



THE

Hebrew Watchman

SERVING THE MEMPHIS JEWISH COMMUNITY SINCE 1925

HEBREWWATCHMAN.COM

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Federation’s 2nd Impact Luncheon to Feature Stories of Empowerment and Strength



On Tuesday, January 10, 2023, women from across the community will join to support Memphis Jewish Federation’s 2023 Annual Community Campaign and celebrate Women of Strength at a luncheon and VIP shopping experience. Jeweler, mother of four, and entrepreneur Freida Rothman, pictured, will keynote the event, which will also honor two women of strength in Jewish Memphis, Ricki Krupp and Alla Olswanger-Lubin. Learn more at jcpmemphis.org/freida

On Tuesday, January 10, 2023, women from across the Memphis Jewish community will join to support Memphis Jewish Federation’s 2023 Annual Com-

munity Campaign and celebrate Women of Strength at a luncheon and VIP shopping experience. Second generation jeweler, mother of four, and entrepreneur Freida Rothman will keynote the event, which will also honor two Memphis women who have made a significant impact in our Jewish community, Ricki Krupp and Alla Olswanger-Lubin.

“Federation plays such an important role in our community,” said board chair Cindy Finestone who, along with event co-chairs Jaclyn Marshall, Debbie Rosenthal, Jody Shutzberg, and Jessica Baum Sukhodolsky, is part of the leadership team planning this exciting event. “We are expecting more than 200 women to attend the event, all of whom will be asked to support the critical needs of our local and global Jewish communities.”

According to Finestone, Federation’s Annual Campaign is doubling down on its support of several critical issues impacting Jewish families including the war in Ukraine, rising antisemitism and teen mental wellness.

“Campaign pledges made at the luncheon will support Federation’s efforts in all of these areas, plus ensure we can continue to support our infrastructure of local and overseas organizations. We are especially excited that Elisheva Massel, Director, Strategic Partnerships at the Joint Distribution Committee will

be joining us to share stories of the impact of our gifts in supporting families across the world,” she said.

In addition to inspired messages about the impact of our philanthropy, event attendees will hear the amazing story of Freida Rothman, a born-and-raised Brooklynite, whose messages focus on empowering women to believe that through positivity and optimism you can conquer any challenge. Inspired by the legacy of four grandparents – all Holocaust survivors – Freida’s stories match her exquisite jewelry with their ability to honor strength, hope, and resiliency. Immediately following the event, those in attendance can participate in an exclusive shopping opportunity offering the latest inspired designs from Freida’s collection. 10% of each sale will benefit Federation’s Annual Campaign.

“Our inaugural Women’s Impact event was the last Federation program before the pandemic shut everything down,” said Laura Linder, President & CEO of Jewish Community Partners. “I’m beyond thrilled that we can now continue what we started in 2020 with this program and these distinctly dynamic women. Freida, Ricki, Alla, and Elisheva each embody powerful womanhood in different ways, and bringing them together for this event in support of Federation’s Annual Community

Campaign strikes the perfect balance of heart and impact.”

Under the leadership of the event co-chairs, a host committee representing every corner and age demographic of our community has assisted in planning the details of the event as well as recruitment. The committee includes Maureen Baum, Suzanne Baum, Marion Bessoff, Ellee Breit, Jill Buring, Hallie Charney, Bari Eiseman, Jackie Evans, Janis Finnan, Karen Franklin, Marlene Gerson, Shayna Giles, Margo Gruen, Myrna Halpern, Elana Kahane, Karen Karmel, Justin Katz, Lisa Kaufman, Karen Koplon, Barb Lansky, Danielle Lazarov, Debbie B. Lazarov, Emily Lennon, Danielle Levine, Aviva Lewis, Betsy Libby, Sharon Lubin, Lisa Menuskin, Lindsey Reef, Shelley Robbins, Hillary Samuels, Sophie Samuels, Stacy Siegler, Lisa Silver, Audrey Siskind, Jill Steinberg, and Kathy Wexler.

The event will be held at 11:30 a.m., Tuesday, January 10 in the Memphis Jewish Community Center’s Belz Social Hall. There is a \$50 couvert, with attendance open to anyone whose household has pledged or commits to pledge \$180 or more to Memphis Jewish Federation’s Annual Community Campaign. Tickets are on sale and expected to go fast. Visit jcpmemphis.org/freida to learn more and buy tickets. [HW](#)

Jewish Foundation of Memphis Celebrates Donors and Professional Advisors with Latkes & Vodka



Almost two dozen of the 120-member Jewish Foundation of Memphis Professional Advisory Group posed for a photo at Foundation’s 2022 Latkes & Vodka event at Dixon Gallery & Garden. Celebrating the donors, advisors, staff, and supporters of Foundation, this year’s Hanukkah-themed event was Foundation’s first large-scale social event since the outbreak of the pandemic. Credit: Paige Miller Photography

On the dark and rainy night of December 7, Jewish Foundation of Memphis celebrated its Fundholders and Professional Advisors with the light of Hanukkah, at Latkes & Vodka, held at Dixon Gallery & Gardens.

About 175 donors, advisors, and staff toasted an impactful year of philanthropy through Foundation, including our recent ranking in the Memphis Business Journal’s list of Mid-South charities,

(See Latkes Page 3)

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Bat Mitzvah

On Dec. 17, 2022, Dahlia Esther Freiden celebrated her bat mitzvah. On Shabbat morning, she delivered a D’var Torah from the Bima followed by a gala kiddush for the entire community. On Saturday night, the celebration continued with Dahlia sharing words of Torah that she learned studying with her teacher, Morah Anat Kampf. Afterwards there was a video montage followed by dancing and Chanukah-themed food catered by Nosh-a-Rye Deli.

For her mitzvah project, Dahlia’s guests filled out Chanukah greeting cards that Dahlia delivered to the residents of the Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab.

Mazel Tov to parents Aviva and Yoni Freiden and siblings Benny, Dahlia and Max. Mazel Tov also to grandparents Harriet and Elliot Jacob, and Deb-



Dahlia Esther Freiden
bie and Hugh Freiden. Mazel Tov to great-grandparents Bernard Freiden and Pesha Gordon. **HW**



Members of Memphis Jewish Federation’s Lion of Judah Tikkun Olam Committee packed Hanukkah gift bags, which will be given to isolated Memphis Jewish seniors. From right to left: Stacy Siegler, Liz Simonian, Kimberley Strome (Committee Chair) and Aileen Cooper.



Memphis Jewish Federation Executive Vice President Bluma Zuckerbrot-Finkelstein gave a presentation on Antisemitism to Memphis Mayor Jim Strickland’s Multicultural Advisory Board. Comprised of 25 representatives from our city’s multi-faith, multi-ethnic mosaic, the Advisory Board’s mission is to act as a catalyst to encourage respect, understanding, and inclusion of all of Memphis’ diversity.

