum session in Israeli parliament in Jerusalem, Jan. 5, 2022. Credit: Yonatan Sindel/Flash90

By Gabe Friedman

(JTA) — Former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is reportedly negotiating a plea deal with prosecutors in his ongoing corruption cases that could bar him from politics for several years and further reshape Israel's political landscape.

Although various Israeli media reports have swirled inconclusively for several days — including some that claim momentum for a deal is slowing — all allege that Netanyahu has laid the groundwork for a possible deal that would dismiss some of the charges against him while having him confess to "moral turpitude" in a series of corruption cases.

According to Israeli law, a moral turpitude conviction would see him banned from Israeli politics for at least seven years.

Netanyahu, the longest-serving prime minister in Israeli history, is currently the leader of Israel's opposition after being ousted from power last year. In 2020, he became the country's first sitting prime minister to be indicted, for a series of cases involving bribery and inappropriate political gifts. In one, he allegedly sought to harm a leading Israeli newspaper in exchange for positive coverage in another.

The attorney general who indicted Netanyahu, Avichai Mandelblit, is retiring at the end of January, spurring some to speculate whether he wants to end his tenure with an explosive bang. Hundreds of protesters gathered outside of Mandelblit's house last Saturday, urging him to dismiss a plea deal and work towards convicting Netanyahu on all accounts he is charged with.

In addition to shaking up his Likud party, Netanyahu's potential plea deal could rattle the Israeli parliament's coalition, which has been held together by a historically diverse set of parties by the slimmest of margins since last June. If one party is forced to reshuffle its leadership in turmoil, it could break down the coalition and trigger new elections. **HW**

'English is Not Her First Language': Joss Whedon Claims Gal Gadot's Accusations Were a Misunderstanding

By Shira Hanau

(JTA) – Joss Whedon, the director and showrunner who has been criticized by multiple actresses for his behavior on movie sets, shot back at Gal Gadot in an interview with Vulture published last Monday over accusations she made last year that Whedon had made threats about her career.

In May 2021, Gadot told Israel's News12 that Whedon had threatened

her career on the set of "Justice League," which was released in 2017. Gadot said Whedon told her, "if I did something, he would make my career miserable," according to The Hollywood Reporter. Someone who witnessed the interaction between Gadot and Whedon later said: "Joss was bragging that he's had it out with Gal. He told her he's the writer and she's going to shut up and say the lines and he can make her look incredibly stupid in this movie."

Whedon, who has been accused by others of abusive behavior on set, said in the Vulture interview that Gadot, who

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is Israeli, had misunderstood him.

"I don't threaten people. Who does that?" he told Vulture.

He added: "English is not her first language, and I tend to be annoyingly flowery in my speech."

He said he instead intended to joke with Gadot:

He recalled arguing over a scene she wanted to cut. He told her jokingly that if she wanted to get rid of it, she would have to tie him to a railroad track and do it over his dead body. "Then I was told that I had said something about her dead body and tying her to the railroad track," he said. (Gadot did not agree with Whedon's version of events. "I understood perfectly," she told New York in an email.)

Whedon has written and directed Marvel films and served as showrunner for several cult-hit TV shows, including "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" and "Firefly." **HW**

Israel 'Sy' Dresner, 'Most Arrested Rabbi' Who Marched with Martin Luther King Jr., Has Died at 92



Rabbi Martin Freedman (R) and Rabbi Israel Dresner (center) are taken to the Tallahassee city building where they were charged with unlawful assembly after they and ten other 'Freedom Riders' were arrested attempting to eat at the Tallahassee airport in June 1961. Credit: Getty Photos

By Shira Hanau

(JTA) — Rabbi Israel "Sy" Dresner, who demonstrated with Martin Luther King Jr. and was sometimes called the "most arrested rabbi in America," died Thursday, [Jan. 13, 2022,] at age 92.

Dresner, who was a Freedom Rider in the 1960s, built a career as a social justice-oriented Reform rabbi who was active in the fight against the Vietnam War and was a vocal opponent of Israel's occupation of the West Bank. Dresner was diagnosed with stage 4 colon cancer in December.

