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# Hebrew Watchman

**SERVING THE MEMPHIS JEWISH COMMUNITY SINCE 1925** 

HEBREWWATCHMAN.COM 25 ADAR II, 5784 APRIL 4, 2024 VOL. 102, NO. 29

## Memphis Jewish Girl Scout Troop Sends Cards & Gifts to Israel



Girl Scout Troop #13142 braids and decorates challah in addition to making cards to send to IDF soldiers.

#### By Shoshana Cenker

About once a month, Girl Scout Troop #13142 gets together to learn something new, volunteer or attend fun activities. They've learned all about honey from a beekeeper, made jewelry, visited fire and police stations, created paintings at an art studio, and more.

After the Oct. 7 tragedy, Troop Business Manager Edie Efron wanted to create a meeting that would have a tangible positive impact on the girls, but one that wouldn't be fearful or scary. So, Edie reached out to me, as my daughter, Lyla, is in Troop #13142, and we were already

scheduled to host November's meeting. Lyla and I sprang into action to plan a meaningful event.

As the girls arrived for the meeting in honor of Israel, Israeli music played softly in the background. They piled into the kitchen to braid challah, decorate the bread with fun toppings, and say the bracha, "Hafrashat Challah," in merit and honor of Israeli soldiers, hostages, and Rose Lubin (Z"L). We were thrilled when the Bat Ami ladies – four delightful Israeli students who are spending a year in Memphis, working at the Margolin Hebrew Academy and other local Jewish agencies to promote learning and a connection to Israel – came to help.

While the challah was baking, the Girl Scouts circled around two large tables filled with art supplies. The girls wrote notes to Israeli soldiers and those who lost family members, sprucing them up with paper flowers, glitter, drawings and gems. The messages of love and support, in English and some in Hebrew, included "We're thinking about you,"

"Stay strong," "Be safe" and "We love you, from Memphis!"

For the next part of the program, Troop #13142 Zoomed with Shai Ben Harosh, our family friend and former IDF soldier and Kollel Torah MiTzion member. From Israel, Shai graciously answered questions from the girls and their moms. Wearing his IDF uniform, he talked about aspects of the uniform and his active service. Fluent in English, he also spoke about the Shuk, what life is like in Israel during 'regular' times and what it's like now during war, and he shared details about his family, work, neighborhood and his love of music and guitar playing. That was the first time many of the girls had ever spoken to an Israeli. It was a very special experience for everyone.

"The meeting was very powerful because we were making cards for all of Am Yisrael and Zooming with Shai, my Israeli friend," said Lyla. "When Shai

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## Native Memphian David Lubin Runs for Georgia State Senate



**David Lubin** 

#### By Shoshana Cenker

David Lubin is running for Senate of Georgia's 40th District. Here's a look at how he got here.

Over the past few months, David's become more involved in the tall task of combating antisemitism. His effort to make positive change came about after the tragic stabbing death of his eldest daughter, 20-year-old Sergeant Rose Lubin (Z"L), who was killed in November 2023 while she stood guard defending the Old City in Jerusalem.

"Rose's legacy of who she was has given us so much strength. It's kind of hard to not wake up every day and feel motivated to go out and do more – that's who she was and what she would have wanted us to be. It's lifted us up at every moment, every step of the way. And we've gotten so much support, which has helped us get through," said David over our Zoom interview. "Some of

that has to do with everybody holding together and being strong. But it's not easy. It hits you when you're not expecting it. It's amazing because people call saying they've named their child after Rose or someone will send me a picture of them at her gravesite, and it fills me with so much pride and joy. But then it brings up emotions, too."

So, David connected with Georgia State Representative Esther Panitch - the only Jewish legislator in Georgia. She was one of the sponsors of antisemitism bill HB30 which, among other measures, made the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's definition of antisemitism the official one in use by the state. David and his wife, Stephanie, began lobbying legislators at the Capitol. "We'd go down there with pictures of Rose, send legislators letters," David explained, "any opportunity we got to be at an event that dealt with HB30, we were there. We worked really hard."

David ended up speaking at the state Senate committee meeting on Jan. 25 about HB30, which was the last hurdle to getting it to the governor's desk. HB30 passed both chambers of the state legislature by a wide margin. Just two days later, David met with Governor Brian Kemp to discuss HB30 and asked if the governor would sign the bill into law. Governor Kemp said yes and followed through on Jan. 31.

We need to back up a second, though. When the bill was presented to the

state Senate for a vote, state Senator Sally Harrell of District 40, who represents David's district, which has one of the largest constituencies of Jewish voters in Georgia, shocked the chamber. "Everyone was expecting her to vote in support of this," said David. "Then she spoke against the bill, and everyone's jaws dropped because they didn't know where it was coming from. Then she walked out – she didn't even have the courage to vote."

As Harrell drew immediate rebuke, she said, in part, that the bill should've had a definition for Islamophobia too.

"After that, people started talking to me about running. Stephanie and I realized it was important, because there needs to be another Jewish vote in the state Senate. And at the same time, I'm trying to replace a voice that's not [supportive]," David shared. "I actually met with Sally, hoping I'd learn why she did what she did. After that meeting, I was more concerned about other things besides that. I realized that she was an inefficient legislator; I looked at her record ... she hasn't had a stellar book of success. To mess up like this and have a poor record, in my opinion, means that someone needs to be replaced."

As you'd imagine, the Lubins considered many factors as they decided whether to begin David's political campaign. "But it always went back to: What's the right thing to do? All Jewish people right now understand what we're up against in this country," David add-

ed. "When I speak to Jewish people, I'm speaking to the choir. And I always say, 'The choir needs to get louder,' because we have to drown out the other voices. We need leaders to step up and take an active role to push out the opponents or those who don't have our best interest in mind, because they're not going away on their own, and they're just getting louder."

Today, while David continues running his commercial construction company that focuses on municipal community projects, he's actively running his campaign.

"I have experience starting a business, and running a campaign is very similar," he shared. "But it's faster and takes laser focus. Your main goal is to start it, win it, and close it, which is a different approach than a business. But it all boils down to having good leadership skills, the ability to meet and work with people, communicate a message, be personable, and listen to the people. I've always had those characteristics – my campaign has brought them to the front."

Now to the main issues David's campaign is focusing on for District 40, starting with transportation and traffic. David notes long work commutes and being stuck in traffic have a direct impact on the economy and people's mental health. There's also community safety and police support. "Police don't

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#### Scouts...

(Continued From Page 1)



IDF soldiers receive cards from Girl Scout Troop #13142.

was telling us all about Israel, we could really understand what we were fighting for – our freedom and our homeland."

After the event, Lyla collected all the cards – about 50 in total – and the gifts, including stickers, costume jewelry, hair accessories, coloring books and more, and packaged them for her dad, Dovid Cenker, to take to Israel. Once there, his Aunt Cheryl Auerbach and cousin Shlomo Pinkus distributed the items to soldiers and families in need.

"All the wonderful things you brought have been given out and both the displaced families (of which there are many) and the soldiers (may they come home safely soon) were so touched by the outpouring of care and kindness in sending all these things to them," texted Cheryl. "The soldiers love getting letters, pictures and notes. In the merit of this tremendous mitzvah, may we see an end to all the suffering, and everyone should come home safe and soon!"

"We really wanted to find a meaningful way for the girls to not just do something kind for those in Israel, but to get a feeling for what it's like to be there at this moment," said Edie. "Coming together to bake challah, make care packages, and have the opportunity to speak to an Israeli, checked all the boxes for this service project that is so meaningful to our community. Our hope is to teach the girls at a young age the importance of Tikkun Olam (Repairing the World) and doing what they can – however large or small – to make the world a better place.

