

January 2024
Tevet / Shevat 5784

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UNITED AGAINST HATE

Local school has
meaningful week of activities

THE YEAR AHEAD
A New Year and
Another Chance
for A Fresh Start

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ANTISEMITISM
Jewish Federation
works with cities
and agencies to
create awareness

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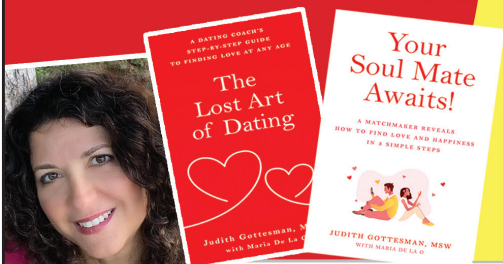


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THE YEAR AHEAD

A New Year and Another Chance for a Fresh Start

As many of you know, I love movies. More accurately, I love specific points or lines in movies that are memorable and poignant in their message. In *Forest Gump*, there is a line that is often overlooked. When *Forest Gump* is celebrating New Year's Eve with Lt. Dan and two random women at a bar, one of the women says, "Don't you just love New Year's? You get to start all over. Everybody gets a second chance."

As Jews, we are lucky because this concept applies to us twice—once in September (or October, depending on when Rosh Hashanah falls that year) and once on January 1. And while each instance provides us an opportunity to look forward to the year ahead, sort of a "clean slate," it is up to us to make sure that we use the time to its fullest.

In my final weekly column of 2023, emailed out as part of our weekly Tuesday eBlast, I provided a recap of the highlights of what our Jewish Federation had done in 2023. As a bookend to that piece in this month's JLife SGPV column, I am highlighting a few important events we have planned for our community in 2024.

We kick off 2024 with two important community events. The first is our 29th Annual Meeting, which will occur on Sunday, January 7. This annual meeting is an opportunity to bring our community together and share our impact on our community during the previous year and our plans to increase that effort in the year ahead.

Our second event of the year is our Every Person Has a Name Holocaust Commemoration and Vigil, which we have done for the past five years in recognition of UN International Holocaust Remembrance Day. We will once again return to the steps of Pasadena City Hall on January 27 through January 28 for our 25-hour event, where volunteers will



read the names of those murdered during the Holocaust. As a nod to us celebrating our 30th Anniversary, we decided to present an exhibition that honors 30+ righteous gentiles who risked their own lives and freedom by saving Jews during the Holocaust. This annual event has become one of the most important ones we coordinate for our community, especially in light of the current pervasive epidemic of antisemitism and hate we are witnessing today.

March will be hectic as we hold our inaugural Ladies of Laughter Comedy Fest: Celebrating Funny Jewish Women at the world-famous Ice House in Pasadena March 7-10. Our goal with this festival is to spotlight Jewish female comedienues, who do not often get to be the voice for entertainment. The festival will feature an improv and sketch night, a stand-up night, a series of workshops, and our celebration will conclude with an evening honoring someone who has "broken the mold" and paved the way for Jewish Women of comedy. This year's honoree will be Gilda Radner and the documentary screening of "Love, Gilda" will be included.

Then, in April, we are taking our community to Anatevka as our JFed Players proudly return to the stage for *Fiddler on the Roof*. This produc-

tion is part of our 30th Anniversary celebration and commemorates our Cultural Arts' 13th year. We could think of no better way to mark this momentous occasion than to stage this quintessential musical.

Our 30th Anniversary celebration will conclude on June 23 with our 30th Anniversary Celebration Brunch that will honor our past Jewish Federation Presidents, celebrate our 30 years of providing positive Jewish experiences for our community, and look ahead to the next 30 years.

Of course, we have so much more planned in 2024. This will include our ongoing local effort to combat antisemitism and all forms of hatred, another incredible summer of Camp Gan Shalom, more Jewish Cooking Connection videos, PJ Library programs, and the year will culminate with our 26th Annual Jewish Book Festival. I am excited to announce that we are also planning a Culinary Trip to Israel at the end of the year.

I am so excited that 2024 is just beginning, and I look forward to celebrating an incredible year ahead with all of you. ☆



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

ON BECOMING U.S. CITIZENS

A Matter of Life, Death Changes My Mind

BY TEDDY WEINBERGER

On Nov. 16, my Israeli grandsons Noam, 5, and Lavi, 2, became American citizens.

The ceremony at the Holtsville U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services on Long Island, New York, came after several years of discussion within the family. I had always been against giving my grandchildren American citizenship. Why? Because I view American citizenship as a two-way street.

It's not just about how citizenship can benefit a person (most significantly in this case, about \$1,500 per child per year), but also how a person, through taking upon himself civic duties, can work to improve America. And because all of my children view their futures in Israel, and because I hope that my grandchildren will share that view, I saw citizenship for my grandchildren as unwarranted.

That all changed on Oct. 20, the day Hamas released hostages for the first time: a mother and daughter who are dual U.S.-Israeli citizens.

When it becomes a matter of life and death, I will silence my thoughts concerning citizenship “imbalance” if it means that the president of the U.S.A. will prioritize the safety of my grandchildren.

[For those who are curious about the whole procedure, America seems to be saying to people like Nathan, i.e., Americans whose parents got the crazy idea to move to a different country when those Americans were children: If you can prove that at least one of your parents was American and lived in America as an adult, you can, for a fee of \$1,700 per child to Homeland Security, make your own children American.]

I asked Nathan how the



appointment went.

“People were very nervous in the waiting room,” he said, “but the people coming out were by and large happy, relieved.”

He told me that as the American parent only he was invited in for the interview, though he ended up taking Lavi, and Noam stayed outside with Avia. Despite the fact that the interview just consisted of “very straightforward questions” (date of birth, place of birth, etc.), Nathan said: “It was emotional because you get into the mood of being emotional because a lot of people around you are emotional. You see the 80-year-old Honduran guy who has been waiting for this his whole life and he’s very emotional.”

Summarizing the lengthy process, Nathan says: “It had nothing to do with any sort of tax benefits or credits; I still view myself very much as American so I think that’s a primary reason for me to do it for the kids.”

I asked Avia for her thoughts about

the experience.

“It speaks to the connection between the children and Nathan’s homeland, even though he is Israeli and you and Sarah are Israeli,” she told me. “Nathan and you have a very long history with the United States and I do feel that it is something very positive that the children now also have a part in this.

“Also, speaking practically, it’s good that the kids have an additional citizenship, especially American, which is a very strong citizenship. If there is a very, very, very exceptional situation and something happens and—G-d forbid—you need to go someplace for whatever reason, I feel comfortable that the United States of America has our backs.” ☆

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.

HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Explaining the Unexplainable. Or Not.

BY ANDREA SIMANTOV

I stirred awake to the sounds of supply planes, sirens and piercing whistles of the Iron Dome defense system ramming into an errant Hezbollah missile. Hunkering under the blankets, it took a moment for me to realize that I wasn't in Jerusalem but instead, 8,500 kilometers away in South Africa. Still addled by sleep, what I'd believed were the sights and sounds of war were merely summer storms accompanied by lightning, thunder and typically endless Johannesburg traffic.

The plan to visit Africa came well after the war broke out and, to be candid, I had been torn. "Torn" is an apt description for so many of us with relatives overseas who leave the Holy Land for myriad reasons in our lifetimes. There is no one-size-fits all descriptor for us Israeli-Anglos and while I have many friends/acquaintances who enthusiastically await their next visits to Target and Trader Joe's, for me these visits are difficult. Leaving Israel for a day is hard and if not for my elderly mother in Maryland and child/grandchildren in South Africa, I would be hard-pressed to leave Israeli soil. Ever.

It is particularly agonizing to leave Israel with a son on the front lines. I know too much and I don't know anything. He spoon-feeds accounts of certain missions and this oxygen keeps our home-fires burning with patriotism and *ahavat Yisrael*—love for our fellow Jews. Since the 8th of October, Ariel has been on active duty and what he shares has shifted the conflict's narrative from newsprint into a living, breathing entity. If I didn't recognize his mannerisms, speech patterns and favorite foods, I wouldn't recognize this man who joins us for an occasional weeknight supper or Shabbat morning Kiddush during his rare military leaves. His



language is peppered with terms that bespeak battle and defense, strategy and costs-versus-benefits. I am glued to the stories, despite not being a fan of war-films. This isn't Netflix and I can't turn the channel. That's fine. I don't want to.

