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Bornblum Middle Students Innovate with Passion



A Bornblum sixth grader made jewelry to sell to raise money for Israeli hostages as part of her Design Thinking capstone project.

Bornblum Middle students, parents, mentors and friends gathered at Bornblum Jewish Community School on March 20 for an exposition of design thinking capstone projects created by Bornblum sixth, seventh and eighth graders.

The evening was the culmination of year-long, individual study by each of Bornblum's middle school students. At the beginning of the year, students were given the task of marrying something they feel passionate about with a challenge they see in the world. From this combination, each student built a self-guided study and created a solution to a challenge using their passion as the vehicle.

According to Head of School Daniel R. Weiss, "We are incredibly proud of our Bornblum Middle students! When we made the decision to embed design thinking in our school four years ago, with the help of the Herbert Shainberg Foundation, we never dreamed how in-

novative our students could be or the level of passion they would bring to the world around them."

From creating a Dungeons and Dragons quest to fight human trafficking to creating a 3d printed cleat that low-income children can attach to regular sneakers to be able to play soccer, the student projects were diverse, creative and impactful.

"The best part of the capstone projects has been seeing our students engage with challenges they care about and apply their own passions to find innovative solutions," said Jill Cross, Bornblum's director of Curriculum and Instruction.

As the student projects proceeded, Bornblum provided each student a mentor to help them think through aspects of their project. Mentors were chosen based on needed expertise and came from Memphis and around the United States. Some mentors met with students in person and some on Zoom. Eighth grader Jacob Phelps, who combined his passion for Jewish life with his concern about racism, met with Shannan Seals, an African American Chef in Memphis who also has extensive knowledge of Jewish food and culture, as his mentor.

According to Phelps, "Working with my mentor allowed me to learn how to collaborate with other people about my ideas. My mentor had a lot of knowledge about foods that pertained to my capstone project, and she helped me narrow my ideas."

There are five steps in the design thinking process: empathize, define, ideate, prototype and test/assess. Students were guided through each of these steps by Bornblum's design thinking faculty, Samantha Schmidt, Amir Sharabi and Miriam Beeber. With the help of these teachers, members of the leadership team and mentors, students created innovative solutions to the challenges they chose to address.

The year-long process culminated at the Capstone night where each student created an informational display about their project and the process that got them there. Three students were chosen by their classmates and faculty to present their projects to those in attendance.

Sixth grader Blaire Kleinman presented her climbing wall for the visually impaired. She combined her passion for climbing with her concern for the visually impaired community. She created a prototype of a climbing wall that was integrated with a tactile grid and sound technology that could help guide a blind climber safely up a wall.

Seventh grader Jacob Morris combined his passion for geography with his concern about misinformation about world conflicts. After much research,

Morris settled on creating a video addressing misinformation about the Russia Ukraine war.

Eighth grader Elizabeth Daggett used her passion for crocheting with her concern about drunk driving. Daggett created patterns for crocheting miniature animals that could hold messages about the dangers of drunk driving. These animals are meant to be perched on the driver's dashboard as a constant reminder not to drink and drive.

The Capstone year ended with the students creating a video discussing each of their projects and what they learned in the process. (Scan QR code below.)

"Watching the video that the students created in their own words made me so proud of our design thinking program. It was one of those moments where we were able to realize that after four years of focus and hard work embedding this amazing approach to learning into Bornblum in all subjects and all grades, that it has transformed the way our students are learning in a way that will make them uniquely prepared for high school, college and for the jobs of the future which have not yet been invented," said Dr. Weiss. "For our parents in attendance, this was one of those tuition validating moments that demonstrated why Bornblum is such a unique and exceptional school." HW



The video is posted on the school's YouTube channel and can be viewed using this QR code.

Hundreds Celebrate Purim at Kaufman's Annual Block Party with Universal Language Room



Jason Caplan and his Naqshon's Leap band, playing at the Purim block party on Friday, March 14

By Matt Timberlake

What started as a small but over-thetop Purim party rotating between a few friends' houses solidified several years ago into a block party blowout at Lisa and Seth Kaufman's house near Baron Hirsch Congregation. The increasingly popular bash reached new heights this year, with support from Jason Caplan's Universal Language Room (ULR) and his band, Naqshon's Leap, as well as a very hands-on Memphis Jewish community.

"Every year, this party has been incredible but nothing like this year. It was a blow-your-mind situation," said Lisa. "People kept coming and coming. Avi Katz was there promoting his new artisan pizza pop-up for private parties. Rabbi Noah Karp from Memphis

Kollel's Memphis Jewish Experience was making cotton candy. It was flying through the air like confetti."

"Lisa and Seth host such a meaningful and amazing event," said bandleader and lead guitarist Jason Caplan. "Nobody sees it from South Yates, but you go one street over, and it's bounce houses, pizza, ice cream, and 200 or 300 people just walking around. This year was the best yet and the weather worked perfectly."

Naqshon's Leap tore through an inspired performance celebrating a banner year, in which Jason's ambitious Universal Language Room project began globalizing the idea off cross-cultural

(See Purim Page 2)

Purim...

(Continued From Page 1)



Community kids line up for sno-cones at the home of Jessica and Rabbi Daniel Weiss.

communication through improvisational music. Last year ULR started 12 international programs in six countries, led by local facilitators who are sent funding and trained to produce ULR programs for their communities. There are now operations in India, Indonesia, Colombia, Bali, Sri Lanka and Uganda.

"A Jew from Indonesia wrote to me to say they had found my online content and were interested in starting a program. I wrote back, 'I didn't even know there are Jews in Indonesia,'" said Jason.

"Naqshon's Leap was great. Somebody came up to me and said, 'You don't realize the caliber of musicians we have here in Memphis,'" said Lisa. "But the success of the event really was the combination of so many factors and participation from community members. It was just an absolute festival."

Like ULR, the block party has experienced growth spurts over the years, breaking (non-official) records this year. A cluster of neighborhood households offered treats and activities for the rowdy crowd. Margolin Hebrew Acad-

emy Director of Engagement Jessica Baum Sukhodolsky and her husband, Alex, contributed a bounce house and a popular s'mores station. The Kaufmans offered pizza, ice cream and the band. Rabbi Karp set up his cotton candy machine on the lawns of the Ehrenkranz and Mendelson families. Bornblum Jewish Community School Head of School Rabbi Daniel Weiss and his wife, Jessica, who serves as Philanthropic Services Associate for Jewish Foundation of Memphis, chipped in with popcorn, sno-cones and Very Hungry Caterpillar themed decor. At another spot in the tightly packed neighborhood, it's been reported that a vendor sold out of popsicles. This cannot be confirmed.

"What I love most about Memphis is the fun and excitement of Purim," said Rabbi Weiss. "People come into our neighborhood to be with one another. It brings the whole community together. The best part for me is that families from Bornblum Jewish Community School are able to mingle with families from Margolin Hebrew Academy. It truly is a community-wide event."



The Weiss Family

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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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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 JEWISH LIVING OF THE SOUTH, Inc. THE HEBREW WATCHMAN

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 **PUBLISHER'S STATEMENT**

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4/3/2025



Memphis Candlelighting Time

Weekly Torah Portion: Vayikra

"It was wild. Wow," said Lisa. "Hundreds of people were here — not just people from the same communities. Memphians, Israelis, people from every congregation and Jewish organization in town."

