

# Jlife

SGPV JEWISH LIFE

March 2026  
Adar — Nissan, 5786

CELEBRATING FUNNY  
JEWISH WOMEN

HOW TO  
PREPARE A SEDER

## THE PASSOVER ISSUE

GOT KIDS?  
Look Inside for  
**kiddish**



JEWISH  
FEDERATION  
OF THE GREATER SAN GABRIEL  
AND POMONA VALLEYS

# LADIES OF LAUGHTER

Comedy Fest

CELEBRATING FUNNY JEWISH WOMEN

2026 CALENDAR OF EVENTS

MARCH 8 - 14

8

10:30 AM | AMUSING JEWS LIVE PODCAST

Jewish Federation | Monrovia

6 PM | STAND UP NIGHT

Laugh Factory | Covina



Featuring: Cathy Landman

11

7:30 PM | FILM NIGHT

Laemmle Theater | Glendale

12

7 PM | IMPROV AND SKETCH NIGHT

Sierra Madre Playhouse



Featuring: Jena Friedman

14

8:30 PM | STAND UP NIGHT

Sierra Madre Playhouse



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JEWISH FEDERATION OF THE GREATER SAN GABRIEL AND POMONA VALLEYS

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# HAPPY PASSOVER

## From Where I Sit

# CELEBRATING FUNNY JEWISH WOMEN

One of my great disappointments is that I was born in the wrong era (and lived on the wrong coast) to experience and witness the comedians that graced the Borscht Belt stages in the Catskills. You see, I love comedy. While I like clever dialogue and comedy writing, give me an opportunity to listen to a great stand-up routine, and you will hear my distinctive laugh cutting through the crowd. That same laugh can be heard watching sketch comedy or improv, let alone a slapstick comedy movie.

There are many theories as to why Jews are synonymous with comedy... or, more specifically, the two are tied so closely together. In fact, there have been countless books written about this subject to better understand this connection and what led to the proliferation of Jewish history in comedy.

So why am I writing about what many people already accept as gospel?

This month, our Jewish Federation will hold its Ladies of Laughter Comedy Fest: Celebrating Funny Jewish Women. As far as we know, this is the only comedy festival that exclusively features and highlights Jewish women's incredible contributions to the comedy world. And I could not be more excited.

Although the results from the Pew Research Center's *Jewish Americans in 2020* study are close to six years old, the findings are still relevant today. One of the most significant points this study illustrated is that the majority of American Jews have

reshaped how they consider they are "affiliated" with their Judaism. A substantial number of people today feel their Jewish connection comes from eating Jewish food or watching a Jewish TV show or movie. In essence, "doing Jewish" is different than at any point in our collective history.

This is one of the reasons we created our Ladies of Laughter comedy festival a couple of years ago. It is an opportunity to bring another Jewish experience to our community that, for many, is more in line with how they feel about their Judaism. And being able to add to the nationwide celebration of National Women's Month is an added bonus.

Since I became our Jewish Federation's Executive Director over 17 years ago, I have strived for us to create and provide opportunities that are relevant and unique in the lives of our Jewish com-



munity. I am proud that we have found something "Jewish" that many people are excited to do.

Before I began grad school, Rabbi Richard Joel, then the President of Hillel International, shared his definition of what makes something Jewish - "the fact that two Jews are doing something together, makes that activity Jewish." In other words, Judaism is two Jews doing something together. I still believe strongly in this maxim and it remains at the heart of this year's festival.

I hope to see you at one of the many Ladies of Laughter Comedy Fest events we are bringing to our community. Let's come together to laugh as we celebrate funny Jewish women. ✨



**JASON MOSS** IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE JEWISH FEDERATION OF THE GREATER SAN GABRIEL AND POMONA VALLEYS.

“My children have begged me to stop thinking about [Zeresh], to stop being so ‘weird’ in my fondness for the obscure. I can’t.”

# OF MASKS AND MIRTH

## The Stark Truths That Lie in Jest

BY ANDREA SIMANTOV

Humor is entirely subjective. My parents loved to laugh and were, in fact, two very funny people. In addition to scratchy LP’s of Broadway shows that we acted out every Saturday afternoon after rearranging the furniture to replicate a proscenium arch, my siblings and I memorized acts of borscht-belt comedians like Shecky Greene, Jackie Mason, Buddy Hackett, Tobie Fields, Don Rickles, Joan Rivers, Norm Crosby and others. The blonde console stereo knew no respite during the Eisenhower era as our love for Jewish humor was nurtured. What began for me in the Catskill Mountains was refined with outings to the Westbury Music Fair. (If you know, you know.)

I do not have to be told that something is funny and, consequently, will not watch any program with canned laughter. Equally revolting to me are gags that are played at the expense of another’s dignity. I loathe practical jokes and consider all forms to be *chilul HaShem*: a desecration of G-d’s name. We don’t knock one another down and certainly do not shame another human being.

The aforementioned children long ago stopped attending the reading of the *Book Esther (Megillah)* with me, primarily because they either have families of their own or they live in strange locations like Tel Aviv. But altered marital status and/or geographical inconveniences may not be the only reasons. It seems that my annual reaction to the mention of Haman’s wife, Zeresh, made my offspring cringe while pretending not to know me.

I can see her with my eyes closed; brash, opportunistic, negative and relatable. First she bolsters her husband’s ego in an us-against-the-world scenario, no doubt protecting

the privileged life she has come to expect. Soon after, however, seeing the writing on the wall, she jumps ship and, in an all-about-me moment, announces to Haman & Company, “You’re cooked. *Hasta l’vista, baby . . .*”

With each mention of her name, I howl with raucous, ribald laughter, drowning out both *graggers* and stalwart readers of the holy book. I mean, the viceroy of Shushan gets browbeaten by his significant other in a scene that intensifies this already character rich tale of lust, avarice, wisdom and faith: How beautifully constructed is that? My children have begged me to stop thinking about her, to stop being so ‘weird’ in my fondness for the obscure. I can’t. Achashveiros wins the Putz Award but Zeresh is a different kind of imbecile. If they ever make a film

version of *Megillat Esther*, I’m signing up to audition *el pronto* for the role.

Among the not-so-funny but achingly poignant lessons of the *Megillah* occur when Mordechai implores Esther to intercede on behalf of her people, lest Haman’s genocidal plans come to fruition. Mordechai instructs Esther to plead with the king on behalf of her nation. She responds that to approach him without being summoned is tantamount to a death sentence. Mordechai responds to his niece with the words, “Do not think that you will escape the fate of all the Jews by being in the king’s palace. If you remain silent at this time, relief



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and salvation will come to the Jews from another source, and you and the house of your father will be lost. And who knows if it is not for just such a time that you reached this royal position.”

These lines are glaringly prophetic but not everyone is capable of heeding the forecast. And while it is certainly meritorious to find humor during times of darkness, it is equally important to know when to stop laughing and, with clarity and poise, act for the sake of Heaven. ✨

NEW YORK NATIVE ANDREA SIMANTOV HAS LIVED IN JERUSALEM SINCE 1995. SHE WRITES FOR SEVERAL PUBLICATIONS, APPEARS REGULARLY ON ISRAEL NATIONAL RADIO AND OWNS AN IMAGE CONSULTING FIRM FOR WOMEN.



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# A JEWISH HOCKEY DYNASTY

**Jack Hughes' Jewish Mom, Ellen Weinberg-Hughes, Is a Hockey Legend, Too**

BY LIOR ZALTZMAN, MY JEWISH LEARNING

**A**merica's hockey team just won its first Olympic gold in over 40 years at the Milano Cortina Olympics, all thanks to an overtime goal from Jewish New Jersey Devils player Jack Hughes.

Jewish moms everywhere are *kvelling* (and reminding you that, yes, he is Jewish).

Yet none have more reasons to *kvell* than Hughes' own Jewish mom—Ellen Weinberg-Hughes.

Weinberg-Hughes, 56, has not one but two sons on that winning team. Her oldest son, Quinn Hughes, a defender for the Minnesota Wild, played alongside brother Jack. And Weinberg-Hughes was also on the coaching staff of the U.S. women's hockey team as a Player Development Consultant. That team won gold the day before the men's team did, making Ellen, technically, the first of the Hughes family to win Olympic Gold.

Weinberg-Hughes was raised Jewish in St. Louis, Missouri and Dallas, Texas. Her father was a doctor who helped advocate for kids with learning disabilities. Her brother, award-winning sociologist and president of Denison University Adam Weinberg, shared that growing up in the South, their family experienced "discrimination because of their faith and culture."

Ellen has had a long and storied career in hockey. It all started when Adam started playing the game. "I wanted to do everything my little brother did and since I was a little girl, I wanted to play hockey," she shared in a 2025 interview. She started playing when she was just 7-years-old.

A report from Channel 5 Action Sports News in Fort Worth featured 12-year-old Ellen playing with only boys on Texas's Pee Wee team as an aggressive defender. The boys paid her nothing but compliments as her dad, Dr. Warren Weinberg, yelled instructions to the team from the sidelines. The older Weinberg said that he feared that as Ellen got older she would struggle to keep up with the "muscular strength" of the boys, but "she likes it, so we let her play."

In that same interview, a young Ellen shares her dream of becoming a professional hockey player. "It's just a goal that I want to reach, it's something that I've wanted," she said. When asked if she thinks she's going to make it, she seems incredibly confident that she will.

And Weinberg-Hughes did. She was lucky to

play hockey for the University of New Hampshire, which was way ahead of its time for offering women's sports scholarships. She also played lacrosse and soccer for the school, because apparently, she is triple talented.