Visiting with my daughter's friends who have become, over time, my friends, it is apparent that my presence now makes them uncomfortable. They don't know what to ask and War-Etiquette isn't covered in the S.A. school system. With the exception of my daughter, there are no Israeli's—or Jews—in her social circle. Amara is polite and asks "How is life in Israel these days?" and I make a mistake. Because when I become passionate with accounts of volunteerism, morality of mission, resilience of our citizens, etc., I notice her pasted-on smile, awkward with embarrassment. I've done that TMI thing, again.

Enveloped with sadness, again I am struck by our global isolation in the midst of the brutality and explosion

of Jew-hatred that has erupted. It is ours alone. Undoubtedly, a more convenient storyline might be that we are anxious to shake hands, make nice and stop with all of this fighting silliness. This war makes me a sloppy guest, less pristine and certainly not-attractive. I would be remiss to omit that a few of the non-Jewish friends, like Chris, are informed and unwavering in their support, praying that Israel does the job of freeing herself from an odious enemy.

Consequently, I prefer to remain indoors when not in Israel, reading books to small people and counting the days until my return because, when I am not in Israel, I am not anywhere. I don't know who I am when separated from our G-d-given homeland. After 3,000 years, rootless is not an option. ✡

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.



"The Color Purple" author Alice Walker attends the "The Color Purple" Broadway revival's Opening Night at The Bernard B. Jacobs Theatre on December 10, 2015 in New York City. (Mark Sagliocco/Getty Images)

A NEW 'COLOR PURPLE'

The adaptation hits theaters, returning author Alice Walker's history of antisemitism to spotlight

BY ANDREW LAPIN, JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY (JTA)

The bright, colorful movie musical "The Color Purple," which opened in theaters on Christmas, tells a story that has by now become a familiar part of the American canon—of a young Black woman's self-empowerment and discovery of her own sexuality amid the horrific, abusive conditions of her life in the early-1900s rural South.

It's far from the first time Americans have heard the story of Celie, the protagonist of Alice Walker's novel "The Color Purple." Walker's novel debuted in 1982 and received rave reviews, the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award. Three years later, it was adapted into a dramatic film directed by Steven Spielberg. This new version is an adaptation of a 2005 stage musical, which itself was reworked for a successful 2015 revival.

But even as the reputation of "The Color Purple" has soared over the decades, Walker's own has become more muddled—specifically for her difficult relationship to Judaism and her outright flirtations with antisemitism. Married to a prominent Jewish civil rights lawyer when she was younger, Walker in the mid-2010s began

promoting works by an antisemitic conspiracy theorist and authored an antisemitic poem of her own.

This combined with her longtime outspoken criticism of Israel has led some in the Jewish community to question her continued stature as a well-regarded figure of American letters and led to her being disinvited from a major book festival just last year.

Despite the fact that Walker's reputation among Jews has nosedived since their first film together in 1985, Spielberg remains involved in the new "Color Purple" as a producer and walked the red carpet at the premiere with fellow producers Oprah Winfrey and Quincy Jones (who both worked on the first film as well). Directing duties this time went to Ghanaian filmmaker Blitz Bazawule.

Amblin Entertainment, Spielberg's production company, did not return a request for comment for this story.

Here's what you need to know about Alice Walker right now.

Early life and love

Growing up in a sharecropper's shack in rural Georgia, Walker married into Judaism when she met Melvyn



Author Alice Walker with her then-husband Melvyn Leventhal and their daughter Rebecca, August 12, 1970.
(Bettmann/Getty Images)

Leventhal, a young law student and civil rights activist with the NAACP Legal Defense Fund, at a soul food restaurant in Jackson, Mississippi, in 1966. Walker, whose activism was influenced by her progressive Spelman College Jewish professor Howard Zinn, had returned to the South to join the civil rights movement after transferring to Sarah Lawrence and traveling through Europe.

"I glared across the room at the white people eating in 'our' restaurant and locked eyes with a very cute guy. Oy vey," Walker wrote in her journals at the time, later published in 2022. The two continued their courtship in New York until Leventhal finished law school.

They were married in 1967 after Walker proposed to Leventhal and moved back to Mississippi, a state where interracial marriage was still illegal, to continue their activism. "Can there be any doubt that, no matter what, we will live happily ever after?" Walker wrote at the time. But Melvyn's mother Miriam deeply disapproved of the marriage, calling Walker a "schvartze," using a derogatory Yiddish term for a Black person, and going so far as to sit shiva for her son. His brother, Walker later claimed, nailed a giant Confederate flag "over an entire side of his bedroom" in protest of the union.

The two had a daughter, Rebecca, together, who would later become a prominent feminist scholar and is an executive producer of the new "Color Purple" movie alongside her mother. Rebecca Walker's own autobiography, "Black, White, & Jewish," describes her feeling of being pulled between the identities of her parents; it was recently pulled from a Florida school district (along with "The Color Purple") with district officials citing sexual content.

In her journals, Walker called Leventhal "a real Jew"

(emphasis hers), elaborating, "He loves justice, like one loves a magnificent misused person." But their marriage became strained, and the two divorced in 1976, having already been separated for years.

A hard tack against Israel

Walker's activism around Israel for years was contentious but largely in line with most pro-Palestinian thought.

In 2010, she published a short essay book, "Overcoming Speechlessness: A Poet Encounters the Horror in Rwanda, Eastern Congo, and Palestine/Israel," that originated as an essay in the left-wing Jewish website Tikkun. In the book, she discusses visiting the Gaza Strip with the antiwar nonprofit CODEPINK in 2009, in the midst of an Israeli bombing campaign, and accuses world leaders of showing "indifference to the value of Palestinian life that has corrupted our children's sense of right and wrong for generations."

"Most Jews who know their own history see how relentlessly the Israeli government is attempting to turn Palestinians into the 'new Jews,' patterned on Jews of the Holocaust era, as if someone must hold that place in order for Jews to avoid it," she writes, adding that she could never "rationally discuss" Israel with her ex-husband. "He does not see the racist treatment of Palestinians as the same racist treatment of blacks and some Jews that he fought against so nobly in Mississippi, and that he objected to in his own Brooklyn-based family." She also listed several progressive Jews whom she said were friends of hers also protesting Israel, including Zinn, Muriel Rukeyser, Amy Goodman and Noam Chomsky.

In 2012, Walker made her positions explicit when she turned down an offer to publish a new Israeli edition of "The Color Purple." In a letter, she told publisher Yediot

Books that she did this because she believed Israel “is guilty of apartheid and persecution of the Palestinian people,” and endorsed the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement—a tactic that bestselling Irish author and fellow BDS backer Sally Rooney would echo in 2021. (An earlier Hebrew-language edition of “The Color Purple” was published in the 1980s.)

In 2013, the University of Michigan’s Center for the Education of Women rescinded an invitation for Walker to speak at its 50th anniversary celebration; Walker would later claim that this was due to her views on Israel. But the university never gave a clear reason, and in fact invited her to speak again the following year without incident.

Full-on Icke

By 2017, Walker’s tone had hardened—not only against Israel, but also Jews more broadly. That year on her website, she published a poem entitled, “It Is Our (Frightful) Duty To Study The Talmud,” in which Walker writes, “Are Goyim (us) meant to be slaves of Jews, and not only / That, but to enjoy it?”

The poem, a harsh critique of Israel and what Walker suggests is a Jewish urge to dominate non-Jews in accordance with the Talmud, continues, to describe “what may be done / With impunity, and without conscience, / By a Chosen people, / To the vast majority of the people / On the planet / Who were not Chosen.”

Walker also describes being “accused of being antisemitic” by a “friend / a Jewish soul / who I thought understood / or could learn to understand / almost anything”—an apparent reference to her ex-husband. The poem includes a link to an interview she conducted with controversial Israeli pro-Palestinian activist Miko Peled.

Walker’s troubles with antisemitism would break into public view the following year, when *The New York Times* Book Review asked her to list her favorite books for a regular column. Among her choices was “And The Truth Shall Set You Free,” by antisemitic conspiracy theorist David Icke. The book purports to explore the secret forces behind global power, and contains numerous screeds on Israel, the Jews, and familiar conspiracy theories like the Rothschild family.

“I believe that researchers over the years who have blamed the entire conspiracy on the Jewish people as a whole are seriously misguided; similarly, for Jewish organizations to deny that any Jewish person is working for the New World Order conspiracy is equally naive and allowing dogma or worse to blind them to reality,” Icke writes at one point in the book. Later, discussing the events that led up to the Holocaust, he states, “I believe that all this was coldly calculated by the ‘Jewish’ elite.”

Walker had nothing but praise for the book, telling the *Times*, “In Icke’s books there is the whole of existence, on this planet and several others, to think about. A curious person’s dream come true.” It wasn’t her first time praising Icke, whom she has also boosted on her website and in other writings; she soon suggested that her critics were merely upset over her pro-Palestinian activism.