Neither the Neighborhood Purim Party nor Jason's Universal Language Room operate on organization funding. Instead, they stand as exciting examples of what a community does when it comes together.

"Our neighborhood is filled with Jewish organizations. They're all around us. At our Purim Party, I saw people from all of them," said Lisa. "I also saw many people I don't know at all. I'm glad so many felt so welcome. It was a very Jewish experience."

Learn more about the Universal Language Room at ulr1.com. **HW**



Brian Lurie Broker, Vice-President GRI, RENE, MMDC, CRS

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Classes Restarting at the MJCC



Mah Jongg lessons

Beginning Bridge Lessons with **Debbie Jackson**

April 10 thru May 22, Thursdays at 10 a.m.-12 p.m.

Learn to play the world's greatest game! This class will teach you all the basics you need to start playing Bridge like a pro. Bring your friends and learn a new game. The class number is 11859. The cost is \$72 for members and \$80 for non-members.

Below: Bridge Classes

Beginning Mah Jongg Lessons with Melanie Mann

April 22 thru May 20, Tuesdays at 6 – 8 p.m. The class number is 11858. {Sold Out!}

April 27 thru May 18, Sundays at 1-3 p.m. The class number is 11860.

Melanie has been teaching this class for quite a while at the MJCC as well as other places around town. We filled up her Tuesday night class so please call the MJCC front desk to register ASAP at 901-761-0810. The cost is \$72 for members and \$80 for non-members. Bring your friends and learn a new game! 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 7

Speaker: Rabbi Akiva Males, Rav of Young Israel of Memphis.

Topic: Passover - Frogs, Crocodiles and Portugal

Rabbi Males talks are always enjoyable and bring a special twist to every topic he discusses. As Passover is right around the corner, come enjoy a nice talk about the upcoming holiday. Rabbi Males will also have a Q &A period following his talk. Reservations are only needed for the luncheon, and everyone is invited for the talk.



Tal Nezry

Wednesday April 9 Speaker: Tal Nezry, MJCC Community Shlicha

Topic: The Lone Soldiers of Israel

Tal served in the IDF Air Force as a behavioral diagnosis scientist. Lone soldiers serve in regular IDF units, including combat units in Israel. Israel is one of the only countries in the world where people from all over the world come to help protect the Jewish State. This will be one of the most interesting talks of the year. As the room is small, please make reservations to make sure that everyone has a seat.

Julianne Thomas & Dom Fosco

MJCC Larissa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Monthly Luncheon Featuring Julianne Thomas & Dom

Many our participants asked to have this duo back, so we booked them for this performance! Julianne and Dom have been making music all their lives. They each have many accomplishments in their long careers, but along the way, the best reward is the love of sharing

what they do. Julianne offers a stirring vocal style with a joyful presence while Dom is an amazing instrumentalist on

keyboard, sax and backgrounds. Their

repertoire includes traditional jazz, standards, blues and R&B. Everyone will

sing and smile, swoon over the tunes

and tap their toes while Julianne and

Dom create a journey back in time that

been drawing around 70 people with a cost of only \$5 for a kosher catered

meal including dessert delivered by the

The monthly luncheon has recently

is "Unforgettable."

Wednesday April 23

From April 14 through April 18 there will be no meals served, because of the Passover Holiday. The MJCC will also be closed on Monday April 14! Please see the MJCC website about other closings during the Holiday.

Please join us Monday through Friday for a delicious kosher lunch from the kitchens at 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 or stevekaplan@jccmemphis. org or by calling the front desk at 901-761-0810. Steve works Monday through Thursday 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

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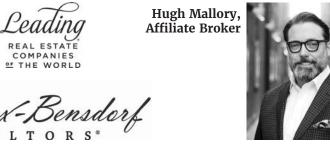


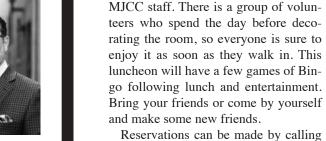




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the front desk of the MJCC at 901-761-0810. This month's Luncheon is sponsored by The Avaline, Assisted Living and Memory Care. Hope to see you

there. HW

PAGE 4 | APRIL 3, 2025 THE HEBREW WATCHMAN | hebrewwatchman.com

Your Health:Why is Balance and Physical Activity Important as We Age?

By Cindy Katz, DNP

Have You Ever Tried Balance Challenges?

For Example: Walk heel to toe in a straight line. Can you do it without losing your balance?

Stand on one foot, lift the other, and hold steady for 10-30 seconds. Now switch legs!

Can you sit down and stand back up without using your hands for support?

Many patients visit our clinic with concerns about balance difficulties. This is particularly common among older adults, who may experience dizziness, balance issues, or a recent fall.

Why Balance Training Should Be Part of Your Wellness Routine

Focusing on balance and physical activity can transform your overall health and quality of life by:

Preventing Falls – Reduces the risk of injuries that could limit mobility or independence.

Encouraging Independence – To be able to confidently perform daily activities without worry.

Enhances Posture and Alignment – By improving stability for better walking, standing, and overall movement.

Address Balance issues with Professional Help!

If you're experiencing balance difficulties, consult your healthcare provider. Dizziness may require lab tests or further evaluation, as it could stem from underlying conditions or medication side effects, such as incorrect dosages or interactions.

Balance and physical activity are essential for healthy aging. They play a key role in maintaining independence, preventing injuries and improving overall quality of life.

Take steps today to incorporate balance exercises and physical activity into your routine and take the necessary steps toward improving your overall health and wellness. **HW**

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Criminal Court Clerk's Office Teams Up with Memphis Grizzlies for Expungement Clinic

Community Resources Will Be On-Site Ready to Help

For the first time, the Shelby County Criminal Court Clerk's Office is teaming up with the Memphis Grizzlies to host the Erase & Elevate Expungement Clinic and Community Resource Fair on Saturday, April 5, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at FedExForum (191 Beale Street, 38103). This event is free and open to the public. Attendees should note that only clear bags are allowed inside FedExForum. Free parking will be available in the FedExForum parking garage.

"We are incredibly grateful to the Memphis Grizzlies for their support and commitment to making a difference in our community," said Criminal Court Clerk Heidi Kuhn. "Expungements remove barriers that prevent individuals from reaching their full potential, and this event is about creating second chances. Even for those who don't need an expungement, this is an opportunity

to connect with vital resources that can lead to a brighter future."

A variety of community partners will be on-site, including General Sessions, City of Memphis, Transitional Reentry Adult Program, Xcelente Trucking & Logistics Training Center, HopeWorks, Shelby County Health Department - WIC, Navigate Reconnect, Shelby County Office of ReEntry, A Betor Way, TN Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services, Memphis Area Prevention Coalition, Behavioral Health Group. These organizations will provide guidance and essential services - all in one place, removing obstacles for residents who might otherwise struggle to access them. For more information on expungement eligibility, visit www.criminalcourtclerkkuhn.com/ expungements. HW

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Khamenei Aide Says Iran has 'Not Closed All Doors' on Diplomacy, Blasts U.S. 'Psychological Warfare'

(JNS) – A senior advisor to Iranian Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei accused the U.S. administration of "psychological warfare" in its policies toward the Islamic Republic last Thursday, but declared Tehran was prepared to explore diplomatic talks with Washington on a renewed nuclear deal.