Girl Scout Troop #13142 is open to Jewish girls, starting with rising kindergarteners. Groups are broken up by age: K-1 Daisies; 2nd-3rd grade Brownies; 4th & up Juniors & Cadette. Plans are already in the works for the 2024-2025 season, including floral arrangements for Plough Towers and Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab, a scavenger hunt, Dixon art classes, a CPR class and more. Of course, girls earn those famous badges at each meeting and sell the highly sought-after kosher Girl Scout Cookies. (Thin Mints in the freezer, anyone?!) Email Edie with any questions or to join: edie.efron@me.com HW



Plans are already in the works for the troop's 2024-2025 season, including floral arrangements for Plough Towers and Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab, a scavenger hunt, Dixon art classes, a CPR class and more.

## Hebrew Watchman

SERVING THE MEMPHIS JEWISH COMMUNITY SINCE 193

Established September, 1925 By Leo I. Goldberger (1902-1989)

> MAILING ADDRESS THE HEBREW WATCHMAN PO Box 770846 Memphis, TN 38177-0846

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Subscriptions toni@hebrewwatchman.com

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The Hebrew Watchman is a Member of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, and Jewish News Service

#### THE HEBREW WATCHMAN (USPS #807-360) is published weekly every Thursday for \$36 per year by

for \$36 per year by
JEWISH LIVING OF THE SOUTH, Inc.
THE HEBREW WATCHMAN
PO Box 770846

Memphis, TN 38177-0846 Periodical postage paid at Memphis, Tenn.

#### POSTMASTER:

Send address changes to: THE HEBREW WATCHMAN PO Box 770846 Memphis, TN 38177-0846

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One of our key services is the Kay & Allen Iskiwitz Shalom Shuttle, which can help with the transportation challenge. Our experienced driver, Dale Steele, provides transportation to members of our Jewish community who are at least 60 years old as well as those adults of any age with special needs. Transportation is provided with door-to-door assistance for just \$5 one-way to locations within Shelby County. Please note we are unable to accommodate those individuals in wheel chairs. Pre-registration/reservations are required and can be made by contacting Fogelman JFS at 901-767-8511. **HW** 



#### Lubin...

(Continued From Page 1)

need reform, we need to give them financial support so they can work on things like how to deal with racial issues better than what we've seen in the past," he said. "Our first responders and police officers are a direct reflection of who we are – we need to support them."

The other key item is gun safety. With five kids, David acknowledges that he's fearful about school shootings. "Is there going to be an active shooter? We've accepted it, and that's not right," he added. "We have red flag laws, which I think we need to support."

While most of The Hebrew Watchman's readers aren't eligible to vote for David, it doesn't mean we sit back and watch. "What I'd say to Jews in other communities is that we used to think anti-Israel and anti-Jewish was a national problem. But it's moved down to state levels, community levels, city councils. We have to be vigilant and support Jewish candidates, for one thing, but also candidates who are trying to push back - those voices that

are willing to stand up and lead," David shared. "People who succeed on the local level usually move to the national level. So we need to change our approach and get ahead of this. And to my constituents who will vote - they've had a representative who wasn't effective, who walked out on a major bill and chose not to vote for it. With me, they'll get someone who will be effective and will never walk out

We concluded our interview the way we started: sweet Rose, and what she'd think about her dad's run for office. Before responding, David paused - as he processed the thought, a beautiful expression of joy erupted.

"No. 1, she'd give me a big smile. Then she'd try to help me get votes, and she would have voted for me," David said proudly. "I can see her face right now. She'd tell me, 'Dad, you'd make an excellent senator in Georgia."

For more info and to donate to David's campaign: davidlubinforsenate.com HW

## The MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Happenings

Lunch is Monday-Friday at 11:30 a.m. All programs start at 12:15 p.m. Monthly Luncheon is at noon.

Monday, April 8

Speaker: Rabbi Yosef Braha, Rosh Kollel, Memphis Kollel Director of **Operations** 

Topic: Ask the Rabbi

The word Kollel comes from the Hebrew word "klal," which means group or community. A Kollel is a group of Jewish families dedicated to and united by a shared vision who live, learn and teach in the community. Rabbi Braha's talks are always inspiring and informative. With Passover coming up, many have questions. This is a perfect time to get answers about the holiday or anything else one wishes to ask. Come for a terrific kosher lunch and a really nice program.

#### Wednesday April 10 **Performance: Emily Groff Heilborn**

Emily joined the Temple Israel clergy team in the fall of 2022 as the Temple's first Music and Cantorial Director. Born and raised in Miami Beach, Emily moved to Tennessee to study at Vanderbilt University, earning a Bachelor of Music and Master of Education in Instrumental Music degrees. Emily will perform a selection of songs following lunch at 12 p.m. Join us for an enjoyable afternoon. Please call the front desk at (901) 761-0810 for your reservation.

#### **Monday April 15**

Speaker: Rabbi Abe Schacter-Gampel, Director for the Center of Jewish Life and Learning at the MJCC.

**Topic: Preparing for Passover** 

Rabbi Abe's knowledge and sense of humor are always a delight. This talk is free and open to the public.



The Double D Band

Wednesday, April 17 MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Monthly Luncheon featuring The Double D Band!

The Double D Band plays a wide range of songs and genres, but especially music from the 50s. Playing guitars and mandolins, they've appeared on MTV, BBC, and have been a part of the music scene in London, England, and New York City, having lived and performed in both. The last time The Double D Band played for the Monthly Luncheon, many of the seniors requested their return! This month's luncheon is sponsored by Harbur Realty and Mid-South Home Helpers! Please call the MJCC front desk at 901-761-0810 to make reservations for this terrific lunch and entertainment. Cost is only \$5!

Please 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 Steve Kaplan, Adult Services Coordinator at 901-259-9220, at stevekaplan@jccmemphis.org, or by calling the front desk at 901-761-0810. **HW** 

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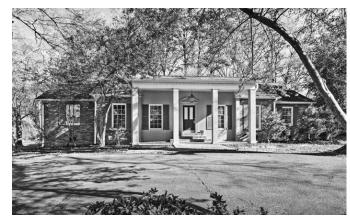
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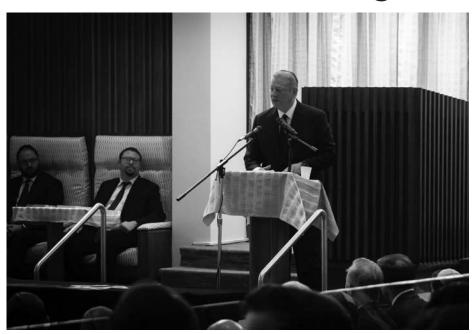
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## Al Gore, Hundreds of Mourners Hail 'Supreme Mensch' Joe Lieberman at Pioneering Jewish Politician's Funeral



Al Gore speaks at Sen. Joe Lieberman's funeral in Stamford, Connecticut, March 29, 2024. Credit: Luke Tress

By Luke Tress

(JTA) - Alison Sharaf, a staffer for Sen. Joe Lieberman in 2000, remembers the moment she heard that he would be making history.

Sharaf, then a manager in Lieberman's Hartford office, was confident that Al Gore would pick her boss to be his running mate on the Democratic ticket – despite fears that the country was "not ready" to vote for an Orthodox Jew. She got to the office at 3 a.m. that morning anticipating the announcement and, later, Lieberman celebrated the news with her and the rest of his team.

"The whole staff in Connecticut, he took us on a boat ride down the Connecticut River and said our lives are about to change," Sharaf, standing outside Lieberman's funeral on Friday, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. "He's very forthcoming, he's very honest, just tells it like it is, and he's a good human being."