Walker’s outspoken love of Icke has prompted a more

widespread reckoning with her beliefs on Jews. Last year, a book festival in Berkeley, California, disinvited her from a major event over what the festival said was her “endorsement of antisemitic conspiracy theorist David Icke.” Walker had been promoting “Gathering Blossoms

Under Fire,” a newly published collection of her journals. Playhouses staging “The Color Purple” started publishing statements addressing Walker’s links to antisemitism.

A new ‘Color’ with shades of old

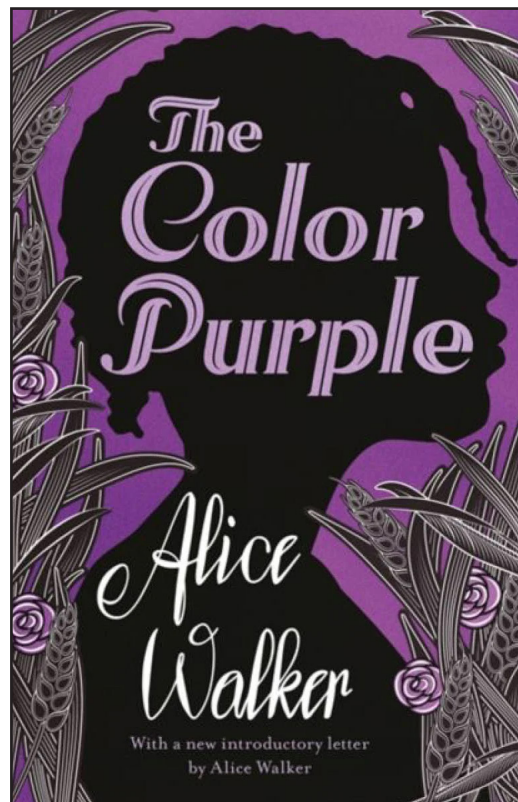
The new “Color Purple” is marketing itself as a “bold” reimagining of the novel, swapping out its dour, punishing prose for splashy, elaborate choreography. Like the first Spielberg adaptation, it also features an all-star Black cast: in this case headlined by Fantasia Barrino, Taraji P. Henson, “The Little Mermaid”’s Halle Bailey and musician H.E.R.

It is also being positioned by studio Warner Brothers Discovery as a major awards contender—notable as the Spielberg-directed version was famously shut out of all 10 Oscars it was nominated for. At the time, film critic Roger Ebert, who named Spielberg’s film the best of the year, suspected this was due to the racism of a nearly entirely white Academy.

In the midst of Israel’s ongoing war with Hamas in the Gaza Strip, Walker has continued to advocate for Palestinians. Last month she appeared in a webinar hosted by Socialist Action entitled “Palestine Will Be Free From the River to the Sea” that also featured an editor of the anti-Zionist website Electronic Intifada.

Meanwhile, Spielberg’s Shoah Foundation has launched an initiative to collect testimony from Israeli survivors of the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks. Spielberg himself, while not directly involved in the project, has endorsed it, saying, “I never imagined I would see such unspeakable barbarity against Jews in my lifetime.”

Spielberg has made no public comments about Walker or the new “Color Purple” this year, though the two of them both walked the red carpet at the film’s premiere. ✨



COPING WITH ANTISEMITISM

Jewish Federation works with cities and agencies to create awareness

BY ILENE SCHNEIDER

Since the Hamas massacre in Israel on October 7, U.S. antisemitic incidents reached the highest number of incidents during any two-month period since ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) began tracking in 1979, according to preliminary data.

In the three months following the massacre, ADL recorded 2,031 antisemitic incidents, up from 465 incidents during the same period in 2022, representing a 337-percent increase year-over-year. This includes 40 incidents of physical assault, 337 incidents of vandalism, 749 incidents of verbal or written harassment, and 905 rallies including antisemitic rhetoric, expressions of support for terrorism against the state of Israel and/or anti-Zionism. On average, in the last 61 days, Jews in America experienced nearly 34 antisemitic incidents per day.

"This terrifying pattern of antisemitic attacks has been relentless since the Israel-Hamas war began on Oct. 7, with no signs of diminishing," said Jonathan Greenblatt, ADL CEO. "The lid to the sewers is off, and Jewish communities all across the country are being inundated with hate. Public officials and college leaders must turn down the temperature and take clear action to show this behavior is unacceptable to prevent more violence."

Jason Moss, executive director of the Jewish Federation of the Greater San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys, has remained focused on protecting the community with the help of the intelligence and weight of the Anti-Defamation League, the expertise of the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles' Community Security Initiative, and the resources of Community Security Service as part of the Southern California Jewish Security Alliance. The objective is to let people know what they can do to reduce hate, such as reporting incidents and making authorities aware of them, he said.

According to Moss, "This alliance aims to have a fully integrated security network to better protect and respond to any threat targeted at a Southern California Jewish organization. This alliance will also benefit the work we have been doing locally with our Community Security Committee these last several years. This committee, chaired by Gabi Kovnator, brings together the representatives from each of our community's synagogues responsible for handling security at their respective institutions. By bringing them together, they are able to learn from one another by sharing ideas and ultimately keeping the members of their community safer."

County Supervisor Kathryn Barger recently named Moss a commissioner to the LA County Commission on Human Relations. As he explained, "The mission of this commission is to promote better human relations in LA County and help build vibrant, thriving communities by working to transform prejudice into acceptance, inequity into justice, and hostility into peace. In many ways, this appointment

will be an extension of the work our Jewish Federation has been doing to combat antisemitism and all forms of hate in the greater San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys for the last several months."

Moss related that antisemitism has been on the rise since 2016. Since March, the Jewish Federation has been getting cities to adopt resolutions. "The more allies we gain, the more we can take action against hate," he said.

The Federation is also working on making things better on college campuses, where "the rate of incidents is something we've never seen before," Moss said. He believes that universities "have been ill-prepared" to deal with the situation and have not held to policies to protect people.

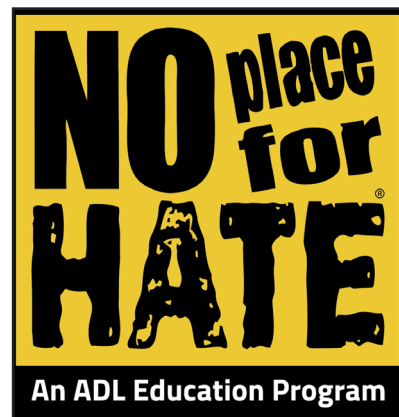
Moss added, "They don't hold people accountable for the impact of hate speech. They hide behind the mantra of free speech. Hate speech crossed the line. We know that students are afraid to express themselves and feel intimidated."

Jewish Federation is working with ADL and Hillel to confront college and university administrators to hold the line on hate speech, but Moss revealed that the problems are at elementary, middle, and high schools as well. Jewish Federation meets with school administrators to "address the climate of hate and its impact on people." Most are extremely responsive and thankful, but peer-to-peer interactions are more challenging, according to Moss.

"ADL's No Place for Hate program is a great way to shift the climate at schools," Moss added. "Kids are bombarded and school administrators need help. Some are proactive, and some need more guidance. We're getting a lot of appreciation from families who feel that they're not alone."

The approach is what can we do moving forward, he said. While the schools try to engage with students while they are at school, the students hear things at home.

"Our challenge is to help non-Jewish families to understand our concern," Moss concluded. ☆



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BEHIND ‘THE ZONE OF INTEREST’

The real Auschwitz commandant—and Yiddish resistance song

BY ANDREW LAPIN, JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY (JTA)



A scene from Jonathan Glazer's film "The Zone of Interest" (Courtesy of A24)

// "The Zone of Interest" is not like other Holocaust movies.

Directed by British Jewish filmmaker Jonathan Glazer, the film initially appears to follow an unexceptional German family in the 1940s and their idyllic lifestyle in a cute cottage near a river. A father (Christian Friedel), a mother (Sandra Hüller) and their five children host parties, go swimming, tend to their garden and read bedtime stories at night.

Only gradually does the movie reveal that this family's seemingly idyllic home is located directly adjacent to the Auschwitz death camp—and that the patriarch is none other than Rudolf Höss, that camp's real-life commandant, who directly oversaw the systematic murder of more than a million Jews, and perhaps many more. Audiences never see these murders, but they hear the horrific evidence of the slaughter: screams, gunshots and the machinery of the gas chambers.

"The Zone of Interest," which won the Grand Prix at this year's Cannes Film Festival, never shows the inside of the camp's operations. Yet it is still rooted firmly in historical realities about the Holocaust and in the minute details of how the Hösses lived comfortably alongside it, ignoring the mass suffering their father was orchestrating.

