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July 2025
Tammuz — Av 5785

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STANDING WITH ISRAEL

Navigating the growing chasm between different age groups' support for the Jewish state.

In the summer of 1990, when I was 16 years old, I and 44 other Jewish teens from across Northern California's East Bay spent six incredible weeks in Israel. I was the first from both sides of my family to visit the ancestral home of our religion. This life-changing trip was the first of three times I spent in Israel, including my three-week trip as part of my grad school program and once as part of our Jewish Federation's first community trip back in 2012.

Israel has always had a special place in my heart, not only because of its rich history and incredible beauty but also because, as I walked the streets and interacted with people, I knew I was in a place that "got" me. I didn't need to play Jewish geography to feel connected... in Israel, you feel it.

As you might imagine, over the last several years, Israel has been at the forefront of my mind, especially with the rise of antisemitism and the rise of anti-Israel sentiment that we have witnessed and experienced.

I am a Zionist and will continue to share this openly and proudly. To me, Zionism means that you believe in the importance of there being a place that Jews from around the world can call home. I do recognize that, like many other countries, there are flaws in the decisions and actions made by the Israeli government. Do I always agree with decisions that are made in Israel? Absolutely not. But I also know that since I am not an Israeli, nor do I live in a country surrounded by people who want its complete



destruction and actively work to make that happen every day, I am not always able to understand or grasp why certain decisions are made entirely. This is a nuanced perspective, and it is often difficult to articulate, let alone communicate to people.

So often, people view things as either-or, but with Israel, I believe that two truths can be held simultaneously, which can allow people to stand in solidarity with Israel. And it makes me almost sick to my stomach that for some people, the word "Israel" has become a "dirty" word and has even torn families and life-long friendships apart. Never in my wildest dreams could I have ever imagined that this would happen, especially within the Jewish community. And yet, it is the reality in which we live in today. Part of this issue can be solved by not viewing what is taking place in Israel through our "Western" lens.

Study after study continues to illustrate the growing chasm between the different age groups who have strong positive connections with Israel. The percentage

of 18-25-year-olds who have a positive perspective on Israel has been declining over the last 10+ years. Part of this has to do with how Israel is perceived in the world because younger people develop opinions and perspectives through social media, and Israel is still trying to figure out how to improve its public relations to respond to this "trend." More effort and attention needs to be made to educate our Jewish youth, keeping in mind that the "issue" about Israel is no longer black or white ... there is a lot more nuance than ever before. Unfortunately, there is a challenge in teaching nuance, and people cannot fully comprehend the issue unless they see it for themselves. The only real way to do this is to see and experience Israel with your own eyes... not what online algorithms decide you should see as you scroll on your social media feeds. ☆



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

“Growing scientific evidence indicates that it behooves retirees to include volunteerism among the opportunities awaiting them.”

HEALTHY VOLUNTEERING

Giving back helps all parties.

BY TEDDY WEINBERGER

When people ask me what I do for a living, I have now reached the age (almost 64) when I can say: “I am retired.” Like many people, Covid 19 forced me into early retirement, but it took a while for me to realize that my main writing work was not coming back, and it took some time beyond that for me to get to an age that is somewhat “respectable” for retirement (at least in my mind). I should say that the Hebrew phrase “*yatzati le’pensya*” feels so much better than “I am retired” (“*pensya*” is a Hebraicized version of “pension”). Hebrew uses a very active verb to describe this stage of one’s life: *yatzati*: “I went out,” suggestive of movement and new opportunities. “I am retired” is suggestive of one-foot-in-the-gravism.

Growing scientific evidence indicates that it behooves retirees to include volunteerism among the new opportunities awaiting them. For example, a 2020 study, published in the American Journal of Preventive Medicine entitled “Volunteering and Subsequent Health and Well-Being in Older Adults,” collected data from 12,998 seniors to study whether volunteering increased well-being. Among the results: those who volunteered more than 100 hours per year were more likely to be optimistic and less likely to experience hopelessness. According to the study, along with exercise and good nutrition, volunteering should be on the list of things that gerontologists routinely recommend to their patients.

My wife Sarah is a big believer in volunteering. One year, when we were still living in Givat Zeev and she was between jobs, she volunteered at the local public religious school to help children with their English. Sarah committed to volunteering every Monday between 9-1, and rain or shine she was there. Currently, Sarah has been volunteering at a bridal boutique run by a non-profit organization called



“Women’s Spirit,” which is “dedicated to helping women survivors of abuse find employment and achieve economic independence” (the organization has a separate track of volunteers who act as long-term personal mentors for women suffering from economic abuse; see <https://www.ruach-nashit.org.il/home-1>). The boutique’s wedding gowns are donated by Israeli designers, brides purchase them at a steep discount (dresses that can cost several thousand dollars are typically sold for \$700), and the income helps Women’s Spirit. Sarah has more flexibility in this volunteering than she had as an English tutor. She chooses a 3-hour block (and this need not be the same each week), and during each of the three hours a bride (accompanied by her mother or a friend) arrives to look at dresses. Sarah loves making brides happy and she loves the win-win aspect of the boutique (the bride saving a lot of money and the money going to a good cause)—plus she can watch “Say Yes to the Dress” as a type of continuing education!

When it comes to volunteering, my attitude seems to be that I wait until I can no longer avoid it. In practice this is rather informal volunteering with just one person at a time. My current volunteering gig began serendipitously, just like my previous stints at volunteering. On my frequent bicycle trips between my home in Ra’anana and

my son’s in Herzliya, I would often see a person sitting alone on a bench. Even on relatively cold days, there she sat. Finally, my curiosity got the better of me, and it turned out to be a Holocaust survivor named Shula Zarbov. I began to visit with Shula on her bench. Several months ago, I decided that I would deliver a home-baked challah every Friday to Shula’s home, and our visits take place then. Shula is fairly miserable at her assisted-living facility away from her beloved Tel Aviv, where she lived for 60 years near the beach, but her sons were adamant that she could no longer live alone. I hope that my challah and my company cheer her up a little.

Dear Reader: Even if you’re not a traditional volunteer like my wife, I’m here to say that there are a lot of small volunteer opportunities right around you—people who could use some company or a helping hand. All you have to do is open your eyes and heart and donate some of your time, and it can even be at your convenience. In doing so, to quote from the conclusion of that 2020 study, you will be “simultaneously enhancing health and society.” ☆

TEDDY WEINBERGER IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO JLIFE MAGAZINE. 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.

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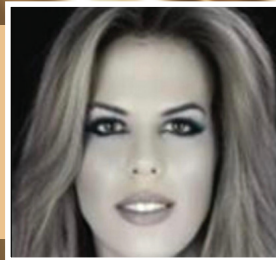
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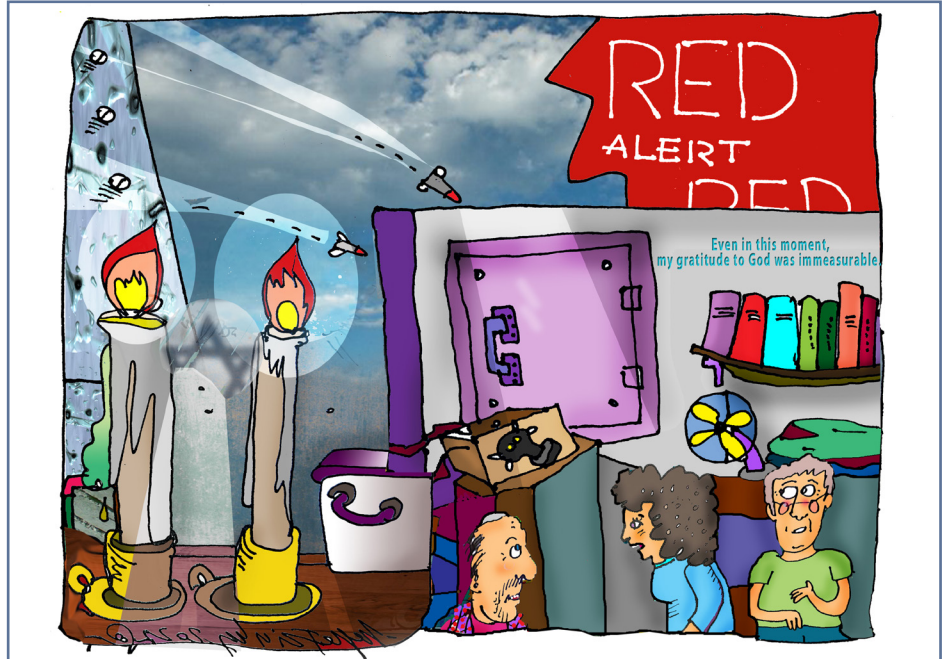
BY ANDREA SIMANTOV

A special state of emergency was declared for the entire country and we'd been warned that Shabbos might be rough.

It was so rough. Our dinner guest came early because synagogue prayer was cancelled by order of the Home Front Command. I lit candles and, with the sky still light, our friend Zeesi came over before dark set in. She hadn't brought her customary fruit platter from the elegant shop in town because all non-essential activities were forbidden. In lieu, I'd baked a fruit-laced cake without using a recipe, thinking it might serve as an adequate finale to a lovely Shabbat dinner. (Note to self: Find a recipe. The cake was inedible.)