Sharaf and hundreds of others mourned Lieberman as a model of decency and bipartisan cooperation that they believe is missing in Washington today at his funeral in his hometown of Stamford, Connecticut, on Friday morning. The service was held in his synagogue, Agudath Shalom, and not far from Stamford High School, where Lieberman was class president and named "most likely to succeed" in 1960.

The funeral drew a diverse crowd of young and elderly, secular and religious, who lined up outside the synagogue in the bright morning sun. The American and Israeli flags outside the synagogue's front door hung at half-mast. The crowd filled the synagogue.

Lieberman's daughter, Hani Lowenstein, described how her father was on a warm, first-name basis with everyone from his colleagues to Capitol Police officers.

"Everyone knew they would be received by a warm smile," she said in an emotional speech. "You genuinely cared about every person you interacted with."

His son, Matt Lieberman, called his

father a "supreme mensch."

"He was blessed, and he was a blessing for all of us," he said. The family members' speeches drew some tears in the audience.

Sharaf, who worked for Lieberman from 1997 to 2001, highlighted his famous friendship with Republican Sen. John McCain as a model of political tolerance. "That's the way it's supposed to be done, but those days are over," she said.

In 2008 Lieberman, then an independent, endorsed McCain's Republican presidential bid and was vetted to be his vice presidential nominee. At the time, the move drove a wedge between Lieberman and his longtime party, but those tensions did not appear at the funeral. A range of former and current Democratic leaders spoke warmly about him - including Connecticut Gov. Ned Lamont, who beat Lieberman in the state's hard-fought Democratic senatorial primary in 2006, then lost to him in the general election.

Speakers at the ceremony also included Gore and Chris Murphy, Richard Blumenthal and Chris Dodd, all current and former Connecticut senators who knew Lieberman and his family through his long career in the state's politics. Speakers hailed Lieberman's religious faith, independent streak and commitment to his family and community.

Gore, who flew in from Tennessee, said Lieberman led a "life of constant consequence for his family, his friends, his nation."

The two were close before their presidential run and their families knew each other well, Gore said, speaking beneath the spacious synagogue's soaring stained-glass windows.

"We laughed together, we fought like hell together for what we wanted our country to be," Gore said.

He hailed Lieberman's commitment to "reconciliation as a form of grace" in politics, an approach Gore said was needed to "heal the rancor in our nation today."

Murphy said that while he was coming up in politics, Lieberman was "a giant to me" who decided his position on an issue "regardless of its political origin."

Lieberman had a "decency that will never show up in the history books," Murphy said, recounting how Lieberman had written a lengthy condolence letter to a woman he barely knew when her father died.

The synagogue's rabbi, Daniel Cohen, said Lieberman was "truly a stranger to no one."

"He saw the divine in everyone he met." Cohen said. HW

#### **OBITUARIES**

The Hebrew Watchman publishes obituaries (up to 500 words) as a service to the Jewish community at no charge. Over 500 words there is a minimum fee.

## Nine Months in Prison for Israeli Who Praised Oct. 7 Attack



Hamas terrorists who were caught during the Oct. 7 massacre and during the Israel Defense Forces operation in the Gaza Strip, at a courtyard in a prison in southern Israel, Feb. 14, 2024. Credit: Chaim Goldberg/Flash90.

(JNS) - An Israeli kindergarten assistant who praised the Hamas-led Oct. 7 massacre was sentenced to nine months in prison last Thursday.

Haj Yahya, 24, from the Arab city of Tayibe in central Israel, also received an additional seven months' probation and a 5,000 shekels (\$1,356) fine from the Kfar Saba Magistrate's Court as part of a plea bargain.

The sentence comes after Yahya published an Instagram post on Oct. 7 praising the terrorist group and the attack to her 9,200 followers.

She wrote the inciting post while working as an aide at a kindergarten in Hod Hasharon.

According to the indictment filed by Attorney Roy Reis from the Central District Attorney's Office, Yahya wrote, among other things, that "there is nothing more beautiful than waking up to the news of the Palestinian resistance in the Gaza Envelope and to the terror and fear of the Zionists from the missiles that fall on their heads. God, give victory to your servants in Gaza and Palestine and to all those who raised your flag, and be a help to them against the enemies of religion."

Yahya confessed and was convicted of incitement to terrorism and identification with a terrorist organization. HW

## **Your Health** Common Sleep Problems

By Cindy Katz, Nurse Practitioner

Insomnia is a common sleep disorder we see in primary care. "I cannot fall asleep; I cannot stay asleep; I wake up early and cannot get back to sleep." Most adults need 7-9 hours of sleep. Over time, sleep disturbance can lead to a variety of problems, including fatigue, poor concentration, cognitive impairment and elevated blood pressure.

How can we improve the quality of our sleep?

Take the necessary steps to eat healthier and exercise! Choose fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meat, fish, poultry, low-fat cheese and nonfat dairy when planning meals. Work on getting 150 minutes of physical activity per week.

Set up a good sleep hygiene routine at bedtime, which includes:

- Be consistent and try to go to bed at the same time each night.
- Utilize a meditation routine that helps you relax.
- Avoid caffeine, large meals and al-• Avoid a heated discussion or watch-
- ing a heart-racing television show. • Put your handheld devices on "do not disturb," darken the room, and use a sleep mask if needed.

There is treatment available with both over-the-counter and prescription medications. It is imperative that you understand the treatment goal and potential side effects before starting the medication.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is recommended as an alternative treatment if you are hesitant to use sleep medications. It is effective and can help you develop and overcome behaviors that keep you from sleeping well.

Some causes of insomnia are preventable, but there may be underlying medical reasons affecting sleep, such as acid reflux, diabetes, heart disease, COPD or asthma. Pregnancy and menopause are common culprits of insomnia for women. Aging seniors with poor health struggle with sleep onset and staying asleep. Facing recent grief, stress and dealing with new onset of depression and anxiety are also medical conditions that affect sleep behavior.

It is wise not to wait until you are overwhelmed by the consequences of insomnia. Find what interventions work best for you with the help of your healthcare provider. Taking proactive steps to address sleep issues early can lead to better long-term outcomes for your health and well-being. HW

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## Bring Them Home Now: Run for Their Lives



Run for Their Lives participants in local communities meet once a week in a designated location for a short 1km walk/run.

#### By Shoshana Cenker

It's been nearly 180 days since the hostages were violently taken into captivity from Israel. As the antisemitic rhetoric, protests, and lies circulate, the Jewish people stand united.

One way to show our solidarity and bring awareness to our brothers and sisters still held captive is through the global organization Run for Their Lives.

"The movement was started by a group of Israelis in the Bay Area in California, in collaboration with the Hostage and Missing Families Forum (#BringThemHomeNow), shortly following the terrorist attacks on Oct. 7, 2023," explained Hannah Chanin, the Run for Their Lives Memphis organizer. "Each city has a local organizer or two to support the group.

This is a grassroots, community-centric movement, and the groups are started by passionate folks, using their own resources, in each community."

According to the org's website, local communities meet once a week in a designated location for a short 1km walk/run. It takes about 18 minutes, (ητ), which means life). Groups often wear unified T-shirts, carry flags of the countries whose citizens are among the hostages, shoot videos/photos, and spread the events on social media.