Glazer and his team did years of research before filming in an effort to capture the tonal disconnect of the moment, in perhaps the purest cinematic distillation yet

of German Jewish philosopher Hannah Arendt's famous proclamation about "the banality of evil."

"I wanted to dismantle the idea of them as anomalies, as almost supernatural," Glazer, who also adapted the script, told *The New York Times* about his depiction of the Hösses. "I wanted to show that these were crimes committed by Mr. and Mrs. Smith at No. 26."

Here's what you need to know about the new film, which is gathering awards buzz and has been shortlisted for the best international feature Oscar as it enters a limited theatrical release this month.

What is "The Zone of Interest" based on?

Glazer, whose previous films include "Under the Skin," "Sexy Beast" and "Birth," adapted his script for "The Zone of Interest" from the late British author Martin Amis' 2014 novel of the same title. But the film differs considerably from the novel, and has a greater basis in historical fact.

While Amis' novel followed multiple plotlines, including a love triangle, set in and around Auschwitz, Glazer's script stripped away everything except the Höss family at its center. He also made his film about the real Höss family, whereas Amis (who died as the film was premiering at Cannes) had rendered fictional versions of them.

Glazer also went further, hiring researchers at the Auschwitz-Birkenau museum in Poland to look into details of the Höss family's lifestyle. (The film was shot near the museum, in a formerly dilapidated house the production

crew transformed into a replica of the actual Höss home.) He was also, he told *The Times*, inspired by sources like Timothy Snyder's "Black Earth: The Holocaust As History And Warning," and the writings of Gillian Rose.

Who was Rudolf Höss?

Rudolf Höss was the Nazi commandant who oversaw the mass killing operations at Auschwitz-Birkenau, having been posted there from 1940 until nearly the end of the war. Before Auschwitz, Höss—born Catholic and a World War I veteran who became a committed Nazi from the beginning of Hitler's rise to power—was posted at the Dachau and Sachsenhausen camps, where he learned the tricks of the trade of mass death.

Within the Nazi upper ranks, Höss was considered, according to an SS report, a "true pioneer" for his mass-killing innovations at the camp, which became the deadliest site of the war under his watch. After the Final Solution began being implemented in 1941, Höss installed gas chambers and ovens at Auschwitz capable of killing thousands of people every hour and disposing of their bodies; from then on, the camp was a brutally efficient system of death. He was also the one who introduced the poisonous gas Zyklon B to the camps, impressing Adolf Eichmann.

As portrayed in the film, Höss was briefly transferred to a more administrative role within the Nazi Party in 1943—a move that the family gardener has testified angered Rudolf's wife Hedwig (Sandra Hüller), because she believed the family had everything they needed at Auschwitz. (Glazer has said that his need to understand this argument between the two of them was the driving force behind the film.) However, he was reassigned to the camp the following year to oversee the mass extermination of Hungarian Jewry in an operation named after him.

He went into hiding after the war, but was tracked down by Hanns Alexander, a German Jewish Nazi hunter, and stood trial in Poland in 1947, where he was sentenced to death. The Jewish Telegraphic Agency covered his trial at the time.

Höss admitted to his role in the genocide in a written statement in which he coldly describes the "improvements" his Auschwitz team made over similar extermination efforts at Treblinka—using the same dispassionate, removed cadence spoken by the movie's version of Höss.

Höss was hanged in Auschwitz at the age of 45, on gallows he himself had ordered constructed at the camp.

What do we know about the Höss family?

The bulk of "The Zone of Interest" focuses not on the mass extermination, but rather on the particulars of Höss' family life and the ways in which this Nazi clan mentally separated the two. As in the movie, the real Höss family lived in an impeccably maintained two-story house that bordered Auschwitz: They could see the prisoner blocks and crematoria from their upstairs window.

Rudolf and Hedwig saw themselves as homesteaders, fulfilling the Nazi ideal of reclaiming rural territory for the master race. While Rudolf went to work at the camps every morning, Hedwig busied herself with her social life and proudly accepted the moniker of "Queen of Auschwitz." Historian Thomas Harding wrote about how they stocked their closets with clothes and jewelry seized from the Jews who were exterminated, and with the help of a large waitstaff, including some Auschwitz prisoners, they kept a garden, often entertained guests and swam and canoed on the nearby Sola River with their kids. (One scene in the movie depicts Rudolf hurrying his kids away from the river once he realizes it is full



Rudolf Höss, far right, is shown in a photograph with, from left, fellow SS officers Richard Baer and Dr. Josef Mengele, at Solahütte, the SS retreat outside of Auschwitz.

(Karl Höcker album/U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum)

of human ash from the camps.)

After Rudolf was caught and hanged after the war, his family was free to go, but they were shunned by German society. One of his daughters, Brigitte, would later move to the U.S., where she worked for decades at a Washington, D.C. fashion store owned by Jews who had fled the Nazis after Kristallnacht, and her mother came to visit her frequently. In 2013, at the age of 80, Brigitte told Harding she hardly thought about her Auschwitz childhood, but that she recalled her father as "the nicest man in the world," said she believed his confession had been coerced by the British, and doubted the reported death tolls at the camp.

What is the Yiddish song featured in the movie?

Late in the film, an unnamed character—likely a partisan—sits down at a piano to play a song with an unusual melody. The song is "Sunbeams," a little-known resistance song composed inside Auschwitz by the Polish Jewish prisoner Joseph Wulf. Though it is not sung out loud, the lyrics appear on the screen as the plaintive melody is played, and Wulf's own voice (recorded in the late 1960s) introduces it.

Wulf wrote:

*Sunbeams, radiant and warm
Human bodies, young and old
And who are imprisoned here,
Our hearts are yet not cold*

According to the *Forward*, Glazer's research team reached out to musicologists at the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum seeking obscure Yiddish music that had been written in Auschwitz.

Wulf himself survived the camp and a death march in 1945, settled in Germany in the 1950s and became a historian who tried to force German society to confront and account for the crimes of the Nazi regime. He also became a West Berlin correspondent for JTA.

Wulf spent his life trying to turn the site of the Wannsee Conference, where the Nazis formalized the Final Solution, into a Holocaust memorial that he would head up. But it didn't happen in his lifetime. In 1974 he leaped to his death from his Berlin apartment.

In a note to his son, Wulf lamented: "I have published 18 books about the Third Reich and they have had no effect ... The mass murderers walk around free, live in their little houses, and grow flowers." ☆

ANDREW LAPIN IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO JTA AND JLife MAGAZINE

SAVE OSHER ASULIN

The Race Against Time to Save a Special Boy from a Rare Disease

BY ELAD MASSURI

In a heart-wrenching battle against time, one-and-a-half-year-old Osher Asulin has been diagnosed with the rare and deadly Adrenoleukodystrophy (ALD) disease. This devastating condition, if left untreated, spells certain death. Osher's desperate parents, Liel and Roy, have embarked on a journey to the United States, seeking a lifeline for their son, as Israel lacks the medical expertise and facilities capable to offer the necessary assistance.

ALD is a rare disease that affects a mere 3% of the global population. It is an inherited disorder that mercilessly assaults the nervous system. Its primary victims are young males, and its progression unfolds in agonizing stages. Disturbingly, a patient may carry this insidious disease for considerable time while remaining oblivious to its presence until specific blood tests are conducted.

The sinister nature of ALD lies in its impact on the body's ability to break down long-chain fatty acids, which results in a harmful accumulation of them. This wreaks havoc on crucial components of the body such as the adrenal gland and white matter in the brain, and ultimately culminates in severe muscle atrophy, leading to an untimely demise.

The initial signs of the neurological deterioration of ALD often manifest as attention and hearing disorders. As the disease advances, it robs its victims of their hearing and



speech abilities. Subsequently, it inflicts profound muscle paralysis, rendering the afflicted individual unable to move their face and a subsequent downward spiral.

Osher's story is not just an affecting narrative; it's a call to action. The urgency to find a solution underscores the critical need for heightened awareness, research, and resources to combat a rare disease like ALD. As Osher fights for his life, his journey serves as a stark reminder of the ongoing battle against time with such rare and harrowing adversaries.

Out of Every 42,000 Men, One Will Suffer from ALD

Osher's parents currently find themselves in a small motel in New Jersey, alongside their younger daughter, Orin, desperately seeking help from kind-hearted individuals in the local Jewish community. In the coming week, they plan to move to yet another hotel, this time in Brooklyn, in an attempt to find assistance. Despite their challenging financial situation and the ongoing struggles in their homeland, they have been unable to find a savior, even with the internet campaign they launched.