THE Hebrew Watchman

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12/22/2022



Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. December 23, 2022 / 29 Kislev, 5783.....4:35 p.m.
Havdalah, Sat. December 24, 2022 / 30 Kislev, 5783..... 5:35 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Mikeitz

“We Demand Justice for a Man Who was Doing Nothing but Speaking the Truth to Power,” says the Lawyer Representing Nizar Banat’s Relatives.

(JNS) – The family of activist Nizar Banat, who died in Palestinian police custody in June 2021, filed suit at the International Criminal Court last Thursday, holding top Palestinian officials responsible for his death.

“We demand justice for a man who was doing nothing but speaking the truth to power,” said Hakan Camuz, the family’s lawyer, according to AFP.

Banat’s family decided to take the matter to the ICC after 14 members of the Palestinian security forces arrested in connection with the case were set free on bail, pending a military trial, according to the report.

Banat, a prominent critic of the Mahmoud Abbas-led Palestinian Authority, died shortly after being arrested by Palestinian security forces in his home in Hebron on June 24, 2021.

According to family members, security forces entered his home with a warrant at around 3:30 a.m. and began beating him while he was still in bed. He was then dragged away, bleeding heavily.

At 6:00 a.m., Palestinian authorities announced in a statement: “Following an arrest summons for Nizar Khalil Muhammad Banat at dawn today, security forces arrested him, during which his health deteriorated, and he was immediately transferred to Hebron government hospital for examination, where it was found that he had passed away.”

Banat’s death led to weeks-long protests against the P.A. Protesters chanted for the “overthrow of the regime.”

The Palestinian press also strongly criticized Fatah’s handling of the Banat incident and the conduct of the movement’s officials. **HW**



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Latkes...
(Continued From Page 1)

where Foundation rose to the current #9 spot, up from #14 in the previous ranking of charitable organizations by dollar amount of contributions, with \$19 million collectively added to funds. Foundation was also listed by the Journal as 11th largest grant-maker and 8th largest foundation in the Mid-South.

“The Memphis Jewish community is such a special place,” said Laura Linder, President & CEO of Jewish Community Partners, the managing organization of Foundation and Memphis Jewish Federation. “Together we have changed countless lives and have created a culture of giving that ensures that every community member in need is supported. Our community has a national reputation of coming together to meet any challenge, and this will never change.”

The recent formation of Foundation’s newest Family Foundation was also marked with the public announcement of the Burton Weil Family Foundation. This transformational foundation set up as a supporting organization of the Jewish Foundation will honor the incredible achievements of Jewish Memphian Burton Weil and engage current and future members of his family in charitable giving.

“Latkes & Vodka was the first big Foundation social event since the pandemic started, and it was wonderful to see so many of our fundholders, Professional Advisory Group members, board members, and supporters in one place enjoying one another’s company,” said JCP Senior Philanthropic Officer & Executive Vice President Sheri Gadberry.

“We were also able to welcome people who are relatively new to Foundation, people who have opened new philanthropic funds with us or joined the Professional Advisory Group in the last few years. Some, like Burton Weil and his family, had just completed the paperwork for their new funds earlier the week of the event. It was really nice to introduce new faces to the Foundation family.”

Guests sampled tender brisket and an assortment of latkes, including herbed and sweet potato, while enjoying Israeli wine and the night’s signature cocktail, the Endow-Mint, made with cranberries, mint liqueur, and spirits from event sponsor Tito’s Handmade Vodka.

“I remember being at a holiday party years ago and chatting with a Jewish acquaintance who pointed out that there were never latkes at non-Jewish December holiday parties,” said Foundation Board Chair and Chair of the Professional Advisory Group Jason Salomon. “It makes me happy to get together with this large group of people, who trusts Foundation as much as I do as a trusted partner in charitable giving, at a holiday party that finally has a latke.”

Those interested in opening a Jewish Foundation of Memphis fund before December 31 have a unique opportunity to maximize their impact. The first 10 funds opened before the end of 2022 will receive an extra \$500 to grant to a local Jewish non-profit with an established partnership with Foundation. Call 901-347-0400 or email sgadberry@jcp-memphis.org to learn more. **HW**

The MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Happenings

Lunch is Monday–Friday at 11:30 a.m. All programs start at 12:15 p.m.

Monday, December 26
Annual End-of-the-year Bingo Championship!!
Special Prizes! Come join us for a fun event!

Wednesday, December 28
Art Program with Julie Christen!
Julie believes that every single one of us is creative. She will bring art projects that can be finished in one session. Each senior will have their own project to bring home. No cost for this fun time. Sign up for lunch and the art project will be at 12:15 p.m.

Please join us from Monday through Friday for a delicious kosher lunch from the kitchens at the Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab. The cost is only \$2 for seniors. Reservations are required the day before by 1 p.m. by contacting Adult Services Coordinator Steve Kaplan at 901-259-9220 or stevekaplan@jccmemphis.org, or call the front desk at 901-761-0810. **HW**

Monday, January 2
In-House Ice Cream Social!
Plenty of Non-Dairy Ice Cream with toppings Galore! Come for lunch, only \$2 and enjoy Ice Cream after. Great fun way to start the New Year off!

Wednesday, January 4
The Joy and Fun of the Marx Brothers
Videos that highlight the hilarity of Groucho, Chico, Harpo and Zeppo! The Funniest Comedy Group ever!! This will be shown with a little bit of trivia about the group thrown in. Please come join us!

Adam Sandler to Receive Mark Twain Prize for American Humor

By Jackie Hajdenberg

(JTA) – The eight crazy nights of Hanukkah came early for Adam Sandler when the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts announced last Tuesday that the comedian and actor would be honored with the Mark Twain Prize for American Humor at a ceremony in March.

The prize is presented annually to individuals “who have had an impact

on American society” similar to that of the 19th-century novelist and humorist, “who startled many while delighting and informing many more with his uncompromising perspective on social injustice and personal folly.”

Sandler, 56, got his start as an actor on “The Cosby Show” and was a cast member on “Saturday Night Live” for five years, before eventually starring in a slew of blockbuster comedy movies in the 1990s and early 2000s, including “Happy Gilmore,” “Big Daddy,” “The Wedding Singer,” “50 First Dates” and “Click.”

Sandler has also given critically acclaimed dramatic performances, such as one in 2019’s “Uncut Gems,” in which he played a frenetic Jewish jeweler with a gambling addiction. Others include roles in Paul Thomas Anderson’s “Punch-Drunk Love” (2002), Noah Baumbach’s “The Meyerowitz Stories” (2017) and Jeremiah Zagar’s “Hustle” (2022).

Perhaps unusually for comics of his generation, the Brooklyn-born Sandler often places his Jewishness front and center, as in his portrayal of an Israeli fish out of water in “Don’t Mess With the Zohan” (2008) and especially in his performance of “The Chanukah Song,” originally an “SNL” bit in which he name checks dozens of Jewish celebrities. His 2002 animated comedy “Eight Crazy Nights” takes place during the Hanukkah season.