For the events here in Memphis, "we open each walk by sharing the stories of one or more hostages. For example, we shared the stories of each of the remaining women hostages for Inter-

national Women's Day, and a couple weekends ago we highlighted the story of the Bedouin AlZayadni family, two of whom remain in captivity," explained Hannah. "We walk peacefully for about 18 minutes carrying signs, posters, and flags. Then we briefly reconvene after the walk to share thoughts, prayers, and record a video that's shared with the hostages' families through the Hostages and Missing Families Forum every week." There was also a walk near Baron Hirsch on Purim day, during the neighborhood's block party.

Run for Their Lives has 182 active groups walking every week in 20 countries across the globe including Mauritius, India, and Japan. The non-denominational, non-sectarian, non-political movement welcomes anyone who's aligned with the mission: calling for the immediate release of all hostages in Gaza. "The 'hostage issue' is not a Jewish issue, it's a HUMAN issue and all people concerned for the hostages are welcome," Hannah added. "This is a family-friendly and dog-friendly event. We aim to accommodate all levels of physical ability."

For security, the location of each week's walk is not announced to the broad public – it's posted on WhatsApp groups maintained by the local organizers. Go to run4lives.org, click on "Find a group near you," and you'll be connected to the WhatsApp group that's closest. "We ask that those who plan to join the walk also join the WhatsApp group for safety and planning purposes," Hannah said. "All official communications, in-

cluding weekly walk details, are shared through the secure WhatsApp group. We have not had any safety or security issues in Memphis, and the organization's guidelines were developed with safety in mind. For example, the organization emphasizes that this is NOT an angry or provocative protest, it is a peaceful, humanitarian advocacy event."

Of course, nothing would give Run for Their Lives more joy than ending the movement. That can only happen when all the hostages are freed. "We are committed to walking every week until every hostage is home," Hannah shared. "Not only does this continue to bring attention to the issue and provide support to the hostages' families, it serves as a reminder to us all that we cannot allow these barbaric, inhumane circumstances to become 'normal' or an 'accepted' status quo in our society."

Somewhat of a word-of-mouth organization, turn out in Memphis has been growing weekly. "We will continue to walk each week, whether we have one or 100 walkers, and stand steadfastly in solidarity with the hostages and their families," Hannah said. "While the circumstances that brought this movement to bear are horrific and tragic, many of the walkers are incredibly thankful for this opportunity to build new relationships within the Memphis community. We look forward to the day these walks will no longer be needed and know that the special connections forged by this group will continue to blossom in the Memphis Jewish community and the greater Memphis community for a long time to come." HW



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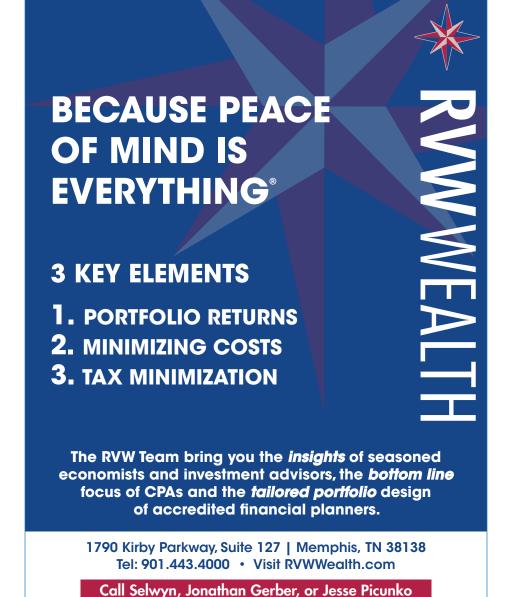
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LARGEST

MANAGEMENT

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### Beth Sholom's Purim Celebration Turns Back the Clock



It was hard to recognize these three amigos: Michael Weinberger, Kevin Bernstein and Seth Agranov.

"We decided that since Purim began on a Saturday night, we would have two events: an adults-only Megillah reading and party after Havdalah and a Sunday morning Megillah reading and program for children and families," explained Dana Bernstein, who co-chairs Beth Sholom's program committee with Rachel Feinman. "Everyone embraced the '70s theme, and the costumes were amazing."

Rabbi Sarit Horwitz explained, "Purim is so often viewed as only a children's holiday, and part of having an



Rabbi Abe Schacter-Gampel and Kevin Bernstein admired each other's costume.

adults-only program on Saturday night, I realized, was to remind adults that Purim is for them, too."

Rabbi Horwitz continued, "The Purim story is one that is relevant in all times, and especially in our day. It's the story of those who want to eradicate the Jewish people, and it's a story of our survival. There are deep existential themes that run through the Book of Esther, and I think people are feeling those on a real level in our time. That reality has also called for us to strike a balance in our daily lives. Purim asks



Program Committee Co-Chairs Dana Bernstein and Rachel Feinman with Lauren Tochner.

us to find immeasurable joy, and that can be complicated amidst an ongoing war in Israel and growing antisemitism in America. But I found that this year that was even more important. To remind ourselves how to feel joy, in the hopes that some day it won't be so complicated to do so."

Lauren Tochner said there was abundant joy that evening, explaining that "Saturday night was a blast. Rabbi Abe's chanting was fabulous. The energy in the building was unbelievable." **HW** 

### White House: Biden and Netanyahu are Rescheduling DC Talks on Rafah

#### By Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA) – The Biden administration says it is rescheduling a Washington visit by Israeli officials that was canceled by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, creating an international incident.

Beth Sholom Synagogue turned back

the clock to have a rockin' 70's Purim

party, with guests dressed to the nines in

their best disco and flower-power out-

fits. After congregants and many others

from the Memphis Jewish communi-

ty filled the Chapel to hear Rabbi Abe

Schacter-Gampel chant the Megillah,

guests poured out into a New-York-

City-in-the-70s themed Community

Court, complete with a dee jay and dis-

co crystal ball. Hot-dog and hot-pretzel

"carts" added to the NYC vibe, and

cocktails and mocktails were served.

Last week, President Joe Biden asked Netanyahu to send a delegation to Washington, D.C., to hear out American objections to Israel's planned invasion of Rafah, the city on the Gaza-Egypt border that Israel says is the last redoubt of Hamas, the terrorist group that launched the war with an invasion on Oct. 7.

Biden officials say a massive incursion into Rafah would be catastrophic, because more than a million Palestinians have fled into the city, often at Israel's behest.

"The Prime Minister's Office has agreed to reschedule the meeting dedicated to Rafah, so we're now working with them to find a convenient date," Karine Jean-Pierre, the White House spokeswoman, said last Wednesday afternoon at the daily briefing for reporters

Netanyahu and the White House had scheduled a visit between top officials

for [this] Wednesday, but Netanyahu canceled the visit [last] Monday after the Biden administration allowed a U.N. Security Council Resolution calling for a ceasefire.

Jean-Pierre said a separate visit this week, by Israeli defense minister Yoav Gallant, appeared to have calmed the waters. "They were constructive discussions with Israel's defense minister over the last two days," she said.

An official in Netanyahu's office said only that "The White House has made a request to set a new date." Jean-Pierre said she did not know yet how soon the visit would be.

Hamas' Oct. 7 attack killed approximately 1,200 and took some 250 hostages. The Hamas-run Gaza health ministry says more than 32,000 Palestinians have been killed in the war. More than 250 Israeli soldiers have been killed in the invasion of Gaza.

Indirect negotiations between Israel and Hamas recently broke down after Hamas rejected a U.S.-backed proposal for a temporary ceasefire and release of Israeli hostages. Hamas demanded a full ceasefire and complete Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. **HW** 







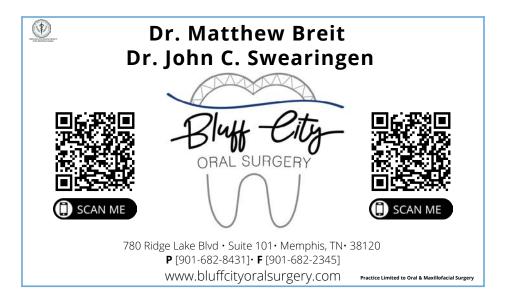
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## All Smiles for Purim at the Home!



