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SUBSCRIPTION FORM ON PAGE 8

# THE Hebrew Watchman

SERVING THE MEMPHIS JEWISH COMMUNITY SINCE 1925

HEBREWWATCHMAN.COM 26 SIVAN, 5783 JUNE 15, 2023 VOL. 101, NO. 38

## Joint Annual Meeting to Honor Jewish Community Leaders Cindy Finestone and Scott Vogel



Cindy Finestone

Jewish Community Partners (JCP), Memphis Jewish Federation (Federation) and Jewish Foundation of Memphis (Foundation) will hold a joint annual meeting on Wednesday, June 21, 2023, at 5:30 p.m. in the Belz Theater at the Memphis Jewish Community Center.

The meeting will highlight achievements of the past year as well as honor outgoing Federation Chair Cindy Finestone and outgoing JCP Chair Scott Vogel.

The meeting will open with an entertaining and interactive press-confer-



Scott Vogel

ence-style conversation with Finestone and Vogel, as well as Foundation Chair Jason Salomon and JCP CEO Laura Linder. Taking questions from the audience, the leadership will share accomplishments and future plans.

According to Ms. Linder, the interactive presentation promises to incorporate a light-hearted and interesting way to share accomplishments. “We always try to bring in creative ways to share what we’ve accomplished. I think it will be both meaningful and engaging.”

“What I appreciate most about our annual meeting is the opportunity to reflect on achievements of the past year,” she continued. “Every day our team is focused on the details of what needs to get done. The annual meeting is the culmination of a year’s worth of work, and its always gratifying to have time to reflect and celebrate.”

Also taking place at the annual meeting is the election of new chairs for JCP and for Federation. Marty Kelman has been nominated to chair JCP and Scott Notowich has been nominated to chair Federation. Foundation Chair Jason Salomon, elected one year ago, will continue to serve in his role.

A highlight of the evening will be tributes to outgoing chairs led by past leader Michael Greenberg.

Ms. Finestone was first elected chair of Federation in 2019 and served two consecutive terms. Her term was marked by major world events, growth in Federation assets, and activities, and a complete shutdown of the community due to COVID. Due to Cindy’s extensive business background (she is a retired CPA), calm demeanor and steadfast focus she was the right person to lead our community through the unex-

pected ups and downs.

“Looking back over the last four years it’s amazing to think of what we faced,” said Ms. Finestone. “COVID caused a complete shift in mindset and priorities, and our Federation stepped up in a big way to ensure our Jewish community had the resources it needed. During that same time, we were undertaking a major campaign to build the endowment assets of the Wendy and Avron Fogelman Jewish Family Service – an agency that would become more relevant and needed than ever!”

Ms. Finestone further reflected on other major events that marked her chairmanship, including the outbreak of war in Ukraine that again put our Federation in the center of connecting our local community to the needs of Jewish families in Ukraine. “It was heartwarming to see how our community came together, as we always do, when there are global Jewish needs,” she said. “We raised \$500,000 to support our overseas partners.”

“And through all of these major happenings, we continued to support the critical infrastructure of our Jewish community through actions and through

(See Meeting Page 3)

## Marchers and Demonstrators Wave Israel’s Flag at New York’s Celebrate Israel Parade



Some 40,000 people marched in this year’s Celebrate Israel parade, marking Israel’s 75th birthday, including pro-democracy activists from Ameinu, the former Labor Zionist Alliance, who were joined by Rep. Jerry Nadler. Credit: Steve Talmud

By Lisa Keys

(New York Jewish Week) – Tens of thousands of marchers participated in last Sunday’s Celebrate Israel parade, with school groups, synagogues and

nonprofits waving Israeli flags honoring the country’s 75th birthday – and demonstrators urging the Netanyahu government to reject a judicial overhaul

plan they consider anti-democratic.

Members of the group UnXeptable, made up largely of Israeli expats who oppose the judicial reform plans, joined a delegation from Ameinu, the former Labor Zionist Alliance, during the largely upbeat march along Fifth Avenue. At least five members of Israel’s governing coalition – including Member of Knesset Simcha Rothman, an architect of the judicial overhaul – took part in the parade.

Some highlights of the day included: Humans of Judaism paid tribute to parade founder Ted Comet, 99, who began the New York City parade to celebrate Israel in 1965.

Mayor Eric Adams @NYCMayor gave some remarks – and posted great shots of spectators along Fifth Ave.

Nefesh B’Nefesh, the organization that helps Jews move to Israel, brought a lot of energy and enthusiasm.

A delegation from the Hebrew Public charter school network – whose Harlem outpost is set to close at the end of the school year – joined the throng marching up Fifth Ave.

As most years, a large contingent of

marchers represented various Jewish day schools and yeshivas from the area.

Unlike most years, however, this year many demonstrators turned out to speak out against the Netanyahu government’s proposed judicial overhaul.

With some 1,000 participants, Ameinu was one of the biggest blocs of the parade. This was the first time in a dozen years that the group marched in the parade, and they came with a strong message for Israel’s right-wing government. They were joined by Rep. Jerry Nadler, the Upper West Side Democrat.

The Forward’s senior political reporter captured [a] viral photo of Israel’s Diaspora Minister, Amichai Chikli, seemingly flipping the bird to pro-democracy demonstrators. In response to backlash online, Chikli said he was simply telling the protestors to smile.

The legendary Dr. Ruth Westheimer celebrated her 95th birthday at the parade.

The parade’s organizers, the Jewish Community Relations Council-NY, livestreamed the event – you can watch the whole thing at jta.org. [HW](#)



# Memphis Jewish Federation Brings Back Israel Scout Friendship Caravan



Memphis is looking forward to welcoming the Israel Scout Friendship Caravan to Memphis this summer, made possible by a generous grant from Memphis Jewish Federation’s Lemsky Endowment Fund.

Comprised of 10 enthusiastic and musically talented 16- and 17-year-old Israel Scouts, the Caravan travels across North America utilizing music and dance to showcase Israeli culture to diverse audiences. Members of the 90,000 strong non-political, non-sectarian Tzofim/Israel Scout movement, these dynamic teens audition and prepare for months in order to entertain and inspire audiences of all ages, cultures and religions.

After a three-year hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this year’s Caravan Scouts are excited to return to Memphis to entertain the Jewish community, as well as the broader Memphis community. In addition to marking Israel’s 75th anniversary of its creation, the Caravan will also mark the 50th anniversary of the Friendship Caravan coming to North America.

Arriving in Memphis on Sunday, June 25, the Caravan starts performing on Monday, June 26. Its first open-to-the-public performance will be later that day at Crosstown Concourse in the Central Atrium with a free pop-up performance at 4 p.m.

On Tuesday, June 27, the Caravan will spend the day at the Memphis Jew-

ish Community Center leading and participating in “Israel Day” camp activities followed by a special performance for the campers.

The public is invited for a free Caravan performance at the Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab Tuesday at 6:15 p.m.

On Wednesday, June 28, the Caravan will perform at Lichterman Nature Center at 9:30 a.m. for the Lichterman day campers and museum-admitted guests. This performance is open to the public with museum admission.

Later that day, the Caravan travels to Camp Kia Kima Boy Scout Reservation in the Ozarks for a performance and evening with hundreds of boy scouts in the Chickasaw Council before embarking on the next leg of their U.S. journey.

While in Memphis, the Scouts and two Scout leaders will be housed by members of the Memphis Jewish community, who have graciously opened their homes, enabling the Scouts to learn about our colorful local culture, while sharing their own Israeli flavor with local families.

They will further connect with Memphians through performances that are not open to the public at the Museum of Science and History (MoSH) and The Villages at Germantown.

One cannot think of the Israel Scouts in Memphis, without thinking of Art Wolff, of blessed memory, known as the “father

# THE Hebrew Watchman

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## Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. June 16, 2023 / 27 Sivan, 5783.....7:58 p.m.  
Havdalah, Sat. June 17, 2023 / 28 Sivan, 5783..... 9:01 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Shalch

of the Caravan.” Art gave 45 years of tireless work and dedication to the Scouts, on behalf of the Memphis Jewish community. He served on the Israeli Scout Planning Committee, helping to facilitate the visits of both the Caravan Scouts and the two Summer Scouts who join the MJCC day camp staff. Art and Bert Wolff gave generously to Federation’s Annual Community Campaign in order to support the

Summer Scouts program. That gift is now perpetuated in an endowment fund held at the Jewish Foundation of Memphis, and managed by his daughter, Laura Wolff Morris, who also serves on the Israeli Scout Caravan Planning Committee.