Tehran "has not closed all doors," said Kamal Kharrazi, a former foreign minister who heads the Strategic Council on Foreign Relations. "It is ready for indirect talks with the United States to evaluate the other side, present its conditions and make the appropriate decision."

However, the veteran diplomat stated: "What is seen today in American officials' behavior is psychological warfare, or the policy of 'either war or negotiations' through sending contradictory messages.

"The American strategy is an invitation to dialogue under the shadow of the intensification of economic sanctions and military threats to press Iran to give in to a dialogue," Kharrazi said, according to remarks printed by the Tehran Times newspaper, which is close to the regime.

"The result of such a strategy is nothing other than imposing the will of one side on the other by intimidation and threat," he added.

During his first term in 2018, U.S. President Donald Trump pulled the U.S. out of the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action nuclear deal with Tehran and stepped up sanctions on the regime. The deal offered sanctions relief in exchange for a promise to dial back its nuclear activity for 10 years.

The Islamic Republic has since significantly increased its stockpile of near-weapons-grade uranium, enough to build six nuclear bombs, according to

the International Atomic Energy Agency watchdog.

Earlier this month, Trump revealed that he sent a letter to Khamenei, urging him to negotiate a renewed nuclear deal, or face military action.

"I said, 'I hope you're going to negotiate, because it's going to be a lot better for Iran," Trump stated in an interview with the Fox Business Network channel on March 7. He added, "The other alternative is you have to do something, because Iran cannot have a nuclear weapon."

Israel has also said that a "reliable military option" is required to deter Tehran from taking the final steps toward acquiring nuclear weapons.

Kharrazi last year said that Tehran had the technical capability to build nuclear weapons but was only held back by a religious decree banning them. He warned an "existential threat" could prompt a policy change.

Last Wednesday, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps announced the opening of what regime media described as a novel underground "missile city," showcasing projectiles that could potentially be used in attacks on Israel and U.S. military assets in the Middle East.

The unveiling featured senior military officials, including the chief of Iran's armed forces, Maj. Gen. Mohammad Bagheri, as well as Gen. Amir Ali Hajizadeh, the head of the IRGC's aerospace division.

The IRGC previously released footage of similar underground facilities, prompting speculation that the newly publicized missile silo may be an older site repurposed for a media campaign amid tensions with the Trump administration, according to a report in the London-based Iran International, an English-language opposition news outlet. **HW**

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UAE President, Trump Discuss Gaza Ceasefire, Aid Deliveries

By JNS Staff

(JNS) – United Arab Emirates President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan and U.S. President Donald Trump spoke by phone last Tuesday regarding efforts to achieve a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip and maintain regional stability.

Al Nahyan stressed the importance of humanitarian aid to Gaza in light of the "dire humanitarian situation" there, according to Emirates News Agency-WAM.

On March 2, Israel suspended all aid into Gaza after Hamas rejected a cease-fire extension proposed by Washington. The U.S. backed Israel's move.

The UAE's president also reaffirmed his country's support for the two-state solution as the "foundation for a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace in the region – one that guarantees security and stability for all its countries and peoples."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has rejected the establishment of a Palestinian state in the wake of Hamas's Oct. 7 massacre.

"Israel categorically rejects international dictates regarding a permanent settlement with the Palestinians. Such an arrangement will be reached only through direct negotiations between the parties, without preconditions," said Netanyahu in Feb. 2024.

Most Israelis oppose a two-state solution, according to recent polls.

Al Nahyan and Trump also discussed strengthening strategic ties between the countries.

They spoke of the recent official visit to the United States by Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed Al Nahyan, deputy ruler of Abu Dhabi and the UAE's national security adviser.

The visit led to the announcement of key agreements and partnerships between the UAE and the United States, particularly in the fields of artificial intelligence, advanced technology, infrastructure and energy. **HW**

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Bruce Pearl Opens NCAA Postgame Press Conference by Calling to 'Bring the Hostages Home'

By Ben Sales

(March 24, 2025) - JTA - Bruce Pearl, whose Auburn men's basketball team advanced to the Sweet Sixteen this weekend, opened his postgame press conference by calling to "bring the hostages home."

Auburn is one of three No. 1 seeds in the NCAA Division I men's basketball tournament with a Jewish coach. All three made the tournament's round of 16, as has the biggest Jewish star on the court, Danny Wolf.

Pearl is known for his outspoken support for Israel, which he put on display last Saturday after the Tigers beat Creighton in the second round. He began his press conference by acknowledging the team's victory, then spoke about Edan Alexander, an American-Israeli held hostage by Hamas who is believed to be alive.

Pearl said it was "G-d's plan... to give me an opportunity to start this press conference really briefly and remind the world that Edan Alexander is still held hostage in Gaza right now. An American held hostage. And there aren't enough people in this country that know his name."

He went on, "So I asked the players if it was OK if I started out this press conference and just called out the name of an American. Bring the hostages home."

Speaking later in the press conference, Pearl repeated that he believes one of the reasons for Auburn's success is that G-d has given him a platform as a Jewish American. He also recounted his grandfather's story of immigration to the United States and defended Israel, which he called the "ancestral homeland for the Jewish people."

"It starts with my faith, and it starts with answering the question, 'Why has G-d blessed Auburn and this basketball team the way he has all season long?"" he said. "And honestly it's to, I think, put us in a platform - in this case right now, myself, as a Jewish American who loves his country more than anything else in the world."

Pearl is a vocal supporter of President Donald Trump. And last Sunday, he shared a post on the social network X saying that the two-state solution, which would see a Palestinian state established alongside Israel, "is dead."

In the men's tournament, two other No. 1 seeds are coached by Jews, and all three won their first- and second-round games, sending them to the round of 16 later this week. They are:

Duke, No. 1 in the East, coached by Jon Scheyer. The Blue Devils won two blowouts and defeated No. 4 Arizona last Thursday.

Florida, No. 1 in the West, coached by Todd Golden. The Gators edged UConn in a thriller last Sunday and defeated No. 4 Maryland last Thursday.

Auburn, No. 1 in the South, coached by Pearl. The Tigers won both their games by double digits and beat No. 5 Michigan last Friday and No 2 Michigan State on Sunday.

The Auburn-Michigan matchup, last Friday night, pit Pearl's team against Danny Wolf, the Israeli-American player who's had a standout college career and is expected to be drafted into the NBA later this year. After a nail-biter in the first round, Michigan beat Texas A&M to advance to the Sweet 16.

In the women's tournament, one No. 1 seed, USC, has a Jewish coach, Lindsay Gottlieb. USC won its first-round game by 46 points and will play No. 9 Mississippi State on Monday, March 31. HW



Bruce Pearl celebrates with his team after defeating the Alabama Crimson Tide at Auburn Arena, Feb. 1, 2022. Credit: Michael Chang/Getty **Images**



Monday | April 28, 2025 | 7PM





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PAGE 6 | APRIL 3, 2025 THE HEBREW WATCHMAN | hebrewwatchman.com

Delicious Kid-Friendly Passover Recipes You Won't Want to Pass Over!