In 1992, she played on the U.S. women's national hockey team, representing the country at the Women's World Championship and earning a silver medal. She wasn't playing in 1998 when women's ice hockey first became part of the Olympics, but before the 1994 Lillehammer Olympics in Norway, the Norwegian ice hockey federation hired her as a USA Hockey ambassador to help promote women's hockey.

"I went around to all the little towns and taught the girls how to play. It was awesome," she recalled.

Aside from coaching and playing professionally, she also worked as a successful (and delightful) sports broadcaster. She was an ESPN sideline reporter during the 1999 FIFA Women's Cup. She's also broadcasted from the Olympics and the Frozen Four.

She was inducted into the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame in 2024, and in a video thanking the organization for the honor, she shared that she's "so proud of my Jewish heritage."

Ellen married former hockey player and coach Jim Hughes, and they had three sons—Jack, Quinn and Luke. While Jim isn't Jewish, Ellen felt it was important to raise her sons, all professional hockey players (Luke plays for the New Jersey Devils with his brother), with Jewish traditions, including celebrating Jewish holidays and honoring their bar mitzvahs.

"We do light stuff for Hanukkah and then Christmas is when we get the big stuff, it's important in my house, obviously my mom is Jewish and my dad is Catholic, I guess it's important to know your heritage," Jack Hughes, the first Jewish man to be a No. 1 NHL draft pick, shared during a 2023 interview.

Ellen quit her broadcasting career when it became clear all three of her sons were very, very serious about hockey. Her husband was busy as director of player development for the Toronto Maple Leafs.

"She was taking us to the rink, the outdoor rinks, and teaching us how to skate. She really helped us grow our passion, driving us around everywhere, a full car. I'm super thankful," Jack recalled in an interview with *The Athletic*.

When the kids got older, though, and started making hockey history in their own right, women's ice hockey beckoned Ellen back. After the 2022 Olympics,

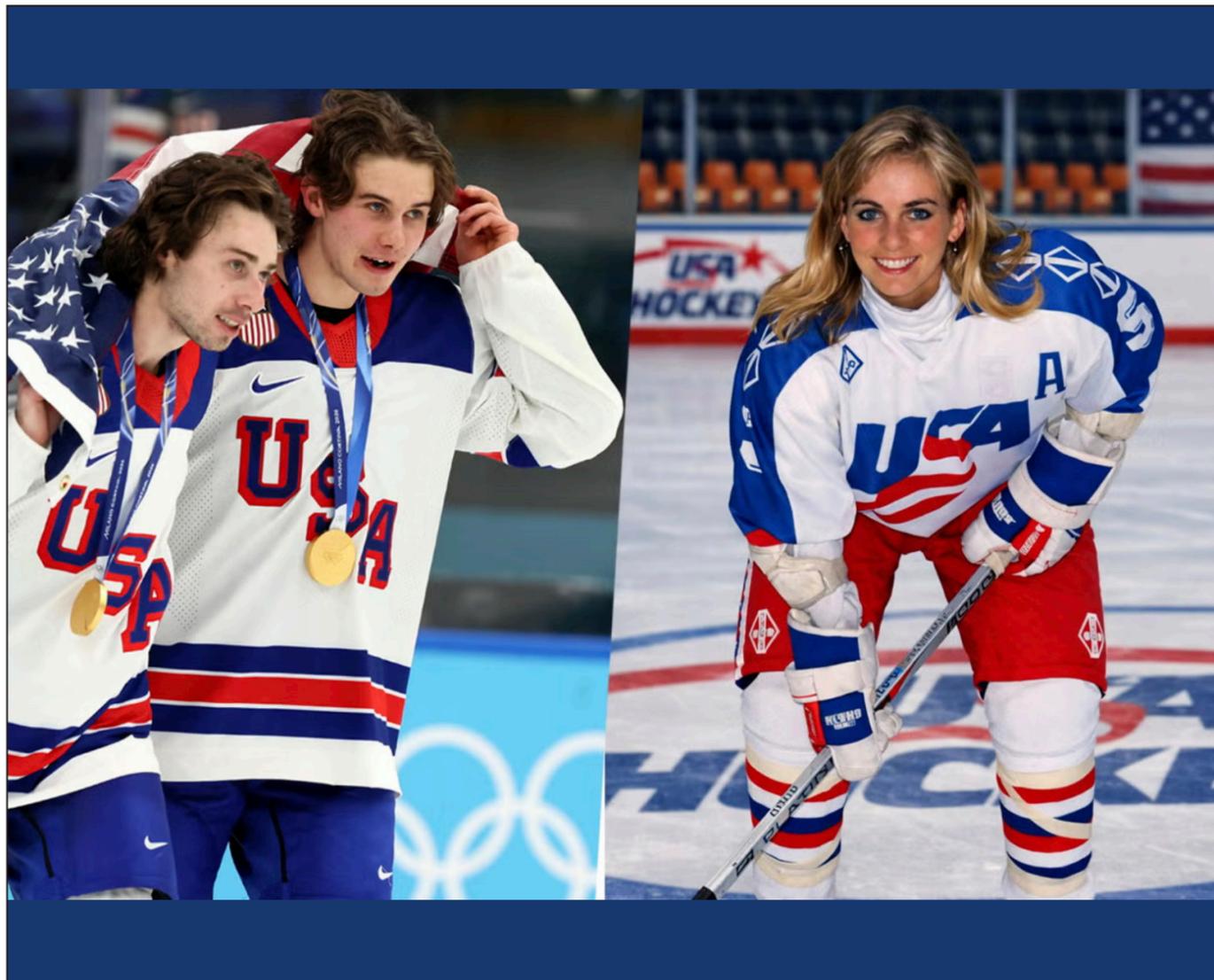


Photo Courtesy of Bruce Bennett and USA Hockey

she texted a congratulations to new team coach John Wroblewski. The two got to talking and he later offered her a job.

In an interview last year, Weinberg-Hughes, who has been on the coaching staff of U.S. women's ice hockey team since 2023, shared how proud she was of how far women's hockey has come, recalling how many talented women players before her never got to wear the U.S. professional jersey. "You can't even calculate where the game is... We are coaching the best players in the world," she shared with fierce pride, "and all they want to do is continue to reinvent the game, continue to set new bars."

"She just has the perfect way of instilling confidence and getting through to us girls and building people up," player Caroline Harvey said of Weinberg-Hughes. "I've never met somebody who thinks the game the way she does. She sees it and she just gets it and knows the perfect way to talk to each of us."

Weinberg-Hughes is one lucky Jewish mom, too—her kids call her often to sound off on just about anything.

"She's just got a big heart and she's there for everyone. But just her intelligence, you can always rely on that. So we're always bouncing things off her—not even hockey-related, just life things," Quinn shared in one interview. Isn't that just about any mom's dream?

Unfortunately, it's not always all happiness. Being the mom of professional players sometimes means sitting through a game grasping your seat with all your nervous might, or watching your son break his front teeth on Olympic ice.

Not every mom could handle it, but Ellen Weinberg-Hughes isn't your average Jewish mom—she's an ice hockey legend, through and through.

Mazel to Ellen and the entire Hughes clan. Thank you for giving us so much to *kvell* about. ✨

LIOR ZALTZMAN IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.

# PASSOVER MEMORIES

## My Family's Large and Joyous Seder Tradition

### All Began With Pogroms in Europe

BY LINDSAY KARP, MY JEWISH LEARNING

Our extended family has been celebrating the first night of Passover under the same roof for nearly a century. Known as The Goldberg Family Seder, cousins travel to Philadelphia from California, Washington D.C., and New York. As a child, I believed this was a typical Jewish family gathering. It wasn't until I was a young adult that I realized this was certainly not the norm. Our most unusual, yet incredible, seders resulted from the pogroms in Eastern Europe during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

My great-great grandmother, Sadie Goldberg, came to America at the age of 11, traveling alone with her 13-year-old sister. As the fear of pogroms in Ukraine heightened, their parents decided the girls would be safer in America, alone, than at home with their family. Pogrom is a Russian word which means to "wreak havoc." It describes the anti-Jewish attacks that decimated countless Jewish communities in Eastern Europe during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Girls and women were singled out for rape, harm, and murder. From this environment, our family matriarch made her way to America with her sister. Today, when I read about the innocent civilians of Ukraine fleeing their homes and leaving behind everything they know and love, it reminds me of my great-great grandmother's journey many years ago.

The courage to leave their parents, their comfort, their home, and everything they knew, would one day allow Sadie's family to establish traditions that are still strong today. She married and had ten children of her own, one of which was my great grandmother. Each sibling married and had their own children, and each year on the first night of Passover, they gathered to commemorate our ancestors' liberation from slavery in Egypt. And so, the Goldberg Family Seder began.

In the early years, the seder took place at Sadie's home, but, eventually, the ten siblings took turns hosting. My grandmother remembers her father moving the living room furniture downstairs and a lofty table filling the room. Family traditions were important to Sadie as evidenced by her remark at the end of every seder: "Let's do this again next year!"

To say we've had to add a few chairs to our seder table is an understatement, but our family continues to enjoy the first night of Passover together, five generations later. Some of my earliest memories are of the Goldberg Family Seder where my many cousins and I recited The Four Questions and excitedly searched for the *afikomen* through mysterious hallways of an Atlantic City event hall. With the entire hall reserved for our family, some wings were closed off to guests, but that only sparked



Image provided by Lindsay Karp

our curiosity further. It was a night of adventure; exploring darkened ballrooms and searching for the *afikomen* in the coat closet, which was filled to the brim with almost 100 family members' jackets.

