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# the Hebrew Watchman

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## Memphis Jewish Federation Announces Acclaimed Author as Keynote for Yom HaShoah Commemoration



**Judy Batalion, keynote speaker.**

Memphis Jewish Federation invites the community to its 64th Annual Yom HaShoah Commemoration on Tuesday, April 14, 2026, at 6 p.m. to be held in the Marsi Moss Social Hall at Baron Hirsch Congregation.

This year's commemoration will be emceed by Federation Holocaust Memorial Committee co-chairs Harry Diamant and his daughter, Michelle Diamant.

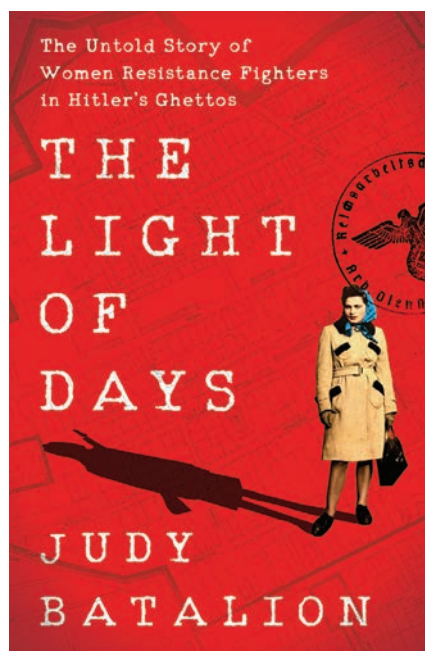
Federation is proud to welcome award-winning author and granddaughter of Holocaust survivors Judy Batalion as keynote speaker. Her visit to Memphis is graciously sponsored by the Tennessee Holocaust Commission. Batalion will speak on the theme Chain of Mem-

ory: Unfading Stories of Courage & Resilience.

Raised in Montreal speaking English, French, Yiddish and Hebrew, Batalion studied the history of science at Harvard University before moving to London to pursue a Ph.D. in art history. While in London, she worked in a variety of creative roles – including curator, researcher, editor, lecturer and performer – experiences she later transformed into essays and articles published in The New York Times, The Washington Post, Vogue, The Forward and The Jerusalem Post, among other outlets.

Her reflections on family relationships and the generational transmission of trauma culminated in her first book, “White Walls: A Memoir About Motherhood, Daughterhood, and Mess in Between.”

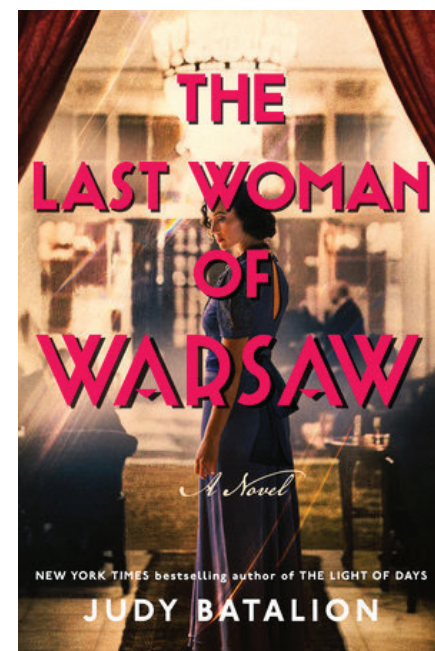
In 2007, while conducting research at the British Library, Batalion discovered a dusty Yiddish volume titled “Freuen in di Ghetos” (“Women in the Ghetos”). The account of young Jewish women who hid revolvers in teddy bears, bribed Nazis with whiskey and pastries, and sabotaged German supply trains inspired her bestselling work, “The Light of Days: The Untold Story of Women Resistance Fighters.” The book became a New York Times and international bestseller, won both a National Jewish Book Award and a Canadian Jewish Literary Award, was translated into 23



languages, adapted into a children's edition, and optioned for film by Amblin Partners, founded by Steven Spielberg.

While researching “The Light of Days,” Batalion became fascinated by the cultural world that shaped these courageous young women. Her forthcoming novel, “The Last Woman of Warsaw,” explores friendship, love and belonging in the artistically vibrant and politically charged Polish capital of the late 1930s. The novel will be released on April 7 and will be available for purchase at Novel.

Throughout the 2025–2026 school



year, Federation has expanded its Holocaust education initiatives, including growing its statewide Art and Essay Contest to reach more schools across Tennessee. In partnership with Facing History & Ourselves and the Tennessee Holocaust Commission, Federation is also bringing more second- and third-generation Holocaust speakers into local schools.

For more information about the commemoration or Federation's Holocaust awareness initiatives, contact Lorraine Wolf at lwolf@jcpmemphis.org. **HW**

## From Conversation to Connection: Launching “Partners Memphis” see ad on page 12

By Laura Kurcfeld

“Hi! How are you? I see your name is \_\_\_\_\_. It's nice to meet you, I'm \_\_\_\_\_. I guess we'll be getting to know each other tonight, and what a great topic for us to talk about too.”

On Monday evening, March 23, from 7-8:30 p.m., the Memphis Jewish Community Center will hold the first of a series of Partners Memphis bi-monthly programs. There is no charge to attend, and of course there will be some delicious food to enjoy while you schmooze. At Partners Memphis you'll be intentionally paired with someone from a different Jewish background, and potentially some similarity in background, for a meaningful conversation on a different focus topic each time.

With such close proximity to Passover, which begins the night of April 1, the topic this month is “The Seder Experience: A Nation of Educators.” We are excited to have Dr. Daniel Weiss, head of Bornblum Jewish Community School as our framing speaker of the night.

Learning materials are provided by Partners in Jewish Life (pjl.org) in part-

nership with the Rabbi Sacks Legacy Foundation, as the booklets provided for each session are comprised of essays from the teachings of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks with thought-provoking questions for partners to discuss.

In the words of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks:

*“I think we need to renew those face-to-face encounters with the people not like us. It's in those face-to-face encounters that we discover that the people not like us are just people, like us. And that actually, every time we hold out the hand of friendship to somebody not like us, whose class or creed or color are different from ours, we heal one of the fractures of our wounded world.”*

Meet people who may not be just like you, but really are just people, like you! No Hebrew reading, all-English material, open-dialogue discussing the various aspects of the Passover Seder and Haggadah, and the meaning of them to the Jewish people – from the past, now and through the generations to come.

The Partners Memphis program is presented through the MJCC Center for Jewish Life and Learning, led by Laura Kurcfeld. The Steering Committee is comprised of some wonderful people who are passionate about this great program including Gregg Beeber, Jerry Kutliroff, Shelley Kutliroff, Emma Mansberg Weintraub and Lynnne Mirvis. If you know them, please feel free to ask them about the program.

However you identify with your Judaism, even if just Jew-ish, join us as we strengthen connections across Memphis' Jewish community. It's an easy and engaging way to expand your circle, share perspectives and discover what unites us.