Recently, the family received distressing news from Osher's doctor. Their son has also developed Addison's disease, which attacks the kidneys. In its advanced stages, Addison's causes a frightening 75% of cases to trigger a severe ALD outbreak. Osher is currently undergoing intensive treatments, with regular blood transfusions and steroid administration



to control the disease and prevent outbreaks. To fully recover, little Osher requires an innovative genetic treatment unavailable in Israel but offered at a hospital in Boston. The good news is that this genetic treatment boasts an incredible 97% success rate. However, it comes with the staggering news that the cost of the treatment amounts to \$2.5 million—a daunting sum, especially for a young Israeli couple in their mid-20s.

Osher's parents shared with me how the entire ordeal



blindsided them completely: "Throughout the pregnancy, everything seemed normal, and the doctors assured us—by mistake—that we were having a healthy daughter, so we had no concerns about ALD, a disease that primarily affects boys. However, after birth, comprehensive tests, including an Exum test, after our approval, revealed that Osher tested positive for ALD. The treatment he needs is gene replacement, a process that replaces a faulty gene with a healthy one. If detected in time, it can save him. But when we realized the cost, darkness descended upon us. Initially, the doctors suggested that researchers might fund the treatment, considering it's a rare case, especially in Israel. Unfortunately, that didn't happen. Meanwhile, Osher continues to undergo painful and costly tests, requiring an MRI every six months." Royold me that it's not easy to cope during this period: "Doctors give him steroids to stabilize him and prevent deterioration, but he's only a year and a half old. These medications affect him and his mood. They make him irritable and nervous, and he constantly needs a lot of attention."

Please help Osher

<https://my.israelgives.org/en/members/osher>. ☆

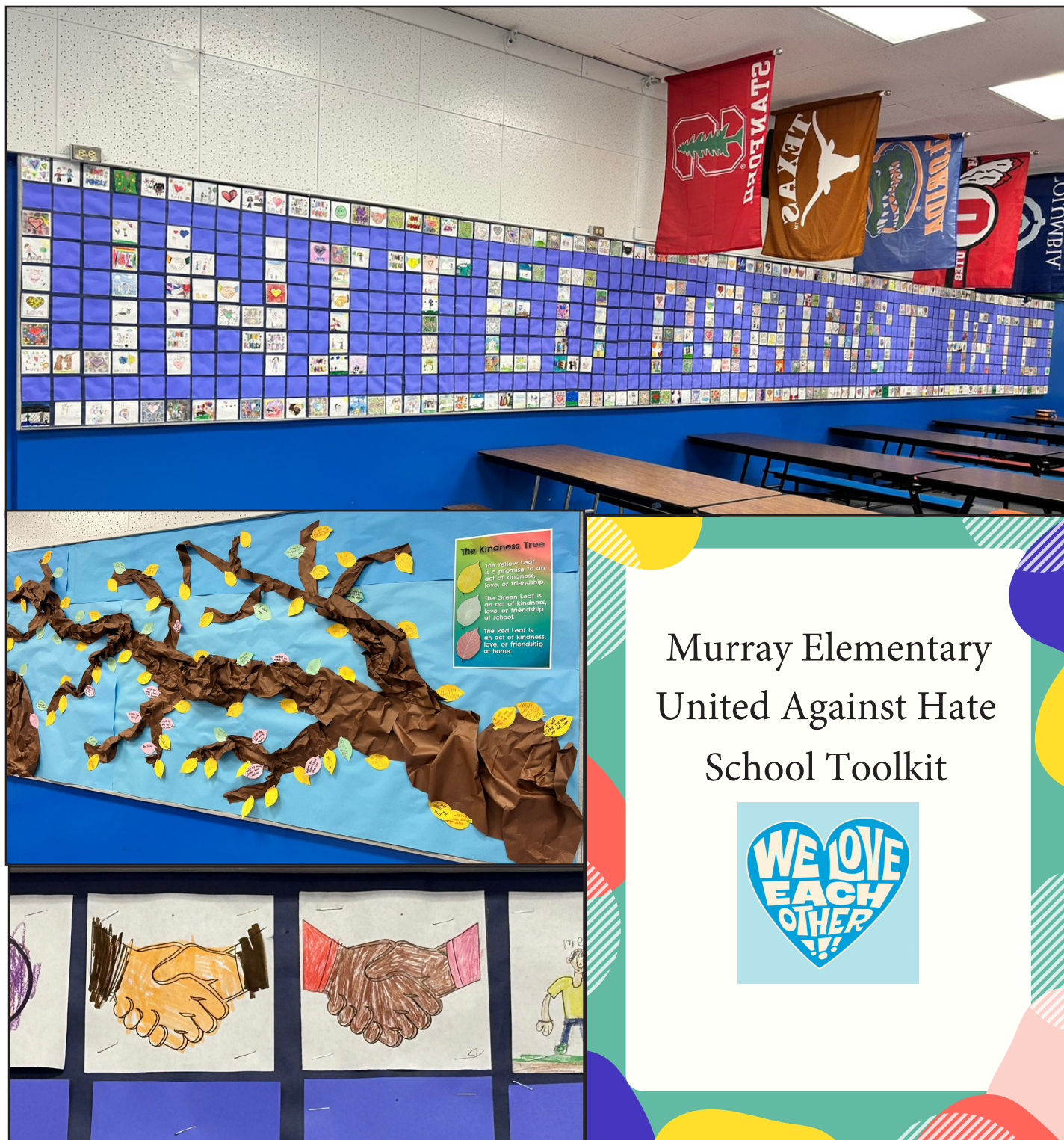


ELAD MASSURI IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO J LIFE MAGAZINE.

UNITED AGAINST HATE

Local school has meaningful week of activities

BY ILENE SCHNEIDER





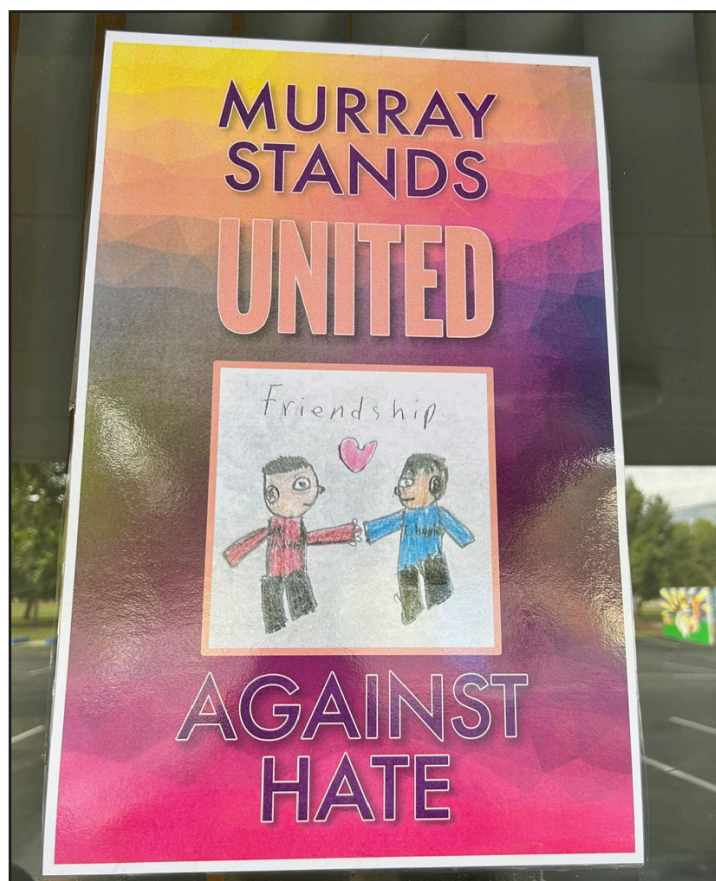
United Against Hate Week emerged from a United Against Hate poster campaign created by Bay Area Cities in response to white supremacist rallies in Berkeley and San Francisco in 2017. Since then communities and schools throughout California, along with state and local leaders, community members, activists and others have coordinated a United Against Hate Week during one week in November. The events have helped people learn how to reject hate of any kind and build a safer and more equitable world by working together.

LA vs Hate, the local coordinator of United Against Hate Week, is a program of LA County's Human Relations Commission, on which Jason Moss, executive director of the Jewish Federation of the Greater San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys serves as a commissioner. This program works with community partners from all

five LA County districts, representing a diverse coalition of voices committed to ending hate. The organizations inspire people to stand up to hate, build understanding about what constitutes a hate act and how to report it, and support individuals and communities as they heal from the trauma of hate. The objective is to build respectful and resilient communities.