The first missile barrages began during the salad course. Our bomb shelter is four flights down and, not yet inebriated from Shabbat wine, tequila and vodka or stuffed with challah, my husband Ronney (72), Zeesi (75+) and I (none of your business) skipped down the marbled stairways and took our places with other intrepid neighbors. The crowd included Ethiopians, Russians, Sri Lankans, missionaries and us. Greetings of "Shabbat Shalom" filled the air. Those with cell phones filled us in on what our miraculous air force was achieving. Although we were well underground, we could feel a gentle rumbling outside and, from time to time, some distant booms.

We returned to dinner and added liquor to the mix. Just before I served dessert (the ayatollahs probably knew about my cake), the sirens sounded and missiles began flying. Ronney and Zeesi, both stalwart and sporty, went all the way down while I cockily sat on the stairs outside of my apartment door. Our border collie was terrified, barking wildly and I didn't want to be far. But unlike



earlier, these missiles/bombs were shaking the ground, rattling windows and I suddenly flew down the stairs to get closer to safety. If I wanted to better ensure that I made it through the night, better to follow orders from Home Command Front and not ad lib survival.

Zeesi didn't want to stay over and I walked her to the street. She promised she would try to return for kiddush the next morning. Exhausted, Ronney went to the bedroom and I slept in the living room. Or hoped for sleep.

Just after 3 am, the mightiest of barrages occurred. This time, even Ronney wore fear on his face. As we huddled with others on the lowest floor, he rubbed my head. This small act gave me great strength. We were together, experiencing the unimaginable. Even in this moment, my gratitude to G-d was immeasurable.

Finally asleep on the sofa, at about 4:45 a.m., I heard/felt enormous trembling of the building, the windows rattling something fierce.

Apparently an enormous attack was underway, too far off for the sirens to alert in Jerusalem. It was the most prolonged bombing I'd experienced. I did what I wasn't supposed to do; walked to the balcony and looked out, the pre-dawn sky streaked with missile vapors.

And this morning, my son returned to fight in Gaza.

Looking only at the trees, the story is scary and my hopes lie with men and women in leadership who are tasked with our safety. But then I look at the forest. We who are blessed to live in the Holy Land at this moment in time are sitting in the front row of prophesied Jewish history. Our role has been decreed and, whether foolish or undeniably brave, we are imbued with unwavering faith as we take up the gauntlet toward our ultimate—let it be soon—Redemption. ☆

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.

WILL TRAVEL FOR FOOD

BY SHANNON SARNA, MY JEWISH LEARNING



Last week at this time my husband and I were busy scrambling to get our suitcases and 7-month-old out the door as we departed on our first proper vacation since she was born: we were headed to St. John, part of the U.S. Virgin Islands, for 4 days of relaxing in the sun.

It was lovely—beautiful weather, gorgeous aqua colored water, friendly people and an exceptionally well-behaved little girl. Everything was great, except for one thing: the food!

Someone once said to my husband that normal people travel and enjoy eating along the way, but that he travels with the purpose of having good food. And to a certain extent that is true for both of us.

One of the happiest days on our honeymoon was spent hopping from bakery to bakery all day in Venice sampling each local version of the “fritte venezia,” or the seasonal fried donuts they serve before Carnivale. We might have also sampled some espresso, pizzette and other pastry along the way...

There was nothing bad about the food we ate in St. John, in fact there were a few fantastic morsels—

cinnamon bun bread pudding, plantain-coated mahi and a refreshing blood orange margarita. And one of the stand-outs was a coconut rice cake made with chunks of fresh coconut that I am eager to recreate this weekend!

But the majority of the food was geared towards American tourists—club sandwiches, chicken caesar salads, hamburgers and french fries—items you could get at any restaurant here.

This most recent vacation was not about eating or even traveling per se, but about taking a break from our busy lives to rest and relax together as a family. And so it was a success! But I know we look forward to planning our next trip where food will place higher on the agenda.

Stay tuned next week for a recipe for the coconut rice cakes we had on St. John and also for a guest post from Arielle Singer, who is recently back from her latest trip to Israel where food was top of the agenda!

Shabbat Shalom, and happy eating wherever you are this week. ☆

SHANNON SARNA IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.



YOU CAN THANK THESE THREE WOMEN

They have inspired thousands of Americans to love Israeli cuisine.

BY RACHEL RINGLER, MY JEWISH LEARNING



Yotam Ottolenghi, Alon Shaya, and Michael Solomonov, all James Beard award winners, are seen as the stars of the new Israeli cuisine. But these men stand shoulder-to-shoulder with three female food writers and chefs who play their own important role in drawing attention to Israel's food. In their latest cookbooks, which come out this September, Einat Admony, Janna Gur, and Adeena Sussman—culinary stars in their own right—let you into the home kitchens and open-air markets of Israel to show you how to recreate that delicious food in the United States or anywhere.

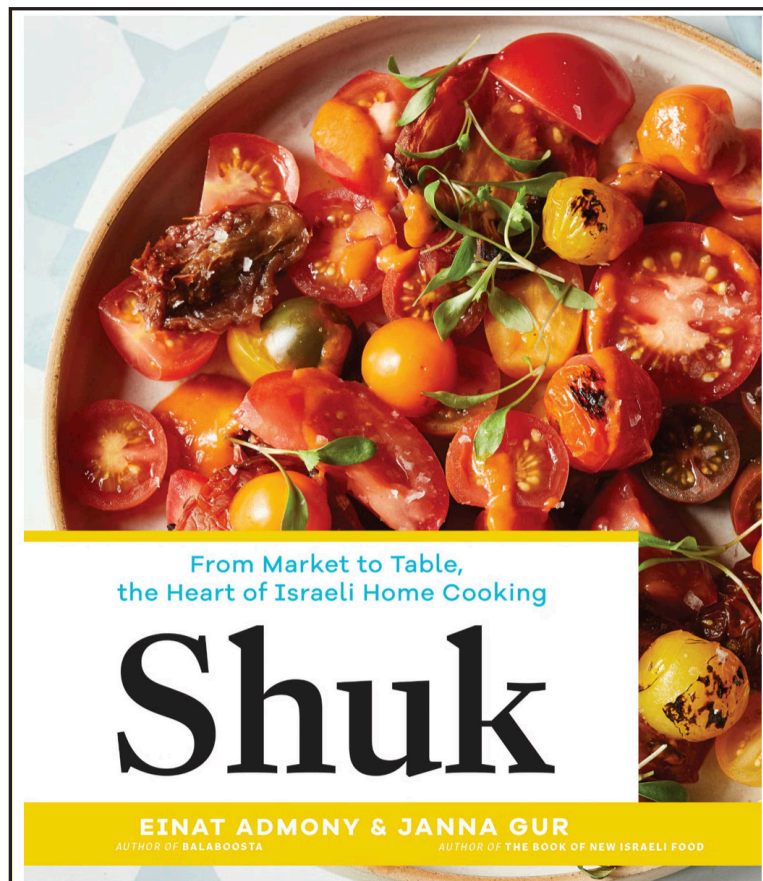
For the last 20 years, Admony has shared the vibrancy of Israeli food with the American market via her appearances on the Food Network's *Chopped*, her first cookbook, *Balaboosta*, and her many restaurants, including Taim, Kish-Kash, and Balaboosta. Taim is described as having the best falafel in New York, and many credit Admony with bringing sabich, the Iraqi sandwich stuffed with fried eggplant, hard-boiled eggs, and hummus, to America. Her cauliflower is famous, and she has introduced wide swaths of New

Yorkers and visitors alike to Israeli flavors that they have come to love.

Admony's co-author, Janna Gur, opened the door to the bubbling food scene developing in Israel in her book *The Book of New Israeli Food*, published years and before Ottolenghi's acclaimed *Jerusalem* hit American bookstores. *The Book of New Israeli Food* is part cookbook, part photo essay, with recipes far less intimidating than other Israeli cookbooks but sharing a similar narrative. In that debut book, Gur shined a light on food that, until then, had received scant attention, putting the cuisine that was evolving in Israel onto the global food map.

Gur and Admony's cookbook, *Shuk: From Market to Table, the Heart of Israeli Home Cooking*, is filled with recipes built around tahini, labneh, condiments, salads, *kitzitzot* (ground patties, meatballs, or burgers that are the pride of the Israeli home cook), and all manner of chicken dishes, some with roots in Iraq, others from Persia, and one perfumed with orange blossom water.

It is also a celebration of the shuks, or open-air markets, dotting the land of Israel. Admony and



Gur describe their favorite shuks in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Akko, and Haifa and the shops they frequent in each of them. Do you want the best stuffed filo pies in the Carmel market in Tel Aviv? Or the most flavorful chraime, a North African fish stew, in Jerusalem's Machne Yehudah market? They tell you exactly where to get what you want in this cookbook-cum-travel guide.

And then there's American-born Adeena Sussman, who developed a name for herself in the United States as a writer for food publications like *Gourmet*, *Food & Wine*, and *Travel and Leisure*. She's co-authored and collaborated on more than a dozen cookbooks, including two *New York Times* best-selling cookbooks that she wrote with the model Chrissy Teigen. While technically conceived in Israel, Sussman's feet were solidly planted in the States—that is, until she fell in love with an American-Israeli man and left her New York life behind for Tel Aviv.

Sussman admits to worrying about the impact her move to Israel would have on her career as a food writer. But rather than sputter into oblivion, her writing sparkled, taking on new power and passion. She lives a short walk from the Carmel market and begins each day there, walking the alleyways just as the vendors are setting out their wares. She says that she moved

to Israel for love but “she stayed for the shuk.”

