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THE

Hebrew Watchman

SERVING THE MEMPHIS JEWISH COMMUNITY SINCE 1925

HEBREWWATCHMAN.COM

10 TAMMUZ, 5783

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U.S., Canadian Military Cadets Tour Israel



Participants in the MirYam Institute’s Israel Strategy and Policy program visit the Western Wall in Jerusalem, June 2023. Credit: Photoagency.

By Etgar Lefkovits

(JNS) – Nearly 50 American and Canadian military cadets toured Israel and German death camps in Poland this month, in a trip that seeks to buttress the future officers’ awareness of the history and shared values at the core of the U.S.-Israel relationship.

The two-week Israel Strategy and Policy tour, which was initiated by the New York-based MirYam Institute in partnership with the U.S. Defense Department, the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, the Virginia Military Institute and the Royal Military College of Canada, presented past and present to the future officers.

The cadets’ trip began with a three-day tour of the Nazi death camps, fol-

lowed by 12 days spent crisscrossing Israel, taking in the sights and meeting with IDF soldiers and commanders.

For the non-Jewish cadets on the tour, the country’s size, diversity, mix of modernity and ancient, and the inseparable integration of the people’s army that is the IDF, came as a revelation.

“I was surprised flying in how much smaller Israel is compared to the U.S. and how densely packed everything is,” said Ian M., 19, from Cincinnati, Ohio, a cadet at West Point. “I was struck by the mix of the modern infrastructure in such an historic place.”

Sohum A., 21, a future infantry officer from New Jersey, also attends the United States Military Academy at West Point.

“I was surprised by how in such a small country you have widely different people and cultures who through thousands of years of history maintained their own identity while simultaneously living in close proximity,” he said.

Macy H., 21, from Seattle, also a cadet at West Point, said, “I knew that the IDF was a conscripted army, but it is amazing how the IDF is part of society and how society is the army, and how integrated and inseparable the two are.”

Melina B., 19, from North Carolina and the Virginia Military Institute, offered, “The passion that Israelis have for their country and maintaining this place where they seek refuge and are able to be free even though there are wars is striking.”

Mission-ready academies

The cadets came from a wide variety of backgrounds across the U.S., as well as a handful from Canada. They will be integrated across the military including, for the Americans, the Marines, the U.S. Army’s Armor and Infantry Branches, and the U.S. Navy during their multi-year service.

The trip sidestepped the Palestinian territories due to State Department-imposed security restrictions that did not allow them to enter the biblical heartland.

(Active-duty officers on a separate tour that MirYam offers are provided with helicopter rides and briefings over Judea and Samaria, commonly known as the West Bank.)

“We seek to impact the leaders of today and tomorrow now,” MirYam CEO Benjamin Anthony said in a statement. “By exposing these officers to the broad array of policymaking considerations in Israel

we assist the academies with their goal of building mission-ready academies.”

MirYam has brought hundreds of cadets and officers to Israel since its inception in 2017.

“The vast majority of the participants are not of the Jewish faith yet the connection they forge with Israel ... is deeply rooted in shared values and common challenges to Israel, the U.S., Canada and the entire free world,” said Rozita Pnini, the MirYam Institute’s chief operating officer.

Willpower and resolve

“Seeing the sites of the biggest demonstration of antisemitism in world history showed us the power of having a Jewish state and better appreciate the willpower and resolve of the people of the State of Israel,” said Bethany J., 19, a future armor officer from Orlando, Florida, who attends West Point.

“My grandfather landed in Normandy during World War II and liberated some of the death camps,” said Alexander D., 20, a West Point cadet from Wisconsin. He recounted his grandfather’s harrowing description of seeing bulldozers pillaging up bodies for mass graves.

During a visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Memorial in Jerusalem, the group saw a video showing that same scene. “It made me realize why Israel is so important,” he said.

Ela F., 20, a cadet at the Virginia Military Institute from Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, said, “That feeling in my stomach standing in Auschwitz and at Yad Vashem will never go away.”

(See **Cadets** Page 3)

Adamah Awards Climate Action Fund Grants to 8 Jewish Organizations

Adamah (the new name of merged organizations Hazon and Pearlstone) announced the launch of its \$1,000,000+ Climate Action Fund around Earth Day 2023. The Fund includes both interest-free loans and matching grants to support Jewish community organizations in undertaking climate solutions that will reduce organizational greenhouse gas emissions. The grants were awarded on June 9, with more awards to be announced.

Award recipients:

- Camp Tawonga, Groveland, Calif.: 173 KW ground mounted solar array
- Congregation B’nai Israel, Tustin, Calif.: 126 KW ground mounted solar array
- Habonim Dror Camp Galil, Ottsville, Pa.: Insulation and window replacement project
- Merage Jewish Community Center of Orange County, Irvine, Calif.: Multiple building LED lighting retrofit

- Portland Jewish Academy, Portland, Ore.: Food waste reduction and composting program
- Temple Beth Hatfiloh, Olympia, Wash.: Rooftop solar array
- Temple B’nai Tikvah, Calgary, Canada: 27 KW rooftop solar array
- Temple Judea of Laguna Hills, Laguna Woods, Calif.: 28 KW rooftop solar array

The projects funded include five solar PV installations (with 363 installed KW), a lighting retrofit, insulation and window upgrades, and a food waste reduction program. Combined, these projects will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 9,725 tons over their lifetime, the equivalent of planting 15,560 trees^[1] or taking 97 average cars off the road^[2]. The projects will also save these eight organizations over \$320,000 annually through reduced energy bills and other expenses.

This first round of grants comes at a time when wildfires, with their smoke and destruction, affect the lives of millions in North America and across the globe. Adamah is coordinating a collective Jewish response to the climate crisis – and the launch of the Climate Action Fund propels organizations to implement the climate solutions necessary to make a meaningful impact and demonstrate Jewish leadership.

Adamah’s Climate Action Fund is open to members of the Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition, a network of Jewish community organizations who recognize the urgency of the climate crisis and commit to taking action. In early 2022, Adamah launched the Coalition in partnership with 20 founding partners who represent major national and international umbrella organizations of Jewish life (including Jewish Federations of North America, Jewish Funders

Network, Hillel International, and JCC Association of North America).

There is no cost to join the Coalition, and any Jewish organization in North America is eligible for membership.

“This Coalition represents an unprecedented mobilization of the Jewish world towards meaningful Jewish climate action, at pace and at scale,” says Jakir Manela, CEO of Adamah. “We are so grateful to all our Coalition members for leaning into this partnership and engaging in this process. Climate and sustainability have not been on the list of priorities for the vast majority of Jewish organizations; this coalition and the climate action work they are doing reflect a deep paradigm shift and culture change moving forward. By supporting each other and convening hundreds of member organizations

(See **Adamah** Page 3)

Memphis Artwork Gifted to Israel Sister-City, Shoham



Artist Sarah Beth Cohen-Wilcox and Eitan Petigro, Mayor of Shoham

This artwork was gifted to Shoham, Israel, Memphis' sister city, in celebration of Israel at 75. The mixed-media piece was created by Sarah Beth Cohen-Wilcox and Marisa Baggett.