At the start of the school year, Principal Adrian Acosta of Murray Elementary School in Azusa contacted Moss "to see if I (Moss) could help him address hate in the community surrounding his school." During their initial meeting, Moss suggested Acosta have his school participate in United Against Hate Week (this year being held November 12 to 18), and he and his staff ran with it."

An entire week's curriculum culminated in an assembly. The students signed a pledge to do



everything they could not to hate. It became a personal mantra, and parents and teachers got involved. Students also created a mural that was unveiled in their cafeteria made up of pictures drawn or colored by the students. On the opposite wall is the tree (see picture on page 18).

"It was beautiful to see the students so engaged and to hear the reports from the principal throughout the week," Moss said. "The school is an amazing place to be, and the parents took pride in the students' involvement."

He added, "When the city of Azusa had gang-related activity, the city asked the schools to do something. Now Murray Elementary is a model for what other schools can do."

Moss hopes that other area schools will want to participate in future United Against Hate Weeks through its local organization, LA vs Hate. Since its inception, United Against Hate Week has spread to over more than 200 communities including all of Los Angeles County, faith-based groups, LGBTQ and human rights organizations, and is beginning to takeoff throughout California and in communities across the U.S.

"We're not going to eradicate hate completely, but there are things that can be done, like this, that can minimize it," Moss concluded. ☆

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SGPV'S JEWISH YOUTH & PARENTS

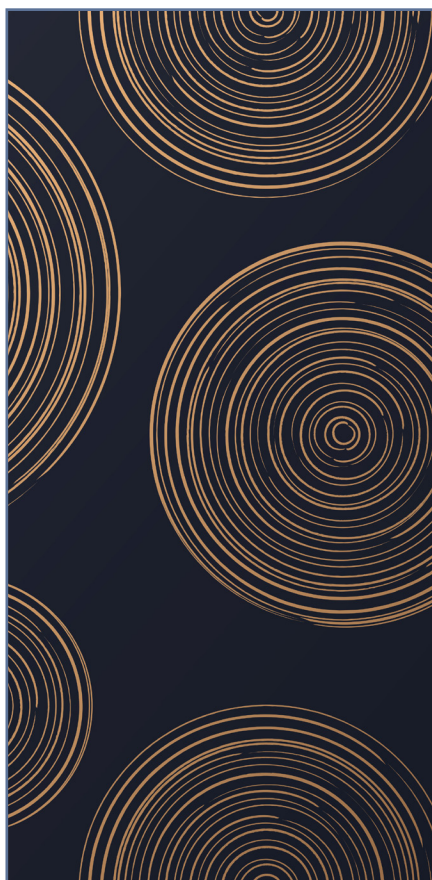
kiddish

Tu Bishvat

The "Birthday of the Trees"

JANUARY 2024

- 3 TU BISHVAT 2024**
In 2024, the “birthday of the trees” begins at sundown on Wednesday, Jan. 24 and ends at sundown on Thursday, Jan. 25.
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This act has always been held in high regard in Judaism.
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The modern seder draws on elements of its mystical predecessor.



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Tu Bishvat 2024

In 2024, the “birthday of the trees” begins at sundown on Wednesday, Jan. 24 and ends at sundown on Thursday, Jan. 25.

BY MY JEWISH LEARNING

In 2024, Tu Bishvat begins at sundown on Wednesday, Jan. 24 and ends at sundown on Thursday, Jan. 25.

Tu Bishvat or the “birthday” of all fruit trees, is a minor festival. The name is Hebrew for the 15th of the Hebrew month of Shevat. In ancient times, Tu Bishvat was merely a date on the calendar that helped Jewish farmers establish exactly when they should bring their fourth-year produce of fruit from recently planted trees to the Temple as first-fruit offerings.

The Tu Bishvat Seder

In the 16th century, the Kabbalists (mystics) of Tzfat (the city of Safed) in the Land of Israel created a new ritual to celebrate Tu Bishvat called the Feast of Fruits. Modeled on the Passover seder, participants would read selections from the Hebrew Bible and Rabbinic literature, and would eat fruits and nuts traditionally associated with the land of Israel. The Kabbalists also gave a prominent place to almonds in the Tu Bishvat seder, since the almond trees were believed to be the first of all trees in Israel to blossom. Carob, also known as bokser or St. John’s bread, became another popular fruit to eat on Tu Bishvat, since it could survive the long trip from Israel to Jewish communities in Europe. Participants in the kabbalistic seder would also drink four cups of wine: white wine (to symbolize winter), white with some red (a harbinger of the coming of spring); red with some white (early spring) and finally all red (spring and summer).

Complete with biblical and rabbinic readings, these kabbalists produced a Tu Bishvat Haggadah in 1753 called “Pri Etz Hadar” or “Fruit of the Goodly Tree.”

The early Zionists seized upon Tu Bishvat as an opportunity to celebrate their tree-planting efforts to restore the ecology of ancient Israel and as a symbol of renewed growth and flowering of the Jewish people returning to their ancestral homeland.

In modern times, Tu Bishvat continues to be an opportunity for planting trees—in Israel and



elsewhere, wherever Jews live. Many American and European Jews observe Tu Bishvat by contributing money to the Jewish National Fund, an organization devoted to reforesting Israel (the purchase of trees in JNF forests is also customary to commemorate a celebration such as a Bar or Bat Mitzvah).

Environmentalism and Tu Bishvat

For environmentalists, Tu Bishvat is an ancient and authentic Jewish connection to contemporary ecological issues. The holiday is viewed as an appropriate occasion to educate Jews about their tradition’s advocacy of responsible stewardship of G-d’s creation, manifested in ecological activism. Tu Bishvat is an opportunity to raise awareness about and to care for the environment through the teaching of Jewish sources celebrating nature. It is also a day to focus on the environmental sensitivity of the Jewish tradition by planting trees wherever Jews may live.

The Tu Bishvat seder has increased in popularity in recent years. Celebrated as a congregational event, the modern Tu Bishvat seder is multi-purpose. While retaining some kabbalistic elements—and still very much a ritual that connects participant to the land of Israel—the seder today is often imbued with an ecological message as well. ☆



Planting Trees for Tu Bishvat

***This act has always been
held in high regard in Judaism.***

BY LESLI KOPPELMAN ROSS, MY JEWISH LEARNING

In the Jewish scheme of the world, trees have always occupied a key and revered role. According to the Creation story, seed bearing plants and fruit trees were put on the Earth before any other living thing (Genesis 1:11-12). In other words, the first thing G-d did once He had firm land was to plant trees!

The Tree of Life, which G-d placed at the heart of the Garden of Eden, became a symbol of Jewish existence, a core value of individual and communal living: continuity.

The Talmud sages held wonderfully imaginative discussions about trees in life and legend. They believed that mankind, which they often compared to trees, owes its existence to them and should treat them with special recognition. Serious consequences would result from destroying a tree. The Torah (itself called a Tree of Life in Proverbs 3:18) prohibits the destruction of fruit trees, even in times of war (Deuteronomy 20:19-20), and to prevent the loss of Israel's natural forests, the sages prohibited the Jews from allowing goats to graze freely. Today in Israel, anyone who wants to destroy a tree must apply for a license, even if the tree is on his or her own property.

Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, who lived in Jerusalem when it was being sacked by the Romans, cleverly taught the priority of planting. "If you should be holding a sapling in your hand when they tell you the Messiah has arrived," he advised, "first plant the sapling, then go out and greet him."

Planting a tree—a concrete, practical act—has represented hope since ancient times. On Tu Bishvat in Palestine, trees were planted for children born during the previous year: for a boy, a cedar, with the wish that the child would grow to be tall and upright, for a girl, a cypress, which was graceful and fragrant. Later, branches from the cypress and cedar of a bride and groom were used to make the chuppah (canopy)

for their wedding ceremony. The planting was associated with two of the most important times in an individual's life, birth and marriage, two occasions when we concentrate on the possibilities for the future. So powerful is this connection that even in the Theresienstadt (also called Terezin) concentration camp, children planted a tree.

Planting was also considered a way to create eternity. As the Talmud relates, the righteous man Honi once encountered a man planting a carob tree. "How long will it take to bear fruit?" he inquired. "About 70 years," the man replied. "So you think you will live long enough to taste its fruits?" The man explained, "I have found ready-grown carob trees in the world. As my forefathers planted them for me, so I plant for my children."

As a result of the Jewish National Fund (JNF) reforestation projects in Israel, the land once desert now supports successful farming endeavors, and millions of trees cover the hills. Visitors to Israel, on Tu Bishvat or at other times, can participate in the Plant a Tree with Your Own Hands Program. A popular alternative is to purchase tree certificates, through local and national JNF and Hadassah offices.