**What: Partners Memphis:** “The Seder Experience: A Nation of Educators”

**When:** Monday, March 23, 2026, MJCC Goldstein Lodge

**Cost:** FREE • Registration Required

**How:** Register at [jccmemphis.org/JewishLife](http://jccmemphis.org/JewishLife)

**Contact:** Laura Kurcfeld, [lkurcfeld@jccmemphis.org](mailto:lkurcfeld@jccmemphis.org) **HW**

## 100-Year Commemorative Edition in Production

Coming this fall is a special edition of *The Hebrew Watchman* 100-Year Anniversary. This edition will capture highlights from the exhibit “*Journey Through the Decades: The Legacy of The Hebrew Watchman*,” which was on display in the Shainberg Art Gallery of the Memphis Jewish Community Center for a short period in September 2025.

While we are still searching for a new location to display this exhibit for a longer period, you may also view the exhibit online at [HebrewWatchman.com](http://HebrewWatchman.com).

To receive this special edition, your 2026 subscription must be paid by July 31, 2026. You may mail a check to The Hebrew Watchman, P.O. Box 770846, Memphis, TN 38177-9846, scan the QR code at the top of the page, pay online at [HebrewWatchman.com](http://HebrewWatchman.com), email [toni@HebrewWatchman.com](mailto:toni@HebrewWatchman.com) or call 901.763.2215.

Thank you to our subscribers, advertisers and 100-year sponsors for making this edition possible and for keeping Memphis Jewish journalism alive! **HW**

# On the Move and Learning with the MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Center



On February 25, the MJCC seniors toured St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

The MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Center offers a wide variety of educational, physical, social and cultural activities to meet the diverse needs and interests of senior adults. In addition to daily kosher lunches, on Mondays and Wednesdays, lunch is followed by a speaker or activity. Recurring activities include Trivial Pursuit, ice cream socials, art projects in partnership with Mid-South Hobbies, and more. Speakers include local rabbis who often speak on topics relevant to the season and offer opportunities to "Ask the Rabbi" as well as partners who speak on topics such as "Brain Health for Seniors" or "Boost Your Budget."

Each month we host a monthly luncheon with entertainment provided in partnership with Creative Aging.

To offer an idea of the types of programs offered through the MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Center,

below and pictured are two recent programs enjoyed by all who attended.

In February, a bus full of seniors went on a tour of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. The tour was led by a knowledgeable member of the hospital staff, offering a behind-the-scenes look at this remarkable institution. There was so much history included on the tour and everyone learned something while enjoying themselves.

In March, we hosted a special evening program with Elise Meyer who presented "Declutter 1-2-3!" Elise helps people declutter and organize their homes and implement storage solutions that improve daily efficiency and ease of use. She also discussed packing, unpacking and event organization, while sharing practical tips that everyone can use.

These programs are open to all seniors



On March 10 Elise Meyer presented "Declutter 1-2-3!"

# THE Hebrew Watchman

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## Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. March 20, 2026 / 2 Nissan, 5786 .....6:53 p.m.  
Havdalah, Sat. March 21, 2026 / 3 Nissan, 5786 ..... 7:50 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Vayikra

- you don't have to be Jewish or a member to attend. Daily meals are \$2 for seniors and the monthly luncheon with entertainment is \$5 for seniors. If you are interested in participating in any of the senior programs or have questions you can call the MJCC front desk at 901-761-0810 to reserve your spot or call Steve Kaplan at 901-259-9220. We look forward to seeing you soon at the MJCC! HW

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# US Puts \$10 Million Bounty on New Iranian Supreme Leader

(JNS) – The U.S. State Department announced a \$10 million reward for information about the whereabouts of Iran’s new supreme leader Mojtaba Khamenei on Friday.

The department’s Rewards for Justice program placed a bounty on 10 of Iran’s most senior remaining leaders, including Khamenei and Ali Larijani, secretary of Iran’s Supreme National Security Council and the country’s top security official.

“These individuals command and direct various elements of Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, which plans, organizes and executes terrorism around the world,” the department stated.

The Rewards for Justice Program has previously offered bounties for terrorists like former al-Qaeda leaders Osama bin Laden and Ayman al-Zawahiri. Syrian President Ahmed al-Sharaa was the subject of a \$10 million reward under the program until he was removed in 2024.

Five of the people designated on Friday are listed by their titles with no name or photograph, including “secretary of the defense council” and “the

IRGC commander.”

The United States and Israel have killed many of Iran’s top leaders, including former IRGC commander Mohammad Pakpour and Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, the former supreme leader and Mojtaba’s father.

Larijani posted a video of Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian walking in Tehran on Friday for the country’s annual Quds Day demonstrations against Israel and taunted U.S. Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth’s claim that Iranian leaders were hiding underground.

“Mr. Hegseth, our leaders have been, and still are, among the people,” Larijani wrote. “But your leaders? On Epstein’s island!”

Larijani also did a live interview with Iranian media during the march.

U.S. President Donald Trump told Fox News in an interview that aired Friday morning that he believed Mojtaba Khamenei, who has not appeared in public since he was elevated to supreme leader, was wounded.

“I think he’s damaged, but I think he’s probably alive in some form,” Trump said. **HW**

# MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club: Spring Blooms & Special Screenings

The week of March 23 at the MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club is packed with terrific programs and exciting field trips. Our regular kosher lunch program, provided by the Memphis Jewish Home, begins daily at 11:30 a.m. (\$2 for seniors), followed by speakers or entertainment at noon.

## Monday, March 23 Boosting Your Budget Speaker: Kristin Miller

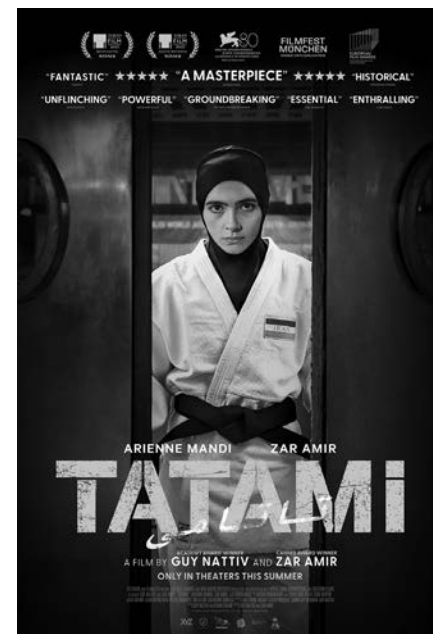
Whether you’re shopping for essentials or clicking “add to basket,” Kristin will share practical steps to help your money stretch further. A helpful hand-out will be provided following the talk.

## Wednesday, March 25 Field Trip to the Dixon Gallery and Gardens

Don’t miss a special trip to the Dixon Gallery and Gardens to see a spectacular display of over 500,000 tulips and daffodils in honor of their 50th Anniversary! This local treasure is a must-see this spring. The bus leaves the MJCC at 12 p.m. and returns by 3 p.m. The cost is only \$2 for the roundtrip ride.

## Monday, March 30 Special Movie Screening of Tatami

We are thrilled to host a special showing of the film *Tatami* in the Belz Theatre. Recently featured in the Fogelman International Jewish Film Festival, this is the first feature co-directed by Iranian and Israeli filmmakers. The film follows a female judoka faced with an impossible choice during the World Championships. This special event is in partnership with XYZ Films, Flawless AI and Mean Streets Management. While this screening is FREE and open to all 16+, reservations are required due to seating.



