



# THE Hebrew Watchman

SERVING THE MEMPHIS JEWISH COMMUNITY SINCE 1925

HEBREWWATCHMAN.COM

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## Steve Libby, Molly Weiss Lane and Jimmy Ringel Chairing 2024 Annual Community Campaign



Steve Libby

Three longtime community leaders are chairing the 2024 Annual Community Campaign for Memphis Jewish Federation – Steve Libby, Molly Weiss Lane and Jimmy Ringel. Mr. Libby is chairing the campaign, with Ms. Lane overseeing community campaign and Leadership Sunday/Monday, and Mr. Ringel chairing major gifts.

Steve Libby facilitated Federation’s recent solicitor training, emphasizing the strong connections in the Memphis Jewish community. He shared inspiration at the training, saying, “Remember, you are calling on a friend to ask for



Molly Weiss Lane

support for something important to you both – a heartfelt interest in seeing our vibrant community grow and flourish.”

“I’m excited to be this year’s Campaign chair,” Mr. Libby said. “I’m proud of what Federation does to improve Jewish life, and I know our donors and friends will be generous in their giving.”

In addition to serving as Campaign chair, Mr. Libby has also held several positions on the Federation Board and committees. Notably, he joined the Lemsky Mission and traveled to Israel to see how Federation grants support social services and help the most disad-



Jimmy Ringel

vantaged in the country.

After many years as a Jewish community leader, Molly Weiss Lane feels more than ready to oversee the community campaign this year. “I’ve been participating in Super Sunday (Leadership Sunday) on and off since I was in my 20s,” she explained. “Taking on this additional leadership role for the Campaign reminds me of how special this community is and how much I’ve gained from being a part of it.”

Ms. Lane has also served on the boards of Bornblum Jewish Community School and Baron Hirsch Congregation.

Jimmy Ringel, past Campaign chair, is happy to step in and support major gifts for the campaign. “I’ve been involved with Federation for several years and have a clear understanding of the many ways Federation supports every person and place in Jewish Memphis in some way,” said Mr. Ringel. “I look forward to connecting with friends and encouraging them to increase their giving, so we can continue to fulfil our mission and support our community’s growth.”

Judy Lansky, Federation’s director of development, said, “I am thrilled to continue working with Steve and Jimmy and to add Molly to the team. They are passionate and strong leaders who I continue to learn from. I know this year’s campaign will be an incredible success with them leading the way.”

For more information about this year’s Annual Community campaign, contact Judy Lansky at [jlansky@jcpmemphis.org](mailto:jlansky@jcpmemphis.org) or at 901-767-7100.

The mission of Memphis Jewish Federation is to develop a vibrant and sustained Jewish community in Memphis, Israel, and throughout the world. Federation helps nourish Jewish life through community grants, programs for the Memphis Jewish community and by supporting Jews in Israel and throughout the world. **HW**

## Baron Hirsch Congregation Distributes Rosh Hashana Chesed Boxes



For more than 25 years the members of the Baron Hirsch Congregation have connected with the greater Memphis community by delivering “Chesed Boxes” containing items to prepare a complete traditional dinner for the upcoming

Rosh Hashana holiday.

Almost 90 families received the Chesed Boxes that were prepared and delivered by over 40 volunteers of all ages. The volunteers gathered at the Synagogue to pack and deliver the boxes



throughout the city. The recipient families were able to enjoy a special meal to celebrate the upcoming Jewish New Year.

Each year, those receiving assistance from Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman Jewish Family Service and Jewish residents of Plough Towers are the recipients of the program’s Chesed Boxes.

Dr. Irv Cherny, chairman of this year’s program said, “Our members

both young and old, were very excited to volunteer their time and efforts to pack and deliver these boxes to homes all over Memphis. The teen and pre-teen helpers, as well as the adults, were very excited and motivated knowing they were helping these families to enjoy a more meaningful holiday.

Miriam Danzig, a longtime Baron

(See Chesed Page 2)

Chesed... (Continued From Page 1)



Hirsch member who helped develop and find funding for the program over 25 years ago, has been a volunteer along with her husband, Bernard Danzig, every year since. She is very moved that the Rosh Hashana and an addition-

al Passover Chesed Box delivery still flourish.

Anyone who would like to donate to support the program or volunteer to participate may call the Synagogue office at 901-683-7485. HW

Memphis BBYO: Sarah Hochman



Sarah Hochman

My name is Sarah Hochman, and I am Delta's 76th Regional N'siah, or president.

I joined BBYO during the summer of 2020, right before starting my freshman year. Despite mask restrictions and virtual programs, Kriger BBG made me feel welcome and special as their newest member. Throughout the year, I became more and more involved and ran to be my chapter's Mazkirah, the chapter vice president of communications. This introduced me to the world of leadership opportunities that BBYO has to offer, and I fell in love with everything I was learning. I also found a Jewish home both unrestricted by time or place and full of teenagers just like me. By the end of my sophomore year, while I was studying abroad in France,

I was running for Regional Board. As Delta's 75th S'ganit, or vice president, I was able to attend and lead my first real conventions, no longer held back by the pandemic that defined the start of my journey. I was recommended to apply for IC Steering, where I was able to serve on the leadership team. Throughout my week in Dallas, I met world leaders and industry experts, further solidifying my goal of being elected Regional N'siah for my senior year. At Spring Convention, this dream came true.

As Regional N'siah this year, I have already had the incredible opportunity of participating in the August Executive Conference in Omaha, Nebraska. Along with the International Board, regional presidents from over 20 countries were able to come together and form the future of the movement as we head into BBYO's centennial year. Seeing over a hundred Jewish teens around me, coming together and singing songs we all knew despite our different backgrounds, sparked a feeling that I don't think can be replicated by any other community. The next weekend, Delta's Regional Board convened in Nashville for our board retreat. Learning from the people I have the honor to work and grow with all year has left me inspired to make this year the biggest and best in our history. Even once I graduate, BBYO's impact on me will never fade, and I couldn't be more grateful. HW

THE Hebrew Watchman

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Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. September 22, 2023 / 7 Tishrei, 5784 .....6:39 p.m. Havdalah, Sat. September 23, 2023 / 8 Tishrei, 5784 ..... 7:33 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Ha'azinu

Have a Simcha? share with The Hebrew Watchman readers 901.763.2215 info@hebrewwatchman.com

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## BeWell Memphis Raises Awareness About Mental Health

### Did you know...

1 in 5 teens and young adults live with a mental health condition.