Each inexpensive certificate represents one tree planted in Israel in memory or honor of an individual or on a special occasion. (Only large plantings, not individual trees, are actually designated on site.) Outside Israel, symbolic plantings are often done for the holiday, with trees planted in one's yard or community, or houseplants started from seeds, particularly parsley, which will sprout in time for Passover.

Reprinted with permission from Celebrate! The Complete Jewish Holidays Handbook (Jason Aronson). ☆

LESLI KOPPELMAN ROSS IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.

How to Lead a Tu Bishvat Seder

The modern seder draws on elements of its mystical predecessor.

BY MY JEWISH LEARNING



Set up your table as for Passover: white or other nice tablecloth, good dishes, flowers, wine, and juice. There is no requirement to light candles, but scented candles add a nice touch and a festive glow. Either one person can lead the seder, reciting each reading and making the blessings, or everyone can take turns. The directions concerning which fruit to locate and the mix of the wines should be read aloud. As each piece of fruit and each cup of wine is being considered and blessed, that object is held by the reader. After each blessing, the participants taste the fruit or sip the wine.

Hand Washing

Fill a large bowl with flower-scented water and float a small cup in it. Carry the bowl from person to person or set up a washing station in a corner. Feel how nice it is to place your hands over the bowl and have someone pour warm water over your fingers. Have towels ready.

Say this blessing [though some may choose to fore-

go this blessing, since it is traditionally recited upon washing the hands before eating bread, which is not eaten here]:

Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam, asher kidshanu b'mitzvotav, v'tzivanu al netilat yadayim.

Blessed are You, Source of all life, Who commands us to ritually wash our hands.

Reader: And G-d said: Let the earth put forth grass, herb-yielding seed, and fruit-tree-bearing fruit after its own kind, wherein is the seed thereof, on the earth. (Genesis 1:11)

Reader: In the 16th century in northern Israel, in the spiritual town of Tzfat (Safed), the Jewish mystics created the Tu Bishvat seder. They recognized the many and varied dimensions of G-d's creation and used the fruits of Israel to symbolize their existence.

The First Cup of Wine or Grape Juice

This cup of white wine or grape juice symbolizes winter and the mystical dimension of atzilut, or emanation, at which God's energy infused the creation

process with initial life.

Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam borei peri ha-gafen.

Blessed are you, Source of all life, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

Reader: For Adonai your G-d is bringing you into a good land. A land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths springing forth in valleys and hills, a land of wheat and barley and vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive trees and honey, a land wherein you shall eat without scarceness, you shall not lack anything in it; a land whose stones are iron and out of whose hills you may dig brass. And you shall eat and be satisfied, and bless God for the good land, which is being given unto you (Deuteronomy 8:7-10).

The First Fruit

Fruit that is hard on the outside and soft on the inside, such as walnuts, coconuts or almonds. The hard shell symbolizes the protection that the earth gives us and reminds us to nourish the strength and healing power of our own bodies.

Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam, borei peri ha-etz.

Blessed are You, Source of all life, Creator of the fruit of the tree.

The Second Cup of Wine or Grape Juice

This cup of wine or grape juice is mostly white, with a little red mixed in, to symbolize the passing of the seasons and the mystical concept of formation and birth, often associated with water.

Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam, borei peri ha-gafen.

Blessed are You, Source of all life, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

Reader: Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. Blessed shall you be in the fruit of your body, and the fruit of your land, and the fruit of your cattle, and the young of your flock. Blessed shall you be in your basket and your kneading trough. Blessed shall you be when you come in and blessed shall you be when you go out (Deuteronomy 28:36).

The Second Fruit

This fruit is soft with a pit in the center—olives or dates [or peaches, apricots, etc.]—and symbolizes the life-sustaining power that emanates from the earth. It reminds us of the spiritual and emotional strength that is within each of us.

Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam, borei peri ha-etz.

Blessed are You, Source of all life, Creator of the fruit of the tree.

The Third Cup of Wine or Grape Juice

This cup of wine is mostly red with a little of white mixed in and symbolizes once again the change of



seasons and the mystical concept of beriah, or creation.

Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam, borei peri ha-gafen.

Blessed are You, Source of all life, Creator of the fruit of the vine.

Reader: Then G-d formed the human from the dust of the ground, and breathed into the nostrils the breath of life; and the human became a living soul (Genesis 2:7).

The Third Fruit

This fruit is soft throughout and is completely edible, such as figs, grapes, and raisins. This type symbolizes G-d's omnipresence and our own inextricable ties with the earth.

Barukh ata Adonai, Eloheinu Melekh ha-olam, borei peri ha-etz.

Blessed are You, Source of all life, Creator of the fruit of the tree.

Serve a Vegetarian Dinner

A favorite is vegetarian lasagna and noodle kugel with fruit. Eat other exotic fruits that are placed around the table.

The Fourth Cup of Wine or Grape Juice

This cup is all red, symbolizing the mystical concept of fire and the idea that within all living things dwells a spark of G-d.

Reader: And the angel of G-d appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and Moses looked, and behold, the bush burned with fire and the bush was not consumed (Exodus 3:2).

The Fourth Fruit

This has a tough skin on the outside but sweet fruit within—mangos, bananas, avocados, or sabra, a desert pear—and symbolizes the mystery of the world and our study of Torah. We are constantly seeking to uncover her secrets, and are continually nourished by her fruits.

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COOKING JEWISH

Lifestyle

SHABBAT'S MAGIC

Celebrating our
special day

BY JUDY BART KANCIGOR

PHOTOS COURTESY OF DAN PEREZ

Mexican Gefilte Fish

Who doesn't love a holiday? We Jews are lucky because we get to celebrate one every week. It's called Shabbat, and a new cookbook, "Shabbat," by the wildly popular author of "Sababa," Adeena Sussman, brings you all the majesty and tradition of the holiday with recipes geared toward the day of rest, recipes that are do-ahead, approachable and relaxed, with Sussman helpfully sharing her masterful techniques and prep tips along the way. Accompanying the recipes are engaging stories of family, friends, local cooks and chefs of Israel, where she has lived for almost a decade.

Having been raised in an orthodox home in Palo Alto, California, and steeped in ritual, Sussman "grew up enveloped in Shabbat's magic, aware of how my family's life revolved around this sacred bubble," but also with the realization that "so much about Shabbat was about the food and the table that the two are inseparable in my mind. During the week we ate meals, but on Shabbat we had celebrations."

To some, what to cook for Shabbat centers on Friday night dinners, but our day of rest lasts 25 hours from just before sunset on Friday to nightfall on Saturday, four meals to plan for and enjoy. No worries. Sussman has the whole weekend covered with Crispy Eggplant and Goat Cheese Tart, Potato Blintzes with Mushroom Sauce or Cheesy Spinach and Phyllo Pie for breakfast or brunch, for example; a dizzying array of salads and sides—may I just give a shout-out for the Roasted Green Beans and Peppers with Smoky, Nutty Bread Crumbs my friend served with dinner recently? —appetizers, soups, stews, breads and a whole chapter dedicated to kugels. For dessert try the show-stopping Lemon-Black Sesame Bundt Cake, but don't miss the Halvah Berry Bread Pudding with Tahini Drizzle hiding out in the Breakfast and Brunch chapter.

Challah is the "one recipe that defines Shabbat," says Sussman, but why bake two? As the Israelites wandered through the desert, she explains, G-d sent them manna, one

piece for each day during the week, but "before Shabbat they received two, so they wouldn't have to work by gathering their meal. Today, we place two loaves of challah on the table for Shabbat meals to symbolize those two pre-Shabbat portions of manna."

The traditional braiding of the Sabbath challah was actually adopted by Jews from their German neighbors during the Middle Ages. As they did with so many other customs, Jews living in the diaspora absorbed traditions from the surrounding culture. The rabbis then searched for symbolic meanings to these customs to make them more Jewish. Could the braiding signify G-d's plaiting Eve's hair for her wedding to Adam? The interlocked arms of lovers? Perhaps the triple concepts of the Creation, Exodus, and Messianic Age? As Maggie Glezer, author of "A Blessing of Bread," told me, "Jews admired the Germans' Sunday loaf. It looks beautiful, they thought. Obviously, we want our Sabbath loaf to look as beautiful. We mix our traditions with the local traditions and create new ones."

The serving of gefilte fish has been a Sabbath tradition since the Middle Ages, fish being seen by Jewish mystics as signaling the coming of the Messiah. Fish was expensive in Europe, and the recipe was developed as an economical way to stretch it so that every family member could get a taste. It became a particularly traditional Sabbath dish, made on Friday, because to remove the flesh from the bone was viewed by the devout as "work."