"Well, I want to be remembered as somebody who not only tried to keep the Jewish faith ... But also to invoke the Jewish doctrine from the Talmud, which is called 'tikkun olam,' repairing the world, and I hope that I made a little bit of a contribution to making the world a little better place," Dresner told CBS New York in December.

Israel Seymour Dresner was born on the Lower East Side in 1929 to an Orthodox family and grew up in Brooklyn, where his father ran a delicatessen. He attended yeshivas as a child but went on to become a Reform rabbi after serving in the Korean War and working on a kibbutz in Israel.

He first practiced his activism protesting the British government's decision to block Jewish immigration to Palestine outside a British-owned business in Manhattan in 1947, according to a 2011 interview with the New York Jewish Week.

His first arrest came in June 1961, when an interfaith group of white and Black activists traveled on a bus through the South on a Freedom Ride that aimed to desegregate bus stations. He was arrested again every summer over the next three years.

"I was a Reform rabbi, but I always wore a yarmulke," Dresner told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in 2011, 50 years after his first Freedom Ride. "I wanted people to know I was Jewish."

Dresner first met King in 1962. That summer, he spent a night trapped in a house with King and other activists while the house was surrounded by hundreds of members of the local White Citizens Council. King told Dresner about his experience attending a Passover seder at a Reform synagogue in Atlanta that year.

"Dr. King said to me, 'I was enor-

mously impressed that 3,000 years later, these people remember their ancestors were slaves, and they're not ashamed," Dresner said. "He told me, 'We Negroes have to learn that, not to be ashamed of our slave heritage.""

In 1963, King spoke at Dresner's synagogue in Springfield, New Jersey. In 1964, at King's request, Dresner led a delegation of Reform rabbis to St. Augustine, Florida, where they participated in an anti-segregation protest at the Monson Motor Lodge.

"We need you down here with as many Rabbis as you can bring with you!" King wrote to Dresner. Dresner and the other rabbis traveled to Florida straight from a meeting of the Central Conference of Rabbis meeting in Atlantic City, N.J.

In 1965, King asked Dresner to deliver the prayer at the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama.

Dresner's activism extended far beyond the Civil Rights Movement. In the 1970s, Dresner frequently protested in support of Soviet Jews. In 1982, he unsuccessfully tried to get the Central Conference of American Rabbis to condemn Israel's invasion of Lebanon. At the time, Dresner told JTA he was committed to a "democratic and just Israel" and "what is happening in Lebanon today has nothing to do with that kind of Israel." In 2013, Dresner was honored by President Barack Obama for his role in the Civil Right Movement.

On Dresner's bucket list after receiving his cancer diagnosis was a trip to Katz's deli on the Lower East Side for one last pastrami sandwich. "He didn't ask a single question about the disease. He was ready – and ready to fill whatever weeks he had left, as he had filled the nine decades before," his son, Avi Dresner, wrote in an essay for the Forward.

Speaking to JTA in 2011 about his work in the Civil Rights movement, Dresner said he would do it all over again if the moment called for it.

"Because I'm Jewish," Dresner said. "I didn't see any alternative." **HW**

A Jewish Couple in Tennessee is Suing After a Christian Adoption Agency Refused to Help Them

By Shira Hanau

(JTA) – A Jewish couple is suing Tennessee's Department of Children's Services after a Christian adoption agency that receives state funding refused to

ing told they would be able to work with the agency to complete the training, according to the lawsuit, the agency told them the day before their training was whether they are still waiting."

In South Carolina, the Trump administration allowed the governor to waive federal requirements prohibiting reli-

OBITUARIES

Florence Siegel Fink

Florence Siegel Fink died January 14, 2022.

Florence was born in Memphis in 1925 to Joseph and Anna Siegel. She was the youngest of four sisters: Margaret Friedman, Miriam Friedman and Francis Wiener who predeceased her. As a child, she was a top student and won the Memphis-area Scripps Howard/Commercial Appeal Spelling Bee. She had a lifelong passion for reading and could often be found at the Germantown Community Library. Florence worked for many years as an executive secretary for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. In her 70s, she traveled to Japan to visit her son, James, and to Singapore. Florence enjoyed walking and gardening and remained active well into her 80s. She was predeceased by her husband, Alvin Elliott Fink, and leaves three sons, Dr. Terence Fink of Memphis, Edward Fink of Houston, James Fink (Mika Fink) and two grandchildren, Alvin and Anna Fink all of Tokyo. A graveside service was held on Tuesday, January 18, 2022, at Baron Hirsch Cemetery. HW

Father of Kids Harassed in Brooklyn Says Suspect Yelled, 'Hitler Should Have Killed You'

(JNS) – As police continue to search for the woman who yelled anti-Jewish remarks to a group of children in Brooklyn, N.Y., before spitting on one of them, the father of the victims has spoken out for the first time since the incident took place.