This year’s Israel Scout Caravan Planning Committee includes Kate Basar, Michele Buring, Mark Clemons, Leslie Fargotstein and Laura Wolff Morris. HW

## CORRECTION

In the 6/8/23 edition in the article “Rabbi Finkelstein Surpasses 500,000 YouTube Video Hits,” the rabbi’s email was listed incorrectly.

Rabbi Joel Finkelstein’s correct email is: [Rabbijmf@baronhirsch.org](mailto:Rabbijmf@baronhirsch.org)

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# Foggy Bottom Courts Palestinians, as Ramallah Insults Washington

By Mike Wagenheim

(JNS) – In a recording that leaked last year, Palestinian Authority leader Mahmoud Abbas told a group of Palestinian Americans that he called U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken a “little boy.” In October 2022, Abbas told Russian President Vladimir Putin, “We don’t trust America,” and he and other Palestinian leaders often attack the Biden administration for what they claim is a failure to live up to promises.

Despite Palestinian leaders frequently trashing the Biden administration and the United States, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Israeli-Palestinian Affairs Andrew Miller told JNS on June 5 that Washington has demonstrated that it wants to build a relationship with Ramallah.

“Since the beginning of the Biden administration, we’ve been clear that we wanted to rebuild the relationship with both the Palestinian leadership and with the Palestinian people,” Miller said. “I think we’ve demonstrated that not just in word but in deed.”

Since assuming office, the Biden administration has provided nearly \$1 billion in assistance to Palestinians, including making vaccines available during the pandemic, as well as providing food and educational opportunities for this population, according to Miller.

“Things that are clearly in the best interest of the Palestinian people writ large,” he said.

Miller assumed his current role last November, replacing Hady Amr, who was promoted to a new position: Wash-

ington-based special representative for Palestinian affairs. The new role was intended, in part, to show Ramallah that the Biden administration was serious about addressing its concerns.

Asked if it has done anything to improve ties with the P.A., Miller talked instead about Amr, who with his team in Jerusalem is “engaging with a broad swath of Palestinian society.”

“We think that the creation of this position is a crucial tool in our efforts to strengthen our relationship with the Palestinians, both in terms of extending the conversations that we have but also enabling us to have broader outreach to a wider spectrum of Palestinian society than was the case previously,” Miller said.

Despite Ramallah’s lack of cooperation and gratitude, Miller said Washington and its partners are leaving the door open for the P.A. to participate in the Negev Forum, reportedly scheduled to convene later this month in Morocco.

“All Negev Forum members remain open to Palestinian participation,” Miller told JNS. “We think that it’s an opportunity for the Palestinians to pursue the interests near and dear to their people.”

**Border opening, work permits serve ‘mutual interests’**

Foggy Bottom continues to think improved relations between Israel and others in the region “can have a direct and tangible positive impact on the Palestinian people,” said Miller. “It’s also good for Israel because tensions between the Israelis and Palestinians present a threat

to Israeli security and to the Israeli way of life at times.”

“That’s the last thing that the administration wants to see,” he said.

Miller declined to identify or describe any Ramallah requests or demands in exchange for participating in the Negev Forum. He told JNS that the U.S. State Department continues to convey to Ramallah the value of participating, “and we’re listening to their perspectives.”

“We’re listening to what they have to say. But ultimately, we believe that the Palestinians should seize the opportunity to participate as part of this collective of countries,” he said.

The Biden administration’s top concern in his file is “rising instability” in Judea and Samaria, “and the prospect of further violence, both there and in Israel,” noted Miller. “We are working very closely with Israel and the Palestinian Authority, along with some of our regional partners, to pursue measures that will hopefully de-escalate tensions and restore some measure of calm for both Israelis and for Palestinians.”

Miller said it is “certainly positive” that Israel recently extended hours of operation at the Allenby border crossing and increased work permits for residents of Gaza. Those actions “serve the mutual interests of the United States, of Israel and the Palestinians,” he added.

Given the situation’s severity, said Miller, “additional steps are going to be required to de-escalate tensions and try to achieve some greater degree of calm.” **HW**

## Meeting...

(Continued From Page 1)

dollars.” Ms. Finestone cited the formation of task forces and committees to focus on important community issues such as security, teen mental health, engagement, senior services and addressing the rise in antisemitism.

Although Ms. Finestone is ending her term as chair of Memphis Jewish Federation, she is representing our community on the board of Jewish Federations of North America where she serves on the audit and finance committees.

“It has been an honor to serve my community. I look forward to supporting Scott Notowich as he takes on the chairmanship of Memphis Jewish Federation,” said Ms. Finestone.

Life-long Memphian Scott Vogel is a well-known Jewish community leader having served numerous roles across the community leading up to his chairmanship of Jewish Community Partners. Elected two years ago as the 4th chair in the history of the organization, Mr. Vogel served at a critical time during the history of JCP.

“JCP is still evolving as a management organization,” said Vogel in reflecting on his term as chair. “We did a complete analysis of our governance structure at the start of my term, carving out specific roles and responsibilities for JCP as the back office operating arm of our community. We brought on outstanding leadership to our executive committee all with expertise they were willing to share to help lead our organization.”

Mr. Vogel also referred to a recent analysis conducted by the organization’s audit team to identify process improvements and applauded the staff for taking on several key recommendations such as documenting internal processes and procedures. “We added two key professionals this year to focus on operations, Phyllis Abraham and Laura Kaplan Paller, both of whom have added significant strength to JCP,” he said.

Mr. Vogel ends his term as chair having played an integral role in the overall management of JCP, all with an eye on creating operating efficiencies for its managed organizations. “As I end my term, I think of the past leaders whose vision resulted in the creation of JCP,” he said. “I think we’ve come a long way in the eight years of our existence. I look forward to supporting Marty Kelman as he takes over the reins.”

Light dairy desserts will be served following the meeting, dietary laws will be observed. Please RSVP to 901-767-7100 or email crichardson@jcpmemphis.org. **HW**

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# A ‘Gender-Sensitive’ Translation of the Hebrew Bible Has Hit Digital Shelves. Not Everyone is Happy.



A side-by-side comparison of the 1985 edition of the JPS Tanakh and the 2023 gender-sensitive edition demonstrates slight changes in the English translation. Credit: Design by Jackie Hajdenberg

By Jackie Hajdenberg

(JTA) – A new Bible translation that eschews gendered pronouns for God is now available through Sefaria, the on-line library of Jewish texts, prompting backlash on social media from some who see the change as a sacrilege.

The Revised Jewish Publication Society edition of the Bible, which the 135-year-old Jewish publishing house has released in partnership with Sefaria, is the first major update to the JPS translation of the Tanakh in nearly 40 years. So far, only the books comprising the Prophets, the Hebrew Bible’s second section, are available on Sefaria.

The new English translation refers to individuals with pronouns that are consistent with traditional gender norms. But unlike nearly all translations of the Bible throughout history, the new edition, known as RJPS, does not refer to God with masculine pronouns. It doesn’t use feminine pronouns either:

Instead, God is referred to simply as “God” throughout the text.

For example, Isaiah 55:6 reads, “Seek GOD while you can, Call out while [God] is near.” JPS’ landmark 1985 translation, by contrast, reads, “Seek the LORD while He can be found, Call to Him while He is near.”

“The RJPS makes the case that the art of Bible translation is always a work in progress, and should take into account not only our deeper understanding today of biblical Hebrew but also the significant changes that have occurred in the use of English over the past decades,” said JPS’ director emeritus, Rabbi Barry Schwartz, in the announcement for the new translation of the Bible.

“Tanakh is the foundational text of the Jewish people, and we share Sefaria’s desire for everyone to be able to access it in language that is appropriate

and meaningful for them while remaining faithful to the original,” Schwartz added. “Tanakh” is an acronym for the three components of the Hebrew Bible: the “five books of Moses,” Prophets and Writings.

The lack of divine pronouns in the RJPS translation comes as non-traditional pronouns – and debate over their use – have become increasingly prevalent in public discourse. A 2021 study by the Pew Research Center found that more than a quarter of American adults know someone who uses gender-neutral pronouns, up eight percentage points since 2018. Meanwhile, many conservatives have decried the use of gender-neutral pronouns, and multiple Republican-led states have passed laws effectively permitting educators to refuse to use the pronouns their students prefer.

