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# Jlife

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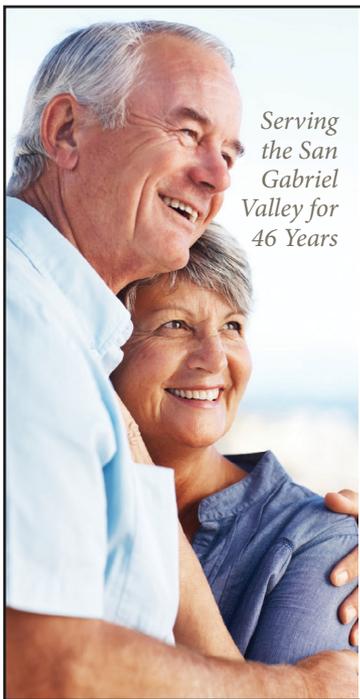


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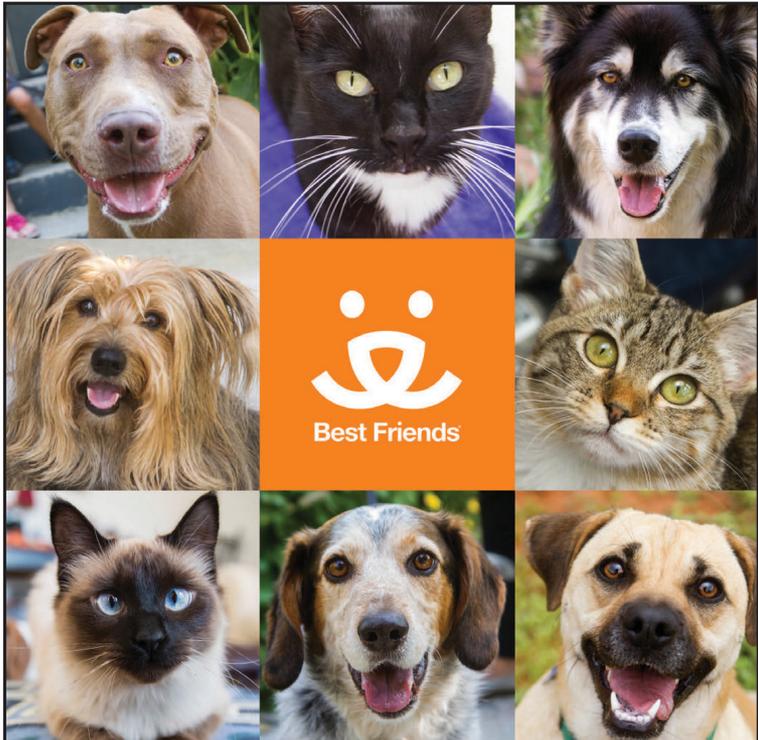
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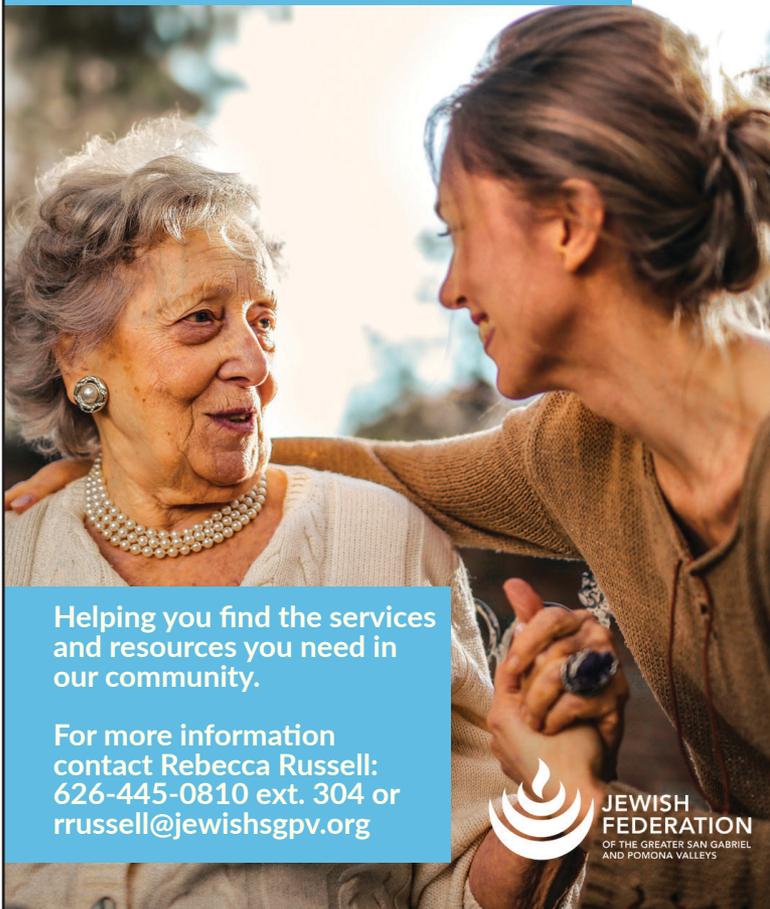
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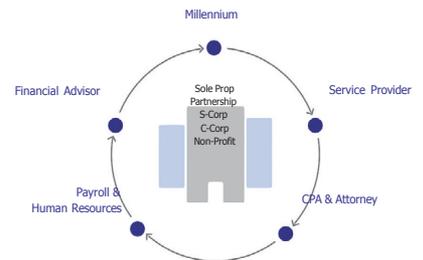


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# BEHIND THE SCENES

## Pulling back the curtain to show some of the unseen work of the Jewish Federation

**W**hen I was a teenager, I participated in a retreat program in the San Francisco Bay Area that brought teens from all across the area for a series of 3-4 weekend retreats. These retreats were coordinated through the Bureau of Jewish Education which, at the time, was a Jewish Federation of the Greater East Bay's supported organization. Between participating in this program and the 6-week Israel trip, this was my only connection with the Jewish Federation growing up. Even with those two experiences, I had no real understanding of what the Jewish Federation actually did. This is why it does not exactly surprise me when I get asked occasionally, "So what does the Jewish Federation actually do?"

I guess part of the challenge is that sometimes the most impactful things a Jewish Federation does is not something that can be seen. Take for instance the idea that was discussed and promoted almost two decades ago... it was the notion that Jewish Federation fosters Jewish continuity. Huh??? So, the Jewish Federation works to ensure Judaism and the Jewish community will continue into the future ... why didn't they just come out and say that? That is a very good question.

Rather than use taglines or phrases, I will attempt to explain some of the "behind the scenes" work your local Jewish Federation does, to more clearly explain and answer the question above.

Around the start of each school year, as parents are sent school calendars of important events or meetings like Back-To-School Night, Homecoming, etc., inevitably there always seems to be a conflict that arises where a school has scheduled an event on a Jewish holiday. The reason this occurs is California's Education Code prevents the inclusion of any religious holidays on school calendars. And what often occurs is that rather than checking a regular calendar, school and district personnel only use internal calendars



that don't have holidays listed. Because of this, and as a way to ensure our Jewish students, their parents, school teachers, and other personnel in the over 60 school districts in our community, are being supported, the Jewish Federation sends out two letters a year, one in January introducing the Jewish Federation as a resource, and one in July reminding districts of when the High Holy Days are that year and that no student can be penalized for missing school due to religious observance according to California's Education Code. We also include in each letter an 8-year calendar we have developed that lists the dates of all of the major Jewish holidays so that the districts can use the information as a reference when planning and scheduling.

Another example of the work we do that often goes unseen is our advocacy work on behalf of the Jewish community. Whether it is representing the Jewish perspective on issues around such things as California's new ethnic studies requirement, bills before California's state legislature like AB 587 (a bill to require transparency for social media companies in an attempt to stop the spread of hate speech and rhetoric on these platforms), and other advocacy efforts. By being involved

in these and other areas, the Jewish Federation is able to ensure that a Jewish voice and perspective from our community is heard and is part of the conversation.

And lastly, earlier this year the Jewish Federation officially adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance's working definition of antisemitism. It is our hope that by doing this, other Jewish and non-Jewish organizations will join us and close to 1000 other organizations in this effort.

I know that you may not always hear or see what the Jewish Federation is doing besides the programs many in our community have participated in and/or benefited from. I just hope you know that each day we are working towards fulfilling our mission to strengthen and enhance Jewish life in our community. And we can do this through the support we receive from community members like you. Together, we are making our community stronger. ☆



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

“For a teacher to succeed they must have a lot of empathy.”

# MELAMED

Rabbi Motti Simpson

BY TEDDY WEINBERGER

**A**round this time last year, in a column titled “An Unusual Public-School Teacher,” I wrote about my cousin Evan Leibowitz, an Orthodox Jew teaching at an elementary school in the South Bronx. In Israel, too (except for the ultra-orthodox sector), male primary-school teachers are “unusual.” As I happen to be friends with such a teacher—he is the Rabbi of the synagogue in Givat Ze’ev where we used to live—I decided to write about him.

Rabbi Motti Simpson, 44, is married to Orit and they have four sons. Already at the age of 18, Motti (a nickname for Mordecai) knew that he wanted to be a teacher. Later, at a teacher’s college, he was trained for a career of teaching junior-high and high school. He says that back then this was the case for all male teachers: “no one ever told us that it was important to teach in primary school.” Motti notes that only recently was a program opened by the Ministry of Education to train men to teach in elementary schools (and “even with the new program,” says Motti, “it’s hard to get good, quality male teachers). Perhaps it’s no surprise, then, that Motti’s entry into grade-school teaching was by accident: “I was asked to fill-in at an elementary school in Eilat, where I was studying in a yeshiva.”

Motti was immediately drawn to working with children: “I am a kid at heart, and this goes well with the dynamics of young children who make a lot of noise and are very expressive. The kids have a lot of original thinking, and they are innocent and it fills me up with happiness to teach them.” Motti stresses the importance of good primary-school teachers: “Elementary school prepares a person for life; the kids are open to everything and there is a need for people to shape the future generation, a need for exceptional people to teach them.” Motti continues: “A child’s world is complicated. There is a lot of

imagination, there is a lot of emotion; it is a different world than adults. It’s not easy. Who has patience for the mishega’as of little kids? For a teacher to succeed they must have a lot of empathy.”

Motti teaches in a “Torani” public religious school in the city of Modi’in. These schools have separate classes for boys and girls, have more Judaic studies than regular religious public schools, and emphasize “modesty” in appearance. There is a relatively large number of male teachers in the school, and (as in ultra-orthodox circles) these have the respected title of “melamed” (respected enough to be used as a last name, see “Bernard Malamud”—it literally means “one who teaches”). Motti says that “there is a lot of support and respect from the parents of the children I teach”; however, he adds, “in the general world of the national religious, there isn’t this respect for a melamed.” And here we come to a serious problem facing Motti and all Israeli teachers: low salaries. Motti says that he sometimes even hears from his students (fifth and sixth graders): “If you are so smart, why are you teaching children?” On the one hand, Motti responds to them: “I think that it’s important that I am a teacher precisely because I am smart,” and he emphasizes for his students that he did extremely well in high school and could have gone on to study anything and to do anything he wanted. On the other hand, the financial sacrifice he has to make as a teacher is becoming more and more intolerable to him (I should mention that the remuneration that Motti receives for being the rabbi of the synagogue in Givat Ze’ev is



extremely small). Motti says: “I don’t see anything else that I would want to do in life, but at the age of 44 I am definitely having a crisis due to my poor salary. I am surrounded by teachers who have spouses who all earn a decent salary, but my wife Orit is also a teacher. And I don’t see a way out if I stay in this field. The only option is to become a principal, but the additional salary is not much, and when you consider all the added hours that go with the job of principal, it’s just not worth it financially.” He adds ruefully: “I need other things to fill me up beside ideals.”

Motti still remains a melamed; he still feels it a great privilege to be able to “change and shape child after child.” Motti, speaking for all teachers, says that he is grateful for the attention: “We need the public relations; we are people too, who, in the end, also like to be told: Thank you.” Speaking as a parent and for all Israeli parents, I say: Thank you Rabbi Motti Simpson and thank you all teachers. ☆

**TEDDY WEINBERGER** IS DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT FOR A CONSULTING COMPANY CALLED MEANINGFUL. HE MADE ALIYAH WITH HIS FAMILY IN 1997 FROM MIAMI, WHERE HE WAS AN ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES. TEDDY AND HIS WIFE, SARAH JANE ROSS, HAVE FIVE CHILDREN.

