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Rhodes Hillel Student Samuel Cross Elected to Hillel International Student Cabinet



Samuel Cross (I) and Robbie Musicante (r) man the Rhodes booth during the 2021 Rhodes Hillel Welcome Reception at the Peabody Hotel.

"While interviewing for the Hillel International Student Cabinet, I was asked about what my specific individual project would be upon acceptance into the group, and I responded by stating that I intended to work on outreach towards Jewish communities outside of the traditional Hillel network," said Samuel Cross, a rising junior and Hillels of Memphis member at Rhodes College in Memphis.

"Hillel tends to be super Euro-centric, and my goal is to reach out to other Jewish communities that are rich in tradition and culture but have begun drifting away from the more mainstream Ashkenazi/Sephardic traditions that we think of. Examples include the population of Beta Israel in Ethiopia, Bene Israel in India, and Central and South American Jews. I want to find ways to bring these communities in and facilitate a closer link between groups and hard-to-reach students."

This thoughtful response earned Samuel a seat on the Hillel International Student Cabinet, with his term beginning in July. For people who know Samuel, this exciting news should come as no sur-

prise, as he has always demonstrated a tendency to be outgoing in his Jewish involvement.

Raised by Kerry and Brian Cross, Samuel and his younger brother grew up in Griffin, Georgia, a small town in rural Georgia with a very small Jewish population. However, Samuel's parents made an active effort to give their children access to a Jewish education.

"My parents took me to synagogue (Congregation B'nai Israel in Fayetteville, Ga.) every week for Sunday school and weekly Hebrew school on Wednesdays. It was a huge part of my life at that point," he said. "The congregation was about an hour's drive away from where I lived, so it was a real endeavor to go there and resulted in many late nights over the years, but my parents were consistent in making it happen, and I am thankful for that."

By the time Samuel began looking at potential colleges, he knew that he wanted a school that offered rich Jewish experiences.

"I didn't have a strong social connection to my Jewish identity due to growing up in an area with relatively few Jewish peers. When college came around, I remember looking at various schools and thinking that some leaned too heavily on Judaism while others had a relatively weak Jewish population, and neither of those options fit with what I wanted," said Samuel.

"Then, I came across Rhodes and saw that the school offered a nice, personal connection with a growing Jewish community," he said. "There is an active push at Rhodes to increase religious diversity on campus, and I saw an opportunity to get involved and find a connection for myself in a way that I couldn't elsewhere. I thought Rhodes would be a great fit and it absolutely has been.

"I saw that Rhodes had a scholarship, the Jewish Community Fellowship, so I ended up asking a few questions about the scholarship with Hillels of Memphis Director Sophie Bloch, and eventually, that turned into discussing Hillel at Rhodes. Immediately showing up and having students actively reach out to me and build connections was also very nice."

The Jewish Community Fellowship is an exclusive college scholarship created from a partnership between Memphis Jewish Federation and Rhodes College, which requires that students be involved with Jewish leadership both within Rhodes and the larger Memphis Jewish community. Each year, five \$10,000 merit-based scholarships, each renew-

(See Hillel Page 3)

B'nai Tzedek Teens Donate Locally and Overseas



Jewish Foundation of Memphis B'nai Tzedek students gathered on March 21, 2022, to award grants to six local Jewish organizations, funding nine programs with a total of \$10,000. In May, the teens made gifts from their individual tzedakah funds.

When it comes to individual tzedakah money, B'nai Tzedek students have a history of giving to non-profit organizations they are passionate about. B'nai Tzedek, the teen philanthropy program at the Jewish Foundation of Memphis,

provides our Jewish community's teens with the knowledge, tools, and passion for philanthropy. In March 2022, the teens granted out \$10,000 to six local organizations through a collaborative grant-making process, and in May the teens decided where to donate money from their individual tzedakah funds.

Jewish teens join B'nai Tzedek by donating \$250 of their bar or bat mitzvah money to the Jewish Foundation of Memphis, establishing a Donor Advised Fund in their name. This \$250 contribu-

(See B'nai Tzedek Page 3)

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Personal

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My Teen Israel Experience



Jacob Shapiro (r) enjoys the food in Jerusalem with friends Jack Benjamin, Connor Rubin and Anders Kennedy.

Jacob Shapiro, son of Virginia Palacio and Todd Shapiro, just graduated Lausanne Collegiate School. Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemksy Endowment Fund provided him with a Teen Israel Experience grant to help offset the cost of his NFTY program in Israel last summer. 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. Applications for Summer 2023 will open in the Fall of 2022.

By Jacob Shapiro

My time in Israel was one of the most defining months of my life. It opened my eyes to the history of Judaism, Israel, and buses, more than I have ever experienced.

The first part of the trip was exciting because I went to New Jersey to hang out for the night and meet people from the other camps who were all going to Israel. It was a fun night, and I was excited about staying in a hotel with my camp friends and not in a Jacobs camp cabin. When I landed in Tel-Aviv we were greeted by our tour guide. Immediately after stepping outside, it was noticeably clear we were experiencing a completely different culture. It was hot and everything was built out of what looked like a type of sandstone. However, the first thing that stood out to me was the security for passengers entering the country. Just like any other international flight, we needed passports and identification, but the distinguishable

differences were the border control permits and passenger interviews.

The Eastern Mediterranean International School right outside of Tel Aviv was the first place we stayed. The school was a boarding school with housing and dining facilities. Surprisingly, the food was amazing, better than any other place we stayed. After a few days of orientation and talking about the itinerary for the next week, we had our first night out in the city of Tel-Aviv. The city of Tel-Aviv had a downtown that felt similar to Seattle but not quite as big as Chicago or New York. We had a fun night with some amazing ice cream from a place recommended by the tour guides.

The second week was action packed because we traveled all over and stayed in the Negev desert for three days. I was worried I was going to spend three days in the desert and not shower the whole time, but it was the best part of the trip. The first day we hiked up Masada and saw the incredible sunrise, one of the prettiest things I have ever seen. We went to a community pool in the desert, which was very strange because I felt refreshed and relaxed and then looked around and realized I was in the middle of nowhere.

Masada was not the only thing that took away my breath. Though it was incredible, the Western Wall and the city of Jerusalem took my breath away, sent chills down my spine and dropped my jaw. I have never seen a city so perfect and beautiful. The image of the sun setting over the Golden Dome is still

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Memphis Candlelighting Time

Weekly Torah Portion: Shlach

drilled in my head. I found that the people of Israel were genuinely welcoming and nice to our group.

In conclusion, Israel was a life changing trip, and I am so grateful for everything that made the stars align for the trip to happen not just for me, but for everyone.

Thank you to Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemsky Endowment Fund for helping to make my NFTY summer Israel experience possible. **HW**

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Hillel...

(Continued From Page 1)

able for three years for a total of \$40,000 per student are available for qualifying Rhodes College students. Fellows aim to bring the Jewish community into events and pull Jewish students out into the community, and Samuel is a proud Fellow himself.

It was through his connection to Hillel that Samuel learned about the possibility of sitting in a leadership position at the national level, almost hidden at the bottom of an email.