The RJPS translation, one of at least 12 available through Sefaria, has sparked backlash online from some Orthodox Jews who believe the new translation is not aligned with their values. Arguing that the translation is an example of progressive political ideology seeping into religion, some have said they will stop using the app over the RJPS translation.

Yehiel Kalish, the CEO of Jewish ambulance corps Chevra Hatzalah, announced last week via Twitter that he had deleted the app. Other prominent figures in the Orthodox world also condemned the new translation.

“Sefaria is a tremendous resource for the [world of] Torah,” tweeted Yocho-non Donn, news editor of “Mishpacha Magazine,” which reaches a haredi Orthodox audience. “Messing around with [holy books] to conform to western ideas of equality is an unacceptable breach. If this is true, I can’t see people

learning from an unholy source.”

Rabbi Yaakov Menken, managing director of the Coalition for Jewish Values, a right-wing Orthodox political advocacy organization, tweeted that “to be more inclusive of atheists, they’ll provide a ‘historically accurate translation’ that avoids mention of the Supreme Being. ‘In the beginning, heaven and earth were created.’”

Sefaria has always featured texts relevant to Jews with a range of approaches – a spectrum that has only widened as the digital library has added (and begun supporting the creation of) contemporary texts and translations.

Publishing the RJPS is “about having different translations that are available,” said Sara Wolkenfeld, Sefaria’s chief learning officer. (Sefaria’s CEO, Daniel Septimus, is on the board of 70 Faces Media, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency’s parent organization.)

“We are always working to include Jewish texts that are studied by the full range of Jewish learners,” she said. “And that’s why we chose to include the newest JPS translation, but among the many other translations that we’ve already hosted in the library.”

Sefaria also has translations from Orthodox-gear-ed publishing houses, such as the Koren and Metsudah versions, and even translations into French and German. Users can select their own preferred English translation, and RJPS is not the default translation for the Book of Prophets.

“People should know that Sefaria is a library for the entire Jewish people,” Wolkenfeld said. “And our mission is to provide access to Torah and to bring Torah into the digital age. That’s really what we’re aiming for.” **HW**

## Birthright Israel Bone-Marrow Registry Marks 100,000 Potential Donors

(JNS) – For nearly 20 years, Birthright Israel has partnered with the Gift of Life Marrow Registry, encouraging the young Jews who participate in trips to Israel to register and potentially help those with leukemia, lymphoma and other blood-related diseases.

The groups recently hit a milestone: 100,000 who have offered to serve as donors. The 100,000th is 20-year-old Mitch Linefsky of Fairlawn, N.J.

“An incredible one in eight Birthright participants have joined Gift of Life’s registry. That’s 100,000 out of 800,000 Birthright participants,” said Jay Feinberg, founder and CEO of Gift of Life. “Four-hundred-thirty-three donors have

**So far, the initiative has facilitated 434 life-saving bone-marrow transplants.**

saved the lives of patients battling blood cancer. As a transplant recipient myself, thank you to every donor who has joined our registry to make a difference in the world.”

According to transplant centers, donors between 18 and 35 – a demographic that also describes those who go on Birthright – tend to produce the best outcomes for patients. **HW**

## EJA Urges Irish Auction House to Drop Hitler Items

(JNS) – European Jewish Association chairman Rabbi Menachem Margolin requested last Tuesday that Bloomfield Auctions withdraw from a sale in June two items once belonging to Adolf Hitler.

The items are an initialed pencil given to Hitler by Eva Braun, and a signed and framed photograph.

“This is not a legal appeal to you, Mr. Bennett, but very much a moral one,” wrote Margolin in a letter to Bloomfield Auctions Managing Director Karl Bennett.

“In comments attributed to you in a national newspaper, you say: ‘But for me, as a high-end collector of militaria items, they preserve a piece of our past and should be treated as historical objects, no matter if the history they refer to was one of the darkest and most controversial in recorded history,’” wrote Margolin.

“We simply cannot fathom how a love trinket such as an engraved pencil or a

signed photograph constitutes a historical object of any inherent historical value,” he continued.

“In Europe today and indeed further afield, auction houses are buying and selling to the highest bidder other items such as watches or ashtrays belonging to Hitler, Hermann Goring cutlery sets, even Wehrmacht toilet paper. The defence from Munich to Maryland is the same, these items are of historical interest. They are anything but,” he continued.

Adding that while the EJA supports placing items of historical importance in museums and educational institutions, it opposes as “dangerous” the creation of a “macabre trade in items belonging to mass murderers.”

Such a trade, he said, “Is an insult to the millions who perished, the few survivors left, and to Jews everywhere.”

Margolin concluded by requesting from Bennett that he withdraw the items from sale “in this spirit of decency.” **HW**

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# What an ER Doctor and Musical Trendsetter Miri Ben-Ari, a Jay Z Collaborator, Have in Common



Israeli violinist Miri Ben-Ari is a musical trendsetter has brought the violin to the fore in commercial pop music – and has performed at the White House. Credit: Noam Galai

By Renee Ghert-Zand

Being a successful musician is a lot like being a trauma room physician. You need to collaborate harmoniously with others, practice a lot and perform expertly in real time.

One might think that performing on some of the world’s largest stages and at high-profile venues like the White House is nothing like working in a tight space in a hospital emergency room. One involves art, the other science; one happens in public, the other behind closed doors; one appears beautiful and clean, the other can be messy and bloody. But the two actually have a lot in common.

Dr. Tal Patalon, the head of Kahn Sagol Maccabi (KSM), the Research and Innovation Center of the Israeli HMO Maccabi Healthcare Services, highlighted this when she hosted Grammy Award-winning violinist, producer and UN Goodwill Ambassador of Music Miri Ben-Ari on her podcast, “A Matter of Life and Death.”

“It is as though I am meditating on the highest frequency when I am in front of a live audience,” Ben-Ari said. “It is like an out-of-body experience.”

Patalon, an active clinician specializing in family and emergency medicine, said, “The same thing happens to me when a patient comes in. Every decision is one of life and death. You have to be in the moment. You have to give your everything to perform at your max.”

Musical trendsetter Ben-Ari has brought the violin to the fore in commercial pop music, collaborating with artists including John Legend, Alicia Keys, Janet Jackson and Jay Z.

The unusual and popular podcast – now in its third season, but the first in English – is an opportunity for Patalon to talk with thought leaders from a wide variety of backgrounds and fields, including medicine, academia, technology and the corporate world, and she brings to listeners unusual conversations that wind their way from the esoteric to the profound. Recent guests on the program have included astrophysicist Avi Loeb, former Mossad chief Yossi Cohen, and psychologist and happiness expert Tal Ben-Shahar.

KSM has unique access to Maccabi’s professional medical data and conducts medical research, helping scientists, tech companies and entrepreneurs through various partnerships; uses a unique cloud-based platform that relies in part on AI technology; operates a bio-bank with over 1 million biological samples that assist companies in genetic sequencing and genetic research; and supports a range of other big data and clinical research projects.

Patalon thinks broadly, seeking inspiration from all corners.

Born in Tel Aviv, violinist Ben-Ari, 44, grew up playing classical music and at one point studied under the legendary Israeli violinist Isaac Stern.

“But something switched for me when I heard a recording of Charlie Parker,” Ben-Ari said. “He wasn’t playing the saxophone; he was talking to it. I wanted to do that with the violin. So I studied jazz in the United States and played with the best.”

Ben-Ari, who remained in the United States and lives in New Jersey, felt she was finally in her zone. “Now I could do me. I could integrate, harmonize and collaborate,” she said.

Over the past two years, Ben-Ari has branched out even further by working with African artists such as Nigerian producer Young D and Tanzanian superstar Diamond Platunz, who plays bon-go flava – a melange of American hip hop and traditional Tanzanian styles.

“It’s been fascinating working with African artists,” Ben-Ari said. “Africa is so close to Israel, so it was natural for me to go in this direction. The music is different in each country, and in each region of the continent.”

Patalon asked Ben-Ari on her podcast what it has been like to move from classical music training to experimentation with so many genres.

“I actually gave a TED talk about how to take a skill from one place to another,” Ben-Ari said. “You first have to have a firm foundation, then you can let your imagination take over and think outside the box.”

But it’s not easy, she said. “You find your own individual way of expression. It takes a lot of chutzpah, drive, persistence, dedication and bravery to keep continuing when you get a lot of no’s along the way.”