Surveillance-camera footage from the scene shows the woman who is accused of harassing an 8-year-old boy and his younger siblings, ages 2, and 7, on Jan. 14.

"This woman passed by them, yelled at them. Something along the lines of 'Hitler should have killed you all," Aryeh Fried, the father of the three children, told CBS New York.

"I would hope that she understands the severity of what she did," Aryeh Fried told CBS New York. "To do it to anybody is obviously problematic, but for an adult to do it to a child is just beyond crazy."

help them adopt a child because they are Jewish.

The lawsuit, filed by Elizabeth and Gabriel Rutan Ram with the support of a religious liberty group, is the first to challenge a 2020 law in Tennessee that allows adoption agencies not to place children in arrangements that violate the agencies' "religious or moral convictions or policies."

Tennessee's law was designed to allow agencies not to place children with same-sex couples. As has happened in other places with similar laws, agencies are using the latitude more broadly.

The Rutan-Rams tried to adopt a child with the Holston United Methodist Home for Children in Greenville, Tennessee, last year.

After deciding to foster and eventually adopt a child from Florida, the couple reached out to the Holston adoption agency to participate in the agency's foster parent training. After initially beset to begin that it would not help them.

"I felt like I'd been punched in the gut," Elizabeth Rutan-Ram said in a news release, according to the Knoxville News Sentinel. "It was the first time I felt discriminated against because I am Jewish. It was very shocking. And it was very hurtful that the agency seemed to think that a child would be better off in state custody than with a loving family like us."

The Rutan-Rams are not the first Jewish family to face difficulties working with Christian adoption agencies because of their religion.

"I think often about the other older children who were waiting for families, the ones in Miracle Hill institutions whom we could have loved if we had not been rejected because of our faith," Lydia Currie wrote about her family's experience in South Carolina for the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in 2019. "I wonder what happened to them – and gious discrimination for organizations that receive federal funding, which many adoption agencies do. The Holton agency that the Rutan-Rams sought to use also receives federal funds, and the agency sued the Biden administration over the regulations last month, according to the Knoxville newspaper.

The couple is being represented in their suit, which was filed last Wednesday, by Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

"Public funds should never be used for religious discrimination. The law should never create obstacles that keep loving parents from taking care of children who need a home. That should certainly never occur because of religious discrimination," Alex Luchenitser, the group's associate vice president and associate legal director at Americans United for Separation of Church and State, told the Knoxville News Sentinel. **HW**

He added that the 8-year-old responded to the woman, telling her that he would save his little sister.

Fried said, "I gotta teach him not to engage, but he engaged. And she came running back at him, spat in his face and told him, 'We will kill you all, I know where you live, and we'll make sure to get you all next time."

Fried said the incident took place when his children were outside playing in the neighborhood, as they typically do, and that the family has never seen the suspect before.

"I would hope that she understands the severity of what she did," he told CBS New York. "To do it to anybody is obviously problematic, but for an adult to do it to a child is just beyond crazy."

The New York Police Department Hate Crime Task Force is investigating the incident. **HW**

Marvel series 'Moon Knight' to Feature First Overtly Jewish Superhero



The Marvel comic-book character "Moon Night." Credit: Amazon

By Inbal Chiat

(Israel Hayom via JNS) – The highly anticipated Marvel superhero series, "Moon Knight," which is scheduled to debut on the streaming platform Disney+, has sparked a great deal of excitement among comic-book fans, among other reasons because it features, for the first time, a superhero who is overtly Jewish.

The official trailer for the series, which aired last Monday, has garnered

considerable interest from fans.