50% of all mental illnesses begin by age 14, and 75% by the mid-20s.

Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for youth age 15-19.

Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman Jewish Family Service and Beth Sholom bring BeWell Memphis and Teen Mental Health First Aid to T3 (TMHFA) program.

“Judaism is clear that saving a life is above all other mitzvot, says Julee Levine, director of education at Beth Sholom Synagogue. “Anything we can do to help empower both teens in crisis and their friends who want to support them is so worthwhile. The Jewish community is not immune to the mental health crisis in America. Pretending that we are is unwise and unsafe.”

Facilitated by Emily Davis, LMSW and Kayla Salomon, LCSW, this program teaches teens in grades 10-12, or ages 15-18, how to identify, understand,

and respond to signs of mental health and substance use challenges in their friends and peers.

TMHFA covers common signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use challenges, common signs and symptoms of a mental health crisis, particularly suicide, the impact of school violence and bullying on mental health, how to open the conversation about mental illnesses and substance use with friends, and how to seek the help of a responsible and trusted adult.

For more information, please contact Julee Levine at Beth Sholom Synagogue, or Emily Davis at Fogelman Jewish Family Service. To schedule a Teen or Youth Mental Health First Aid private training at your organization, contact Rashki Osina at Fogelman Jewish Family Service at 901-767-8511.

This program is generously sponsored by The Sidney Kay Foundation and a grant through Memphis Jewish Federation. **HW**

## Dr. Shaul Bar, University of Memphis, has Published a New Book, “The Joseph Story: Here Comes the Dreamer.”

The Joseph story starts when he was 17 years old and ends with his death at 110. These years included near death experiences, hatred among brothers, jealousy, a bizarre world of dreams, temptation, imprisonment, and his rise to power as grand vizier of Egypt. All of these events led to a change – once an arrogant young man with grandiose dreams, now he became a down-to-earth man with a sense of humility and a basic sentiment of religion. There was no more hatred among brothers, but love, which led to their eventual reconciliation. Joseph’s life as portrayed in the book of Genesis was the starting point of many legends and commentaries found in the Talmud, Midrashim, and medieval commentaries. His behavior was an exemplary prototype of a righteous man; it served as a model for how a person should conduct himself.

Dr. Rami Arav, University of Nebraska at Omaha, commented “Shaul Bar pro-

vides us once again with a brilliant analysis of this biblical saga. He thoroughly analyzes Joseph’s personality from childhood to death and studies the reception of the story through the generations.

Particularly unique is his dealing with a long and old list of Jewish perceptions of the story, including Late Roman, medieval, and modern interpretations and commentaries. In a clear and rich language, the book appeals to students and scholars alike.”

Dr. Bar is the author of “A Letter That Has Not Been Read: Dreams in the Hebrew Bible” (2001), “I Deal Death and Give Life” (2010), “God’s First King: The Story of Saul” (2013), “Daily Life of the Patriarchs” (2014), “A Nation is Born: The Jacob Story” (2016), “The Samson Story: Love, Seduction, Betrayal, Violence, Riddles, Myth” (2018), “Isaac: The Passive Patriarch” (2019), and “Samuel: The Man of God” (2022).

You can order the book on Amazon. **HW**

## Jewish Leaders React to White Supremacist Killer of Three in Jacksonville, Fla.

(JNS) – Before the massacre began at the Dollar General store in Jacksonville, Fla., the gunman reportedly texted his father to check his laptop, where multiple racist manifestos awaited alongside a suicide note.

Sheriff T.K.Waters in Jacksonville said that Ryan Palmeto, 21, “hated black

people,” leading the man who lived with his parents to don a tactical vest, arm himself with a Glock and an AR-style rifle (a long gun similar to the AR-15 now common in mass shootings in the United States) before murdering three people at a Dollar General store. Photos released of the weapons showed white swasti-

kas drawn next to the serial number and “Palmetto State Armory” logo.

Law enforcement identified the victims as Angela Michelle Carr, 52; Anolt Joseph “AJ” Laguerre Jr., 19; and Jer-rald Gallion, 29.

Palmeto shot and killed himself after he barricaded himself in an office.

Detailed information on what Waters described as “this cowardly shooter’s personal ideology” has yet to emerge. The writing described by Waters as “the diary of a madman” does not appear online.

One former classmate described Palmeto as socially awkward, “obsessed with video games” and “involved with internet humor.” A neighbor speculated that Palmeto’s allegedly discontinuation of certain medication may have contributed to the shooting.

Before shooting up the store, Palmeto had visited Edward Waters University, a historically black private college in Jacksonville, possibly with the intent to attack and apparently deterred by campus security when asked to identify himself.

Amy Spitalnick, CEO of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, said that “from Charlottesville to Pittsburgh to Poway to El Paso to Buffalo and now Jacksonville, we’re witnessing a cycle of white supremacist violence – fueled by increasingly normalized conspiracy theories and hate promoted directly by politicians and pundits and enabled by social media.”

Ted Deutch, the CEO of the American Jewish Committee, said: “We must also take stock of what fuels the unbridled hate and conspiracy theories that propel extremists to carry out such wanton acts of violence.” He said that “from government and law enforcement to social-media companies and the business community, there is a role we can all play to reject hate and prevent it from spreading.”

Spitalnick added that “it’s sadly no surprise that this racist shooter marked his gun with swastikas: because antisemitism, anti-black racism and white supremacy are inextricably linked, animating and fueling each other in a constant feedback loop with deadly consequences for our communities and our democracy.”

Waters said of Palmeto that “he hated blacks, and I think he hated just about everyone that wasn’t white. He made that very clear.”