According to Patalon, the process bears some similarities to medicine. Just as Ben-Ari had to have years of classical training behind her to be able to innovate as she does, trauma care doctors need to have their basics intact before trying new approaches, Patalon said. One can only innovate on top of a deep foundation of expertise, experience and competence.

“It’s more than just knowing the basics. You need to be able to do them as an automatic response behavior. I need to know how to resuscitate a patient with my eyes closed and one hand tied behind my back,” she said. “We have to be experts.”

At the end of every podcast episode, Patalon asks her guest whether they think about death and how they would like to be remembered.

Ben-Ari said that the prospect of death doesn’t regularly occupy her: “I am busy with life, and I don’t think about what will happen after I die.”

When Patalon asked Ben-Ari what she would like the epitaph on her gravestone to say, she said she didn’t want an actual place of burial.

“I don’t believe in graves,” Ben Ari said. “I want to be an NFT or something technological like that. I would want there to be one private one just for my child,

and a different version for my fans.”

Patalon suggested that she wasn’t surprised that Ben-Ari doesn’t think much about death, noting how common it is for people to fear death because they fear pain and losing relationships with loved ones – and are afraid of the unknown.

In the last episode of her popular podcast, Patalon offers some intriguing insights into the future of medical treatment: how technology will help predict a person’s medical future, how therapies can be tailored to the individual’s level, and the ethical questions that arise from these advances.

Ultimately, Patalon concludes, our well-being will be determined by what we do outside medical establishments: “I hope that we will all learn how to take the time to introspect, to develop relationships that are meaningful, because at the end of the day that’s what really keeps us happy.”

To listen to this episode and others from Season 3, visit [ksminnovation.com/podcast](https://ksminnovation.com/podcast).

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## Vienna to Tilt Statue of Antisemitic Mayor 3.5 Degrees to the Right to Shift ‘Perspective’



A fence in Vienna surrounds the statue of Karl Lueger, the antisemitic former mayor of the Austrian capital, Oct. 6, 2020. Credit: Joe Klamar/AFP via Getty Images

By Gabe Friedman

(JTA) – The city of Vienna will tilt the statue of an antisemitic former mayor 3.5 degrees to the right in order to shift the viewer’s “perspective on it,” a move that some Jewish leaders are calling an inadequate way to deal with a dark chapter of the city’s history.

The city’s Twitter account announced the decision last Wednesday and included an image of what the tilted statue will look like.

Karl Lueger served as mayor of Vienna for 13 years until his death in 1910. He was known for antisemitic rhetoric that is said to have inspired Adolf Hitler, who lived in Vienna as a young man. Hitler wrote in “Mein Kampf” that he had “undisguised admiration” for Lueger.

The statue, situated in a square called Dr. Karl Lueger Platz in the city’s center, has been hit with vandalism for years by protesters who call for its total dismantling. In 2020, the city put up fencing to deter protesters from spray-painting it.

Viennese artist Klemens Wihlidal had proposed the slight tilt, which is slated to happen sometime in 2024.

“With this, I would like to cause an irritation, or even more, a moment of insecurity, which may only become perceptible upon a second look,” he said in a press release, according to CNN. He added that he hopes the viewer will feel like the statue is “about to topple over or at least expect that it won’t stand for much longer.”

Oskar Deutsch, president of the Jewish Community of Vienna, told CNN that fully taking down the statue “would be more appropriate and in line with a sincere culture of remembrance,” adding that “squares, streets, bridges and other monuments are still named after antisemites all over Austria.” A street named after Lueger was renamed in 2012.

“Tilting the statue is a halfhearted approach to dealing with this issue,” said Ariel Muzicant, president of the European Jewish Congress and a former president of Vienna’s Jewish community. “At the very least, the local authority should change the name of this square and of many other locations in Vienna bearing Lueger’s name.” **HW**

## 5 Dead in Gang-Related Shooting Near Nazareth as Government Aims to Stem Wave of Arab-Israeli Killings

By Ben Sales

(JTA) – Five people were killed in a gang-related shooting at a car wash near Nazareth in northern Israel, continuing a rising wave of violent deaths in Arab-Israeli areas and prompting increasingly urgent calls for action to address the bloodshed.

The incident last Thursday was the most fatal criminal attack in Israel since 2009, according to the publication “Ynet,” and comes amid a string of killings in Arab-Israeli communities. Since the beginning of the year, 97 Arab-Israelis have been killed by violent means, compared to 35 in the same period last year, according to the “Times of Israel.” In protest of last Thursday’s shooting, an umbrella Arab-Israeli leadership organization called a general strike for tomorrow.

The shooting in the town of Yafa an-Nasriyye was reportedly related to a longstanding feud between two Arab crime families, though bystanders may also have been killed. The victims range in age from 15 to 29, according to “Haaretz.” The previous night, a man was killed in a separate shooting in Nazareth, and there were other shootings last Thursday as well.

For years, Arab-Israelis have lobbied for the Israeli government to take crime in their cities more seriously and to devote more resources to stemming the tide of killings. Those calls have grown louder this year as the death toll has skyrocketed.

Arab-Israelis have also prompted debate this week over who will oversee the effort to reduce violence in Arab-Israeli municipalities. The politician in charge of the police response to the crime wave is Itamar Ben-Gvir, the far-right na-

tional security minister, who said last Monday that he would select a point person to focus on the issue. He has also pushed for the creation of a 2000-member national guard under his authority, a proposal Israel’s government advanced earlier this year.

Last Thursday, Ben Gvir visited the site of the car wash shooting and, “Ynet” reported, said there had been “decades of abandonment and a lack of governance that have blown up in our faces.” He additionally called Arab-Israeli society the “Wild West.” Police commissioner Kobi Shabtai also came to the scene, where he was greeted with protesters calling him a “murderer.”

Ben-Gvir demanded that the Shin Bet intelligence agency get involved in the response to the killings. The Shin Bet is known for its operations against and interrogations of Palestinian terror suspects, and involving the agency in combating the crime wave has been a controversial prospect among Arab Israelis.

Arab-Israeli politicians have said they mistrust Ben-Gvir’s politics and intentions, and they have instead appealed to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to take charge of the issue. In a meeting with Arab-Israeli lawmakers who are usually among his most outspoken opponents, Netanyahu promised to appoint a steering committee, which he would chair, to address the crime wave.

“In order to defeat criminal organization, trust is needed, and we have no trust in Ben Gvir, the racist,” read a statement earlier this week from the Arab-Israeli Hadash-Taal Party, according to the “Times of Israel.” “A proper government would have fired him a long time ago.” **HW**

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## Polish City Throws Children’s Bubble Party on Top of Jewish Graves



Children enjoy a bubble party in Kazimierz Dolny, Poland, for Children’s Day, June 1, 2023. Screenshot from YouTube/Kan

By Dinah Spritzer

(JTA) – The chief rabbi of Poland sent an angry letter to the mayor of Kazimierz Dolny, condemning the eastern Polish town for throwing a festive children’s bubble party on the site of a former Jewish cemetery where the dead are still buried.

The Kazimierz Dolny authorities filled the former cemetery with bubbles for Children’s Day, a holiday celebrated on June 1 in many European countries.

In the letter sent to Mayor Artur Pomianowski last Tuesday, Michael Schudrich wrote, “the party organized on the yard, which was after all fun on the graves, proves that for the municipal authorities, respect for human burial is not an important value.”

Schudrich told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that it was “outrageous” that Pomianowski posted a video of the bubble party on his mayoral Facebook page.

“Is this what we want to teach our children about how we treat the dead, our ancestors?” Schudrich said.

Bartłomiej Godlewskia, Kazimierz Dolny’s deputy mayor, sent a letter in response to Schudrich last Wednesday.

“I regret the wrong decision to organize Children’s Day. We share a common history and a common home, and it was never our intention to hurt feelings – it was human error. I hope that this event will not interfere with our dialogue and cooperation in the future,” he wrote. “I extend my apologies to you to the entire Jewish community.”

The former cemetery, now a children’s play area next to an elementary school, was demolished roughly 50 years ago, but the bodies were not removed. Jewish headstones were used to pave roads and used as building materials throughout Eastern Europe during the communist era.

Schudrich said that for the past five years, representatives of Polish Jewry have been trying to work with several mayors of Kazimierz Dolny, including the current one, as well as the town council, to move the cemetery so that it would not function as a playground. He estimated that a few hundred Jews are

buried at the site.