# KEEPING US SAFE

## Jewish Federation develops comprehensive security plan for the community

BY ILENE SCHNEIDER

**A**lthough the local Jewish community has never had any serious security issues, except for the occasional suspicious package or hate graffiti, events that have transpired as of late started to make the Jewish Federation of the Greater San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys think about enhancing its security efforts for the community.

“Everyone believes that security awareness and preparation are important, but to what extent?” explained Jason Moss, Executive Director of the Jewish Federation. “It’s scary, and people don’t want to think about it. They don’t want our institution’s buildings to become fortresses, but if people need to feel safe, then something has to give.”

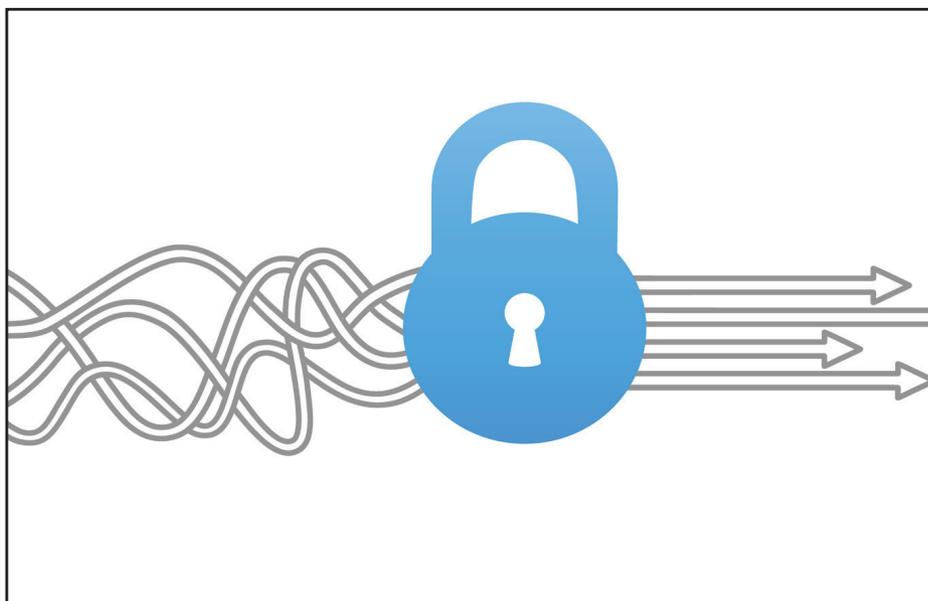
The Jewish Federation recently announced its development of a community security plan. This plan ensured that the Jewish Federation and its community partners were doing everything possible to help keep the community safe. It also encouraged open communication about the security plan with all members, so they would feel safe attending services or events.

Previously, there were plans to prepare professionals in all of the local Jewish institutions to deal with security-related incidents, but then COVID hit, and most events were canceled. Moss realized that security would not be the top priority of the institutions once they came back from COVID restrictions, but he knew that they had to think about it.

“The biggest thing is to change the culture of how people view security – how the institutions can remain welcoming and inviting but be as secure as possible,” Moss said. “People can grieve for the days of innocence before there were security concerns, but we have to find ways to be safe.”

He added, “We have to stop thinking about “if” an incident will happen, but “when” it will happen. It’s OK if security training is not needed after people learn how to do it, in the same way people are trained in First Aid/CPR. We like to think of our plan as a security insurance policy that people never have to cash in.”

The Jewish Federation is working with Secure Community Network (SCN) to coordinate a comprehensive approach to the entire process. The plan looks at every single avenue of what can be done, including institutions working with their local law enforcement to conduct threat assessments and to share their building maps, and conducting trainings. Working hand in hand with the FBI and local law enforcement and training personnel at



various facilities, the plan is designed to keep facilities protected and the members of the organizations safe.

For the High Holidays the plan is for facilities to notify local law enforcement to be especially vigilant, but to remind each synagogue to train volunteers to look for signs of problems. “It’s like what Israeli airports do – be friendly but observational,” Moss explained.

Jewish Federation is coordinating a series of security trainings with SCN for community members. The first round focuses on being alert and aware of your surroundings, no matter where you are. The second round focuses on what to do during an active shooter threat, and the third will include how to help victims who are injured during an attack. This training will take place in-person in two different locations - one in the west and one in the east - and will include life hands-on drills.

Over the last several years, most of the synagogues in the area obtained federal funds to harden and strengthen their facilities, to keep people safe. The Jewish Federation is hoping that this community security plan, in addition to the federal funds the synagogues have received will help ensure that money does not continue to be a roadblock to keeping the community safe. The Jewish Federation of North America is lobbying for an increase in federal funding for the benefit of the whole country to keep houses of worship safe.

Moss described the security plan as a blueprint in which the community is “constantly working at it and then moving on to the next step.” He concluded, “We have to get past being scared, hurt, and sad, and embrace the commitment to take security seriously and feel safe.” ☆

ILENE SCHNEIDER IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO JTA AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.

# PRICELESS TREASURES

## NYC's Holocaust museum uses personal objects to tell the story of lives lived and lost

BY JULIA GERGELY, JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY (JTA)



An enamel bowl, on display at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Manhattan, was carried through three concentration camps by the Burbea family from Libya, even serving as a vessel to carry their youngest son to his circumcision when he was born in Bergen-Belsen in 1944. (Museum of Jewish Heritage)

**A** young child's diary, a favorite doll, a cookbook of family recipes, a report card, a Torah scroll smuggled to the United States and a silver spoon found among the rubble at a concentration camp.

All of these objects are on display in "The Holocaust: What Hate Can Do," an expansive new permanent exhibition at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Lower Manhattan that opened in July. The exhibit emphasizes the individual human stories and the Jewish lives lived before, during and after the Holocaust.

The 12,000-square-foot, two-story exhibit attempts to shed new light on Holocaust education by creating a compelling narrative of the Holocaust, antisemitism, Jewish resistance and perseverance. The exhibit weaves together the individual stories of 750 objects and artifacts, as well as first-person testimonies, photographs and text.

For Judy Baumel-Schwartz, the exhibit's curator and Holocaust scholar at Bar-Ilan University, working on the exhibit "has been one of the high points of my

professional career.

"As a historian specializing in the Holocaust, I have always taught my students, through stories and documentation, about what happened, and why it happened," she said in a press release. "Here, for the first time, I can actually show people how it happened and to whom it happened through hundreds of objects and graphics."

One such object on display is a white enamel bowl that belonged to the Burbea family who were first sent to the Giado concentration camp for Libyan Jews. They were only allowed to take a few objects with them when they were then deported to the Civitella del Tronto camp in Italy and, from there, sent to Bergen-Belsen in Germany. The bowl stayed with them—when their youngest son was born in Bergen-Belsen in 1944, the family used it to carry the boy to the mohel for his circumcision.

Baumel-Schwartz donated the bowl for the museum to use in the exhibit—it was given to her more than 40 years ago by the mother of the Burbea family, who had survived. "She looked at me and said, 'You're starting to teach this for all of us. The bowl had done what it needed to for me.

We don't need it anymore. But I want you to take it. I want you to show it to your students and tell our story," Baumel-Schwartz recalled.

The goal of displaying these types of objects is to animate and intensify the narrative of the Holocaust with first-person stories, said Michael Berenbaum, a Holocaust scholar and advisor on the exhibit. "We believe in a story-telling museum," he said, noting that the exhibit draws upon the full name and mission of the museum: "Museum of Jewish Heritage-A Living Memorial to the Holocaust."

For survivor Toby Levy, who, as part of the museum's Survivors Speakers Bureau, travels around the city sharing her story, the exhibit is a reminder to bear witness. Though she does not have any personal objects in the exhibit, Levy still commended its power in sharing Holocaust narratives.

Born into an Orthodox Jewish family in Poland in 1933, Levy and her family went into hiding in 1942, taken in by a non-Jewish friend. She and her eight family members remained in hiding until 1944, and in a displaced persons camp until 1949, when they were able to immigrate to the United States.

"Every time I talk about [my story], I relive it," she said. "The museum has created this perfect exhibit in a time to teach."

In order to develop a full narrative of the Holocaust, the exhibit first paints a picture of Europe's thriving Jewish communities prior to the Nazi rise to power; "a vibrant, vital, living community that has no idea that their time is limited, that they are on the brink of destruction," Berenbaum said.

In one section, the exhibit homes in on the month of April 1943, spotlighting several narrative arcs: that month, Jews in the Warsaw Ghetto resisted their captors; Hitler and Nazi collaborators were busy implementing their "Final Solution" by building crematoria at Auschwitz; Americans and British



A pot belonging to the Farber family, confined to the Vilna Ghetto, whose daughter was abducted in a children's action, one of the roundups periodically organized by the Nazis. It is inscribed in Hebrew: "In this pot kosher food was cooked in the Vilna ghetto for a girl who was taken to be annihilated." (Museum of Jewish Heritage)

authorities stood by with empty words and half-hearted actions at the Bermuda Conference.

To provide context for the Holocaust, the exhibit works hard to define who the Jewish people are—and how much culture and community was lost all around the world in the Holocaust's wake, from Iran and Libya to Greece and Eastern Europe.

Another section connects Nazi antisemitism with antisemitic campaigns throughout history, including the Crusades, the Inquisition and Russian pogroms. In other sections, Nazi propaganda and antisemitic caricatures are on display to showcase the obsessive and insidious quality of Nazi antisemitism.

The exhibit's title, "What Hate Can Do," invites the viewer to consider the manifestations of hatred in today's world, and how devastating the effects can be if they are not combated.

"What we have seen over the last five or six years is something that I, and all of us, thought we would never see again—whether it be war in Ukraine, whether it be refugee camps, whether it be mass murders or genocides, we always thought never again, and now we're seeing it," Bruce Ratner, the chairman of the museum's board of trustees, said at a press conference previewing the exhibit. "Unfortunately the Holocaust is a yardstick against which all of today's events are measured, but it makes the purpose of the museum to tell the story all the more important."

"The remembrance of the past was meant to transform the future," said Berenbaum. "Tragically, we live in a world in which this has taken on greater urgency—in our day, in our time, in the very months in which we were putting this exhibition together."

"Resistance has taken on new meaning, immigration has taken on new meaning, invasion has taken on new meaning, and human solidarity in the wake of evil has taken on new meaning," he added.

The exhibit is accompanied by a narrative audio guide available on the Bloomberg Connects app, which is available for free to remote listeners. ☆



At a press conference at the Museum of Jewish Heritage launching its new permanent exhibit are, left to right, exhibition designer Paul Salmons, consultant Michael Berenbaum, museum chairman Bruce Ratner, Holocaust survivor Toby Levy and museum president and CEO Jack Kliger, June 30, 2022. (Julia Gergely)

JULIA GERGELY IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO THE JTA AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.

# A LITTLE PIECE OF HEAVEN

The Jewish Federation's JFed Players are pleased to present their fall production, directed by John Carlton and Lori McKenna

BY LORI MCKENNA

**JEWISH FEDERATION**  
OF THE GREATER SAN GABRIEL  
AND POMONA VALLEYS

PRESENT

**JFED PLAYERS**  
COMMUNITY THEATER ENSEMBLE

# A Little Piece of Heaven

*By Matthew Carlin*

SEPTEMBER 10 - 18, 2022  
PORTICOS ART SPACE, PASADENA  
For tickets visit [www.jewishsgpv.org](http://www.jewishsgpv.org) or call 626.445.0810

**P**ick up a bowl owned by your grandmother and, bam, you are back in her kitchen, watching her cook. A locket, passed down through generations, meaningful, because it was owned by a mother, grandmother and, perhaps great-grandmother; looking at it



triggers memories of a loved one wearing it. Memories. Mementos. Memories and mementos. They are fused together. Now imagine those precious things are lost, the memories of the person are not gone, of course, but the tangible reminder of that memory is. Have you ever been in a situation where you lost something precious to you? Finding that item creates a sense of joy and a connection with something greater.

Written by Matthew Carlin, *A Little Piece of Heaven* is a charming, heart-warming play, set in a small-town thrift shop appropriately named, "A Little Piece of Heaven." It is owned by Henry and Elizabeth, a loving, but unusual couple. Customers come into the shop to eat the wonderful cookies and casually browse the curiosities; others come in searching for . . . something. Some fortunate patrons leave with a precious item, once lost and now, somehow, found.

Michael, a biker stranded in town when his motorcycle breaks down, wanders into the shop and, seemingly by chance, becomes an employee. For several years, Michael has been running from his past, seeking something, but unaware of what that "something" might be. On his first



day, he meets Lily, an 87-year-old woman who has been coming to the shop since its opening. She is strong-willed and openly speaks her mind. She, too, is searching for something. Through several encounters, Michael and Lily forge an unlikely relationship, tentative at first, growing into one of mutual respect and caring.