Sandler, his wife, Jackie, and their two teenage daughters are set to star in a bat mitzvah-themed movie for Netflix based on Fiona Rosenbloom’s 2005 novel, “You Are So Not Invited To My Bat Mitzvah!”

Previous Jewish winners of the Mark Twain Prize include playwright Neil Simon, Lorne Michaels of “SNL,” actors Carl Reiner and Billy Crystal, and comedian Jon Stewart.

There was no Mark Twain Prize in 2020 or 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The previous two winners before Sandler were 2019’s Dave Chappelle and 2022’s Jon Stewart. Chappelle was recently the subject of controversy when he focused part of an “SNL” monologue on Kanye West’s antisemitic comments and cracked jokes that suggested Jews run Hollywood. In the days following the episode, Stewart, a personal friend of Chappelle’s, weighed in on the monologue and defended Chappelle’s comments. **HW**

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He’Brew Maker Shmaltz Brewing Relaunches with New Owner: a Rabbinical Student



Various beer bottles by Shmaltz Brewery on display in an exhibition on “Jewish brewing stories” at the Jewish Museum in Munich, Germany, April 11, 2016. Credit: Sven Hoppe/picture alliance via Getty Images

By Andrew Lapin

(JTA) – It seemed like the last keg had been tapped for Shmaltz Brewing Company, until a rabbi-in-training stepped in for a Jewish renewal project.

The Jewish craft beer label, best known for its He’Brew: The Chosen Beer line of drinks, shut down last year after 25 years when its founder, Jeremy Cowan, said he wanted to focus on his other businesses. But now it’s been sold to a new owner: Jesse Epstein, a 26-year-old Reform rabbinical student at Hebrew Union College who first got into home brewing during the COVID-19 pandemic and began looking for ways to work his love for beer into his rabbinical pursuits.

“I started forming in the back of my mind this idea for a Jewish brewery: how to combine these two big passions,” Epstein told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency.

When he heard that Cowan was winding down Shmaltz, Epstein jumped at the chance to acquire the closest thing the beer world had to a storied Jewish brand – even though he has two-and-a-half years left of school and is currently a rabbinic intern at Temple Sinai of Saratoga Springs, New York.

“I could have waited to do this until after I was ordained, and then I’d have more time on my hands, but I didn’t want to lose the opportunity,” Epstein said, declining to say how much he paid for the brand. Cowan agreed to the proposal and remains at the company as a minority owner and consultant.

Founded in San Francisco in 1996 but now based in Clifton Park, New York, Shmaltz spent 25 years as the king of Jewish craft beer, with shtick-y brews like David’s Slingshot Hoppy Summer Lager, a jelly donut-flavored Hanukkah ale, and a Babka Loves Rugelach stout (brewed with chocolate, cinnamon and raisins). During its run it attained some level of notoriety and robust sales, with Cowan releasing a memoir, “Craft Beer Bar Mitzvah,” in 2010. Last year, after announcing he would close up shop, Cowan released an Exodus Ale as a swan song.

Epstein’s aims are different. As a rab-

binical student wrestling with surveys showing a shrinking interest in Reform and Conservative affiliations among American Jews, he says his goal with Shmaltz is to use beer as a vehicle for rethinking the idea of a synagogue, and of Jewish communal gathering spaces.

“What about our Jewish values can be used to inform our food practices?” he asks. “How, through beer, can we embrace the values of welcoming in the stranger, freeing the captive, opening the eyes of the blind?”

The revamped Shmaltz, working for now with an all-volunteer staff, is making Jewish practice and ritual as much a part of its brand as the shtick. Its first year under Epstein’s ownership will consist of a series of pop-up events in partnership with various Jewish groups, starting with a Dec. 17 Hanukkah launch party with Brooklyn Jews. (The events will mostly take place in New York, though Epstein may expand into other Northeast locations.)

At these gatherings, Epstein says, attendees will do the kinds of activities they might normally come to synagogue for: “Build community, do justice, look at a text, but over a pint of beer.” He sees Shmaltz as a peer of Jewish young-adult gathering projects such as Moishe House, OneTable and Base. But he says it will rely on a for-profit business model rather than institutional Jewish support.

Initially Epstein will draw from Shmaltz’s leftover inventory for the actual beers on hand at the pop-ups, and he is holding off on new products and distribution. But he hopes eventually to start brewing his own selections, which are decidedly more Talmudic in inspiration than the label’s previous offerings: He envisions a Purim-themed beer named “Shushan Beer-a” (a play on the first line of the Megillah, the scroll Jews read from on the holiday) and, ultimately, beers inspired by each of the weekly Torah portions. The brand’s labels will now include a Jewish blessing for beer, in Hebrew and English.

Ultimately, Epstein says, he would love to run Shmaltz full-time: “I can really foresee it becoming my rabbinate.” HW

Young Israel’s Recent Book Read Program

By Rabbi Akiva Males

Young Israel’s (YI) Book Read is a group that regularly meets to discuss a thought-provoking Jewish book they’ve read. These discussions are masterfully facilitated by Mrs. Shelley Kutliroff. On Monday night, Dec. 12 the group met to discuss “Strangers and Neighbors: What I Have Learned about Christianity by Living Among Orthodox Jews” by Maria Poggi Johnson.

This was the 12th book the group has read and discussed together. What made this session different was the fact that the book’s author joined us via Zoom to talk about her book and answer the many questions our group asked of her.

In addition to being a devout Catholic wife and mother, Professor Maria Poggi Johnson is also the chair of Theology at the University of Scranton. As luck / fate would have it, when she and her family moved to Scranton, Pa. around 20 years ago, they bought a home smack in the middle of Scranton’s Orthodox Jewish community. In the years since, she and her family have developed strong friendships with many of her Jewish neighbors. She wrote this book about how those unexpected relationships (and many humorous interactions) deepened her understanding of her own faith.

Our group of nearly 20 participants met in the Margolin Hebrew Academy – Cooper Yeshiva High School for Boys’ library where we first discussed the book among ourselves. After about 25 minutes, the author joined us via Zoom on one of the school’s hi-tech smartboards. Professor Johnson spent over an hour (!) talking with us and answering the group’s many questions.

According to Shelley Kutliroff, “The highlight of our recent discussion of ‘Strangers and Neighbors’ was a Zoom participation by the author, Maria Poggi Johnson. Her memoir is filled with pithy but insightful analysis of how a deeper understanding of Judaism contributed to her own religious consciousness. For us, her deeply empathetic analysis of Orthodox Judaism was not only a rare treat but also inspirational.”

Each participant walked away with

positive feelings as well. Below are some of the emails I received following the program:

Sam Chafetz remarked: “This book confirms for me the importance of sharing my Jewish heritage and practices with my non-Jewish acquaintances. It demonstrates that those ‘others’ are capable of becoming understanding and sympathetic cheerleaders for our heritage. The author was most generous and candid with her remarks. She answered our questions without hesitation – even though some might have challenged her basic beliefs. If only the entire world shared her ‘live and let live’ attitude!”