PJ Library Offers Free Downloadable Recipes for Kids on their Newly Updated Passover Hub



Banana Bread Granola

PJ Library, a trusted resource for Jewish families, is making Passover cooking easier – and more fun – than ever! Just in time for this year's celebration (April 12-20), PJ Library is offering a collection of kid-friendly Passover recipes that are perfect for breakfast, lunch and dinner.

While many families have their goto Passover favorites (tradition, tradition!), keeping meals fresh and exciting – especially for young children – can be a challenge. That's where PJ Library comes in. With these easy, delicious and kid-approved recipes, families can create lasting holiday memories while cooking together. Download the free recipes today and bring some extra joy to your Passover table.

Banana Bread Granola

Inspired by the Minimalist Baker / Recipe by Lori Hoch Stiefel

Ingredients

- 3 cups matzah farfel, or broken up pieces of matzah
- 1 cup walnuts (or any nuts that you like)
- 1/2 cup pecans (or any nuts that you like)
- 3 tbsp sugar (any type, white works well)
 - 1/2 tsp sea salt
- 1/2 tbsp cinnamon (you can add in other warming spices like ginger and nutmeg)
 - 1 tbsp flax seed
 - 1/4 cup coconut oil

- 1/3 cup + 1 tbsp agave syrup (maple or honey work well too)
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- 1 medium ripe banana, mashed (~1/2 cup)

Instructions

- 1. Preheat the Oven: Set your oven to 350°F (175°C).
- 2. Prepare the Dry Ingredients: In a large mixing bowl, combine the matzah, cinnamon, sugar, salt, flaxseed and nuts. Stir well to evenly distribute the ingredients.
- 3. Make the Wet Mixture: In a small saucepan over medium-low heat, warm the coconut oil, maple syrup (or agave/honey) and vanilla extract. Stir occasionally until fully melted and combined.
- 4. Incorporate the Banana Puree: Remove the saucepan from heat and whisk in the banana puree until smooth and well blended.
- 5. Combine Wet and Dry Ingredients: Pour the warm liquid mixture over the dry ingredients in the bowl. Stir thoroughly to ensure everything is evenly coated.
- 6. Spread and Bake: Evenly spread the mixture onto one or two baking sheets, making sure it's not overcrowded to allow for even crisping.
- 7. Bake to Perfection: Place in the oven and bake for 23-28 minutes, or until golden brown. Keep an eye on it, as the coconut oil helps it crisp up but can cause it to brown quickly.

Additional PJ Library recipes for Passover:

Passover-Friendly Egg Noodles

https://pjlibrary.org/beyond-books/pjblog/march-2025/noodles-for-passover-yes-its-possible

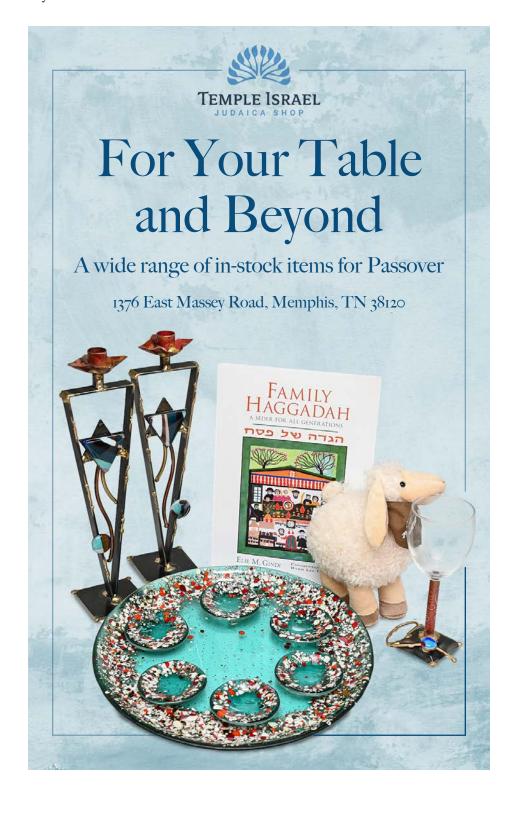
Passover can make mealtime tricky, especially with picky eaters who love pasta and pitas. But if noodles are a staple in your house, you don't have to skip them for the holiday. Make protein-packed, egg-based "noodles" with this recipe that work in soup, with tomato sauce or topped with cheese and butter. They're a great way to keep a favorite on the menu while adding extra protein during the holidays (or year-round).

Charoset

https://pjlibrary.org/beyond-books/holidays-for-kids/passover-hub/articles/charoset

One of the items on a Passover seder plate, charoset (pronounced chah-ROE-set) symbolizes the mortar Jewish slaves used for making bricks in Egypt. It may look a bit like mortar, but it sure doesn't taste like it. Every family has a special take on charoset – some add a little spice, some include nuts, and others mix in pears or crabapples. At the link above, you'll find two delicious recipes from different Jewish cultural traditions.

(See PJ Passover Page 7)





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hebrewwatchman.com | THE HEBREW WATCHMAN APRIL 3, 2025 | PAGE 7

PJ Passover ...

(Continued From Page 6)

For more Passover kid-friendly food & recipe inspiration, visit PJ Library's Passover Hub at pilibrary.org/passover where you'll find "11 Delicious Books About Passover Foods," "25 Easy Passover Recipes Your Family Will Love," and "9 Passover Lunch Ideas for Kids." Families will also find everything needed to plan a festive Passover meal (seder), set the table and answer kids' curious questions. Also, on the Hub are PJ Library's free downloadable Passover Guide, a family-oriented primer that lays out how to prepare for the seders and the foods you need for your table, as well as offering up meaningful activities to make the most out of all eight days -

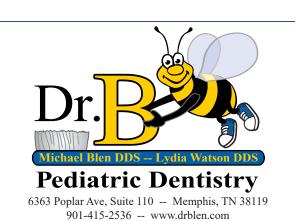
and more!

Speaking of Passover food, this year, PJ Library is again proud to partner with Streit's during their landmark 100th anniversary, bringing together two beloved names in Jewish family traditions. PJ Library will be featured on Streit's iconic matzo boxes, giving even more families the chance to discover the joy of free books and activities delivered right to their door each month. There's also a special surprise for families in the 5lb box of Streit's Matzo! As you search for the afikomen this Passover, also keep an eye out for the PJ Library logo on Streit's Matzos boxes in supermarkets across North America or visit streitsmatzos.com to learn more. HW

Our community wants to know what our local Jewish organizations & synagogues have been doing!

Please share photos & stories.

info@HebrewWatchman.com







Barton's Candy: a Passover Favorite



The Temple Israel Sisterhood Gift Shop will stock these Passover favorites.

Preparing for Passover brings back many fond memories, a good number of which revolve around food.

Some of the most recognizable treats come in the form of kosher candies originally made by the former Barton's Candy Corporation. Originally known as Barton's Bonbonnieres, the company was started in 1938 by Austrian immigrant Stephen Klein and his family, just a year after his arrival in this country. By 1960, the company operated 3,000 stores across America.