### Holiday Scheduling Note:

Please note there will be no lunch or programs on Wednesday, April 1 (Erev Pesach) or during Chol HaMoed Pesach. Our lunch program will resume Friday, April 10, followed by a special “Ask the Rabbi” session with Rabbi Braha on Monday, April 13.

### Reservations:

Lunch reservations are required by 1 p.m. the day prior. Please contact Steve Kaplan, Adult Services Coordinator, at 901-259-9220 (Mon–Thu, 9:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.) or email [stevekaplan@jccmemphis.org](mailto:stevekaplan@jccmemphis.org). You may also call the front desk at 901-761-0810. **HW**

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# Margolin Hebrew Academy Launches “Building Blocks” Dyslexia Support Program

## MHA’s Partnership with Bodine Showing Strong Early Gains in Pilot Year

Margolin Hebrew Academy has launched a new K–4 literacy initiative that families are calling a genuine game-changer for their students: the MHA Building Blocks Reading Support Program. Now in its second pilot semester, Building Blocks is already showing meaningful academic gains for students with dyslexia and related learning differences.

“And, just as importantly,” Head of School Rabbi Dr. Gavriel Brown said, “is restoring confidence, stability and joy in learning for children who have too often felt left behind.”

What makes this launch especially significant is its permanence. MHA has received a dedicated endowment to establish and sustain Building Blocks for the long term. This ensures that the program is not a short-term pilot, not dependent on annual budget pressures, and not vulnerable to staff turnover.

For families who have quietly worried whether their child’s reading needs could truly be met within a Jewish day school, this represents a lasting commitment. Specialized, research-based literacy intervention can now happen consistently, during the school day, and within the Jewish educational environment families value – without forcing difficult tradeoffs or external placements.

The program’s mission is straightforward: to strengthen foundational English-Language Arts skills – reading fluency, comprehension, writing, spelling and grammar – through a hands-on, multisensory approach delivered in a nurturing environment. Students with dyslexia receive daily small-group instruction during the school day in a 1:3 ratio. Instruction is individualized, aligned with neuropsychological evaluations, and designed specifically for learners who cannot keep pace with standard classroom instruction without targeted support.

A defining strength of Building Blocks is its intentional partnership with Bodine, a nationally recognized dyslexia school located in Germantown, for its expertise in dyslexia education and structured literacy.

From the outset, MHA leadership “made a deliberate choice not to ‘build in isolation’ or rely on intuition, anecdote or legacy reading practices,” R. Dr. Brown said. Instead, the school sought out Bodine to ensure that the program would be grounded in the science of reading and aligned with decades of research about how children, especially those with dyslexia, actually learn to read.

This partnership has shaped the program at every level. Bodine provides professional development, instructional advisement, curricular guidance and ongoing consultation. MHA educators participate in training sessions, lunch-and-learns, summer programs and whole-staff professional development led by Bodine experts. This ensures that Orton-Gillingham instruction is implemented with fidelity, precision and a shared professional language, rather than as a loose collection of techniques. The result is coherence: assessment, instruction, progress monitoring and classroom coordination all reinforce one another.

School leaders emphasize that this is not a vendor relationship. It is a capacity-building partnership. Bodine brings decades of research, experience and methodological clarity. MHA brings the setting: a school committed to inclusion, academic rigor, honest measurement of student growth and the dignity of every learner. Together, they are extending proven literacy practices into a Jewish day school context – where students receive daily intervention without being pulled out of community, identity or belonging.

This research-based foundation is especially important given the complexity

of dyslexia. Dyslexia is often misunderstood as a letter reversal disorder, but it affects many aspects of language processing: decoding, spelling, word retrieval, pronunciation of unfamiliar words, rhyme recognition, syllable division and reading comprehension. It appears across languages, often runs in families and frequently goes undiagnosed for years. When early intervention is missed, the academic and emotional costs compound. Research has made clear that there is a limited window in which targeted instruction can be most effective and that structured, explicit, cumulative instruction is essential for students with dyslexia.

“Dyslexia can be especially hard for children in Jewish schools because of our bilingual approach.” R. Dr. Brown said, “We are reading all the time in Hebrew and in English.”

Building Blocks is led by Jamie Katz, an educator with a Master of Education in Educational Leadership from Lipscomb University and a degree in Early Childhood and Special Education from the University of Kansas. She has 10 years of experience in inclusive support classrooms and has received Orton-Gillingham training through the Institute of Multi-Sensory Education (IMSE). Her work is closely aligned with Bodine’s guidance, ensuring that daily instruction reflects best practice rather than guesswork.

Daily lessons integrate MHA’s English-Language Arts curriculum with Orton-Gillingham principles. Skills are taught explicitly and sequentially, then reinforced through repeated practice in spelling, reading, writing and oral language. Instruction is continuously adjusted based on assessment data, allowing students to make steady, durable gains that transfer back into the classroom.

Mid-year assessment data underscores the impact of this approach. Formal Orton-Gillingham assessments administered in August and November

show significant growth in letter-sound mastery and writing skills across grade levels, with gains ranging from five to more than 20 percentage points. These data are not used merely for reporting, but to guide instruction and ensure that every student receives the precise support they need.

Families say the impact of the Building Blocks program has been immediate and deeply felt – both academically and emotionally. Parents consistently point to the power of daily, in-school intervention, noting that “the consistency of five days a week of instruction has made a noticeable difference” in their child’s reading growth. Just as significant, families describe a shift in how their children experience school itself. One parent shared that their child now “feels supported and understood,” adding that her confidence and motivation have “completely changed.”

For some families, the program has altered decisions that once felt unavoidable. A second-grade parent reflected that they had been considering holding their child back a grade; now, instead, “she’s reading full books independently for fun.” These moments – quiet, personal and transformative – capture why families are describing Building Blocks not as an add-on, but as a turning point.

As Building Blocks continues through the spring, MHA will administer additional assessments and refine instruction in partnership with Bodine. The early message is clear: when schools commit to research-based practice, invest in expert partnerships and secure long-term programs, students who learn differently do more than catch up. They begin to see themselves as capable learners. With Building Blocks – and with Bodine’s guidance woven into its foundation – MHA is not simply adding support. It is reshaping what literacy success looks like for its community, now and for years to come. **HW**

# Hooks Institute Celebrates 30 Years and Memphis ‘Pillars of Progress’ in Gala Event

The Benjamin L. Hooks Institute will mark a significant milestone – its 30th Anniversary – at the “30 Years and Still Rising: Pillars of Progress Gala” to be held at the Scheidt Family Performing Arts Center on the University of Memphis campus on April 10 at 6 p.m. The Gala will include a cocktail reception with heavy hors d’oeuvres followed by the awards presentation program and live music.

For decades, the Hooks Institute has turned bold ideas into real change – keeping children safe and communities healthy, opening doors to academic and economic opportunity, transforming research into action and preserving the legacy of civil rights through education, art and storytelling. From reducing childhood drowning deaths and advancing student success to shaping public policy, honoring groundbreaking scholarships, and elevating Memphis artists, this work strengthens our community and builds a more just future.

The Hooks Institute relies substantially on donated and grant dollars to provide direct support for its programs.

Proceeds from the event will help fund these vital programs, for which demand is expanding.