It's her love for that shuk that inspired her newest book, *Sababa: The Fresh Sunny Flavors of Israeli Cuisine*. The book begins with recipes for some of the most popular spice mixes and sauces in Israel, like a lemon spread made with lemons, garlic, kosher salt, jalapeno, and oil to use on... everything. She adds it to pasta salad, sandwiches, and kebabs as a natural flavor enhancer. The book ends with a shopping guide full of resources Americans can use to access some of the harder to find ingredients like freekeh, pomegranate molasses, and the pickled mango condiment, amba (which, for the record, you can now get at Trader Joe's).

Sababa also includes recipes for American classics made using Israeli ingredients in fresh new ways, like her recipe for all-American granola flavored with tahini, olive oil, and silan, a sweet syrup made from dates. You'll also find recipes for her Pomegroni, a cocktail of pomegranate juice, sweet white vermouth, dry gin and bitters and a coffee cake enriched with labneh and flavored with halvah and Baharat, a spice mixture of cinnamon, allspice, nutmeg, cloves, cardamom, ground black pepper, and ginger.

Each book introduces the reader to foods and ingredients from different cultures. Admony has fallen for Ethiopian food which, “...reminds me

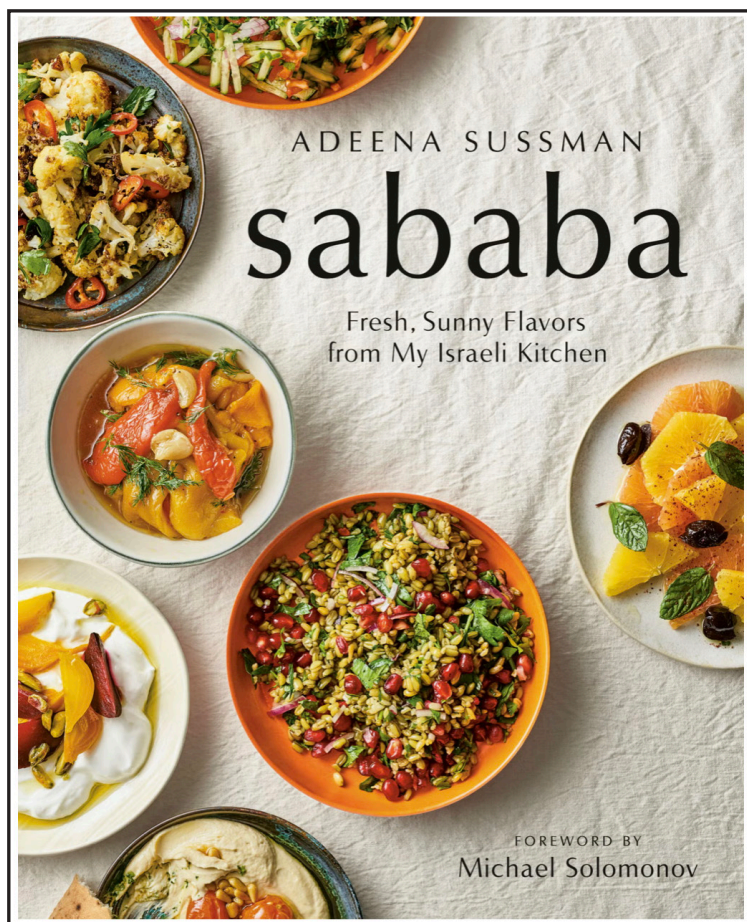




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of my Yemenite background.” Her recipe for Doro Wot, an Ethiopian chicken dish flavored with ginger, cardamom, turmeric and fenugreek, and braised in a pot with hard-boiled eggs, results in a tender and moist bird, with juices that can be mopped up with the Ethiopian spongy flatbread, injera, or the similar Yemenite lochoh. She dedicates a whole chapter to the proper way to make couscous from scratch and suggests and offers recipes for some of the dishes and sauces that might accompany it.

In both books, the authors teach the reader how to make classic Israeli dishes, like a crisp, flavorful schnitzel. “I respect classic dishes, done perfectly,” says Sussman, “like the perfect challah or schnitzel. By learning how to make these essential dishes, I will help create confident cooks.” Conversely, though, she believes that when cooking, “...there are no mistakes. Things unfold. Some of the best foods are happy accidents.”

In recent years, the selection of Israeli cookbooks available in the United States has grown rapidly. Why the heightened interest? Janna Gur has a theory:

“Israeli food is a cuisine in the making,” Gur says. “It is a combination of food traditions from different immigrant groups coupled with a total lack of commitment to tradition.” And she adds, “As a nation, we don’t have an age-old venerable cooking tradition that we need to honor. We can do whatever we want.”

Philosophy aside, Israel also seems, at least to Gur, to be in the right place at the right time, as far as food is concerned. Israeli food is vegetable-forward, she points out, and this is how the world wants to eat today. The focus on vegetables and salads contribute to its popularity.

And finally, Gur shared, Israeli chefs are great communicators. “They bring Israeli foods, like hummus, a classic Levantine dish that was always there, to other parts of the world. Israelis came across it, elevated it to an iconic status and exported it to the world.” The same could be said about burekas, shakshuka, and of late, arayes, (a pita stuffed with meat and then grilled) that is having a special moment.

It’s hard to know what will be next in the quickly developing Israeli food scene. And while it’s obvious the recipes and flavors of their cookbooks shine and delight, the contributions of these three powerhouse women is so much deeper than these collections alone.

Make sure to check out the Doro Wot (Ethiopian chicken) (<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/the-nosher/ethiopian-chicken-recipe-doro-wot/>) and lochoh (Yemenite spongy flatbread) (<https://www.myjewishlearning.com/the-nosher/yemenite-sponge-bread-recipe-lochoh/>) recipes from Admony & Gur’s book, *Shuk*. ☆

RACHEL RINGLER IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.

THE TRAVELER'S PRAYER: WHAT YOU SAY ALONG THE WAY

In Judaism, it is the journey, not the destination, that matters.

BY RABBI SHEFA GOLD, MY JEWISH LEARNING

The Traveler's Prayer—or Tefilat Haderech in Hebrew—is said as we embark on a journey. It is meant as an assurance of safety along the way. When we leave the comforts and familiar surroundings of home, it's natural to feel a bit vulnerable or apprehensive, so it's a good time to remember that we are ultimately safe, guided, and blessed.

This prayer can be chanted at the onset of a journey by foot, car, bus, boat, train or plane. It can take us to a place of calm and spacious awareness. It reminds us that G-d is with us and to pay attention to the gifts that might otherwise be missed along the way.

For the full text of the prayer please visit: <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/tefilat-haderekh-the-travelers-prayer/>.

The foundational story of Judaism—which is remembered, celebrated and relived every single day—is the story of a journey. In the beginning, we journey into existence. Then we journey with Abraham into the unknown and then into the entanglements of family dramas. We journey from there down into Egypt and into the suffering and constriction of slavery (the Hebrew word for Egypt is Mitzrayim, literally “the narrow place.”). Our journey from slavery to freedom, from Egypt to the Promised Land, represents the journey of awakening.

Major Jewish holidays celebrate important points on that journey. On Passover, we commemorate the leave-taking. On Shavuot, we celebrate the receiving of the Torah at Mount Sinai along the way. Sukkot reminds us of both our fragility and abundance as we journey forth. In fact, everything that is important to our spiritual development as a people happens along the way.

There is a yearly cycle of readings from Torah that all Jews follow, which leads us from the very beginning of creation to the moment when we are about to arrive in the Promised Land. And then we never really get there. After all that anticipation, all that promise, we start over again. We're right back at the beginning.

If the destination was the point of it all, then this might become very frustrating. But it is the journey that matters.

We read this story again and again—discussing, analyzing, and extrapolating about it endlessly—because it is meant to be a mirror of our own soul's journey. By reflecting on our journey, we are meant to wake up to both the wonder and magnitude of each and every step,



and the amazing miracle of the whole journey in all its glory, absurdity and sweetness.

There is a way that these two awakenings—to the miracle of the journey and to this step right here beneath our foot—are symbiotic. The moment when we can step back and marvel at the twists and turns, the synchronicities and blessings that have brought us to the here and now—that is the moment of realization that every step matters. Walking with that kind of awareness, deliberately opening to the grace of each step, enables a vision of the wide perspective of our whole amazing life's journey.

Each of us walks the path of a valiant hero on a remarkable journey, filled with the human adventures of birth, illness, romance, divorce, loss, triumph, heartbreak, healing and aging into wisdom. And yet we often just accept it all as boringly normal and tedious.

Traveling is a reminder that all of life is an extraordinary adventure. Traveling awakens curiosity and wonder and brings those qualities to every step of life. Being awake in this way is a paradox. With each step, we arrive in the Promised Land and all there is to do is celebrate. Yet we are also always forever on our way there, stumbling, dancing, opening to all it means to be human, remembering that it is the journey that matters.

Chanting the words of the Traveler's Prayer blesses this journey, connecting to Holy One who sends us and opening to the possibility that wherever we think we're going, the destination is in fact the fullness of life, joy, wholeness and peace. ✨

RABBI SHEFA GOLD IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.

JEWS ON THE CHOCOLATE TRAIL

In Judaism, it is the journey, not the destination, that matters.

BY LEAH KOENIG, MY JEWISH LEARNING

“Every time I put a piece of chocolate in my mouth, the entire world grinds to a screeching, blinding halt,” wrote renowned pastry chef, David Lebovitz, in “The Great Book of Chocolate.”

Rabbi Debbie Prinz knows the feeling. A Reform rabbi and self-proclaimed chocophile, Rabbi Prinz has dedicated her professional life to seeking out Jews’ historical connection to the chocolate trade.