Right: Sarah Beth and Arela Kotter, chairwoman for the Memphis-Shoham committee in Shoham



Baron Hirsch Honors Graduates

Baron Hirsch Congregation honored over 40 students marking educational milestones on Shabbat morning, June 10. The annual event recognized students' academic achievements on all levels. In honor of the special occasion, all those graduating from high school, eighth grade or kindergarten were recognized by Rabbi Ian Lichter during the services, and each received a Sefer relevant to their age groups from the congregation. "We are so proud of the academic and spiritual accomplishments of our graduates," stated Rabbi Lichter. "This Shabbat provides us the annual opportunity show our pride and celebrate these mile-

stones and tremendous nachas with all of our families." Following services was a Kiddush honoring the graduates, which was sponsored by many parents and grandparents. As part of the kiddush, many other graduates were included, such as those who completed college or a master's program. Graduating from high school are: Nathan Baer, Adam Loskovitz, Natalie Mashinsky, Gavriel Peiser, Max Rosales, Chana Rovner, Lea Thomas, Calder Trotz, Ezra Wiener, Dovid Wogan, Ikey Levey and Elisha Serman. The eighth grade graduates include: Jack Ardestani, David Baum, Gordon Chaifetz, Mia Friedman, Toby Gescheit,

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Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. June 30, 2023 / 11 Tammuz, 57838:00 p.m.
Havdalah, Sat. July 1, 2023 / 12 Tammuz, 5783 9:02 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Chukat-Balak

Hodaya Harary, Daniel Kahane, Esther Kahn, Ilan Lennon, Gavriel Lichter, Rachel Sanderson, Jonah Siegel, Adam Thomas, Maya Weiser, Eli Weisfogel, Dotan Weiss, Aliza Wiener and Omer Zalman. Those graduating from kindergarten are: Gavriel Bauer, Arielle Dollin, Kayla Einhorn, Shmuel Gelb, Devora Goldstone, Tzvi Harary, Rivka Hollander, Ethan Krupp, Gedalya Mehler, Elazar Nissan, Ruchama Rossman, Liba Shapiro, Golda Vaena, Eli VanderWalde and Max Wilons. HW

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Beginning Sunday, August 20 Temple Israel’s Adult Hebrew Classes on Zoom

It is never too late to start learning Hebrew or brush up on what you once knew.

For six years, Barbara Mansberg has taught Temple Israel’s Hebrew Class, also known as Adult Ulpan. Her knowledge and experience make learning Hebrew fun and easy. Aleph, the introductory class, is open to all and the perfect place to start for a quick refresh or to begin your Hebrew journey. Hebrew classes are held on Zoom beginning Sunday, August 20 – you don’t even have to leave your house!

“I have always loved learning new things, so when I read about the virtual Hebrew class at Temple, I was excited,” said Deedee Perel. “Barbara Mansberg has made learning to read Hebrew fun. Not only does Barbara help us learn to pronounce and ‘speak,’ but she also explains the history behind many of the customs and pronunciations, teaches us the background of prayers, and makes the class come alive. I am amazed and thrilled that each week I can read more

and more quickly.”

Carolyn Mizne never learned Hebrew as a child but began learning at the age of 73 in the Adult Ulpan class at Temple Israel. “I am finding new meaning in the prayers, and the best part may be that I am able to tell my children to never believe they are too old to learn something new.”

Intermediate and advanced classes are also available! For more information or if you would like to register, please contact Emma Figarsky at emmaf@timemphis.org.

Beginnnger Class: Aleph

Learn to identify and speak the alphabet – you will be able to read words at the end.

Intermediate Class: Bet

Put words together and start translating – you will be able to read and translate sentences at the end.

Advanced Class: Gimel

Begin translating the Book of Ruth **HW**

Adamah...

(Continued From Page 1)

across the Jewish world, this coalition is poised to have a transformative impact on Jewish life – for people and planet.”

The Coalition is actively recruiting new members and takes applications on a rolling basis. For more information about Adamah, the Jewish Climate

Leadership Coalition, and the Climate Action Fund, visit adamah.org/coalition.

About Adamah

We believe in the centrality of adam and adamah, people and planet. We cultivate vibrant Jewish life in deep connection with the earth, catalyzing culture change and systemic change through

The MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Happenings

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

Monday, July 3

Ice Cream Social

The ice cream social will follow lunch at 12:15pm. These non-dairy treats will be served with other goodies that can be added. There is no charge for this delicious dessert. Reservations do need to be made, so there will be enough on hand, by contacting Adult Services Coordinator Steve Kaplan at 901-259-9220 or stevekaplan@jccmemphis.org.

Tuesday, July 4, due to Independence Day, there will be no senior lunch! Have a great, safe 4th of July!

Wednesday, July 5

Special Program

Maika Yamaoka, Japanese Cultural Ambassador will speak about Japan and will have a musical recital. She is an accomplished musician on traditional Japanese instruments. This should be one of the most exciting programs of the year. Please call and make your reservation. If you wish to come after the lunch,

please call the front desk and have them add your name to the list, but mention that you will not be there for the lunch.

Monday, July 10

Kristin Miller with Mid-South Aging Consultants will talk about “Staying on Your Feet-Fall Prevention!” Please join us for this much-needed topic.

Wednesday, July 12

Super Bingo!! Prizes and fun abound!! Come and enjoy the fun. No reservations necessary.

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

mit to take action. Since opening Coalition membership in September 2022 to Jewish community organizations across North America, over 200 Jewish community organizations have joined.

[1] Calculation of CO2 offsetting by trees. Encon. [2] Tailpipe Greenhouse Gas Emissions from a Typical Passenger Vehicle | US EPA. **HW**

Cadets...

(Continued From Page 1)

Not on the news

A recurring comment among the cadets was that Israel is not what you see on the news and is something you have to experience for yourself.

“The American people and the people of Israel share a lot of the same interests but from seeing the news headlines some people don’t realize this,” said Justin P., 21, from Washington, D.C., and the Virginia Military Institute. He called the trip an “eye-opening experience.”

Alexander D. added, “Standing on the Golan and hearing from the IDF soldiers makes you understand the significance of what the IDF is doing.”

Ela F. said, “You expect fear, but you see the day-to-day life of the clubs, parties, beaches and nightlife of Tel Aviv as people go on with their lives.”

Paul M., 20, also from Washington, D.C., and the Virginia Military Institute, said, “The ability to discuss things openly despite the proximity to danger and not get rebuked by your flag officer really struck me.”

Melina B. said, “These are things you can’t get from reading a book, watching a video or watching the news. You have to have your foot on the land.”

The cadets said that the news from Israel was one of rockets raining down on the country, Israeli attacks on Palestinians in Gaza, or a government in turmoil, a picture of a country constantly at war externally or internally.

“You are not getting the full story in the media,” Alexander D. said.

“They talk about the conflict but never tell you about the fundamental history,” Paul M. said.

“Israel has a PR crisis,” Ian M. said. “Remind people why the Jewish state has to exist. If people understand that they will have much more sympathy.” **HW**

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Harry Styles Thanks Orthodox Friends for Walking Miles to his Concert on Shabbat



Harry Styles performs at the Brit Awards in the O2 Arena in London, Feb. 11, 2023. Credit: Gareth Cattermole/Gareth Cattermole/Getty Images

By Gabe Friedman

(JTA) – Pop star Harry Styles gave a shout-out to a pair of Orthodox Jewish friends who walked close to six miles to attend a concert of his at London’s Wembley Stadium last Saturday. “Jewish Chronicle” reporter Tash Mosheim, who was at the show, heard Styles tell the crowd of 90,000 that he was grateful for Ben and Meredith Winston’s efforts to show up at the gig, which opened its doors well before sundown on Shabbat. The couple walked from their home in Hampstead, an outlying area of London, to avoid violating the laws of Shabbat. The Winstons have been close with

Styles throughout his rise to superstardom. While he was a contestant on the British music competition show “The X Factor,” Styles stayed in the Winstons’ attic bedroom for 20 months. A 2017 “Rolling Stone” profile claimed that “the Winstons’ Orthodox Jewish lifestyle, with a strong family emphasis, helped keep [Styles] sane” through the stress of the competition. Ben Winston, a producer for James Corden’s “Late Late Show” and the “Grammy Awards” show, continued as a mentor for Styles as he joined the boy band sensation One Direction and later embarked on a wildly successful solo career. The pair even co-produced a CBS sitcom that ran for one season called “Happy Together” – which involves an up-and-coming pop star who moves in with his accountant’s family – loosely based on their experience living together. In the years since the start of their friendship, Styles – who is not Jewish – has tweeted about Jewish holidays (and engaged with Jewish social media users) on multiple occasions. He has a tattoo with his sister’s name spelled in Hebrew and a kippah with his own name on it, courtesy of Winston. He is also a godparent to the Winstons’ young daughter Ruby, who voiced the line that starts his song “As It Was,” which topped the singles charts in dozens of countries last year: “Come on, Harry, we want to say goodnight to you!” Winston’s father is Robert Winston, a pioneer in IVF research and later a TV presenter, and his mother, Lira, worked with several British-Jewish organizations. **HW**

‘Jeopardy!’ Featured a Suburban Detroit Synagogue Once Called ‘A Concrete Sinai on the Shoulder of Interstate 696’



Ben Goldstein on a “Jeopardy!” winning streak despite missing a clue about a notable synagogue, Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Southfield, Michigan, 45 minutes from his home. Screenshot; synagogue from Wikimedia Commons

By Philissa Cramer

(JTA) – Viewers of the popular game show “Jeopardy!” got a glance of one of the United States’ most distinctive synagogue buildings last Tuesday, after a clue showcased Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Southfield, Michigan. The Conservative synagogue had leaked the fact that it would appear as a trivia item on “Jeopardy!” for days before the game, and as luck would have it, one of the contestants last Tuesday lives just a 45-minute drive from Southfield, in Dexter. Ben Goldstein told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that his local expertise did influence his quick response to the clue – just not correctly. Contestants were shown a picture of Shaarey Zedek’s soaring facade as they heard the clue, in the category “Architects:” “After World War II, these evolved Moorish to Modernists as in architect Percival Goodman’s Shaarey Zedek in suburban Detroit.”