Although the play takes place in a thrift shop, full of curiosities, antiques, and just plain stuff, such tangible things are not all that the little store offers those who enter. Townspeople, employees, and customers find what they need there, whether it be an old record, a new relationship, or just one of those heavenly cookies. And overseeing it all, Elizabeth and Henry seem to know, somewhat mysteriously, just what everyone needs.

The Jewish Federation's JFed Players chose this as its Fall 2022 production because of its warmth, humor, and, mostly, its heart. We can all relate to the story of losing

something precious to us and, when miraculously found, we feel a sense of joy... In this time of uncertainty and, sometimes fear, our memories can ground us and bring us peace. Relationships can also bring solace and comfort. *A Little Piece of Heaven* has plenty of both.

The Jewish Federation's JFed Players are pleased to present *A Little Piece of Heaven*, directed by John Carlton and Lori McKenna, opening on September 10, 2022, at Porticos Art Space in Pasadena. Funny and poignant, *A Little Piece of Heaven* will leave you feeling a little happier, a little more sentimental, a little more positive, and full of hope. ☆

## CAST MEMBERS

Character	Actor
• Henry	• John Carlton
• Elizabeth	• Lori McKenna
• Judith	• Danielle Schlichter
• Jared Havens	• Rob Schaumann
• Glory Havens	• Karen Hochman Brown
• Michael Cain	• Neil Brown
• Frank Thomas	• Norm Gold
• Girl	• Kenley Schlichter
• Claire	• Alena Zepkowski
• Lily Adair	• Kate Landro
• Herb	• Michael DiRosa
• Deb	• Janet Ryan Ho
• Sam	• Lew Snow
• Jamie (Customer)	• Sarah Bernhardt Zepkowski ☆



LORI MCKENNA IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO JLIFE MAGAZINE.

# FAMILY TIES

## When Jewish Education Becomes a Family Affair

BY BEN LIGHT, KVELLER

In the 80s, my father and I did parent/child Hebrew classes (before it was cool). Every Saturday afternoon after religious school, my father arrived at our temple with a Burger King Italian Chicken Sandwich and we spent 90 minutes studying Hebrew with three other families. The two most memorable parts of that experience were the chicken sandwiches and the fact that my dad and I did this together.

When I asked to quit Confirmation Class at the beginning of ninth grade, my parents said I could if it was replaced with something else that furthered my Jewish education. My father had a friend who was studying with his son on Sunday mornings at a nearby yeshiva, so we joined them. We started each Sunday by putting on tefillin and saying the morning prayers followed by Torah study with one of the rabbis at the yeshiva. There were no chicken sandwiches, but again, my father and I were doing this together.

My parents believed that Jewish education was extremely important. They made this point to me by making it a family activity.

Now my wife and I have tried to make the same point to our daughter.

For six of the last eight school years, our family attended a program at The Temple-Tifereth Israel in our suburb of Cleveland called Shabbaton.

The structure of the Shabbaton program is simple. Instead of dropping our daughter off at religious school on Sunday mornings, we attend as a family on Saturday afternoons. The afternoon begins with a brief service or song session, then the children head off to Hebrew or Judaic Studies while the adults have a Torah study session led by the senior rabbi or one of the other members of the clergy. We come back together for parent/child Hebrew (which is now cool) and conclude each afternoon with the havdalah prayers.

The impact of the Shabbaton program on our family is anything but simple.

At the core, the Shabbaton program is about building community. We have had the good fortune to develop wonderful friendships throughout our time in the program. Friendships with like-minded adults who are also making a bold statement to their children that Jewish education is a family activity.

Each academic year has a unique theme that the children follow with their teachers. The adults also address this theme in the texts we study with the rabbi. Last school year, we addressed “The Great Questions and Answers in Judaism.” This led to some very thoughtful discussions with the rabbi that continued after the formal study sessions concluded. This year’s topic is “Standing at Sinai is an Ongoing Experience.” These are relevant and interesting areas of study, and allow us to relate what we are learning to our daily Jewish lives.

But in addition to learning from the rabbi, we learn from each other. We share parenting lessons, family traditions,

perspectives on current events, and spend time deepening our relationships with other members of our community.

We learn through art, music, drama, and other non-traditional methods. We focus on the importance of tzedakah and giving back to our community as well as those who are less fortunate. We support other families in our community who are struggling with illness or loss.

And we do it all as a family.

I have watched my daughter develop meaningful relationships with children of all ages as well as with other adults who participate in the program. She has been mentored by many of the older children and she has mentored those who follow her. This year, she will begin serving as a *madricha* (teacher’s aid) at Shabbaton. She cannot wait to work with the younger children and help them on their journey to become more active members of the temple and Jewish community.

My daughter truly feels that the temple is a second home. Her experience is an example of part-time Jewish education that works well. Like many others around the country, my wife and I turned to our congregation to deliver an educational experience with personal meaning and impact. We have not been disappointed. We found that our congregation offers much more than a traditional “sit-behind-the-desk” education—indicative of a change in other communities across the country as well. Increasingly, part-time Jewish education offers innovative, dynamic educational opportunities that inspire Jewish life and build community.

So how does this all play out with the kids? Currently, The Temple-Tifereth Israel’s main facility is undergoing renovations, and as we began planning our daughter’s upcoming bat mitzvah, there was some question of where her service would take place. But in her mind, there was never a question. The Temple was the only place she could imagine going through her formal transition into Jewish adulthood. Shabbaton is the primary reason why she feels this way.

When my wife and I made the decision to join the Shabbaton community, we did so with the hope that it would clearly demonstrate to our daughter how much we value her Jewish education. We value it so much that we were willing to pay with our time, our most precious commodity. The outcome of this investment has been greater than we ever could have imagined.

Although there are no chicken sandwiches at Shabbaton, making Jewish education a family activity is now a family tradition. We hope our daughter will continue the tradition when she has a family of her own. ✨



# “13: THE MUSICAL”

## A Bar Mitzvah Musical Is Coming to Netflix

BY LIOR ZALTZMAN, KVELLER

Put a family movie night on your calendar for this coming August because the movie adaptation of the very Jewish Broadway musical “13,” titled “13: The Musical” is about to hit your Netflix, and the first trailer looks so, so delightful.

The tagline for the film is “raise your voice even if it cracks,” and truly, if that doesn’t take you back to your bar or bat mitzvah, I don’t know what will.

The movie musical stars actor Eli Golden as Evan Goldman, a 12-year-old teen preparing for his bar mitzvah in New York City. “A bar mitzvah is the event that defines you, the Jewish Superbowl,” Goldman says in the trailer. Unfortunately, his plans for the epic bar mitzvah are foiled by the dissolution of his parents’ marriage.

Instead of spending his days planning a tony Manhattan coming-of-age party, Evan has to move with his mom, played by IRL Jewish mom Debra Messing, to the small town of Walkerton, Indiana—a place that inspires the song “The Lamest Place on Earth.”

Evan and his mom shack up with his Jewish grandma Ruth, played by the wonderful Rhea Pearlman. “If it took a divorce to get you to come back, maybe it’s a good thing,” Ruth tells her daughter, in true Jewish mom fashion. “I look at the bright side,” she professes.

The very easy-on-the-eyes Peter Hermann of “Younger” plays Evan’s dad, Joel, who stays behind in New York City with Evan’s very congenial rabbi, Rabbi Shapiro, played by Jewish comedian and dad Josh Peck. Peck makes for the perfect movie rabbi, and he is full of Jewish jokes and zingers for his young student. In the trailer, after Evan attempts to chant his Hebrew Torah portion, Rabbi Shapiro answers a pretend call and tells the teen: “It’s God, he wants his language back.”

As if having to practice his haftorah over video calls weren’t bad enough, Evan also has to learn to navigate the teenage politics of his new school. To fulfill his plans for a glamorous bar mitzvah (“if my party is awful I’ll never live it down,” he tells Rabbi Shapiro), he needs to make sure the most popular kids accept his party invites—a task that turns out



Alan Markfield/Netflix

to be quite the challenge for young Evan. Evan’s newest friend, Patrice, is not in with the school’s cast of popular jocks and cheerleaders. Romance, a trip to an R-rated movie, middle school cafeteria drama and lots and lots of teens shenanigans—all accompanied by addictive music—ensue.

The movie is based on a beloved 2008 Broadway musical, a collaboration between Jewish composer and lyricist Jason Robert Brown and writer Dan Elish. Brown has won Tonys for his work on “Parade,” a musical dramatization of the lynching of Jewish American teen Leo Frank in 1915, and the famous “The Bridges of Madison County.” A novel adaptation of the musical written by the two was published by HarperCollins that same year and will be released in paperback this August.

(Fun fact: the musical also marked the professional debut of none other than Ariana Grande, who played a cheerleader in the production along with future “Victorious” co-star Elizabeth Gillies. So not only is it delightful, but an integral part of pop music history.)

This new movie brings the popular musical into the 2020s and includes three new original songs. With a diverse cast, a catchy soundtrack, teen drama and what will possibly be our new favorite onscreen rabbi, we really couldn’t ask for more from a family-friendly summer movie.

We can’t wait for the August 12 Netflix premiere! ☆

LIOR ZALTZMAN IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO KVELLER AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.

COVER STORY



Eric Godal's 1945 cartoon, included in the New-York Historical Society exhibit "Confronting Hate 1937-1952," was distributed with the cooperation of the CIO, the federation of industrial unions. (American Jewish Committee)

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SWAT THEM ALL!

# UNLIKELY HEROES

## When a Jewish group fought antisemitism with radio shows and comic books

BY ANDREW SILOW-CARROLL, JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY (JTA)

**H**alf a century before the Internet was invented, an American Jewish organization was asking how new media might be harnessed in the fight against antisemitism. Their answer, launched in 1937 as the Nazis rose to power in Germany, was a 15-year effort to spread the message of tolerance through comic books, radio, advertising, newsstands and eventually television spots.

The organization was the American Jewish Committee, and its pioneering effort to combat prejudice through mass media is the subject of an exhibit, "Confronting Hate 1937-1952," which opens July 29 at the New-York Historical Society. The exhibit represents a deep dive into AJC's holdings by Charlotte Bonelli, AJC's archives director, and displays the wide variety of materials—radio scripts, cartoons, film clips, posters and magazine and newspaper articles—generated largely under the direction of Richard Rothschild, the advertising executive recruited by AJC to run the campaign.

The materials' relentlessly upbeat messages about brotherhood and Americanness might strike modern audiences as naive, but at the time the stakes couldn't have been higher nor the rhetoric more sincere: Hitler was on the march, American isolationists were a political force to be reckoned with, and demagogues such as Father Charles Coughlin and Gerald L. K. Smith were using the airwaves to broadcast popular versions of America-first antisemitism.

Today the AJC has a director for combating antisemitism and maintains a social media presence as well as a podcast, but the emphasis has shifted from actually producing mass media (radio spots featuring their CEO, David Harris, were last aired in 2015), to training policy-makers, media execs and law enforcement about how to recognize, report and root out antisemitism.

I spoke Thursday with Bonelli and Debra Schmidt Bach, curator of decorative arts and special exhibitions at the New-York Historical Society. Our conversation touched on the range of materials created by AJC's campaign and in what ways, if any, they changed hearts and minds.

Our conversation was edited for length and clarity.

**Andrew Silow-Carroll: Set the scene: What was happening in America in 1937? In what ways were Jews feeling discrimination and what was the AJC most alarmed about?**

**Charlotte Bonelli:** In the 1930s Jews were facing an unprecedented wave of antisemitism. Naomi Cohen, who wrote the first history of the AJC [in 1972], noted that by 1939, the AJC had estimated there were more than 500 antisemitic organizations operating in the U.S. Some were certainly receiving propaganda and at times funding from the Nazis. You also have the Great Depression. You have the confluence of all these things and the nativism hanging over from the 1920s. You have really an explosive mix.

Selma Hirsch, who became the associate executive director here, was the only person alive from the era I was able to speak to. She worked in the Office of War Information during the '30s and '40s, and she said that the Nazi propaganda network here was much more extensive than most people ever would have imagined. In AJC polling from 1938, 41% of the respondents answered that Jews had too much power in America. So these views were hardly being limited to an extremist group. They were permeating all groups of society.