Pat Chafetz added: “I found the book to be inspiring and hopeful. Not only did the Catholic and Orthodox families become close, but their children have maintained their friendships as they’ve become adults.”

Natalie Sukhodolsky commented: “It struck me how unbiased and accepting toward Jews Dr. Johnson is. I admire her attitude.”

Michelle Katz shared this: “Having grown up in Scranton, I was happy to learn that many of the community’s Orthodox families had warmly embraced the author and her family – despite their significant differences. I could easily envision my childhood community explaining our Jewish customs, laws, and traditions while modeling their love of Torah and Yiddishkeit.”

Ellen Tavin had this to say: “The book was a fascinating and eye-opening read. Our learning experience was enhanced by a rare opportunity – a meeting and Q & A session with the book’s warm and friendly author, who gave us additional insights and anecdotes beyond the scope of the book. A wonderful event!”

Young Israel thanks Shelley Kutliroff for leading this ongoing Book Read program and MHA for sharing their space and excellent technological setup with us. Please email Shelley at rmaskjrk@gmail.com to learn more about the next YI Book Read program.

Young Israel’s Rabbi Akiva Males can be reached at rabbia@yiom.org HW

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Baron Hirsch So-Shuls Pre-Chanukah Celebration



The Beverly Brothers entertained more than 50 seniors at the So-Shuls Luncheon



Bingo games after lunch offered plenty of challenges!

More than 50 people attended Baron Hirsch’s Chanukah-themed So-Shuls luncheon for adults 64 and older. The event featured a fantastic lunch of chicken tenders, latkes, homemade applesauce, and sufganyot (traditional Chanukah doughnuts). The Beverly Brothers, presented by Creative Aging, sang familiar ‘60s music to delight all. The happy music, as well as the tables decorated with Chanukah gifts, dreidels and chocolate gelt, filled the room with a comfortable and friendly holiday spirit. To complete the

fun, Bingo games after lunch offered plenty of challenges! The next So-Shuls event will be at noon on Wed., Jan. 4, 2023, and we will celebrate the arrival of the 2023! Spaghetti and meatballs are on the menu, and entertainment will be provided by Creative Aging. Bingo will follow lunch. The cost for the luncheon, including the Bingo games, is \$3 per person. Please call Gwen Moody at Baron Hirsch Synagogue, 901-683-7485, by Dec. 30, 2022, to make your reservation! **HW**

2023 Temple Israel Trip for Jews by Choice – Register Now for the Israel Trip of a Lifetime!

Judy Bearman and Sally Rosenberg, leaders of Temple Israel’s conversion class, Embracing Judaism, have designed a journey that brings Jews by Choice and a family member or friend on an unforgettable journey home to Israel. As the mentors and teachers of Embracing Judaism for 11 years, Judy and Sally have seen the commitment and excitement adults new to Judaism feel toward the land of Israel. When speaking about this journey, Sally adds, “We will begin our journey before we even leave American soil by coming together to build our community and prepare our hearts and minds for the pilgrimage of a lifetime.” Judy notes enthusiastically, “We will connect through all of our senses by exploring Israeli cuisine and wine, swim-

ming in the Dead Sea, digging at archeological sites, and observing Shabbat at the Kotel. In addition, those who choose to will be blessed with the unique opportunity to become b’nai mitzvah in the homeland of Am Yisrael. The adventures we’ve planned for this uniquely curated journey will be life changing. It’s definitely a time to be inspired – body, mind, and soul.” The trip has a few spots left for those who are ready to reignite their love of Judaism, deepen their knowledge of Jewish history and modern practices, and experience a new depth of living Jewishly. Those interested in joining can visit timemphis.org/israel to register and learn more. This trip will take place May 27, 2023-June 5, 2023, and is open to all progressive Jews by Choice. **HW**

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OBITUARY



Monica Segal

With a heavy heart, we announce the passing of Monica Segal, 89, on December 1, 2022. A beloved mother, grandmother, sister, aunt, and friend. She leaves her brother, Allen Segal, and her children, Jeff Baras (Hani), Randy Baras z”l, Lisa Baras Stark (Jeff) and five grandchildren. The funeral took place on Friday, Dec. 2, 2022, at Beth Sholom Memorial Gardens. Monica was born in Leipzig, Germany, in 1933. Her family fled Germany in 1939 and eventually settled in Houston, Texas. She was a pillar of the Memphis Jewish community for over 50 years, a lifelong member of Hadassah and Beth Sholom Synagogue. She actively volunteered for many organizations, which included Target House, Oral School for the Deaf, Team Read (Coleman Elementary) and others. She retired as a director of sales and

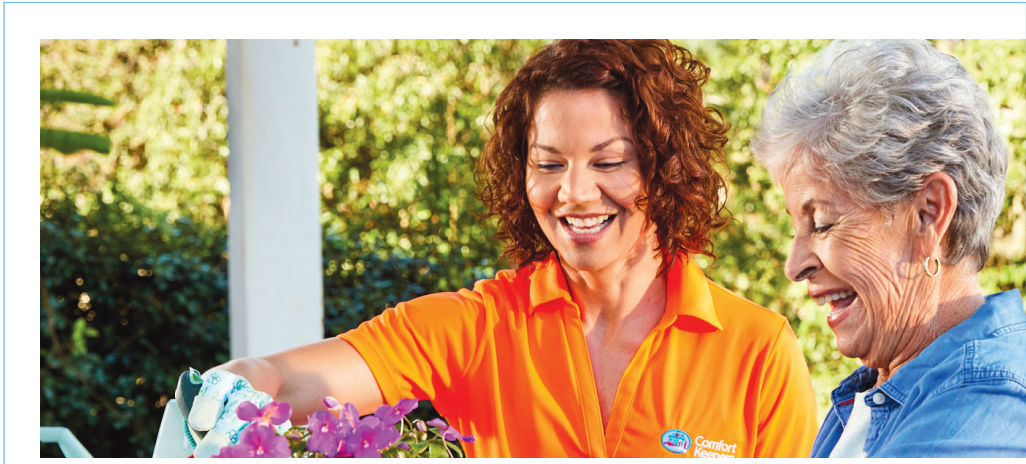
marketing for over 30 years in the hospitality industry. We wish to express our appreciation to the staff at HarborChase of Germantown, the medical and hospice staff at Baptist East Memorial Hospital. Any donations can be made to the charity of your choice. **HW**



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Beth Sholom Grand Gala Celebration Draws Community-Wide Attendance



Rabbi Sarit Horwitz, Len Alperin, Samantha Alperin, Illysa Wortheimer, and Leslie Epstein. Samantha, Ilysa, and Leslie were the gala organizers. Credit: Diane Reich

On Saturday night, Dec. 3, 250 people came out to celebrate Beth Sholom Synagogue (BSS) at their Grand Gala, the annual fundraiser. As the first fundraiser event since the pandemic began, the primary focus of the event was to host a beautiful evening for the community to gather and enjoy one another’s company. By all accounts, the event was a tremendous success.