At this landmark event on April 10, we will honor individuals and institutions that exemplify steadfast commitment to social change and community advancement. This year’s honorees are the Memphis Brooks Museum of Art, the Tri-State Defender, the Hon. Johnnie Turner and Jocelyn Wurzburg. The program will also feature a celebration of the Hooks Institute’s 30 years of work and impact, including archival footage of its namesake, Benjamin L. Hooks.

The Memphis Brooks Museum community outreach efforts and art exhibitions are vital to the community because it explores to the cultural interest and lived experiences of all Memphians. From 1951 to present, the Tri-State Defender has been the seminal voice of African American life in Memphis – past, present and future. The Honorable Johnnie Turner was a fearless 1960s civil rights activist, a longtime educator and served Memphis as State Represent-

tative for District 85 from 2010 to 2018. After Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s assassination in 1968, Jocelyn Wurzburg co-founded of the Panel of American Women to promote healing and racial unity in Memphis.

The Hooks Institute proudly recognizes these honorees for their impactful contributions to the community in their respective fields. Their dedication has helped create a stronger, more connected and vibrant Memphis.

Members of the community are invited to join the Hooks Institute in this celebration. Individual tickets for the event are \$150, a block of 8 tickets for \$1,200 and all are available through Eventbrite at [memphis.edu/hooksgala](http://memphis.edu/hooksgala).

To date, the “30 Years and Still Rising: Pillars of Progress Gala” sponsors include Truist, Bank3, Baptist Memorial Healthcare, Pinnacle Financial Partners, AllWorld Project Management, Inc., The Memphis Grizzlies, JAMS (Judicial Arbitration and Mediation Services), Brown Missionary Baptist Church, Renasant Bank, CIGNA, Memphis Allies, Cornerstone Engineering and Mississipp-

pi Boulevard Christian Church.

For sponsorship opportunities, please contact Amy Ruggaber, assistant director, at [amy.ruggaber@memphis.edu](mailto:amy.ruggaber@memphis.edu) or call 901.678.3974.

**About the Benjamin L. Hooks Institute for Social Change**

The Benjamin L. Hooks Institute implements its mission of advancing social change and strengthening democracy through research, service, and historical preservation. Institute programs include community outreach; funding faculty research initiatives on community issues; implementing community service projects; hosting conferences, symposiums and lectures; and promoting local and national scholarship on civil and human rights. The Hooks Institute is an interdisciplinary center at the University of Memphis. Contributory support for the Hooks Institute, including funding from individuals, corporations and foundations, is administered through the University of Memphis Foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization. For more information, visit [memphis.edu/benhooks](http://memphis.edu/benhooks) **HW**

## Suspect in Michigan Synagogue Attack Identified as Ayman Ghazali, an Immigrant from Lebanon



Law enforcement remain on site at the Temple Israel synagogue in West Bloomfield, Michigan, a Detroit suburb, on March 12, 2026, after an assailant drove a vehicle into the building. Credit: Jeff Kowalsky/AFP via Getty Images

By Philissa Cramer

March 13, 2026 (JTA) – The Department of Homeland Security has identified the man killed while attacking a suburban Detroit synagogue as Ayman Mohamad Ghazali, a U.S. citizen who immigrated from Lebanon 15 years ago.

Ghazali, 41, was a resident of Dearborn Heights, Michigan, according to its mayor, Mo Baydoun. Baydoun said in a statement that members of Ghazali’s family, including his niece and nephew, had recently been killed “in an Israeli attack on their home in Lebanon.”

Ghazali was shot by security after driving an explosives-laden truck into Temple Israel in West Bloomfield, a heavily Jewish suburb about 20 miles north of his home.

DHS said Ghazali had entered the United States in 2011 on a visa meant for the foreign-born spouses of American citizens. He became a U.S. citizen in 2016 after applying for naturalization in 2015.

Ghazali worked at a popular restaurant in Dearborn Heights, Hamido, but had been absent in recent weeks, fellow employees told The New York Times. Coworkers and a neighbor praised him to the Detroit Free Press, with the neighbor saying she had planned to bring him flowers because his brother had died.

Law enforcement officials in Michigan said they were still investigating Ghazali’s motive. But reports on social media tied him to four people with the last name Ghazali, including a young boy and girl, who a Lebanese news outlet reported were killed on March 5 in Mashghara, Lebanon. Al Jazeera reported at the time that the family was killed in an “Israeli army raid on a house.” The raid took place three days after the Israeli army urged residents of Mashghara, a Hezbollah stronghold, to evacuate buildings used by Hezbollah.

Israel has long battled Hezbollah, an Iranian proxy in Lebanon, in a conflict that has escalated this month after Hezbollah resumed firing on Israel after Israel and the United States attacked Iran. The Lebanese government said last Thursday that 98 children were among the nearly 700 people killed since March 2. Israel says it is targeting Hezbollah strongholds, including in densely packed Beirut.

A recent poll of “connected” American Jews – those affiliated with synagogues and Jewish organizations – found that while the majority supported the war, most also believed it would increase antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment in the United States.

Officials identified the perpetrator of a second incident last Thursday, a shooting at Old Dominion University in Virginia that killed a member of the ROTC army corps, as Mohamed Bailor Jalloh, a naturalized citizen who previously spent more than seven years in prison after being convicted of attempting to provide aid to the Islamic State terrorist group.

Authorities in Norway, meanwhile, said they had determined that two men whose behavior had ignited a major police response outside a Trondheim synagogue last Thursday posed no threat. **HW**

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*In 2027, Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab (MJHR) will celebrate 100 years of serving patients. In honor of this accomplishment and all the people who made it possible, we are telling 100 of their stories. Over the next two years, we will publish 100 Stories for 100 Years – a weekly column spotlighting resident, staff, and lay leader stories with the Home from throughout our history. This week, we are sharing words from our Past President and loyal supporter, Alvin Notowich.*

## Meet Alvin Notowich



*Alvin with his daughter, Sarna, at the annual Thanksgiving Luncheon.*

*By Shoshana Center*

### **MJHR: Tell us about yourself**

I was born and raised in Memphis; my parents, Sam and Sadie (OBM), had come to Memphis as infants, so it was a blessing to grow up with aunts, uncles and extended family. My brother, Herbert (OBM) was 10 years older than me.

Fun fact: When I was in 6th grade, White Station High School as we now know it was being formed in the early 1950s. White Station students got to vote on picking the high school's colors and mascot. My 6th grade class, which had the most students, was learning about the Spartans. Since we had the most votes, the Spartans won to become the high school mascot!

When my dad passed away after high school graduation, I ran my parent's grocery store at the age of 17 until it was sold, so I could go to college. To catch up in school, I started at Christian Brothers University, took summer classes at then-Memphis State, then transferred to Vanderbilt, where I earned my degree in



*Alvin Notowich attends the MJHR Wishmakers Kickoff Celebration.*

chemical engineering. While in Nashville, I taught Sunday school at West End Synagogue, and Marcia and I hosted Passover seder there for Jewish students.

My wife, Marcia (née Bluestein) (OBM), was also from Memphis. We dated in high school and married after my sophomore year of college. We were actually the first wedding at Beth Sholom Synagogue. We adopted two children, a son and daughter, both of whom live in Memphis.

After a brief stint working in Pittsburgh, my family moved back to Memphis, where Herbert, business partner Larry Welch, and I started our Plastico company, which we had for 44 years until selling it in 2014.