"I saw a small ad about an application for the Hillel International Student Cabinet, and I didn't think that I would get it because of the nature of them only accepting very competitive students, and certainly from much more widely recognized schools with larger Jewish communities. But I threw my hat in, wrote a few essays, and was invited to interview. It was a nice surprise when I was accepted," he said.

The same week that Samuel received the acceptance, he was also elected president of VOICES, Rhodes College's multicultural organization on campus.

"Samuel has played an integral role in

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Rhodes Hillel during his time on campus these last few years," said Sophie. "He is a familiar face to his peers and doesn't hesitate to step up into leadership roles as a Jewish Community Fellow and board member of Rhodes Hillel. We are so proud that Samuel also represents Hillel and the Jewish student population in other student groups and councils on campus, ensuring that Jewish students have a voice that is heard by other students, faculty, and the administration alike."

As a busy college student, Samuel hasn't yet mapped out what a post-college future looks like. "I'm interested in looking along the lines of diplomacy, international affairs, or international work of some sort, and want to continue reaching out to communities and work on providing representation to under-represented groups," said Samuel.

There is no doubt that Samuel is finding ways to make his time in Memphis impactful, and his drive to help connect communities is very admirable. He is sure to do a fantastic job representing Rhodes College and Hillels of Memphis in the 2022-2023 Hillel International Student Cabinet. **HW**

B'nai Tzedek...

(Continued From Page 1)

tion is matched by the Foundation, giving the student a total of \$500 to donate towards any non-profits in the United States before they graduate from high school. Others, like grandparents or other family, or even the teens themselves, can add funds to their accounts, giving them more potential to make a meaningful impact, and learn valuable lessons about the power of giving.

"I want to support the Memphis Jewish Federation with its mission to help Ukraine," said Wallis R., a student at St. Mary's Episcopal School. Wallis, along with other B'nai Tzedek students, was inspired by the war in Ukraine to donate to the Memphis Jewish Federation, who distributes funding to the Jewish Agency for Israel, which is helping war refugees make Aliyah to Israel, and the Joint Distribution Committee who is providing humanitarian aid on the ground. This was no surprise as the students collectively granted \$1,000 to support the crisis in Ukraine back in March.

Yael C. joined the B'nai Tzedek program in 2017 and recently graduated from the Goldie Margolin School for Girls at the Margolin Hebrew Academy (MHA). This year, Yael and three other MHA students chose to donate to their school. "I love the Margolin Hebrew Academy. I've been a student there since PreK-3 and had an amazing ex-

perience there, so I want to give back," said Yael.

Evan S. joined the B'nai Tzedek program in 2018 and recently graduated from Memphis University School. One of the organizations he chose to donate to was BBYO, and specifically the Delta region. "I chose to donate to BBYO, because for the last four years BBYO has provided me with incredible leadership opportunities, Jewish identity-building experiences, and a community and network of friends from all over the world. It only seemed fitting to give back to the organization that has let me thrive as myself," said Evan.

Other local organizations supported by the students included Girls on the Run Memphis, Jay Uiberall Foundation and the Forrest Spence Fund. Although not local, many Memphis teens attend Camp Sabra, and its Scholarship Fund was another recipient of B'nai Tzedek support. Donations to national organizations included World Central Kitchen, Planned Parenthood, Boy Scouts of America and Friends of Roots.

"B'nai Tzedek is a great way to learn about tzedakah," said Sarah Vander-Walde, Director of the B'nai Tzedek program. "Any teen who has become Bar or Bat Mitzvah is welcome to join B'nai Tzedek and the summer is a great time to fill out the online form. This way students can be enrolled before we start meeting again in the fall." **HW**

Report: Israeli Narrowly Escaped Iranian Kidnap Attempt in Turkey

(JNS) – An Israeli tourist narrowly avoided an Iranian kidnapping attempt in Turkey in recent days, according to Israeli media.

The kidnappers made physical contact

urkey

Turkish police in Diyarbakır, Turkey (Jan. 2016) Credit: Mahmut Bozarslan/Voice of America via Wikimedia Commons.

with their intended victim, who resisted them, according to Channel 12. The full details of the incident cannot yet be publicized, the report last Tuesday stated.

The incident comes after Channel 13 reported last Monday that a group of Israeli tourists in Istanbul had been whisked to safety by Israeli security forces, narrowly avoiding an Iranian hit squad. The tourists received a telephone call from an Israeli security official warning them not to return to their hotel, where the Iranian cell was waiting for them, according to the report.

The intended victims were evacuated to the airport in a bulletproof vehicle, and put directly onto a flight back to Israel; their luggage remained behind.

Iranian cells remain at large in Turkey, and a special task force comprising the Israel Security Agency, the Mossad and Israel's National Security Council is working around the clock in coordination with Turkey's security forces to contain the threat, according to Channel 12's report. Turkish police have also deployed in unprecedented numbers to protect Israeli tourists.

Some 1,000 Israeli tourists in Turkey have received warning calls from Israeli security forces, according to the report.

"We will not hesitate to activate Israel's power in any place in the world in order to safeguard our civilians," Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said in a statement last Tuesday.

Meanwhile, an Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman said last Monday that if Iran "wants to respond to Israel's operations, we will provide our answer in the [right] place and not in a third country," Channel 12 reported. **HW**

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A Cop Displayed Nazi Symbols and Joked about the Holocaust. A City Near Seattle Paid Him \$1.5 Million To Go Away



A Washington State assistant police chief taped the insignia of an SS officer over his nameplate on his door. Credit: YouTube

By Ron Kampeas

(JTA) – Seattle's Jewish community was outraged that an assistant police chief who displayed Nazi symbology got off with a two-week suspension and sensitivity training. It called on the city of Kent to "treat the offenses with the seriousness and care they deserve."

So the small city near Seattle got serious and paid Assistant Chief Derek Kammerzell \$1.52 million to go away.

In a statement last Friday, the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle said that while it was "disturbing" Kammerzell came away with the substantial settlement, it was "grateful" he was gone.

In September 2020, a colleague reported that Kammerzell had taped the insignia of an SS officer to his door. Fellow officers said that Kammerzell, who is of German heritage, often joked about the Holocaust, once saying "that his grandfather died in the Holocaust after getting drunk and falling" out of a guard tower, The New York Times reported last Tuesday.

In its statement last December, the Seattle JCRC said it was "horrified" to learn of Kammerzell's actions, which had come to light because of the publication of an internal police department investigation, and the scope of his punishment.

"The two-week suspension and sensitivity training given in response are completely inadequate, especially at a

time when incidents of hate against the Jewish people are higher than they've been in almost 45 years," it said.

It concluded, "We call on the City of Kent to immediately revisit the situation, publicly recognize the harm and hurt caused to our Jewish community, and treat the offenses with the seriousness and care they deserve."

City officials said in a release last week that the city could not negotiate the termination settlement down further from \$1.52 million, about half the \$3.1 million Kammerzell's lawyer originally asked for, because Kammerzell's 27-year record was unblemished by disciplinary action and community complaints and because of "double jeopardy principles," a reference to the fact that the city had already punished Kamerzell for the same offense with the two-week suspension.