The shooting came two days before the 60th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington against racism and for ethnic equality, led by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. **HW**

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# Alpha Epsilon Pi International Joins the Jewish Service Alliance, Powered by Repair the World, to Further Inspire Jewish College Students to Engage in Acts of Service



**AEPi Brothers in New Orleans Partner with Repair the World to Clean Up a Local Veteran's House**

(INDIANAPOLIS, IN) – Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity (AEPi), the world's leading Jewish college fraternity, has joined the Jewish Service Alliance (JSA), powered by Repair the World, to enhance and expand service opportunities for AEPi's more than 8,000 undergraduate members on 150 college campuses around the world.

AEPi joins the Jewish Service Alliance, a group of partners, which inspire the Jewish service movement and mobilize Jews and their communities to take action to pursue a just world, igniting a lifelong commitment to service. Repair the World, as an organization that sits at the intersection of service, Jewish engagement, and social change, believes that every act of Jewish service can be a meaningful Jewish practice and create positive change in the world.

"We are excited to partner with AEPi to inspire young adults as they show up for their communities to meet pressing needs and connect to their Jewish value of repairing the world, *tikkun olam*. Through this partnership, we hope to catalyze tens of thousands of acts of service and learning to create meaningful social change and connect participants to their Jewish identities and communities," said Celia Livshin, Repair's senior director of National Partnerships Strategy.

AEPi Brothers on 150 college cam-

pus in the United States, Canada, the U.K., and Israel, will have the opportunity to further deepen their relationship to service and philanthropy through this new partnership.

"As the international Jewish fraternity, Alpha Epsilon Pi holds the Jewish value of pursuing a just world through service and learning. This is an integral component of our mission – to develop the future leaders of the Jewish community – and this partnership with Repair the World will provide our members with opportunities to get involved, take action, and make a difference on their campuses and in their communities," said Rob Derdiger, AEPi CEO. "I'm looking forward to seeing our students continuing to explore their passion for making the world a better place."

The Repair the World and AEPi partnership launched last month at AEPi's 110th International Convention in New Orleans. Dozens of AEPi undergraduates from around the world joined with Repair the World staff and Rebuilding Together New Orleans (RTNO) to support an 81-year-old veteran, living in New Orleans' 9th Ward, repair the exterior of his home by replacing rotten wood, caulking, priming, and painting. The service project connected students with the needs of those in different communities from their own and emphasized making

a difference in people's lives. Following are some comments from AEPi students who participated in the project:

- "Today was a great experience overall! Not only did I have the opportunity to meet new (AEPi) Brothers but also to make a difference in a beautiful community! To be able to make a difference in someone's life and have a good time doing it is what it's all about." – Jacob Rivers, Towson University

- "This was a meaningful opportunity to volunteer for a community that wasn't ours and to be with other brothers from around the world. It was even more meaningful that we were painting a hero's house." – Isaac Nathan, University of North Texas

- "It was a great experience overall and I'm glad we were able to help Mr. Capers. No better feeling than seeing the results ... and putting a smile on someone's face. Despite the heat, I really enjoyed what we did ... It has inspired me to find volunteering opportunities for our chapter in Nashville so we can make an impact there too." – Ben Kurcz, Vanderbilt University

- "I had a great time volunteering and helping paint Mr. Capers' house. This experience really put into perspective that Alpha Epsilon Pi betters communities around the world... It's a great feeling knowing that, as an organization, we

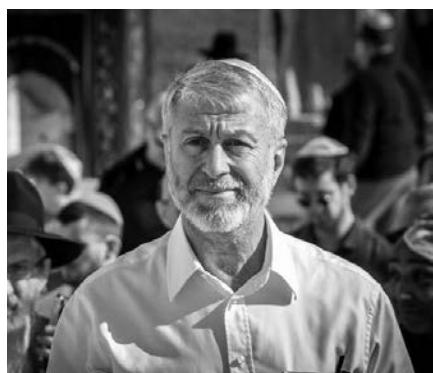
directly impact so many people with all of our service events." – Alex Valdman, North Carolina State

"Seeing our undergraduates serving alongside each other outside in 100-degree heat to repair a stranger's house in a neighborhood far from their own, was an unforgettable event. I know that every participant in that program came away with an appreciation for how Alpha Epsilon Pi, working with Repair the World, can make differences in communities around the globe. Just as importantly, though, is how we are impacting the lives of the future leaders of our Jewish communities," said Derdiger.

**Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPi)** is the world's leading Jewish college fraternity, operating chapters on more than 150 college campuses around the world. Founded in 1913, AEPi has more than 100,000 living alumni. The fraternity's mission – developing the future leaders of the Jewish community – is demonstrated every day through acts of brotherhood, *Tzedakah* (charity), social awareness and support for Jewish communities and Israel. More information is available at [aepi.org](http://aepi.org).

**Repair the World** mobilizes Jews and their communities to take action to pursue a just world, igniting a lifelong commitment to service. More information is available at [werrepair.org](http://werrepair.org). **HW**

## Internal EU Paper Contains Antisemitic Tropes, Jewish Group Claims



**Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich arrives at the Western Wall for his son Aaron's Bar Mitzvah, Dec. 20, 2022. Credit: Arie Leib Abrams/Flash90.**

**By David Isaac**

(JNS) – A recent internal European Union paper light denigrates Russian oligarch Roman Abramovich, referring to his Jewish background and employing derogatory antisemitic themes, according to the European Jewish Association.

The European External Action Service (EEAS), the E.U.'s diplomatic service, sent out an Aug. 16 working paper

titled "Ukraine territorial integrity – additional information." According to the EJA, the paper identifies Abramovich's faith, though it's unrelated to the issues discussed, then belittles his attachment to that faith and finally claims he took orders from Russian President Vladimir Putin to undermine the Russian Jewish Congress.

The EJA sent a letter of protest to the European Commission Coordinator on combating antisemitism Katharina von Schnurbein, pointing out the offending passages.