**Debra Schmidt Bach:** Quotas limited the number of immigrants to come in from Eastern Europe, the source of most of the Jewish immigrants coming into the United States. Colleges set quotas for the number of Jewish applicants who could be accepted. Groups like the KKK but also white supremacists, particularly groups affiliated with the Nazis, were active all over the United States. In the exhibition are photographs of the Madison Square Garden rally in 1939, which thousands of people attended. Behind the speakers' dais is an American flag, a portrait of George Washington and the Nazi flag.

**And what is the AJC at this moment? Are they a big, powerful, confident Jewish group? Are they able to get a hearing where it mattered?**

**Charlotte:** The AJC was founded in 1906 in response to the Russian pogroms. Until this point, it had largely focused on diplomacy. They had worked sometimes on legislative efforts, they had supported anti-lynching laws. They had something called a survey committee, which studied the state of antisemitism in America and made grants largely to local organizations to promote better intergroup relations. They realize that they are facing something so serious and so different, that they have to go down a new path, and so they decide that they're going to enter the world of mass media. This is something very new for AJC. They really have very little experience in this, so they recruit Richard Rothschild, a highly accomplished advertising executive and Yale graduate. He's just an extraordinary talent.

And he comes on to launch a national campaign that will fight the spread of antisemitism, and eventually it morphs to fight bigotry in general. And they will do so in the mass media world, with comic books and cartoons and posters, newspaper ads and radio programs and just a whole variety of material. And it will aim to reach people through women's groups, veterans, educational societies and religious groups.

**And what was Rothschild's message?**

**Charlotte:** His strategy is really twofold. One, he is not going to answer antisemitic charges directly. He thinks that's often counterproductive, and you actually often just spread them. Instead, AJC will introduce the American



Judy Garland appears in a 1946 magazine advertisement, from "Confronting Hate: 1937-1952." (American Jewish Committee)

public to Jews, they will put in positive stories about Jewish contributions to society—to create a whole new reality, so to speak. And he will do it with allies because AJC does not have the logistics to reach millions and millions of Americans.

***So we're really talking about new media—which makes it very relevant to today. Talk about some of the finds in the archive and some of the tools the campaign used.***

**Debra:** The Superman comic launched in 1937, and by the time the United States enters into World War II, the armed services are using comic books to teach the troops about things that range from hygiene to how to use new weapons to how to operate vehicles. AJC used comic books, and we have a sampling of them in the exhibition. A number of different titles featured the cooperation between Jews and Christians, and talk about the way Americans can work together to produce unity. Comic books are readable by a range of different literacy levels, and of course, young people were very, very attracted to comic books.

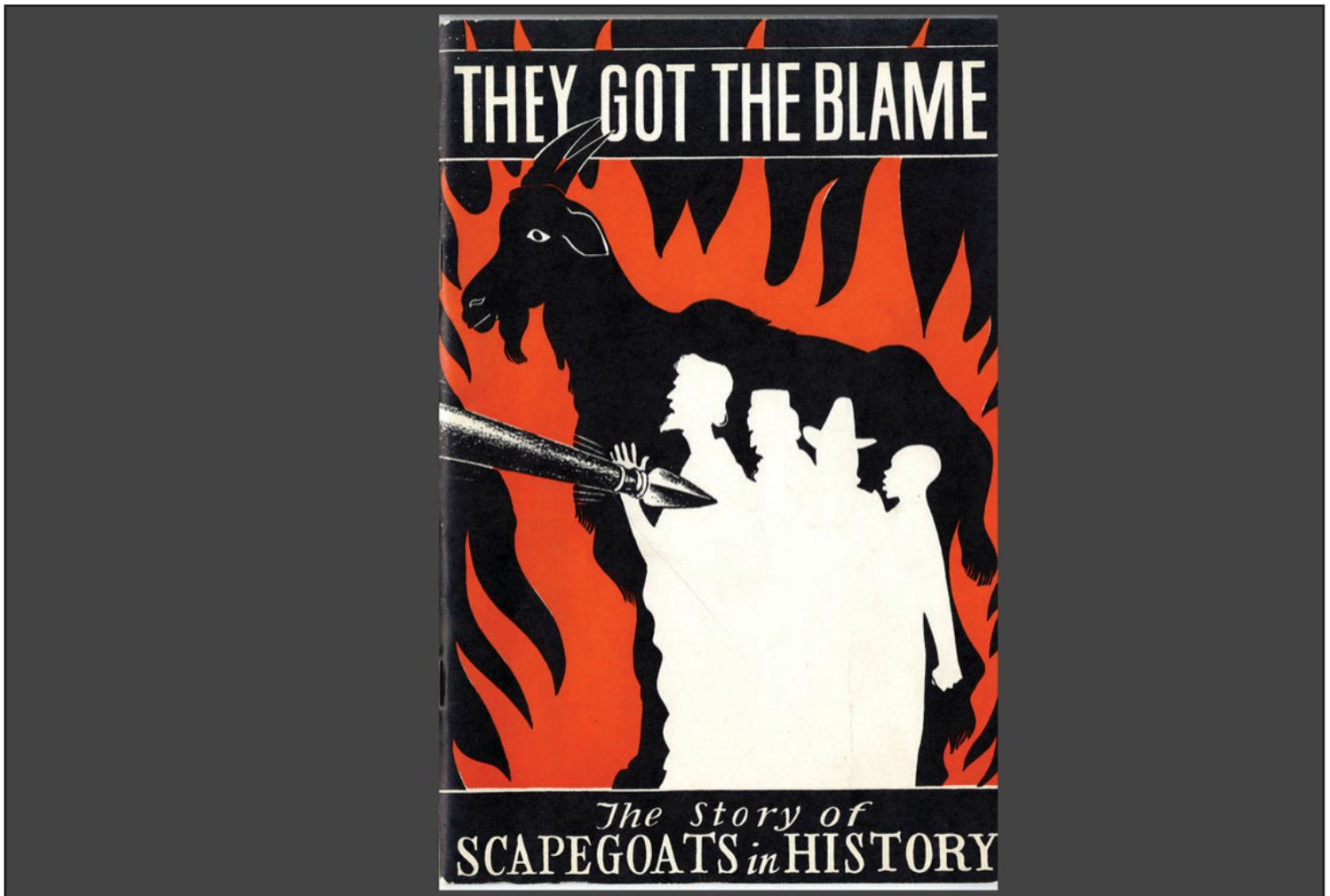
Visitors will also see in the exhibition a sample of radio programs. One is from Uncle Don [Carney], a popular children's entertainer, who asked children to write essays in 1939 for "Uncle Don's All Americans Contest" explaining "why it's grand to be an American." We're also going to be showing a movie that the AJC

made about the Jewish religious service that was held on the Aachen [Germany] battlefield after that city fell to the Allies. That was a radio broadcast on NBC, and it was groundbreaking in terms of the way it reached around the world.

***The campaign also enlists pop culture heroes like Judy Garland and Frank Sinatra, and the writer Steven Vincent Benet. How were they recruited?***

**Charlotte:** I think Stephen Vincent Benet might have been recruited through the Writers' War Board. Milton Krents, who was the director of AJC radio, had no fear about going after big talent. And I would assume that maybe there are connections through the AJC's lay leadership. I know certainly in terms of comic books, [Jewish philanthropist] George Hecht was one of the owners of True Comics.

Rothchild talks about this in his oral history: The importance of these names is that they would make antisemitism disreputable, and of course they could reach millions. Milton Krents comes up with this idea of "Dear Adolf," a radio show based on letters from different sectors of American society: farmers, laborers, housewives, immigrants, soldiers. The actors read letters to Hitler basically telling him off and extolling the inevitability of an Allied victory. He got Stephen Vincent Benet to write it, and the actors William Holden, James Cagney and Helen Hayes. The message is that if America is



"They Got The Blame: The Story of Scapegoats in History," written by Kenneth Gould and illustrated by Jacob Landau, was published by the Association Press of the YMCA in 1942. (American Jewish Committee)

to win this war, we have to stay united and cannot be divided one race against another, or by religion or ethnicity. In one episode Holden says America has the best army and reads the roll call: "DiGennaro, Kelly, Smith, Nathan, Orlando," and you could not have a stronger contrast with the Nazi Aryan idea of racial purity.

**That raises a question. As we move into the war years, clearly what's happening in Europe is weighing heavily on what's happening in America. Were there any concerns that a national campaign of this sort led by a Jewish group would be seen as propaganda for entering the war in a way that could be used against them by the isolationists?**

**Charlotte:** That's a good question. Very often, these projects do not carry the name of the American Jewish Committee. The AJC is basically creating a lot of plums and giving them away. So Milton Krents is loaned out to the Council for Democracy, and "Dear Adolf" is produced under their name with NBC. They also got a spread in Life Magazine, which they were very excited about. There is the concern that if they put a Jewish name on it, it will smack of Jewish self interest, and they want to get the widest distribution possible. It is not until 1943 that the AJC openly sponsors broadcasts and these are done just for Jewish holiday programs, like Purim, and for the

battle of the Warsaw Ghetto.

**The campaign started as an impulse to fight antisemitism. To what degree was the campaign also about tolerance for other groups?**

**Charlotte:** Almost from the very beginning, there is a recognition that in fighting antisemitism, you will have to fight other bigotries. When Milton Krents writes the scripts for the "All Americans" contest, he has Uncle Don say something like, "Maybe you know a boy or girl who's a different color than you, or whose mommies and daddies speak a different language than your mommy and daddy or go to a different church. Well isn't it grand to know that we're all Americans?"

The cartoonist Eric Godal is a German Jew who fled Nazi Germany, and in his cartoons, you very clearly see that he's linking these prejudices. So he'll have Hitler as the Pied Piper and behind Hitler a string of rats labeled with different bigotries: racism, hatred of the foreigner, antisemitism, anti-Catholicism. Young people today may not realize that anti-Catholic prejudice has deep roots in this country.

**So I learned a version of Jewish history in which it was the revelations of the Holocaust after the war that shocked Americans out of their antisemitism, or at least drove it underground. And on the flip side, following the war, racist attitudes hardened in the South as well as de facto**



Members of the German-American Bund parading through the streets of New York City in 1938. (Three Lions/Getty Images)

**segregation in the North. So the blunt question I have to ask: Was the campaign successful? Is there a way to measure its actual impact on public attitudes?**

**Charlotte:** Naomi Cohen wrote in her book that she believed that these campaigns were successful in stopping antisemitism from taking firmer and deeper root within this country. That is, you know, her opinion. I think another important element is that they became so good at this, wrapping these messages into an entertaining format, that other agencies come to them for help with their messaging. Within the exhibit, there's a note from an executive at the Ad Council to Rothschild thanking him, saying that their public service ads wouldn't have been as good without the input of his team. And Krents wrote something in his correspondence that [before the AJC campaign] it was unheard of to put these human relations messages on the radio.

**This exhibit is obviously coming out at a time of increased reporting of antisemitism, and rising concern about hate speech and intolerance. Is that what drew AJC and the Historical Society to stage this at this moment?**

**Debra:** I think it's relevant for almost every moment, honestly, in my lifetime. I'm hoping this exhibition reignites the conversation about the work that's left to be done. And we actually started working on this

exhibition before the pandemic. I saw this material initially before the pandemic and then it was put aside for a number of months. Looking at it again, after being through the first year and a half of pandemic, it was really a very moving experience. Because the types of messages that were being imparted were really prescient and in a way timeless and ageless.

**Charlotte, do you want to add to that?**

**Charlotte:** I think it is a very timely exhibit, but I've been interested in this material from the very first time I saw it, which was 20 years ago. It is in some ways inspirational, because overall there is an optimistic tone to this campaign. They do believe that these hatreds are so anathema to America that they will, in the end, prevail. They never gave into cynicism.

I also think it shows a willingness to embrace something new. It's not easy for an organization to go down a totally new path. But AJC did, and I think they deserve great credit for that. And also I think what is relevant today is that they knew that they could not do it on their own, and so they sought allies from many different segments of society.

I read Rothschild's oral history when he was interviewed in the 1970s, and he was complaining about the malaise in society and that you can't give into that. He knows that you're not going to make things perfect, but that doesn't free you from the responsibility of acting. ☆

ANDREW SILOW-CARROLL IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO JTA AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.