Prinz’s cocoa quest began two winters ago, when she heard Lebovitz interviewed on National Public Radio speaking about chocolate in France. Lebovitz’s lush descriptions of Parisian chocolate shops convinced Prinz and her husband, Rabbi Mark Hurvitz, to add a chocolate focus to their upcoming European vacation. Their whim, it turned out, led to an unexpected discovery. While visiting one chocolate store in Bayonne (France’s first chocolate-making city), Prinz picked up a pamphlet that caught her eye.

“With my high school French,” she said, “I was able to read a line that said, ‘Jews brought chocolate to France.’” Intrigued, she dug a little deeper, checking in with Bayonne’s Planete Musee du Chocolat (Chocolate Museum) and several other sweet shops in Paris, all of which remarkably revealed similar stories. “There are other theories about how chocolate came to France,” she said. “But this is by far the most popular one.”

Since that first trip to France, Rabbi Prinz and Rabbi Hurvitz have traveled across Europe, Israel, Mexico, and even Egypt, uncovering the buried links between Jews and chocolate. They discovered that the 17th century conversos, who settled in France after being exiled from Spain and Portugal during the Spanish Inquisition, brought along their chocolate experience. Within a couple of generations after their arrival, local artisans caught on to the mysteries of cacao and formed a chocolate maker’s guild from which Jews were, ironically, excluded.

Rabbi Prinz also discovered Jewish chocolate ties in Colonial America a century later. “By the 18th century, one of the major Jewish traders, Aaron Lopez, was already paying workers to grind large quantities of cacao in Newport, Rhode Island,” she said. Meanwhile, Rebecca Gomez in New York was likely one of a few Jewish women manufacturing chocolate for consumption in the mid-to-late 1700s—roasting the cocoa beans and grinding them with sugar.

Jews’ connection to the chocolate industry endures today, with a wave of new independent manufacturers and shops opening in Israel, and several prominent Jewish chocolatiers on the scene in America. “I wish I’d known about this Jewish chocolate connection when I was in religious school!” Rabbi Prinz joked. But with more travel and a book in the works, and plenty of chocolate to



nibble along the way, life is undoubtedly sweet.

Contemporary Jewish Chocolate Makers

Charles Chocolates

Veteran candy maker, Chuck Siegel, started making his signature line of truffles out of the San Francisco JCC’s kitchen. These days, his confections can be found at Whole Foods stores and at Google’s California headquarters, where he holds the title of official Chocolatier. For more information please visit: <https://www.charleschocolates.com>

Katia’s Handmade Chocolate Truffles

The daughter of Russian Jewish immigrants, Katherine (or Katia) Zinger now lives and creates her chocolates in Seattle. Starting with Scharffen Berger chocolate, Zinger sources ingredients from local farmers and food purveyors, giving her candy sustainable flair. For more information please visit: <https://www.corkat.com>.

Netanya’s Choconoy

“Special chocolate by special people,” is an apt motto for Israeli chocolate company, Choconoy, which holds a mission to create employment opportunities for people with special needs. Their artistically painted pralines define the category: “Shoko-Art.” For more information please visit: <https://choconoy.co.il>.

Max Brenner

Israelis Oded Brenner and Max Fichtman combined their entrepreneurial spirits, as well as their names, to create an internationally celebrated chocolate brand. Purchased in 2001 by Strauss-Elite, Max Brenner continues to spread its delicious “chocolate culture” across the world. For more information please visit: <https://maxbrenner.com>.

Scharffen Berger

One half of the famous Scharffen Berger chocolate brand, Robert Steinberg (who passed away in 2008), was a Member of the Tribe. Together with his business partner and company namesake, John Scharffenberger, Steinberg revolutionized the contemporary field of artisan chocolate production. For more information please visit: https://www.harryanddavid.com/h/scharffen-berger?utm_medium=direct&utm_source=www.scharffenberger.com. ☆

LEAH KOENIG IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND J LIFE MAGAZINE.



Jerusalem Sunset

TRAVEL TO ISRAEL

For Jewish travelers, a visit to Israel can and should be more than a typical tourist encounter with a foreign people, culture, and place

BY RABBI PERETZ RODMAN, MY JEWISH LEARNING



Outside the Tel Aviv Museum of Art, home to one of the world's largest collections of Israeli art. (PikiWiki Israel)

Note: You may be eligible for a free or subsidized trip to Israel. Scroll down for information about some programs available.

Approximately 3 million people visit Israel each year. Some are Christians who come to walk in Jesus' footsteps. An increasing number come to do business. Others come to have a good time in a country that offers scuba diving at the Red Sea, dipping in the healing waters of the Dead Sea, or wind surfing on the Mediterranean. The largest segment of visitors, though, are Jews coming to Israel because they are Jews and Israel is the Jewish homeland.

Perhaps these Jewish visitors can be called pilgrims. If pilgrimages are made to sacred places, however, it is a strangely secularized sense of sacred space that draws Jews to visit not only Jerusalem but also Eilat.

They come to see not only the site of the Holy Temple and the ruins of ancient synagogues but also trendy shops and cafés, to meet not only Jews engaged in Torah study but also Jews who are diamond cutters, dairy farmers, and software tycoons.

For Jewish travelers, a visit to Israel can and should be more than a typical tourist encounter with a foreign people, culture, and place. With preparation, it can be a stimulating, life-changing encounter. How, then, do we plan for a more enriching trip to Israel than that offered by standard tour agencies, a trip suited to our desire to explore what Israel means to Jews?

Experiencing Modern Israel

Jewish visitors come to Israel out of a sense of identification. But with what? Are they coming to learn about the land and people of Israel, or what being Jewish means to them?

If the experience of modern Israel is what you want to learn about, then you will want to visit sites like Independence Hall in Tel Aviv, where the Zionist leadership declared Israel's independence in 1948, or Mount Herzl in Jerusalem, where most of the state's early political leaders are buried. You can visit the home and the burial site of David Ben Gurion in the stark emptiness of the Negev or see memorials to battles and to fallen soldiers, then meet today's soldiers on military bases. You can visit the Knesset and the Supreme Court. You can learn about Israel's minorities by visiting Druze villages and Bedouin encampments. Tour operators can facilitate this. You can experience the Jewish ambience of public spaces: city centers, outdoor markets, even shopping malls.

The key to making this a transformational experience is to ask the sort of questions that most tourists rarely ask. In the mall, consider "Is there something that makes this place distinctly Jewish?" The answers may vary: a stall selling kippot, the Hebrew on the signs, the presence of a synagogue tucked away in the back. Whatever you find, the search raises the issue of what cultural distinctiveness Israeli and Diaspora Jews share. On such a trip, one can come to feel and understand

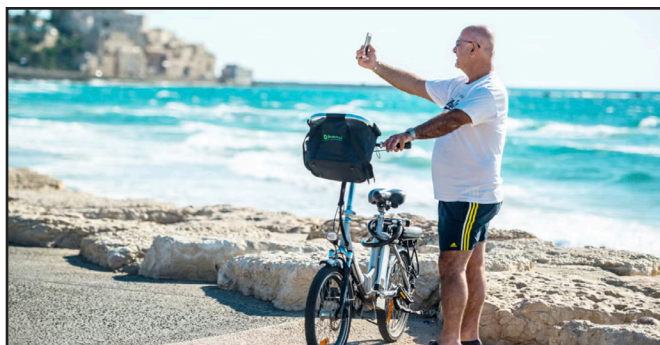
the experience of Jews living as a Jewish majority, speaking a Jewish language, and living by the rhythms of the Jewish calendar, in the same hills and valleys as their ancient ancestors. Lisa Grant of the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion notes: "It has been demonstrated that Israel trips are successful in making American Jews feel more secure in themselves and more connected to the Jewish people."

If you are planning this type of trip, look for travel providers who advertise that they do "educational travel" or provide "Israel education" experiences. These enterprises will have a person traveling with the group who is a "tour educator" or even "scholar-in-residence," often alongside a licensed tour guide. Some education travel providers include: Keshet: The Center for Educational Tourism in Israel, The Israel Studies Institute (ISI), Oranim Educational Initiatives, Ramah Israel Programs, and Daat Travel Services. Judaism, Israel and You

What if your goal is to use Israel as a venue to explore the spiritual side of Judaism? Lawrence A. Hoffman, also of HUC-JIR, wrote *Israel: A Spiritual Travel Guide*, to be "A Companion for the Modern Jewish Pilgrim." In it, Hoffman offers 18 short readings to prepare for a trip to Israel, intended to be read over the three weeks before departure. "Your trip can be just another vacation," he writes, "or it can be the journey of your life. To make it the latter, do it right... Put aside some sacrosanct time" for preparation.

For the trip itself, Hoffman gathers more texts: Psalms, poems, midrashim, and other readings to be read at many sites across the country. He suggests prayers and blessings that can be used to enhance the experience of many types of sites: a place of battle, a place of hope, or seeing and hearing Hebrew all around you. Hoffman tries to help Jewish visitors connect—both before and during their visit—to the experience of prayer and thanksgiving. By using Jewish sources both ancient and modern, the book seeks to link the Israel experience to the practices and values of the religious life of Jews in the Diaspora.

Many Israel tour operators use Jewish texts, games, or discussions to make connections between visitors' own Jewish identities and the land and people of Israel. As Steve Zerobnick of Jerusalem-based tour provider Israel Studies Institute puts it, an Israel trip



Tourist at the beach in Tel Aviv-Jaffa.