Moon Knight is not the first Jewish superhero; there are many claims that Superman and Spiderman are Jewish – and, of course, we can't forget Magneto, the X-Men supervillain who was portrayed in the first film in the series as a child in a Nazi concentration camp. Two of Marvel comics' most wellknown characters, meanwhile, twins Scarlet Witch and Quicksilver, are the children of Magneto, in a plotline that couldn't be referenced by Marvel for legal reasons.

The history of Jewish comic-book heroes, however, is small. Until Moon Knight, the son of a rabbi and the alter-ego of Marc Spector, a Jewish American from Chicago who became a boxer, joined the Marines and the CIA, and later became a mercenary.

After almost being killed, the dying Spector is brought into a recently unearthed tomb for shelter and placed before a statue of the Egyptian moon god, Khonshu. Spector seems to die, but then suddenly revives, fully healed. He claims that Khonshu wants him to be the "moon's knight," redeeming his life of violence by now protecting and avenging the innocent.

The character Moon Knight first appeared in Werewolf by Night #32 in August 1975.

The new series, which is part of "Phase Four" of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, is expected to debut in March, and will consist of just six episodes. The role of Moon Knight is played by Oscar Isaac, who is not Jewish. The series co-stars actor Ethan Hawke as Moon Knight's mysterious antagonist, Arthur Harrow.

This report first appeared in Israel Hayom. **HW**

Who Is Aafia Siddiqui, the Prisoner Whom the Colleyville Synagogue Hostage-Taker Reportedly Wanted to Free



This Federal Bureau of Investigation handout image shows undated images of a woman identified as Aafia Siddiqui Credit: FBI/Getty Images

By Asaf Shalev

(JTA) – The name Aafia Siddiqui became familiar to many Saturday, January 15 when a man took a rabbi and his congregants hostage in a synagogue in Colleyville near Fort Worth, Texas.

genetic testing. They should be excluded if you want to be fair," she said.

Siddiqui is serving an 86-year sentence at Federal Medical Center-Carswell prison in Fort Worth, where she The report circulated widely but it was later removed by the network.

In August, the Fort Worth chapter of CAIR, the Council on American-Islamic Relations, reported that Siddiqui told her lawyer she had been attacked in her cell by a woman who smashed a mug containing hot liquid in Siddiqui's face. The chapter's executive director Faizan Syed told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram that he believed Siddiqui was an innocent victim of rising Islamophobia in the post 9/11 era.

Local and national units of CAIR condemned the hostage-taking at Congregation Beth Israel, as did the Free Dr. Aafia movement. Siddiqui's lawyer Marwa Elbially told CNN that Siddiqui was against the hostage-taking at the synagogue.

"She does not want any violence perpetrated against any human being, especially in her name," Elbially was quoted as saying. "It obviously has nothing to do with Dr. Siddiqui or her family."

ISIS Supporters Praise Texas Synagogue Hostage-Taker

(JNS) – Following the hostage situation of four Jewish congregants of Beth Israel Congregation in Colleyville, Texas, on Jan. 15, users of the pro-ISIS rocket.chat server expressed support for the armed assailant, according to a report exclusively shared with JNS by the Media Research Institute's Jihad and Terrorism Threat Monitor (MEM-RI-JTTM).

The 44-year-old British attacker, Malik Faisal Akram, had demanded the release of Aafia Siddiqui, a Pakistani convicted of multiple felonies who is serving an 86-year prison sentence in nearby Fort Worth. She was linked to Al-Qaeda as being an operative in the early 2000s.

Following reports in the media about the incident and the gunman's demand while events were still unfolding, samir. muwahid, a user of rocket.chat, posted: "Allah Akhbar. Making [the] Dua [prayer] for all the brothers on the fronts. May we never be silent about the Aseerun [prisoners]. They are precious in Allah's eyes."

According to the report, users on the server expressed support for Akram, calling him a "brother" and a "martyr," and favoring his cause.

Akram was shot and killed by law enforcement after the Jewish hostages got out unharmed, including the rabbi, Charlie Cytron-Walker.

After Akram's death, samir.muwahid expressed sorrow at his demise and stressed the importance of his act.

Khalid, another user, wrote: "His jihad fisabilillah [for the sake of Allah] will be remembered. Alhamdulillah [Praise to Allah] Aafia Saddiqui is on our minds today."