“We offered a really nice solution that would involve us helping to fund a new playground and moving the cemetery to an empty field nearby,” said Schudrich. “But they keep stalling or canceling meetings, and it seems like the town just doesn’t care.”

“We deal with several cemeteries every week; 99% are resolved in a very positive and even sometimes quick manner. Kazimierz is from the 1%,” he added.

After Godlewskia’s response last Wednesday, Schudrich said that he is “following up” on his request to meet with Mayor Pomianowski about a solution for moving the former cemetery.

It is believed that the 19th-century Rabbi Yehezkel Taub of Kuzmiri is buried in the former cemetery. Haredi Orthodox followers of the Modzitz Hasidic dynasty, founded by the rabbi, flock to the cemetery-turned-playground each year to pay their respects, but their demand to protect the site has not been met.

Jews have lived in Kazimierz Dolny since the 14th century. The town today is a major local tourist attraction known for its stunning architecture on the banks of the Vistula River. Before the Nazi invasion in World War II, there were 1,400 Jews in Kazimierz Dolny, roughly half of its population. Fewer than 20 of the town’s Jewish inhabitants are thought to have survived the Holocaust.

In his letter to the town’s mayor, Schudrich wrote that the bubble party “puts into question whether further talks about the site make sense, and casts doubt on whether, regardless of religion, both parties are guided by common values drawn from it.”

The director of the town’s Kazimierz Center for Culture, Promotion and Tourism also released an apology statement last Wednesday.

“I declare that we had no bad intentions when organizing this event. We didn’t want to hurt anyone or hurt anyone’s religious feelings,” wrote Józef Skrzeczkowski. **HW**

## Israeli FM Tells European Counterparts Iran ‘Close to Point of No Return’

(JNS) – Israel’s Foreign Minister Eli Cohen met with European counterparts in Slovakia last Tuesday and called for unity in countering the Iranian threat before it is too late.

During the closed-door session in the capital Bratislava, Cohen also discussed strengthening the Abraham Accords and relations with the E.U. bloc.

He is the first Israeli foreign minister to address the Slavkov/Austerlitz format – a regional cooperation forum consisting of Austria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic.

The meeting included Ministers Alexander Schallenberg of Austria, Jan Lipavský of the Czech Republic and Miroslav Wlachovský of Slovakia.

“We discussed the joint fight against the Iranian nuclear issue, and I said that we are close to the point of no return. We must act in cooperation against the reign of terror in Tehran,” Cohen posted to Twitter following the meeting.

“In addition, we discussed strengthening ties between the countries of

the Abraham Accords. We continue to strengthen relations with the countries of the European Union, an important and strategic step to promote the interests of the State of Israel,” he continued.

Cohen kicked off his Central European trip last Sunday night in Croatia, [then] Monday meeting in Zagreb with Prime Minister Andrej Plenković and other top officials. Foreign Minister Gordan Grlić-Radman joined Israel’s top diplomat at the Zagreb Holocaust Memorial.

Cohen also met with the country’s President Zoran Milanović.

He will also visit Austria and Hungary before heading back to Israel. While in Budapest, Cohen will attempt to reach a final agreement on Hungary moving its embassy to Jerusalem. He is expected to meet with his Hungarian counterpart Péter Szijjártó and possibly with Prime Minister Viktor Orbán.

It is Cohen’s seventh visit to Europe since he assumed office on Dec. 29, part of an effort to improve ties with the European Union. **HW**



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# Municipal Bonds: A Tax-Advantaged Way to Put Capital to Work

Provided by Mike Stein, Managing Director - Investments, Wells Fargo Advisors  
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Municipal bonds are issued by public entities such as state and local governments, health systems, universities, and school districts to help finance the building and maintenance of infrastructure projects such as roads, airports, water systems, and facilities. Despite the higher borrowing costs that resulted from the Federal Reserve’s inflation-fighting interest-rate hikes, municipalities issued \$308 billion in debt in 2022 to fund capital projects, after selling more than \$321 billion in 2021.<sup>1</sup>

At present, many municipalities are in solid financial shape, due to an influx of pandemic stimulus funds and increased income and property tax revenues. Over the longer term, a federal infrastructure bill passed in 2021 is expected to provide additional money for capital projects and help boost municipal credit quality.<sup>2</sup>

This means that investors might be able to tap into the higher yields being offered on muni bonds without taking on greater risk. The yield on the Bloomberg Muni Benchmark 30Y Index, a common benchmark, rose to 3.6% at the end of 2022, after starting the year at just 1.5%.<sup>3</sup>

### Accounting for Taxes

The interest paid by municipal bonds is generally exempt from federal income

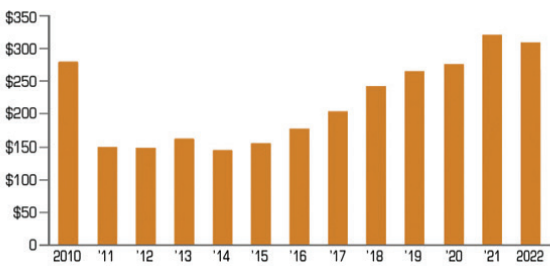
tax, as well as from state and local taxes if the investor lives in the state where the bond was issued. For this reason, muni bonds and tax-exempt funds have long been a mainstay in the portfolios of income-focused investors who want to manage their tax burdens.

The taxable equivalent yield is the pre-tax yield that a taxable bond must offer for its yield to be equal to that of a tax-exempt muni bond. Tax-free yields are often more valuable to investors in higher tax brackets, and they have become especially appealing in high-cost states now that the federal deduction for state and local taxes is limited to \$10,000 a year.

For example, a 5% tax-free yield is equivalent to a taxable yield of about 7.9% for an investor in the 37% tax bracket and 6.6% for an investor in the 24% tax bracket. Exemption from state income taxes would increase the equivalent yield.

Investors should keep in mind that capital gains taxes could still be triggered if tax-exempt bonds or fund shares are sold for a profit. Also, tax-exempt interest is included in determining whether a portion of any Social Security benefit received is taxable. Some muni bond interest could be subject to the alternative minimum tax.

Municipal bonds issued for new projects, in billions



Source: Refinitiv, 2023

### Reviewing the Risks

Because government entities have the power to raise taxes and fees as needed to pay the interest, muni bonds generally carry lower risk than corporate bonds. From 1970 through 2021, the 5-year default rate for U.S. municipal bonds was 0.08%, compared with 6.8% for global corporates.<sup>4</sup>

Regional economies and the financial strength of issuers can vary widely, so municipal issues are rated for credit risk, as are other bonds. A credit rating ranging from AAA down to BBB (or Baa) is considered “investment grade”; lower-rated or “high-yield” bonds carry greater risk.

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- 1) Refinitiv, 2023
- 2) The Wall Street Journal, November 15, 2021
- 3) Bloomberg.com, November 30, 2022
- 4) Moody’s Investors Service, April 21, 2022

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# Israeli Health Ministry Calls Out Elon Musk for Sharing ‘Fake News’ on COVID-19

By Gabe Friedman

(JTA) – Israel’s health ministry tweet-ed that Elon Musk was engaging with “fake news” regarding COVID-19 data, the third Israeli government ministry to comment on the Twitter owner’s views in recent weeks.

Musk had replied to a tweet from Zero Hedge, a far-right blog site that features conspiracy theories and has been ac-cused of spreading Russian propaganda. The tweet claimed Israeli data showed “zero young healthy individuals died of COVID-19.” The billionaire business-man wrote “Zero ...”

In response, the health ministry wrote: “Elon, unfortunately this is not what the whole data shows. fake news is dangerous. Israel Ministry of Health was asked on chronic disease data and explained that we don’t have access to clinical records.”

“We know from clinicians that young healthy people did die from COVID and hopefully data on that will be available on the near future from our HMOs,” the ministry added.

Twitter added a note to the Zero Hedge tweet that noted that Israel’s health ministry “has called this article ‘misinformation.’”

Israel launched a rapid mass vacci-nation drive soon after COVID-19 vac-cines were introduced in late 2020, and it published data both about the coun-try’s vaccinations and COVID cases. In addition to aiding public health practi-tioners, the data has also been used by anti-vaccine activists and others intent on manipulating the figures to downplay the severity of COVID or the efficacy of immunization. Zero Hedge, which has

1.6 million Twitter followers, has also published articles casting doubt on the vaccine.