MJHR resident Rodney making Haman hats with volunteers.

#### By Jasmine Williams

On Sunday, March 24, Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab celebrated Purim with a carnival and lively megillah reading. From costumes, masks, crafts and prizes, the residents were sure to have a Purim Sameach.

Baylee Less, Director of Development, shared with us, "We haven't hosted a Purim Carnival at the Home in over 10 years, so this year's was a test to see if we could pull it off! The residents had the best time, enjoying games, snacks, prizes and crafts. With the decorations, music and energy from the volunteers, it really felt like the auditorium was transformed into a full-blown carnival tent."

When residents entered the carnival, they were greeted with popcorn, beaded necklaces, goodie bags and hamantaschen. Around the auditorium, there were many games set up for the residents to participate in like ring toss, knock 'em down cans, mask painting, Haman hat-making, prize drop, scavenger hunt and tic-tac-toe toss. Thanks to Marcy Milman Productions, the residents and their visitors were also able to take pictures at a photo booth with fun props and costumes. If the resident did not have a guest with them, volunteers guided them through the maze of festivities. The prizes varied from candy to deli certificates, and the residents were definitely excited to fill their goodie bags with those! The volunteers did a great job at keeping the energy alive all day.

One of our volunteers, Rabbi Brett Oxman, told us, "I think we enjoyed the MJHR Purim Carnival as much, if not more, than the residents themselves. Our grandchildren were so excited on the way home, they asked 'Can we do this again next year?"

The staff and board at MJHR are very proud of how the Purim carnival turned out and hopes this will pave the way for more events with our residents and community outside of the Home. The Purim carnival was made possible due to the Ben and Larisa Baer Jewish Activities Fund.



Monte Eiseman with Nicole, MJHR resident, at the dart ball table.



Bob Eiseman guiding Patricia, MJHR resident, through the carnival.

Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab is a not-for-profit nursing home, Jewish in character and environment, dedicated to providing the highest level of care possible with dignity, compassion, and professionalism. Only through the help of generous donors is the organization able to care for those in need. Find more information at www. memphisjewishhome.org/giving. HW





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## Are Your Personal Biases Derailing Your Investment Goals?

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.wellsfargoadvisors.com/michael-stein

Your investment portfolio may need variety to help fit your needs. Too much of one kind of asset, or too little, and you're likely to find yourself without the pieces that can potentially help you meet your long-term financial goals.

The trick is to guard against making decisions based on trends or biases you might not be aware you have. Tracie McMillion, head of Global Asset Allocation for Wells Fargo Investment Institute, took a closer look at some of the biases that can cloud your thinking:

#### **Identify your biases**

Even savvy and knowledgeable investors can be blind to their own biases - tendencies that can thwart smart decision-making. Common investment biases include:

**Sector bias.** All too often, professionals gravitate toward stocks in industries that they're most familiar with. Doctors, for instance, may load up on health care stocks.

- Risk: You may lose out on potential earnings in other industries and unduly expose yourself to downturns in industry-specific markets.
- Consideration: The key is to diversify among sectors. Work with your investment professionals to gain an understanding of how assets in various sectors may potentially help a portfolio perform better as a whole over the long term.

Company bias. From favoring a family business to maintaining too much loyalty to a long-time employer, this bias can weigh down a portfolio with one company's stock.

• Risk: Sinking too much of your retirement savings into one brand can leave you exposed to company-specific volatility risk that can be sizable. It can even expose your portfolio to the possibility that that one company may cease to exist.

• Consideration: Diversification may potentially help buffer the effects of severe problems at an individual company level.

Bias toward recent events. Called "recency bias," this tendency relates to how investors respond to everyday market activity. With investment information and the news of national and international events at our fingertips 24/7, many of us are very tuned in to what's happening in the world – and in the financial markets.

As human beings, we tend to project what has just happened into the future, reacting to upward and downward trends by buying and selling stocks as if yesterday's good or bad news will continue into the future.

- **Risk:** Letting short-term news drive your investment decisions could cause you to abandon your personalized, longterm investment plan.
- Consideration: Self-discipline. Work with your financial team to create a personal investment philosophy statement – and stick to it. This customized strategy should account for your desired asset mix, risk preferences, liquidity needs, and time horizon. And it can help you keep your cool when the headlines start to heat up.

Home country bias. Investors - be they American, Italian, or Brazilian - typically feel most comfortable when they choose to invest in companies headquartered in their home countries. After all, they're usually the companies that such investors read about in local or national media and the companies that they do business with as consumers most often.

• Risk: Home country bias may translate to missed investment opportunities. Heavy reliance on U.S. stocks, bonds, and real estate can keep you from expanding your investment strategy to take advantage of global investment opportunities.

• Consideration: We believe it's a good idea to see to it that most of your assets have some global component. And remember that while currency exchange rates may introduce risks to your portfolio, they also may pave the way toward enhanced returns.

#### Some additional caveats

In addition to these biases, we see other habits and attitudes that can affect our clients' portfolios. You may not be susceptible to all of these tendencies, but being aware of them can help keep your investment strategy on track:

- Overconfidence. Do you think you can beat the Street? Striving to micromanage your portfolio stock-by-stock or trying to outsmart the market in a short time frame is a common, but often flawed, tactic in our view. Instead, trust your plan and don't try to anticipate short-term market movements.
- Aversion to loss. Is there an asset you just can't bear to sell because it has lost value? Well, with each passing day, you could be putting off the inevitable, and in our view, you may be robbing yourself of access to investment dollars that could be working for you elsewhere. Ask yourself if it's time to move on.
- Anchoring. This tactic comes into play when you hold on to an investment because you are comparing its current value to a reference value, such as a top-dollar price point from the past. Anchoring thinking might go something like this: "I just want the stock price to return to the high it hit two years ago before I sell." But by mooring yourself to a potentially unrealistic expectation, you may find that your investment plan doesn't move forward.
- Favoritism in asset classes. Are you showing preference for one type of asset over others? Do you have "rules" against investing in certain asset types? Showing favoritism may unnecessarily exclude a choice - including a new investment strategy – that could serve you well. Our goal is to help clients make their investment plans personal without allowing such unintentional biases and tendencies to creep in. The overall solution comes back to self-control during volatile times. Work with your investment team to maintain objectivity, manage risk, and stay focused on long-term goals rather than toward short-term investment – or emotional – rewards.

#### More about creating your personal investing philosophy

To help provide focus and direction, every investor should consider establishing a personal investment philosophy. For couples, the philosophy statement should reflect their mutual investment goals and their unified strategy as a household.

Here's a short list of action items that can get you started on formulating your personal investment strategy.

• Determine how much cash you need to hold to your commitment to your long-term investment plan. Before and during retirement, you may need to tap cash holdings to pay for living expenses, emergencies, or other major planned expenses, such as a son's or daughter's wedding. We call the amount of cash that you may need to access "your sleep-well number" - the figure that may allow you to feel more at ease regarding your investment plan.