In the approximately 12 years since Saddiqui's incarceration, jihadi clerics from various streams and jihad organizations, including ISIS, have made her release a top priority, according to MEMRI-JTTM. **HW**

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That's because the hostage-taker was reportedly demanding the release of Siddiqui from prison.

After Sept. 11, 2001, Siddiqui — a neuroscientist with a doctorate from Brandeis University — became the first woman accused of working with al-Qaeda leadership and was dubbed "Lady al-Qaeda" in the press. She has family ties to Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, the chief architect of the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. In 2010, she was convicted of attempting to kill American military personnel in Afghanistan while being detained in 2008 on suspicion of plotting attacks in New York.

Ahead of her trial, Siddiqui demanded that the court exclude Jews from the jury and said she wanted the jurors to undergo genetic testing.

"If they have a Zionist or Israeli background . . . they are all mad at me," Siddiqui told the judge. "I have a feeling everyone here is them [sic] — subject to was transferred in 2008. It is the only federal medical facility for women in the United States.

Siddiqui has the support of family and an international network of activists who say she is innocent and are demanding her release. In 2016, supporters gathered in a demonstration outside the federal courthouse in Fort Worth to demand her release. Last September, a Pakistani government official called on the United States to let her out.

CNN cited two unnamed law enforcement officials in reporting that the hostage-taker appeared to be motivated by a desire to free Siddiqui. NBC reported that the hostage-taker had the Colleyville rabbi call another rabbi in New York City to tell him the hostage-taker wished to get Siddiqui released, citing three unnamed law enforcement officials.

Early in the standoff with the hostage-taker, ABC said the hostage-taker was claiming to be Siddiqui's brother. Born in Karachi, Pakistan, in 1972, Siddiqui is a neuroscientist who earned a bachelor's degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and a Ph.D. from Brandeis. She returned to Pakistan in 2002.

Back in her home country, many consider Siddiqui a scapegoat in the United States' military response to the 9/11 attacks. Pakistan's Senate declared her "the Daughter of the Nation" and called on the Pakistani government to act to repatriate Siddiqui in a unanimous resolution in 2018.

The U.S. government has the opposite view. Considering her a dangerous terrorism threat, U.S. officials once called Siddiqui "the most wanted woman in the world." Proposals to trade her for American hostages abroad have been rejected by the U.S. government multiple times.

Her release date from federal custody is set for 60 years from now. **HW**

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For the New Jewish President of the Baseball Hall of Fame, it's All About Tradition



Josh Rawitch is the eighth president of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum. Rawitch by Milo Stewart Jr.; Hall of Fame Credit: John Greim/LightRocket via Getty Images

(JTA) – Josh Rawitch's day-to-day is similar to that of any nonprofit executive: He speaks to stakeholders, supervises senior staff and fundraises.

But in his line of work, stakeholders include people like Jewish baseball legend Sandy Koufax.

Since September, Rawitch has served as president of the National Baseball Hall of Fame and Museum in Cooperstown, New York. He is the eighth leader in the institution's 82-year history.

The Jewish Los Angeles native has worked in baseball for nearly three decades, including long stints with the Los Angeles Dodgers and Arizona Diamondbacks, where he primarily worked in communications roles.

Much like the Hall's 339 inducted members, Rawitch's ascension to baseball's prized historical institution began with a phone call – asking if he would succeed his Jewish predecessor Jeff Idelson.

"Obviously when you get a call like that, you don't ignore it," Rawitch told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. "I had a conversation with my wife, and I said, 'can you believe the potential opportunity here?"

Rawitch applied, interviewed and ultimately got "the call" – the big one – from Jane Forbes-Clark, the chairman of the organization's board of directors and granddaughter of Hall of Fame founder Stephen C. Clark.

As a lifelong baseball fan, Rawitch was speechless.

"It is, at the end of 27 years of working in baseball, a pretty cool way to end up in Cooperstown," said Rawitch. "Obviously quite different than those who earned their plaques, but the call itself, coming from Jane, probably felt quite similar."

Now Rawitch gets to see those plaques every day.

"The Plaque Gallery itself is obviously incredibly special because I can't not look at Jackie Robinson's plaque whenever I walk in, or Sandy Koufax, who I grew up loving," he said.