The city's statement noted that it had consulted throughout the process with members of the Jewish community, including the JCRC.

"Since January, our professional team has had the opportunity to work closely with the City of Kent on their response," the JCRC said in its more recent statement. "We are impressed by the seriousness, humility, and sensitivity with which Mayor Dana Ralph and her team are addressing both Kammerzell's specific actions and tackling antisemitism overall." **HW**

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Court Allows German Church to Keep 'Jewish Pig' Sculpture on Display



The Judensau sculpture on display on the outer wall of the town church of St. Marien in Wittenberg, Germany, Feb. 4, 2020. Credit: Hendrik Schmidt/picture alliance via Getty Images

By Toby Axelrod

BERLIN (JTA) – A one-man effort to remove a medieval anti-Jewish sculpture from public view in Germany has failed.

The Federal Supreme Court in Karlsruhe announced last Tuesday that the St. Marien Church in Wittenberg does not have to remove the "Judensau" – Jew Sow – sculpture from its façade, since the church administration had adequately distanced itself from the original antisemitic intention.

The Judensau is a Christian folk image dating back to the Middle Ages that depicts Jews suckling on the teats of a pig, peering into its anus, or, in the case of the Wittenberg relief, both.

Michael Duellmann, who is Jewish and has pressed the case in lower courts, is vowing to take his fight to the next level, to Germany's highest court of human rights. These sculptures are "much more than merely insulting," he said in a phone interview. "They are an inducement to murder."

Placed inside or on the façade of churches, the statues were intended to teach lessons about sin and virtue. The relief in Wittenberg, which dates from the year 1290, is perched about 13 feet up on the church façade. The town is famous as the place where Martin Luther's Protestant Reformation began in the 15th century.

Duellmann, 79, had demanded that the sandstone relief be removed because it was defamatory to himself and to Judaism overall. After losing his case in district court and on appeal, he took it to Germany's highest criminal and civil court two years ago, where he lost.

Duellmann's options now include taking the case to the Federal Constitutional Court in Karlsruhe, which deals with human rights-related cases, attorney Ludwig Benecke told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. The basis for such a suit would be that such sculptures "insult the dignity of the human being," which is against German Basic Law.

Speaking for the Lichtenfels-based law firm that has advised Duellmann throughout the process, Benecke explained it might be necessary to engage an attorney with experience in arguing cases before the Constitutional Court.

The process could take a lot of time, he said, but "I think [Duellmann] has enough energy to push it through."

Should the Constitutional Court fail to take it on, the case could be brought to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, or the International Criminal Court in The Hague, Benecke said.

In delivering the verdict last Tuesday, the court's presiding judge, Stephan Seiters, said there was no "present infringement" of Duellmann's civil rights, since the church had already installed an explanatory plaque, publicly and clearly distancing itself from the original antisemitic intentions.

In a statement issued last Tuesday, the Central Council of Jews in Germany said it was disappointed in the decision.

The explanatory display does not "unambiguously condemn the anti-Jewish sculpture," Josef Schuster, head of the Central Council, said. To really distance itself, "the church would have to clearly acknowledge its own guilt and condemn its centuries-long anti-Judaism" – something Schuster said he hoped this and other churches in Germany would finally do.

"The defamation of Jews by the churches must be a thing of the past," he said.

The sculptures should come down all together, Charlotte Knobloch, former chair of the Central Council and long-time head of the Jewish community in Munich and Upper Bavaria, said in a press statement last Tuesday.

"I had very much hoped for a different decision," Knobloch added. "As the presiding judge himself has already said, this relief is 'anti-Semitism chiseled in stone."

Duellmann told JTA that while he was disappointed in the verdict, he was pleased that his public challenge sparked conversation about historical and modern antisemitism in Germany.

There are an estimated 40 Judensau sculptures in Germany, the oldest dating to the 13th century. Most are found in the form of reliefs or gargoyles. The earliest versions were placed inside where Jews would not see them, but eventually churches also placed them outside. **HW**

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Local Attorney Climbs the Ladder at Memphis Law Firm



Jason Goldstein was recently named Executive Vice President at Harkavy Shainber & Kaplan

By Shoshana Cenker

Switching careers from the logistics industry to law was a good move for Jason Goldstein, Esq. In just four years, he's quickly climbed the corporate ladder at Harkavy Shainberg Kaplan PLC. After joining as an Associate, he later became a Member, and now he's been promoted to Executive Vice President of the firm.

With a Bachelor of Arts in political science from George Washington University and a Juris Doctorate from the University of Miami School of Law, Jason brought loads of valuable professional experience to the firm – most notably his business-oriented focus within the practice of law and the management of people, processes, systems and sales, "something lawyers don't usually have," he said.

Of course, he has plenty of law industry experience, having been involved in various roles at several organizations including Legal Services of Greater Miami, Inc., American Bar Association Africa Law Committee, Office of the Rhode Island Public Defender, United Nations International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and others.

Beginning with the law practice as an Associate, Jason assisted the litigation team, establishing a general practice with an emphasis on civil litigation, and worked on commercial transactions, business law, estate planning, among other many other aspects. Recently Jason was named a Member (which is akin to Partner, but named differently for the PLC firm), which then brought him to his newest and well-deserved title.

"I saw areas for process improvements in the firm and that led to me being the natural choice to fill the EVP role, in which I assist the managing partners and our firm's president, Michael Kaplan," explained Jason, who earned his TN bar license in 2016. "Michael has been an incredible mentor. What's nice about this role is that all the Members have been great mentors. I came in not knowing the industry so much, and they've all taught me. It's led to fantastic partnerships and very naturally, too."

Jason's new role also includes taking over day-to-day management responsibilities of the firm, which has 10 attorneys, and bringing the practice to the next generation. That means improving internal efficiencies, growing the firm some but not too much, facilitating technological improvements and adopting new software solutions.

"We're also gradually changing how we market our firm with fresh marketing materials – we're growing and evolving within the greater Memphis area and the Jewish community," he added. "We take pride in being a staple of the Jewish community."

Jason points out that he's pleased with his current "chosen profession" after being in a different field. "What I enjoy about being a lawyer is that it's an intellectual profession that allows me to learn about new things all the time and meet new people. I'm always stimulated by unique situations and personalities," said Jason, who's published journal articles in the "Florida A & M University Law Review" and "Africa Law Today." I joined the firm because the founders

and others who grew the practice were working together for decades and decades, and became a family, which still exists today. They've left their imprint. We're all truly cohesively a team."

Jason says he's felt welcomed since the very beginning. "I'll never forget, soon after I started as a brand-new Associate, founder Ronald Harkavy and his wife, Iris, had their 50th anniversary celebration, at which they said, 'Welcome to the family," he shared. "It's a privilege to join them in the ranks of the firm."

Something else that attracted Jason to the firm is its philanthropy, especially with Jewish organizations. "I'm on the board of the Memphis Jewish Federation," Jason said. "And having grown up in Memphis and with my mom's family being Memphians, the Jewish community is very important to me – and it's important to the firm. Our interests aligned in that way. It's a big part of who Harkavy Shainberg Kaplan PLC is."