Goldstein, who has a Jewish father but does not identify as Jewish and said he was last in a synagogue during “the bar/bat mitzvah season of 1994,” buzzed in right away. “What are mosques?” he asked. A second contestant, Janie Sullivan, correctly guessed “What are temples?” “When I read the clue, two phrases immediately jumped out: ‘Moorish’ and ‘suburban Detroit.’ Being a resident of Southeast Michigan, I’m familiar with Metro Detroit’s famously large Muslim community. Those two bits of information made me confident enough to ring in and say, ‘What are mosques?’” he told JTA via Twitter direct message. “I just didn’t pay enough attention to the name of the building and its architect.”

He added, “Obviously, I got a bunch of playful abuse from my Jewish friends over text messages.” But Goldstein – who grew up in suburban Chicago, attended the University of Michigan and works outside Ann Arbor as a marketing specialist at a tech company – said he found consolation from thinking about another set of Jewish loved ones. “My father’s parents, Isaac and Rochelle Goldstein, were Holocaust survivors from Poland, and they were devoted viewers of ‘Jeopardy!’,” he said. “They both passed away years ago, but I know they’d be so proud of me for competing on the show that they’d forgive me for my wrong answer.” While someone with an eagle eye might be able to discern that cutouts on the front of Shaarey Zedek’s towering building resemble Jewish stars, the name offered the only real indicator in the clue that that correct response was about synagogues. Shaarey Zedek means “Gates of Righteousness” in Hebrew and is a relatively common name for synagogues. In fact, a different Congregation Sharey Zedek in Michigan, a Reform synagogue in East Lansing, was in the news last week because a local man was charged last Friday with plotting an attack on it. (Meanwhile, Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Southfield was the site of an active shooter training this week.) The Southfield Shaarey Zedek is one of the largest and most architecturally significant synagogues in the United States, an outlier for Goodman, whose 50 synagogues mostly function on a smaller scale. “But even Goodman had his roadside attraction: Shaarey Zedek, capacity 3,500, parlays a skyscraping Ark and an erupting eternal flame into a concrete Sinai on the shoulder of Interstate 696 near Detroit,” the architect Philip Nobel wrote in “The New York Times” in 2001. Goldstein won the night’s game despite the miss on the synagogue clue, extending his three-day winnings to \$21,293. He [went] into his fourth game last Thursday night having not answered any Final Jeopardy! clues correctly and after multiple games with relatively low score totals. Those signs, along with confusingly worded clues that have stumped contestants, have caused the show’s vocal fans to complain that it has slipped in quality since longtime host Alex Trebek died in 2020. Mayim Bialik, a Jewish actress, is one of two replacements for Trebek and hosted last Tuesday’s episode. **HW**

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Camp Gesher is Back at Baron Hirsch for the Summer!

Baron Hirsch Congregation is once again running Camp Gesher Summer camp. Camp Gesher is open to pre-k through 4th grade from 9 a.m.-3 p.m. The first session is July 31-August 4, and the second session is August 7-11.

Camp Gesher is held at Baron Hirsch Congregation and will provide an opportunity for Jewish children to have fun, socialize in a supportive environment and offers a wide range of activities indoors and outdoors.

Camp Gesher provides safe play

while encouraging children to develop communication, teamwork and leadership skills.

The youth directors Eitan and Dina Selter are experienced with children and host all of Baron Hirsch’s youth events providing a great experience for children. Camp Gesher is staffed with experienced teachers who possess real knowledge in the topics of Orthodox Judaism. If you would like to sign up for Camp Gesher please reach out to eitan@baronhirsch.org [HW](#)

Netanyahu Visits IDF Unit 8200 ‘Bridges’ Program Class



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu awards a student at the 8200 “Bridges” Program Class. Credit: Haim Zach/ GPO.

(JNS) – Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Education Minister Yoav Kish last Tuesday visited the “Bridges” program class of IDF Intelligence Branch Unit 8200 and the IDF Personnel Branch Education Corps at the ORT Air and Space Technology High School in Maale Adumim.

The goal of the program is to expose pupils to the world of computers and cyber and give them the tools to integrate into the high-tech industry, military service or anywhere else they choose.

The program commander, IDF Lt.-Col. Alon Hachima, emphasized that the program is open to all children, without selections or threshold conditions.

The prime minister and education minister also heard from the school principal about how the program has affected the pupils who have participated in it.

Netanyahu told the students, “You have entered the world of tomorrow and have broken through this barrier. This is wonderful. We very much want to commend the education system in Ma’ale Adumim, and in other communities, for

introducing these materials into the curriculum.

“This is the world of the future and it is already here, and the fact that you have overcome the obstacles, impediments and fears, you dove into the pool and suddenly you are discovering that you can swim just like others and maybe even better than them. This is exactly what we wanted to happen,” he said.

“I would also like to thank the instructors and managers, and Unit 8200 and the IDF Education Branch,” he added.

Netanyahu said there was a need to have the program become national in scope in order to reach all children in Israel.

“We want every child in Israel to have the equal opportunity to use these tools. We want to increase this in Hebrew, Arabic and even ultra-Orthodox content, that will help every boy and girl. We want everyone to be able to grasp the future today,” he said.

At the conclusion of the visit, Netanyahu awarded certificates of excellence to the program’s outstanding pupils. [HW](#)

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Following Backlash, Combat Antisemitism Confirms that Video on ‘Woke Antisemitism’ will not be Reposted



A screenshot from a video on “woke-ism” distributed by Combat Antisemitism. (YouTube)

By Ben Sales

(JTA) – A controversial video that sparked backlash after blaming “woke ideology” for a rise in antisemitism will not be going back online in its current form, said the CEO of the group that produced it.

The video, created by a coalition called the Combat Antisemitism Movement, first went online in early June and drew broader attention in recent days after a reporter for the “Forward,” Arno Rosenfeld, began asking questions about its content. The video claims that “wokeism, an ideology which purportedly calls for diversity, equity and inclusion, fan[s] the flames of antisemitism” and says that progressive ideas about race and class fuel bigotry against Jews.

Two major Jewish groups left the coalition, which presents itself as broad-based and nonpartisan, over the video. The Jewish Federations of North America, an umbrella for Jewish communal federations nationwide, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that it rescinded its partnership last Friday after Combat Antisemitism did not immediately remove the video and would not rejoin unless the video were permanently removed.

The Jewish Council for Public Affairs,

a national liberal public policy group, likewise ended its partnership in the movement. The group’s CEO, Amy Spitalnick, told the “Forward” that the video was “deeply disturbing and concerning.”

Combat Antisemitism wrote in a statement on Twitter last Sunday that “we have decided to temporarily suspend the distribution of the video entitled ‘What is Woke Antisemitism?’” with the goal of “fostering a broad consensus.” Now, Sacha Roytman Dratwa, the CEO of Combat Antisemitism, has confirmed to JTA that the video will not be going back up.

“The final decision was taken a few days ago,” he said. “We are reviewing the content to make something that will appeal to a broader audience.”

He added, “I don’t know if it’s another version of the video, but we will continue dealing with every form of antisemitism – far-left, far right and radical Islam, and other forms.”

Upon being notified of Dratwa’s comments, both of the two groups that dropped their partnership said they were not yet prepared to rejoin the coalition.