Rawitch tries to spend time in the Hall each day, taking in the exhibits and artifacts. While known for the heroes honored in its ground floor Plaque Gallery, it also includes a three-story museum about the game and its history.

On Jan. 25, Rawitch will fulfill another dream role for a baseball lifer when he publicly announces the results of the 2022 ballot. The 30-candidate ballot has been considered by the Baseball Writers' Association of America in a strict and sometimes controversial voting process. Boston Red Sox fans are pulling for David Ortiz, although it's possible no player will meet the threshold required for induction, as happened last year. Barry Bonds and Roger Clemens are both in their 10th and final year of eligibility, but performance-enhancing drugs scandals have hurt their chances.

Rawitch does not vote – nor could he comment on the candidates or specifics of the ongoing debate over baseball's history with PEDs. But he will be front and center Tuesday, announcing the results during a live MLB Network television special.

"As a lifelong baseball fan, I'm not sure that there is a cooler honor than doing that, other than maybe sitting on the dais, which I got to do during the last induction ceremony," said Rawitch. "You look around and your baseball card collection has kind of come to life around you. They've earned their way onto the stage, and I don't know that I'll ever feel like I did. But it's a pretty amazing and humbling experience."

As the public face of the Hall of Fame, he sees the names of those living legends pop up on his phone on a daily basis, he said, including Koufax, whom Rawitch got to know during his time with the Dodgers.

"There are plenty of times in a day where my phone rings and you're just kind of in awe that you're getting the chance to talk to somebody who you either grew up watching, or who you just have great respect for," Rawitch said. "Part of what I've learned in working in baseball for a quarter century is that baseball players are just like you and me.... If you show them the respect that they've earned, but at the same time just build a personal relationship with them, you start to realize they're just like anyone else."

As Rawitch settles into his job, he is driven by one main goal for the Hall of Fame: staying relevant. He said young fans who visit the museum today should have the same experience he had years ago, and his father before him.

"How people consume baseball, and how people consume the history of it, we just have to make sure we're delivering that in a way that continues to be relevant for future generations," said Rawitch. "If we can do that, and we can continue to get people to understand just how special this sport is, and how important it is that we preserve it, that's probably tops on my list of things we can accomplish."

That is, of course, easier said than done. Baseball's gradual decline in popularity in recent years is well documented: the juicing scandal tarnished the game's reputation, three-hour-plus games have been trying fans' patience, and a current lockout of players means the headlines are focused on strained labor relations, not the upcoming season. One way to buck that last trend, Rawitch said, is to elevate the game's current stars – including Jewish players like Max Fried and Joc Pederson.

After the 2021 World Series – which featured four Jewish players – Rawitch was tasked with asking Fried and Pederson if the Hall of Fame could display their memorabilia. A recent video on Twitter showed a Hall of Fame employee opening a box containing Pederson's famous pearl necklace.

"Huge amounts of people were thinking this was really cool, just watching this unboxing video of the pearls arriving in Cooperstown," said Rawitch. "That can make baseball cool and culturally relevant in a way that before social media, you certainly couldn't do that."

Meeting Fried, a fellow Jewish native of L.A., took on extra meaning to Rawitch.

"There have been a number of players over the years, either current or legends, that I have had the chance to meet, and I think you do have that immediate bond of being Jewish," he said.

In the case of Fried, that was further strengthened by another connection: Fried's high school coach was Rawitch's high school teammate.

"Immediately there was an ease as I was talking to [Fried], and part of it was knowing that I knew his coach, but part of it was knowing, okay, here's two guys who probably grew up relatively similarly in the San Fernando Valley, loving baseball, and one of them's pitching and one of them is working for the Hall of Fame," said Rawitch.

Rawitch also appreciates the significance of players like Fried, Pederson, and Houston Astros third baseman Alex Bregman performing on the sport's biggest stage. He compared it to Team Israel's magical run in the 2017 World Baseball Classic, which Rawitch witnessed up close as a venue press chief for the tournament.

"I think any time you can see someone who looks like you, feels like you, it definitely gives you a sense that, hey, that's possible. I can do that," he said.

Baseball connects with Judaism in another way, said Rawitch: Both foster a deep personal and communal attachment to tradition.