Mahane Yehuda market in Jerusalem.

should engage "the questions of how the story of Israel makes me feel about my own role in Jewish history, the Jewish world, Jewish politics, my community, and my family." A visit to Jerusalem's Mahane Yehuda market, for example, would best be planned for a Friday. Zerobnick explains: "Watching the transformation of Jerusalem from the high-energy, crowded atmosphere of mid-day and early afternoon to the quiet right before Shabbat would be followed later by a discussion that asks: how do we translate that transformation into our Shabbat experience at home?"

Without making those sorts of connections during and after the experience, Zerobnick notes, even the greatest of transformational experiences can go sour. Not only is attention paid during the trip to processing these questions, but ISI even sends staff members abroad several months after a trip to encourage program participants to consider what they have done with their Israel experience in their own lives and the lives of their communities.

Journeys of the Spirit

It is possible to engage Israel at an even more personal level. Rabbi Jay Rosenbaum, in "Israel as a Spiritual Journey" (Sh'ma), observes that there is "a parallel between the travels of [the Jewish] people and our own soul's journey," and that an Israel trip is a chance to explore that parallel. "How, in fact, have our people reacted to change over the centuries? What can we learn from our people's adaptive strategies that could help us cope with the jagged discontinuities in our own lives? Can the healing from a broken homeland be applied to a broken home?"

Why should Israel in particular be the site for such spiritual introspection? Because, even in the age of instant communication and widely affordable international travel, Israel is—or can be with sufficient planning and follow-up—a place that fosters dreams, a place that enables Jews to connect to their deepest aspirations for themselves and their people.

Free and Subsidized Educational Israel Trips

Birthright Israel offers a variety of free 10-day educational Israel tours for Jews age 18-26.

Honeymoon Israel offers subsidized Israel trips for newly married couples in which at least one partner is Jewish.

The Jewish Women's Renaissance Project offers subsidized Israel trips for Jewish women who are not religiously observant and who have at least one child under the age of 18. Preference is given to women who have never visited Israel before. ☆

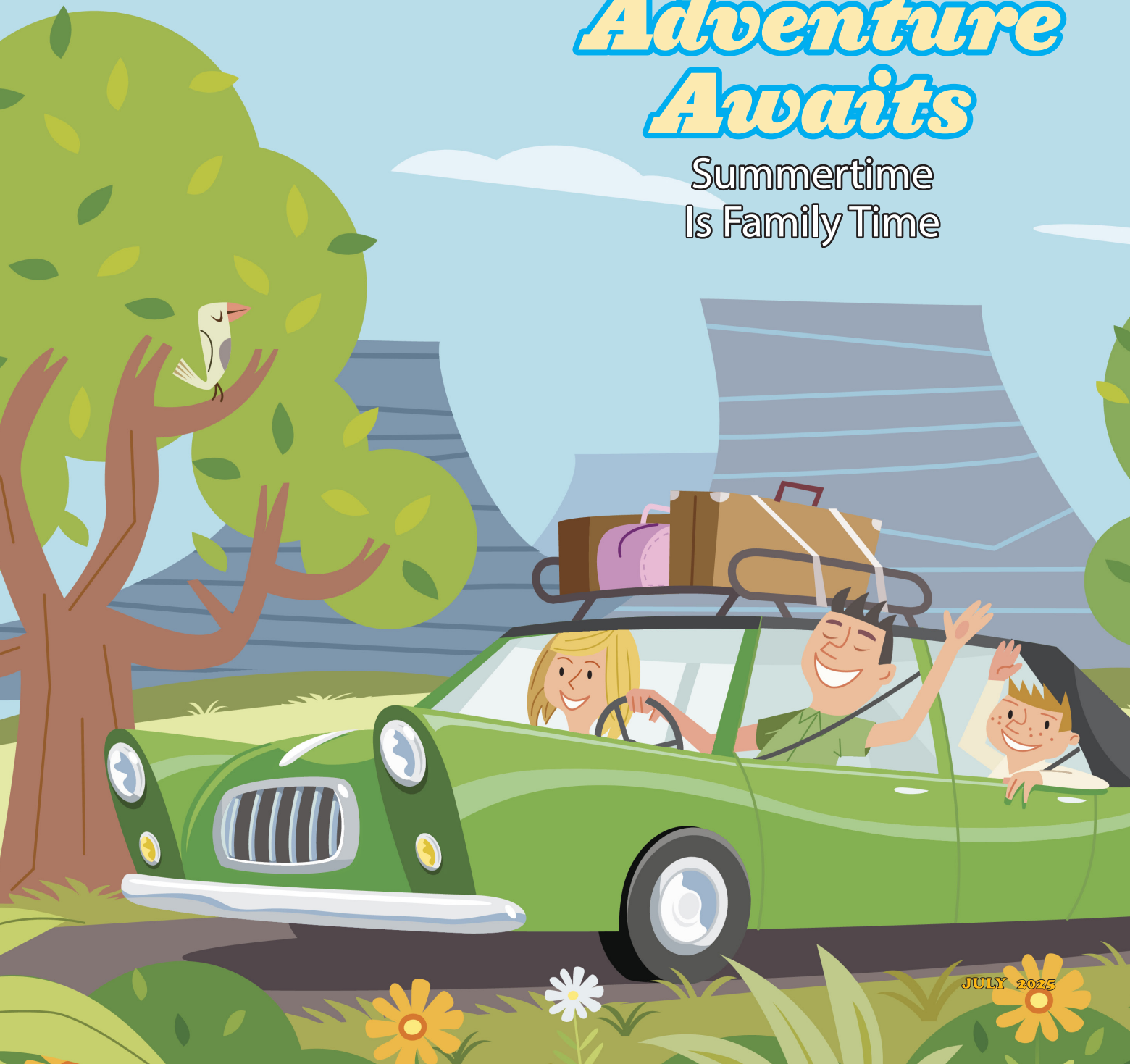
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SGPV'S JEWISH YOUTH & PARENTS

kiddish

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kiddish

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Jewish Travel

BY MY JEWISH LEARNING



Club Kosher
Provides kosher vacations to a variety of tropical and exotic destinations throughout the Caribbean, Costa Rica, Mexico and Europe
<http://www.clubkosher.com>

Heritage Retreats
Offers Jewish retreats in Santa Barbara, CA and Warrensburg, NY for young adults
<https://heritageretreats.com>

Gems in Israel
An online source of Israel travel reservation and Israel tourism information
<https://www.gemsinisrael.com>

Israel 4 All
A travel agency that arranges for people with physical disabilities and special needs in Israel and abroad
<https://www.israel4all.com>

Lasko Tours
Jewish travel agency
<http://www.laskotours.com>

Kosher Cruises
Serves Jewish cruise vacationers
<https://kosherica.com>

Sinai
Offers two-week Jewish educational retreats in Warrensburg, NY for students and young single professionals
<http://www.moodus.org>

Tour-Olam
Offers kosher vacation packages for Orthodox travelers
<https://tour-olam.com>

Urban Cultours project
An initiative to revisit Jewish past from a present Jewish perspective in Barcelona, educating the general public and the local Jewry about the rich contributions of our people in these lands
<https://urbancultours.com> ☆



Traveling the World to Ensure the Jewish Future

BY RUTH ABUSCH-MAGDER, MY JEWISH LEARNING

I'm going to be busy this coming week. I'm heading to Israel, England, Iran, Canada, China and Jamaica. There will be music, exotic foods, late night parties and lots and lots of learning. My passport is ready, because on Sunday, I head off to Camp Be'chol Lashon.

Mapping Our Travels at Camp Be'chol Lashon

Jewish camps are a cornerstone of Jewish life. And in many ways they all build on a similar set of ingredients. In our day to day lives we exist in multiple communities in multiple settings. At camp, we exist in one community and come together with a focus on Jewish identity. So while we swim, hike and sing, we are able to look around and know what we share.

Much of that holds true at Camp Be'chol Lashon, but instead of setting aside our multiple identities, we embrace and celebrate them, making them the focus of our Jewish conversation and connection. Camp Be'chol Lashon takes the diversity of the Jewish people as our starting point. Each day the camp "travels" to a different country using our camp passports to record our impressions as we experience Jewish life around the globe through art, music, dance and crafts. These explorations not only teach us about the traditions of Indian or Ugandan Jews, for example, but also provide the platform from which we launch conversations about complex contemporary issues such as living as a minority in a majority culture or the place of tradition in keeping a community strong.

Working on global crafts projects at Camp Be'chol Lashon

The campers at Be'chol Lashon come from around the world and from right in our neighborhood. Their racial backgrounds and personal histories are as varied as those of the Jewish communities that we "visit" each



day. In many settings Jews of Color have to choose which part of their identities they will put forward and which they will leave at the proverbial door. At Camp Be'chol Lashon, they have the opportunity to be their full selves in a community that celebrates racial and ethnic heritage and the reality of modern Jewish life.

Jewish camps are treasured places but all too often they are seen as places that inoculate Jews against the complexities of the broader world. At Camp Be'chol Lashon we embrace the complexity, for not only does it represent the reality that most of our young people encounter, it represents the world that they will grow into. By grounding their vision of their Jewish selves in the complexity, we hope to prepare them to lead us into the Jewish future.