Though he stays busy at the firm, Jason also enjoys family time with wife, Leah, and their 3-year-old son, Graham. The future seems quite bright, personally and of course, professionally.

"I'm excited knowing how much potential there is here at the firm," he said, "not reinventing the wheel, but helping steer this functioning organization. This is a terrific firm." **HW**

Report: War-torn Ukraine Asks Israel for \$500 Million Loan

(JNS) – Ukraine has asked Israel for a \$500 million loan, Israeli media reported last Tuesday, as the European country's economy continues to be battered by Russia's ongoing invasion.

The loan request was submitted some two weeks ago by Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, according to Israel Hayom. Israel has confirmed the request and is "examining" the matter, the report stated.

The stated purpose of the loan was to help Ukraine deal with the "catastrophic impact" of the war on the country's economy.

According to official statistics, Ukraine's GDP decreased by 15.1% in the first quarter of 2022 compared to the same period last year, the report noted.

According to the International Monetary Fund, Ukraine's economy is projected to shrink by a further 30% to 45% by the end of the year.

Japan has loaned Ukraine \$600 million, Germany has loaned \$300 million and Canada \$800 million, according to Israel Hayom.

On June 8, Ukrainian Ambassador to Israel Yevgen Korniychuk urged Jerusalem to sell its Iron Dome air defense system to the Ukrainian military. The ambassador also asked Israel to sell Ukraine anti-tank missiles.

Israel has sent protective helmets and ceramic vests to Ukrainian emergency responders, and was the only country to operate a field hospital in the country this year, which treated some 6,000 patients

However, Jerusalem has sought to balance its desire to assist Ukraine with

concerns over deteriorating its relationship with Russia, which has significant air and land forces deployed in neighboring Syria, where Israel is conducting a shadow campaign to disrupt Iranian military entrenchment and intercepts weapons smuggling efforts to arm Hezbollah. HW





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Billy Crystal Performs 'Yiddish Scat' at The Tony Awards



Billy Crystal performing a "Yiddish scat" routine during the 75th annual Tony Awards, June 12, 2022. Credit: Screenshot

By Andrew Lapin

(JTA) – "Ella Fitzgerald, wherever you are, I apologize in advance."

Billy Crystal gave this year's Tonys a jolt of Jewish shtick when he coaxed the audience into a call-and-response "Yiddish scat" routine, as part of a live performance to promote his Broadway musical, "Mr. Saturday Night."

In a good-faith mockery of Fitzgerald's own famous "scat" routine, Crystal, in character as his show's fading comedian star Buddy Young Jr., let loose on the Sunday night telecast with a series of nonsensical guttural sounds vaguely approximating Yiddish.

He then gleefully entered the audi-

ence for a bit of crowd work, messing with attendees Samuel L. Jackson and Lin-Manuel Miranda – who unwittingly became a Jewish "Hamilton" alter ego: "I'm Alexander Rabinowitz." (Miranda has proven his Jewish-theater bona fides before: He sang "To Life" from "Fiddler on the Roof" at his own wedding, and also performed in Hebrew in a college a cappella group.)

After briefly cursing "an old Jew's worst nightmare: stairs," Crystal ended his routine by leading Radio City Music Hall in a giant "Oy vey" chant. It was surely a nice consolation prize, given that "Mr. Saturday Night," based on Crystal's 1992 movie of the same name, left the evening with none of the five awards it had been nominated for (the top prize for Best Musical instead went to Pulitzer Prize winner "A Strange Loop").

Some other Jewish-adjacent nominees were more successful. "The Lehman Trilogy," an expansive play about multiple generations of the Jewish banking family, took home Best Play and four other Tonys. "Company," a

gender-swapped revival of the classic Stephen Sondheim show that premiered shortly after the Broadway titan's death, won five awards including Best Musical Revival. And "Take Me Out," a restaging of Jewish playwright Richard Greenberg's 2002 play about a professional baseball player who comes out as gay to his teammates, won for Best Revival of a Play, as well as for its lead actor Jesse Tyler Ferguson.

"Girl From the North Country," a jukebox musical that reimagines Bob Dylan's songbook for a Depression-era story about American hardship, also won a Tony for Best Orchestrations. During the broadcast, "North Country" star Jeannette Bayardelle delivered a showstopping live medley of Dylan's "Like a Rolling Stone" and "Pressing On" (the latter from the raised-Jewish rocker's Christian conversion phase in the 1970s and '80s).

And there was one more Jewish appearance at the Tonys, as "Spring Awakening" star Lea Michele reunited with that 2006 show's cast for an anniversary performance. **HW**

Israeli-Based Company Seeks Approval to Ease U.S. Shortage of Baby Formula

(JNS) – An Israeli-based company hopes to fill the void as the baby-formula shortage in the United States continues with parents continuing to find store shelves bare, particularly for those seeking specialty formulas.

Three weeks ago, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration issued emergency guidance enabling the import of infant formulas produced abroad. Tel Aviv-based MyOr – an Israeli healthtech company – is among companies seeking FDA approval as its Mexican subsidiary, AlphaCare, produces and

markets MyOr formulas from a plant in north-central Mexico.

"We have 200,000 cans of formula ready to be shipped right now, with a capacity to produce another 250,000 a month," said MyOr co-founder and chief technology officer Michael Brandwein. Once it receives FDA approval, he said, the company will be able to ship formula to homes and distributors in a matter of days, as many back-end arrangements have already been made.

Among the formula products AlphaCare makes are specialty ones in very short supply.

"These are for premature babies and for infants dealing with food allergies and sensitivities," said Brandwein. "They are produced by fewer companies and in smaller batches."

He said the company remains hopeful that "approval will come in the next few days," describing the process as akin to the frantic early approval process for COVID-19 vaccines.

Founded in 2018, MyOr provides preventive health-care solutions for infants at-risk with a specific focus on food allergies and nutritional sufficiency. Com-

pany products include a digital platform for predicting food allergies and eczema from birth, as well as a non-invasive hemoglobin test using a smartphone camera.

"MyOr has received numerous requests from distressed retailers in the U.S. eager to supply our products," said Dr. Ariel Katz, CEO of MyOr and AlphaCare. "We're talking about the most basic and humane act of providing newborn babies with nutrition. MyOr has made supporting the community of parents in the United States our No. 1 priority." HW



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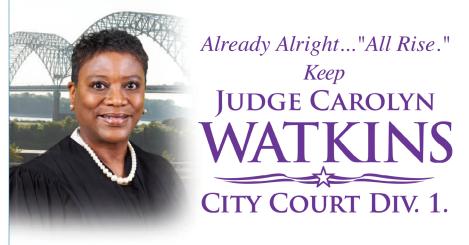
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YI Women's Circle Pre-Shavuos Event





By Rabbi Akiva Males

On Tuesday night, May 31, Young Israel's Moss Grand Foyer was filled with nearly 50 women from across the community enjoying each other's company in a relaxed and fun manner.

This 'DIY Floral Napkin Rings' event was the third major program put together by the recently formed YI Women's Circle. The space was decorated beautifully, the participants enjoyed socializing – while creating decorative items to enhance Shavuos – and a tasty churros bar. All attendees were entered into a raffle for a delicious

cheese babka.