In the months since he bought Twit-ter last year, Musk has interacted with – and boosted the visibility of – several tweets spreading conspiracy theories. His posts have drawn attention to false or misleading claims about events rang-ing from the attack last year on Nancy Pelosi’s husband to a recent mass shoot-ing in Texas.

On May 16, Musk wrote that Jewish billionaire George Soros, who is known for donating to progressive political causes, “hates humanity” and “reminds me of Magneto,” a comic book villain who survived the Holocaust. (Soros, who was born in Hungary, also survived the Holocaust as a child.)

Critics of Musk’s tweet, including the CEO of the Anti-Defamation League and the Israeli foreign ministry, said the attacks encouraged antisemitism given that Soros features at the center of mul-tiple antisemitic conspiracy theories. But Israel’s foreign minister, Eli Cohen, later disavowed his ministry’s critique.

Soon afterward, Amichai Chikli, Is-rael’s minister overseeing the govern-ment’s efforts to combat antisemitism, also defended Musk.

“As Israel’s minister who’s entrusted on combating anti-Semitism, I would like to clarify that the Israeli govern-ment and the vast majority of Israeli citizens see Elon Musk as an amazing entrepreneur and a role model,” tweeted Amichai Chikli, a member of the right-wing Likud Party who also serves as minister of Diaspora affairs. **HW**

# Most of Kherson’s Jews Fled when Russia Invaded Ukraine. A Flood Could Force the Rest to Leave.

(JTA) – Intense flooding caused by the collapse of the Kakhovka dam in eastern Ukraine is threatening to force most of the remaining 600-700 Jews in the Kherson area to leave, according to the city’s chief rabbi.

Rabbi Yosef Wolff told the “Times of Israel” that about 80% of the region’s Jews had already left before this week. About 20 Jewish families have been directly affected by the flooding so far, and they are taking shelter in Jewish institutions. Kherson’s synagogue has not flooded because it sits at a high ele-vation, 20 meters, or 65 feet, above sea level.

Russia and Ukraine are trading blame for the dam collapse; Ukraine claims that Russia blew it up to slow an upcom-ing Ukrainian counteroffensive in the area. Over 1,000 people on both sides of the Dnipro River have already fled their homes last week, but authorities say that the flooding could affect up to 40,000.

The American Jewish Joint Distri-bution Committee, one of a number of Jewish groups providing aid in the area, said that its main service center building was flooded and inaccessible as of last Thursday, but workers were still serving 382 Jews, providing them with food, water and other supplies. They also transferred people’s computers, genera-tors, food and other emergency materi-als to the Kherson synagogue.

“Everything that I had is now under the water,” said a JDC volunteer named Oksana. “My home is gone. My life is gone. I do not know how to live now.”

Moshe Azman, one of multiple claim-ants to the title of chief rabbi of Ukraine, went viral last Thursday for a video in which he ducks for cover from Russian bombs while on an evacuation mission in Kherson.

Before falling to the ground for most of the minute-long video, Azman briefly explains that he was trying to evacuate people from the area.

Azman, who in 2019 was seen in a chummy photograph with Rudolph Gi-uiani during the Trump associate’s ef-forts to enlist Ukraine’s help in the 2020 election, founded and runs a village near Kyiv for Jewish refugees displaced from the past decade’s fighting in east-ern Ukraine.

Other Jews in the Kherson area are getting aid from the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. A group of Ukrainian Jews have boarded buses and fled for Poland, where Chabad of Poland was preparing to house them in Warsaw last Friday, the Hasidic movement announced.

“Because of the war, our brothers and sisters in the Kherson Oblast area have already lost so much,” said Rabbi Sho-lom Ber Stambler, director of Chabad of Poland. “We must do everything pos-sible to help them during this difficult time and ensure that they don’t also lose their hope.”

The Chabad movement’s late reb-be, Menachem Mendel Scheerson, was born about 50 miles down the river, in Mykolaiv, which has not yet experi-enced flooding damage, the “Times of Israel” reported. **HW**

# Anti-Hate Mural Showcasing Jewish Diversity Goes up in LA Neighborhood Where Antisemitic Shootings Took Place



Los Angeles leaders cut the ribbon for the unveiling of a new mural in the Pico-Robertson neighborhood. (Pictured from left to right: Ilan Davidson, President of LA County Commission on Human Relations; Robin Toma, executive director of LA County Commission on Human Relations; Supervisor Lindsey Horvath; Councilwoman Katy Yaroslavsky; Jeff Abrams, ADL Los Angeles regional director; Rabbi Rebecca Schatz, Temple Beth Am; Rabbi Noah Farkas, President and CEO of The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles; Senator Ben Allen. Image courtesy of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles

By Jackie Hajdenberg

(JTA) – A massive mural of a Jewish mother lighting Shabbat candles has just gone up in a Jewish neighborhood of Los Angeles, the first in a series of anti-hate murals planned across the city.

Painted by the Iranian-Jewish artist Cloe Hakakian, “The Common Thread” was painted on the exterior of an event venue in Pico-Robertson, a heavily Jew-ish neighborhood known for its abun-dance of synagogues and kosher restau-rants representing a range of Jewish traditions. In February, two Jewish men in Pico-Robertson were shot on two separate days by an individual whom officials said had “a history of animus towards the Jewish community.”

Flames painted on the mural take the form of the Hebrew words “I’dor v’dor,” a term meaning “from genera-tion to generation” that describes how Judaism is passed down over time. She said she had drawn upon the insights that community members had been in- vited to offer in planning workshops.

“I’ve done a lot of community murals, but this one was special because the community and each individual contrib-uted to it. They shared their experiences and struggles of being Jewish. Public art has a huge role in social change and in revolutions, past and present,” Hakaki-an told “The Los Angeles Daily News” ahead of the mural’s unveiling.

“So a mural out in public, where people are driving by, will hopefully reach folks even outside of this community, and en-courage them to talk and ask questions. That’s a powerful first step in fighting both antisemitism and all hate crimes,” she added. “And I hope it makes Jews feel seen and know they’re not alone.”

In addition to the shootings in Pi-co-Robertson, which took place just blocks from the mural’s location, sever-al other high-profile incidents have put Los Angeles Jews on high alert in recent years. A city councilman representing the historically Jewish Fairfax neigh-borhood said he saw antisemitism in the damage that occurred there during racial justice protests in 2020. Last October, members of the hate group Goyim De-fense League held up signs above a Los Angeles freeway that read “Kanye is right about the Jews,” a reference to an- tisemitic comments by the rapper Kanye West. The Anti-Defamation League’s audit of antisemitic incidents identified 237 in Los Angeles last year – an overall increase of 30% from 2021 – including

143 incidents of harassment.

“At a time when we see antisemitism and hateful messaging on the rise, it’s more important now than ever to highlight the experience and contributions of Jews and other marginalized communities in our city,” Jeffrey Abrams, the ADL’s Los Angeles regional director, said in a state-ment. “We know that exposure to other cultures and experiences can reduce bias and hate and that is exactly what we hope this mural will accomplish.”

“The Common Thread” is the first of a series of murals to be released through-out the city as part of the “L.A. vs. Hate: Summer of Solidarity” campaign, orga-nized by the Los Angeles County Com-mission on Human Relations. Other projects will similarly use the arts and community events throughout the city to tackle hate crimes and address social and political issues, and more murals honoring Black and LGBTQ+ commu-nities will be unveiled later this summer.

“We are proud to help lead this unify-ing collaboration, which heightens our sense of awareness of the uniqueness of communities across Los Angeles,” Joanna Mendelson, senior vice presi-dent of community engagement of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Ange-les, said in a statement. “The Summer of Solidarity initiative provides an op-portunity to reflect the diversity of our Jewish community, and provides a mo-ment to capture the cultural, historical, and spiritual influences that embody the Jewish Angeleno experience. We are prioritizing efforts to build bridges with our neighbors across Los Angeles, and recognize art, such as this mural, is a powerful vehicle to unite.”

In her statement, Hakakian also point-ed out details from her mural that “cel-ebtrate the diversity of Jews within our community and the cultural experiences shared across time and place.”