“We were proud to partner with the Combat Antisemitism Movement in the

past on events such as the Mayors Conference, and hope to collaborate again in the future,” a JFNA spokesperson said in a statement, referencing a recent gathering of mayors who committed to fighting antisemitism. “In the meantime, we are consulting with the Federations and [Jewish Community Relations Councils] in our system as well as the leadership of CAM to find a way forward.”

Spitalnick told JTA, “Before we consider that, we’ll need to discuss and better understand the broader questions surfaced by this video issue. The video didn’t come out of nowhere, and I’d like to understand what CAM will be doing moving forward.”

Combat Antisemitism, which was founded in 2019, is one of several new groups aiming to fight anti-Jewish bigotry, and was launched with the backing of Adam Beren, a Jewish philanthropist who has donated to Republican candidates. Dratwa emphasized that the group aims to be nonpartisan.

“We have been listening to our partners and working with them as a coalition,” he said. “When they have concerns on content, we listen to them and obviously do our best to appeal to as many partners as possible.”

Combat Antisemitism says on its website that it has more than 700 partners. Dratwa told JTA that the movement does not obligate its partners to make a financial contribution but does ask them to collaborate on programs and activities, as well as to see the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s working definition of antisemitism “as the only definition to monitor and combat antisemitism.”

That document, popularly referred to as the IHRA definition, has been adopted by national and local governments worldwide, as well as universities and corporations. But it has stirred controversy because it defines some criticisms of Israel as antisemitic, including calling the country a “racist endeavor,” and critics have offered other definitions.

A JFNA spokesperson told JTA, “We do endorse the IHRA definition and advocate for its use.” Spitalnick pointed to a 2020 resolution by her group that adopted the definition as a non-legally binding document and called for Jewish community relations organizations to use the definition “as a tool when engaging and educating policymakers, law enforcement, educators, and community leaders, as well as other Jewish and non-Jewish community partners.” **HW**

Chicago Cubs Slugger Matt Mervis Sells Hebrew Merch to ‘Help Grow’ Baseball in Israel

By Gabe Friedman

(JTA) – Chicago Cubs first baseman Matt Mervis is selling T-shirts and hats emblazoned with his nickname spelled in Hebrew to raise money for the Israel Association of Baseball.

“It’s a great cause to help grow the game in Israel,” Mervis told MLB.com last Thursday, “and try to build some fields over there.”

Mervis, who is Jewish and a hotly anticipated addition to the Cubs this year, played for Team Israel at the World Baseball Classic in March. He is nicknamed “Mash” because of his home-run hitting power, a moniker that some fans and retailers spell out with asterisks, the way the 1970s Korean War sitcom of the same name was stylized.

That nickname, spelled in Hebrew – asterisks included – along with his last name (in sum, M*A*S*H Mervis) is found on the new merchandise Mervis is selling in tandem with the Israeli baseball association. He tweeted out images of the design on men’s and women’s shirts and caps.

Baseball has not been a popular sport in Israel, which has only a few baseball fields. But Team Israel leaders and many on its roster of mostly American Jewish players have in recent years become invested in boosting the sport there. A sur-

prising Cinderella run at the 2017 World Baseball Classic gave the team’s profile a lift, too, helping it attract higher-profile MLB players, such as Joc Pederson and Dean Kremer.

The team’s recent manager, former Jewish MLB All-Star Ian Kinsler, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency last year that he wants to build more “buzz” around baseball in Israel.

Mervis told MLB.com that his grandmother lived in the Israeli city of Givatayim, adjacent to Tel Aviv, before immigrating to the United States.

“I learned a lot,” he said about his experience on Team Israel. “Just talking to everybody and learning more about the culture and life in Israel and things that my grandmother grew up with.”

Mervis, 25, has had a rocky start to his rookie season in the big leagues, batting just .165 with three home runs through 25 games.

He’s filling big shoes, that of beloved Cubs first baseman Anthony Rizzo who played for the team from 2012 to 2021 and made the out that clinched the team’s first World Series win in 108 years. Rizzo’s legacy has earned Mervis another nickname, this one Jewish: At least one writer has dubbed him “Briszo.” **HW**

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Charleston Rabbi Resigns, Saying Anti-LGBTQ Legislation has Forced him to Leave South Carolina



Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim Synagogue in Charleston, South Carolina, Oct. 18, 2019. Credit: Warren LeMay via Creative Commons

By Andrew Lapin

(JTA) – A rabbi at a historic synagogue in Charleston has announced his resignation from his congregation, and plans to leave South Carolina, over what he characterized as the state’s discriminatory treatment of LGBTQ people.

Last Wednesday, Rabbi Greg Kanter, who is gay, told Kahal Kadosh Beth Elohim that he and his family would be seeking new opportunities in other states whose policies and public spaces are friendlier to LGBTQ people. Kanter is one of three rabbis at the Reform congregation, which was founded in 1749.

“A confluence of factors have gone into this decision including the barrage

of legal challenges in the state of South Carolina that target me and my family,” Kanter wrote in a resignation letter sent to his congregation obtained by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. “We find it necessary to take steps to move to a place that will not target us and our human rights.”

Kanter’s decision underscores the challenges LGBTQ Jews are increasingly facing in Republican-led states. As in other statehouses, lawmakers in South Carolina have proposed a flurry of laws targeting LGBTQ people, including measures banning medical care for trans youth and shielding people who oppose same-sex marriage and “gender identity ideology”

from punishment. The Anti-Defamation League and other Jewish civil rights groups have criticized such legislation.

In addition, states including South Carolina have seen book bans focused on taking LGBTQ- and race-themed works off shelves; such efforts have also ensnared books about Jewish life and the Holocaust.

“They’re talking about weakening our marriage, going after trans kids, and I think adults and kids take notice when people in power do those things,” Kanter, who declined to speak to JTA, told the “Forward.” “It makes it rougher for all of us.”

Kanter added that he is raising a transgender child and that their family was affected when a local hospital recently stopped providing gender-related health care for minors.

Prior to his move to Charleston, Kanter was a rabbi at Temple Israel in Minneapolis. While in that role, he came out to his colleagues and congregation, and described them as “supportive.” He joined the Charleston synagogue in 2017 and said he would stay in his job through June 2024.

In a message sent along with Kanter’s resignation letter, Rabbi Stephanie Alexander and the synagogue’s president, Naomi Gorstein, called his announcement “bittersweet” and extended “every best wish to Rabbi Kanter and his family,” but did not address his reasons for the exit.

Charleston is home to one of the oldest Jewish communities in the country, which numbered around 10,000 according to a 2016 study, and remains a major

hub of Southern Jewish life. Proposed restrictions on LGBTQ life are contrary to the values of Charleston’s Jewish community, Brandon Fish, director of the city’s Jewish Community Relations Council, told JTA.

“Jewish people of every race, nationality, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation deserve to feel safe to live, raise families, and engage Jewishly in South Carolina,” Fish said in a statement about Kanter’s resignation. “Regressive social policy will continue to negatively impact all of our communities and drive good people and businesses away from our state.”

Fish is a member of Kanter’s synagogue and had publicized the news of Kanter’s resignation on Twitter without identifying him by name. Fish told JTA that his organization has collaborated with LGBTQ advocacy groups in the state to push for the adoption of broader hate-crimes laws that would encompass discrimination based on gender and sexuality.

The group has also sought to push back on what Fish characterized as state legislators’ reliance on the Bible to justify such laws. “We’ve reminded them that not all South Carolinians are Christians,” he said.

In at least one case, however, lawmakers have invoked Jewish observance to justify a proposal. The bill to shield opponents of same-sex marriage from punishment cites America’s tradition of religious freedom, including “the right of Jews and other Sabbath observers to dedicate their time to God and family instead of work on their Sabbath.” **HW**

Oceangate CEO’s Wife Descended from Famous Jewish Titanic Passengers

(JNS) – The wife of Stockton Rush, the OceanGate CEO whose submersible, Titan, vanished on June 18 during a dive to the wreckage of the Titanic, is a direct descendant of two famous Jewish passengers who perished when the ocean liner sank in 1912.

Wendy Rush is a great-great-granddaughter of Isidor and Ida Straus. Isidor was co-owner of Macy’s department store.

She is descended from one of their daughters, Minnie, who married Dr. Richard Weil in 1905. Their grandson, Dr. Richard Weil III, is Rush’s father, said Joan Adler, executive director of the Straus Historical Society.