The evening started with a cocktail hour in the synagogue’s Community Court, where guests had appetizers and drinks (including a signature cocktail, the “Mazel Tov Mule”). Rabbi Sarit Horwitz, the spiritual leader of Beth Sholom Synagogue, along with her husband, Rabbi Abe Schacter-Gampel (the Director for the Center of Jewish Life and Learning at the MJCC), led the

community in Havdallah before guests were all welcomed into the Social Hall.

Samantha Alperin and Leslie Epstein co-chaired the event, along with Beth Sholom’s Vice President of Development Illysa Wertheimer. As a team, they transformed the social hall into an elegant oasis. The space provided ample opportunity for guests to eat, drink and schmooze throughout the night! Many guests danced the night away thanks to the talented Jeremy Schrader Band.

Chef Marisa Baggett planned a delicious menu, replete with different stations for guests to sample varied cuisines.

According to Rabbi Sarit Horwitz, “There was so much positive energy in the shul that night, with everyone genuinely happy to be here to celebrate the shul, our growth, and our exciting



Samantha Alperin, Gala Co-Chair; Julee Levine, Director of Education; and Naomi Katz, Beth Sholom President. Credit: Diane Reich



Rachel and Josh Feinman. Credit: Diane Reich



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future. The best part of the night was seeing so many folks from the broader Memphis Jewish community come out to support BSS. It truly felt like a community event!”

Many thanks to our individual sponsors who generously supported this magical evening. They include: Tzaddik (\$5,000+): Dot and Stanley Bilsky, Anonymous; Mensch (\$3,600+): Anonymous; Chaver (\$1,000+): Anonymous, Samantha and Lon Alperin, Dana and Kevin Bernstein, Judy Bookman, Jay Cohen, Vera Feldman, Marlene and Herb Gerson, Michelle and Evan Glazer, Naomi and Josh Katz, Joanne Levine and Noah Sabin, Sandy and Clifton Lipman, Roslyn and Lester Lit, Jill and Ken Steinberg, Keri and Dan Unowsky.

Additionally, we are grateful to corporate sponsors throughout the community that contributed to our tremendous success: Comfort Keepers, Doc Pottery 901, Eventful Party Planning, Harkavy, Shainberg, Kaplan; Hebrew Watchman/Jewish Scene, Incyte, Kaufman Shoes, Marcy Milman Productions, Mister Tree/Bluff City Fence Co, Robert Irwin Jewelers, WellMind, and Yarbrough’s Music.

For more information about Beth Sholom’s upcoming events, please visit our website at www.bsholom.org. [HW](http://www.bsholom.org)

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Pro-Israel Groups Want Ilhan Omar Bounced from House Foreign Affairs Committee



Credit: Rep. Ilhan Omar (D.-Minn.) speaks at a workers’ protest against Amazon. Credit: Fibonacci Blue via Flickr.

By Bradley Martin

(JNS) – Several Jewish and pro-Israel groups welcomed received news of the likely removal of Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) from the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, in the wake of House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy’s (R-Calif.) long-standing pledge.

The new Congress with its Republican majority in the House of Representatives will be sworn in next month and McCarthy is the frontrunner to be elected speaker.

Omar’s antisemitic and anti-Israel comments include when she accused the Jewish state of having “hypnotized the world,” accused Jews of buying control of Congress, called Israel an “apartheid state,” and likened Israel to the Taliban and Hamas terrorist groups.

“Look at Congresswoman Omar, her antisemitic comments that have gone forward. We’re not going to allow her to be on Foreign Affairs,” McCarthy vowed during an appearance on Fox News Channel’s “Sunday Morning Futures.”

AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, has criticized Omar for her long history of antisemitic comments. The pro-Israel lobby group took aim at far-left organization J Street for its recent statement in support of Omar.

“J Street says it’s a ‘false accusation’ to call Rep. Ilhan Omar anti-Israel,” AIPAC posted on Twitter. “A false accusation? J Street is defending one of the most vocal anti-Israel critics in Congress.”

The ire of Jewish and pro-Israel groups

With Republicans winning a narrow

majority in the House, it looks increasingly likely that McCarthy’s long-standing pledge will come to fruition. Omar’s history of antisemitic and anti-Israel comments has earned the ire of Jewish and pro-Israel groups.

“Any member of Congress, regardless of party, who has accused American Jews of dual loyalty, suggested we manipulate the political process, and who calls Israel an apartheid state, should not be holding such a prestigious committee assignment,” B’nai B’rith CEO Daniel S. Mariaschin said in a statement to JNS.

“RJC has been calling for Ilhan Omar’s removal from the House Foreign Committee for nearly 3 years,” the Republican Jewish Coalition posted on Twitter. “Democrats totally abdicated responsibility to hold her accountable for vile anti-Israel & antisemitic rhetoric. The new House GOP Majority will do what Democrats refused to do.”

McCarthy’s pledge was also warmly received by Zionist Organization of America President Morton Klein, in a statement to JNS.

“We urged Rep. McCarthy to remove Jew-hating, Israel-bashing Ilhan Omar from the Foreign Affairs Committee and strongly support his stance,” Klein said. “There must be negative consequences to Omar’s unbridled Jew-hatred to send a clear message that such bigotry won’t be tolerated.”

Although Republicans flipped control of the House in last month’s midterm elections, McCarthy faces opposition from a handful of conservatives in his own conference and a fragile path to the Speakership next year. **HW**

Netanyahu Calls on U.S. to Reinforce Saudi Commitment

(JNS) – To achieve a “quantum leap” towards ending the Arab-Israeli conflict, Israeli Prime Minister-designate Benjamin Netanyahu, speaking in an interview with the Duai-based Al Arabiya English last Thursday, said the United States should reaffirm its traditional commitment to Saudi Arabia.

He also promised to pursue formal Israeli ties with Riyadh.

According to Netanyahu, the protests in Iran have prompted a change in views in the United States of the 2015 nuclear deal, formally known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

“I think there is a re-thinking in Washington. From the initial contacts that we have [had with the Biden administration], I think there’s a re-thinking of that. And I’m glad there is,” he said.

Reviving the 2015 agreement has been a priority for President Joe Biden.

“I can also say that I think one of my main goals would be to speak with my friend of 40 years, President Biden. And I’m going to tell him that I think that there is a need for a reaffirmation of

“The alliance between America’s allies and with America is the anchor of stability in our region,” said the prime minister-designate.

America’s commitment to its traditional allies in the Middle East,” said Netanyahu.

“But I think that the alliance, the traditional alliance with Saudi Arabia and other countries, has to be reaffirmed. There should not be periodic swings, or even wild swings in this relationship, because I think that the alliance between America’s allies and with America is the anchor of stability in our region,” he explained.