"I have lots of favorite Passover foods, and Barton's candy has been a favorite since my childhood," recalls Allison Delugach. "It is a must-have addition to your Passover Seder and holiday celebration. I was first introduced to Macaroons at the Seder and Barton's Macaroons are still my favorite."

In 2011, Bazzini, a nut, fruit and

chocolate company, acquired Barton's Candy Corporation. These tasty treats continue to be sold to this day.

Temple Israel Judaica Shop will have Barton's Kosher Passover Candy available in the store, which is just inside the Temple Israel Welcome Center located at 1376 East Massey Road. Flavors on hand will include Dark Chocolate Mint Creams, Dark Chocolate Covered Almonds, Dark Chocolate Cashews, Fruit Slices, Dark Chocolate Covered Apricots, Milk Chocolate Lollycones, Cashew Butter Crunch, Milk Chocolate Almond Caramel Nut Clusters, Milk & Dark Chocolate Bridge Mix and Dark Chocolate Rasberry Jellies.

As with other items in the Judaica Shop, proceeds from Barton's candy sales benefit Temple Israel Sisterhood, Temple Israel and programs that serve the greater Jewish community. **HW**





PAGE 8 | APRIL 3, 2025 THE HEBREW WATCHMAN | hebrewwatchman.com

Read a Good Beige Book Lately?

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

The Federal Reserve has been at the forefront of economic news since the spring of 2022, when the central bank started aggressively raising interest rates to combat inflation. Now that the Fed has begun to lower rates, each move will continue to be analyzed for its potential effect on the economy.

The Fed's monetary policy is set by the Federal Reserve Open Market Committee (FOMC), which meets eight times each year. In making their decisions, the FOMC considers a wide array of "hard" economic data but also looks at a more informal report of economic conditions prepared before each meeting.

Commonly called the Beige Book (for the color of its cover), the report is officially titled Summary of Commentary on Current Economic Conditions by Federal Reserve District. Also available to the public, the Beige Book gives committee members a broad overview of the economy based on anecdotal information collected by staff members in each of the 12 Federal Reserve Bank Districts (see map).

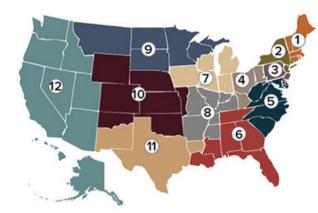
Insider impressions

The information is gleaned from bank presidents, business leaders, economists, and other market experts who have first-hand knowledge of local busi-

ness and economic conditions. A typical report may include input from company executives about how they are managing their inventories, their plans to add or reduce staff, how much money they are devoting to capital spending, whether sales are improving or worsening, what kinds of pricing pressures they are facing, and so on.

Federal Reserve Districts

Districts are identified by number and the city where the main reserve bank is located. Most districts also have branch reserve banks.



- 1 Boston
- 2 New York
- Philadelphia
 Cleveland
- 5 Richmond
- 6 Atlanta
- 7 Chicago
- 7 Chicago 8 St. Louis
- Minneapolis
- 10 Kansas City
- 11 Dallas
- 12 San Francisco

Source: Federal Reserve, 2024 Comprehensive snapshot

Following a standardized format, the Beige Book begins with a national summary and very brief district summaries, followed by a series of district reports that each begin with sections on "Labor Markets" and "Prices" – corresponding with the Fed's dual mandate to stimulate maximum employment while controlling inflation. Other sections cover general subjects such as consumer spending, manufacturing, financial services, and real estate, as well as industries of special importance to that district. For example, districts in the South, Midwest, and West provide information on agriculture, the Boston district often reports on information technology, and the Kansas City and Dallas districts keep tabs on oil drilling.

The Beige Book is more current than many other types of economic data and is easy to understand without specialized economic knowledge. If you are interested in knowing more about current trends in your district or elsewhere in the country, you can access the Beige Book at federalreserve.gov/monetarypolicy/publications/beigebook-default.htm.

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hebrewwatchman.com | THE HEBREW WATCHMAN APRIL 3, 2025 | PAGE 9

This French Jewish Actress Stars in New Show from 'Marvelous Mrs. Maisel' Creators



Via Amazon MGM Studios By Lior Zaltzman

This story first appeared on Kveller. Reprinted with permission.

The first trailer for "Étoile," the new ballet inspired show from Amy Sherman-Palladino and Dan Palladino, the team behind "Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" and "Gilmore Girls," is here – and there is one very thrilling Jewish star at its center.

In the show, Charlotte Gainsbourg plays Geneviève, the interim general director of l'Opera Français and Le Ballet National, the national ballet company of France. Her dancers are impeccable, her finances less so. Enter Luke Kirby (aka Lenny Bruce from "Maisel") as Jack, executive director of the Metropolitan Ballet Theater in New York, which could use some more skill and critical admiration, but is definitely widely beloved. The two decide on an unprecedented move to hopefully keep their dance companies alive - exchanging some of their most successful dancers with the other company to freshen things up and draw in new audiences.

"Étoile," the French word for star used to label a dance troupe's lead dancer, is Sherman-Palladino's second show about ballet, following the fan favorite but short lived "Bunheads" in which Sutton Foster played a Vegas dancer turned small town ballet teacher. Just like "Maisel," for which she drew inspiration from her Jewish father, an aspiring comedian, the show takes inspiration from the director, writer and producer's life.

"I trained as a dancer, so I have been mystified that nothing has really come close to capturing the weirdness of the dance world. They're an odd, amazing bunch of people," Sherman-Palladino shared. "I stopped dancing the minute I realized somebody was going to actually pay me to do something, and I could have a sandwich. [But] my whole life, I've known [that] without ballet, the world is a lesser place. And a place that I don't think a lot of people want to be in, even if they don't realize it." The show is the Palladinos' ode to what they believe is a now endangered art form, deeply impacted by the pandemic and changing times.

Inspired also by the dance documentaries of Jewish American director Frederick Wiseman, the show hopes to capture "the tough world behind this very delicate art form." Aside from Kirby and Gainsbourg, the show also stars Gideon Glick as Tobias Bell, a "rising star choreographer whose quirky theatrics don't easily translate to French sensibilities." Celebrated French actress Lou de Laâge plays a chutzpadick French ballerina who needs to deal with the cross-Atlantic shift. David Alvarez, Ivan du Pontavice, Taïs Vinolo, David Haig, LaMay Zhang and Simon Callow also star in the show. Yanic Truesdale, who many know and love as Michel from "Gilmore Girls," is a recurring

The show marks a fairly big career change for Gainsbourg. The actress is best known stateside for her roles in Lars Von Trier movies like "Melancholia" and "Nymphomaniac." But in France, she's been an icon since child-

hood. At age 12 she recorded an incredibly controversial duet with her father, Jewish French singer Serge Gainsbourg, titled "Lemon Incest" (17 years earlier, her mother, British actress Jane Birkin, recorded her own infamous duet with Gainsbourg, "Je T'aime... Moi Non Plus.") Like her father, Gainsbourg has a pretty prolific musical career and has released multiple French-language albums. She's starred in countless of films, quite a few with Jewish themes - many of those were directed by her partner of over four decades, Yvan Attal. Attal was born in Tel Aviv and is the son of French Algerian Jews. He and Gainsbourg have three kids, including actor Ben Attal, who along with his mother starred in Attal's 2021 film "The Accusation." Yvan also directed the 2016 movies "The Jews," a comedy that spotlighted antisemitism in France.