She married Stockton Rush in 1986, according to “The New York Times.” She serves as OceanGate’s communica-

tions director.

Wendy Rush’s famous ancestors were remembered for their chivalric behavior aboard the Titanic; Isidor refused a seat on a lifeboat as women and children still remained aboard the doomed liner.

Ida was equally heroic, refusing to leave her husband of 40 years. They were last seen sitting arm in arm on a pair of deck chairs as the ship went down.

Hollywood director James Cameron, in his 1997 film about the Titanic, borrowed from the Strauss story, featuring an elderly couple embracing in bed as the boat sank.

Isidor’s body was found at sea about two weeks after the ship went down. Ida’s remains were never recovered.

The Titanic’s remains rest at a depth of 12,500 feet. **HW**

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The IRS warns that although scams are especially prevalent during tax season, they also take place throughout the year.¹ As a result, it's important to always be on the lookout for suspicious activity so that you don't end up becoming the victim of a scam.

One of the more common IRS scams involves phishing emails. These scams involve unsolicited emails that pose as the IRS to convince you to provide personal information. Scam artists then use this information to commit identity or financial theft. Another dangerous type of phishing, referred to as "spear phishing," is targeted towards specific individuals or groups within a company or organization. Spear phishing emails are designed to get you to click on a link or download an attachment that will install malware in order to disrupt critical operations within your company or organization.

Another popular IRS scam involves

fraudulent communications that appear to be from the IRS or a law enforcement organization. These scams are designed to trick you into divulging your personal information by using scare tactics such as threatening you with arrest or license revocation. Be wary of any email, phone, social media, and text communications from individuals claiming they are from the IRS or law enforcement saying that you owe money to the IRS.

A relatively new IRS scam involves text messages that ask you to click on a link in order to claim a tax rebate or some other type of tax refund. Scammers who send these messages are trying to get you to give up your personal information and/or install malware on



The IRS will not initiate contact with you by email, text message, or social media to request personal information.

your phone. Watch out for texts that appear to be from the IRS that mention "tax rebate" or "refund payment."

The IRS will not initiate contact with you by email, text message, or social media to request personal information. The IRS usually contacts you by regular mail delivered by the U.S. Postal Service. Here are some steps that may help you avoid scams.

- Never share your personal or financial information via email, text message, or over the phone.
- Don't click on suspicious or unfamiliar links or attachments in emails, text messages, or instant messaging services.
- Keep your devices and security

software up to date, maintain strong passwords, and use multi-factor authentication.

1) Internal Revenue Service, 2022

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National Portrait Gallery to Display Portrait of Sally Priesand, First Ordained Woman Rabbi in American History

By Jackie Hajdenberg

(JTA) – More than 50 years after she became the first woman to be ordained by an American rabbinical seminary, Rabbi Sally Priesand has set another precedent: Beginning later this year, she will be the first woman rabbi to be featured at the Smithsonian National Portrait Gallery.

But Priesand will not be the gallery's only Reform rabbi: Another exhibit recently began displaying a portrait of Rabbi Isaac Mayer Wise, the 19th-century rabbi who founded the seminary that, nearly 100 years later, would go on to ordain Priesand.

The portrait of Priesand, who was or-

daind by the Reform movement's Hebrew Union College in 1972 and retired from a New Jersey pulpit in 2006, will be shown beginning in October as part of a 21-work collection titled "Recent Acquisitions" that largely features portraits by or of women.

The work is an inkjet print of a 2022 photograph by Joan Roth, who is known for her photographs of Jewish women around the world. It depicts a smiling Priesand wearing a multicolored prayer shawl and holding a Torah scroll whose cover displays the word "avodah," Hebrew for "worship" or "service." Roth drew inspiration from a photograph taken 50 years earlier at Priesand's ordination.

Priesand's photo will hang beside those of other pioneering women, including pop star Beyoncé, science fiction author Octavia Butler, Hollywood icon Greta Garbo and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the late Jewish Supreme Court justice whose likeness has previously been featured elsewhere in the museum. The exhibition will run until November 2024.

Wise's portrait is an oil painting on canvas, and has been in the possession of the National Portrait Gallery since 1977. But it was undergoing conservation work until recently and has never been shown on the museum's walls. Painted by artist Morris Goldstein in 1881, it shows Wise sitting in an armchair with his elbow resting on a stack of books. Folded underneath the books is a copy of "The American Israelite,"

the newspaper he founded in Cincinnati in 1854 that is the country's oldest running Jewish publication.

Wise's portrait is now on display as part of the museum's "Out of Many: Portraits from 1600 to 1900" exhibition, whose works are switched out periodically. It hangs in a room that also includes a bust of turn-of-the-20th-century African-American educator and author Booker T. Washington and a photograph of Sarah Winnemucca, birth name Thoc-me-ah, a 19th-century advocate for Native American rights.

Wise was also a pioneer in the Reform movement, allowing mixed-gender services and replacing bar mitzvah rituals with confirmation ceremonies, among other changes. He founded Hebrew Union College in 1875.

Both the conservation of the Wise portrait and the creation of the Priesand portrait were funded by Reform Rabbi Amy Perlin and her husband, former World Bank and Capital One CFO Gary Perlin. Rabbi Perlin is the first female rabbi in the United States to start her own congregation, Temple B'nai Shalom in Fairfax Station, Virginia.

In addition to Wise and Priesand, the museum has portraits of early 20th-century Reform Rabbi Judah Magnes; 19th-century Dutch-American Rabbi Samuel Myer Isaacs; and 20th-century Reform Rabbi Stephen Samuel Wise. None of those works are currently being displayed at the museum. [HW](#)

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Moms For Liberty Chapter Apologizes for Quoting Hitler in its Newsletter

(JTA) – An Indiana chapter of Moms For Liberty, a group that has advocated for book bans in school districts across the country, apologized for quoting Adolf Hitler in a newsletter last week.

The group’s chapter in Hamilton County, north of Indianapolis, released the first edition of its newsletter, The Parent Brigade, last Wednesday. Atop its masthead was a quotation attributed to Hitler reading, “He alone, who OWNS the youth, GAINS the future.”

Last Thursday, the chapter’s president apologized for the quotation. An amended version of the newsletter with “context” for the quotation was posted online before the whole quote was later deleted and the newsletter reposted without it.

“We condemn Adolf Hitler’s actions and his dark place in human history,” the group’s chair, Paige Miller, wrote in a statement posted to social media. “We should not have quoted him in our newsletter and express our deepest apology.”

Founded in 2021 in Florida to oppose what it calls indoctrination in public education, Moms For Liberty now has dozens of chapters nationwide, a growing national profile and an uneasy relationship with Jewish-themed books.

At least one of its national chairs is Jewish, and the group has publicly supported haredi Orthodox yeshivas that are under fire for allegedly falling short of secular education requirements and other standards. But Moms For Liberty members have also been a driving force behind the removal of Jewish and Holocaust-themed books from schools, including a successful effort to remove an adaptation of Anne Frank’s diary from

a Florida school district. Chapters have also aligned themselves with extremist groups like the Proud Boys, and the left-leaning Southern Poverty Law Center has called them a hate group, sparking criticism from Republicans.

The quotation in question is sourced to a 1935 speech Hitler gave introducing the antisemitic Nuremberg Laws. It was previously quoted publicly in 2021, when Mary Miller, a Republican congresswoman, recited a version of the quotation during a rally shortly before the storming of the U.S. Capitol on Jan. 6 of that year. Miller, who said “Hitler was right on one thing,” initially defended her use of the quotation before apologizing.

On Twitter, Moms For Liberty responded to the email by writing, “Everyone knows Hitler is bad” and calling coverage of the quotation “intentional dishonesty in reporting,” though it added that “The chapter shouldn’t have quoted Hitler without condemning him at the same time.”

Moms For Liberty co-founder Tiffany Justice responded to the quote with a statement that seemed to compare President Joe Biden to Hitler.

“Our Moms condemn Hitler and all he represents,” Justice tweeted above a screenshot of an article about Biden criticizing parents-rights activists. Alongside a picture of a finger pointing at the article, she wrote, “Controlling the minds of the youth through government schools was done by Hitler, Lenin and Mao. Millions have died because of these monsters. They thought they owned the children. Sound familiar?”