Perhaps the most controversial section states:

"Abramovich, as the main shareholder of Omsk Bacon, found nothing wrong to benefit from the annual slaughter of 300,000 pigs. Yet he also followed Yeltsin's and later Putin's instructions to finance a Chadic [sic] counter-organization against the Russian Jewish Congress, which ... had in their view become too powerful as an internationally well-connected lobby."

In the letter of complaint, EJA Vice Chairman Alexander Benjamin wrote:

"A Jewish background, already mentioned needlessly, is slurred even further by calling into question his very faith because of his business interests in pig slaughtering.

"Then we have the antisemitic 'cherry on top' in the document's antisemitic character assassination: that his hand was in the creation of a Chasidic counterweight to the Russian Jewish Congress," he added.

"When I first looked at the document, I immediately said that this seems to meet the IHRA definition of antisemitism," Benjamin told JNS. "My feeling was, why are they even talking about his Judaism in the first place?"

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's (IHRA) working definition of antisemitism is a tool to help countries, governments and individuals identify Jew hatred. Over 1,000 entities have adopted it worldwide.

In the letter, Benjamin quoted the relevant portion of the definition:

"Making mendacious, dehumanizing, demonizing, or stereotypical allegations about Jews as such or the power

of Jews as collective – such as, especially but not exclusively, the myth about a world Jewish conspiracy or of Jews controlling the media, economy, government or other societal institutions."

Every element mentioned in that definition is found in that EEAS paper, Benjamin told JNS.

He noted that the EJA has no specific interest in defending Abramovich or his business interests and would have reacted the same way regardless of whom the EEAS targeted.

Rather, he said, what worries the EJA is the idea that antisemitic tropes are appearing in official E.U. documents. This is not some "populist or xenophobic rag," he said.

Describing the working paper as a kind of a "government white paper, but for internal use," he noted that it was sent to "every permanent representation, or embassy" that deals with sanctions.

"It [antisemitism] has no place in an E.U. document," he said. "And if this is what they say about us in official documents, I hate to think what they're saying about us in private." **HW**

## MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Adult Club September Senior Luncheon September 27



**Candace Mache**

On Wednesday, September 27 at 12 p.m., the seniors will have their Big Monthly Luncheon! This fun event will feature singer Candace Mache and her

accompanist. Steeped in classic blues and jazz, Candace Mache has the sultriness of Peggy Lee and the soul of Nina Simone. Candace is equally at home in an intimate New York nightclub or setting the tempo for the Swing dance set in New Orleans. Experience her dynamic and soulful approach to classic American songs. Candace comes to the Luncheon through Creative Aging. The luncheon also features a delicious hot kosher lunch from the kitchens of the Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab. Please call the MJCC Front Desk at 901-761-0810 to make your reservation! The cost of the Luncheon is only \$5.00.

Have a Happy and Healthy New Year!! LaShana Tova! **HW**



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**Dear Friends**

*We share a proud Jewish heritage and a deep love for our city, and we take our responsibility as citizens of Memphis seriously. The October 5th election is just around the corner, and we will cast our votes with an eye to the future because the next Mayor of Memphis will set the course of our city for generations to come.*

*We must ask ourselves: Will our next mayor make Memphis a safer city? Will our next mayor work to return growth to Memphis and repave our city's road to prosperity?*

*Memphis is at a crossroads, which makes the mayoral election our city's most crucial election in decades. We need a mayor who has the experience to lead. We need a mayor willing to make hard decisions so our children and grandchildren will want to live here. We need a mayor who has an effective plan to fight crime, who understands the importance of diversity, the importance of a good education, how to create jobs, and the critical need to grow our city and keep it safe.*

**That is why we are supporting J.W. Gibson for Mayor of Memphis.**

*J.W. is positioned to be a leader of change because he understands the fundamentals of good government, having served as a Shelby County Commissioner. J.W. has a plan to reduce crime and make our neighborhoods safe again. He will recruit more police officers. He will push to upgrade our crime-fighting technology, and he will push the Memphis Police Department to ramp up its community policing efforts so many of our citizens will see the police as friends not foes. J.W. will launch a program to clean up blighted neighborhoods and find a way to repurpose vacated properties. And J.W. promises to hold a crime summit, bringing together the nation's leading crime-fighting experts with the goal of making Memphis the nation's safest city.*

*J.W. is keenly aware of the threats that our Jewish community faces. He is committed to meet with Jewish leadership to make sure that City Hall is listening to our concerns and that our institutions are protected.*

*As a highly successful businessman, J. W. will work hard to improve our city's economic development opportunities. J.W. created and owns three successful businesses. He has served on many civic boards and has been a major benefactor in numerous non-profit efforts that have improved the quality of life for many in Memphis.*

*Elections are about setting a better course to create a better city for our families, our children, and their families. Elections are about electing a leader who has the ability, the experience, and the plan to change things for the better. We are investing our votes in J.W. Gibson as the next Mayor of Memphis and we urge you to join us by voting early, September 15-30, or on Election Day, October 5.*

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Suzanne and Jonathan Scharff  
Paula Jacobson

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# Artifacts Found on Ancient Muslim Pilgrimage Road were Used for Sorcery

By Pesach Benson

(JNS) – According to a recently published study, artifacts discovered at an archeological site near Eilat in the late 1990s indicate that belief in sorcery was still prevalent in the Early Ottoman Period.

The study, published in the “Journal of Material Cultures in the Muslim World,” was led by Itamar Taxel of the Israel Antiquities Authority, Uzi Avner of the Dead Sea-Arava Science Center and Nitzan Amitai-Preiss of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

The collection of items, uncovered along the ancient Darb al-Hajj route in the Eilat mountains of southern Israel



Clay female figurine. Credit: Clara Amit, Israel Antiquities Authority.

in the late 1990s by Moti Shemtov, includes fragments of clay rattles, resembling table tennis balls, which contained small stones that produced sound when shaken. Two artifacts resembling miniature votive incense altars were found, along with several figurines, including one of a naked woman or goddess with

raised hands.

According to the study, these artifacts were employed in magical rituals to ward off the evil eye, heal disease and more.