I love being active, especially tennis and golf, plus handball and racquetball when I was younger.

### **MJHR: How did you become connected to MJHR?**

When I served as president of Beth Sholom, I was friends with the Home's executive director at the time, and he suggested I join MJHR's board, which I did around 1992. I was then president from 2004-2006. As board members, we'd always say we wanted to make the Home the best place it could be, in case we ever needed it ourselves.

We did end up needing the Home,

when Marcia had a stroke in 2009 and was a resident for 12 years until her passing in 2021. I visited her every day.

### **MJHR: Share your favorite MJHR story.**

I've been tied to the Home for a long time and have many, many good stories. As the former chairman of the Resident Services Committee, we began a program in which committee members would spend time with residents who didn't otherwise have visitors, which was really successful.

I remember Bob T., a former musician and a multiple amputee at the Home. He was a huge Beatles fan. When board member and volunteer Maurice Buring heard that a Beatles tribute band was playing at a Tunica casino, he made arrangements for a small group from the Home to attend. I drove the van down there for the show. Afterward, the tribute band musicians came out to talk with us and take pictures. They were most gracious, and Bob just lit up!

Another memory is when Marcia and I celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary at the Home. We filled the entire auditorium with family, friends and residents. The Home did a beautiful job. Marcia and I were married for 59 years. The secret to our longevity was that she made sure I was happy, and I made sure she was happy.

### **MJHR: What do you wish for the future 100 years of the organization?**

I hope MJHR continues to be supportive of and dedicated to the needs of the aging Jewish population of the greater Memphis area. I hope it also continues to be run as a not-for-profit, even as the needs change. I pray the leadership can recognize and meet those changing needs. The needs of today are different from what will be needed in 20 years and certainly in 100 years – we must move along as the needs change.

### **MJHR: Anything else you'd like to share about the Home?**

I could go on and on about how blessed MJHR is with such amazing staff.

MJHR has had some great executive directors, each bringing something good along the way. Bobby Meadows is wonderful and outstanding; we're blessed to have him. He's so connected to the residents and their families; he's such a loving and caring individual.

During COVID, when I wasn't able to visit Marcia in person, Yolanda would bring Marcia down in a wheelchair to the outside doors of the Home, so I could drive by there and we could see each other safely from a distance. I was so appreciative. And Sharon Young, CNA, who won the Tennessee Health Care Association's statewide Caregiver of the Year award, always made sure Marcia's hair looked nice; Marcia cared about her appearance, so that was absolutely fantastic. When Marcia wasn't eating much toward the end, there was one staffer who somehow was always able to get her to eat some.

These are just simple examples of the beautiful things happening at MJHR. I could talk staffing all day, they are top notch.

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*As part of Memphis Jewish Federation's Community Holocaust Awareness Initiative (CHAI), Holocaust survivor Jack Cohen was invited by Laura Albert Wilons to share his story about his life in Greece during the Holocaust with the 5th grade at Grahamwood Elementary School.*



*Teens participating in Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemsky Endowment Fund Teen Israel Experience grants program met with Tal Nezry, the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) shlichah at the Memphis Jewish Community Center – a program also supported by the Lemsky Fund. Nezry led the group in an interactive evening exploring Israeli culture, travel, language and food.*

# Marcia Menuskin Receives Woman of Valor Award from Beth Sholom Sisterhood



Marcia Menuskin accepts the Woman of Valor Award from Barbara Hellman at Beth Sholom Sisterhood Torah Fund luncheon on March 8.

Eshet Chayil, the beautiful poem from Proverbs, which defines a woman of valor as one with mental and physical strength, intelligence and trustworthiness, is the inspiration for Beth Sholom Synagogue Sisterhood’s yearly Woman of Valor Award. This year, the award went to Marcia Menuskin, who brought her love and experience to Sisterhood to grow it into the vibrant organization it is today. The award ceremony took place at Beth Sholom Sisterhood’s annual Torah Fund Brunch to support Conservative Judaism on Sunday, March 8.

The luncheon’s keynote speaker was Rabbi Sammy Rosenbaum, who spoke about the forces that shaped him as a Conservative Jew and rabbi – shul,

day school, Camp Ramah and USY. He called Conservative Judaism a “superpower” that enables Conservative Jews to be comfortable in any Jewish setting because one learns “the prayers, the Hebrew and lingo, [which grows] inside your soul [and creates] a love of our tradition.”

Marcia embodies the love of the Conservative tradition. She is a relative “newcomer” to Memphis, moving here from Chattanooga in 2015 with her husband, Jay Menuskin, z”l, to be closer to two of their three children, Jill Steinberg and Lisa Menuskin. Marcia came with an impressive Jewish professional and volunteer résumé. In 1991, she was elected the first woman president



Luncheon Keynote Speaker Rabbi Sammy Rosenbaum spoke of the powerful forces that shaped him as a Conservative Jew and rabbi.

of B’nai Zion, her Conservative congregation, where she also worked part-time assisting the rabbi, supervising the kitchen and overseeing programming. She also served for 11 years as the program director of the Chattanooga Jewish Community Center. She was an advisor to Kadima and USY when her children were young.

Beth Sholom Sisterhood members credit Marcia with expanding Sisterhood activities. Marcia brought her experience as sisterhood president in Chattanooga and the knowledge she gained as an active participant in the Women’s League for Conservative Judaism Southern Branch, a coalition of conservative Sisterhoods in the South.

She served as branch president in 1989-90. Her efforts were recognized when the Southern Branch honored Marcia with the Phyllis Grusin Weinstein Award in 1999.

In Memphis, Marcia formed a Sisterhood management team. To share best practices and ideas, she encouraged participation with what’s now known as the Southern Region of Women’s League for Conservative Judaism. Today, Sisterhood is flourishing and offers four or more member programs each year as well as numerous community service activities.

Now, at 89, Marcia focuses on her role as Torah Fund Chair. Each year, Beth Sholom and Women’s League for Conservative Judaism sisterhoods nationwide raise thousands of dollars for the Torah Fund. The money provides scholarships to rabbinical and Jewish professional students and supports the needs of Conservative/Masorti seminaries. This year, Beth Sholom Torah Fund raised more than \$6,000.

Marcia has a busy calendar. She attends services regularly and frequently visits Temple Israel on a Friday night to hear her granddaughter-in-law, Eleanor Tallie Steinberg, Temple’s cantorial soloist. Marcia continues to exercise in the pool, teach Mah Jong, attend Rabbi Sammy’s weekly Sugyot, and read Torah on the second day of Rosh Hashanah, a job she’s had for 21 years. Born and raised in Knoxville, Marcia says, “I’ve been accused of speaking Hebrew with a southern accent. Of course I do. I’ve lived in Tennessee all my life. What do you expect?” **HW**

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### Old Dominion Shooter Previously Convicted for Supporting ISIS

(JNS) – A gunman who opened fire at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Va., last Thursday and killed one person and wounded two others was previously convicted of attempting to aid the terrorist group ISIS.

Law enforcement officials identified the shooter as Mohammed Bailor Jalloh, 36, of Virginia, NBC News reported. FBI director Kash Patel said that the FBI is investigating the attack as an act of terrorism.

Jalloh reportedly opened fire on a Reserve Officers’ Training Corps class at Old Dominion last Thursday morning. The two injured are reportedly in stable condition.