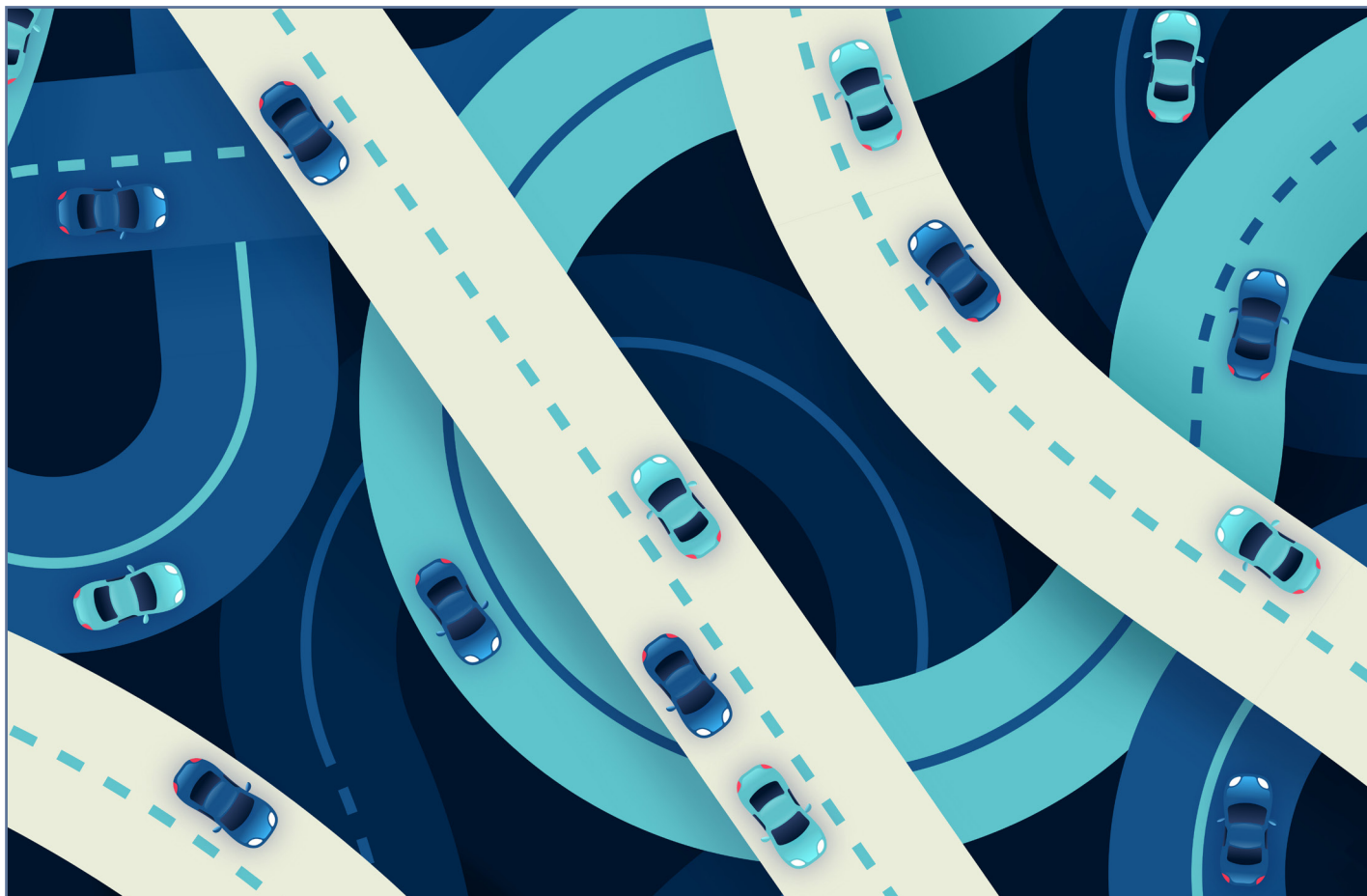
Rabbis Without Borders is a dynamic forum for exploring contemporary issues in the Jewish world and beyond. Written by rabbis of different denominations, viewpoints, and parts of the country, *Rabbis Without Borders* is a project of Clal - The National Jewish Center for Learning and Leadership. ☆

RUTH ABUSCH-MAGDER IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND KIDDISH MAGAZINE.

Open Roads Open Everything

Driving gives me time for podcasts and perspective

BY SOPHIE BERNSTEIN, MY JEWISH LEARNING



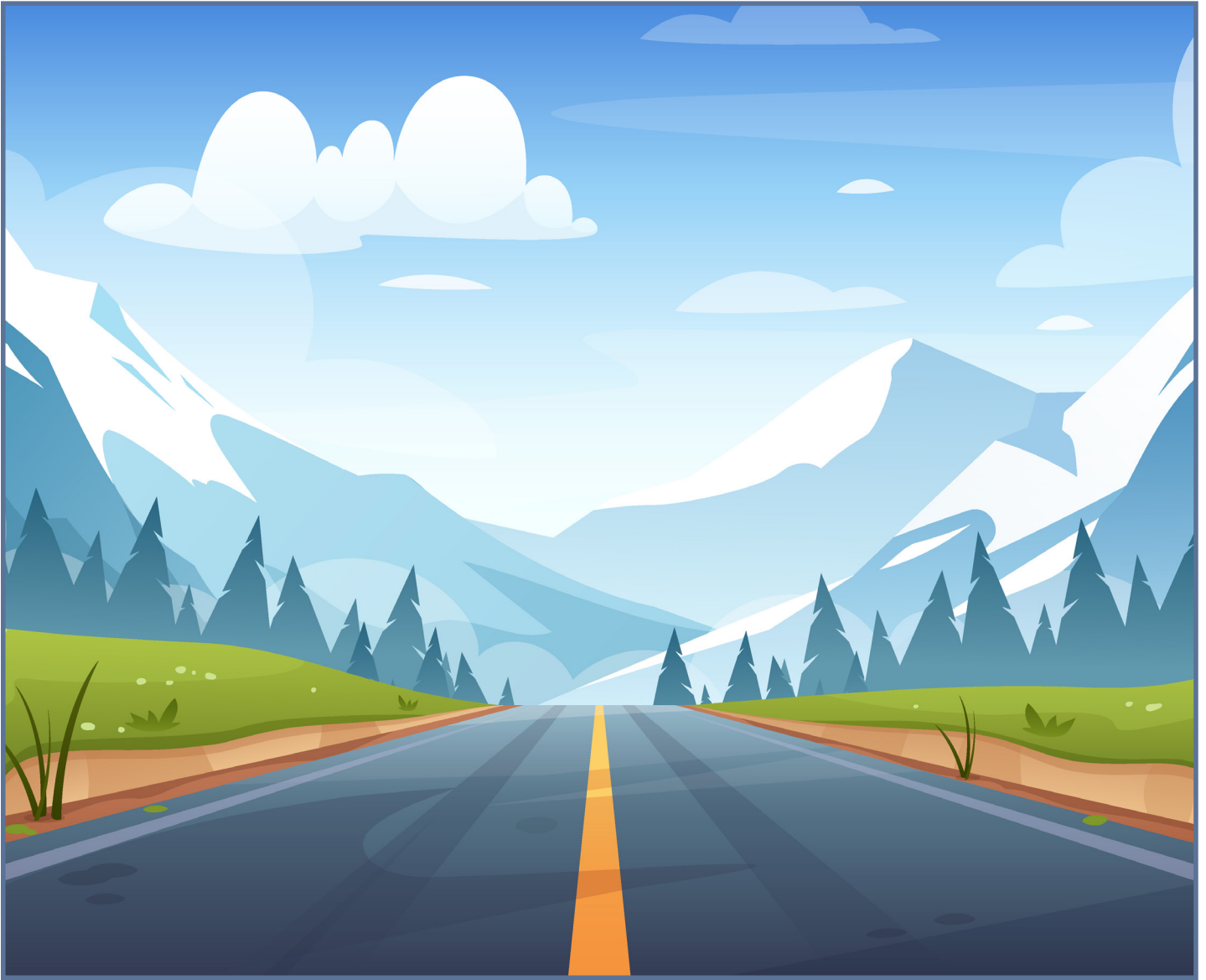
“While it’s you who leaves a place, and you who arrives in a place—right?—it isn’t necessarily you in between. The you who sits on the road is a different you. . . One whose choices have been narrowed down to which exit to stop at, what music to listen to for the next 100 miles. It’s freeing, being taken out of yourself and replaced by this road version.” - Excerpt from the podcast *Alice Isn’t Dead*

Lately on road trips, I’ve been listening to *Alice Isn’t Dead*. Time on the road has always meant something important to me, alleviating anxiety and opening doors to new possibilities. I savored even the short drive to school every day as soon as I was old enough to take myself. The next frontier was road trips. I was always mapping out routes, asking pen pals about meeting halfway between our homes, and dreaming of places I could visit if I ever

hit the road.

I grew up in Dallas, Texas, often passing close enough to downtown that skyscrapers obstructed the view. But depending on which way you point your car, soon there are nothing but open roads and endless sky. These days, I live in Jackson, Mississippi, a much smaller city than Dallas. Since the relatively small airport here can make flying expensive, the best way to leave town is by car, and over the miles I’ve driven, I’ve had time to listen, to think, and to reflect on the landscape.

Alice Isn’t Dead is the perfect podcast for a long drive, because it’s a sprawling story that takes place on an epic road trip. With ambient noises and an atmospheric tone, you’re pulled in immediately. Keeping the volume up on the unfolding story, I watch the wide expanse of grassy plains and traffic on concrete and nothing else for miles.



This is the America I know. This is the American South.

From Jackson to Dallas, to Austin, to Memphis, I ride along with the story. The podcast's narrator, Keisha, and I are sharing a journey. We're both caught in a liminal space between somewhere and the next place. Keisha and I, we must keep our eyes on the road, and keep on driving.