Rawitch's son is the third generation of Dodger fans in his family to watch games called by legendary broadcaster Vin Scully. To Rawitch, that creates a similar bond as generations of family members who had bar and bat mitzvahs and practiced other Jewish customs.

"You walk into a baseball stadium and you feel the tradition. You walk into a synagogue and you feel the tradition," he said. "You light candles and you feel the tradition... knowing that there's generations of people that came before you and did the same thing." **HW**

Texas Synagogue Gunman Spoke Twice to Rabbi Angela Buchdahl in New York City

By Philissa Cramer

(JTA) — Among the details that trickled out of Congregation Beth Israel in Colleyville, Texas, last Saturday while the rabbi and three congregants were being held hostage was the fact that a New York rabbi had been conscripted into negotiations.

That rabbi was Angela Buchdahl, senior rabbi at Central Synagogue and a leading figure in Reform Judaism. Buchdahl confirmed her involvement to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency and said she spoke twice to the attacker, whose identity [had] not yet been made public.

"I can confirm that the gunman reached out to me twice yesterday by phone," Buchdahl wrote in an email. "We are about to share a note with the congregation just confirming that. Other than that for security reasons I cannot share more."

It is unclear why Buchdahl wound up on the phone during the 11-hour standoff, which began during Congregation Beth Israel's Shabbat morning services. But Buchdahl is widely known — even appearing as a clue recently on "Jeopardy!" — and her synagogue's name, which refers to its location in New York City, may lend its itself to the impression that it is an official hub of power in Jewish communities.

Central Synagogue's executive di-

rector and president said in the email to congregants that Buchdahl had no prior relationship with the gunman and that she "immediately contacted law enforcement and followed their directions" after receiving the call.

A law enforcement source told the New York Post that the gunman called Central Synagogue directly and demanded to speak to Buchdahl. The gunman told Buchdahl that he had a bomb and wanted her to use her influence to secure the release of Aafia Siddiqui, a convicted terrorist who is in a federal prison in Texas, the newspaper reported. An FBI source said on CNN last Saturday night that the New York rabbi who had been contacted had been interviewed by FBI investigators.

Congregation Beth Israel's Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker was ordained by Hebrew Union College, the Reform movement's rabbinical school, in 2006, five years after Buchdahl. He and the three other adults who were held hostage [escaped] unharmed after 11 hours Saturday. (The gunman died after FBI agents entered the synagogue shortly afterwards.)

"It was a surreal and scary day," Buchdahl told JTA. "I am so grateful for the outcome." **HW**

'His Entire Persona is Listening and Dialogue': Meet the Texas Rabbi Held Hostage for 11 Hours

By Jodi Rudoren

This originally appeared in Forward, reprinted with permission.

Michelle Werner was a first-year rabbinical student in Jerusalem with Charlie Cytron-Walker on 9/11 and remembers vividly the two sitting with their classmates in the Hebrew Union College cafeteria and watching the video "over and over" of the airplanes hitting the World Trade Center.

On Saturday, [January 15] as Cytron-Walker was held hostage in his Texas synagogue for 11 hours by a man demanding freedom for a convicted terrorist with connections to 9/11, Rabbi Werner and her close-knit classmates supported and updated each other via Facebook chat. "Now all of us are thinking, 'Why are we doing this again, and why is Charlie in the middle of this story?" Rabbi Werner said in an interview last Saturday night before her friend and his congregants [safely escaped].

Rabbi Charlie, as friends and congregants call him, was leading Shabbat services as usual when a stranger disrupted, around the time of the prayer for the sick, according to footage from the livestream of services posted on Facebook. The man said he was hoping to help free Aafia Siddiqui, who is an inlaw of the chief architect of 9/11 and who herself is serving an 86-year prison sentence for attempted terrorism.

Around 9:30 p.m. CT, Gov. Greg Abbott of Texas tweeted that all the hostages had been released safely. The man who held the rabbi and several others captive for about 11 hours was killed in the standoff, the Colleyville police chief said at a news conference.

Those who knew Cytron-Walker said the attack felt not only horrific but also ironic. He was a man who hosted the imam and members of a nearby mosque at his synagogue in Colleyville, Texas. He was the architect of much interfaith dialogue in the community of 26,000 a few miles from the Dallas-Fort Worth airport. Members of his Congregation Beth Israel celebrated iftar dinners during Ramadan with Muslim neighbors.