The victims have not been identified, but the New York Post reported that the deceased victim was the class instructor, a retired military officer.

Patel said students in the class subdued and killed Jalloh after he began shooting.

Jalloh was a former member of the Army National Guard who was sentenced to 11 years in prison in 2017 for trying to provide material support to ISIS. Jalloh was born in Sierra Leone and was a naturalized U.S. citizen, according to the U.S. Department of Justice complaint.

He was released from prison in 2024. **HW**

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# Invest More Confidently in Volatile Markets

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

When financial markets fluctuate, perhaps in reaction to world events, inflation, or a change in interest rates, even the calmest investors can start to question their financial strategies.

But volatile markets can present opportunities to review and reaffirm investment strategies, says Tracie McMillion, head of global asset allocation strategy for Wells Fargo Investment Institute.

“Financial markets are frequently volatile – that’s their nature,” she says. “Even so, during periods of uncertainty, investors may start to question their investment decisions. Having a plan in place can provide the guard rails to help steer through and beyond the volatility.”

In addition to reaffirming and focusing on your plan, here are some strategies you can use to help weather economically turbulent times.

### Match your investments to your time horizon

The simplest way to feel more comfortable about your investments is to align them with your financial calendar, no matter what happens in the financial world this month or year.

For example, do you need some of your money fairly soon or want it close at hand in case of an emergency? If so,

McMillion says you should consider investments such as cash holdings and short-term bonds that shouldn’t lose much, if any, value over the short term.

On the other hand, if you won’t need some of your investment money until you retire multiple years in the future, equities or longer-term bonds are worth a closer look. Those investments carry more risks but also offer potentially better returns.

### Know what to expect from your investments

Some investors lose confidence because they don’t fully understand how their investments work. In that case, McMillion says, some knowledge of typical asset behavior is a good thing.

Consider reading up on different types of investments and asking questions of your financial advisor. Once you know how your investments are more likely to perform in certain financial markets, you can help ensure that your investment strategy is in line with your tolerance for risk.

### Tune out the noise

By “noise,” McMillion means the constant barrage of financial reports and other news events from the 24/7 news media. “Investors usually don’t need to react to the everyday financial news,

no matter how topsy-turvy things may seem,” she says. Keep your long-term goal in mind.

### Regularly revisit your plan

There’s no such thing as a completely set-it-and-forget-it investment strategy, McMillion says. It’s always smart to check in regularly with your investment advisor.

“Your life circumstances may change, or your financial goals could shift,” she says. “You can feel much more confident that your investments are doing their job if you review them regularly with your advisor.”

All investing involves risk including the possible loss of principal. Investing in stocks involves risk, and their returns and risk levels can vary depending on prevailing market and economic conditions. 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

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# 'Stop Blaming Jews' for Iran War, Former Biden Antisemitism Envoy Says



People attending the Unity March and Rally against antisemitism, in San Francisco, April 16, 2024. Credit: Levi Meir Clancy/Unsplash.

(JNS) – Aaron Keyak, a board member of the Combat Antisemitism Movement and former U.S. deputy special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism at the U.S. State Department during the Biden administration, warned against blaming Jews for the ongoing war with Iran.

“Whether in the form of rhetoric from leading political figures or through antisemitic attacks, these critics of the current military operations must stop collectively blaming Jews for the war with Iran,” Keyak stated last Wednesday.

He added that policy disagreements should not translate into hostility toward Jewish individuals or institutions.

“Regardless of any policy disagreements, targeting members of the Jewish community just for being Jewish or seeking to hold them broadly accountable for the actions of the Israeli government, the Trump Administration, or any government for that matter, at the very least reflects an unconscious bias against the Jewish community if not outright Jew-hatred,” he said.

Keyak urged critics to consider how such actions would be perceived in other contexts.

“If one were to take the discussion out of the realm of Middle East policy, some would find the situation clearer,” he said. “For example, while many disagree with how the People’s Republic of China treats its Uighur population, it would simply be inconceivable for those critics to stage a protest outside of a Chinese restaurant or religious institution.”

He added that antisemitic tropes remain deeply embedded in public discourse, leading activists to “fall right into those historic trenches,” even when they do not believe their actions are motivated by hatred.

Keyak’s warning comes amid escalating antisemitic violence, and claims from politicians, podcasters and influencers that Jews are responsible for the war with Iran. The Combat Antisemitism Movement’s Antisemitism Research Center reported a 34% increase in hostility toward Jews and Israel in the first week of the conflict, documenting 154 antisemitic incidents worldwide.

According to the group, 73 of those incidents involved praise for the Iranian regime or conspiracy theories blaming Jews or Israel for the war. **HW**

# FBI Warning Iran May Retaliate with Attack in California Noted 'Unverified' Source

(JNS) – Karoline Leavitt, the White House press secretary, said last Thursday that ABC News should retract its reporting and a related social media post “immediately” for “providing false information to intentionally alarm the American people.”

Leavitt was responding to a post, in which ABC said that “the FBI has warned police departments in California that Iran wants to retaliate for American attacks by launching offensive drones against the West Coast, according to an alert reviewed by ABC News.”

“They wrote this based on one email that was sent to local law enforcement in California about a single, unverified tip,” Leavitt said. “The email even states the tip was based on ‘unverified’ intelligence. Yet ABC News left out this critical fact in their story.”

“To be clear,” she added. “No such threat from Iran to our homeland exists, and it never did.”

The FBI shared a screenshot of the alert, which noted it was “unverified.”

At press time, the ABC social media post remained live, but the news organization had added an editor’s note to its article, stating that the “FBI has posted a fuller version of its alert to California authorities, which includes that the information was unverified. The latest version of this story has been updated with the full statement.”

ABC also posted about the editor’s note on social media.

Sen. Adam Schiff (D.-Calif.) told JNS last Wednesday that he is “closely monitoring this warning, and California authorities and law enforcement have been placed in a higher security posture due to the increased threats emanating from

the Iran war.”

“California’s emergency response capabilities and law enforcement teams are routinely in touch with federal authorities, and we will work to support them in the coming days and weeks,” the senator said.

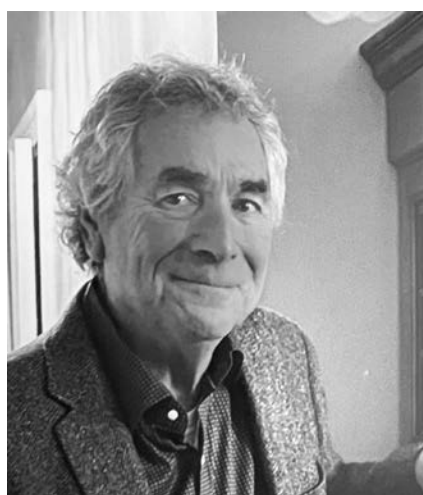
A spokesman for Karen Bass, the Los Angeles mayor, told JNS last Wednesday that the mayor’s office and the Los Angeles Police Department, “as always,” are “coordinating closely with state and federal partners to keep Angelenos safe.”

“At this time, there is no specific or credible threat to Los Angeles,” the mayor’s office said.

Rep. Laura Friedman (D-Calif.) told JNS last Wednesday that the alert was “another repercussion of Trump’s war with Iran.”