SGPV'S JEWISH YOUTH & PARENTS

# kiddish



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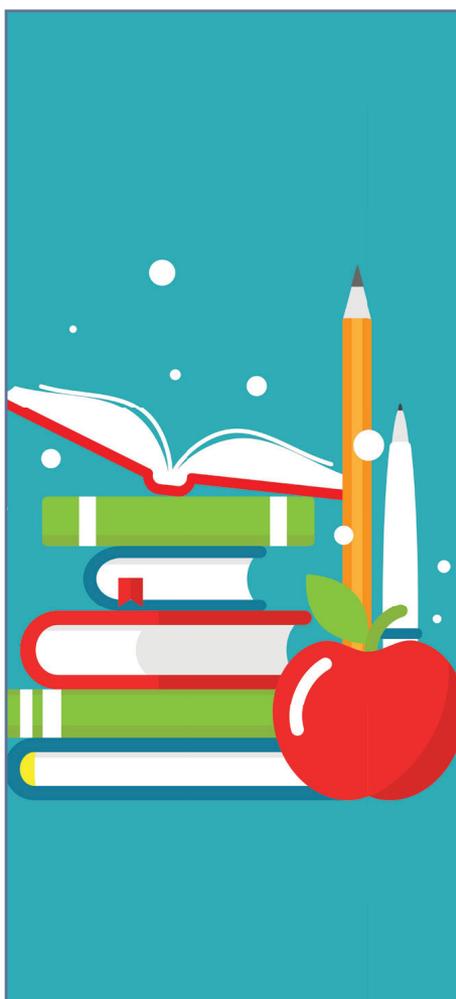
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# kiddish

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# Stay Engaged

School success starts with YOU.

BY DR. BRYN HARARI

A parent's role is crucial in supporting their children's success in school. There are numerous areas of development to consider when considering a child's readiness. It's not just about a child's understanding of letters and numbers. Emotional intelligence and maturity, intellectual readiness, and physical development are all important factors to consider when preparing to send your child to school.



**Four things parents can do to support their child's success in kindergarten and beyond:**

**1. Expose your child to a range of books and nurture language**

**development.** Read aloud to your child and talk with them about the setting, characters, and events in the story. Look for opportunities in daily activities to build vocabulary. High-quality computer literacy games can support language development but do not take the place of child-focused discussion and conversation. This kind of language development will enable them to express themselves, describe their needs, and understand other children in the classroom



and in the playground. Communication skills are crucial to their success and promote confidence in the new setting. Moreover, these language skills promote the foundations of reading and

writing while supporting all academic success.

**2. Cultivate your child's natural curiosity and inherent desire to learn.** Encourage them to ask questions and explore. Ask open-ended questions using words like who, what, when, where, why, and how. "Wonder" out loud with them, modeling curiosity by asking your child what they think before sharing your own thoughts. Curiosity, inquiry, and exploration are the foundation of all learning and cultivate development in all areas of learning. Supporting your child's natural curiosity helps them grow into eager and active learners and empowers

them to solve the future challenges of the world.

**3. Partner with your child's teachers to understand**

**how best to support learning at home.** Your child's teachers will help guide you in understanding and supporting readiness and growth. Your child's success will depend on you and the teacher as partners in learning. Teachers are available to guide and engage with you in the educational process, bringing out the best in your child. While you are your child's first and most

important teacher, the perspective of experienced teachers throughout your child's educational journey will be invaluable.

**4. Choose an enriching value-based academic**

**experience for your child.** A dual curriculum that places emphasis on both general and Judaic studies prioritizes intrinsic motivation and helps students become more engaged in their learning experiences by connecting beliefs and life goals to curricular requirements. Positive role models inspire students to learn how

Judaism can be a thread that weaves meaning and joy into the tapestry of their lives. With this strong foundation, day school students are given life-long tools to engage in the

broader world with the confidence of knowing who they are and the power of what they can accomplish. ✨



DR. BRYN HARARI IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO KIDDISH MAGAZINE.

# “You are So Not Invited to My Bat Mitzvah!”

Adam Sandler Is Turning My Favorite Jewish YA Novel Into a Netflix

BY EVELYN FRICK, KVELLER



I first encountered Fiona Rosenbloom’s 2005 classic Jewish YA novel “You Are SO Not Invited to My Bat Mitzvah!” in my temple’s library. After reading the synopsis on the back, I knew I had to check it out.

As I wrote for Hey Alma in 2021, “Much like ‘The Great Gatsby’ or ‘Middlemarch’, “You Are SO Not Invited to my Bat Mitzvah!” is a masterpiece of its time. Engulfed in all its mid-2000s glory, complete with references to Ashlee Simpson, Delias and Nokia phones, this novel tells the story of Stacy Friedman, a girl preparing for her bat mitzvah.”

I read and reread the book feverishly, finding the everyday, casual representation of Jewishness heartening and the teenage girl drama delicious. “You Are SO Not Invited to My Bat Mitzvah” represented, simultaneously, everything my life was and everything I wanted my life to be as a young Jewish tween in the mid-late 2000s.

As an adult, when I finally moved into my own apartment, I brought the book with me (unfortunately, I think I’ve lost my copy of the sequel, “We Are SO Crashing Your Bar Mitzvah!”). It is now prominently featured on my bookshelf.

resting, in pride of place, directly next to “Reinventing Richard Nixon: A Cultural History of An American Obsession,” a book written by my beloved dad.

So when I heard the news that the next film project from Adam Sandler’s production company Happy Madison Productions will be a movie adaptation of “You Are SO Not Invited to My Bat Mitzvah!” for Netflix, I majorly kvelled.

Thinking the Jewish-centric book was too niche for secular crowds, I truly never thought it would get a movie. Now, I’m eagerly anticipating how Adam Sandler and his team will create the world of bat mitzvah girl Stacy Friedman, bestie-slash-frenemy Lydia Katz and crush Andy Goldfarb. Though the release date is thus far unannounced, I can’t wait to see if Sandler will get the mid-aughts nostalgia just right, or if he will opt to make the setting contemporary, perhaps drawing on his own experience of recently attending his daughter’s extravagant bat mitzvah celebration.

But I’m also nervous.

As “You Are SO Not Invited to My Bat Mitzvah” reflects fun memories of the 2000s, so too does the book serve as a time capsule for more problematic aspects of that era.

Perhaps the biggest and most egregious example of this is Andy Goldfarb. Despite his presumably being a white boy of Ashkenazi Jewish descent (his parents are named Mintzi and Lenny), he exclusively speaks in AAE (African American English, formerly known as African American Vernacular English) throughout the entire book.

We first meet Andy at the bat mitzvah party of another character. Just read this description and you’ll see the beginnings of appropriation of Black culture.

“Andy was so cool. He knew everything there was to know about rap stars and he wore Sean John clothes and Phat Farm. He even had a personalized belt buckle that said G-Farb,” Rosenbloom writes.

It’s not a promising start, and when Andy first opens his mouth after Stacy asks him to dance, it gets worse.

“But just then, Andy pulled out his cell phone, looked at the text, chuckled, and said, ‘Dig, I gotta run outside fo’ a minute. Chill, a’ight Betty?’”

It goes without saying, but: Yikes.

I am by no means a scholar of African American English, but to put it simply: Regardless of intention, it’s an act of racism when a non-Black person co-opts anything created by and for Black people, including language – especially when Black people are so often stigmatized for engaging in their own culture. (You can learn more about AAE and the appropriation of AAE by non-Black people through these great educational videos from BET and PBS.)

Of course, this is complicated by the fact that Andy Goldfarb is a fictionalized character in a piece of media.

In trying to imagine Fiona Rosenbloom’s intentions, it seems to me that she wrote Andy in this way for two possible reasons. The first is that Andy is supposed to be a super popular kid; as Stacy herself says, he’s supposed to be “so cool.” Though I’m not from Westchester, where the book is set, I think it’s safe to assume that in 2005, it was seen as on-trend for non-Black

kids to use AAE – and, while perhaps less overt, it still is today. Think about the last time you heard non-Black kids, teens and even adults use phrases like “period” or “periodt,” “spill the tea,” or “yaaas.”

However, as the reader, we are certainly not supposed to be in agreement with Stacy 100 percent of the time. She is, after all, a

free-wheeling and hormonal twelve- or thirteen-year-old. So perhaps Rosenbloom is nudging us to see Stacy’s infatuation with Andy, who really isn’t that great a guy, and question it.

Still, I don’t know if the book’s target audience has a critical eye developed enough to question Andy’s perceived coolness and not become enamored of him, too. When I first read the book as a kid, I certainly didn’t.

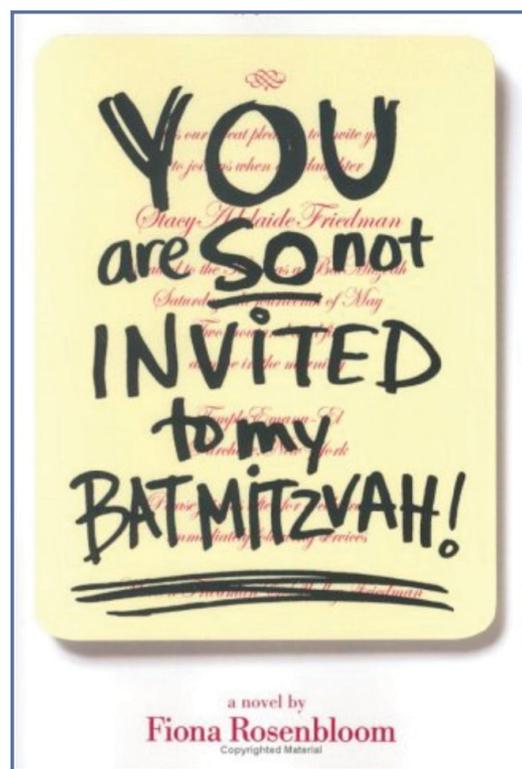
Which leads me to my nervousness over the film.

As much as I love Jewish dad Adam Sandler, I don’t know if his creative voice is precise enough to be able to show a white Jewish character using AAE in a way that doesn’t serve as an endorsement of that racist behavior. And unfortunately, I also feel these concerns over other problematic elements of the book. Stacy perpetually fat shames her little brother Arthur under the guise of doing a mitzvah for him, and the popular clique of girls is homophobic towards Lydia because they perceive her to be queer. I could go on.

To be clear, I don’t have the answers on how “You Are SO Not Invited to My Bat Mitzvah” should be adapted. I think omitting the AAE, fat-shaming and homophobia also presents another unique challenge: In removing anything deemed as problematic from the adaptation, would that serve to sanitize the very authentic way they depict American culture in 2005? And if Sandler decides to make the movie contemporary, thereby bypassing the outdated AAE and hurtful/hateful sentiments, does that fully remove the Y2K spirit of the book?

Like I said, I don’t have the answers.

But when “You Are SO Not Invited to My Bat Mitzvah” eventually drops on Netflix, I’ll be the first to hit play, bowl of popcorn and notepad in tow. ✨



# Hope for Our Future

## What I Learned Chaperoning 45 6th Graders to the Holocaust Museum

BY SHANNA SILVA, KVELLER

The bumpy ride and cacophonous roar of the kids' voices were giving me a headache. I was on a bus with 45 sixth graders, full of hormones and fart jokes, on our way to the Lower East Side in Manhattan. I'd volunteered as a chaperone for my twin sons' class trip to visit New York's Museum of Jewish Heritage—A Living Memorial to the Holocaust. I was interested in the exhibits but I also wanted to be close by as my boys witnessed a memorial to the darkest time in modern Jewish history. I wasn't sure how they, or the other kids, would react upon seeing such vivid images, and if they had the requisite maturity to process what they'd be witnessing.

The kids had been studying World War II in their social studies classes, so there was certainly preparation by the teachers in an age-appropriate manner. However, I knew there was a difference between learning about the Holocaust in an academic setting, and actually seeing the depth of the destruction that took place from relics and vivid documentary testimonial.

As we made our way through the narrow streets of the Financial District, a kid shouted, "Look, there it is!" I was surprised at their enthusiasm about spotting the museum until I realized that the kids had spotted the gleaming Freedom Tower, the new building under construction in the former location of the World Trade Center. We all craned our necks and took pictures of the magnificent building and I realized that the kids had historical context from their own lifetime with which to understand the Holocaust.

The first part of our museum tour focused on Jewish life in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The kids displayed a detached interest in the collection of old wedding photos, children's drawings, miscellaneous yellowed correspondence, and a Torah that had been rescued on Kristallnacht. I urged the kids to pay attention as the docent spoke. In truth, this section of the exhibit was far more interesting to me and the other adults than it was to the students. The kids were not engaged.

The next part of the tour focused on the actual war against the Jews. This is what I had been bracing myself for. The hard-core Holocaust information, complete



with anti-Jewish propaganda, photographs from the concentration camps, and somber mini-documentaries featuring Holocaust survivors. Would the kids be able to handle the graphic assault of information and process the truly terrible nature of what happened? Would they understand how blessed they were to be born American citizens?