An analysis of the ceramic artifacts indicated that they originated from Egypt. According to the IAA their discovery marked the first time such a substantial assembly of ritual objects of this nature had ever been found, especially at a temporary site rather than a permanent settlement.

The Darb al-Hajj began in Cairo, crossed the Sinai Peninsula, continued through the Eilat region, and eventually reached the town of Aqaba before continuing into the Arabian Peninsula. The route was in use from the early days of Islam, starting in the 7th century C.E., and remained in use until the 19th century C.E.

A network of wells, rest areas, and oases was developed along the route to support pilgrimage and trade traffic. Many of these historic rest stops and wells can still be found along the route.

In the vicinity of the Eilat mountains, several camping sites and structures

for pilgrims have been discovered. It appears that these structures primarily served during the Mamluk and Ottoman periods, beginning in the 13th or 14th centuries C.E.

Taxel noted that many of the artifacts were discovered in a broken state, suggesting they may have been intentionally damaged during ceremonies. It appears that these rituals were conducted on-site by one or more individuals specializing in popular magical practices.

Literary sources indicate that magical rituals were in high demand across various strata of society, even alongside formal religious observances, and it is likely that pilgrims en route to Mecca and Medina sought such services.

Omry Barzilai, the IAA’s southern regional archaeologist, noted that the Darb al-Hajj road intersects the municipal boundaries of Eilat, positioning the city to become part of a unique regional archaeological and tourist area.

The IAA plans to oversee the road’s development and accessibility while organizing educational activities to emphasize its cultural heritage role. **HW**

## OBITUARIES



Avron E. Smolensky

Avron E. Smolensky of Miami, Fla., passed away on Tuesday, August 29, 2023.

Avron was born July 6, 1946, to Philip and Libbie Smolensky in Memphis, Tenn. Avron found his calling and life’s work at age 6 when he began piano lessons. After Avron graduated from Central High School in 1964, he went to the College Conservatory of Music in Cincinnati (later part of University of Cincinnati) where he earned a bachelors in applied music. He was accepted by Ivan Davis as a graduate student at the University of Miami in 1968, where he earned a masters in music as well as his teaching certificate.

After graduation, he began a 30+ year career as an elementary school music teacher, 20 of those years at the Howard Drive Elementary School. Avron had a passion for teaching and a mission to ensure that each student felt valued and appreciated. Avron was a dedicated Ba’al Koreh (Torah reader) for 35 years, where he chanted Torah weekdays, Shabbat and all holidays at Congregation Bet Shira. He never allowed his Torah reading to be anything less than perfect. He taught countless bar and bat mitzvah students during his 55 years living in Miami.

Avron retired from Miami public schools in 2008 and spent time performing his own piano concert tours of several cities.

Avron was predeceased by parents Philip and Libbie Smolensky of Memphis, Tenn., grandparents Harry and Alice Smolensky, and Harry and Fannie Scheinberg. He is survived by a brother, Lester (Ranee) Smolensky, nephew Lon (Sara) Smolensky, nieces Libbie (David) Binkiewicz, Abigail (Shuki) Merlis, and their children: Aiden, Benjamin, Lila, Bailey, Judah, Ellee, Emanuel, Netanel and Henny.

Services were held at Riverside Gordon Memorial Chapels at Mt. Nebo/Kendall Memorial Gardens on August 30.

Donations may be made to Congregation Bet Shira, 7500 SW 120th St. Miami, FL 33156, 305-238-2601 or The Young Israel of Kendall, 7880 SW 112th St., Miami, FL 33156, 305-232-6833. **HW**

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# What's Happening in the World of Higher Education?

Provided by Mike Stein, Managing Director - Investments, Wells Fargo Advisors

Questions for Mike? You can reach him at 901.761.8151 or Michael.Stein@WellsFargoAdvisors.com • [fa.wellsfargo.com/advisors/michael-stein](https://www.wellsfargo.com/advisors/michael-stein)

A 2023 survey revealed a notable shift in public opinion over the past decade about the value of a college degree: 56% of Americans think a four-year college degree isn't worth the cost due to students graduating with significant debt and a lack of specific job skills vs. 42% who believe college is worth it. The survey numbers have almost reversed from ten years ago, while college enrollment has declined by about 15% over the same period.<sup>1-2</sup>

A big reason many Americans are foregoing college is the cost. For the 2022–2023 year (most recent data available), the average one-year cost for tuition, fees, room, and board was \$23,250 for in-state students at a four-year public college, \$40,550 for out-of-state students, and \$53,430 at a four-year private college.<sup>3</sup> But many schools, especially “elite” private colleges, cost substantially more, with some over the \$80,000 mark.<sup>4</sup>

## Causes and Consequences

Public misgivings about college intensified during the pandemic, when academic instruction moved online, and students had to pay large tuition bills despite missing out on the positive aspects of campus life. During the 2022–2023 school year, 62% of high school graduates enrolled in college, down from 66.2% in 2019–2020.<sup>5</sup>

Sky-high costs and growing skepticism are not the only factors playing into enrollment declines. A hot job market and higher earnings for less-educated workers has made it easier for high school graduates to justify skip-

ping college and head straight into the workforce. At the same time, alternative forms of job training, such as apprenticeships and certificate programs, have become more prevalent and are increasingly seen as viable educational paths toward a good job.<sup>6</sup>

There has been a surge of interest in public colleges, particularly state flagship universities, many of which offer robust academic and student life opportunities comparable to their private counterparts at a lower cost. Conversely, lower student enrollment is putting financial pressure on many small schools and forcing some to close their doors.<sup>7</sup>

## FAFSA Changes Coming Soon

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) typically opens every year on October 1 for high school seniors planning to attend college in the following year and for returning college students. However, due to an extensive redesign of the FAFSA, the filing season for the 2024–2025 school year will be delayed until December.

The simplified FAFSA will have fewer questions – 46 compared to 108 previously – and the direct transfer of financial information from the IRS to the FAFSA will now be mandatory. A new student aid index (SAI) will replace the current expected family contribution (EFC) terminology, and a raft of changes to the formula could impact the amount of need-based aid offered to students.