“This conflict isn’t making us safer. It isn’t making life more affordable, and

## OBITUARIES



Carl David Reiter

Carl David Reiter has played his last round of golf at Ridgeway CC.

His devoted group of golfing friends will miss “Mook” dearly.

He was the sweetest man with the kindest soul.

The unbreakable bond he shared with his friends spanned decades through life’s highs and lows.

He leaves his wife, Belinda, with everlasting love and memories.

Their time together was too short, but forever cherished.

Carl was fueled by music. His playlist was a reflection of Carl’s authentic self...diverse, eclectic and unconfined by genre, era or social expectations. Whether it was Dylan, Sinatra or Big Band music, Carl knew all the lyrics and sang along as he gallivanted through his nine lives and four holes in one.

Carl had “encyclopedic knowledge” of all things golf. He astounded friends with his uncanny ability to name every Masters’ Champion since 1934 to present. Carl had a gift for composing heartfelt tributes to honor loved ones and commemorate special events. His poetry was a treasured keepsake.

Born in Memphis, the only son of loving parents Edye and Murray Reiter, Carl shared his idyllic childhood with older sister, Marilyn Blumbeks, z”l (John, z”l) and baby sister Ronnye Kendrick (Dale).

Carl opened the iconic clothing store, US MALE on the Highland Strip in the late 70s. It was considered the hippest destination for jeans. During the next three decades, nine more stores would open in Memphis and the surrounding areas.

Carl’s last business venture was Carl’s Wines and Liquor. His two managers, Ethan and Ty, were more than valued employees, they were like sons to him.

Carl was a tonic for the soul to all who knew him. He leaves behind a legacy of love that his family and friends will deeply miss.

Funeral services were held at the Levy Cooper Chapel with burial at Temple Israel Cemetery on Friday, March 13, 2026.

Carl revered Rabbi Micah Greenstein. Donations to Rabbi Greenstein’s Discretionary Fund would please Carl.

February 4, 1944 – March 12, 2026

“The song has ended but the melody lingers on.” Irving Berlin **HW**

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now seven service members are dead, and the FBI is warning of Iranian drone attacks targeting California,” the congress-

woman said. “I am very concerned about the safety of my constituents and have requested a briefing on this threat.” **HW**


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# Family at School and Home: Turning Jewish Values into Daily Life

Daniel R. Weiss and Scott Ostrow

This originally appeared in *Prizmah*. Reprinted with permission.

Jewish day schools are skilled at naming what matters. We articulate values with care and intention, confident that they reflect the kind of people and communities we hope to cultivate. The more difficult question, and one many school leaders quietly wrestle with, is where those values actually live. Do they reside primarily in mission statements and assemblies, or do students experience them daily as they move through school? Are values something we pause school life to teach, or something that shapes school life all the time?

At Bornblum Jewish Community School in Memphis, a K-8 school, the Newburger Mishpachot program is one answer to these questions. What began eight years ago as a way to help students connect across grade levels has become a core structure of the school – one that shapes leadership development, community life and how values are lived rather than discussed. Mishpachot has taught us a central lesson: Values education is most powerful when it is built into the structure of school life.

## Values Built in, Not Added on

Mishpachot – Hebrew for “families” – organizes the school into small, multiage groups that include students from kindergarten through eighth grade, along with faculty advisors. Each student remains in the same mishpachah for their entire journey at Bornblum.

That continuity is intentional and foundational. Mishpachot provides a central organizing structure to students’ journey through the school. Because students remain together over many years, values are reinforced through shared experience, memory and rela-

tionship. Belonging grows from being seen and known again and again.

## Belonging From the First Days of School

The impact of this structure appears almost immediately.

Each fall, about two weeks into the school year, the community gathers for the Mishpachot sorting ceremony. Our mascot, Babka the Bear, rests on stage as kindergarten students are called up one at a time. Each child says their name into the microphone, and Babka “whispers” their mishpachah assignment into the ear of the head of school (Daniel), who announces it aloud. An older student from that mishpachah, often a fifth grader serving as a buddy, comes forward to welcome the new kindergartener and walk them back to their new mishpachah. The child receives a mishpachah T-shirt in their size, complete with the family’s color, name and logo on it.

While the assignments are random, the experience is carefully designed. Every child is publicly introduced, welcomed and immediately connected to older students who will remain part of their school life for years. From the very beginning, students learn to speak confidently, take risks and trust that they belong.

A few years ago, a first grader explained that Babka waits until the second week of school so he can learn each child’s best qualities before deciding where they belong. While the logistics do not work that way, the interpretation mattered. It revealed how quickly students understand that Mishpachot is about belonging – not sorting by achievement, personality or social capital.

## Community That Grows Over Time

As students move through the school,

Mishpachot provides a stable place within a changing environment. Younger students receive care and attention. Older students learn to notice, include and take responsibility for others. Through shared experiences like Kabbalat Shabbat, Tu B'Shvat seders, Field Day, and other schoolwide celebrations, students come to see themselves as part of the broader Bornblum community, not limited by grade level. And because the mishpachah groups remain together for nine years, students experience their own growth in visible ways. They remember being the youngest and over time, come to understand what it means to be relied upon. Community forms not through isolated powerful moments, but through accumulated shared history.

Even during middle school bar and bat mitzvah celebrations, the mishpachah remains central. When students celebrate at school in the week leading up to their simchah, aliyot are given to members of their mishpachah, reinforcing that these milestones belong to a community, not just an individual.

Mishpachot also brings parents, families and board members into this shared life as well. Each mishpachah includes board members who participate in activities and gatherings, offering them a direct view of the school’s culture in action. Parents engage through mishpachah-specific events that include baking challah or babka, creating Shabbat candle holders, or participating in other hands-on projects. These experiences culminate in a shared Kabbalat Shabbat, where parents join their children at the front of the room to help lead the Kabbalat Shabbat blessings.

Over time, these gatherings strengthen relationships among families and reinforce school values within the home. When parents and children lead and celebrate together, the boundaries between the school mishpachah and home mishpachah begin to blur in meaningful ways.

Daniel further extends this sense of belonging by inviting families to Shabbat dinner at his home, often drawing guest lists from families in the same mishpachah. These experiences reinforce that belonging extends beyond students and is shared by the adults who support them. Not just the student belongs to the mishpachah, but the students’ whole family is a part of this community.

## Leadership Learned by Doing

Mishpachot has also become one of Bornblum’s most effective leadership-development structures. Leadership is not treated as a role reserved for a few students, but as a skill cultivated over time by all.

By middle school, students plan and lead Mishpachot gatherings. They facilitate discussions, design activities and pay close attention to how younger students experience the group. They learn to speak clearly, listen actively and adapt when plans change.

Mishpachah leaders meet monthly to plan experiences for their groups. Activities range from collaborative art installations to value-based inquiry projects. In one recent Mishpachot Kabbalat Shabbat, students identified an American president who exemplified their mishpachah’s core value. They created

posters highlighting how that leader embodied the value, and the completed work formed a presidential wall for the entire school to explore.

Faculty advisors support this work by remaining present while resisting the urge to direct. Students hold real responsibility, and leadership feels authentic because it is earned through practice.