Now held at a country club near Philadelphia, our seder is led by my cousin, a well-known rabbi whose brilliant presence is felt from across the room. As the youngest generation sings *Dayenu*, the song traditionally sung during the telling of the story of Exodus, the children act out the story of Passover. As we catch up with one another after the meal, I now watch my own children as they eagerly wander hallways in search of a tiny piece of *matzah*. It's a *simcha* in more ways than one.

Keeping our family tradition alive is no easy feat, but when a family enjoys each other's company as much as we do, dedication comes easily. My grandmother is now the oldest member of the Goldberg family, and she has taken pride in being the point person behind the scheduling. With the help of a cousin, *evites* are sent, a room is reserved, and the menu is finalized. No friend or significant other of any family member is ever turned away. For this reason, those who join our family celebration via marriage or friendship are welcomed with open arms. Sadie's wish to gather again next year has repeatedly come true and we wouldn't have it any other way.

Each year at our Passover Seder, as we recite the story of our ancestors' liberation from slavery in Egypt, we also remember Sadie and her escape from persecution in Russia. We look around the room, at our multi-generation family, and thank G-d that Sadie's voyage enabled all of us to thrive and be here together, under the same roof. Dark history has a way of changing the future. Sometimes for the worse, but often for the better. When we find ourselves amid times of conflict and destruction, we must remember to look for the discrete, yet meaningful, positives that may arise in the aftermath. ✨

LINDSAY KARP IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO HEY ALMA AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.

# HOW TO HAVE A MEANINGFUL SOBER PASSOVER

When you're Jewish and in recovery, getting through your first Passover seder without alcohol feels like a miracle.

BY REBECCA BASS, MY JEWISH LEARNING



Photo Courtesy: R-DESIGN

In 2018, I woke up with a splitting headache the morning after my friends' Passover seder. I felt queasy as I tried to remember any of the stupid things I had said.

"Damn, we drank too much Kedem," I thought.

This was my first grape juice hangover.

I had only known Alex for about six months at this point, but my new friend had already done the greatest thing you could do for a Jew in recovery: She stayed sober during a Passover seder for me. She and her husband were hosting, and I had been so nervous to ask her if I would be the only one not drinking the traditional four cups of wine. I was genuinely shocked when she volunteered to stay sober to make me more comfortable. It was my first Passover since I moved from New York City to Portland, Maine, and it was also my first one in recovery from substance use disorder.

When you're in recovery, firsts are big. Getting through your first date or your first wedding without alcohol feels like a major triumph. When you're Jewish and in recovery, getting through your first Passover seder without alcohol feels like a miracle.

I didn't grow up particularly religious, but with every major life transition, I seek the comfort of Jewish rituals and their emphasis on community. In the years right after graduating college, I probably went to more services than I ever had in my life. (That said, for every Tribe Shabbat I attended in 2017, the free wine was 95% of my motivation. I literally had shingles once and still showed up. That, my friends, means you have A Problem.) So when I moved to Portland, five months sober and looking for a change of pace, I immediately set out to find the Jews.

I met my first friends in Portland through the Jewish Community Alliance of Southern Maine, where I ended

up working about a year later. While at the JCA, I had the opportunity to attend a Moishe House retreat on Passover seders. By that time, I was almost two years sober. I had already been thinking about building a recovery-oriented seder because I saw a lot of parallels between the recovery process and the story of Exodus. The retreat gave me the confidence to put those thoughts into action.

I spent the next few weeks researching existing Passover materials that addressed recovery. I ran into a lot of problematic, outdated language, and most of the content was rooted in 12-step recovery programs, like the *Anonymous Haggadah*, published in 1998 by JACS (Jewish Alcoholics, Chemically Dependent Persons, and their Significant Others). Seeking a more modern *haggadah* that wasn't affiliated with a specific program, I decided to adapt my own, which I used to host a small seder at the Portland Recovery Community Center. I didn't previously know anyone who attended except for Alex, who if he once told me in 2017 that I was going to develop and lead an intimate conversation on recovery with strangers in two years, I would have been appalled. When I got sober in New York, I did it with the help of my therapist and psychiatrist. The idea of going to meetings didn't even cross my mind. To me, sobriety was not a group project; I had to do it myself. I didn't consider myself a "person in recovery"—I was just a person who had stopped drinking.

But as I learned more about substance use disorder and as I made friends in the Portland recovery community, I realized that I had been reluctant to identify as "in recovery" because I had internalized the stigma of substance misuse. I had almost missed out on the love, support, and understanding of an entire group of people because I thought my struggle was something to hide, something I had to fix on my own.

Processing trauma as a community is key to both Passover and recovery. Granted, there are a million different types of recovery meetings (shout-out to my SMART Recovery group) and there are just as many ways to run a seder. Still, the basic themes and goals are the same. At a seder we say, "We were once slaves in Egypt," and in recovery we acknowledge, "We were once controlled by a substance." Now we are free, but we set aside this sacred time to remember the tears and bitterness of our past. We honor our perseverance in the face of obstacles. We express gratitude for all of the small miracles that added up to our liberation. Maybe we sing a silly song about a goat (depends on the recovery program). Most importantly, we practice empathy. Just as everyone at a seder is supposed to feel as if they are an Israelite fleeing Egypt, everyone in a recovery meeting identifies with each other's current and past struggles to find sobriety.

A Passover seder is a roller coaster of sadness, joy,



gratitude, and boredom, but the fact that we go through every twist and turn with other people makes it bearable, even fun at times. Sharing our emotions with others is critical for those of us in recovery, too. We often say the opposite of addiction is connection, and as the pandemic continues to force us into isolation, those lifesaving moments of compassion from others become more difficult to find. As a result, the recovery community has experienced unbelievable loss in the past year as overdose deaths have skyrocketed. I lost someone I love to an overdose last September, and I found myself posting about him on Instagram constantly because the grief was too much to handle on my own. My instincts have completely shifted from keeping difficult things to myself to trusting that my community will help me carry the weight of enormous, complicated emotions.

Whether we are remembering the slavery of our ancestors, grieving a loved one, or resisting the urge to use a substance, having the opportunity to do so openly, with the support of our friends and families, makes a huge difference.

It took me years to learn but, in Judaism and in recovery, no one is expected to make it to the land of milk and honey on their own. The novelty of a Zoom seder may have worn off, but the challenges of the pandemic haven't, whether you're struggling with substance misuse or not. Take advantage of this opportunity to lean on each other. If this is your first Passover in recovery, tell your people. Share your fears. Find your Alex. You may be surprised to learn how many people want to help you.

Likewise, if you know people in recovery, check in with them. Listen to them. Stay sober with them. They may not know just how important your support is until they know they have it.

If you or someone you know is struggling with substance use, check out SAMHSA's national helpline, 1-800-662-HELP (4357), as well as their website for more resources. ✨

REBECCA BASS IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND J LIFE MAGAZINE.

Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer USS Thomas Hudner (DDG 116) fires a Tomahawk land attack missile in support of Operation Epic Fury, Mar. 1, 2026.

# HERE'S HOW AMERICAN JEWISH ORGANIZATIONS ARE RESPONDING TO THE JOINT US-ISRAELI STRIKES ON IRAN

**JFNA called to “pray for the success of the joint United States and Israeli actions in Iran.”**

BY GRACE GILSON, THE JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY, JTA



A plume of smoke rises after an explosion on Feb. 28, 2026 in Tehran as U.S. and Israeli forces launch a strike on Iran. (Majid Saeedi)

**M**any—but not all—major American Jewish groups are backing the U.S.-Israel strikes on Iran that began Saturday morning, February 28, while urging heightened security at Jewish institutions amid fears of retaliation.

The strikes, which were billed by both President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as an effort to topple the Islamic Republic regime that has long targeted Israel, follow weeks of stalled diplomacy between the United States and Iran over its nuclear program that failed to produce an agreement.

The American Jewish Committee quickly threw its support behind the United States and Israel, writing in a statement that the “responsibility for this crisis lies entirely with Tehran.”

“The world will be a safer place when the threat of

the Iranian regime’s illicit nuclear and missile programs, along with the IRGC, is dismantled once and for all,” the AJC said. “We hope today’s military action is a decisive step toward fulfilling that vital mission.”

In a post on X, the Anti-Defamation League wrote that it “stands with the United States, Israel and the Iranian people, who deserve dignity and freedom from a regime that murders its own citizens.”

The strikes also follow large-scale nationwide protests in Iran last month over its economic crisis and widespread calls for political change, which were met by a violent government crackdown.

The World Jewish Congress also came out in support for the strikes, calling on the international community to “stand behind this historic effort and support further measures that end the ability of theocratic tyrants to inflict harm on the Iranian people and the world at large any longer.”



An F/A-18F Super Hornet, attached to Strike Fighter Squadron (VFA) 41, prepares to launch from the flight deck of Nimitz-class aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN 72) in support of Operation Epic Fury, Feb. 28, 2026.

Jewish Federations of North America wrote that it will “pray for the success of the joint United States and Israeli actions in Iran,” simultaneously urging Jewish communities in the United States to maintain security protocols.

“All security protocols in North America should be fully observed. May this moment bring a renewed understanding of our shared responsibility for the future of the Jewish people and the free world,” Eric Fingerhut, the CEO of the Jewish Federations of North America, said in a statement.

Following the first attacks, the Secure Community Network “urged continued vigilance across Jewish communities.” In the wake of Israel’s strikes on Iranian nuclear sites last June, Jewish security groups also warned Jews abroad to remain vigilant, as Iran has a track record of violence against Jewish and Israeli targets abroad following military setbacks on its home turf.