The kerfuffle occurred as Moms For Liberty prepared to host its first-ever

annual summit. Several candidates for president are scheduled to make appearances, including Republicans Donald Trump, Ron DeSantis and Nikki Haley, along with Democratic candidate Robert F. Kennedy Jr.

Most of the group’s activism nationally has revolved around fighting discussion of LGBTQ identity in schools, as well as matters related to race. The other items in the Hamilton County newsletter had included criticism of a local high school receiving an award from the It Gets Better Foundation, which advocates for LGBTQ youth. Immediately below the Hitler quote, there was another one from the group’s national co-founders, Justice and Tina Deskovich: “Moms For Liberty will not be intimidated by hate groups!”

Among the figures condemning the newsletter is Miles Nelson, the Jewish Democratic nominee for mayor of Carmel, Indiana, which is located in Hamilton County. Nelson tweeted, “This hate speech has no place in our community.”

The chair of the county Republican Party, Mario Massillamany, also condemned the newsletter, telling the “Indianapolis Star,” “I don’t think that we as a society can say enough about the atrocities that the poor Jewish people had to go through.”

According to an Indiana public radio report, the “context” the group provided for the quote had stated, “The quote from a horrific leader should put parents on alert. If the government has control over our children today, they control our country’s future. We The People must be vigilant and protect children from an overreaching government.” **HW**



Richard Melvin Eisenberg

Richard Melvin Eisenberg, 73, of Zionsville, Indiana, passed away June 17, 2023. He was born in Memphis, Tennessee, to the late Irvin and Roslyn Eisenberg. He obtained his bachelor’s degree from the University of Memphis and worked in sales for over 50 years. He loved fishing, sports, coaching, family and dogs. He will be remembered for his sense of humor and outgoing personality. He never encountered a stranger – they were simply friends he had not met.

Richard is survived by his children, Stacey (Charles) Lucterhand and Eric (Sarah) Eisenberg; six grandchildren, Jake, Mia and Drew Lucterhand and Rebecca, Eleanor and Max Eisenberg; and two brothers, Jeff (Carole) and Bill (Annette) Eisenberg. He was preceded in death by his parents and brother, John (DD) Eisenberg.

A private memorial service will be held in Memphis on July 8. In remembrance of his life, the family asks that any charitable donations be made to the Humane Society of Memphis and Shelby County.

Arrangements entrusted to Aaron Ruben Nelson Mortuary. Friends may leave a memory or message of condolence by visiting the online obituary at www.arnmortuary.com **HW**

He Racked Up Millions of Likes for Being a Proud Gay Haredi. Then He was Outed as a Fake.



Yaakov Levi was the moniker of a popular Haredi TikTok account revealed to be a secular Israeli named Erez Oved. Credit: Screenshots via TikTok/@this.is.kosher; Instagram/@erezoved)
By Louis Keene

This originally appeared on “Forward.” Reprinted with permission.

His social media presence was nothing short of shocking: an Israeli man, in Haredi garb and payot, peacocking as an out gay Jew on TikTok and Instagram.

Identifying himself only as Yaakov Levi – the latter ostensibly his middle name – and going by the handle @this.is.kosher, he gyrated to pop anthems, paraded with a rainbow flag, and clapped back at homophobic comments, attracting more than 160,000 TikTok followers, 2 million likes and countless admiring messages.

His self-acceptance and defiance of the Haredi world, where modesty is a virtue and gay relationships conflict

with religious law, delighted many of his fans. But last Thursday, the account – and the payot – were revealed as fakes.

A Twitter thread connected the account to Erez Oved, an Israeli actor who is gay and Jewish but not Haredi. The bio of Oved’s account links to the TikTok.

The revelation enraged LGBTQ+ Orthodox Jews who felt their experience had been appropriated for fame.

“When I was a Haredi gay kid, I couldn’t just take off my peyos and my black hat,” Shlomo Satt, whose thread unmasked Oved, wrote on Twitter. “It was a constant struggle, and I was reckoning with it 24/7. I’m extremely upset that he is falsely portraying an experience without the nuance of living it.”

“I fell for it. And I was so happy to see that LGBTQ representation on TikTok,” another Twitter user commented. “And now this just makes me sad and angry.”

After the thread attracted attention on social media, Oved posted a message to his Instagram story: “We live in a terrible reality. I came to fight and try to change people’s lives.”

The “Forward” reached out to Oved for comment but he did not immediately respond.

Social media has partly lifted the curtain on the insular world of Haredi Judaism. Some popular TikTok accounts explain the rituals of Orthodox daily life. Some simply show Haredi people doing regular activities – putting on makeup, dancing to music and talking about their day jobs. The accounts connect Orthodox Jewish people to each other as well as demystify them to non-Orthodox and even non-Jewish society.

But the Yaakov Levi videos were also a rebellious political statement. He proudly shared both his sexuality and his purported religious identity, sending the message that they were not in conflict – and juxtaposed them for maximum effect. Between his white shirt and his black suit jacket, he showed off rainbow suspenders. Searching for a yarmulke in one TikTok, he mutters “not gay enough...not gay enough...not gay enough,” as he sifts through mountains of black velvet – then picks one festooned with pink sequins.

Without ever conceding that the page was an act, Oved painted a picture of the

Haredi world that was more tolerant of queer Jews than its reputation suggests. He introduced two women in modest Haredi dress, identifying them as his cousin and his mother. Both were accepting of his orientation. In one video, the latter said people who weren’t accepting of her son “can go to hell.” The actual identities of these women is unclear.

The reality is often very different as Haredi Orthodoxy regards sex between two people of the same gender as a grave sin. Some gay Haredi Jews stay closeted in their home communities; others leave Orthodoxy entirely.

In an interview, Satt said he grew up in Far Rockaway, New York, in a Haredi home that did not have internet until he was in ninth grade. When he reached bar mitzvah age, he started wearing a black hat. At around the same time, he realized he was attracted to other boys, but understood it was incompatible with his religious observance. He did conversion therapy for three and a half years, which he now describes as the worst experience of his life. When he finally came out, some family members disavowed him.

“Every single one of us has struggled mightily. Every single one of us has lost some degree of connection to family because we’ve come out” in the Haredi community, Satt said. “Trying to portray the community as he’s this anomaly is not correct, and it does a lot of harm for the Haredi community, because in order to make progress, you need to be aware of the problems.” **HW**

7 Ways to Offer Support and Jewish Strength to Friends or Loved Ones Facing Cancer

By Suzanne Kurtz Sloan

When Shoshana Polakoff, 40, received an unexpected breast cancer diagnosis three years ago, the mother of three young children needed extra support. Her friends, family and Jewish community in the Washington Heights neighborhood of Manhattan immediately stepped up.

They organized help with after-school childcare, packed school lunches for her kids and sent her little notes of encouragement while Polakoff endured trying cancer treatments.

“I felt pounds lighter and overwhelmed by the chesed that mobilized so quickly,” said Polakoff, using the Hebrew term for kindness. “And the practical help was such an incredible gift.”

Too often, however, friends and loved ones of cancer patients are at a loss for how to respond when someone close to them is diagnosed with cancer.

“Often they feel just as thrown into this new reality as the woman herself and are not sure what to do next,” said Adina Fleischmann, chief services officer for Sharsheret, the national Jewish breast cancer and ovarian cancer organization.

This is especially the case for young people who might never have had a family member or friend diagnosed with cancer before.

Fleischmann – whose organization offers extensive resources for cancer patients, ranging from emotional support, mental health counseling and education to financial subsidies for women and their families facing breast and ovarian cancer – has some guidance for what to say, how to reach out and what kind of help might be appropriate to provide in the face of a friend or family member’s cancer diagnosis.

It’s all about providing chizuk – Hebrew for strength – to the person facing cancer.

1. Establish the “Kvetching Order”
The “Kvetching Order,” based on a concept called the Ring Theory developed by clinical psychologist Susan Silk, dictates that those close to some-

one struggling with a cancer diagnosis offer only support to the cancer patient, and any kvetching about their own stress outward.

Thus, the person with cancer is at the center of a circle surrounded by a ring of her or his most intimate friends and loved ones. More distant concentric rings include other friends, acquaintances, more distant family and community members.