Unfortunately, this message was not grasping them, either. I was embarrassed and disappointed to see a group of kids giggling at the pictures of concentration camp victims standing with their emaciated bodies naked, genitalia exposed. The kids were focused on the nude bodies, and not the horror of the situation. They still weren't getting it.

I don't know what I'd expected. Maybe I'd hoped the kids could temporarily stop being their 11 and 12-year-old selves, and adopt the respectful demeanor that adults knew to display in this setting. Why wasn't this information grabbing them? Maybe it's because today's



# HOLOCAUST

youth is surrounded by the rhythm and beat of the 24-hour news cycle, with information disseminated through traditional and social mediums in a very graphic way. Kids today are somewhat desensitized to the impact of violence and prejudice because they see so much of it. In any given day, the news is full of stories about school shootings, war casualties, rape, beheadings, and rampant anti-Semitism. I was concerned that they wouldn't be able to grasp the importance of the Holocaust in the context of world and Jewish history.

As it turns out, I was needlessly worried.

At lunch, we sat in a makeshift cafeteria. The kids were eating, laughing, and talking. A docent entered, shushed the room and introduced a special guest speaker. In walked Rose, an older woman with quiet dignity and shaking hands. She seated herself on a stool and spoke in a low, even voice that required absolute silence to hear. The kids hung on her every word.

Rose was a Polish Holocaust survivor. She and her family had hidden in different places, moving only under the cover of night, and only when necessary. Rose told of her privileged early childhood with her affluent family, and how things changed when the Nazi invasion crept ever closer. The humiliation and degradation that Rose detailed was staggering and inhumane.

The entire room listened, fascinated as she spoke of several families hiding in the loft of a barn. The endless daylight hours were endured in utter silence and stillness to avoid detection. There was minimal food, and no running water or bathroom. Rose shared the helplessness she felt watching the eventual weakening and sickening of her younger siblings, who died in hiding. While Rose was spared the horror of being in a concentration camp, her family suffered in so many other unimaginable ways.

I looked around the room, and saw many of the students crying. The impact of the war had finally reached them in a tangible way, through the words of this incredible woman who shared her personal tragedy with a room of strangers. I was proud of the respectful way the children behaved in her presence, and even more impressed with the insightful questions about Rose's feelings about trusting people, and whether she was filled with a consuming hatred. (Amazingly, she wasn't.)

We were all moved by Rose's story, and the kids got it. It broke their hearts, and raised a level of compassion and resolve that was inspiring. As we exited the museum, I knew the words inscribed in large gold letters could not be truer:

Remember - Never Forget.

There is Hope for your future. ✨

# COOKING JEWISH

Lifestyle

## WELL SEASONED

**The Beauty &  
Complexity of  
Curries**

BY JUDY BART KANCIGOR

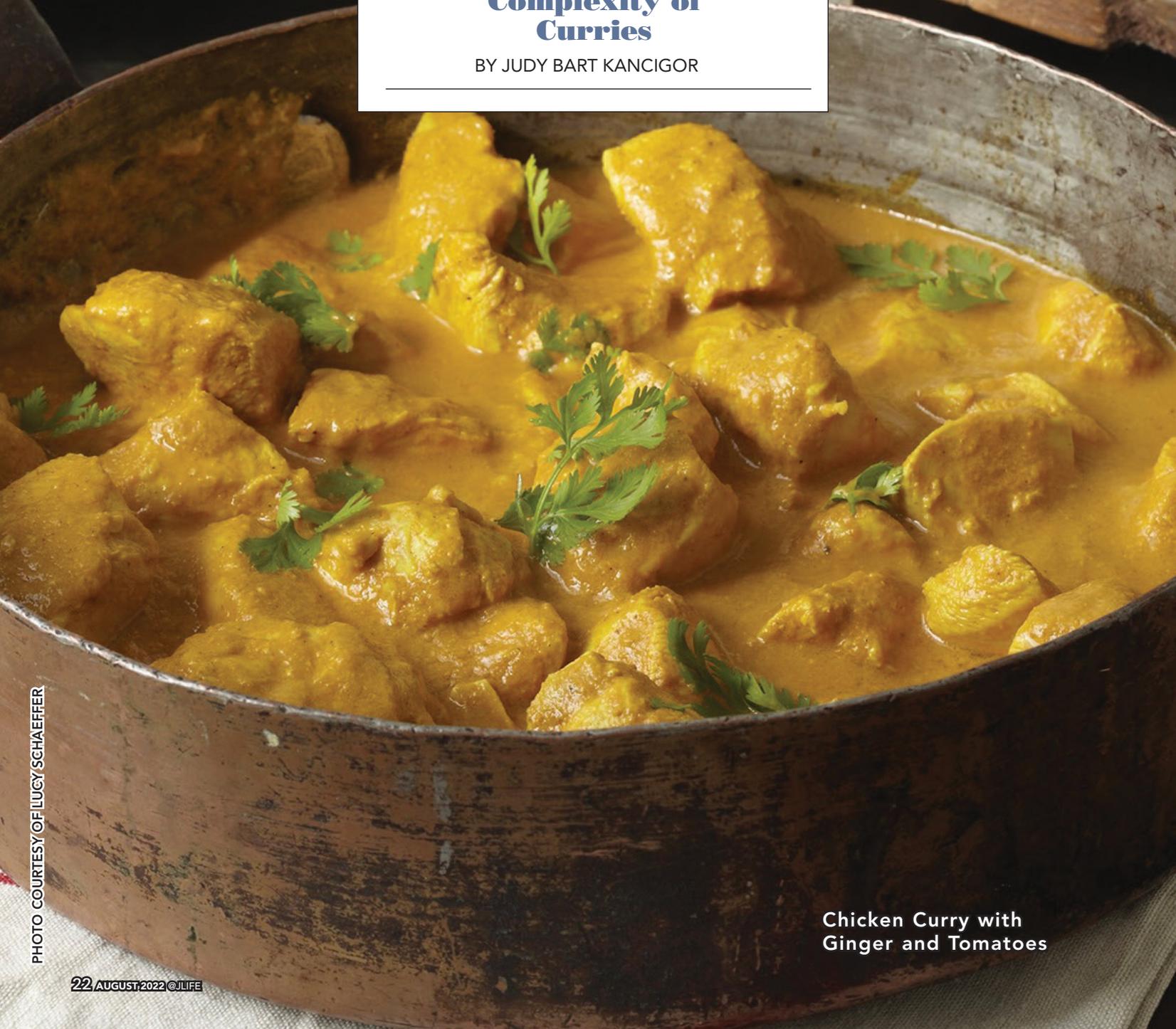


PHOTO COURTESY OF LUCY SCHAEFFER

Chicken Curry with  
Ginger and Tomatoes

**I**f ever a cuisine may be said to be misunderstood, it must be Indian. “Too spicy” some people will say, or “I don’t like curry.” In reality “the word ‘curry’ refers to any Indian sauce-based, spice-laden dish,” according to chef, master teacher and award-winning cookbook author Raghavan Iyer.

Maybe you didn’t care for that one curry you tasted. It’s not for nothing that one of Iyer’s most popular cookbooks is “660 Curries” (Workman, \$25.95). “To Indians curries have nothing to do with curry powder and everything to do with sauces,” he explained, speaking to me by phone from his home in Minneapolis. “Every sauce we do we punctuate with flavor. There are many curries in parts of India that are flavored not with spices, but herbs. For heat we use peppercorns and chiles – that’s about it, so when I say ‘spicy,’ I mean well seasoned, not hot. That’s the beauty and complexity of curries.”

This is the education issue, and when it comes to teaching cooking, I think immediately of Iyer, author of six critically acclaimed cookbooks, winner of three James Beard Awards, one Emmy, and two IACP awards for Cooking Teacher of the Year and a cookbook award.

With “Indian Cooking Unfolded” (Workman, \$19.95) in particular, Iyer’s skills as the consummate teacher shine through. Each chapter begins with a “lesson plan” and includes “extra credit” – tips and explanations so you understand the reasoning behind the instructions. Step-by-step illustrations and Iyer’s explicit instructions leave little room

for guesswork. “My job as a teacher is to give you a visual cue,” he said, “not ‘heat the oil for five minutes,’ but ‘heat it until it begins to shimmer.’”

While “curry” may be controversial, love for naan, that addictive, chewy, tender-crispy bread, is universal. “Naan is usually baked on the inner walls of a high-temperature, clay-lined oven called a tandoor,” Iyer writes. No tandoor in your kitchen? No worries. What follows is his grilled version. He even provides an oven version under “Extra Credit.”

The baked naans are spread with ghee, an essential ingredient in Indian cuisine. While easy enough to make yourself, you can find prepared ghee in the many Indian grocery stores throughout Orange County and even in some supermarkets. “Ghee is butter that is clarified to such a high extent that all the milk solids are completely removed,” explained Iyer. “By removing the milk solids there is no need to refrigerate it. It can sit out for months on end. It’s the milk solids that make it go rancid. Also, ghee has a very nice, strong, nutty flavor, and by getting rid of the milk, you’re increasing the smoke point of butter. You cannot deep-fry in butter, but you can deep-fry in ghee.”

In addition to his work as a chef, teacher, consultant and cookbook writer, Iyer leads travelers on culinary adventures to India, where there are three distinct Jewish communities. “There is a section of Cochin in southwestern India called Jew Town,” he noted, “with an active Jewish synagogue built in the 1700’s and a cemetery dating from the

1300’s. The Cochini Jews go back to the year 370.”

Better known is the larger community of Bene Israel, Children of Israel, who settled on the west coast south of Bombay, now Mumbai, he said. “Then there is a third Jewish community of Baghdadis, Sephardic Jews from Iraq who settled on the east coast. In Kerala you still find just a handful of Cochini Jews left. Mumbai has a synagogue as well. It’s a dwindling community – most have left for Israel.”

Much of Indian cuisine lends itself nicely to kosher cooking because of its emphasis on fresh vegetables and use of coconut milk and coconut byproducts, a pareve and sadly underused ingredient in the kosher kitchen. “They use a ton of coconut oil and coconut milk in the Kerala region,” he observed. “It’s the perfect product for incorporating into kosher meat dishes where you don’t want to mix meat and dairy,” like the Chicken Curry below.

While the original recipe calls for half-and-half, coconut milk is a fine (and tasty) substitution. ☆

**“Curry” refers to any Indian sauce-based, spice-laden dish.”**

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).



## Raghavan's Blend

- 2 tablespoons coriander seeds
- 1 tablespoon cumin seeds
- 2 teaspoons black or yellow mustard seeds
- 1 teaspoon black peppercorns
- ½ teaspoon whole cloves
- 12 to 15 dried red cayenne chiles (stems discarded)
- 1 teaspoon ground turmeric

Grind all ingredients except turmeric in spice or coffee grinder. Stir in turmeric. Will keep up to 3 months in tightly sealed container away from excess light, heat and humidity.

## Naan

Naan is northern India's classic flatbread. The dough requires no rising time because of the absence of yeast. Yield: 4 naan (each about 8 inches in diameter)

- 3 cups unbleached all-purpose flour, plus additional for rolling out dough
  - 2 teaspoons baking powder
  - 1 teaspoon coarse kosher or sea salt, plus extra for sprinkling
  - 1 large egg, slightly beaten
  - Canola oil, for brushing dough
  - Ghee, for finished naan
- For a more detailed Naan recipe please visit [www.jlifespv.com](http://www.jlifespv.com)*

## Chicken Curry with Ginger and Tomatoes

Yield: 4 servings

- 2 tablespoons canola oil
- 1 small onion, coarsely chopped
- 4 medium-size cloves garlic, coarsely chopped
- 4 pieces fresh ginger (each about size and thickness of a 25-cent piece; no need to peel skin)
- 2 teaspoons Raghavan's Blend (recipe follows) or store-bought Madras curry powder
- ½ cup canned diced tomatoes, undrained
- ½ cup coconut milk
- 1½ pounds skinless, boneless chicken breasts, cut into 2-inch cubes
- 1 teaspoon coarse kosher or sea salt
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped fresh cilantro leaves and tender stems



- 1.** Heat oil in large skillet over medium-high heat. Once oil appears to shimmer, add onion, garlic, and ginger. Stir-fry until onion is light caramel brown around edges, 4-5 minutes.
- 2.** Sprinkle spice blend into skillet; stir to mix. Let spices roast until aromas dramatically change, 10 seconds. Stir in tomatoes. Lower heat and simmer the chunky sauce, uncovered, stirring occasionally, until tomato pieces soften, excess moisture evaporates, and some of the oils in the spices start to dot edge of sauce, 5-7 minutes.
- 3.** Pour coconut milk into skillet; scrape bottom to release bits of onion, garlic, and ginger. Transfer sauce to blender. Holding lid down, purée curry until slightly curdled but smooth.
- 4.** Return sauce to skillet; stir in chicken and salt. Simmer, covered, over medium-low heat, stirring occasionally, until chicken when cut is no longer pinkish red and juices run clear, 12-15 minutes. Sprinkle with cilantro and serve.