"I identified as a Jew growing up, and now I'm married to a Jew," Gainsbourg told the Forward in 2019. "His parents celebrate the Jewish holidays. So, that's still very much part of me."

Despite her very lengthy resume, "Étoile" will be Gainsbourg's first English-language comedy TV show. "For me, it was very new to do a comedy in English. I've done comedies in France, and still people see me as a serious actress – but I love comedies," Gainsbourg told Vanity Fair.

"She's just annoyingly cool," Sherman-Palladino told Vanity Fair about Gainsbourg. "In my wildest dreams, I could never be that cool. It's like walking down the street and Lenny Kravitz is standing there. You go, 'G*d damn it, just go away.' Charlotte shows up with her trench coat and T-shirt and unbrushed hair, and I'm like, 'F**k, I'll never be able to carry it like that."

The actress does very much look like a take-no-nonsense badass in the first trailer for the show that came out this week. Despite it featuring a lot more French accents than we're used to from a Sherman-Palladino creation, we do get that lushness of visual detail, the irreverent fast-paced dialogue and many locales that were such a big part of "Maisel," from New York to Paris, where the Weissmans spent a season. I for one am very excited to go on this new (but somewhat familiar) dance with the Sherman-Palladinos.

"Étoile" premiers on Prime Video on April 24. **HW**

OBITUARIES



Marilee Sher

Marilee Sher, age 94, of Memphis, Tenn., died at the Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab on Wednesday, March 26, 2025.

She is survived by her daughter, Judy Edelson (Michael) of Germantown, son Alan Sher (Nan Mulligan) of Boulder, Co., 4 grandchildren and 5 great-grandchildren.

Marilee was born in Memphis and raised in Bells, Tenn. She attended Duke University for two years and graduated from Ohio State University with a social work degree. She moved to Louisville to work after college. There she met Frank Sher who she was happily married to for 59 years.

Marilee was an avid bridge player, expert seamstress and invaluable volunteer.

However, being with her children and grandchildren gave her the greatest joy. Services were held at the Temple Israel Levy Cooper chapel on Friday, March 28.

Memorials can be sent to the Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab or Temple Israel. **HW**

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2021 through 2024

Jack Black, Do the Right Thing: Perform 'Chad Gadya' on SNL



Design by Avital Dayanim
By Evelyn Frick

(March 20, 2025) – This story first appeared on Kveller. Reprinted with permission.

Yesterday, "Saturday Night Live" announced its next slate of hosts for the 50th season. On March 29, Jewish Academy Award winner Mikey Madison will host with musical guest Morgan Wallen. On April 5, Jack Black will host with musical guests Elton John and

Brandi Carlisle. And on April 12, Jon Hamm will host with musical guest Lizzo.

I would be lying if I said my first thought about this news wasn't: "Please, please, please do an 'Anora' Menorah sketch." But my second thought was: "Jack Black, do the right thing. Sing 'Chad Gadya' on SNL."

For those keeping score, the 55-year-old Jewish comedian is scheduled to be on "Saturday Night Live" just a week before Passover begins. And for those doubly keeping score, the 55-year-old Jewish comedian recorded the most entertaining performance of "Chad Gadya," the silly goat song sung at the end of the seder, I've ever heard in my life. If you haven't heard this bonus track from the 2019 album "Hanuk-kah+," you absolutely need to drop everything right now and listen.

Goosebumps. I've heard this before, and I still have goosebumps.

"Any lover of music and media cannot deny that Jack Black is one of the world's greatest performers in any medium," Jewish music writer Miri Verona wrote for Hey Alma in 2024. "Whether you love him, hate him or think 'Nacho Libre' is high cringe, the man puts his whole Jack Blussy into just about everything he does. The Passover bonus track on this Hanukkah compilation album is no different."

I think the best part of Jack Black's performance of "Chad Gadya" is that it's so bare bones and off-the-cuff. Where he recorded the song a cappella, a performance on SNL could utilize Lenny Pickett and the "Saturday Night Live" band for some playful, klezmer accompaniment. Maybe even turn the song into a trio with Elton John and Brandi Carl-

isle! I'm also envisioning cast members dressed up as the animals: Sarah Sherman as the chad gadya, James Austin Johnson as the father, Heidi Gardner as the cat, Mikey Day as the dog, Michael Longfellow as the stick, Bowen Yang as the fire, Chloe Fineman as the water, Kenan Thompson as the ox, Andrew Dismukes as the butcher, Marcello Hernandez as the Angel of Death and, of course, Lorne Michaels as God.

SNL is no stranger to a musical monologue, and I personally think this would be a great way to open the show. It is so quintessentially Jack Black and even if you're not Jewish, you can't help but enjoy Jack's intensity and commitment. So Jack and SNL writers, if you're reading this, please make a Jewish girl's Passover wish come true. What other option is there? Write actual jokes? I don't think so. **HW**

PAGE 10 | APRIL 3, 2025 THE HEBREW WATCHMAN | hebrewwatchman.com

Pesach Visitation



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

By Ted Roberts

Did your rabbi ever tell you the tale of the 36 Tzadiks who secretly circulate in our world? They look like me and you, but inside, they glow with righteousness. To put it plainly, they are the spies of G-d; and their mission is surveillance of the human heartscape. Every Pesach they take the ethical pulse of Humanity. Then they report to the Creator. This determines the fate of the world the following year. If all is ethically well; the harvest is bountiful, the S&P 500 index zooms, the winter is mild, and the summers are balmy. Except for death and taxes, bliss reigns.

But the Berg family at 2822 Mendel Circle in Fairlawn, New Jersey, had no time for rabbinic tales. They were busy planning their Passover. They would have a guest this year, they decided – some homeless stranger. A real mitzvah it would be.

The next morning found Sarah Berg dialing around to several Jewish agencies until she found her man. Sure, they had a candidate. A young, rootless fel-

low passing through town.

What a glorious Passover it would be, thought Sarah. A sumptuous meal, the Seder ceremony, and the added mitzvah of the indigent guest. Just as the Hagaddah says "let all who are hungry come and eat." But so much preparation and post-meal cleanup. She cringed at the thought of dirty dishes piled in the sink, crusted with the remains of five courses. She'd get a maid. A small lux-

Now, it's Seder night. The doorbell rings. It's him, the guest. He's in torn jeans, plaid shirt, and a Bull's sports cap.

But the Bergs welcome him into their home with smiles. Uncomfortably, they make small talk as the stranger sits stiffly at the table. They proceed with the Seder, but he seems to have no understanding of the service. Nor is he interested in Daniel Berg's Passover anecdotes directed at both him and the children. "When do we eat?" he says as they pass the matzoh and moror sandwiches around the table.

The guest eats steadily as the family participates enthusiastically in the service. They talk of ancient miracles as he enthusiastically devours the brisket and roast chicken. The children swing their heads from the derelict to their parents in silent wonder at the sullen guest.