- Commit to diversification of your investments. Not to sound repetitive, but this tactic can help you deal with market ups and downs. Just as you need an overcoat in winter and a swimsuit in summer, various assets simply tend to perform better during different economic cycles. So position yourself for different financial seasons with a diversified combination of fixed income, equity holdings, real assets, and alternative investment strategies.
- Actively manage risk. Don't forget to revisit and rebalance your portfolio about once a year and when you experience a major life event. Reallocation can help your portfolio stay on plan and reduce risk or enhance return potential when markets have moved significantly.
- Weave goals into your overall plan. Many investors who have significant resources also have aspirations of making their world a better place. To understand how you spend your investment dollars, consider asking a financial advisor to run screens on your complete portfolio, including investments, charitable trusts, and asset transfers. Then collaborate on any adjustments needed to help the overarching investment plan operate within your customized preferences.

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All investing involves risk, including the possible loss of principal.

Stock markets, especially foreign markets, are volatile. Stocks may fluctuate in response to general economic and market conditions, the prospects of individual companies, and industry sectors. Foreign investing has additional risks including those associated with currency fluctuation, political and economic instability, and different accounting standards. These risks are heightened in emerging and frontier markets.

Equity securities are subject to market risk, which means their value may fluctuate in response to general economic and market conditions and the perception of individual issuers. Investments in equity securities are generally more volatile than other types of securities.

Investments in fixed-income securities are subject to market, interest rate, credit and other risks. Bond prices fluctuate inversely to changes in interest rates. Therefore, a general rise in interest rates can cause a bond's price to fall. Credit risk is the risk that an issuer will default on payments of interest and/ or principal. This risk is heightened in lower rated bonds. If sold prior to maturity, fixed income securities are subject to market risk. All fixed income investments may be worth less than their original cost upon redemption or maturity.

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#### Investment...

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#### **OBITUARIES**



Neil E. "Nick" Ringel

Neil E. "Nick" Ringel died peacefully on March 22 after a life filled with family, friends, purpose, and achievement. He was 87 years old.

Born in Cleveland, Ohio, on January 14, 1937, Nick grew up in Shaker Heights, a Cleveland suburb. He graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1959, after which he served six months on active duty in the Army and seven years in the Army Reserves, earning the rank of captain.

He met the love of his life, Judy, when she was a junior in high school and he was a sophomore in college. They were married four years later, in 1960, and settled down in Shaker Heights – but not for long. In 1964 they uprooted themselves, along with their two-year-old daughter, Betsy, and moved to Memphis so that Nick could manage a new plant built by his then-employer, Sandusky Metal Cabinets, Inc., in Millington.

Nick ran the Sandusky plant for 14 years as vice-president of the company. Meanwhile he renewed his acquaintance with Jerome Makowsky, a fraternity brother from Penn, and began investing with him in a few real estate ventures. It wasn't long before they went into business together, with Nick functioning as a silent partner until 1978, when he joined Jerome full-time. Makowsky and Ringel Inc. became one of the leading real estate development and management companies in the Memphis area. After 46 years of being close friends as well as business partners, it seems fitting that Nick's death occurred just two weeks after Jerome's. Today Makowsky Ringel Greenberg is run by second-generation members of their families.

An eternal optimist and super salesman, Nick greeted everyone he met with a firm handshake, a hearty laugh, and a kind heart. Fairness and integrity were his core values, and real estate was his passion. No matter what he was doing – driving his children to a playground, vacationing in Florida – he was always

on the lookout for vacant land to develop and buildings to buy. He adored spending time with his grandchildren, especially in Pickwick, where they spent summer weekends playing in and around the lake, and later in Park City, Utah, where he was able to ski with his grandchildren (until they got too good!).

Nick loved mentoring and teaching. As a Penn graduate, he enjoyed interviewing candidates for admission to the University, and every year he looked forward to getting to know a new group of applicants. He also got a kick out of teaching a continuing education class in real estate at the University of Memphis. Energized by his interaction with his students, he often commented that he learned as much from them as they did from him.

Nick was a generous donor and prolific fundraiser for a wide range of community organizations. Nearest to his heart was Temple Israel, which he served as president and, later on, as co-chair of a highly successful capital and endowment campaign. He also served as president of the Jewish Foundation of Memphis, and he was a vice-president of both Junior Achievement (where he taught a class in financial literacy) and the Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab. In addition, he was a board member of the Dixie Homes Boys' Club, the Fire Museum of Memphis, the New Ballet Ensemble, the Memphis Zoo, the Shelby County Board of Adjustment, and the Board of Governors of Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati.

Nick was predeceased by his parents, Dorothy and Irving J. Ringel, and his sister, Marjorie Ringel. He is survived by his beloved wife, Judy, to whom he was married for 63 years, and his three children and their spouses: Betsy Ringel Saslawsky (Andy) and Jimmy Ringel (Janice), both of Memphis; and Jonathan Ringel (Deb Weisshaar), of Dunwoody, Georgia. He also leaves seven grandchildren – Brad (Rebecca Hanai) and Brian Ringel; Joel (Stephanie), Erin, and Matthew Saslawsky; and Lucy and Marcy Ringel – and one great-grandchild, Sophie Saslawsky.

In addition, Nick leaves a team of dedicated caregivers – Sharon Banks, Robyn Boyd, Kesha Brown, Detra Ford, Rhonda Perry, Lisa Taylor, and Julia Wallace – who cared for him in his final years with extraordinary kindness and compassion.

Funeral services werre held at Temple Israel Cemetery on Monday, March 25.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests contributions to Temple Israel, the Alzheimer's Association or a charity of the donor's choice. **HW** 

#### Evelyn Appleson Simkin

It is with great sadness that the children of Evelyn Appleson Simkin wish to announce her passing on March 20, 2024, at the Baptist Reynolds Hospice House. There was a beautiful and meaningful graveside service at the Anshei Sphard Cemetery on March 21, 2024, where she was laid to rest next to our father and her husband of 62 years, Milton David Simkin.

Besides her husband she was preceded in death by her parents who immigrated to the United States from Eastern Europe, Morris and Lena Appleson. Evelyn was the baby and last to live of their six children, Herman Appleson, Adelene Feldmann, Marie Fishbein, Gilbert Appleson and Ruth Newman.

She leaves behind her children, Maxine Molasky (Bobby), Ron Simkin, Betty Chapin (Paul), Mindy Mosteller (Jeff Roberts) 7 grandchildren and 8 great-grandchildren, her cherished sister-in-law, Pearl Simkin, and many nieces and nephews and friends all who loved her dearly.

When first married, Evelyn and Milton moved to West Memphis, Arkansas, where they operated their first retail store, Welworth Five and Dime. They later opened several dollar stores, moved to Memphis and merged with Barnett-Levy.

She went to Central High School and in later life continued her education in independent studies at University of Memphis.

She was extremely charitable and served on the board of the Jewish Welfare and Family Services. She co-chaired the Russian Resettlement program, she was a MIFA volunteer with their emergency relief fund and participated with the Meals on Wheels. Evelyn served as president of ASBEE Sisterhood and was the first woman on the board of the ASBEE congregation. In her continued spirit of giving to the Memphis community she was a volunteer with the Each One Teach One program, with the first Memphis Head Start Program, and she very much enjoyed being a docent for the Memphis Wonder Series.

Her four children kept her very active, and she always had a full refrigerator for the many friends and relatives that stopped by for a visit.

In lieu of flowers the family requests that donations be made to Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman Jewish Family Service, MIFA or any other charity of choice. **HW** 

## Bomb Squad Called as Homes of Austin, Sullivan Hit with Manure by Anti-Israel Activists

(JNS) – Pro-Hamas demonstrators deployed a new tactic last week in targeting houses belonging to two top federal officials.

Last Monday, video showed Palestinian Youth Movement activists dumping manure on the streets outside the homes of U.S. Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin and National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan.