In the folds of the woman’s headscarf, Hakakian says, “there is a young child held in the arms of her mother as older generations stand behind her, each figure wearing a pattern from the diverse cultur-al diasporas in Los Angeles county. Foot-prints move through the desert toward a bright horizon, a metaphor for migration, healing, and resilience within the Jewish community. Silhouettes of culturally sig-nificant Los Angeles county landmarks sit on the horizon, reminding the viewer of the greater community within which the Jewish community thrives.” **HW**



# This is the Most Goth Jewish Text



Design by Avital Dayanim; Assets via Canva and Wikimedia Commons

By Sophia Zohar

This originally appeared on HeyAlma.com. Reprinted with permission.

I have a confession to make... inside my normie, North Face-wearing exterior, I have the soul of a stone-cold goth girl.

I don't know why I don't show it more: I never mastered the makeup; I usually scramble out the door and opt for comfort over style; Doc Martens hurt my feet. Whatever the reason, my inner goth doesn't get to express herself as much as I'd like – but I'm very secure in the fact that she exists. She's in the flowy black lace dress hanging in my closet, in the dark themes of my art and, most importantly, in my study of Jewish text (what?).

That's right – I believe studying Jewish text can be a powerful practice for flexing those goth muscles. I am thinking especially of the most goth text of all: Pirkei Avot.

Pirkei Avot, or ethics of the fathers (also translated as chapters of the ancestors), is a section of the Mishnah (the Jewish code of law). Unlike the rest of the Mishnah, it records no arguments, only advice, quips and zingers about how to live a moral life. It was my entry into Jewish study because of its accessi-

ble nature. Pirkei Avot is also seasonally appropriate because it is traditionally read between Passover and Shavuot as a practice for preparing to receive the Torah. I find it a meaningful way to add ritual and focus to this period of time. It forces me to think hard about what it means to receive the Torah, a concept I find hard to grasp.

What makes Pirkei Avot “goth” is the vivid, dark imagery and dramatic statements it uses to drive home its messages.

For me, goth is the radical notion that death and decay can be beautiful. That when we hide from these concepts, we also hide from ourselves. That these concepts bring us closer to our emotions and what truly makes us human. That mortality isn't scary... it's style. Pirkei Avot also delivers in this area, using the same bold, in-your-face language that the goth aesthetic communicates visually.

Here are some of the most intense of those lines, complete with interpretation of how their particular “dark” take contributes to the power of the ethics behind them.

**Hillel saw a skull (2:6): warning of consequences**  
“[Hillel] saw a skull floating on the

face of the water. He said to it: because you drowned others, they drowned you. And in the end, they that drowned you will be drowned.” Pirkei Avot 2:6

The “gothness” of this passage is pretty straightforward... there's a skull in it, an age-old symbol of mortality. However, there's also a deeper significance. The skull's representation of death communicates a type of permanence in Hillel's message. The drama of this passage emphasizes how critical our actions are to how we interact with, and are affected by, the universe. Commentary suggests that Hillel may have known the identity of the skull. This contributes to the fact that this skull was a real human whose actions lead to their death.

**Know where you come from (3:1): a lesson in humility**

“Akabyah ben Mahalalel said: mark well three things and you will not come into the power of sin: Know from where you come, and where you are going, and before whom you are destined to give an account and reckoning. From where do you come? From a putrid drop. Where are you going? To a place of dust, of worm and of maggot. Before whom you are destined to give an account and reckoning? Before the King of the kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be he.” Pirkei Avot 3:1

Any guy who includes “maggots” in his legacy quote isn't messing around. That's a fellow goth right there! He knows the importance of decay as a lesson. That's what makes this paragraph so powerful. It helps us visualize our beginning and end for what they truly are: metal A.F.! (Yet also small and insignificant.) I would imagine many Hey Alma readers may struggle with the concept of facing judgment, which is totally ok! For me, facing judgment isn't necessarily coming before a big man with a beard, but rather a contemplation on what matters. To Akavya ben Mahalalel, it's a reminder that we are small, and to behave accordingly – with humility.

**Against your will (4:22): advice against apathy**  
“...let not your impulse assure thee

that the grave is a place of refuge for you; for against your will were you formed, against your will were you born, against your will you live, against your will you will die, and against your will you will give an account and reckoning before the King of the kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.” Pirkei Avot 4:22

Goth is tied into the beauty of decay for me, but it also has the tendency to be seen as a very apathetic movement. If death awaits us all, why bother with anything? This passage warns: Death is not a release. It is only the beginning of a much more terrifying prospect. The passage goes on to remind us that we are here against our will, but that only stresses the fact that we must be here for a reason. Here, I interpret “facing judgment” as a reminder of our legacy. What we do on this earth does have an impact, even if we don't mean to be here and won't be here forever. The image of death, the drama of it all, stirs us to action. This is a call for us to live intentionally.

What all these passages have in common (other than being very hardcore) is their emphasis on awareness – awareness of what it means to be alive. They reach that awareness through imagery that reminds us of our mortality. Pirkei Avot doesn't shy away from the heavier burdens we carry as human beings, and that recognition adds to the power of the text. By looking at the text through the lens of my inner goth, I get to focus in on these powerful paragraphs and marvel at their gruesome beauty (because they are, if nothing else, extremely beautiful). The goth aesthetic is relatively new compared to the longevity of Torah study, but that means it provides a new and fresh look at a classic and precious text.

Most importantly, reading Pirkei Avot through a goth lens means truly accepting that the Torah comes to all of us. The things that make us different only enrich Torah study for everyone. Every Jewish person has something new and unique to bring to our ever-changing, ever-growing understanding of Torah. Even – and perhaps even especially – the goth ones. **HW**

# City of Miami Beach Agrees to Pay \$1.3 Million to Settle Jewish Congregation's Discrimination Claims



Today, about 20,000 residents of Miami Beach are Jewish. Credit: Wikimedia Commons

By Jackie Hajdenberg

(JTA) – The city of Miami Beach has agreed to pay \$1.3 million to a small Orthodox synagogue that accused it of discrimination by sending inspectors more than once a week on average for two years.

At the same time, Congregation Bais Yeshaya D’Kerestir agreed to make changes to its parking and noise practices.

The agreement brings to a close an extended dispute over whether the congregation, which meets in a single-family home owned by its rabbi, Arie Wohl, was a religious institution or a private gathering.

The congregation argued that because

its services are invitation-only, the building's use is similar to that of any other private home and so should not be subject to scrutiny by city inspectors. It sued in April 2022, claiming that city officials had visited more than 126 times over the course of two years to enforce various city laws, including 60 times to enforce pandemic restrictions on large gatherings. (Orthodox services require a minyan, or quorum of at least 10 men, in order to recite certain prayers.)

The congregation also claimed that the city installed a video camera in 2021 that surveilled only its property, not neighboring buildings. Miami Beach

was “wrongfully discriminating against Plaintiffs’ First Amendment protected rights of religious exercise and assembly through discriminatory and arbitrary enforcement of the City’s zoning ordinances,” the congregation alleged in a court complaint.

The city issued repeated code violations because it said a religious institution was operating in a residential building. The congregation is “not engaging in private prayer, but, rather, the entity is operating a religious institution in violation of the City’s zoning laws,” the city said in a court filing.

The city said neighbors of the congregation filed multiple complaints against the property related to building code issues. And it said that inspections of the property to ensure compliance with pandemic restrictions were conducted remotely by driving by, not visiting.

“We respectfully disagree with the premise that the city discriminates against any person or religion, simply because the city enforces the city code,” City Attorney Rafael Paz told Axios in January.

But ultimately, to avoid a longer fight in court, the city agreed to settle, agreeing to pay the congregation \$1.3 million – \$100,000 more than the buyer on behalf of the congregation paid in 2020.

The home is located just blocks from one of Miami Beach's multiple waterways and within walking distance of

multiple other synagogues and Jewish institutions and businesses. About 20,000 Jews live in Miami Beach, down from 34,000 in 1994, according to a study from the University of Miami, and roughly 18% of the city's current population is Jewish.

Under the terms of the settlement, according to the “Miami Herald,” the synagogue must improve the condition of its driveway, will not use outdoor speakers for prayer activities, and will also limit the number of cars parked in the area outside the property. The city and the congregation have also agreed to a new process to address future code violations, and the congregation has agreed to not apply for a religious tax exemption at the property.