“Relevant national organizations and Jewish security professionals remain in close coordination, including with institutions, to monitor developments, share timely information, and strengthen protective measures, particularly in light of Shabbat services and Purim gatherings,” SCN wrote in a post on X.

The Zionist Organization of America praised the strikes as “long-overdue” and said they would be merited by the United States “even if Israel didn’t exist” because of the Iranian regime’s antagonism against the West.

“We are profoundly grateful to President Trump for the courageous, necessary joint U.S.-Israeli operation against Iran’s terror regime and its monstrous terrorist leadership,” ZOA President Morton Klein said in a statement. He added, “History will record that when the moment came, President Trump chose strength over surrender, and that decision may finally change the course of the Middle East.”

But while major national and international Jewish groups rallied behind the military intervention, some progressive Zionist Jewish political groups condemned the strikes.

“Americans are waking up to the deeply unsettling news that President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu chose to start a war

with Iran,” wrote New Jewish Narrative, a progressive Zionist Jewish organization, in a post on X. “This is wrong. It needs to stop.”

Jeremy Ben-Ami, the president of the liberal pro-Israel lobby J Street also voiced his opposition to the strikes, writing in a statement that the group was “appalled by President Trump’s reckless decision to launch a war of choice against Iran explicitly seeking regime change.”

“The Iranian government’s nuclear and missile programs, support for proxy groups throughout the Middle East and brutal repression of its own people represent a real national security challenge for the United States and its allies, including Israel. We would be pleased to see this government replaced with one that is a responsible international actor and responsive to the needs and demands of its people,” wrote Ben-Ami. “However, Iran does not present an imminent threat that requires launching a ‘preventive’ war.”

A range of religious organizations issued statements in the days after the first attack, once Shabbat ended.

“There are many questions about the lead-up to this war and the way the U.S. Congress has been prevented from fulfilling its constitutional role in making the decision to wage it,” the Reform movement said in a statement signed by leaders of five of its organizations. “And yet, there can be little doubt that Iran has been a malign force against its own people and against Israel, America, the global Jewish people, and so many others in the region and beyond.”

The Conservative movement, meanwhile, did not offer a specific take on the war but called the Iranian regime “repressive” and said, “We are focused on the safety of American and Israeli armed forces, the people of Israel, and all civilians in Iran and elsewhere who are in harm’s way.” ☆

GRACIE GILSON IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO JTA AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.

# SAN FRANCISCO MAYOR DANIEL LURIE CONDEMNS ‘TAX THE JEWS’ CHANT HEARD DURING PROTEST

The chants appeared to come from a woman who the DSA denied was affiliated with the group.

BY JACKIE HAJDENBERG, THE JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY, JTA

Jewish leaders and California elected officials have condemned an antisemitic chant that was audible during a recent protest against the repeal of a local San Francisco tax ordinance.

During a news conference addressing a new housing construction development plan hosted by San Francisco mayor Daniel Lurie and San Francisco District 5 Supervisor Bilal Mahmood, protesters with the Democratic Socialists of America chanted “tax the rich.”

According to videos reviewed by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, one woman on the scene can be clearly seen and heard chanting “tax Israel” and “tax the Jews.”

Lurie, who is Jewish, condemned the chants, which he said had come from a group of people.

“At an event this afternoon, a group of individuals that were chanting ‘tax the rich’ began to shout ‘tax the Jews,’” Lurie tweeted. “Suggesting that Jews are wealthy is a tired trope, and targeting our community at an event focused on creating economic opportunity for San Franciscans is decidedly antisemitic. I will never accept hate directed at the Jewish community or any community in our city. Those are not San Francisco values—we’re better than that.”

The DSA, the largest socialist organization in the country, distanced itself from the chants, saying that only a single person was involved and that she was not a DSA member.

“During today’s protest of the Prop I repeal, a non-member joined the crowd and spouted disgusting antisemitic remarks,” the DSA said in a statement. “DSA members and other protesters asked her to stop, but she refused. We want to be clear that whatever hate she holds isn’t shared by DSA members and we categorically reject antisemitism.”

In the videos, the woman is wearing a head covering and glasses and appears to be pacing a distance away from the other protesters.

The incident comes as the DSA, which endorses



San Francisco Mayor Daniel Lurie delivers a press conference during which a disruptor chanted “tax the Jews.” (Screenshot via YouTube)

the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement and opposes economic and military aid to Israel, has both notched major wins and drawn repeated allegations of antisemitism. After Oct. 7, it broke with one of its political stars, New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, following her appearance on a panel where she condemned antisemitism. More recently, one of its members, Zohran Mamdani, was elected mayor of New York City. There, a DSA member last week challenged a DSA-affiliated elected official for condemning Hamas during an open meeting.

In San Francisco, the chant was condemned by other Jewish organizations, leaders and government officials, like the San Francisco Jewish Community Relations Council, California Rep. Ro Khanna, and Anti-Defamation League CEO Jonathan Greenblatt.

In a statement shared on X, Amy Spitalnick, the CEO of Jewish Council for Public Affairs, said, “What does antisemitism look like? This. This is hate and extremism masquerading as progressive politics when, in fact, nothing about it is progressive—and it only undermines the fight for justice, all of our safety, and our democracy.” ☆

JACKIE HAJDENBERG IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO JTA AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.



## HOW TO PREPARE A SEDER

BY MEREDITH JACOBS, MY JEWISH LEARNING

**S**eders are tricky. This is no typical dinner party. In fact, the seder is rife with plagues—from cooking unfamiliar foods for a lot of people to hard-to-predict timing (is this the year your husband will decide every child should have a chance to sing The Four Questions and your chicken will dry out, or is this the year everyone rushes through the *hagaddah* because they're hungry and the soup is still cold?) Here's an organizer to make your seder do-able.

### The Week Before

If you have a separate dining room, set the table now. Don't worry about ironing a tablecloth (who irons anymore?) If it's wrinkled, simply spritz it with water from a spritz bottle. The weight of the water will flatten the wrinkles.

Make it fun. Be creative. Suspend sheets from the ceiling over the table to create a "tent"—pretend you are Moses in the desert (maybe throw in some inflatable palm trees and stuffed donkeys to complete the look). Scatter "plague" toys around the table—sunglasses for "darkness", toy frogs for "frogs", sticker dots for "boils", ping pong balls for hail (really the only tricky one is the last one—maybe ignore that one.) Hang blue and green crepe paper streamers from a doorway. Tape "fish" you've cut from construction paper to the streamers. When you get to the part when the Israelites cross the sea, have the children run through the streamers.

Or, be super creative. Have your seder in a different room from the dining room. Throw tons of pillows on the floor and have your guests "recline" while you read the *hagaddah*. Have plates of veggies and bowls of dip around the room to snack on (no rule says you can't eat during the *hagaddah* reading). Then go to the dining room when it's time to eat dinner.

Figure out your menu early. *Bon Appetit* magazine

always has amazing Passover menu ideas (you can also find the recipes on [epicurious.com](http://epicurious.com)). Make your soup and *matzah* balls the weekend before. While you're at it, make lots of extras. After you cook them, let them cool on a cookie sheet. Once cool, put them in the freezer until they are frozen. Then, place all the *matzah* balls you'll need for the seder in a big Ziploc baggie and put it back in the freezer. Place the extras in smaller baggies (one or two per bag). Use these extras during Passover or after (whenever you feel the sniffles coming on). Just heat up a can of soup and plopp 'em in frozen (they'll defrost in the hot broth).

Make the soup broth early and freeze it. It can be messy to make and depending on the recipe, it can be a two day process in order to skim the fat. Making it early means you'll have less mess (and stress) the day of the seder.

Now is also a good time to get a shank bone for the seder plate. If you have a kosher butcher or grocery store nearby, just ask them for a shank bone (they'll give you one for free). If you're a vegetarian or don't have access to a butcher, you can use a beet because it "bleeds."

Buy lots of wine, *matzah*, and eggs (why does every Passover recipe start with "take 12 eggs"?). If you plan to "keep Passover", check all labels—not every box of *matzah* is "kosher for Passover" and I've been to some well-meaning supermarkets that place non-kosher chicken soup in the Passover food aisle. Don't forget to buy a horseradish root for the seder plate (you can use ground up horseradish, but I like the look of the root).

### Two Days Ahead

Chicken pieces make a great entrée. No carving or slicing. I make a yummy lemon ginger chicken with roasted root vegetables. I'll cook everything a day or two before the seder. This gives me time to clean the mess. Then I layer the veggies in a huge aluminum foil roaster



and place the chicken pieces on top. I cover with foil wrap. This way, I have only one container to warm up for the seder and better still, can throw it away for clean up!

I also make a wonderful gefilte fish casserole. So easy and worth the effort. You can use the kind in a can, or for those fish-adventurous chefs, make your own. Just mash the gefilte fish and add onion, carrot, mayo, lemon juice, margarine, eggs, salt and pepper. Pour into a casserole dish, sprinkle paprika on top, and bake. To serve, slice the casserole into squares (like brownies).

You can also make and freeze dessert now. A flourless chocolate torte is amazing. Just add strawberries.

#### Day Before the Seder

Make your *charoset*. This is a fun activity for the kids. You can make the traditional apple, nut, wine/grape juice mix, but I'd also recommend a Sephardic variation. Put dates in a pot and just cover with water. Simmer until soft. Mash them in a Cuisinart until it looks like a thick paste. Right before serving, scoop the dates into a bowl, pour sweet wine on top, and add crushed walnuts. Make enough so you have extra to use as a spread on *matzah*.