In the middle of this tension there is a horrible crash of china from the kitchen. The floor is littered with the shards of Sarah Berg's wedding china; a gift from her mother, who had died two months before

The elderly maid had slipped and upset the card table holding the dirty dishes. She stared down at her clumsy handiwork. A silent tear ran down the old lady's cheek as Sarah looked at her mother's heirloom, now splintered china, all over the kitchen floor. A great sadness seized her heart. The failed holiday, the memory of her mother, this incompetent human being who couldn't even clear the table without disaster. But she swallowed the lump in her throat when she saw the remorseful tears in the eyes of the old lady.

"That's OK, that's OK." She patted the shoulder of her Passover helper as the maid swept the remains of Sarah's mother's Lenox china into a brown paper grocery sack.

Sarah returned to the table determined to crown the evening with ceremony appropriate to the holiday. Fitfully, they resumed the singing. And soon, mercifully, the evening came to an end. The maid, still red-eyed, was paid handsomely, in deference to the holiday, and sent home early with a plastic bag full of roast chicken. The kids – sleepy, irritable, and appalled by the rude guest – were ordered upstairs to bed.

The family went upstairs to an uneasy sleep where Sarah's dreams were strangely lighted by the bright tearful eyes of the clumsy maid. A miserable The Scribbler
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night.

Ah, but what a golden year followed for the Berg family: and the world they inhabited. A warm wind blew over the face of the earth and unlocked the cold heart of humanity. The earth smiled and her harvests were plentiful. The S&P 500 index zoomed, and the winter was mild, and the summer was balmy.

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And all for the price of a pat on the shoulder, a plastic bag full of leftover chicken, and a set of dishes. Who would suspect that a Tzadik's duties included sweeping the kitchen floor.

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**

Iran's Secret Cash Pipeline to Hezbollah Exposed

(JNS) – A Channel 12 report last Wednesday, citing Intelli Times, revealed Iran's covert cash pipeline to Hezbollah using couriers, duty-free baggage swaps and diplomatic immunity.

On Feb. 28, Lebanese authorities arrested a courier at Beirut's airport with \$2.5 million in cash. Analyst Ronen Sol-

omon, editor of Intelli Times, explained: "The system relies on connecting flights through Istanbul and other third countries to obscure the Iranian origin of the funds."

The cash was handed off in a duty-free zone before the courier flew back to Beirut, where he was caught by new

security measures. The money is allegedly funneled to Hezbollah's underground vault beneath Al-Sahel Hospital, which Israeli intelligence believes holds billions of dollars in cash and gold.

The suspect, Mohammad Arif Hussein, insisted the funds were for a "Shi'ite charity." Days later, Leba-

non's Supreme Shi'ite Islamic Council confirmed it was the recipient, although its proximity to Hezbollah sites suggests it acts as a front for the terror organization.

The U.S. has offered a \$10-million reward for information on Hezbollah's financial smuggling network. **HW**

ISRAEL INSIGHTS A Government Teeters Not

By Howard Weisband

The current Israel Government has survived its most critical period to date in order to maintain and complete its current four-year term, which concludes in October 2026.

The most definitive date was March 31 when a state budget had to be approved by the Knesset.

That was done on March 25, as the coalition held together albeit as national and more narrow issues remained on the table. Among them:

First, the ongoing war effort and its costs, including increased taxes on the population, and sweeping across the board budget cuts affecting each ministry. The latter entailed internal political wrangling.

Second is the intensified pressure of demands from ultra-orthodox parties that there be a new law passed, which they've been promised, that will allow their yeshiva students to be exempt from the army draft. They threatened to not support the budget proposal, which would have resulted in the Government not having a majority in the Knesset. A major issue in society, it now involves the war effort and the manpower needs of the IDF.

Third is the need to bring the remainder of our hostages home, those still barely alive and those who have been murdered, versus how and when to continue the war effort in order to eliminate Hamas. This remains both an internal debate in the Government alongside the highly charged public outcry and demonstrations on behalf of the hostages.

Susan Hattis Rolef, writing in The Jerusalem Post on March 17, quoted the new IDF chief of the Southern Command, Maj.-Gen. Yaniv Asor who stated that "the first assignment of the IDF is to liquidate the Hamas terrorists, and the second is to return the hostages." The Hostages and Missing Families Forum quickly reacted: "These are grievous and irresponsible words, since if one is speaking of this order of priorities – a serious danger faces the lives of the hostages, and the ability to return the dead for proper burial. The first moral and ethical assignment under your responsibility is to return the 59 hostages, who have been rotting under Hamas captivity in Gaza for 523 days.

Later on, destroy the Hamas regime. First the hostages – Hamas later."

This exchange vividly reflects both emotions and tensions within Israel.

A related, overarching matter broke in the Israel media on March 15. Jeremy Sharon reported in the Times of Israel (TOI) that "a new compromise proposal made by President Isaac Herzog was accepted by Supreme Court chief Isaac Amit, which is designed to find a pathway for the establishment of a state commission of inquiry into the failures surrounding Hamas' catastrophic October 7, 2023, invasion and massacres."

The IDF already conducted and completed its own internal investigation into the intelligence and operational failures that led to the tragedy of October 7. Calls for a public state investigation, as has happened in the past, most notably after the Yom Kippur War, have been rejected by the Prime Minister.

Netanyahu quickly spoke out: "Such an inquiry could not be conducted when the war was underway... such a commission – whose members are appointed by the president of the Supreme Court – would be biased against the government. The public is entitled to a true investigation and not a politically slanted one, whose composition represents the majority of the people and which should investigate everyone, without exception."

Finally, the latest crisis was of Netanyahu's own doing. He announced on March 16 his intention to fire the chief of the Shin Bet (akin to the FBI), citing "a lack of trust." Later that same day, Attorney General Gali Baharav-Miara told Netanyahu that he could not "initiate a dismissal process" of Bar "until the factual and legal basis underlying your decision is fully examined, as well as your authority to address the matter at this time."

Netanyahu cajoled his coalition/Government to fire both individuals.

David Horovitz, TOI editor, was particularly sharp in his criticism: the PM "plunged Israel back into the constitutional crisis he created in early 2023 with his bid to neuter the judiciary and to concentrate control of all branches of government in his own hands."

In short, a constitutional-like crisis in a country that does not have a constitution!

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

hebrewwatchman.com | THE HEBREW WATCHMAN APRIL 3, 2025 | PAGE 11

Rafael Reports Record Growth as Iron Beam Nears Deployment



Caption: The Naval Iron Beam performs a test. Credit: Rafael Advanced Defense Systems.

(JNS) – Rafael Advanced Defense Systems concluded 2024 with record-breaking sales and a significant milestone: the impending operational deployment of its Iron Beam laser defense system.

Iron Beam has a range of up to 10 km. (6.2 mi), complementing the Iron Dome system, which intercepts projectiles fired from a greater distance.