## Naming the Values – and Living Them

Bornblum’s Mishpachot are grounded in eight core values: *manhigut* (leadership), *chochmah* (wisdom), *ometz* (courage), *masoret* (tradition), *sakranut* (curiosity), *hagshamah* (achievement), *kavod* (honor) and *chesed* (kindness). While each mishpachah aligns with one value, the program does not teach values in isolation. Students in a mishpachah learn and grow with their value, which stays the same from year to year. And each mishpachah teaches and models their value for the other students in the school, so that by the end of a student’s school journey, they have a deep connection to each of the eight values.

Students encounter values through lived experience. They see them modeled by peers and adults and feel their presence in moments of care, challenge and responsibility. Over time, values shift from abstract ideals to shared expectations.

One structural change that emerged from Mishpachot involves tzedakah, which previously had always been given by class. Now, each mishpachah has its own decorated tzedakah box displayed in the main hallway. Each semester, mishpachah leaders present three possible organizations, and the group votes on where to donate its collected funds. This process teaches students to make decisions based on the values they’ve studied.

## A Question for the Field

Mishpachot has pushed us to reconsider a central question in Jewish education: What might change if values did not sit alongside school life, but quietly shaped its design?

For schools committed to values-based education, the challenge may not lie in stronger language or better lessons. Rather, it may lie in examining where values live structurally, how students develop a sense of belonging, how long relationships last and where leadership is practiced.

Mishpachot is not a model to replicate wholesale; it is an invitation to think differently about how values move from aspiration to action. If we want students to carry our values beyond school, we may need to begin by designing schools that are built around them.

Daniel R. Weiss, Ed.D, is in his eighth year as head of school at Bornblum Jewish Community School in Memphis. He is an alumni of DSLTI, a Wexner Field Fellow, and is in the semikhah program at Yeshivat Chovevei Torah.

Scott Ostrow is in his 14th year as director of institution advancement at Bornblum Jewish Community School in Memphis. Prior to working at Bornblum, Ostrow was a private practice attorney for more than 20 years. In his current position, Ostrow leads the school’s advancement team, including fundraising, admissions and marketing. **HW**

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## Designing for Lived Values

At Bornblum, Mishpachot reshapes daily school life by answering three structural questions:

- Belonging: Who knows every child by name, across years and grade levels?
- Continuity: How long do relationships last, and how do they deepen over time?
- Leadership: Where do students practice responsibility before adulthood?

When values are embedded in these structures, they are reinforced through habit, relationship and shared experience.

# Purim Joy Bursts Out of Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab



Megillah reader, Dr. Sherwin Butch Yaffe, with longtime MJHR board member and supporter Maurice Buring.

MJHR resident plays a carnival game run by volunteers.

Residents received shalach manos swag bags.

## By Shoshana Center

On Purim, joy isn't just encouraged, it's an actual mitzvah (commandment). And at the Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab, that spirit of happiness filled the halls as residents, volunteers and staff came together for a festive Purim Megillah reading and carnival that ushered in smiles, laughter and a strong sense of community.

The Purim celebration began with a lively Megillah reading. Staff members brought residents down to fulfill the mitzvah of Megillat Esther, read by Dr. Sherwin "Butch" Yaffe, master Ba'al Koreh (Torah/Megillah reader). He leined (chanted the trope) in his famous clown costume, a beloved decades-long tradition that perfectly captures the playful spirit of the holiday.

"There was great group participation with booing and noisemakers when I read Haman's name," shared Butch. "Everyone at the Home was very friendly. Maurice Buring, who helped organize the reading, was wonderful, and Rabbi Abbey Kelman, MJHR's director of spiritual care, was very complimentary. It was a very nice event, and I was so happy to participate."

"The Megillah reading had the highest attendance in years," noted Baylee Less-Eiseman, MJHR's director of de-

velopment. "Butch was magnificent," added Maurice Buring, longtime MJHR board member, volunteer and supporter.

After Megillah, residents headed over to the carnival for games, prizes, treats and celebration. Volunteers helped run each game station, making sure every resident could take part in the fun.

"What was really special was that the games could be adapted so residents with disabilities could participate," explained MJHR board member Jennifer Roberts. "For example, residents in wheelchairs were pivoted so they could play games successfully. It was pretty amazing."

Some games required steady aim and smart strategies, while others encouraged creativity. Among the favorites were beanbag knock-the-cans-down, tic-tac-toe toss, Skee-Ball, and a decorate-your-own tambourine/grogger station.

There was also a festive photobooth where residents used cute props to capture joyful memories together. Meanwhile, the concession stand inside the Ronna K. Newburger Adult Day Center offered classic carnival snacks like nachos, corn dogs, popcorn, and, of course, Purim's traditional sweet treat, hamentashen.

"The carnival was so much fun," said MJHR Adult Day participant Ron.

"I walked in and there were so many people smiling, laughing and playing games. When I told a friend how I feel coming out to the Home, I said, 'This



MJHR staff.

place brings out the good in people."

Another highlight came from the students of Bornblum Jewish Community School and Temple Israel's Barbara K. Lipman Early Learning Center, who prepared special shalach manot (Purim goody bags) swag bags for residents.

The thoughtful gesture brought extra sweetness to the day and reminded residents that the broader Memphis Jewish community was celebrating right along with them.

For the many volunteers who helped make the carnival possible, the experience was just as meaningful as it was fun. "It's good for the elderly, so they can feel young again," said one volunteer. "And it's good for the kids and adult volunteers to feel the gratitude in the room."

"Helping with the event made the holiday even more special," added a child who volunteered. "It's enjoyable for us volunteers because we get to watch the residents have fun with the carnival games and bring some happiness to their Purim."

Indeed, that happiness could be felt throughout the room, in every laugh, every game played and every shared moment of happiness.

Purim reminds us that joy, kindness and connection are powerful forces. At Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab, this year's Megillah reading and carnival brought those values to life in the most wonderful way, proving that sometimes the greatest celebration is simply the chance to laugh and play together. **HW**

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## Young Israel Children's Hamentashen Bake



## By Rabbi Akiva Males

On Sunday, February 22, Young Israel's (YI) Moss Grand Foyer was absolutely filled with happy children who prepared for Purim by creating their very own hamentashen! After rolling out many pounds of dough, taking part in lots of giggles and sharing many smiles, all the kids returned home with tons of tasty

creations and lots of happy memories.

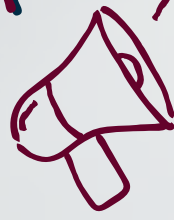
YI thanks Sarah Bracha Wogan for leading this year's amazing Children's Hamentashen Bake – attended by close to 100 kids. YI also thanks Sarah, Hannah and Ella Ardestani; Ahuva Naftel; Goldie Plotitsa; and Noam Davidovics for helping Sarah Bracha mix and pre-

pare all the dough prior to Sunday's event. Yasher Koach to each of you for making this delicious program a reality.

This program was made even more special by the participation of Adina, Batya and Tova – three of this past summer's SEED volunteers. The SEED girls joined YI for a Shabbos filled with

fun programming for girls of all ages. (Due to a tremendous blizzard in NY, they ended up staying several days longer than anticipated.) YI thanks the Ardestanis, Gibbers, Plotitsas, Schwartzbergs and Memphis Jewish Federation for sponsoring the SEED girls return to Memphis. **HW**

DID YOU KNOW?



# Trivia Night



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