Colloquially known as “comfort in, dump out,” the Kvetching Order establishes a flow of support directed toward the person facing cancer.

2. Be clear and specific with offers of help

Support can look and feel different to different people facing cancer; each person’s needs and life circumstances are unique. When younger women are diagnosed with cancer – as often is the case with ovarian or breast cancers, where 50% of new diagnoses are in women under age 63 – patients often need extra help managing their responsibilities as parents and/or career professionals.

“Let the woman guide the journey,” Fleischmann says of the cancer patient. “Follow her lead.”

Sharsheret suggests offering concrete, practical assistance, such as offering to take the patient’s child to after-school activities or helping with homework. Maybe offer to come over to help clean the house, do laundry, or pick up groceries and make dinner for the family.

“But give the woman the feeling of control,” Fleischmann said. “Let her be in control of your support.”

Thus, a concrete suggestion like, “Can I bring you pizza for dinner on Wednesday?” is better than a vague offer of “What can I do to help?”

3. Check in often but don’t expect a response

By all means reach out to the person facing cancer. But if they don’t respond to your phone calls, emails or texts, don’t be put off.

“Sometimes the woman may not have

the time or energy to respond,” Fleischmann said. That doesn’t mean you shouldn’t continue reaching out. “She will appreciate knowing that you’re thinking of her.”

Polakoff found small gestures particularly meaningful.

“Little things meant a lot,” she said. “Like just a note that said, ‘I’m thinking of you. Have a good Shabbos.’”

4. Leave cancer out of it sometimes and just be with them

Kristen Harvey, who at 23 was faced with an ovarian cancer diagnosis for the second time, said it was important to have friends around her with whom she could talk about the future.

“Just being there was the best thing,” said Harvey, who recently graduated from college and lives in Michigan. “We didn’t need to do anything. I appreciated when people came over and we just hung out and watched a movie.”

Alexis Wilson, a teacher in Jupiter, Florida, said her friendships were essential during her breast cancer treatment. Before starting chemotherapy, her friends threw her a big party to which everyone showed up in different-colored wigs and decorated her yard with signs.

“My friends played a big role,” said Wilson, 39. “I felt like I wasn’t alone.”

5. Continue your support throughout someone’s cancer journey

For some women, “maintenance treatment” can last for many years beyond the active treatments of chemotherapy, radiation or surgery. Women living with metastatic breast cancer, for example, usually continue treatment throughout their lives.

Fleischmann recommends checking in with a woman along every step of her cancer journey: not just the period of active treatment, but also during maintenance treatment, survivorship, and if she is living with metastatic or advanced cancer.

“It’s nice to know my friends and family continued to reach out once I was done with treatment,” Harvey said.

“Back to normal doesn’t mean life is ever normal.”

There are often heightened emotional needs around anniversaries of certain cancer diagnoses or treatment dates, Fleischmann said, so marking these dates could be important.

6. Make sure you have your own support system

If you’re particularly close to the person with cancer, you may experience feelings of being overwhelmed yourself. It’s important to take care of your own emotional well-being and not dismiss it in the face of someone else’s more pressing illness.

“As a caregiver, you can be very easily drained without your own coping mechanisms,” Fleischmann said.

Make sure to take care of yourself physically and emotionally so that you have the capacity to attend to your friend or loved one’s needs.

7. Talk to your healthcare provider and safeguard your own health

Even while supporting a loved one or friend with breast or ovarian cancer, it’s important to safeguard your own health.

The BRCA genetic mutation that causes breast cancer and ovarian cancer is much more common among Ashkenazi Jewish women than in the general U.S. population. About 1 in 40 Ashkenazi Jewish women and men carry the mutation, compared to 1 in 400 in the general population. Ashkenazi Jewish men are also at elevated risk for melanoma and prostate and pancreatic cancer.

“Talk to your healthcare provider,” Fleischmann said. “Those whose family members are facing hereditary breast and ovarian cancer should speak with their doctor or genetic counselor to see how this may affect them, too, and learn about appropriate testing and precautions.”

This article was sponsored by and produced in partnership with Sharsheret, the national Jewish breast cancer and ovarian cancer organization. This article was produced by JTA’s native content team. **HW**

A Hulu Horror Movie Influenced by the Post-Holocaust Pressure to Have Children

By Taylor Speyer

A version of this article first appeared on “Hey Alma.” Reprinted with permission.

As a science fiction horror film, Alexis Jacknow’s movie “Clock” is relatively unremarkable. Its images aren’t unique, and its narrative comes across as self-important. All of its attempted metaphors are spelled out by the director, leaving the audience with nothing to do except nod silently at its proclamations. As a result, I can understand why the film received negative reviews by audiences who wrote it off as nothing more than dull “propaganda.”

But audiences shouldn’t be so quick to dismiss Jacknow’s film, because there is something more horrifying in it than its images: its context.

The movie follows the story of an interior designer named Ella who, after being urged by her husband to go to a doctor for a breast cancer screening, ends up in a clinical trial that aims to fix the broken biological clocks of women who feel no desire to have children.

While for some, not having children is simply a choice, to others it is a radical statement –especially within the

Jewish community, where there is intense pressure to procreate. In “Clock,” Ella’s choice to not have children is seen by her father to be a betrayal of her family’s past – especially to her grandmother, who survived the Holocaust. Beyond being a movie about a woman who doesn’t want kids, “Clock” is an exploration of the responsibility placed upon young Jewish women to avenge the wrongful deaths of our ancestors by bearing children.

Jacknow, who herself grew up Jewish in the Bible Belt, presents Ella as the quintessential assimilated, non-religious Jew. She serves caviar at Shabbat dinner, and in her wedding photos, she’s wearing a sari instead of standing under a chuppah. She embodies an in-between space that values Judaism’s customs and tradition without the burden of religious signifiers.

After arriving at the clinic, Ella undergoes a series of treatments aimed at fixing her biological clock. Dr. Simmons, the head of the clinical trial, explains to Ella that the single evolutionary goal of any species is to procreate; therefore, she says Ella’s biological sys-

tem is mentally and physically off in a way that is similar to depression. During therapy, Dr. Simmons aims to get to the root of Ella’s dysfunction. Ella ends up talking about her family’s sole heirloom recovered after the war, a grandfather clock which she accidentally calls the “grandfather coffin” – and which represents the physical manifestation of Ella’s religious and familial betrayals.

Throughout the course of her treatment, Ella provides various reasons why she does not want children – one of them being the Holocaust. She says to Dr. Simmons that the Holocaust was the worst genocide because it happened between educated and cultured people, in a society that very much reflects the world today. Ella says she cannot in good conscience bring children into a world where the Holocaust could happen.

“Clock” is the latest in a long tradition of artworks that discuss the pressure or obligation some women feel to have children. “Alien” spearheaded the filmic discussion back in 1979, allegorizing motherhood and childbirth as life-ruining events. Outside of film, novels such as “Motherhood” by Sheila Heti and co-