- 1.** Thoroughly combine flour, baking powder and 1 teaspoon salt in large bowl.
- 2.** Pour beaten egg over flour mixture and quickly stir it in. Flour will still be very dry with a few wet spots.
- 3.** Pour 1 cup warm tap water into measuring cup. Drizzle a few tablespoons water over flour mixture, stirring (you can use your hand as long as it's clean. I think it's the best tool) it in as you drizzle. Repeat with a few more tablespoons of water until a soft, slightly sticky, but manageable dough ball is formed. Watch carefully; you don't want it so sticky you have to add more flour to make it workable.
- 4.** If you used your hand to make the dough, it will be caked with floury clumps. Scrape clumps back into bowl. Wash and dry your hands thoroughly, then knead dough. (You'll get a much better feel for the dough's consistency with dry hands.) To knead the dough, dust your hands lightly with flour. Knead dough to form a smooth, soft ball, 1 to 2 minutes.
- 5.** Divide dough into 4 equal portions. Lightly grease a plate with oil. Shape 1 portion into a round resembling a hamburger bun and put it on the plate. Repeat with remaining dough.
- 6.** Brush tops of rounds with oil, cover with plastic wrap or slightly dampened cloth, and let sit at room temperature about 30 minutes. Allowing dough to rest softens the gluten that has formed as you knead dough. Gluten is what gives bread its structure, and when just formed, it has a tendency to spring back into a tightness, making it difficult to roll dough.

“India has three distinct Jewish communities.”

# EDUCATION FOR CHANGE

## The powerful lessons of hakhel and shmita.

BY ADINA GERVER, JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY (JTA)

**C**ommentary on Parashat Nitzavim, Deuteronomy 29:9 - 30:20.

I consider the most beautiful passage in the Torah to be found in Parashat Nitzavim (Deut. 30:11-14):

Surely, this mitzvah that I enjoin upon you this day is not too baffling for you, nor is it beyond reach. It is not in the heavens, that you should say, 'Who among us can go up to the heavens and get it for us and impart it to us, that we may observe it?' Neither is it beyond the sea... No, the thing is very close to you, in your mouth and in your heart, to observe it.

One reason I love this passage is because it utterly fails to define "this mitzvah," leaving each of us to attach our own personal meaning. I understand "this mitzvah" as an amalgam of the interpretations of the medieval commentators Nahmanides and Seforno.

### This Mitzvah

Nahmanides says that the phrase refers to the entire Torah, and Seforno explains it as teshuvah—repentance and return. By pairing Torah, which at its essence demands that we pursue justice, and teshuvah, our capacity to right wrongs, we can understand this passage as a mandate to believe that we have an innate capacity to fight the status quo when it is unjust and create change in the world around us.

By telling us that "this mitzvah" resides within us—in our mouths and in our hearts—this passage acknowledges and strongly rejects the human tendency toward defeatism: to convince ourselves that change, hope, and progress are beyond our grasp.

We may sometimes wish that we could be passive receptacles for the difficult, transformative mitzvot that help us enact change in the world around us, that someone else could do this hard work for us, but this passage vehemently rejects that notion. Rather, it insists that the capacity to effect change resides within us.

Yet the passage neglects to tell us how we each can come to actualize and act on this capacity. I believe that the answer lies in the next parashah, Vayelekh (Deut. 31:10-12):

"Every seventh year...you shall read this Torah aloud in the presence of all Israel. Gather the people—men, women, children and the strangers in your communities—that they may hear and so learn...to observe faithfully every word of this Torah."

### Education for All

This practice, called hakhel, is an all-inclusive, free, public education, granted to women, men, and children, both community members and strangers. According to medieval commentators Abraham Ibn Ezra and Hizkuni, hakhel takes place at the beginning

of the shmita, or sabbatical year, when agricultural work is forbidden. This enables the full year, when the entire community is free

from physical labor, to be devoted to study. This model of universal access to education is the Torah's built-in system to activate our capacity to change and improve the world.

Although imperfect due to its extreme infrequency—one year out of every seven does not provide for a very thorough education—hakhel's messages of universal access and the need for sufficient time away from work in order to study are relevant today.

This is especially true in the contemporary Global South, where the necessity of earning a livelihood often imposes a formidable barrier to education. Children mired in poverty—especially girls—often must perform a great deal of domestic labor, leaving them no time for schooling. The United Nations notes the strong association between child labor and lack of access to education.

Inversely, expanding primary school enrollment has proved to be one of the most effective ways to relieve persistent poverty. Universal education is one of the eight Millennium Development Goals articulated by the United Nations and adopted by major world leaders with the goal of reducing poverty worldwide.

The goal is to "[e]nsure that, children everywhere, boys and girls alike, will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling." Recognizing this, many grassroots NGOs focus on providing families with the means to generate sufficient income so that children do not need to work—creating a shmita-like pause in labor that creates time for learning.

We who accept the message of Parashat Nitzavim—that the Torah's mandate for change resides in all of our hearts and minds, just waiting to be activated through education—must extend to all of humankind the opportunities that have allowed us this outlook. We must ensure that hakhel and shmita exist for all of the children of the world, so that they can access the knowledge that will free them from the cycle of persistent poverty. Only then will progress, change, and hope truly reside not in the heavens or across the sea, but in the mouths and hearts of all of us. ✡



# COMMUNITY CALENDAR

## TUESDAY, AUGUST 2

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Caffeine for the Soul, CIE

## SATURDAY, AUGUST 6

TO SUNDAY, AUGUST 7

TISHA BA'V

## SATURDAY, AUGUST 6

THE 9TH OF AV

Fast begins at 7:47 pm

9:00 pm - Maariv -

Evening Services

and the reading of the

Eicha - the Book of

Lamentations, CIE

## SUNDAY, AUGUST 7

9:00 am - Shacharit -

Morning Services

and the reading

of the Kinnot

6:00 pm - Mincha Services

Fast ends at 8:13 pm CIE

All events listed here are virtual unless otherwise noted. Please visit [www.jewishsgpv.org/virtual-calendar](http://www.jewishsgpv.org/virtual-calendar) for details.

## TUESDAY, AUGUST 2

11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Caffeine for the Soul, CIE

## THURSDAY, AUGUST 25

11:30 AM - 2:30 PM

Community Outing: I'll

Have What She's Having-

The Jewish Deli

Skirball Center

2701 N. Sepulveda Blvd.

Los Angeles, CA 90049

<https://www.skirball.org/exhibitions/ill-have-what-shes-having-jewish-deli>

Beth Shalom

of Whittier (BSW)

[www.bethshalomofwhittier.net](http://www.bethshalomofwhittier.net)

net

B'nai Simcha

Community Preschool

[www.bnaisimcha.org](http://www.bnaisimcha.org)

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)

com

Congregation Hugat

Haverim (CHH)

[www.hugathaverim.com](http://www.hugathaverim.com)

Jewish Federation of SGPV

(JFSGPV)

[www.jewishsgpv.org](http://www.jewishsgpv.org)

Pasadena Jewish

Academy (PJA)

[www.pasadenajewishacademy.com](http://www.pasadenajewishacademy.com)

com

com

Pasadena Jewish

Temple & Center (PJTC)

[www.pjtc.net](http://www.pjtc.net)

Temple Beth El Riverside

<https://www.tberiv.org>

(TBR)

Temple Ami Shalom

(TAS)

<https://templeamishalom.org/>

org/

Temple Beth Israel of

Pomona (TBI)

[www.tbipomona.org](http://www.tbipomona.org)

Temple Beth David of

the San Gabriel Valley

(TBD)

[www.templebd.com](http://www.templebd.com)

Temple Beth Israel of

Highland Park and Eagle

Rock (TBILA)

[www.tbila.org](http://www.tbila.org)

Temple B'nai Emet (TBE)

[www.templebnaiemet.org](http://www.templebnaiemet.org)

Temple Sinai of Glendale

(TSG)

<http://temple-sinai.net>

Temple Shalom of

Ontario (TSO)

[www.templeholomofontario.org](http://www.templeholomofontario.org)

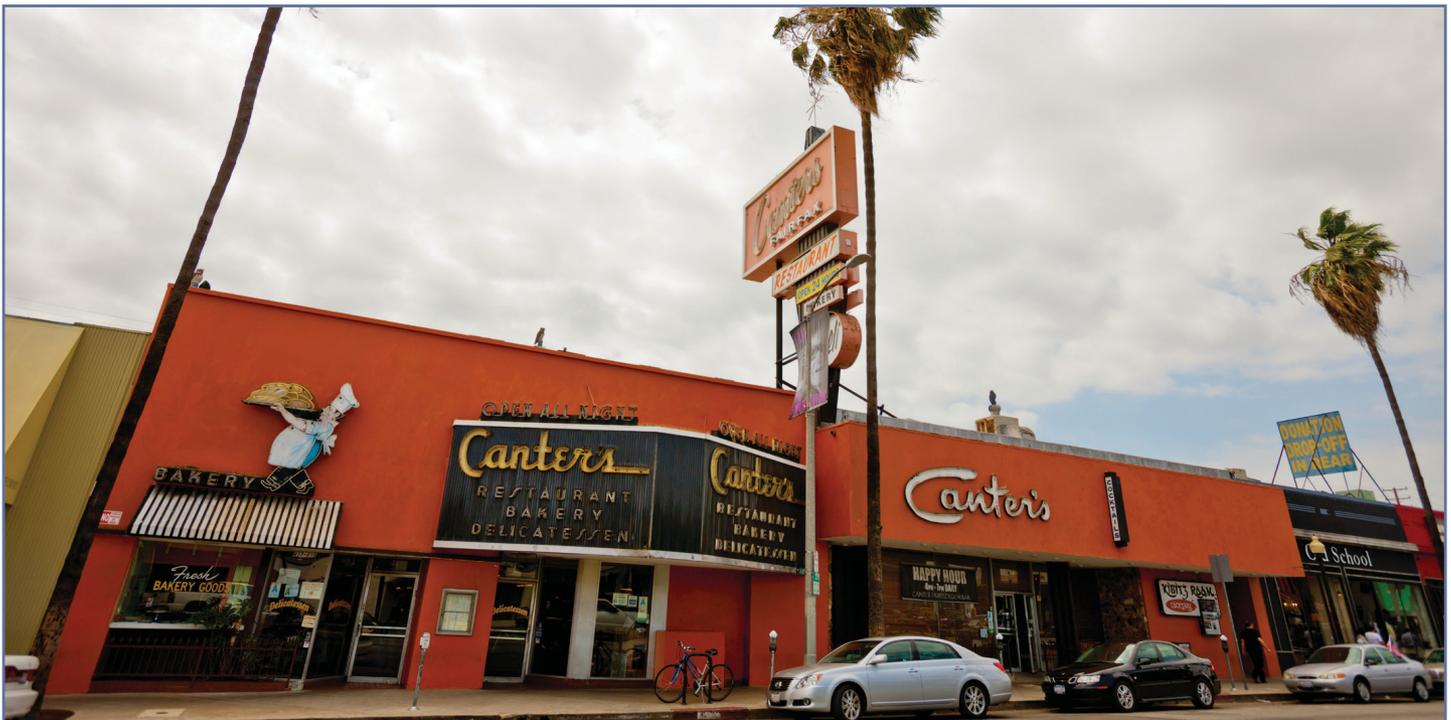
www.templeholomofontario.org

Tree of Life Preschool

(formerly TBI Preschool)

(ToL)

[www.tbipomona.org](http://www.tbipomona.org) ☆



# COMMUNITY OUTING

## "I'LL HAVE WHAT SHE'S HAVING"

**SPEND THE DAY WITH THE JEWISH FEDERATION EXPLORING THE NEWEST EXHIBITS OF THE SKIRBALL CULTURAL CENTER; "I'LL HAVE WHAT SHE'S HAVING" THE JEWISH DELI, AND "TALKING BACK TO POWER."**

**FROM A DELI-STYLE LUNCH, TO PERSONAL EXPLORATION, AND EVEN A DOCENT TOUR, WE HAVE YOUR DAY OF ARTISTIC ADVENTURE ALL SET.**