For example, the simplified FAFSA will expand Pell Grants to more low-income students and will link eligibility to

family size and the federal poverty level. The income protection allowance for parents will increase by 20%, and the income protection allowance for most students will increase by 35%, which will shield more income from the needs analysis formula.

The new FAFSA will no longer provide an advantage to parents with multiple children in college at the same time. The current FAFSA divides the EFC by the number of children in college, but the new FAFSA does not. This could decrease aid eligibility significantly for middle- and high-income students.

Cash support and other money paid on a student's behalf by grandparents or other relatives will not need to be reported on the new FAFSA, so they can help with college expenses without affecting the student's eligibility for financial aid based on the FAFSA. (Grandparent gifts will likely continue to be counted by the CSS Profile, an additional aid application typically used by private colleges when distributing their own institutional aid.)

## The Specter of Student Loans

Even with a discount on the sticker price, many students need to take out federal, and sometimes private, loans to cover college expenses. About 54% of the class of 2021 graduated with student debt averaging \$29,100.<sup>8</sup>

Interest rates on federal student loans are based on the rate for the 10-year U.S. Treasury note and reset each year. For the 2023–2024 school year, rates have increased again and are now the highest in a decade.

In August 2022, an executive order cancelled up to \$10,000 in federal student loans (\$20,000 for Pell Grant recipients) for borrowers with incomes below certain limits, but the order was struck down by the U.S. Supreme Court in June 2023.<sup>9</sup>

Nine repayment pauses have been in effect since the pandemic began in March 2020, but payments will soon start again in October – a sobering reality for millions of borrowers after three-and-a-half years of reprieve.

## Will College Pay Off?

Many people go to college because they want to pursue a lucrative career and/or qualify for a specific occupation that requires a bachelor's degree or higher. One smart approach is to treat college choices like any other business decision – by considering the potential return on investment (ROI).

A Georgetown University analysis of public data from the U.S. Department of Education's College Scorecard found

wide disparity in lifetime earnings among college graduates. The average difference between a high school and college graduate's lifetime wages is about \$1 million, but the difference between the lowest- and the highest-paying majors is \$3.4 million. Degrees in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) had the highest ROI, followed by business and health majors.<sup>10</sup>

Whether a student aspires to be an engineer or a teacher, it's important to take a hard look at earning potential when assessing the value of any academic program. Students who plan to enter lower-paying fields may fare better if they can keep their costs down and hold borrowing to a minimum.

## Tips for Managing Costs

To help avoid overborrowing, here are some ways for students to reduce college costs: pick a college with a lower net price (use the net price calculator on every college's website); focus on in-state colleges and/or attend community college for one or two years and then transfer to a four-year college; aggressively seek out need-based and merit aid; live at home or become a resident assistant to get free housing; work part time throughout college and budget earnings wisely; and if possible, use college credits earned in high school to graduate from college early.

1–2, 5–6) The Wall Street Journal, March 31, 2023, and March 29, 2023

3, 8) The College Board, 2022

4) Harvard University, 2023; Stanford University, 2023

7) CNBC, June 17, 2023

9) The New York Times, June 30, 2023

10) Georgetown University, 2015 (most current data)

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# Andy Samberg Plays a Famous Jewish WWII Photographer in Upcoming Biopic



Jewish actor and comedian Andy Samberg, left, portrays World War II photographer David E. Scherman, right in the biographical film "Lee." Images courtesy: Rich Polk via Getty Images for IMDb and Wikimedia

By Jackie Hajdenberg

(JTA) – A historic wartime photography partnership from the 1940s – often credited as the first to capture many of the horrors of the Holocaust – is getting the Hollywood treatment.

Kate Winslet stars in "Lee" as model-turned-wartime-photojournalist Lee Miller, who often worked alongside David E. Scherman, a Jewish photographer portrayed in the film by Jewish actor and comedian Andy Samberg. The film debuted at the Toronto International Film Festival last Saturday.

Miller, then employed by Condé Nast, and Scherman, employed by "LIFE Magazine," were among the first to enter the city of Nuremberg, the Dachau concentration camp and Berchtesgaden, where the Nazi Party had its "Eagle's Nest" fortified alpine retreat. They also covered the D-Day invasion of Europe, the first battles on the beaches of Normandy and the liberation of Paris in 1944.

While on assignment, Scherman survived two small plane crashes. His first near-death experience in wartime came in April 1941, before the United States had entered the war. Scherman was headed to Cape Town when his ship was shelled by a German warship disguised as a merchant vessel. Scherman's photographs of the warship, smuggled back to the United States in tubes of toothpaste and shaving cream, were published in "LIFE" and later used by the British navy to identify the boat and sink it.

Scherman was also one of the first photographers to enter Munich during the war, where he discovered Hitler's home, the location of which was not yet known to Allies, according to his obit-

uary in "The New York Times." It was there that he and Miller took some of the most iconic photographs from their creative partnership – most notably of Miller in Hitler's bathtub, coincidentally snapped on the day of Hitler's suicide in Berlin. In the series of photographs, a portrait of Hitler sits on the tub to her left, and her boots, still dusty from the duo's visit to Dachau earlier that morning, dirty up the towel on the floor. The concentration camp had been liberated the day before.

"She understood the meaning of being able to stomp her dirt and mud-laden boots on Hitler's prissy bath mat – it was the mud of Dachau, which she had just seen and witnessed," Ellen Kuras, the cinematographer who worked on "Lee," told "Vanity Fair." "Lee Miller had a great sense of irony. Even though we may not have seen that in photographs, we wanted to be able to capture that."

When Miller finished posing, Scherman took her place and Miller took the camera, her son Antony Penrose told the Jewish News ahead of an exhibition about her photography in 2015. (Penrose also wrote "The Lives of Lee Miller," the book upon which the screenplay for "Lee" was based, and he stars in the film as an extra.)