The Haifa-based company reported a 27% increase in sales, reaching 17.8 billion shekels (\$4.8 billion), and a 24% rise in its order backlog to 64.7 billion shekels (\$17.5 billion), equivalent to more than three-and-a-half-year's work. Net profit surged 64% to 950 million shekels (\$257 million), driven by a strong fourth quarter in which sales hit 5.4 billion shekels (\$1.46 billion) – a 20% year-on-year increase.

Despite challenges including employee military call-ups and supply chain disruptions, Rafael CEO Yoav Turgeman emphasized the company's resilience. "We continued supplying defense products as expected and introduced new innovations. Our order backlog could have been even higher had we finalized additional contracts, which will be completed soon."

Iron Beam: The future of missile defense

Looking ahead to 2025, Rafael's primary focus is finalizing the Iron Beam system, the world's first operational high-energy laser interceptor. According to Turgeman, Rafael is on track to meet its commitment to delivering the system by year's end. "We are the first company in the world to bring such an advanced laser defense system to operational status. Despite all [the] challenges, we remain committed to our promise – this is a major global achievement."

Iron Beam is set to revolutionize missile defense economics by significantly reducing interception costs. Currently, a single Tamir interceptor used by Iron Dome costs around \$50,000 per launch. In contrast, terrorist organizations in Gaza, such as Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, have spent as little as \$500

to \$1,000 per rocket, often funded by Iran. This economic asymmetry has long posed a challenge for Israel – until now.

The system is designed to complement Iron Dome, intercepting short-range threats at lightning speed and conserving missile stockpiles. "It allows us to neutralize threats at near-zero cost, forcing adversaries to spend significantly more to launch attacks than we do to stop them," an official from the company said.

Expanding capabilities and global partnerships

Rafael continues to enhance its defense portfolio, with its David's Sling missile defense system already securing major international contracts, including a recent deal with Finland. Turgeman hinted at further developments, stating, "David's Sling offers exceptional capabilities at a lower cost than comparable systems, and more updates are on the way."

David's Sling, which became operational in 2017, is designed to intercept enemy planes, drones, missiles and rockets, fired at ranges of 40 to 300 km. (25 to 190 miles).

As the largest defense employer in northern Israel, Rafael hired 1,800 employees in 2024, bringing its direct workforce to 10,000 and supporting 20,000 households indirectly. The company's local procurement reached 4 billion shekels (\$1.08 billion), primarily benefiting northern communities. Chairman Dr. Yuval Steinitz, a former Cabinet minister, highlighted Rafael's economic impact, calling its growth "a driving force for Israel's economy and a critical element in rehabilitating the north."

With continued demand in the defense sector, Rafael is increasing its research and development investments by 30% in 2025, totaling around 6 billion shekels (\$1.62 billion) – some from its reserves and some from customers who commissioned development.

"We are committed to pushing the boundaries of innovation and ensuring Israel's security with cutting-edge technology," Turgeman said. HW

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PAGE 12 | APRIL 3, 2025 THE HEBREW WATCHMAN | hebrewwatchman.com

This 'Sesame Street' Mitzvah Episode Teaches Kindness in Action



Via Max

By Lior Zaltzman

This story first appeared on Kveller. Reprinted with permission.

Most parents, myself most certainly included, felt heartbroken to read about the recent troubles at Sesame Workshop, the nonprofit behind "Sesame Street," which is struggling due to budget cuts. They've lost their streaming deal with HBO and are having a hard time competing in the oversaturated kids' TV market. As big a fan I am of "Bluey" and "Ms. Rachel," no show can ever compete with the international magic of "Sesame Street," a show that, since 1969, generations of children grew up on – children who then became parents raising their own children on those charming muppets and their human neighbors.

The last few seasons of the show, which did also have an Israeli and a Jewish spinoff ("Rechov Sumsum" and "Shalom Sesame"), also delivered charming and deeply felt Jewish representation thanks to Violet Tinnirello's Charlie, who has taught Elmo to cele-

brate Hanukkah and organized with her family a heartwarming Shabbat meal on the iconic street for which she taught her neighbors to bake challah.

Last month, the show premiered another episode about an important Jewish concept – the mitzvah. Charlie's mother, Mary, played by veteran workshop puppeteer Jennifer Barnhart, describes it as an "act of kindness" in Hebrew. The word literally means a commandment – there are 613 commandments Jews are traditionally meant to follow, including things we are commanded to do and not do. But nowadays, when many of us call something a mitzvah, we do mean a generous, good deed.

In the episode called "Mitzvah Day Mix-Up," which originally aired on February 15, 2025, Charlie is waiting for a delivery for her synagogue's "Mitzvah Day" as her mother prepares to deliver some sandwiches for the Jewish house of worship ("a synagogue is a temple where Jewish families like mine go to pray, learn and celebrate Jewish holidays," Charlie explains to Elmo and the viewers).

Charlie is hoping to install a Little Free Library for Sesame Street residents to exchange books. She explains the concept of Miztvah Day to the always inquisitive Elmo by saying, "On Mitzvah Day, everyone in our synagogue works together to help our neighbors on Sesame Street," adding that "helping the neighborhood share books is part of

making the world a kinder place."

Elmo and Charlie watch as Grover delivers the mail which, instead of being filled with all the pieces for the Little Free Library Charlie wants to build for her community, is full of colorful balls.

Charlie decides to make the library herself, and right away, the residents of "Sesame Street" come to help. Elmo offers the paint, Grover scouts the prefect location for the library, Cookie Monster offers two metal trays for the roof, wood is supplied by leftovers from a project Alan was doing at Mr. Hooper's Store and doors come from Burt's first pigeon coop. Burt and Ernie come to offer books ("Bath Time Chanties" and "The Complete History of Oatmeal" are two of the tomes they share). Big Bird brings a book of big birds that he made himself. Abby supplies a base for the library, a sweet mushroom post with climbing vines. The library is adorned with decorations that come from other street residents - little guitar pick flowers from Rosita, flowers made out of circuit boards and wires provided by Tamir and Ji-Young and little foil foliage from Oscar the Grouch. The result is so much more beautiful and unique than anything Charlie could have ordered online.

As she builds her library, Charlie also explains why she wanted to build the free library. Her Hebrew school teacher urged her and her fellow Jewish students to "think of things that we wish were true about our community and find

ways to make it happen," suggesting things like dog walking for a neighbor in need, donating toys or making cards for people in the hospital. Charlie said she chose to make the library because "I wished there was a way that people could share the things they care about with each other." And in building the library with her community, she also made it an object that represents those things, too.

Charlie likens the process of building the library together to the Jewish idea of tikkun olam, the concept of fixing the world. "Jewish people believe in tikkun olam. Everybody can do a little to help make the world a better place," she so aptly surmises.

It is such a beautiful portrayal of these concepts at the heart of Jewish practice – the sense of community, the importance of charitable and kind deeds, and a love of reading and learning. "Mitzvah Day Mix-Up" may be one of the most touching pieces of Jewish TV that came out lately, and it also helps that the theme of the entire episode is books.

Tinnirello, who is Jewish, shared how special it was for her to shoot the episode, writing on her Instagram that it always "feels like a gift getting to continue to share with others my Jewish heritage through such a fun and special way." It's certainly really special to get a Jewish kids' episode that isn't just centered on a Jewish holiday, but on a Jewish tradition that permeates our daily lives. **HW**



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