I've heard much positive feedback about the evening, and I know that many women are looking forward to the next YI Women's Circle program.

YI thanks the chairs of this enjoyable program: Aliza Gelb, Chana Goldstone, Yocheved Naftel, and Leah Semmel – and each volunteer who put a lot of work into planning, setting up and cleaning up from this event.

To learn more about YI Women's Circle, please email thewomenscircleyi@gmail.com HW

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Plough Towers: Summer Calls for Ice Cream



Vice President Harleen Tague, President Laurie Scheidt, Secretary Julie Boshwit and Executive Director Leigh Hendry

By Harleen Tague

It's June and summer has definitely begun!

I Scream, You Scream, We all Scream for Ice Cream! When the intensity of the heat begins, we know that one thing can make us gather for a cool treat – an Ice Cream Social.

Plough Towers Board of Directors sponsored an Ice Cream Social for residents on June 13 with almost the entire Board participating, serving, socializing and having a great time. There's nothing like ice cream to make people happy – no matter what age we are.

June is definitely a month to look forward to. Summer has come to represent optimism, positivity, hope for the future and joy. It's a time to relax from the pressures of the seasons that come before it. Three months of freedom and vacation; fresh fruits and vegetables provided each week from Temple Israel Sisterhood Gleaning at the Farmers Market; exercise continues with Sara; trips to local stores and to Southland Casino and dinner out at local restaurants are always anticipated.

Most importantly Father's Day was celebrated on Friday, June 17. Breeze Coyle with Creative Aging of the Mid-South performed his New Orleans style jazz. A fun time was had by all our fathers, families and friends. For more information on the happenings at Plough Towers please visit www.ploughtowers.org. **HW**





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Baseball Lessons That Might Help Change Up Your Finances

Provided by Mike Stein, Managing Director – Investments, Wells Fargo Advisors Questions for Mike? You can reach him at 901.761.8151

Baseball stadiums are filled with optimists. Fans start each new season with the hope that even if last year ended badly, this year could finally be the year. After all, teams rally mid-season, curses are broken, and even underdogs sometimes make it to the World Series. As Yogi Berra famously put it, "It ain't over till it's over." Here are a few lessons from America's pastime that might inspire you to take a fresh look at your finances.

Proceed One Base at a Time

There's nothing like seeing a home run light up the scoreboard, but games are often won by singles and doubles that put runners in scoring position through a series of hits. The "one base at a time" approach takes discipline, something you can apply to your finances. What are your financial goals? Do you know how much money comes in and how much goes out? Are you saving regularly for retirement or for a child's college education? Answering some fundamental questions will help you understand where you are now and help you decide where you want to go.

Cover Your Bases

WELLS

FARGO

Baseball players must be positioned and prepared to make a play at the base. What can you do to help protect your financial future in case life throws you a curveball? Try to prepare for those

Advisors

"what ifs." For example, you could buy the insurance coverage you need to help make sure your family is protected. And you could set up an emergency account that you can tap instead of dipping into your retirement funds or using a credit card when an unexpected expense arises.

Expect to Strike Out

Fans may have trouble seeing strikeouts in a positive light, but every baseball player knows that striking out is a big part of the game. In fact, striking out is much more common than getting hits. The record for the highest career batting average record is .366, held by Ty Cobb.² As Ted Williams once said, "Baseball is the only field of endeavor where a man can succeed three times out of ten and be considered a good performer."³

So how does this apply to your finances? As Hank Aaron put it, "Failure is a part of success." If you're prepared for the misses as well as the hits, you can avoid reacting emotionally rather than rationally when things don't work out according to plan. For example, when investing, you have no control over how the market is going to perform, but you can decide what to invest in and when to buy and sell, according to your investment goals and tolerance for risk. In the words of longtime baseball fan Warren

Buffett, "What's nice about investing is you don't have to swing at every pitch." 5

Take Me Out to the Ball Game

The average cost of taking a family of four to a Major League Baseball game during the 2021 season was \$253. Costs varied across the league, with Red Sox fans paying the most and Diamondbacks' fans paying the least.*



*Based on the Fan Cost Index from Team Marketing Report, which includes price of four nonpremium tickets, parking, two draft beers, four soft drinks, four hot dogs, and two adult-sized adjustable hats.

Source: The Athletic, 2021

See Every Day as a New Ball Game

When the trailing team ties the score (often unexpectedly), the announcer shouts, "It's a whole new ball game!"

Whether your investments haven't performed as expected, or you've spent too much money, or you haven't saved enough, there's always hope if you're willing to learn from what you've done right and what you've done wrong. Hall of Famer Bob Feller may have said it best. "Every day is a new opportunity. You can build on yesterday's success or put its failures behind and start over again. That's the way life is, with a new game every day, and that's the way baseball is."

All investing involves risk, including the possible loss of principal. There is no guarantee that any investment strategy will be successful.

- 1, 3-4, 6-7) BrainyQuote.com
- 2) ESPN.com
- 5) quotefancy.com

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Israel Experiencing 'Very Sharp' Spike in COVID-19 Cases



Dizengoff Center, Tel Aviv, on Aug. 17, 2021. Credit: Miriam Alster/Flash90.

(JNS) - Amid a "very sharp" rise in COVID-19 cases, Israel's Health Ministry last Monday recommended a return to wearing masks in closed spaces.

"The wearing of masks is the way to decrease infections in the community and to safeguard high-risk populations and the elderly, who are especially vulnerable to serious disease and death caused by the virus," the Ministry said in a statement.

"In recent days, Israel is seeing a very sharp rise in the number of corona confirmed cases, and with it, a leap in the number of seriously ill. We want to safeguard the [daily] routine – but also [public] health," the statement continued.

Nearly 6,000 new COVID-19 cases were confirmed last Sunday, while the number of seriously ill patients stood at 100, Israel's Walla news site reported

The positivity rate of Ministry-supervised COVID-19 tests stood at 26.38%, and the reproduction factor (R) rose to 1.51 – which means the virus is spreading rapidly – according to the report.

The Ministry said that it was every individual's personal responsibility to wear masks in closed places despite there being no obligation to do so at the

"This is an act of solidarity and caring towards others," the statement added.

The Ministry cited a study by the United States Center for Disease Control, which found that continuous use of masks in indoor spaces reduced infection risks by up to 50 percent. HW

Chemical Exposure at Pool in Jerusalem Results in 42 Women Hospitalized

(JNS) - United Hatzalah volunteers responded to a large-scale medical emergency early last Friday morning that took place in a community pool in the Ramot neighborhood of Jerusalem after those present were exposed to toxic chemicals.

Some 42 women sustained injuries due to exposure and breathing in the chemicals.

United Hatzalah volunteer EMT Ariel Ben David, who was one of the first responders at the scene, said "the majority of the women and young ladies who were exposed sustained mild injuries, most of them respiratory injuries. They have been transported to hospitals in Jerusalem for further care and treatment."