Make the hard boiled eggs. Enough for each guest and the seder plate.

#### The Day of the Seder

If you've been following along, the day of the seder you'll have very little to do. In the morning, prepare the seder plate. Take the egg with tongs and burn the shell a little bit over a fire (I use my gas stove for this). Do the same with the shank bone. Place *charoset*, parsley, egg, shankbone, and horseradish root on the plate. (If you

have an extra space, you are using a Sephardic style seder plate. This space is for a second bitter herb, for example, romaine lettuce.)

Move the soup into the refrigerator to defrost (just the soup, keep the *matzo* balls frozen).

Make dishes of salad and place a piece of the gefilte fish casserole or plain gefilte fish on each salad plate.

An hour or two before the seder: Begin to warm up soup on the stove.

When seder starts: Turn on the chicken in the oven and dump the frozen *matzo* balls into the soup. Place fresh asparagus on a broiler pan but do not put in broiler.

When everyone is eating the Hillel sandwich: Put an egg in a little bowl and add water and salt. Make one for each guest. Begin laddeling the soup—one *matzo* ball per guest.

When everyone is eating gefilte fish: Drizzle asparagus with olive oil and put in broiler (remove in 10 minutes when slightly charred).

Serve dinner as follows:

Egg and salt water

Matzo ball soup

Gefilte fish and salad

Chicken with roasted root vegetables and grilled asparagus

Dessert (you can even make this super easy and just serve macaroons and fresh fruit).

See? Not so scary! Make it simple, stick with recipes you're comfortable with, and plan ahead. You'll do great! (I'm so proud!) ☆

MEREDITH JACOBS IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.

# kidddish

## Let my people go!

The  
Passover  
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**kiddish**

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**How to Keep Kids Entertained During the Passover Seder**

BY LIOR ZALTZMAN, MY JEWISH LEARNING



The Passover seder is a meaningful, beautiful ancient(ish) Jewish ritual. From the retelling of the story of Exodus and the eating of symbolic foods to the chanting of songs, it's full of opportunities for learning, bonding and growth.

It is also so, so long.

The seder really tests our patience as adults, so it makes sense that our kids can't stay seated for the entire *haggadah* reading. I remember so many seders as a kid, hungry and cranky, patiently waiting for the part when we eat as my many younger siblings and cousins wreaked havoc at the poor host's house. By the time we got to the *afikomen* search, things were positively feral.

But it doesn't have to be this way! To stop my and your kids from going feral, I've put together some great distractions for kids attending the Passover seder to keep them occupied, and most importantly, to keep you sane.

1. Make sure they're comfortable: We all love an excuse to don our fanciest outfits – sequins! Tailored dresses! Bowties! But for kids, wearing a stiff outfit all night long can be an extra source of discomfort. So why not wear comfy clothes for the seder instead? You can also get your kids some comfy sweats or pajamas, and allow an outfit change in the middle of the seder if you still want to start off fancy.

2. Print some Passover coloring pages: Get out those crayons! There are plenty of downloadable coloring pages for Passover on the internet and honestly, even my 30-something-year-old self loves having something to color as I'm listening to people reading the *haggadah*. There are also these coloring Passover placemats that serve a double purpose.

3. Have a nosh station: I love the French concept of the apero—a pre-meal or party drink and nosh. Hungry kids are cranky kids,

so serving a little pre-seder apero can help stave those seder cranks. Have a station with cut veggies, cheese if it works for your meal, hummus and matzah chips, or anything else that your kids would like to nosh on.

4. Have a dance party or physical activity break: Organize a dance-off to a Passover parody, or create an obstacle course to cross the Red Sea to help your kids get some of those *shpilkes* out.

5. Passover bingo or crossword puzzles: Are there things that happen at your seder every year? Does someone always spill the wine? Does your uncle make a bad dad joke about Elijah? Create family seder Bingo cards to keep things entertaining! You can also print some of these ready-made Passover crossword puzzles for older kids (or adults).

6. Get yourself some Passover-themed games: Organize a jumping frog competition or matzah ball juggling performance! There's even a Let My People Go board game.

7. Offer some sensory distractions: From Passover slime (yes, this is a risky one for your kids' clothes, but yes, I'm a little obsessed with this matzah pizza slime) to kinetic sand to a box

full of fidget spinners, there are lots of great ways to offer your kids sensory distractions as you go through the night.

8. Put together a craft station: There are so many great Passover crafts out there! Don't want to get messy? You can also have a puzzle table — especially good if you've amassed a pandemic puzzle collection. (Or get yourself a next year in Jerusalem Passover puzzle).

9. Use a kid-friendly *haggadah*: Switch up your *haggadah* game this year! *Kveller* has a family-friendly *haggadah* for curious kids and their parents that's free to download and also available to purchase on Amazon! We also have a list of other great family-friendly *haggadahs*.

10. Or let the kids skip the *haggadah*: There's no shame in focusing on a short retelling instead! We've put together a great, printable, kid-friendly version of the Passover story just for you. You can all read it together, then let your kids loose — to maybe watch that Passover "Rugrats" special or "The Prince of Egypt" — while you do the *haggadah* reading with the adults until mealtime.☆

LIOR ZALTMAN IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND KIDDISH MAGAZINE.



## YOUR GUIDE TO HAGGADAHS

BY JON MADOF

Guess what? Passover is really soon! So if you're planning a seder, now's the time to figure out which *haggadah* you want to use. There are a TON out there, so we thought we could help narrow down your search with a few we enjoy. Some are for kids, some are for adults, and some are for the whole family, so take a look and find what's best for you.

### 1. The *Kveller Haggadah: A Seder for Curious Kids (and their Grownups)*

Our *haggadah* is adorned with colorful and delightful illustrations from our resident designer Grace Yagel—which makes it a feast for the eyes. The best part about this *haggadah*? We're not here to "dumb" things down—we've recruited some of our favorite Jewish experts to answers all your and your kids' Passover questions—yes, even the ones that don't have an easy answer.

### 2. The (unofficial) *Hogwarts Haggadah*

This is the perfect *hagaddah* for your resident Potterheads! This *haggadah* draws on all the parallels between the Harry Potter books and the story of Passover, and honestly? There's a lot! Dress up as wizards for your seder this year and have a magical seder night.

### 3. *Sammy Spider's First Haggadah*

This is part of the Sammy Spider series that cover most

major Jewish holidays with beautiful illustrations and a totally non-scary spider protagonist. It has plenty of fun Passover songs, like "Crunch Goes the Matzah" (sung to the tune of Pop Goes the Weasel). While this one is definitely aimed at kids, the illustrations are pretty and unique enough that adults won't mind flipping through it, either.

### 4. *A Night to Remember: The Haggadah of Contemporary Voices*

Here's another expansive *haggadah* with full traditional text, reflections on the meaning of Passover, folktales, songs, and stories. One of the best parts about *A Night to Remember* is the cartoon illustrations, with pictures like a bitter herbs taste test and a karpas vending machine.

### 5. The *Katz Passover Haggadah*

This one is the coffee table book of the *haggadah* world. Its glossy pages boast intricate artwork that is colorful, beautiful, and sometimes even a little scary. I'd probably avoid showing your kids the picture of Pharaoh bathing in a pool of blood while a decrepit slave sits with his hands chained to his neck, but the adults at the table might appreciate the brutality.

### 6. *Richard Codor's Joyous Haggadah: The Illuminated Story of Passover*

This one is definitely great for young kids, full of large text and bright, inviting pictures. The story of Passover is told in comic book form, and the back of the book has

a recipe for "Chocolate Matzah Delight" that begs to be devoured.

### 7. *Passover Haggadah: The Feast of Freedom*

Here's another fairly straightforward *haggadah*, though its shiny pages do have some abstract, color-block illustrations to make the big chunks of Hebrew text seem slightly less intimidating. It's put out by the Rabbinical Assembly, so you can feel very official while using it.

### 8. *A Family Haggadah*

There are two editions of this *hagaddah*, one with the subtitle "A Seder Service for All Ages" and the other "For Families with Young Children." The one for young children comes with a disclaimer in the introduction: "Do not attempt to discuss all the questions and do all the suggested activities. That would make the seder long and tedious." I like the honesty. Both are very easy to follow and come with the Hebrew, English, and transliteration of all the prayers and songs involved with the seder. They're also nice and small, so you don't have to worry about overcrowding the seder table.

### 9. *My Very Own Haggadah*

This *haggadah* doubles as a coloring book, so it's a great way to keep the kids occupied before, during, and after the seder. It's been around for over 30 years, so it can serve as a nice reminder that what entertained you as a child still has the potential to entertain your own kids.

### 10. *A Different Night: The Family Participation Haggadah*

This is a very comprehensive *haggadah* that keeps both adults and children's interests in mind. Along with outlining the steps of the seder in clear sections, ethnic traditions, interesting Passover tid bits, and even a fictional newspaper with headlines like "Sudden death strikes men and cattle" fill the pages. For the kids, fun things like the script for a Passover skit help make the seder more than just a boring dinner. For those looking for a speed read, there's also a compact edition that has all the traditional text with a little less commentary.

### 11. *The Passover Haggadah Graphic Novel*

The Passover story is so epic, it honestly deserves a graphic novel dedicated to it, and now, it has one. This *haggadah*, illustrated by legendary Israeli cartoonist Erez Tzadok is visually stunning. While it is on the pricier side, it will have the comics fans in your midst captivated.