**THURSDAY AUGUST 25, 11:30 A.M.**

**SKIRBALL CENTER**

**(2701 N. SEPULVEDA BLVD., LOS ANGELES)**

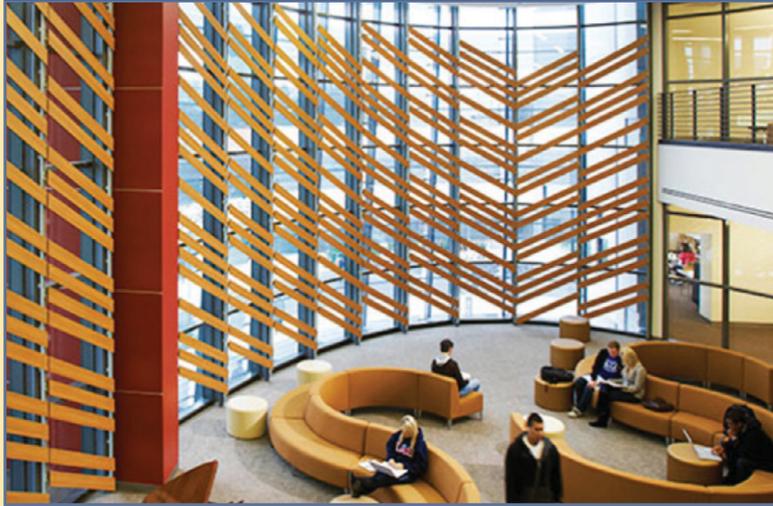
**SPACE IS LIMITED**

**MUST RSVP BY 8/12**

**MUSEUM ENTRANCE, PARKING, AND EXHIBITION TOUR ARE FREE WITH REGISTRATION. GUESTS ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR THEIR OWN TRANSPORTATION AND LUNCH.**

**FOR MORE DETAILS AND TO REGISTER, VISIT: [WWW.JEWISHSGPV.ORG](http://WWW.JEWISHSGPV.ORG)**

# NEWS & JEWS



The Henry Madden Library is the third-largest library in the California State University system. (Cary Edmondson)

## A California university will rename a library building previously named after a Nazi sympathizer

By Lillian Isley-Greene, JTA

The California State University Board of Trustees voted Wednesday to remove the name of an unrepentant antisemite and Nazi sympathizer from the main library on its Fresno campus, putting an end to the legacy of longtime former librarian Henry Miller Madden at Fresno State after an internal investigation.

The building will be referred to as the Fresno State Library until a replacement name is chosen.

In a press release sent to the campus community, Fresno State University President Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval said he was thankful that the 25-member board voted the way it did, calling Madden's writings "deeply hurtful and disturbing."

"This is a critical and necessary next step toward healing for our community and upholding the values of inclusion and equity that allow Fresno State to thrive," he wrote, adding that he will be forming a new-name task force.

"I firmly believe that naming a building or any key campus area must align with our communal values and reflect our shared spirit of discovery, diversity and distinction," he wrote.

The decision to strike Madden's name from the library came after a task force put together by Jiménez-Sandoval recommended it be removed from the building, citing extensive examples of antisemitism in Madden's personal papers.

Among them, Madden wrote about a 1934 visit to New York City: "I spent a good 20 minutes walking, looking all

the time for an honest gentile face, and I don't think I saw one."

"And such Jews! Noisy, dirty, smelly, ugly — Jews such as you have never seen before, absolutely different from S.F. Jews," he wrote in a letter to his mother.

"The Jews: I am developing a violent and almost uncontrollable phobia against them," he wrote in a letter to a friend. "Whenever I see one of those predatory noses, or those roving and leering eyes, or those slobbering lips, or those flat feet, or those nasal and whiny voices I tremble with rage and hatred."

In other writings, Madden fantasized about driving Jews "barefoot to some remote spot in Texas" — to camps "closed in by electrically charged barbed wire."

Michael Lukens, chair of the task force who is on staff in Fresno State's office of the president, said the recommendation followed five months of investigation into Madden's personal papers, including examining 53 boxes of material that Madden donated to the library in 1980.

Jiménez-Sandoval "wanted to look at the trajectory of his thoughts, whether later in life he had come to some sort of reckoning and displayed remorse or regret over the views that he held in his 20s and 30s," Lukens said. "What we found is that there was really no evidence that he renounced the views at all."

Madden's views came to light in November 2021 when Bradley Hart, an associate professor who teaches about the media, lectured on the topic in class. Hart unearthed Madden's antisemitic writings while doing research for his 2018 book "Hitler's American Friends," but the university was not made aware of the history until after the lecture.

Hart applauded the board of trustees for taking what he called an important step in building inclusivity on campus. "This is a great moment for Fresno State," he said. "Today we have rectified a historic wrong."

The removal of Madden's name from not only the library building but also the university website, advertising materials and signage will begin immediately, Lukens said. Though the process will be complex and expensive, he said the university is committed to the effort.

Jill Fields, a history professor and founding coordinator of the school's Jewish Studies Program, which began in 2012, said she was impressed by the university's quick response to the issue.

Moving forward, Fields said, the university must work to eradicate what remains of Madden's legacy on campus. Madden spent 30 years as a librarian at Fresno State, and the library building has featured his name since 1981.

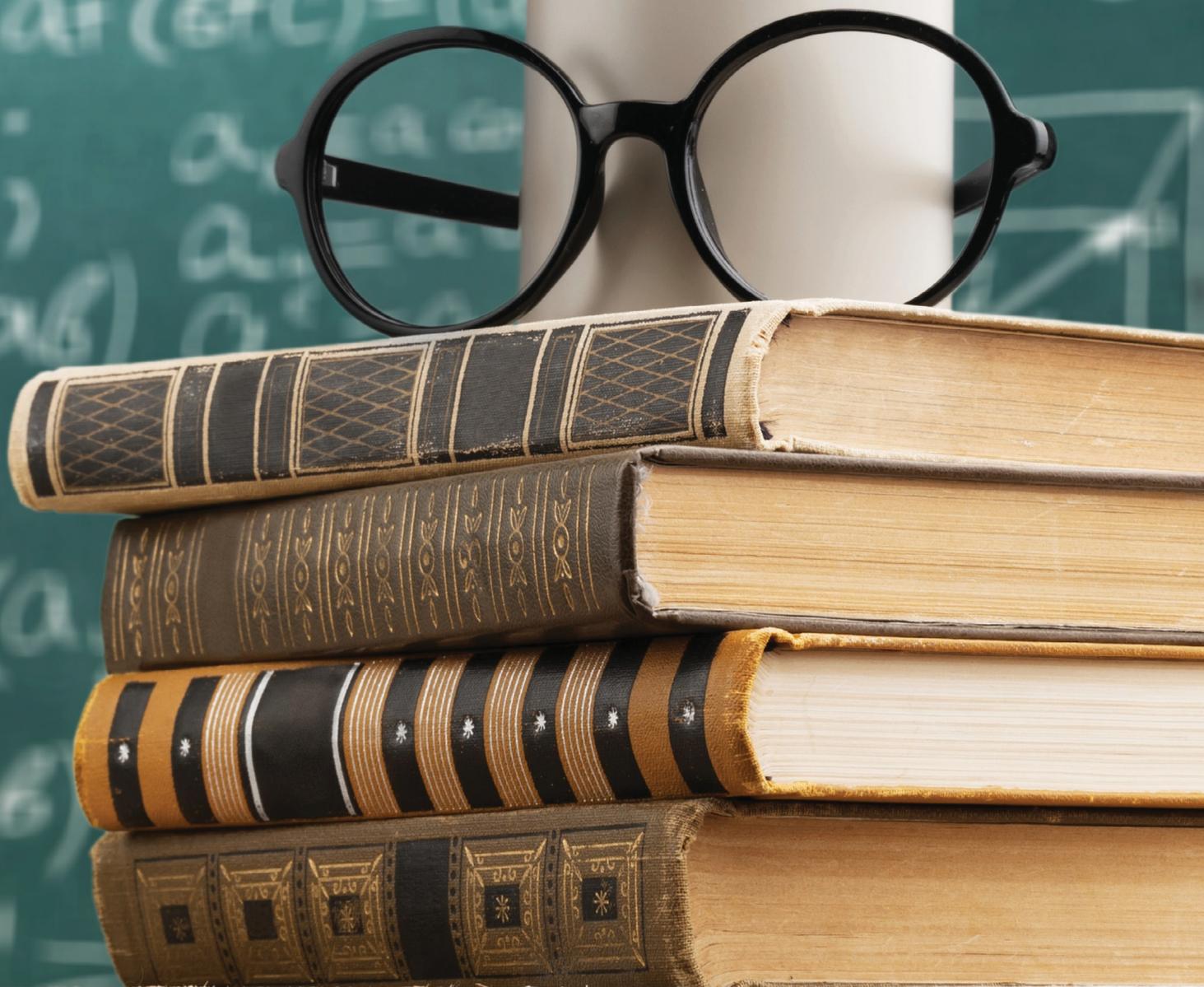
"There's more that can be done," Fields said. "It's one thing to remove a name, and it's another to ensure that students and the wider community remain educated about the existence and persistence of antisemitism and other forms of racism."

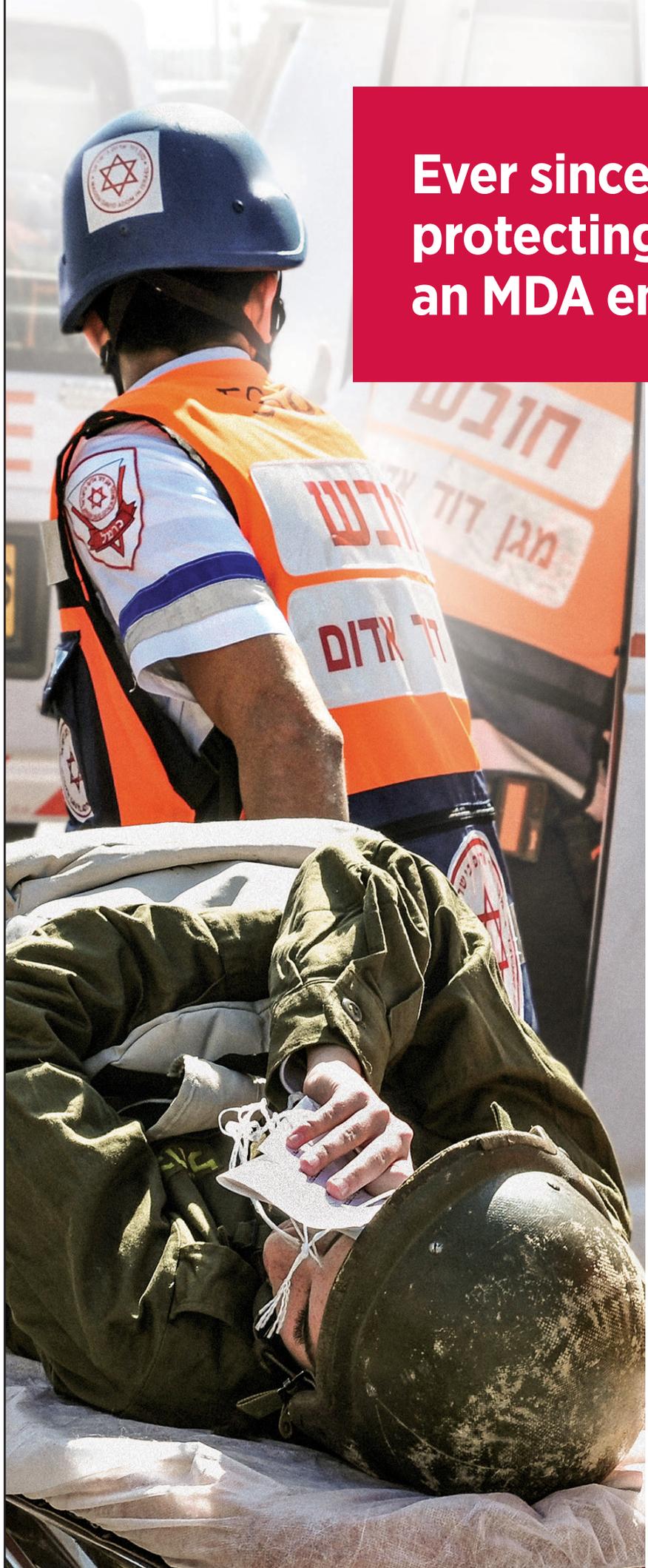
A version of this piece originally ran in *J. The Jewish News of Northern California*, and is reprinted with permission.☆

## LAST WORD

*“It’s not that I’m so smart, it’s just that I stay with problems longer.”*

*— Albert Einstein*





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