For hours, I have listened to only my engine and Alice isn't Dead. Calm settles over me throughout those hours. As Keisha puts it, this "is how a person becomes good at long road trips... they sit and are transported. They take the world as it comes."

In the rest of life, buzzing with energy and anxiety, I am still working on finding the freedom I feel when out on the open road. It doesn't come so easily as it does when all my worries float out the car window with miles to stretch out. In the quote I shared to open this essay, Keisha's wife Alice notes

that "it's you who leaves a place, and you who arrives in a place...it isn't necessarily you in between." I have tasted this myself, but in my experience, Alice misses one thing: the you who arrives can be a different you, too. Time on the open road can change you.

On the other side of a road trip, with anxiety released and diluted by the miles, I step out of my car. I am the me who found solitude and stories. I am the me who has accepted the way the world speeds by, like the scenery just beyond reach on the other side of my windshield. Time will always go by—but now, the hours feel a little less intimidating. After finding physical and emotional space on the highway, I am ready to truly be there when I arrive at my destination. ✨

SOPHIE BERNSTEIN IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND KIDDISH MAGAZINE.



COOKING JEWISH

Lifestyle

AN EXOTIC JOURNEY

**Travel to Syria &
the Island of Rhodes**

BY JUDY BART KANCIGOR

**Saffron-Glazed Baby Chickens
Stuffed with Couscous and Almonds**

Open a cookbook and you can virtually travel to distant lands. Today we will not only travel to Syria and the island of Rhodes, but time travel as well, for both these places exist in all their former glory only in the authors' fond remembrances.

In "Aromas of Aleppo: The Legendary Cuisine of Syrian Jews" (Ecco/Harper Collins, \$50) Poopa Dweck chronicles how her honeymooning parents, Sarine and Murad Kattan were caught up in the pogroms following the partition of Palestine in 1948 and never were able to return to their beloved Syria. All Jewish life was virtually extinguished, erasing centuries of this rich, thriving culture. Those Jews that survived fled by the thousands.

By all accounts, the culture and cuisine of the Jews of Aleppo should have perished. They did not. The Syrian-Jewish community, extremely tight-knit despite its scattering across many continents, continues to thrive.

"When the Jews left Aleppo, they dispersed throughout the world to Mexico, South America, Israel, Panama, Colombia, Geneva," Dweck explained by phone from her home in Deal, New Jersey. "The largest Syrian Jewish community is in Brooklyn. We stay connected – the community is like one. At weddings and bar mitzvahs, we all know each other."

Alienated by the Eastern European Jews when they arrived in America, the Aleppian community has defied assimilation. "When we came to Brooklyn, to the Lower East Side of New York, other Jews didn't even think we were Jewish. We were dark skinned. We looked different. We didn't eat matzo ball soup and challah. We made our own Syrian flat bread. The reason we're so closely knit, I think, is that we have paid strict adherence to our customs and religious observances. We didn't go to meatloaf. Through its food, holidays and life cycle events we've kept it intact."

More than a collection of recipes, "Aromas of Aleppo" is the documentation of the rich culinary legacy of a once flourishing community with its unique customs and traditions. "Compared to other Arab cuisines, it is elaborate, very opulent, because Aleppo itself was a flourishing commercial center, and the ingredients came from all over the world and were of the best quality," Dweck noted. "Through Turkish, Persian and Spanish influences that came to Aleppo, it was brought up to a high level. Our cuisine was known as the pearl of the Arab world."

In "Stella's Sephardic Table," (Hoberman, \$45) Stella Cohen, an artist and textile designer as well as a food writer and authority on Sephardic cuisine, takes us on a fascinating journey, in loving detail, into the culture, history and traditions of the island of Rhodes. Located close to the coast of Turkey and along the sea route to Israel, it was once home to a rich and vibrant Jewish community – it was even nicknamed La Chica Yerushalayim (Little Jerusalem). The economic depression of the thirties and the coming onslaught of the Nazis drove the Jews out – those who didn't meet their fate in Auschwitz, that is, as many of Cohen's family members did.

Cohen's family wound up in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) where she was born. Her mother was her inspiration in the kitchen. "I never understood why my mom, who had some help in the house available, insisted she nurse a stew herself," she told me while visiting her family in New York. "I would come back from school and be mesmerized by her fingers molding some savory pastries. When I was a very small child, she used to make her own filo by rolling it very thin and stretching it over pillows so it would dry out. Cooking was my mother's ultimate joy. I began to understand what the Ladino word 'necutchera' meant, an accomplished woman with a

refined sense of taste and intuitive wisdom. She took great pride in creating something beautiful made with love. I wanted to preserve our Rhodesli food as a tribute to the extraordinary skills of our foremothers. It was only when I began my own culinary journey that I realized that my mother's instinct and passion for cooking involved not just feeding the body, but also nurturing the soul."

This is a generous, flavorful cuisine that brings family together. "There is a Ladino saying – if there is food left over after a meal, then not enough has been prepared," she said. "The dishes are aromatic and nutritious with an emphasis on simple ingredients, fresh vegetables, food cooked with love. I remember multiple generations of family and friends would come together to bake or cook and to enjoy stories and recollections while making these little feasts."

Apart from the classic baklava, the Sephardim in Rhodes made a triangular version with walnuts called "trigonas." "I like to make individual flower-shaped baklava with lavish pistachio and almond filling, often seen in Lebanon and other countries in the Middle East," Cohen noted. ☆

“Through its food, holidays and life cycle events we’ve kept the Aleppian community intact.”

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.



Pistachio Filla Wedges in
Rose Water syrup (Baklava)

Pistachio Filla Wedges in Rose Water syrup (Baklava)

**MAKE
ME!
EASY TO
FOLLOW
RECIPE**

The sheen on the surface of baklava comes from the shira (Fragrant Aleppian Dessert Syrup)
Yield: 30 wedges

1 1/2 pounds pistachios, shelled, blanched, peeled, and finely chopped
2 tablespoons confectioners' sugar
1 1/4 pounds (5 sticks) unsalted butter or margarine, melted
24 sheets filla (about 1 pound)
1 cup cold shira (Fragrant Aleppian Dessert Syrup, recipe follows)

1. Combine pistachios, sugar, and 1/4 cup of the melted butter in medium mixing bowl.
2. Working with half the filla, brush each sheet, one at a time, using slightly less than half the remaining melted butter. Stack them evenly, one on top of the other. (Keep untended sheets covered with wax paper and towel to prevent drying out.) Fit buttered phyllo sheets into 14-inch round or 10x12-inch baking pan, folding sides over to create a round or straight edge.
3. Preheat oven to 350°F.
4. Spread nut mixture over filla. Repeat step 2 for remaining filla, covering nut layer and brushing top sheet with butter generously. Refrigerate, covered, 20 minutes. Cut pastry into diamond, square or rectangular pieces.
5. Bake 1 hour or until puffy and golden. Remove from oven; pour cold shira over it. Let cool.

Shira (Fragrant Aleppian Dessert Syrup)
Yield: 2 cups

3 cups sugar
1 teaspoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
1/2 teaspoon orange blossom water or rose water

1. Combine sugar, lemon juice, orange blossom water and 1 cup water in medium saucepan over medium heat. Stir constantly with wooden spoon until mixture boils. Reduce heat to low and simmer 15 minutes, or until syrup slides slowly down back of spoon.
 2. Allow syrup to cool. Use immediately or pour into glass jar and refrigerate. It will keep up to 2 months.
- Source: "Aromas of Aleppo" by Poopa Dweck

Saffron-Glazed Baby Chickens Stuffed with Couscous and Almonds

Ras-el-hanout is a spice mix common in Moroccan, Algerian and Tunisian cuisine. You can find it in specialty shops or online.

6 (14-ounce) free-range baby chickens (sometimes called broilers or fryers), rinsed and patted dry
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper
3 tablespoons olive oil
2 large onions, finely sliced
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 teaspoon ras-el-hanout (optional)
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1/2 teaspoon saffron threads
1 cup hot chicken stock
1 to 2 tablespoons runny honey
1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar
1/2 cup golden raisins, soaked in 1 cup hot water with 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon for 10 minutes

Stuffing:

1/2 cup couscous
1 cup hot chicken stock
Pinch saffron threads
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
1/2 cup golden raisins, soaked in 1 cup hot water for 10 minutes and drained
1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1 tablespoon confectioners' sugar
1 tablespoon runny honey
1 cup whole blanched almonds, toasted and roughly chopped in food processor
Sea salt and finally ground white pepper

1. **Stuffing:** Place couscous in bowl and pour in hot chicken stock and pinch saffron threads. Lightly work with your hands to break up any lumps. Add oil and fluff lightly with fork. Cover tightly with plastic wrap and set aside about 10 minutes or until liquid has been absorbed. Add raisins, cinnamon, confectioners' sugar, honey and half the chopped almonds. Season with salt and pepper to taste and mix gently with fork. Set aside.
 2. Season baby chickens inside and out with salt and pepper. Spoon couscous stuffing into chicken cavity until approximately 3/4 full. Secure skin with toothpick.
 3. Heat 1 tablespoon olive oil in braising pan over medium-high heat and cook onions with cinnamon and ras-el-hanout (if using) until softened.
 4. Blend vegetable oil with saffron and rub over chickens. Place them breast-side up in braising pan over onions. Pour in hot chicken stock and bring to a boil. Cover, reduce heat and simmer 30 minutes, basting chickens with pan juices from time to time. Turn chickens often and add hot water as necessary. Cook until tender and juices run clear when thighs are pierced with a skewer.
 5. Transfer baby chickens to large plate. Bring pan juices to rapid boil, reducing cooking liquid to 1 cup. Add honey, confectioners' sugar and raisins with soaking liquid to sauce. Stir to blend well and taste. Adjust seasoning for salt and pepper and sweetness.
 6. Heat remaining 2 tablespoons olive oil in large frying pan over medium-high heat and transfer chickens to frying pan. Carefully fry them turning until they are glossy and golden brown.
 7. To serve: Heap plain couscous in center of large warmed platter. Stack baby chickens around couscous. Spoon saffron sauce over chickens and scatter with remaining chopped almonds. Serve immediately.
- Source: "Stella's Sephardic Table" by Stella Cohen

THE PERILS AND PLEASURES OF SPIRITUAL TRAVEL

BY ERIC WEINER, MY JEWISH LEARNING

I've written a book about my "spiritual journey," fully aware what an oft abused, dangerously clichéd term it is. The problem with "spiritual journey" (one of many, actually) is that it is usually used aspirationally. We venture far from home, in search of something, and so we convince ourselves we found it.