"That was the first time I'd ever met an imam," Tia Sukenik, the congregation's former religious-school director, recalled of the first meet-and-greet between the two communities. A few dozen people gathered around four or five round tables in the social hall over snacks. "It opened the door where I could bring my religious-school students to go visit them," she added. "He's always worked to expand our world and to let other people see what Jews are like."

Cytron-Walker arrived at Beth Israel in 2006, shortly after his ordination from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. He was the small Reform congregation's first full-time rabbi, and it was his first pulpit. In the 15 years since he started, it has nearly doubled in size to about 140 families.

Those who knew him growing up in Lansing, Michigan; in rabbinical school in Jerusalem and Cincinnati, Ohio; and in Colleyville described Cytron-Walker as a welcoming presence and bridge builder deeply committed to social justice. He's the guy who turned in his thesis 15 minutes before it was due and needed help writing thank-you notes to host congregations where he spent weekends as a student-rabbi. A guy who adopted a hyphenated surname upon marriage and always wears a yarmulke.

"His entire persona is listening and dialogue," said Rabbi Werner, his HUC classmate and leader of Congregation Bnei Israel in Rochester, Minnesota. "If you had a meeting with Charlie, there was like a six-hour process part about how everybody would be heard, about how we could be kind to each other - and that was about ordering a pizza."

Their rabbinical-school year in Jerusalem was during the heat of the second intifada, Werner noted, and it was Cytron-Walker's apartment where the friends would gather when the bomb-sirens went off. "That's where people felt safe and surrounded and cared for," she explained. "It wasn't a question: you knocked on the door and then the door opened."

Cytron-Walker's wife, Adena, works for a group called the Multicultural Alliance. The couple has two daughters, the younger of whom became bat mitzvah during the pandemic.

He is a 1998 graduate of the University of Michigan, where he met his wife and, according to the synagogue website, he once spent 48 hours on the street to understand homelessness, and another time participated in a 24-hour dance marathon. Before starting rabbinical school, he worked at Focus-HOPE, a civil and human rights organization in Detroit, and at a soup kitchen and food pantry in Amherst, Massachusetts.

Gary P. Zola, a history professor at HUC's Cincinnati campus, recalled Cytron-Walker as the student who got along across cliques because "he's got a warm smile and speaks in a gentle, compassionate way."

"There are a lot of different personalities in rabbinical school, and strong feelings — Charlie was somebody who could establish bonds with everybody," Zola said. "He is blessed with the ability to connect with people and become beloved."

Though most graduates of HUC start their careers as assistants at large congregations, Cytron-Walker was drawn to the idea of building up a smaller community in a place without a lot of Jews. So was his friend, Rabbi Werner, who is about 20 years older than most of her classmates and applied for the same job in Colleyville.

Werner said Beth Israel told her it felt Cytron-Walker's relative youth was a better match for its young community – "and Charlie wanted to sue them for ageism on my behalf."

Rabbi Ben Sternman of Adat Chaverim, a Reform congregation in the Dallas suburb of Plano, gets together for lunch most Wednesdays — depending on COVID levels — with Cytron-Walker and two other rabbis of small synagogues in the area. They go to the Oldwest Cafe in Bedford or the Parma Pasta and Pizza in Lewisville and compare notes — about pandemic planning, personal finances, tikkun olam and, yes, synagogue security.

"When we're faced with issues that we're not sure how to handle, we bounce ideas off each other," Sternman said. "Charlie is an organizer. He sincerely wants to make this world a better place. He is always out there trying to get all of us involved in a project. When he's been organizing in interfaith, he's been telling us what he's doing and it's an inspiration for us to get involved in the same way."

Sternman said that Cytron-Walker, like himself, had gone through active-shooter training provided by the Dallas-area Federation, which had also conducted security audits for their congregations.

"After Pittsburgh we talked about security, what small congregations that don't have deep pockets can do in order to maintain security," he said, referring to the 2018 killing of 11 worshippers during Shabbat services. "Every time that I have gone to Congregation Beth Israel the door has been locked, so I don't know what happened today." **HW**





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