The masked group accused the defense secretary of genocide, chanting, "Austin, Austin, you ain't s\*\*\*, we'll keep fighting until you quit." Those gathered at the national security advisor's home repeated, "Sullivan, Sullivan, you can't hide. You're committing genocide!"

Like other protesters who timed their disruptions in the early morning, the group yelled: "Austin, Austin, rise and shine, occupation is a crime!"

Similar demonstrations occurred at the homes of the two U.S. leaders on Dec. 25.

Groups at each house also used red and green smoke that drew the bomb squad to Sullivan's residence; the Secret Service is investigating the incident.

Sullivan and Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Israeli Minister of Defense Yoav Gallant last Monday.

Gallant would meet Lloyd the following day, prompting him to thank his American counterpart on social media The Secret Service has started an investigation into one of the incidents.

"for hosting us at the Pentagon for an important discussion on operations required to destroy Hamas' governing and terror capabilities, efforts to release the hostages, and ways to ensure regional stability in the face of threats on multiple fronts." **HW** 

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## Hulu's 'We Were the Lucky Ones' Uncovers a Jewish Family's Buried Past Under the Nazis



Joey King, as Halina, and Logan Lerman, as Addy, in a scene from "We Were the Lucky Ones." (Hulu)

#### By Shira Li Bartov

(JTA) – Georgia Hunter was 15 when she discovered that her grandfather was Jewish. The revelation took place a year after his death, while Hunter was interviewing her grandmother for a school project.

"A high school English teacher said, 'Go out and interview a relative to learn a bit about your roots and in turn about yourselves," Hunter told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. "I sat with my grandmother, Caroline, and I will never forget that hour I spent with her, sitting in her home and discovering that my grandfather was from this town called Radom, Poland, that he was one of five siblings, that he was raised in the Jewish faith, and that I came from a family of Holocaust survivors."

That interview led Hunter, who grew up in Providence, Rhode Island, down the long road to uncovering her family's Holocaust story, which spanned five continents and six years of hiding, imprisonment and exile. As an adult, she spent nine years researching their implausible paths to survival – a project culminating in her 2017 novel, "We Were the Lucky Ones," based on their experiences.

Now "We Were the Lucky Ones" is coming to TV as a Hulu series, co-ex-

ecutive produced by Hunter alongside Erica Lipez, who produced "The Morning Show." Starring Logan Lerman as Hunter's grandfather Addy Kurc and Joey King as his sister, Halina, the series will premiere with three simultaneous episodes on Thursday, March 28.

The series joins a spate of recent limited series about the Holocaust and World War II, including "The Tattooist of Auschwitz," which will air on Peacock in May; "Transatlantic," last year's Netflix series about Holocaust rescuer Varian Fry; "A Small Light," the Disney+ miniseries about Anne Frank's protector, Miep Gies, and the recent Netflix adaptation of Anthony Doerr's novel, "All the Light We Cannot See."

"We Were the Lucky Ones" is distinguished from these and other Holocaust dramas by its wide lens. It begins at the Kurc family's Passover dinner in Radom in 1938. Their life looks as comfortable as their elegant home, despite whispers of antisemitism and Hitler's ambitions outside their borders.

Parents Sol (Lior Ashkenazi) and Nechuma (Robin Weigert), who run a fabric store, are delighted to welcome home their son, Addy, a musician and electrical engineer visiting from Paris. Their other sons, Genek (Henry-Lloyd Hughes) and Jakob (Amit Rahav), are budding lawyers, their daughter, Mila (Hadas Yaron), is pregnant with her first child and their daughter, Halina, dreams of following Addy abroad.

This cozy existence is shattered by the outbreak of World War II. Over the course of eight episodes, the family is scattered across the globe: Sol and Nechuma are forced into factory work before they go into hiding in the Polish countryside; Addy flees France for Brazil via detainment in Vichy French-controlled Dakar; Genek and his wife, Herta (Moran Rosenblatt), are sent to a Soviet labor camp in Siberia until he is able to join the Polish army, which takes them to Palestine under the British mandate and Italy; Mila hides her daughter in a Warsaw convent; Halina clings to a false identity through torture at the Nazi Montelupich Prison in Krakow.

The vast scope of the family's migration and the creeping pace of their persecution in "We Were the Lucky Ones" tells a story about the Holocaust beyond the death camps, said Lipez. Family members face exile, robbery, humiliation, forced labor and street massacres before a whisper that Jews are being gassed is heard several episodes in.

"There's been some good education and storytelling about the death camps that is really necessary," Lipez told JTA. "But I think this show was an opportunity to focus a lot on those years leading up to the Final Solution, and to show through the really intimate lens of this family the boiling hot water that they were in – in their own society and their own community."

According to Hunter, her grandfather did not explicitly keep his past a secret from his family. He renamed himself Eddy Courts from Addy Kurc upon arriving in the United States after the war and intended to start a new chapter and protect his children from a troubled past. When he visited other surviving family members, he sometimes left out the context.

"He would talk about going to Brazil,

but he would maybe say that he was going for his birthday – and then my mom would learn later that he planned to be there over Passover," Hunter recalled.

Luck is the theme of her family's story: the luck to survive and reunite, but also the chance to create new lives and families far away from the past. The main characters in "We Were the Lucky Ones" are also granted a fortunate moral arc – by the end, their hardships have made the family universally more resilient, generous and loving, a development that not every survivor of trauma is lucky enough to experience.

Of course, there is also an irony to the term "lucky ones," as each family member endures profound tragedy. King said it is the perception of being lucky despite their circumstances that made the Kurc family compelling to her.

"The perspective that they took was so humbling – to hear them call themselves lucky, it's just beyond imagination," said King. "But they survived, and they had love in their lives, and they considered themselves lucky."

While it was Addy Kurc's luck to leave the Holocaust behind, Hunter sees it as her luck to remember it. Her research took her to interviews with family members on the east and west coasts of the U.S. and in France, Italy and Brazil. At a screening of "We Were the Lucky Ones" in Washington, D.C. on Wednesday, she will be joined by 25 relatives who flew in from across the world.

Even though she was not raised with Jewish identity, Hunter said that this project has brought her closer to herself, an identity rooted in her Jewish family history.

"I feel like my eyes have been opened to these pieces of me that were always there, but that are so apparent now – whether it's the stubborn gene, not ever taking no for an answer, or having the courage to set out and try to complete this project over the course of nine years," said Hunter. "I see so much of myself in my grandfather and my relatives." HW

## Amsterdam, Atoning for Role in Delivering Jews to the Nazis, Pledges Donation and Memorials at Tram Stops



Tram line 3 in 1942, shortly before the start of the deportations, on Krugerplein in Amsterdam's Transvaal neighborhood. On the right, next to a tram driver, a number of Jewish children with a star who were no longer allowed on the tram. Courtesy: Willy Lindwer

#### By Philissa Cramer

(JTA) – Amsterdam's public tram company, GVB, will place memorials at three central locations where it transported Dutch Jews into the clutches of the Nazis during the Holocaust.

The city of Amsterdam is also donating 100,000 Euros – and potentially more in the future – to local Jewish

groups to divest itself of its revenue from collaborating with the Nazis.

The announcement, from the office of Amsterdam Mayor Femke Halsema, comes shortly after researchers revealed that the company had not only collaborated with the Nazis to transport Jews to their deaths but sought repayment for its

services even after the war.

"GVB would now like to express its sincere regret for the role that the Municipal Trams and the Municipal Transport Company played in the Second World War," Halsema's office said in a statement issued [last] Friday. "GVB calls it horrible and cruel that the Municipal Transport Company has sent invoices for carrying out the journeys to transport Jewish Amsterdammers to Central Station and Muiderpoort Station. The municipality and GVB therefore want to part with the money earned by participating in these deportations."