She said firefighters remained at the pool to counteract the exposure to the substance, and that the incident is under investigation. HW

Helen Davidson Basist Hellman



Our beloved Helen Davidson Basist Hellman, passed away on June 2, 2022, in Asheville, N.C, where she made her home for the past eight and half years. She was born in Memphis, Tenn., on December 11, 1930, to Harry and Hannah Davidson. She married her high school sweetheart, Dr. Robert Basist, in 1950. Together they

OBITUARIES

had four children (Judy, Renee, Alan, and Marc). Robert (Bob) passed away in Aug. 1963. She went on to marry Bernard Shapiro who took her to Rochester, N.Y. They had 12 joyful years together. After his passing, she married Maynard Hellman, with whom she shared 20 wonderful years in Rochester and Boca Raton, Fla., before his passing in 2005.

More than anything, she devoted herself to her children and grandchildren along with their spouses, and to her great-grandchildren. She took great pride and satisfaction in all of their achievements and delighted in frequent family events. Being with them was a great source of joy, with tremendous love flowing in both directions.

Helen is survived by her sister, Sondra Abraham (Memphis), daughters Judy Figura (Theodore) of Asheville, N.C., Renee Hutcheson (Alan) of Raleigh, N.C., sons Alan Basist (Beatrix Beuthner) of Asheville, and Marc Basist (JoAnn) of Allentown, Pa. She also has six grandchildren (Michael, Rachel, Stephen, Courtney, Lauren, and Shawna) and five great-grandchildren (Grant, Chloe, Maisy, Yaira, and Tybee).

Being the center of our family, Helen will live on in our hearts and memories. Thinking of her will bring a loving smile on each of our faces.

A funeral service was held at Baron Hirsh Cemetery in Memphis on June 7,

Donations can be made in Helen Hellman's memory to Congregation Beth Israel, Social Action Fund at 229 Murdock Avenue, Asheville, NC 28804; to Four Seasons Hospice at 571 South Allen Road, Flat Rock, NC 28731; or to Manna Foodbank at https://donate. mannafoodbank.org HW

Shirley Levitch Kaplan



Shirley Levitch Kaplan was born along with her twin sister in El Dorado, Arkansas, on June 11, 1931. Her parents Samuel and Lena Levitch moved to Memphis, Tennessee, with all eight siblings in December of 1931.

Shirley graduated from Central High School, started college, had a few various jobs before working for the U.S. Department of Agriculture and meeting her husband of 43 years, Dr. Issac Kaplan.

Shirley retired after 25 years of service from USDA. After she retired Shirley volunteered at Anshei Sphard Beth El Emeth Synagogue and sisterhood where she was past president and life member. She was a lifetime member and volunteer of Hadassah, MJCC and Salon Circle. Shirley was fashion conscious, a leader, a mentor, an independent, strong, dedicated, sweet but stern women who was always there to lend a helping hand.

She was proceeded in death by her parents, Lena Finegold Levitch and Samuel Levitch, her husband, Dr. Issac Kaplan, three brothers Harry Levitch, Arthur Levitch and Dr. Mark Levitch, three sisters, Etta Meiner and Sylvia Lansky of Memphis, and her twin sister, Jean Levitch of San Antonio, Texas.

She is survived by her sister, Myrtle Finley, of San Antonio, Texas, and her loving nieces Deborah Lansky, Deborah Rosenwein, Dina Biesman, Jan Sturdivant Berry, Gail Phillips and her loving nephews, Paul Lansky, Scot Lansky, David Kaplan, Dr. Mark Kaplan, Donald Finley and Ronald Levitch. Shirley Levitch Kaplan was loved by all who knew her and will be greatly missed. HW

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On Juneteenth, Jewish Communities are Reckoning with Their Own Attitudes on Race



Galveston residents celebrate Juneteenth, which originated in the Texas city. Credit: Getty

By Jackie Hajdenberg

(JTA) – June 16, 2022 – At Washington Hebrew Congregation in D.C., a weekend full of educational programming is on the agenda for Juneteenth.

Guests at Friday's Kabbalat Shabbat will enjoy a dinner provided by a local Caribbean catering company featuring menu items like jerk chicken, green beans, and fried plantains. After services on Saturday morning, the synagogue will send a group to the Moral March on Washington. On Sunday, there will be a screening of the film 'Who We Are: A Chronicle of Racism in America'.

In Greensboro, North Carolina, Temple Emanuel will tell the story of one of its white congregants who was involved in desegregating local businesses during the Woolworth lunch counter sit-ins of the Civil Rights Movement. In Georgia, the Atlanta Jews of Color Council and Kol Panim will co-host a musical Shabbat at the Distillery of Modern Art.

These communities join the many others celebrating Juneteenth in Jewish spaces for the second year of its recognition as a federal holiday. The holiday, which falls on Sunday, June 19, commemorates the day in 1865 when enslaved Black people in Texas learned of their emancipation, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation.

For many Jewish institutions, Juneteenth is not just an opportunity for solidarity with the Black community, but a moment to grapple with racism in their own spaces. Many of these communities' celebrations and commemorations will be led by their own members who are both Black and Jewish.

"I certainly hope that this event will be the start of a conversation, not just the end," said Josh Maxey, head of the Jews of color group at Washington Hebrew. Two years ago, Washington Hebrew launched a roundtable program to address racial inequity. But Maxey knew that Jews of color needed a place for fellowship, and so the affinity group was founded in August 2021.

"It's really a chance for other Jews of color to come together to celebrate each other and to be themselves and not feel like we have to hide aspects of our identity," Maxey said. "Sometimes it's difficult to walk into Jewish spaces and be the only person that looks like you."

Amid a national reckoning over racism in the United States in the wake of the 2020 murder of George Floyd, Jewish communities are turning the focus on themselves. And many are finding the ways their actions fail to match their rhetoric of inclusion.

At the Reconstructing Judaism convention in March, attendees of an anti-racist workshop co-led by Rabbi Sandra Lawson, director of racial diversity, equity, and inclusion for the movement, learned about how harmful it is to ask a person of color when they converted, or, during Shabbat services, if they know what they're doing.

Nate Looney, director of community safety and belonging at the Jewish Federations of North America, said this is something he deals with when deciding whether to go to synagogue.

"As much as being observant is important to me, my peace of mind is better guarded if I stay home and observe Shabbat at home, versus going to this new random synagogue and being faced with all the questions that I'm going to get," Looney said.

"My heart goes out to Jews of color that are struggling with their Judaism and going into these spaces to seek refuge and then are met with this exoticism or curiosity," he added.

In April, Lawson launched the beta version of a tool for synagogues to assess their racial justice and equity work.

Synagogues have also had to reckon with their attitudes toward security,
especially in the wake of antisemitic
violence that included the hostage situation at Congregation Beth Israel in
Colleyville, Texas, in January. While
white Jews might welcome police and
armed guards at their synagogues, Jews
of color do not feel that same sense of
security in their presence, given the disproportionate amount of police violence
directed at Black and brown people in
the United States.

Looney, a farmer by trade, is now leading an examination of armed security for the Jewish Federations' equity, diversity and inclusion efforts.