"Now if you were to see the photo of Scherman, Lee tilts up to fully include the showerhead prominently," Penrose explained. "Why? Because Scherman was Jewish and that morning they had been in a very different type of shower room, one that was disguised as such, but was in fact a gas chamber. There are thousands of words in those two pictures." HW

# Member of Goyim Defense League Extradited to Netherlands after Allegedly Projecting Antisemitic Message onto Anne Frank House



A view outside the Anne Frank House Museum in Amsterdam, March 31, 2020. Credit: Sjoerd van der Wal/Getty Images

By Andrew Lapin

(JTA) – A prominent member of an American neo-Nazi group has been extradited to the Netherlands, where he will stand trial for projecting an antisemitic message onto the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam.

Robert Wilson is accused of being behind a February incident in which a message was laser-projected onto the house where Anne Frank hid during the Holocaust. The message read "inventor of the ballpoint pen," a reference to a widely debunked antisemitic conspiracy theory alleging that Frank's famous diary is a forgery because it was originally written with a ballpoint pen, which was invented only after World War II.

Frank was discovered by the Nazis in 1944 and died in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp the following year. The house where she hid is now a museum.

Wilson is scheduled to make his first court appearance in early October. Originally from Canada, he is a member of the Goyim Defense League, a prominent neo-Nazi group now based in Florida.

Wilson lived in Chula Vista, California, a suburb of San Diego, from 2016 to 2021, when he was accused of assaulting a neighbor and targeting them with homophobic slurs. Soon after the alleged assault, Wilson was accused of hanging an antisemitic banner over a San Diego freeway overpass. He fled the country before he could be prosecuted for a hate crime in the assault.

Since then Wilson has been largely based in Poland, where he holds citizenship, and where he has documented himself committing various antisemitic

acts, including displaying vulgar signs directed at the Anti-Defamation League while outside the site of the Auschwitz concentration camp in 2022. Goyim Defense League founder Jon Minadeo Jr. also posed in the same photo, which Minadeo said led to his arrest by Polish authorities.

Wilson reportedly traveled to Amsterdam several months later, at the time of the Anne Frank House incident. His presence there was discovered by a group of Dutch citizen sleuths devoted to rooting out terrorist activities.

In the spring, the Netherlands issued a European arrest warrant for him, and Polish authorities first arrested him in April, ordering him not to leave the country while the investigation was ongoing. But Wilson was arrested again in July while trying to flee to Canada from an airport in Germany. He was held in Germany before being transferred to Amsterdam in late August.

In July the Netherlands outlawed speech that specifically takes the form of Holocaust denial, but Dutch prosecutors did not indicate in their press release announcing Wilson's extradition what they would be charging him with.

The unclear nature of the projected message will be a "test case" for the Netherlands, Willem Wagenaar, an extremism researcher who works at the Anne Frank House, told San Diego's newsource.

"Is this a punishable offense in the Netherlands, or is this freedom of speech?" Wagenaar said. "It's in the gray area in between. So we will find out." HW

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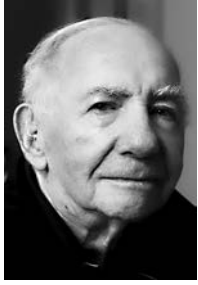
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# Jonah; an Ecumenical Haftorah for Yom Kippur



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

## Ted Roberts

Maybe it's a profane analogy, but ranking the prophets is like ranking football teams. It is a highly subjective exercise. Ask twenty rabbis, you'll get twenty lists. Well, maybe except for Isaiah and Elijah who are numbers one and two on everybody's list.

And isn't it strange that Elijah – a perennial No. 1 – doesn't have his own book. Samuel's got two. Even Haggai, a lightweight, thunders against moral apathy in four short pages, titled – what else – “Haggai.” His mama must have loved it. “Well yes, he's a prophet, so he doesn't bring home much of a paycheck, but he's got his own book, you know.” Poor Mama Elijah, just looked straight ahead.

Jonah, who we read on Yom Kippur, also is one of these lesser lights. There are no inspirational sermons – no thunder and lightning of the Armageddon to come. Only one small prayer that the prophet delivers from the gut of the great fish that swallowed him. Then, later the brief warning to the Ninevites:

“Only forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.”

Even more humiliating to the prophet than serving as fish food to a giant Gelfite fish, is the fact that the book of Jonah is not about Jonah. In fact, the prophet is the butt of the book. Public relation wise, it's a disaster for Jonah, who is chastised by his Creator. Nineveh, as far as I know, is his last assignment. Subsequently, this lover of gourds (more about Jonah and his gourd, later) is unemployed. Like Haggai's mama noted, the pay was never great, and now what does a 65-year-old ex-prophet do for medical insurance?

Remember the story? The Lord commands Jonah to preach at the Ninevites. The message – consistent with the High Holyday theme – is REPENTANCE. But the prophet flees and buys a discount ticket on a freighter plying the Joppa to Tarsus trade. It turns out the reason the ticket's so cheap is that it's a three-day trip in the belly of a big tuna – a punishment for his rebellious ways. And if you think the United shuttle from Boston to New York is confining, try a cubicle in a tuna fish.

Of all the prophetic books – this one is overwhelmingly the most ecumenical. Maybe the Book of Ruth is a close second, because it instructs us that Moabites are human, too. Sure “your people will be my people,” but in the book of Jonah the Lord throws a mantle of compassion over the sinners of

Nineveh, AND their beasts.

In the shortest speech on record by Rabbi, politician, or prophet the verbally parsimonious preacher declares, “Yet 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.” Boy, is Jonah a blind prophet. It turns out, he's as bad at prediction as all those stock analysts who recently went to jail and your local weather person, who's only 2 outa 5 predicting rain or snow.

“Let neither man NOR BEAST, herd nor flock...feed nor drink water, but let them be covered with sack cloth, both man and beast.” That's what the King of Nineveh tells his subjects in order to avoid the Lord's wrath. The message is: Jews, Gentiles, and animals are all divine manifestations. Find me another passage in the entire Tanach that sings such a universal anthem of love. The Ninevites listen and clean up their act. Repentance and the Lord's mercy cancel a Sodom and Gomorrah encore. But our prophet is disappointed. Jonah has come a long way to see Nineveh burn.