The Passover seder is an adventure, not a chore—and *Kveller's*, family-friendly *haggadah* captures all the excitement, plus explains everything you need to know. Best of all? It's free! ☆



# Passover Art

*Celebrate the beauty and meaning of this important holiday.*

BY DIANA SHABTAL, "MISSDEE" PSY.D., ATR-BC



Passover and Spring are soon approaching...a festive and fresh time to prepare and try new arts and crafts ideas to do together! Families typically gather together during this holiday and it is a special time in Jewish homes and also a great opportunity to create holiday bonding art together.

Jewish tradition tells us that the most important part of this holiday is the children themselves! Children are encouraged to ask questions about

the story of Passover at the seder and many even get the special role of reciting a part of the historic story and the traditions of this holiday are important, the most important part of all is the children's participation and enjoyment of it. Our children and grandchildren will carry these traditions on, therefore it is very important to engage young children in the process of preparing for, learning about and celebrating Passover. So, what better way to do this than through fun,

hands-on Passover art activities, which also had the benefits of self-care!

Try adding these activities to your own celebration of the holiday to learn about the holiday itself that will have your children exploring, engage in sensory play, storytelling, literacy, art and even some practical life skills. Passover is a holiday rich in ritual objects, and these items can be found in many Jewish homes, some even handmade, collected from special places and passed on from generation to generation.

One of the most special ways to connect young children with these special materials is to engage them in making their own! The best part is that they can be shared at a family seder, used in play or displayed for family and guests to see. There are endless creative possibilities, but here are a few ideas (for all ages) to get you started.

Make your own Seder plate or Kiddush cup, wine goblet, or Elijah/Miriam's cup:

Every seder table has a seder plate and kiddish cups! Symbols of hope and redemption during Passover. Representing the journey from slavery to freedom. Here are a couple of ideas you might try which are easy and fun and can be replicated each year or be lovely special keepsakes to use, always:

All you need is; a ceramic plate for the Seder plate or a wine glass/goblet/shot glass, and enamel (multi-media paint), which both can be obtained at most craft stores. There are four cups of grape juice/wine consumed during the course of the seder and each guest needs their very own kiddush cup! You can paint traditional symbols, Hebrew sayings, or any designs you'd like!

After you paint your item, it can be baked in the oven (see directions on paint bottle) to seal it and enjoy using it at the family Seder together this year or as a cherished gift for a loved one.

Note: there is a simpler version to making an arts and crafts Seder plates and glasses by just using basic materials around the house. For the plate, you will need; a paper plate, markers/crayons/colored pencils, glue stick, magazine cut-outs or printed pictures (which can be obtained online) of seder plate foods for the younger children to look at and/or glue on for the 5 or 6 items on their seder plates, each of which has symbolic meaning to the story. They can also of course draw and color these items instead of cutting and gluing images.

Children can make these seder plates and cups as beautiful and ornate as they'd like and can draw their own decorative designs or even add some stickers, embellishments, tissue paper, permanent

marker and small craft items to glue on. There are also many free printable Seder plate coloring sheets which can be found online and printed, which can also be used as reference or for pictures of the seder plate foods to color and glue.

Make your own matzah cover/afikoman bag:

This is one of my favorite activities which can be handed down over generation! A part of the Seder is covering the table and matzah in beautiful and ornate wraps. This is an opportunity to make your own decorative fabric garment to cover the matzah using using a white cloth napkin or a square of white fabric/felt. You can write the word "Matzah," or a prayer, or meaningful family message on it in English or even Hebrew if you wish. These covers can be decorated using fabric markers or fabric paints, and even permanent sharpies wound work, as well as gluing on small craft items or even tie-dyeing them! The same can be done if you choose to make an afikoman bag for half of the piece of matzah which is hidden during the Seder. This can be done with a small pillow case or with fabrics, which can be sewed or folded in half, leaving the top open like an envelope. The afikoman bag can also be made from construction paper if you do not have fabric on hand, which allows the little kids to use crafty decorative items as listed above.

A final wonderful and easy activity to do together for all ages is Painting Symbolic Passover/Jewish art: As a family you can first discuss/teach or read about the meaningful traditional symbols that depict the history of Passover and its stories. Then you can all draw and paint what comes to mind by using anything on hand, whether it be canvas and acrylic paints, watercolors with paper, or even crayons and markers. This is a great fun and creative way for children to learn about Judaism and the holiday and artwork to hang up and enjoy this Spring season!

We hope you enjoy these creative ideas and try these special, creative, fun, bonding, and joyful ways to celebrate the Passover seder as a family and gathering with loved ones...making memories and the passing down and retelling of stories related to the Jewish holiday and family traditions and looking towards the bright colorful future together. Happy Passover with Love and best wishes in great health and happiness to you all! ✨

DIANA SHABTAL, "MISS DEE" PYY.D, ATR-BC IS A BOARD CERTIFIED ART THERAPIST WHO OBTAINED A MASTERS DEGREE IN CLINICAL ART THERAPY, MA IN MARRIAGE & FAMILY THERAPY & A DOCTORATE DEGREE IN MFT. SHE IS PASSIONATE ADVOCATE FOR BRINGING AWARENESS TO THE THERAPEUTIC BENEFITS OF ART. EXPERIENCE STUDYING, WORKING, & EDUCATING IN THE FIELD OF PSYCHOLOGY & THE THERAPEUTIC ARTS FOR NEARLY 20 YEARS. SHE IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO JLIFFE MAGAZINE.

# COOKING JEWISH

Lifestyle

## SEPHARDIC DELIGHTS

The exotic flavors of  
the Middle East.

BY JUDY BART KANCIGOR



Really-Not-So-Short Ribs

Years ago, when I interviewed Wolfgang Puck about his Seders at Spago, he told me, “If I would become Jewish, I would become Sephardic because of the cooking.” As an Ashkenazi Jew, I can totally relate. What is it about those Mediterranean flavors that are so enticing? The exotic spices. The luscious fresh fruits and vegetables.

Sure, my Russian grandmother used spices – garlic powder, paprika and pepper – lots of pepper! (She was a Litvak!) But when I think of her cuisine, nothing green comes to mind. Beets, carrots, onions, radishes—those familiar vegetables of Eastern Europe graced her table in America as well. When I asked my mother if she could remember eating any vegetables when she was growing up, she said, “Sure. We had potatoes.”

I still salivate over the hearty, rich Eastern European delicacies I grew up on – the brisket, *borsht*, *kneidlach* and *blintzes* – but the amazing variety and intense flavor of Middle Eastern cuisine beckons, and it doesn’t hurt that it’s healthful too.

At the heart of this cooking are the spice blends and condiments that give these dishes their zing. How often did I pass up a recipe because some of the ingredients were unfamiliar? *Baharat*? *Harissa*? *Hawaij*? Never heard of them. *S’chug*? What is that? Preserved lemons? Sounds complicated. I was a culinary xenophobe.

Then someone gave me some *za’atar* from Israel. I sprinkled it on an omelet and was hooked. Learn to prepare a few of these mixtures, and the whole world of Sephardic cooking opens up to you. These days you can find more and more prepared versions in specialty shops, even on supermarket shelves.

“Think of harissa as a modern-day gourmet hot sauce – or, if you prefer, as an update to Tabasco,” said Einat Admony, James Beard nominated chef and owner of New York’s Balaboosta, the fine dining Middle Eastern Israeli restaurant, as well as the beloved fast casual falafel chain, Taïm and as author of “Balaboosta: Bold Mediterranean Flavors to Feed the People You Love,” (Artisan, \$29.95). Harissa gives her Really-Not-So-Short

Ribs a dramatic flavor boost, a jolt of flavor for your Passover seder.

*S’chug* she refers to as “Dad’s hot, hot, hot sauce.” “My father actually takes this homemade sauce with him to restaurants,” she explains. “Even today he cleans the cilantro, picks his own chile in the spice market, peels the garlic, and grinds it all by himself – a true labor of love.”

Admony’s mixed Israeli heritage reflects her Yemenite and Persian upbringing, but like Israeli cuisine itself (if there is any such thing), her style reflects borrowings from many cultures in the region. Ironically, she chose the Yiddish word “*balaboosta*” for one of her restaurants as well as her first cookbook.

“I chose the name because it’s warm and reflects who I am,” she said. And she’s not talking about the stereotypical perfect housewife of yesteryear. “Today it’s trickier. Most women work outside their homes, managing careers and kids, so it’s hard to live up to the traditional definition. A modern *balaboosta* figures out how to build a successful career without neglecting her husband and family.”

During the Seder, we eat matzoh with *haroset*, the fruit-nut mixture resembling, in color and texture, the mortar the ancient Hebrews used as slaves in Egypt, and combine it with bitter herbs, to remember the bitterness of slavery and the sweetness of freedom. Yet, unlike the roasted lamb, bitter herbs, and *matzo*, *haroset* is not mentioned in the Torah as one of the foods we are commanded to eat on Passover and doesn’t show up as part of the Seder until hundreds of years later in the *Mishnah*. While the *Mishnah* mentions placing unleavened bread, lettuce and *haroset* on the Passover table, *haroset* is referred to as a type of appetizer, leading to much debate about its inclusion in the ritual proper.

“The name ‘*haroset*’ comes from the Hebrew word for clay (*chres*),” explains Oded Schwartz in “In Search of Plenty” (Culture Concepts). “*Haroset* is a direct descendent of the Greco-Roman sweet-sour sauces which were served at the beginning of a feast as a dip for raw bitter salad herbs. They were eaten to refresh the palate and tantalize the appetite...and were

probably adopted in Israel under the Greek and Roman occupation.”