Last week, officials from the city of Amsterdam, GVB and Centraal Joods Overleg, the main Dutch Jewish organization, met to discuss the research in the book and documentary "The Lost City," which concluded that GVB had transported 48,000 Jews from the city into the hands of the Nazis.

The announcement of the memorials and donation is a first step in responding to the research, which the mayor's office says is ongoing and will result in a broader response next year.

According to the announcement, GVB will rename one stop to reflect the new National Holocaust Museum, which opened this month. Halsema

also indicated that she would consider a proposal by Itay Garmy, a Jewish City Council member, to make the museum free for all Amsterdam secondary school students. And the mayor signaled that the donation – the equivalent to what it received from the Nazis, adjusted for inflation and rounded up significantly – could end being only the first step in restitution for the city's role in persecuting its Jews, of whom the vast majority were murdered.

"The mayor has expressly informed the CJO that this amount is not intended as compensation, but is merely the return of money that the municipality should never have received," the announcement said. "After the publication of the [forthcoming] report, the council will consider the financial consequences of the total findings."

Gideon Taylor, president of the World Jewish Restitution Organization, which seeks the recovery of Jewish assets lost during the Holocaust, said in a statement that Amsterdam's announcement represented a meaningful step.

"We acknowledge these important measures taken today. We look forward to continuing steps to address the past," Taylor said. "Acknowledging history helps shape a better future." HW

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# New York City High School Student Launches Children's Book, "Finding Messi, The Miracle Cat From Kyiv" as a Result of His Humanitarian Efforts at the Onset of the Ukraine War



Trevor Ostfeld and his father.

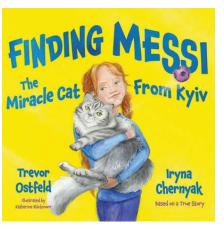
(New York, New York – March 22, 2024) Trevor Ostfeld, a high school student in New York City and a resident of New Jersey, co-authored a children's book, "Finding Messi, The Miracle Cat From Kyiv," with Iryna Chernyak after volunteering for a humanitarian mission in March 2022 when the war in Ukraine began. This picture book written by two teenagers is already an Amazon best-



Iryna Chernyak with her mother and Messi.

seller.

"Finding Messi, The Miracle Cat From Kyiv" tells the true story of 13-year-old Iryna and her cat, Messi. When Ukraine was attacked, Iryna and her mother had to abruptly leave everything behind in Kyiv, including their beloved pet. Messi goes missing, and Iryna rallies the community to help her find



her cat. The book gently explains the impact of war on families, and young readers will better understand the experiences of children displaced by war.

Trevor, now 17 years old, chose to skip his family Spring Break in Florida in March of 2022 and instead traveled with his father and other volunteers from their synagogue to Poland and Ukraine. The group from Temple Emanu-El carried over 9,000 pounds of humanitarian supplies to help women and children who were fleeing from war and distributed them at the Poland-Ukraine border.

Together they brought over 4,000 diapers and other personal essentials to aid the impacted families.

Trevor Ostfeld shared, "Part of what I realized in Poland and Ukraine is that kids are just kids, even when they are escaping their homes. I will never forget seeing everyone crossing the border out of Ukraine."

After coming back home from his humanitarian mission in Poland and Ukraine, Trevor couldn't stop thinking about Iryna's story about Messi the cat. Her dramatic story inspired him to write a children's book. Trevor wanted to help kids better understand what it's like to grow up in a war crisis and to teach them how to empathize with those who are experiencing it.

All proceeds from this book will be donated to charities that support victims of the Ukraine War. This will help to make a positive impact and provide aid to those in need.

"Finding Messi, The Miracle Cat From Kyiv" is available where books are sold on April 16, for more information visit: www.findingmessi.com **HW** 

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## IDF Begins Isolating Rafah, Orders 40,000 Tents



Displaced Palestinians pitch tents next to the Egyptian border with the city of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on March 8, 2024. Credit: Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash90.

(JNS) – The Israel Defense Forces has begun isolating Rafah in southern Gaza and has started taking steps to evacuate the city's civilian population, Channel 12 reported last Wednesday.

The moves come despite intensifying international opposition to a ground operation in the last Hamas stronghold, which Jerusalem says is necessary to defeat the terrorist organization. The final four Hamas battalions, comprising some 3,000 terrorists, are holed up in the city, according to Israel.

There are also well over a million Gazans sheltering in Rafah, causing concern regarding potential harm to noncombatants.

As part of the preparations for the op-

eration, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has ordered the purchase from China of 40,000 tents for Rafah evacuees, which will be moved to the Gaza Strip from Israel, according to the report.

"Clear places will be defined in the Strip where the tents will be placed and the refugees will stay," the article states.

U.S. National Security Council spokesman John Kirby stressed the need to protect the noncombatants in Rafah in an interview with Channel 12 last Wednesday.

"We simply cannot support a significant ground attack in Rafah, which does not include an achievable and verifiable plan that would ensure the security of 1.5 million Gazans who found refuge there. And they found refuge there because of the operations that were conducted in the north, in Khan Yunis and earlier in Gaza City," said Kirby.

"We need to ensure that their security is well taken care of," Kirby continued. "We recognize that it is necessary to act against Hamas, we certainly recognize that Israel has the right to do so; of course they do. Hamas still poses a real threat, and we know that there are Hamas terrorists in Rafah. We fully understand the need to do so, but we do not believe that entering Rafah is a good idea – a massive entrance."

The White House favors a limited operation aimed at high-value targets and securing the Gaza-Egypt border, instead of a large-scale ground operation.

An Israeli official told JNS that the White House has contacted Israel to reschedule a canceled ministerial-level delegation to Washington to discuss the Rafah operation.

Shortly thereafter, White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said during a White House press briefing that "The Prime Minister's Office has agreed to reschedule the meeting dedicated to Rafah," which she called "urgent."

Israeli Strategic Affairs Minister Ron Dermer, National Security Adviser Tzachi Hanegbi and an Israel Defense Forces official had been slated to arrive in Washington last Tuesday for meetings with U.S. counterparts.

Washington had said the discussion would focus on alternatives to a military operation in Rafah, amid reports that Biden is considering conditioning military aid to Israel if Jerusalem moves ahead with it.

Netanyahu announced last Monday that he was canceling the delegation's trip, after the United States failed to veto a ceasefire resolution at the U.N. Security Council earlier in the day.

Netanyahu said that Biden's move "hurts the war effort and the effort to release the hostages" by giving Hamas hope that international pressure will bring about a ceasefire without freeing the 134 remaining captives.

The premier told Sen. Rick Scott (R-Fla.) last Wednesday that his decision to cancel Dermer and Hanegbi's visit to Washington "was a message to Hamas: 'Don't bet on this pressure. It's not going to work."

While the Israeli official told JNS that Washington initiated the request to reschedule the meeting, multiple U.S. media outlets cited a U.S. official as stating that the request had come from the Israeli Prime Minister's Office.

"The Prime Minister's Office is in touch with us to reschedule. It's likely to be fairly soon, but I don't have a date to announce," a U.S. official told Axios before Jean-Pierre formally announced the news.

Former U.S. secretary of state Mike Pompeo weighed in on the matter over the weekend, tweeting that "allowing Hamas to remain in Rafah would be like firefighters only putting out 80% of a fire. We should support Israel's mission to completely defeat Hamas."

Around three-quarters of Jewish Israelis and a majority of Israelis overall support expanding the military operations against Hamas to Rafah, according to polling conducted by the Israel Democracy Institute. **HW** 



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