"It's really important to ensure that individual communities are engaging in these conversations about safety and security, that they're seeking out the Jews of color in their community to engage them in those conversations as well," Looney said.

Many of the Jewish Juneteenth programs across the country will touch upon these year-round issues for Black Americans. But they'll also focus on how Black Jews have always been part of the Jewish community by centering Black Jewish voices. At the Marlene Meyerson JCC Manhattan, ritual leaders Rabbi Isaama Goldstein-Stoll and Marques Hollie – the "Jewsician" –will lead a rooftop music session, followed by a vegetarian potluck dinner. In Elmira, New York, Congregation Kol Ami will host guest speaker Mookey Van Orden, a Jewish day school alum, teacher, theater director and activist who will give a presentation on how to be a Jewish anti-racist.

"Black Jews aren't an oddity or something that's just cropped up since the murder of George Floyd," Looney said. "We've always been a part of the community and have been either hidden or ignored."

"There's often a conversation when it comes to talking about the Black community around saying 'the Jewish community' and 'the Black community,'" he added. "I think it's important for us to shift that conversation some to recognizing that it's not two separate things, and that there can be overlap."

Recently, that overlap became tragically evident after a shooting in a Buffalo grocery store left 13 people dead, 11 of whom were Black. The shooter had

been influenced by the antisemitic and racist Great Replacement conspiracy theory, which, among other things, suggests Jews are behind a plot to "replace" white people with a tide of immigrants and Black and brown people.

In some ways, the parallels between Jewish history and Black history are clear. The central story of the Jewish people - the exodus from Egyptian bondage - echoed with enslaved African-Americans and their descendants, to the extent that Juneteenth seders have become part of Black Jews' commemoration of the day. In 2018, Jews for Racial & Economic Justice began hosting an annual Juneteenth seder, creating a haggadah and seder plate that blends the symbols from Passover with traditional foods from the American South such as beets, okra and sweet potatoes.

The Civil Rights Movement was the high-water mark for an alliance of Jews and Blacks who saw common cause. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel famously marched from Selma to Montgomery with Martin Luther King Jr.; two Jewish activists, Andrew Goodman and Michael Schwerner, and the Black civil rights worker James Chaney were murdered by members of the Ku Klux Klan when they were registering Mississippi's Black citizens to vote as part of 1964's Freedom Summer.

In the Jewish world today though, the challenge is not just interfaith or interracial work to end racism elsewhere, but also dealing with racism in Jewish community spaces, Black Jewish leaders say. Hosting a Juneteenth seder is an opportunity to recognize these issues using a familiar Jewish lens.

"We're retelling the story of coming into freedom," Looney said. "And oftentimes within the United States, the messaging to Black Americans is that you should forget about slavery. But as Jews of color, it's part of our tradition to remember being a part of slavery and being out of slavery. So what does it mean to hold on to something that was 5,000 years ago, but forget about something that was 300 years ago?"

Josh Maxey from Washington Hebrew said his synagogue's Juneteenth programming serves two purposes: "It's not only bringing the Jews of color together, but also just educating the community about what Juneteenth is and why it's important.

"We have to be comfortable with being uncomfortable in those conversations," he added. "And that's really the only way that things will change." **HW**

White House Confirms Biden to Arrive in Israel on July 13



U.S. President Joe Biden arrives to deliver remarks to essential and frontline workers and military families attending the Fourth of July celebration on July 4, 2021, on the South Lawn of the White House. Credit: Official White House Photo by Katie Ricks.

(JNS) – The White House last Tuesday confirmed that U.S. President Joe Biden will travel to Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Saudi Arabia between July 13 and July 16.

The trip will "reinforce the United States' iron-clad commitment to Israel's security and prosperity" and see Biden "attend a Summit of the Gulf Cooperation Council [GCC] plus Egypt, Iraq, and Jordan," according to a statement released by White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre.

The GCC is comprised of Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman and Qatar.

The U.S. leader will also "meet with counterparts from across the region, to advance U.S. security, economic and diplomatic interests," the statement said.

He will head to Israel first, where he will meet with Israeli leaders to discuss Israel's "security, prosperity and its increasing integration into the greater region," it continued.

From there, Biden will travel to Judea and Samaria to consult with the P.A. leadership and "reiterate his strong support for a two-state solution, with equal measures of security, freedom and opportunity for the Palestinian people," according to the White House.

He will then head to Jeddah, Saudi Arabia – the current chair of the GCC and the venue for the summit – at the invitation of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, said the statement.

"President Biden's visit to Israel will deepen the special relationship and the strategic partnership between the two countries, as well as strengthen the U.S. commitment to the security and stability of Israel and the region," Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett said in a statement released last Tuesday night.

"The president's visit will also reveal the steps that are being taken by the U.S. to integrate Israel into the Middle East and increase the prosperity of the entire region. In addition to this, the U.S. and Israel will be forging agreements set to strengthen the civilian and security cooperation between the two countries and take the U.S.-Israel alliance to new heights," the statement added. "The State of Israel welcomes President Biden's visit to the region, including his important visit to Saudi Arabia, and thanks him for his efforts to strengthen the countries' joint interests and expand regional peace." HW

Summer Travel Season Begins with Chaos at Israel's Main Airport



Check-in at Israel's Ben Gurion International Airport, on June 14, 2022. Credit: Avshalom Sassoni/Flash90.

By Shimon Yaish

(Israel Hayom via JNS) – After returning to full operations in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, Israel's Ben-Gurion International Airport is having difficulty coping with heavy passenger traffic as the summer travel season gets underway.

Even though the airport has reopened Terminal 1 and airport director Shmuel Zakai is on the floor himself helping conduct security checks, the lines remain long.

Zakai has said that the airport is having difficulty recruiting new staff and is facing a shortage of some 1,000 workers. Zakai said he expects it will take until Passover 2023 for the situation to improve.

The worker shortage is so severe that some airlines are operating with 40% fewer staff than they had on board at the same time a year ago.

The Shavuot holiday, which this year fell in early June, saw some 300,000 travelers pass through Ben-Gurion airport, and some 4 million travelers are expected to depart from and enter Israel this summer.

In recent weeks, a number of airlines have contacted Ben-Gurion to request slots for additional flights to and from Israel. The airlines were informed that the airport was unable to accommodate their requests.

Senior airport officials explained that even without additional slots, the airport was dealing with a volume of approximately 90% of the flights it handled in the record year of 2019, prior to the pandemic.

Airlines that request approval for charter flights are also expected to encounter refusals, which could lead to more expensive ticket prices due to the comparatively low number of available flights.

Travelers who landed at the airport last Friday were forced to wait hours for taxis to take them home. Some gave up and went back inside to spend the night at the airport.

A few weeks ago, *Israel Hayom* revealed that even though flights have resumed, the Transportation Ministry has not reinstated the night and weekend trains to the airport, meaning that travelers need to ask for rides or pay expensive taxi fares to reach their destinations.

The difficulty in arranging taxis affects not only Israelis but also tourists, who are met with a frustrating first encounter with Israel. Officials involved in the matter told Israel Hayom about a number of instances of taxi drivers prey-

ing on tourists, charging them as much as thousands of shekels.