“I think it requires periodic reaffirmation and I’m [going] to speak to President Biden about it,” he said. **HW**

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You may donate money to charitable organizations throughout the year, for no other reason than your heart-felt desire to support causes that you care about. But if philanthropy is important to you, keep in mind that the associated tax breaks could potentially increase your ability to give. You might consider a more strategic approach to charitable giving, possibly as part of your year-end tax planning.

You can generally deduct charitable contributions, which reduces your taxable income, only if you itemize deductions on your federal income tax return. The deduction is currently limited to 60% of your adjusted gross income (AGI) for cash contributions to public charities. Otherwise, limits of 50%, 30%, or 20% of AGI may apply, depending on the type of property you give and the type of organization to which you contribute. (Excess amounts can be carried over for up to five years.)

If you claim a charitable deduction for a contribution of cash, a check, or other monetary gift, you should maintain a record such as a cancelled check, a bank statement, or a receipt or letter from the charity showing the name of the charitable organization and the date and amount of the contribution. Donations of \$250 or more must be substantiated with a contemporaneous written acknowledgment from the charity. Additional requirements apply to noncash contributions.

Here are some strategies that may help enhance your charitable impact as well as your tax savings.

Bunch or Time Gifts and Deductions
The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act roughly doubled the standard deduction beginning in 2018 and indexed it annually for inflation through 2025 (\$12,950 for

single taxpayers and \$25,900 for joint filers in 2022). The result was a dramatic reduction in the number of taxpayers who itemize — now only about one out of ten.¹

If you find that the total of your itemized deductions for 2022 will be slightly below the level of the standard deduction, it could be worthwhile to combine or “bunch” 2022 and 2023 charitable contributions into one year, itemize on your 2022 tax return, and take the standard deduction on 2023 taxes.

Another option is to increase your charitable giving in years when you expect higher annual income. For example, charitable deductions could help offset the tax liability resulting from a business sale, capital gains, stock options, or a Roth IRA conversion.

Utilize a Donor-Advised Fund
Another way to bunch contributions or generate a large charitable deduction for the current year — possibly before you know where you want the money to go — is to open a charitable account called a donor-advised fund (DAF). Donors who itemize deductions on their federal income tax returns can write off DAF contributions in the year they are made, then gift funds later to the charities they want to support. DAF contributions are irrevocable, which means the donor gives the sponsor legal control while retaining advisory privileges with respect to the distribution of funds and the investment of assets.

Donate from an IRA
If you are an IRA owner who is 70½ or older, you can give to charity without itemizing and still get a tax break through a qualified charitable distribution (QCD). A QCD must be an otherwise taxable distribution from an IRA (generally, distributions from traditional

IRAs are subject to federal income tax). QCDs are excluded from income and won’t affect your tax obligation. Moreover, once you reach age 72, a QCD can satisfy all or part of your required minimum distribution. To make a QCD, you would direct your IRA trustee to issue a check made out to a qualified public charity. You may contribute up to \$100,000 from your IRA; if you’re married, your spouse may also contribute up to \$100,000 from his or her IRA.

Consider a Charitable Trust
With a charitable remainder trust (CRT), you can donate money, securities, property, or other assets to the trust and designate a beneficiary — even yourself — to receive the income. Upon your death (or the death of your surviving spouse or designated beneficiary), the assets in the trust go to the charity.

Although the annual trust income is usually taxable, you may qualify for an income tax deduction based on the estimated present value of the remainder interest. Once assets are in the trust, the trustee may be able to sell them and reinvest the proceeds without incurring capital gains taxes.

Assets placed in a charitable lead trust (CLT) pay income to the designated charity until the trust ends (typically, upon your death). The remaining assets would then be returned to your heirs. This strategy might help reduce estate and gift taxes on appreciated assets that go to your heirs.

Both types of trusts are irrevocable, so assets cannot be removed from the trusts once they are donated. Not all charities are able to accept all possible gifts, so it would be prudent to check with your chosen organization in advance. Trusts incur upfront costs and often have ongoing administrative fees. The use of trusts involves a complex web of tax rules and regulations. You should consider the counsel of experienced estate planning, legal, and tax professionals before implementing trust strategies.

Strive for Effective Giving
With so many nonprofit organizations seeking financial support, you may want to direct your money where it can do the most good. Here’s how you can help ensure that your donations are well spent.
Give directly to the charity. Individuals who call on the phone or knock on your door are likely to be paid fundrais-

ers, which can cut into the organization’s proceeds. Even worse, they could be questionable groups posing as more reputable and well-known charities. When contacted by fundraisers, never give out personal information over the phone or in response to an email you didn’t initiate. There’s no rush — take time to vet the charity before you donate.

Check out the charity’s track record. There are several well-known “watchdogs” (such as *CharityNavigator.org*, *GuideStar.org*, and *CharityWatch.org*) that rate and review nonprofits. These organizations provide information that can help you evaluate charities and make wise choices. Find out how your gift might be used by looking into the charity’s mission, plans, and financial status. Charities with higher-than-normal administrative costs may not be spending enough on programs and services — or they could be in financial trouble.

Take advantage of “leverage” opportunities. A wealthy benefactor or corporation may offer to match private donations to a charity during a certain window of time, and some employers have charitable giving programs that match funds donated by employees to qualifying organizations.

DAFs have fees and expenses that donors giving directly to a charity would not face. All investing involves risk, including the possible loss of principal, and there is no guarantee that any investment strategy will be successful.
1) Internal Revenue Service, 2022

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Gap Year in Israel for People with Disabilities Offers Normalcy

By Howard Blas

(JNS) Thanks to Darkaynu, young men and women with disabilities can spend a gap year in Israel. Darkaynu programs in Jerusalem for women and in Efrat for men provide an opportunity to learn, work and grow in Israel in the year or years following high school—much like the experience afforded their nondisabled peers. Twenty-eight students from Jewish communities in the United States, Canada, England and Australia recently arrived in Israel to take part in the program.

The Elaine and Norm Brodsky Darkaynu Program, part of the extensive Ohr Torah Stone network of programs, was founded in 2003. “I started the program because a girl (with disabilities) who had been in a regular mainstream program wondered why she couldn’t go to Israel for a year like her siblings,” recounts Elana Goldscheider, Darkaynu’s director. “How do I tell a person they can’t go? It is a terrible thing. We stopped and said, ‘Wait, you are like everyone else. You can!’”

Spending a year in Israel is very common in the Orthodox world, where the majority of high school graduates spend a year learning in yeshivas and seminaries. While some in the non-Orthodox world opt to spend a post-high school year learning and volunteering in Israel, it is much less common.

According to Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brandner, President and Rosh HaYeshiva of Ohr Torah Stone, “Torah study, personal growth, independence and a relationship to Israel are integral parts of our Jewish human identity, and they must be made accessible to everyone. Ohr Torah Stone is deeply proud to have developed the Darkaynu program, which is preparing young men and women with special needs with the ability to embrace and pursue meaningful futures as active and committed members of the Jewish community.”