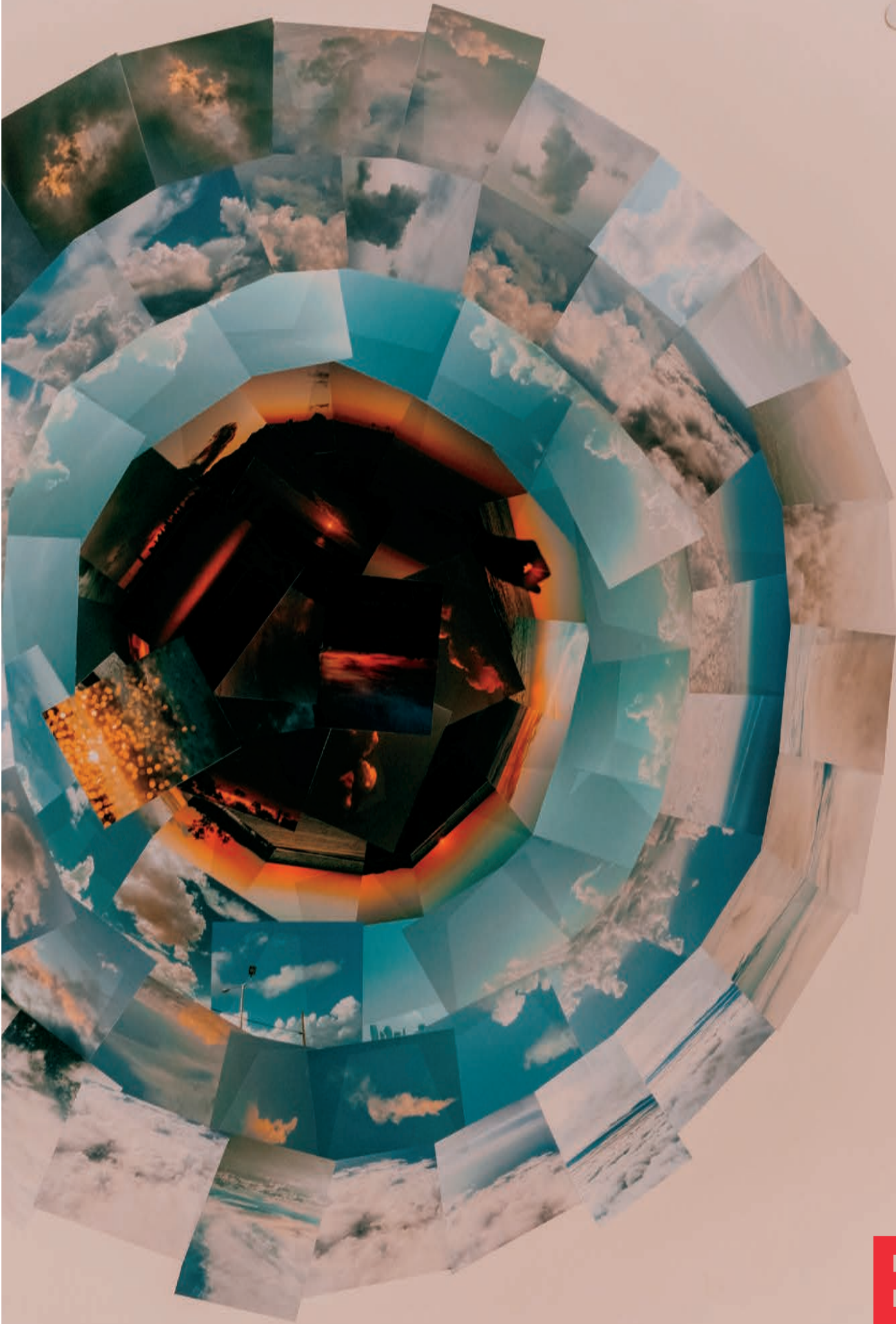
“Even if we had gone to trial and won, it wouldn't have felt like we had won anything,” Miami Beach Mayor Dan Gelber told “The Miami Herald.” “Ultimately, we do support the celebration of faith in our community.”

Congregation Bais Yeshaya D’Kerestir is far from the only synagogue to get entangled in local zoning issues. University Heights, Ohio, recently fought a court battle over compliance with a congregation called the Alexander Shul, which was settled in December with the synagogue paying \$1.59 million. As part of that agreement, the city and the synagogue will construct a new synagogue that meets the state building code. **HW**



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# Jewelry with Nazi Ties Fetches Record Prices at Christie’s Auction Amid Controversy



**The “Briolette of India” diamond necklace from the Heidi Horten collection sold for more than \$7 million. Credit: Fabrice Coffrini/Getty By Jackie Hajdenberg**

(JTA) – A blockbuster jewelry auction at Christie’s is drawing criticism because of the gems’ ties to a Nazi.

The pieces sold belonged to the late Heidi Horten, an Austrian art collector whose husband, Helmut Horten, was a Nazi Party member. The items fetched a total of \$202 million, making the auction the largest jewelry sale in history.

Some Jewish groups had urged Christie’s to halt the sale, citing Helmut Horten’s record during the Nazi era, when he amassed a fortune after buying businesses whose Jewish owners sold them under duress, often at steeply discounted prices. Horten used that wealth to propel his company, which ultimately was responsible for introducing American-style supermarkets in Germany.

Heidi Horten was born in 1941 and was more than 30 years younger than her husband. When he died in 1987, she inherited nearly \$1 billion, according to

“The New York Times.” Heidi Horten died last year at age 81.

Associations representing Jews and Holocaust survivors criticized the auction because of the origin of the wealth that paid for the jewelry. David Schaecter, president of Holocaust Survivors’ Foundation USA, said the auction continues “a disgraceful pattern of whitewashing Holocaust profiteers,” according to the “Times.”

“Christie’s must suspend this sale until full research [into the] link to Nazi era acquisitions [is] completed,” Rabbi Abraham Cooper, the associate dean of the Simon Wiesenthal Center, said in a statement earlier this month urging Christie’s to halt the auction. “Don’t reward those whose families may have gained riches from desperate Jews targeted and threatened by the Nazis.”

Christie’s also drew fire for not initially including any mention of the Jew-

ish businesses in its marketing materials for the auction. Its website now includes a brief note stating that the provenance of Horten’s wealth is “a matter of public record. The business practices of Mr. Horten during the Nazi era, when he purchased Jewish businesses sold under duress, are well documented.”

The auction house has committed to donating a portion of its commission to organizations that contribute to Holocaust research and education. It did not specify which organizations would receive the funds, saying only in a statement that it would be up to those organizations to “communicate about these donations.”

Proceeds from the sale of the jewels will be donated to the Heidi Horten Foundation, which supports children’s welfare and medical research, in addition to funding the Heidi Horten Collection, an art museum in Vienna. The museum boasts works by Pablo Picasso and Pierre-Auguste Renoir, as well as Jewish artists such as Marc Chagall, who escaped the Nazis, and Roy Lichtenstein.

The museum’s website includes a brief mention of Helmut Horten’s wealth accumulation under the Nazis, stating that Heidi Horten hired a historian to research and write “a scientific report on Helmut Horten’s build-up of assets and business in the context of ‘Aryanization’ during the ‘Third Reich.’”

That report, which was published last year, concluded that while Horten benefited from his purchase of Jewish-owned businesses, he was not an enthusiastic Nazi and was expelled from the party, and briefly imprisoned, near the end of World War II.

“There is not a saint and not a devil, but there is Horten who ... benefited from the circumstances of the tyranny of the Nazis,” the historian, Peter Hoeres, told the Associated Press. “You can’t say Horten was part of the resistance against the dictatorship.”

The Heidi Horten Foundation appears to be separate from a foundation bearing the name of her husband. On the website of the Helmut Horten Foundation, a page with a biography of Horten does not mention Jews, the Holocaust or the Nazi Party by name, though it does have a short section referencing Hoeres’ report. It says Horten was a “liberal,” and that the foundation “considers it extremely important to review and understand its founder’s history in the best possible way.”

“This auction is doubly indecent,” Yonathan Arfi, chairman of CRIF, the umbrella organization for French Jewry, said in a statement. “The funds that made it possible to acquire these jewels are partly the result of the Aryanization of Jewish property carried out by Nazi Germany, but in addition, this sale will contribute to a foundation whose mission it is to ensure the name of a former Nazi for posterity.”

More than 400 pieces of Heidi Horten’s jewelry were sold in the auction, both online and in person in Geneva, Switzerland, including jewels from brands Bulgari, Van Cleef and Arpels, Cartier, and Harry Winston, with many diamond, pearl, and colored gemstone pieces individually estimated to be worth millions of dollars. The last 300 lots from Horten’s collection are scheduled to be sold in November. [HW](#)



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