In the past, there were designated taxi companies that worked with the airport, and airport employees could also coordinate with taxi drivers to ensure that there were enough taxis available at peak times. This coordination has fallen by the wayside.

"There's no oversight. No one knows which drivers enter the airport, no one knows what they're doing," said one official.

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

Lebanese President to Propose Compromise in Maritime Border Dispute with Israel

(JNS) U.S. Senior Advisor for Energy Security Amos Hochstein arrived in Lebanon last Monday for a two-day visit that included mediating indirect talks aimed at resolving a maritime border dispute between Lebanon and Israel, according to a State Department statement.

"The [Biden] Administration welcomes the consultative and open spirit of the parties to reach a final decision, which has the potential to yield greater stability, security, and prosperity for both Lebanon and Israel, as well as for the region," the statement noted.

Hochstein was invited by the Lebanese government after Beirut slammed the arrival on June 5 of a vessel operated by the Energean company to develop a gas field for Israel known as Karish. While Israel claims the site is located within its exclusive economic zone, Lebanon nevertheless issued a "warning" against any "aggressive action" regarding gas production.

For its part, Hezbollah said that it was

prepared to take military action to prevent Israel's development of the field.

The countries' indirect negotiations were upended last year when Lebanese officials pushed their maritime claim from a boundary known as "Line 23" further south to "Line 29," according to a Reuters report last Monday. This added around 540 square miles to Beirut's claim, including part of Karish, the report said.

Instead, Hochstein proposed a fieldswap, but Lebanon did not formally agree, the report added.

However, Reuters cited three Lebanese officials as saying that Lebanese President Michel Aoun is slated during a meeting with Hochstein [last] Tuesday to drop his government's claim to waters extending to Line 29, and instead propose a demarcation border of "Line 23, plus a little more."

The proposed zone would not include the Karish field, which is located about 50 miles west of Haifa, the report stated. **HW**

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Is 'Cha Cha Real Smooth' the First Good Bar/Bat Mitzvah Movie?

By Andrew Lapin

(JTA) – It seems hard to believe, but there's never been a truly great bar/bat mitzvah movie –mostly because there just haven't been that many bar/bat mitzvah movies, period.

Yes, there have been plenty of one-off TV episodes centered around the Jewish ritual, ranging from "Big Mouth" to "And Just Like That" to "The Wonder Years." And sure, one could make an argument for "A Serious Man," the Coen brothers' 2008 masterpiece about a Jewish physics professor undergoing an existential crisis, except the hero's son's bar mitzvah only factors into the story tangentially.

But after that, things get pretty sparse. "Keeping Up With The Steins," the 2006 Jeremy Piven comedy about warring bar mitzvah families, got lukewarm reviews, at best. And the less said about "Donny's Bar Mitzvah," the better.

Now, though, we have a serious contender: "Cha Cha Real Smooth," a low-key charmer from 25-year-old writer-director-star Cooper Raiff that opened Friday in theaters and on Apple TV+. (Apple acquired the film for a record sum at this year's Sundance Film Festival, just like it did with last year's eventual Best Picture Oscar winner "CODA," and seems to be adopting a similar release strategy here.)

Named after a lyric in "Cha Cha Slide," a 2000 hit by DJ Casper that has become a standby of bar mitzvah playlists everywhere, it's a film that seems to understand something subtle about the dramatic potential of bar and bat mitzvahs – even though Raiff himself

isn't Jewish, we never see the inside of a sanctuary, and the R rating aims the move at a post-bar mitzvah audience.

So what makes this one special? "Cha Cha" takes the bar mitzvah's central coming-of-age idea, that a single ritual at the appropriate time marks the true threshold of adulthood and runs with it in an unexpected manner. Its hero, Andrew (Raiff), isn't a bar mitzvah boy but rather his hype man: the guy the parents hire to make sure the hormonal honorees (and all their friends) are having a good time at their own party.

In a sign of what's to come, Andrew is first seen as a teenager hopelessly in love with an adult "motivational dancer" at a friend's bar mitzvah party, oblivious to their age and maturity gap. Fast-forward a decade, and we watch Andrew himself become a motivational dancer, once again falling in love with an older woman (Dakota Johnson, playing depressed single mother Domino). He spends his evenings among the pubescent, caught between the carefree world of his youth and the unanswerable tensions of adulthood.

The chance to liven up some b'nai mitzvah parties and extend adult-ish confidence boosters to his 13-year-old brother in the process, is the lone motivator in this recent college grad's otherwise deeply directionless life. Bunking back in his New Jersey childhood home with his bipolar mother (Leslie Mann) and self-serious stepfather (Brad Garrett, playing against type as a humorless scold), Andrew can't quite figure out whether he wants to be an adult at all. He continually seems to be glitching back

and forth between maturity (launching his own party-starting business) and debasement (drinking on the job; spinning the adults-only Cardi B hit "WAP" for a roomful of junior high school kids).

Raiff's publicists did not respond to multiple Jewish Telegraphic Agency requests for an interview. But he's told other outlets that his inspiration for the film came from growing up in a wealthy, heavily Jewish community in Dallas, where most of the kids at his school were Jewish and the bar mitzvah party was a major marker of social status. Raiff was less interested in the easy jokes one could make about elaborate, expensive parties than in the undercurrent of the ritual itself: what it means to put so much attention and so many expectations on a 13-year-old.

"The whole experience is, you see your close friend and the fruits of his or her labor. And so you're seeing this whole new life of people that you've known for so long," he told The Playlist. "They were such huge, huge events in my mind."

This outlook translates on screen into a curious outsider's perspective on Jewish pathways to maturity. Its main characters aren't preparing for bar/bat mitzvahs themselves (Domino offhandedly remarks that she's also not Jewish), yet they still treat the parties as rites of passage: important social engagements that will determine whether they can have meaningful relationships with their peers. Andrew might think he's the one teaching these teens how to do that, but actually – as regular viewers of the

prototypical "Sundance dramedy" have likely already deduced – they're teaching him.

Case in point: One significant character, Domino's autistic teen daughter Lola (played by newcomer Vanessa Burghardt, who is herself on the autism spectrum), explains to Andrew why she's less comfortable in social situations than he is, and why she often needs to recharge by sitting in an empty room. Andrew's acceptance of this information constitutes what, for him, is growth: the realization that confidence can come in many different forms and doesn't just show up on the dance floor. (The disability rights nonprofit Respect-Ability, which often works on disability inclusion issues within the Jewish community, consulted on Lola's representation in the film.)

What can "maturity" mean to a drifter like Andrew; to a lost adult like Domino; to their young charges decked out in their awkward formal wear; or to someone like Lola with an entirely different outlook on life? "Cha Cha" explores the different aspects of this question with wit and insight, if not a particularly Jewish perspective. But it's not entirely without Jewish insight.

When the non-Jewish heroes witness a bar mitzvah boy call his family up to lead the motzi and kiddush, they get emotional: This image of a family coming together to mark a life stage means something grand, even if they don't have the words for it.

"Cha Cha Real Smooth" opened June 17 in theaters and on Apple TV+. **HW**