Just because we label a journey spiritual, though, doesn't make it so, and the fact is: sometimes we're better off staying at home. "The farther you travel, the less you know," warns Lao-Tzu, the Taoist sage.

Yet this was the same sage who gave us the wonderful aphorism: "A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step." Was Lao-Tzu conflicted? Was he deliberately trying to confuse us?

I don't think so. He knew that it's not whether we travel or not, but how that matters. Travel, done properly, disorients us, and it is through this disorientation that any spiritual journey actually lives up to its name. This is the sort of travel Henry Miller had in mind when he said that "One's



Pools in blue valley park (*emek hatchelet*) at the northern approach to Tzfat.

destination is never a place but a new way of seeing things."

If different places didn't evoke different feelings, different ways of experiencing, we might as well stay at home, especially now, given the enhanced interrogation techniques that pass for air travel these days.

But we must choose our places carefully. Many supposedly sacred places disappoint. Freighted with history, and our outsized expectations, they collapse under the weight of their own sacredness.

Such a fate has befallen many a shrine or temple. Whatever spiritual essence once existed there has long evaporated, siphoned off by opportunists and posers. Today they possess all of the divinity of a Greyhound bus station. They are dead places.

Then there are places like Tzfat, in northern Israel. There, the air is soft and plush. It is no dead place. Ever since the 16th century, Tzfat has been a center of Kabbalah, the mystical arm of Judaism, and it still attracts those looking for taste of the *ein sof*, or infinite.

The denizens of Tzfat are spiritual free agents, cobbling together a bit of this, a bit of that, and somehow making it all work. It is one of those places that the early Celts called "thin places," locales where the distance between heaven and earth collapses and, for perhaps the first time, we can taste the divine. ☆

ERIC WEINER IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.



Ancient Jewish cemetery and approach to Tzfat/Safed Israel.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

FRIDAY, JULY 4

6:30 - 8:00 PM

ZOOM

JULY 11

7:30 - 9:00 PM

JULY 18

7:00 - 9:00 PM

JULY 25

7:30 - 9:30 PM

Shabbat Services @

Temple Beth David, TBD

SATURDAY,

JULY 5, 12, 19 & 26

10:15 AM - 12:15 PM

EVERY WEEK

Shabbat Morning Services @

TBI of Highland Park

TBILA

CAMP GAN ISRAEL

JUNE 23 - JULY 4

(EVERYDAY UNTIL JULY 4)

9:00 AM - NOON

Chabad of the Inland Empire

8710 Baker Avenue

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CAMP GAN SHALOM

JUNE 9 - JULY 18

(WEEKS 1-6)

MONROVIA

CAMP GAN SHALOM

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SUNDAY, JULY 13

9:00 - 10:00 AM

Miller Introduction to Judaism

Class - Temple B'nai Emet

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the Temple to reserve your

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SUNDAY, JULY 16

1:00 - 4:00 PM

Sisterhood Event

Kibbitz & Craft

Temple Beth David

of the San Gabriel Valley

9677 Longden Avenue

Temple City, CA

Contact Mike Sirota

626-287-9994

office@templebd.com

SUNDAY, JULY 27

2:00 - 4:00 PM

MONDAY, JULY 28

7:00 - 9:00 PM

TUESDAY, JULY 29

7:00 - 9:00 PM

JFed Players:

Auditions for Company

What to Prepare:

16 bars of a song

Sides will be provided at the audition

Performance Dates:

Opening Night: Saturday, October 4

Runs through

Sunday, October 19

(Performances on weekends only)

Performance venue in Pasadena.

For questions or more

information, please contact

Cantor Judy Sofer @ jsofer@jewishsgpv.org

jewishsgpv.org, JFGSGPV

Beth Shalom

of Whittier (BSW)

www.bethshalomofwhittier.net

B'nai Simcha

Community Preschool

www.bnaisimcha.org

Chabad Jewish Center of

South Pasadena

www.jewishsouthpasadena.com

Chabad of Arcadia

(CoA)

www.jewisharcadia.com

Chabad of Pasadena

(CoP)

www.chabadpasadena.com

Chabad of the

Inland Empire (CIE)

www.chabadinlandempire.com

Congregation Hugat

Haverim (CHH)

www.hugathaverim.com

Jewish Federation of the Greater San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys (JFGSGPV)

www.jewishsgpv.org

Pasadena Jewish

Academy (PJA)

www.pasadenajewishacademy.com

Pasadena Jewish

Temple & Center (PJTC)

www.pjtc.net

Temple Ami Shalom

(TAS)

<https://templeamishalom.org/>

Temple Beth Israel of

Pomona (TBI)

www.tbipomona.org

Temple Beth David of

the San Gabriel Valley

(TBD)

www.templebethdavidsgv.org

Temple Beth Israel of

Highland Park and Eagle

Rock (TBILA)

www.tbila.org

Temple B'nai Emet (TBE)

<https://templebnaiemet.org>

Temple Sinai of Glendale

(TSG)

http://temple-sinai.net

Temple Sholom of

Ontario (TSO)

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Tree of Life Preschool

(formerly TBI Preschool)

(ToL)

<https://tbipomona.org> ☆

JFED
PLAYERS

AUDITIONS

FOR OUR FALL 2025 PRODUCTION

COMPANY
A MUSICAL COMEDY
BY STEPHEN SONDHEIM

July 27, 2-4 p.m.
July 28 and 29, 7-9 p.m.
at: Jewish Federation's office
114A W. Lime Ave., Monrovia, CA 91016



The Jewish Federation's JFed Players

We are excited to announce auditions for the Fall Musical:
Company by Stephen Sondheim
Directed by Cantor Judy Sofer

Auditions will be held at the Jewish Federation SGPV office:
114A W. Lime Ave., Monrovia, CA 91016

Audition Dates:

- Sunday, July 27 | 2:00–4:00 PM
- Monday, July 28 | 7:00–9:00 PM
- Tuesday, July 29 | 7:00–9:00 PM

Please prepare 16 bars of a song. Sides will be provided.

Performances begin Saturday, October 4
Running weekends through Sunday, October 19
Venue: Pasadena

If you have any questions, please email Cantor Judy Sofer at jsofer@jewishsgpv.org.

NEWS & JEWS



Security officers surround the Israeli Embassy in Washington, DC, on May 22, 2025, following a shooting that left two people dead outside the Capital Jewish Museum the day before.
(Brendan Smialowski/AFP via Getty Images)

DHS releases \$94 million of security grants for Jewish institutions as remainder of funding stalls to secure religious institutions

“DHS must urgently release the additional NSGP supplemental funds,” said Lauren Wolman, the director of federal policy and strategy at the Anti-Defamation League.

The Department of Homeland Security announced it would award \$94 million in security grants to 512 Jewish organizations Friday.

The agency cited the recent string of violence against Jewish groups, including the attacks in Washington D.C. and Boulder, Colorado, in its announcement, writing that the funds would “help protect Jewish faith-based institutions from further attacks.”

“DHS is working to put a stop to the deeply disturbing rise

in antisemitic attacks across the United States,” said DHS Assistant Secretary Tricia McLaughlin in a statement. “That this money is necessary at all is tragic. Antisemitic violence has no place in this country. However, under President Trump and Secretary Noem’s leadership, we are going to do everything in our power to make sure that Jewish people in the United States can live free of the threat of violence and terrorism.”

The grants mark the release of around half of the funding still tied up from a Trump administration review of federal spending.

The funding, which is distributed by the Federal Emergency Management Agency through the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP), was expected to include the full \$220 million that has yet to be released to recipients.

NSGP provides funding for faith-based institutions including synagogues, schools and Jewish community centers to pay for security measures to protect their buildings from attack. Last month, FEMA lifted the Trump administration’s two-months-long freeze on funding reimbursements.

Lauren Wolman, the director of federal policy and strategy at the Anti-Defamation League, told Jewish Insider that while the recent funding announcement is welcome, “the job isn’t done.”

“We welcome the Administration awarding \$94 million in Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) funding to help protect over 500 Jewish institutions amid the historic levels of antisemitic threats that ADL is tracking,” said Wolman. “But the job isn’t done. DHS must urgently release the additional NSGP supplemental funds Congress appropriated to meet overwhelming demand and save lives. ADL will continue working with lawmakers and senior officials to underscore both the urgency of increasing funding and moving previously appropriated funding.” ☆





*"In Judaism, it is the journey, not
the destination, that matters."
— Rabbi Shefa Gold*

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