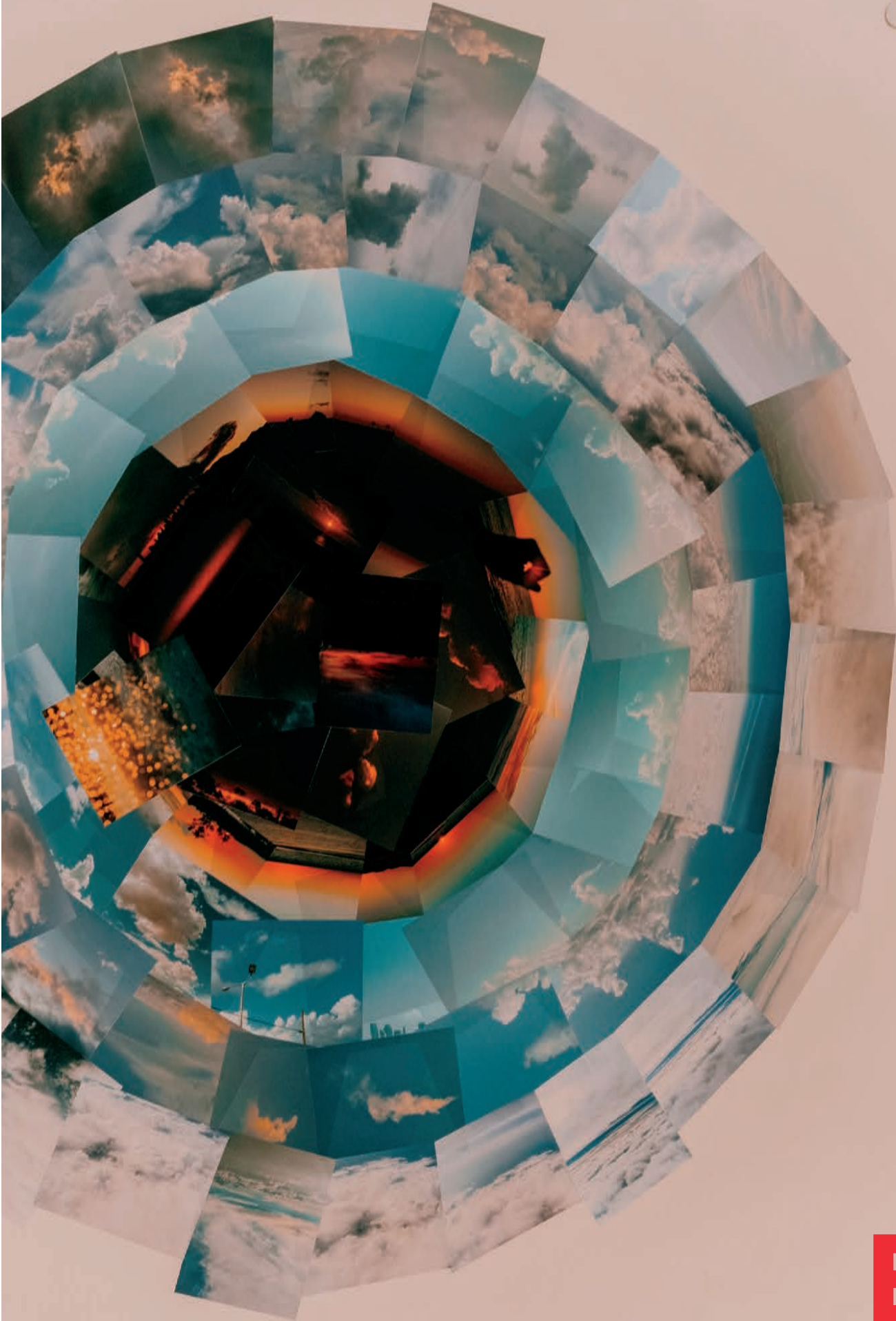
medic memoirs like “I Can Barely Take Care of Myself: Tales From A Happy Life Without Kids” by Jen Kirkman address notions of procreation and motherhood in a less sinister manner. Despite their different tones and conclusions, they have all worked to de-stigmatize the conversation around procreation and allow women who choose not to have kids, or feel ambivalent about the decision, feel heard and understood.

Ultimately, Jacknow’s film can perhaps be seen as a cautionary tale against forcing women to have children, which could be an especially pertinent message to broadcast to the Jewish community. There is a widely held idea that the best revenge we can have for the Holocaust is our continued existence. After all, if we cease to have children, then what did we survive for? But by adopting this attitude and pressuring all Jewish women to bare children, we might simply be pushing them away.

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of JTA or its parent company, 70 Faces Media. [or The Hebrew Watchman] **HW**

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On Paul Simon’s Dark Night of the Soul, He Wants it Darker - Much Darker

By Dan Epstein

This originally appeared on “Forward.” Reprinted with permission.

During the darkest days of 2020, with COVID-19 running rampant and a significant portion of the U.S. population deciding that the freedom to infect and be infected was of paramount importance to their personal Bill of Rights, one Paul Simon lyric kept going through my head:

*I have my books
And my poetry to protect me*

I’d always loved that line from Simon and Garfunkel’s 1965 hit “I Am a Rock,” and how it somehow managed to feel earnest and ironic at the same time. Sung from the point of view of a misanthropic recluse living under self-imposed lockdown, the song is both a fierce rejoinder to John Donne’s “Meditation XVII” (“No man is an island, entire of itself ...”) and a succinctly evocative character study of a damaged and defensive individual. Maybe the self-proclaimed “Rock” truly believes what he’s saying, but more than likely he knows deep down that it’s all a front, and that his books and poetry and his “fortress deep and mighty” will ultimately do little to shield him from the pain and fear of human existence.

Still, there were times back in 2020 where I saw the definite appeal of hunkering down with my books and records and headphones while sickness and craziness raged outside my walls. Maybe they wouldn’t offer much of a defense in the long term, but they could

at least temporarily stave off the existential dread, as well as give my desk a much-needed respite from the frustrated pounding of my cranium.

But as Paul Simon’s new “Seven Psalms” acknowledges, all lines of defense – be they books and poetry, or internet outrage and outright denial – are ultimately temporary, and ultimately useless. A 33-minute meditation on mortality and what may or may not lie beyond it, “Seven Psalms” finds the 81-year-old singer-songwriter trying to look his own impending exit as squarely in the eye as possible.

“Seven Psalms” is a fascinating, haunting, and often deeply moving piece of work, a dark night of the soul distilled into one unbroken track of seven movements – or more, if you count the several reprises of “The Lord,” the album’s opening track. Centered around Simon’s hushed vocals and deftly picked acoustic guitar, the lyrics of “The Lord” dive right into the deep end. “I’ve been thinking about the great migration,” he sings in its very first line, “Noon and night they leave the flock.” The song looks in wonder at the beauty of existence, while also marveling at the impermanence of it all. “Nothing dies of too much love,” he sings, but then there’s no amount of love that can confer immortality, either.

Simon sees the hand of God in terrible and troubling things, as well. “The COVID virus is the Lord” may be one of the least elegant lines that Simon has ever written, but he returns to it again

and again in “The Lord” and its reprises, as if to underscore how the pandemic marked a turning point in his understanding of human existence.

Also repeating throughout the song is a guitar figure suspiciously similar to “Anji,” the fingerstyle instrumental written by British guitarist Davey Graham that became a standard on the UK folk scene of the early 1960s. Simon learned the song in England during his solo sojourn there following the recording of Simon & Garfunkel’s folky 1964 debut “Wednesday Morning, 3 A.M.,” and recorded it for the duo’s hit 1966 follow-up “The Sounds of Silence;” the reappearance here of its main lick seems alternately like a fond talisman from his carefree younger days and a compulsive tick, like the fingering of prayer beads in times of great stress and uncertainty.

Simon’s wife, Edie Brickell, appears on the final two songs, “The Sacred Harp” and “Wait,” and there are subtle cameos throughout from guests including trumpeter Wynton Marsalis, the vocal ensemble Voces8 and various chamber musicians, but the album never really breaks from its downbeat mood and atmosphere. Which is not to say that there isn’t some humor here. “My Professional Opinion” playfully (if also mournfully) skewers our current culture of grievance and the 24-7/365 Festivus celebration raging on the internet:

*Good morning, Mr. Indignation
Seems you haven’t slept all night
In my professional opinion*

Go back to bed and turn off your light

Our time is short, Simon is telling us, so why are we wasting it arguing with strangers on social media? Better to get on with the business of living – and of dying, which is unfortunately part of the deal whether we accept it or not. “We’re all walking down the same road to wherever it ends,” Simon sings in “Trail of Volcanoes.” “The pity is the damage that’s done leaves so little time for amends.”

But what does dying even mean? Is there a Heaven or a Hell? Or just silent nothingness? And how tightly should you cling to your faith – or how freely should you let your doubts roam – as the end approaches? “I want to believe in a seamless transition,” he sings in “Wait,” “I don’t want to be near my dark intuition.”

This all adds up to what sounds very much like the final musical missive from an iconic artist. It’s entirely possible that Simon has many more good years ahead of him, with even more music to come. But if not, “Seven Psalms” (his first album of new material since 2016’s “Stranger to Stranger”) will stand as a remarkable farewell, a thought-provoking, deeply personal look into the abyss that stands right up there with David Bowie’s “Blackstar” and Leonard Cohen’s “You Want It Darker.” If you’ve ever been a fan of Paul Simon in any of his many musical incarnations, “Seven Psalms” is definitely a record you need to hear. [HW](#)



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