Ohr Stone was founded in 1983 and currently consists of 30 educational institutions, social projects, outreach programs and leadership development initiatives for men and women.

Goldscheider offers her students with disabilities an experience similar to her students without disabilities. “I created a word —“sidestreaming” or parallel streaming. The students with disabilities are not with their typical peers for everything, but they are alongside—we have parallel streams.” She offers an example from a recent outing: “We went hiking, but it was a little different. We did what works for us, and that is okay. Our students have to recognize what they can and can’t do—one who walks with two crutches would not enjoy a hike in the same way as another person, but she may enjoy a walking tour instead.”

The students in Goldscheider’s program learn in Jewish studies classes, participate in volunteer jobs in the community and work in ganim (child care centers), where they serve as teaching assistants, data entry, catering, book and clothing stores and the offices of the Orthodox Union. Participants also enjoy tiyulim—short trips around Israel—cooking classes and time with their adopted families.

The students comprise a wide range of cognitive functioning and independence skills. “Some take the bus alone to work, some walk, some take a van and some take the bus with staff,” reports Goldscheider. Of the 16 young women in this year’s Darkaynu cohort, nine have returned for a second year. “In their first year in Israel, they figure it out by February or March—so they want to come back. This is home!” Their learning, jobs

and time and distance away from families helps students develop life, interpersonal and independence skills.

Avi Ganz, director of the Darkaynu program for men in Efrat, reports that most of his 12 young men learn in a self-contained environment and work throughout Efrat. “Two work in a pizza store, one in a winery, one on an army base, one in an industrial kitchen, one in a makolet (small grocery store) and one in a bakery,” he says.

Another student, Isaac Anderson, 23, of Rochester, New York, works in Anak Stock, a store that sells housewares, kitchenware and games. “I price items, put them on the shelves, and do price checks,” he says. He is proud of the strides he is making in Hebrew, saying, “I am working on my Hebrew as much as I can and am trying to communicate as much as possible in Hebrew.” Anderson has returned for a third year in Darkaynu. “I didn’t know about it when I graduated high school,” he says. “I was in community college at the time and was doing very well. But I wanted to do something Jewish and expand my Jewish knowledge, to explore the Land of Israel and learn about Israel’s people and culture.”

Anderson reports that he learned of Darkaynu from Marc Fein, a NCSY regional director. “He put out my request on Facebook and friends responded and mentioned Darkaynu,” he recounts. “He contacted Avi Ganz and I enrolled in the Darkaynu program.”

For Anderson, the experience has been mostly positive: “I value the opportunity to make new friends in Darkaynu and in the host yeshiva, Har Etzion—the experience will last a lifetime!” He firmly believes that “Every Jewish adult should have the opportunity to travel to Israel—regardless of challenges or strengths or hurdles—and have the opportunity to experience the land of Israel because it is the Jewish homeland. It is where we walk in history and connect with our heritage.”

Anderson is considering his options for when he completes his third year at Darkaynu. He may return to the States or make aliyah. Ganz reports that some students return to the States to participate in Yeshiva University’s Makor College Program, a three-year non-degree program for young men with intellectual disabilities.

Ganz continues to attend “Israel nights” to spread news about Darkaynu. Like Goldscheider, Ganz does not want any member of the Jewish community to miss out on the experience of learning and living in Israel.

While Darkaynu offers a unique opportunity for young adults with disabilities, Ganz stresses the normalcy of the program: “The unique thing about Darkaynu is that there is no pomp and circumstance.” HW

125 U.S. Lawmakers Call for Task Force to Fight Jew-Hatred



Fliers blaming Russia’s war in Ukraine on Jews were left in front of homes in Beverly Hills, Calif., on the first day of Passover, April 16, 2022. Source: Screenshot.

(JNS) – In a letter to President Joe Biden on Dec. 6, a bipartisan slate of U.S. lawmakers from both chambers demanded the creation of an interagency task force to pursue a “whole of government” approach to combat antisemitism at home and abroad.

“Rising antisemitism puts Jews both in the United States and around the world at risk,” the letter states. “Antisemitic voices, inciting hateful and violent action, are finding new audiences, with anti-Jewish conspiracies gaining traction across the globe and through social media.”

The letter cites an FBI report stating that there was a 6% rise in antisemitic hate crimes in 2020. The lawmakers called on an array of federal agencies to act and for the creation of an interagency

task force to combat the phenomenon. “Because many individual agencies play a critical role in combating antisemitism, closer coordination is needed to share best practices, data and intelligence; identity gaps in efforts; streamline overlapping activities and roles; and execute a unified national strategy,” the letter reads.

It urges Biden to prioritize coordination among all agencies in this space, including but not limited to the Department of Homeland Security, the Department of Justice and the Office of the Special Envoy on Holocaust Issues.

The administration was set to convene a roundtable discussion on antisemitism at the White House, following a record surge in harassment and physical attacks against Jews in the U.S. HW

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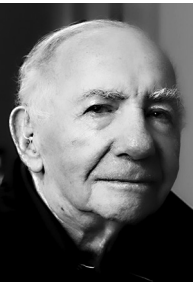
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The Night the Rebbe Did the Kazatzky



*Editor's note:
This story is being
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of Ted Roberts in
appreciation of his
longtime service
as a newspaper
columnist.*

My Zayde was a storyteller, especially on Chanukah. High on the list of “Zayde’s Ten Biggest Hits” was The Tzadik of Zomzach. “Tell us the story of the Tzadik,” we grandchildren chorused. He couldn’t resist. Although the tale had many variations, it always began the same: “Once there was a peasant and a Rebbe in the village of Zomzach. The peasant was only a peasant and I’ll tell you about him later, but the Rebbe – he was the Tzadik of Zomzach. That’s what they called him. Visitors, petitioners, followers from the entire district paraded through his court. Infertility? Halachic questions? No job? A sour stomach? An unmarried daughter? Go tell it to the Sage of Zomzach. We Jews, you know, don’t really need an intermediary – like Catholics need the Pope. But if your Malcha was unmarried, thirty-six, and had a small wart on her forehead, why not let the Rebbe offer a short prayer so Zalman, the tailor, might suddenly be captivated by small warts. It couldn’t hurt.

Now in this same village of Zomzach, that was glorified by the presence of the Rebbe and Zalman the tailor, lived Mendel the peasant, his wife, and a seven-year-old daughter. As poor and hungry they were as the crows who pecked in the winter fields of dried corn stalks.

Their total possessions would have fit on a one-horse wagon. They were drowned in poverty because Mendel – believe it or not – was a kazatzky dancer. That’s what he did. He had a nature, shall we say, like the butterfly, not the industrious honeybee. For weddings, bar mitzvahs, birthdays, anniversary parties, he danced the kazatzky. His pay was a sack of flour, maybe a chicken, a handful of copper coins.