We tend to think of *haroset* as a strictly Passover tradition, but it wasn’t always so. “*Haroset* was probably eaten throughout the year, as the *Mishnah* specifies that flour is not allowed just in a Pesach *haroset*,” notes Schwartz, “There is no set rule about which fruit should be used, but the tradition is to use fruit which is associated with the land of Israel: dates, figs, raisins and pomegranates.” Obviously, these fruits were unavailable in the *shtetls* of Eastern Europe, and the Ashkenazim apple-walnut version was born.

Even the spices used in the mixture are symbolic, suggests Ungar. “Cinnamon and ginger, which are hard spices until ground, are added to the mixture to recall the straw pieces the Egyptian taskmasters forced Hebrew slaves to use for making bricks after they stopped supplying them with clay.”

Two recipes in Faye Levy’s “1,000 Jewish Recipes” (IDG Books Worldwide) – her Yemenite *Haroset* and *Haroset Truffles* – inspired me to create these pretty little *haroset* balls. They are so sweet, spicy, and festive, they really belong on the dessert table, but I like to serve them, along with traditional *haroset*, on the appetizer plate, where they won’t get lost amidst that ostentatious display of sponge cakes, tortes, cookies, and pastries. (Ah, yes, poor us. No bread for a week. Thus we remember the sufferings of our ancestors!) ✨

“At the heart of this cooking are the spice blends and condiments that give these dishes their zing.”

JLIFE FOOD EDITOR JUDY BART KANCIGOR IS THE AUTHOR OF “COOKING JEWISH” (WORKMAN) AND “THE PERFECT PASSOVER COOKBOOK” (AN E-BOOK SHORT FROM WORKMAN), A COLUMNIST AND FEATURE WRITER FOR THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS AND CAN BE FOUND ON THE WEB AT [WWW.COOKINGJEWISH.COM](http://WWW.COOKINGJEWISH.COM).



Yemenite Haroset Truffles

## Really-Not-So-Short Ribs

- Serves 4 to 6  
 3 tablespoons canola oil  
 1 large carrot, coarsely chopped  
 1 large yellow onion, coarsely chopped  
 3 celery ribs, cut into 1/4-inch pieces  
 1 large leek, white and light green parts only, cut into 1/4-inch pieces  
 5 garlic cloves  
 4 fresh thyme sprigs  
 1 fresh rosemary sprig  
 1 bay leaf  
 4 cups red wine  
 4 cups chicken stock  
 1/2 cup honey  
 3 tablespoons kosher salt  
 1 1/2 teaspoons Baharat (recipe below)  
 1 teaspoon sweet Hungarian paprika  
 1 teaspoon ground cumin  
 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper  
 5 pounds beef short ribs, rinsed

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Heat oil in large Dutch oven or other large, heavy pot until it starts smoking. Add carrot, onion, celery, leek, and garlic. Sauté until vegetables start to caramelize, about 15 minutes. Add thyme, rosemary, and bay leaf and sauté another 5 minutes.
3. Add wine and bring to a boil, then reduce mixture by half. Add chicken stock, honey, salt, baharat, paprika, cumin, and pepper. Bring to a boil; then lower heat to simmer.
4. Using tongs, sandwich short ribs between a layer of vegetables on bottom and another layer of vegetables on top. Ladle some sauce over the short ribs, then cover with a lid. Bake until meat is fork-tender, 2 1/2 to 3 hours. Serve with sauce.

**Baharat**  
 Makes about 1 1/3 cups  
 2 tablespoons ground black pepper  
 3 tablespoons allspice  
 3 tablespoons ground coriander

## Yemenite Haroset Truffles

Grind toasted almonds for coating before preparing truffles to avoid cleaning the processor twice.

- Yield: 20 to 24 truffles  
 1/3 cup (2 ounces) pitted dates  
 1/3 cup (2 ounces) dried figs  
 1/3 cup (2 ounces) raisins  
 1/3 cup (2 ounces) dried apricots  
 2 1/2 tablespoons honey  
 1 1/2 tablespoons orange liqueur  
 1 1/2 teaspoons ground cinnamon  
 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger  
 1/8 teaspoon ground cloves  
 1/8 teaspoon ground cumin  
 3/4 cup toasted coarsely chopped pecans  
 3/4 cup slivered almonds, toasted



**For the Coating:**  
 1/2 cup slivered almonds, toasted and finely ground

1. Combine dried fruit, honey, orange liqueur and spices in food processor and pulse until smooth. Add pecans and slivered almonds, and process until well combined. Refrigerate, covered, until firm, at least 3 hours.
2. Form mixture into balls 1 to 1 1/2 inches in diameter. Roll them in the ground almonds, and place them in individual fluted foil or paper candy cups. May be refrigerated up to 5 days.

- 5 tablespoons ground cinnamon  
 1 tablespoon ground cloves  
 3 tablespoons ground cumin  
 1 teaspoon ground cardamom  
 4 teaspoons ground nutmeg  
 2 tablespoons sweet Hungarian paprika  
 1 tablespoon dried lemon zest (optional)  
 4 teaspoons dried ginger (optional)

Combine all the ingredients together until well mixed. Store in airtight jar away from direct sunlight. ☆

# PASSOVER CHICKEN NUGGETS

BY SARAH M. LASRY, MY JEWISH LEARNING



There are those who believe chicken nuggets are just for kids. I feel sorry for those people, because they obviously never tried this recipe. Crispy on the outside, soft and juicy on the inside, these battered chicken nuggets are truly the highlight of any Passover meal. I dress up these chicken nuggets all the time, by adding spices to the batter and serve them up with a delicious assortment of dipping sauces, that kids and adults all go crazy for. This recipe is from my Aunt Rachel, who patiently stands in front of her stove and makes these fresh-to-plate practically every holiday that she can. It is the quintessential batter recipe for anything that you want to deep fry.

Recipe from the #1 Best Seller *Kosher for Passover eCookbook*  
 4 Bloggers Dish: Passover (Modern Twists on Traditional Flavors).

Non Gebrokt & Meat  
 Serves 4-6  
**Ingredients:**  
 4 eggs  
 3/4 cup Potato Starch  
 1/4 tsp. salt

- dash pepper  
 1/4 tsp of basil or oregano  
 1/4 cup vegetable oil  
 4-6 boneless chicken breasts cut into small nugget chunks  
 Vegetable oil for frying

### Directions:

1. Heat vegetable oil in large frying pan.
2. In a small bowl combine the first 6 ingredients well. Dip chicken pieces into batter and cover chicken well. Using a fork gently place chicken into hot oil and let fry on each side for about 3 minutes or until golden brown. Remove and drain on paper towel. Serve hot.

### Prep Ahead Guide:

You can batter the raw chicken nuggets up to two hours before serving. Keep them on a parchment lined aluminum tray in refrigerator. These are best served freshly fried.

### Take To-Go:

These are also a great item to take on the go for kids. Fry fresh and then pack in to-go containers. Serve cold or at room temperature. ☆

SARAH M. LASRY IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.

# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

March 2026

## THURSDAY, MARCH 5

**7:00 PM**  
Ladies of Laughter Comedy  
Fest: Golden Love  
Isn't Blind  
Temple Beth Israel of  
Highland Park  
and Eagle Rock  
5711 Monte Vista Street  
Highland Park, CA  
Cost: \$25.00

## THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 12, 19 & 26

**6:30 - 9:00 PM**  
**EVERY WEEK ON  
THURSDAY UNTIL  
MARCH 26, 2026**  
Miller Intro to Judaism  
Program  
Pasadena Jewish  
Temple and Center, PJTC

## FRIDAY, MARCH 6 & 20

**10:00 - 11:30 AM**  
**EVERY 2 WEEKS UNTIL  
MAY 15, 2026**  
Gan Katan:  
Our Little Garden  
Jewish Federation of the  
Greater San Gabriel and  
Pomona Valleys  
114A W. Lime Avenue  
Monrovia, CA  
Cost: \$150.00, JFSGPV

## FRIDAY, MARCH 6

**6:30 - 9:30 PM**  
Purim Dinner  
Temple Beth David of the  
San Gabriel Valley, TBD

## FRIDAY, MARCH 6, 13, 20 & 27

**7:00 - 8:00 PM**  
**EVERY WEEK UNTIL  
MAY 29, 2026**  
Erev Shabbat  
Temple Ami Shalom  
On Zoom, TAS

## SATURDAY, MARCH 7, 14, 21 & 28

**10:00 AM - NOON**  
**EVERY WEEK UNTIL  
MAY 30, 2026**  
Shabbat services at  
Temple Ami Shalom, TAS

## SUNDAY, MARCH 8

**10:00 AM - NOON**  
Dress-Up & Do-Good:  
A PJ Library Purim  
Southern California  
Children's Museum  
459 E Colorado Blvd  
Pasadena, CA  
Contact: Natalie Karic  
nkaric@jewishsgpv.org  
Join us to make mishloach  
manot (Purim gift baskets)  
for animals in need in our  
community.