And you must admit – he's well before his time, since he's the first vegetable activist. Yes! He places the welfare of the gourd plant – that shades him – above the lives of Nineveh's human and animal population. When the Creator destroys the gourd, Jonah cries.

You weep for this sappy plant, says the Lord, but you don't give a fig for the people (a mixed multitude of Jews and Gentiles) and cattle (again the animals!) of Nineveh.

## The Scribbler On the Roof

By Ted Roberts

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So why do we pair this bizarre Haftorah (a Haftorah in which whales, gourds, cattle, and reformed sinners share the stage with G-d's prophet) with Yom Kippur, the most awesome of our holidays. The official answer I don't know – go ask your Rabbi. But to me, the Jonah story encompasses the entire world of man and beast. It is wildly ecumenical. And obviously, the theme is forgiveness.

If even the beasts of Nineveh regretted their excesses and dodged destruction because of their contrition, well there's hope for us.

Repentance will shield us from the evil decree. This is a happy Haftorah with a Hollywood ending – a touch of joy to temper the solemnity of Yom Kippur.

*The syndicated humor of Ted, the Scribbler on the roof, has appeared in newspapers around the U.S., on National Public Radio, and numerous websites. HW*

Please check out Jewish Scene Magazine and The Hebrew Watchman on Facebook • Instagram • JewishSceneMagazine.com • HebrewWatchman.com

## ISRAEL INSIGHTS Remembering Two Memphis Leaders

By Howard Weisband

I am writing on September 12. Yesterday our dear friend, Alvin Gordon, Zichrono L'vracha (Z"l, of Blessed Memory) passed away in his home here in Jerusalem. Alvin was known to many in Memphis, as a friend, colleague, and community activist.

By a sheer coincidence from Heaven, while Alvin will be buried tonight in Jerusalem, Sam Weinreich, Z"l, also will be buried this evening in Israel in a different cemetery not far away. We will attend Alvin's funeral in person, but timing and distance will cause us to watch Sam's funeral on Zoom just beforehand.

In Memphis we lived in the same neighborhood as both gentlemen and davened in the same synagogue. Community was very important to both, though they came to Memphis from different backgrounds. I had the merit to interact with each in the context of Federation activity. As a Holocaust survivor, Sam was involved in the planning for the annual community Holocaust Memorial Day program at the JCC, during which he always sang The Partisan Song and recited the memorial prayer El Malei.

Alvin, who served on the Board of the Federation, was a skilled attorney and negotiator, as was our mutual friend, Sam Weintraub, Z"l. It was during Sam's tenure as President of the Federation, that both gentlemen stepped in and were critical to me and the Federation in solving a looming communal crisis that revolved around the funding of Jewish education.

I first connected to Alvin and Elaine

in 1975, my first year in Memphis, when we recruited a wonderful group of Memphians through the then Memphis Jewish Welfare Fund to participate in the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) National Koach Young Leadership Mission to Israel. It was the Gordons' first visit to Israel, and though not the youngest of young leaders, they quickly became the mentors to our mission group.

After a few days in Israel, while entering Jerusalem for the first time in his own life, Alvin took the microphone on the bus and shared his emotional feelings at that moment. He related that with the privilege of being in the Holy City of Jerusalem, he was doing so for himself, his father and mother, and others in his family who had never been in Jerusalem and would be with him now. I have always remembered that moment; in fact, it likewise became a part of my own existential self as I've had the privilege of living in Jerusalem.

Alvin and his dear wife, Elaine, are very special to us, to Kayla and me, and to our family on a deep personal level. We have had a loving, meaningful friendship with them anchored in Memphis and continuing here in Israel.

Living in the same Ramot neighborhood for years, we often would be together for Shabbat dinner or lunch, in their home or in ours. Dining at various Jerusalem restaurants together has been another favorite activity. Best of all, we have always shared in the joy of participating in family celebrations, Bar and Bat Mitzvahs and weddings in both the Gordon and Weisband families.

Kayla and I, and our family, all were honored with our children's weddings when Alvin recited one of the special Seven Blessings for the Bride and Groom under the Chupa. Shaul, our son, reminded us that Alvin would walk up to the Chupa in his own patented fashion, large embroidered kipa, cane in hand with a bottle of whiskey strapped to it for L'Chaim later in the evening, having asked the musicians to play “When the Saints Come Marching In.” For all present, it remains an unforgettable moment of joy.

Kayla informed our children yesterday of Alvin's passing with the following on our family WhatsApp: “Our dear friend Alvin Gordon passed away this afternoon. He was a proud Jew who felt fortunate to live in Jerusalem. He loved his family and friends. His adoring and devoted wife, Elaine, was the center of his world. May his memory be a blessing for all.”

Our daughter Naavah responded succinctly, lovingly: “Very sad. Very much like a sabba (grandfather) to us.”

May You Rest in Peace, both Alvin Gordon and Sam Weinreich.

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

## Actress Arleen Sorkin of Daytime TV Fame Dies at 67



Arleen Sorkin

(JNS) – After fighting multiple sclerosis for a decade, the disease took the life of 67-year-old Jewish film and television actress Arleen Sorkin on Aug. 24.

Playing Calliope Jones Bradford in the daytime soap opera “Days of Our Lives,” Sorkin served as a series regular from 1984 through 1990, making guest appearances on the show in the years afterwards through 2010.

Then there was “Batman: The Animated Series,” and the introduction of Harley Quinn, both sidekick and love interest to the Joker. Sorkin both voiced and reportedly provided inspiration for the character's personality.

In 1992, in what writers initially intended as a one-off appearance, Sorkin performed the character so memorably that Harley Quinn became a fan favorite, appearing across TV shows, comic books, video games and animated films in the following decades. The latest iteration of the villainess was portrayed in the live-action films “Suicide Squad” (2016) and (2021) by actress Margot Robbie.

Sorkin is survived by her husband, television writer and producer, Christopher Lloyd; and their two sons, Eli and Owen. HW

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