And as though their life wasn’t bleak enough, their only child – the seven-year-old Miriam, a beautiful child with vivid red hair – was bedridden. She hadn’t walked since her 5th birthday. And it was this misfortune that provoked the strange, unexplained, events at Zomzach.

“But why am I telling you this?” suddenly blurted out Zayde “You’ve heard it a dozen times. You know what happened.” He turned away to light his pipe.

He knew we would plead. And we knew because he loved to tell the story that he would continue.

“So, on Chanukah,” he went on, the wife said to Mendel, ‘Go to the Rebbe – ask for a blessing for Miriam. It’s Chanukah, the Rabbi won’t deny you. It couldn’t hurt, you know. And G-d knows we can’t send for the doctor in Cracow.’

‘But I have no gift,’ said the kazatzky dancer. ‘And you know everyone who asks the Tzadik of Zomzach for a prayer on Chanukah brings something. A token that the Rebbe gives to his students.’

‘Go!’ said the wife. ‘Pick some flowers from the fields. Find a colored stone. Anything. Just go!’

Soon, there he was at the Holy man’s

holiday court shouldering his way through a crowd of admirers and petitioners. He stood in front of the Tzadik of Zomzach – who listened attentively to his plea: that he should pray for the sick child who hadn’t walked in many months.

Here, Zayde paused. “You know what happened. Why should I continue? Let me drink my tea.” But a roar of protest from us kids reinspired the storyteller.

So, he continued, “As Mendel humbly stood at the Rebbe’s table, he thought, I have no gifts; but nobody, nothing, including a whirling Chanukah dreidel, can spin like me. I’ll bet the Rebbe would enjoy my Cossack kazatzky – the one where I hop on one foot, kick straight out with the other with my arms folded tightly across my chest.”

And that’s what he did. And the on-lookers picked up the beat of his flying feet. They clapped, they roared with approval. Who could do the kazatzky like Mendel? No one, including the Cossacks who guarded the Czar himself.

The Rabbi clapped, too. As he clapped, he looked heavenward, and his lips moved as though in prayer. And before you could say “Judah Maccabee” the Alte Rebbe had leaped the table, joined hands with the peasant and whirled around the room with him. “G-d wants the heart,” he cried over and over.

The spectators grinned and clapped and whistled with delight. Ah, that was their Rebbe. And what a heart he had. But soon their smiles turned to astonishment. THERE WERE THREE FIGURES in the circle. And one of them was a small red-haired girl!

We listeners screamed, “Zayde, Zayde, tell us how she danced.”

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By Ted Roberts

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“How she danced? How do you think she danced. She had the kazatzky gene in her blood.”

She was magnificent. Naturally quicker than the Alte Rebbe, she kept up with her father. But when the dance was completed, only the Tzadik of Zomzach and Mendel the Peasant were seen.

And when the peasant arrived home, Miriam standing erect beside her mother, met him at the door. She smiled at her father. Then quickly, she dropped into the traditional kazatzky position. Three quick spins brought joy to his heart. They hugged.”

“It’s not true,” said my older brother. “It’s what they call a ‘Zaydemeiser’ in Yiddish. Or a ‘Tall Tale’ in English.”

“All I know,” said my grandfather, “is that MY Zayde, who was there the night the Rebbe did the kazatzky, told me the story every Chanukah.”

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

ISRAEL INSIGHTS Why in Israel?

By Howard Weisband

This column is more of a personal nature, and it may be the most difficult one I have written, but one I want to do.

On November 22 my dear sister, Phyllis, z”l, passed away in her home in Los Angeles after more than a six-year valiant, proactive battle with a localized but reoccurring cancer and multiple chemotherapy and radiation treatments, including several clinical trials.

Her situation declined quite rapidly in the last several weeks. Kayla and I were at her bedside with my brother-in-law and niece, and my two brothers during the last few days and even the last hour as home hospice care kept her as comfortable as possible.

Until the last several months, Phyllis was quite active, running and working out as much as possible, always graciously hosting family and friends. When she retired a few years ago, she was well known for her role as an executive producer within “the industry” in Los Angeles.

It was only toward the beginning

of November that I learned from my brother-in-law that Phyllis had recently requested that her final resting place would not be in Los Angeles where for some 50 years she had made her life and career. Nor in Pittsburgh where our parents and grandparents and others are buried in a Weisband family section of a local cemetery. No, her request was that she would be laid to rest in Israel.

It is somewhat common, historically and in the present day, for Jews living outside Israel to be buried in Eretz Yisrael, in the Land of Israel. Generally, although not always, those plans are put into place well in advance.

Without such advance notice, we delayed our travel to L.A. to be with Phyllis in order to make that request become a reality. Though I hadn’t had such experience before, I found the various people in each setting – the Chevre Kadisha (Burial Society) in Israel, the office in New York, and the Chevre Kadisha in Los Angeles – all to be most knowledgeable, informative,

professional, sensitive, communicative, and efficient... with great “Menschlik-ite”/human kindness. Within days, even hours, forms were completed, costs covered, and everything was in place.

Which all leads to the ultimate question: Why in Israel?

There are those who look more to the history of the Jewish People and are motivated by the values modeled by our forefathers associated with the Land of Israel, beginning with the Bible itself. Both Jacob and then his son, Joseph, requested while they were living in Egypt, that they be laid to rest in the Land of their Fathers and Mothers. Upon Jacob’s death, Joseph himself traveled with his father’s remains to the Land of Canaan to bury him in Hebron. Joseph’s request was transmitted to Moses, who made certain to take Joseph’s bones at the time of the Exodus for burial in the Promised Land.

Then there are those who look to the future. They want to be in Eretz Yisrael when the Mashiach/Messiah arrives, to

be first among all those to be redeemed, who according to tradition will come to Israel preceding the final redemption.

Phyllis was more about the present. She had a deep love for Israel. She loved to visit, especially at a time of a family celebration. And she loved to tour the country, whether in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv or Acre.

Her desire to be buried in Israel was directly related to an Ahavat Yisrael, her Love of Israel. She had a simple but honorable request, which we were honored to help fulfill.

She wanted her family to visit her. And we will do so.

Howard Weisband served as Assistant Executive Director (1975-77) and Executive Director (1977-84) of the Memphis Jewish Federation. Following Aliyah with his family in 1986, he served as Secretary General of the Jewish Agency for Israel through 1997, and then in other senior professional positions in Israel. Now retired, he and Kayla live in Jerusalem. He can be reached at hweisband@gmail.com HW

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Panel Discussion

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Saturday, December 3 | 2 -5pm

Where the Wild Things Are

A film by Spike Jonze

Saturday, January 7 | 2pm

Sendak, Maurice. Design for show curtain from Nutcracker (No. 116). 1979-83
Credit line: The Morgan Library & Museum, Bequest of Maurice Sendak, 2013.103.58e.

B

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on Antisemitism

**This Hanukkah, we're asking
our community to shine a light.**

Antisemitism is on the rise
around the world. We must
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the darkness.

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