## SUNDAY, MARCH 8

**10:00 AM - NOON**  
Ladies of Laughter Comedy  
Fest: Amusing Jews  
Live Podcast  
Jewish Federation of the  
Greater San Gabriel and  
Pomona Valleys  
114A W. Lime Avenue  
Monrovia, CA

## SUNDAY, MARCH 8

**7:00 - 9:00 PM**  
Ladies of Laughter Comedy  
Fest: Stand-Up Night  
Laugh Factory  
Covina104 N Citrus Ave.  
Covina, CA 91023  
Cost: \$35.00

## WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11

**7:30 - 9:30 PM**  
Ladies of Laughter Comedy  
Fest: Film Night  
Laemmle Theater Glendale  
207 N. Maryland Ave.  
Glendale, CA 91206  
Cost: \$18.00

## THURSDAY, MARCH 12

**7:00 - 10:00 PM**  
Ladies of Laughter Comedy  
Fest: Improv  
and Sketch Night  
Sierra Madre Playhouse  
87 W. Sierra Madre Blvd.  
Sierra Madre, CA 91024  
Cost: \$25.00

## FRIDAY, MARCH 13

**7:30 - 9:30 PM**  
Shabbat Service  
Temple Beth David, TBD

## SATURDAY, MARCH 14

**8:00 - 10:00 PM**  
Ladies of Laughter Comedy  
Fest: Stand-Up Night  
Sierra Madre Playhouse  
87 W. Sierra Madre Blvd.  
Sierra Madre, CA 91024  
Cost: \$40.00

## THURSDAY, MARCH 19

**10:30 AM - NOON**  
PJ Library Makes Music In  
the Park with Mr. Mark  
Lewis McAdams Riverfront  
Park2944 Gleneden St  
Los Angeles, CA 90039  
Contact: Natalie Karic  
nkaric@jewishsgpv.org,  
JFSGPV

## FRIDAY, MARCH 20

**7:30 - 9:30 PM**  
L'Dor Vador  
Temple Beth David, TBD

## FRIDAY, MARCH 27

**7:30 - 9:30 PM**  
Shabbat HaGadol  
Temple Beth David, TBD

## SUNDAY, MARCH 29

**2:00 - 4:00 PM**  
PJ at the Playhouse:  
Song of the North  
Pasadena Playhouse  
39 S. El Molino Avenue  
Pasadena, CA 91101

Beth Shalom  
of Whittier (BSW)  
[www.bethshalomofwhittier.net](http://www.bethshalomofwhittier.net)

B'nai Simcha  
Community Preschool  
[www.bnaisimcha.org](http://www.bnaisimcha.org)

Chabad Jewish Center of  
South Pasadena  
[www.jewishsouthpasadena.com](http://www.jewishsouthpasadena.com)

Chabad of Arcadia  
(CoA)  
[www.jewisharcadia.com](http://www.jewisharcadia.com)

Chabad of Pasadena  
(CoP)  
[www.chabadpasadena.com](http://www.chabadpasadena.com)

Chabad of the  
Inland Empire (CIE)  
[www.chabadinlandempire.com](http://www.chabadinlandempire.com)

Congregation Hugat  
Haverim (CHH)  
[www.hugathaverim.com](http://www.hugathaverim.com)

Congregation Emanu El  
(CEE)  
<https://emanuelsb.org/>

Jewish Federation of  
the Greater San Gabriel  
and Pomona Valleys  
(JFGSGPV)  
[www.jewishsgpv.org](http://www.jewishsgpv.org)

Pasadena Jewish  
Academy (PJA)  
[www.pasadenajewishacademy.com](http://www.pasadenajewishacademy.com)

Pasadena Jewish  
Temple & Center (PJTC)  
[www.pjtc.net](http://www.pjtc.net)

Temple Ami Shalom  
(TAS)  
<https://templeamishalom.org/>

Temple Beth Israel of  
Pomona (TBI)  
[www.tbipomona.org](http://www.tbipomona.org)

Temple Beth David of  
the San Gabriel Valley  
(TBD)  
[www.templebethdavidsgv.org](http://www.templebethdavidsgv.org)

Temple Beth Israel of  
Highland Park and Eagle  
Rock (TBILA)  
[www.tbila.org](http://www.tbila.org)

Temple B'nai Emet (TBE)  
<https://templebnaiemet.org>

Temple Sinai of Glendale  
(TSG)  
<http://temple-sinai.net>

Temple Shalom of  
Ontario (TSO)  
[www.templeholomofontario.org](http://www.templeholomofontario.org)

Tree of Life Preschool  
(formerly TBI Preschool)  
(ToL)  
<https://tbipomona.org> ☆

**Ladies of Laughter Comedy Fest**  
CELEBRATING FUNNY JEWISH WOMEN  
SUNDAY, MARCH 14, 8:30 PM  
**STAND UP NIGHT**  
JENA FRIEDMAN  
GINA GOL  
EUNJI KIM  
JESSICA WINTHER  
SIERRA MADRE PLAYHOUSE  
JEWISH FEDERATION OF THE GREATER SAN GABRIEL AND POMONA VALLEYS

## Saturday, March 14 at 8:30 PM Sierra Madre Playhouse

Get ready for a night of smart, sharp, can't-stop-laughing comedy!

Join us for the Ladies of Laughter Comedy Fest: Stand-Up Night at the Sierra Madre Playhouse, featuring an incredible lineup of hilarious voices—and a headliner you won't want to miss.

Featuring:

- Jessica Winther
- Gina Gold
- Jessica Saul

Headliner: Jena Friedman

An evening of bold humor, great company, and big laughs—perfect for a night out.

Mark your calendar—this one's a crowd-pleaser!

Tickets & info: [www.jewishsgpv.org](http://www.jewishsgpv.org)

# NEWS & JEWS

## Jewish Studio Project's 10th Anniversary Elevates Creative Capacity as Essential in an Uncertain Time

**A decade of work at the intersection of creativity, Jewish life, and leadership positions the organization at the forefront of a growing national conversation about how communities adapt to change.**

At a time when communities and institutions across the country are struggling to navigate polarization, grief, and rapid change, Jewish Studio Project (JSP) is marking its 10th anniversary by elevating a bold claim: creativity isn't extra, it's essential.



Over the past decade, JSP has built a national movement reframing creativity as a core capacity for life and leadership—one that strengthens resilience, deepens moral imagination, and equips communities to stay in relationship across difference when certainty collapses

"In this moment of collective heartbreak and upheaval, we need tangible tools that expand our curiosity, courage, and capacity to imagine new possibilities," said Dr. Imani Chapman, Chair of JSP's Board.

Founded in 2015 by Rabbi Adina Allen and Jeff Kasowitz, JSP's work centers the belief that transformation unfolds through process—not certainty—and that every person carries innate creative capacity that can be activated for communal renewal.

The organization has developed a distinctive model that blends Jewish wisdom, creative process, and leadership development. Its approach treats creativity not as self-expression, but as a disciplined practice for navigating complexity—one that can be learned, cultivated, and applied across sectors.

"Ten years in, we're seeing that creativity is not a luxury—it's foundational, and it's a capacity everyone can cultivate given the right tools and support," said Kasowitz.

JSP has engaged tens of thousands of individuals (including

educators, clergy, artists, and institutional leaders) across hundreds of Jewish organizations nationwide, through immersive fellowships, workshops, and partnerships. Participants report renewed clarity of purpose, greater emotional agility, and practical frameworks for leading through disruption.

"JSP gives me space to notice the feelings inside me and move through difficult moments," a JSP Participant shared. "I always leave our sessions feeling shifted—more grounded, with renewed energy to move forward."

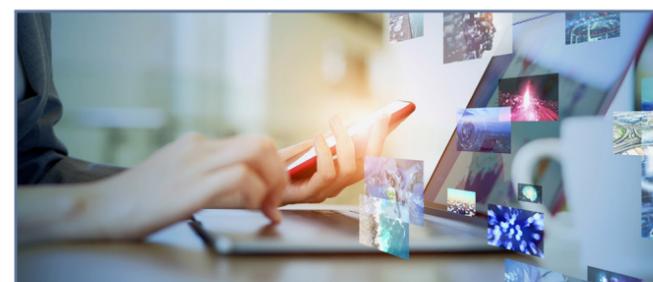
The 10th anniversary will culminate in "We The Process," a national livestream gathering on March 1, bringing together partners and participants for an evening of storytelling, music, and participatory art-making. The event will honor three internationally recognized leaders whose work embodies JSP's values:

- Krista Tippett, Peabody Award-winning journalist and host of On Being
- Bayo Akomolafe, global speaker and author exploring posthumanist futures
- Susan Magsamen, founder of the International Arts + Mind Lab and author on neuroaesthetics

Alongside the anniversary, JSP has launched a \$500,000 campaign to expand its impact and reach in its second decade.

"Genesis opens with chaos and void," said Allen. "Creation doesn't wait for clarity; it begins in the dark. At a time when fear constricts our collective imagination, creativity is how we participate in that original creative act again—bringing new worlds into being."

Registration and campaign information: <https://www.jewishstudioproject.org/we-the-process-celebration>. ✨



## JPAC is now JEWISH CALIFORNIA - Our Voice in Sacramento

JPAC has officially relaunched as Jewish California – Our Voice in Sacramento.

Founded in 1972, Jewish California represents us and 40 other member organizations serving hundreds of thousands of Californians and advocating on behalf of the state's 1.2 million Jews. The new name reflects growth, clarity, and continued commitment to combating antisemitism, protecting civil rights, and advancing policies rooted in dignity, justice, and shared responsibility.

While the name has changed, the mission remains the same: amplifying Jewish voices through statewide advocacy and coalition-building to better the lives of Jews and all Californians.

Learn more at [www.jewishcal.org](http://www.jewishcal.org).

The Jewish Federation of the Greater San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys is a member of Jewish California. ✨

## LAST WORD



*Happy Passover to you and yours.*  
— JLife Magazine

Independent Living | Assisted Living | Memory Care



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