The word "gefilte" is actually German for "stuffed." The original recipe called for seasoned, ground boned fish mixed with eggs and fillers, such as vegetables and crumbs, which was then stuffed back into the fish skin and cooked. Over the centuries the skin was eliminated, with cooks shaping the mixture into balls or patties and poaching them. Recipes varied greatly depending on geography. According to Matthew Goodman writing in "The Food Maven" for The Forward, Polish Jews preferred sweeter food than their neighbors and made their gefilte fish with sugar. "David and Diane Roskies have speculated

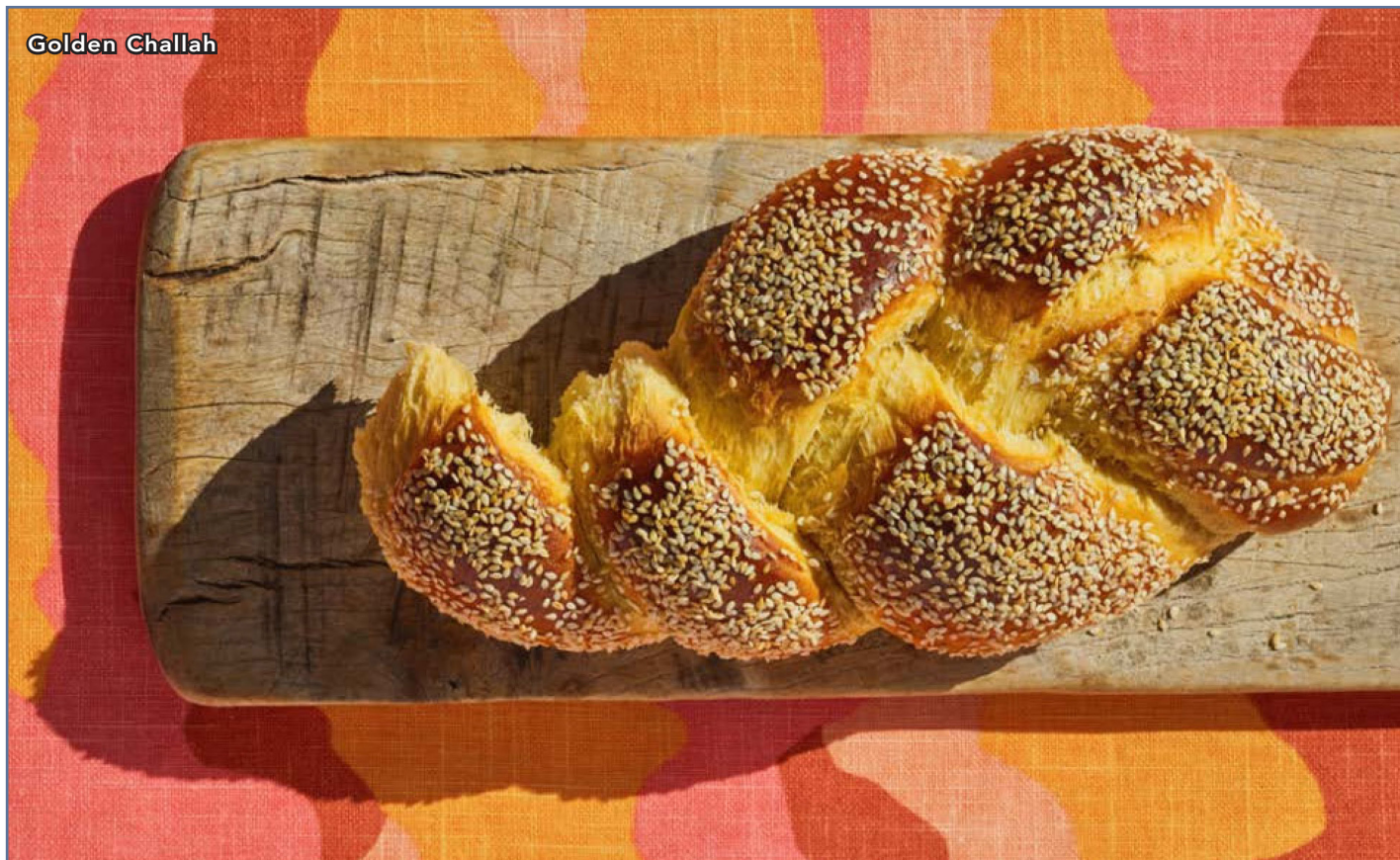
that this variation may correlate with the rise of Chasidism in the region," writes Goodman. "The Chasidim tend to like their food sweet, associating sugar with the joy of religious celebration—though a more materialist explanation would point to the profusion of Jewish-owned sugar refineries in the surrounding area."

By contrast, gefilte fish in Lithuania was spiced heavily with pepper and served with horseradish alongside. Goodman references a doctoral dissertation by a Marvin Herzog, who proposed what he termed the "gefilte fish line." "The line runs north to south, about 40 miles east of Warsaw," explains Goodman. "West of it, the preferred gefilte fish preparation was sweet, while to the east the fish was peppery." My own family lore tells of the anxiety my grandparents felt when my mother, of Litvak pepper-loving heritage, decided to marry my father, a Galitziana with sweet tooth proclivities, for fear they would be served, horror of horrors, gefilte fish with sugar by their new macha-tunem (their daughter's in-laws).

Canned or bottled gefilte fish, while convenient, cannot compare to authentic homemade. Its preparation need not be daunting; the food processor does the job easily. While gefilte fish was a staple of my childhood, it has gotten a bad rap through the decades, or as Rodney Dangerfield would put it, "It ain't got no respect." The Mexican Gefilte Fish in Spicy Tomatillo Sauce featured here keeps with tradition while bringing a whole new flavor to this iconic dish. Sussman obtained the recipe from the owners of Tacos Luis, "Israel's best, most authentic, happens-to-be-kosher taqueria," she says, where it's bound with almond flour to keep it gluten-free and served with avocado and tostadas fritas (fried whole corn tortillas), signaling the coming of the Messiah but with a lot more pizzazz. Even Jewish mystics would approve. ☆

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.

Golden Challah



Mexican Gefilte Fish

Yield: (makes 20 balls), 6-8 as main course, 8-10 as appetizer

For gefilte fish balls

- 2 1/2 pounds skinless whitefish fillets, such as carp, snapper, flounder, lemon sole, tilapia, or a combination
- 1 large onion, coarsely chopped (2 cups)
- 1/2 cup almond flour
- 2 large eggs, beaten
- 4 teaspoons kosher salt
- 2 teaspoons ground coriander
- 1 teaspoon finely black pepper

For Salsa Verde:

- 3 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1 large onion, finely chopped
- 6 fresh large jalapeños (10-12 ounces total), seeded if desired, chopped
- 1 can (28 ounces) tomatillos, (2 cups), coarsely chopped, + 1/4 cup brine from can
- 1 cup water
- 5 garlic cloves
- 2 cups fresh cilantro leaves and tender stems
- 2 teaspoons kosher salt, plus more to taste
- 1 cup fish broth, homemade or store-bought

For finishing

- 1/4 cup chopped fresh cilantro, plus leaves for garnish
 - 1/4 cup chopped pickled jalapeños, plus more pickled jalapeño rings for garnish (optional)
 - 1 avocado, peeled, pitted, and cut into one-inch pieces
 - Baked or fried whole corn tortillas or tortilla chips
 - 1 lime, cut into wedges
- (Recipe continues at jlifespv.com)



Golden Challah

To determine if your challah is done, insert a meat thermometer into the center. If it reads 190–195° Fahrenheit, you're there.

Yield: 2 large or 3 medium challahs

- 1 cup warm water (110° to 115°F), plus up to 1/4 cup more
- 1/2 cup + 2 tablespoons sugar
- 2 packets (1/4-ounce each) active dry yeast (4 1/2 teaspoons total)
- 1/2 cup vegetable oil + 1/2 tablespoon for greasing bowl
- 1/8 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 4 large eggs
- 6 cups (780 g) all-purpose flour, plus more as needed
- 2 1/2 teaspoons fine sea salt
- 1/2 cup sesame seeds
- Flaky sea salt, such as Maldon, or kosher salt

1. In bowl of stand mixer, whisk warm water and the 2 tablespoons sugar (I use a fork; no need to dirty the whisk). Whisk in yeast and let it get foamy and fluffy for 5-6 minutes (if this doesn't happen, your yeast is dead! Start over!). Whisk in remaining 1/2 cup sugar, 1/2 cup of the oil, the turmeric and 3 of the eggs until incorporated.
 2. Add flour and fine sea salt, then fit mixer with paddle attachment to incorporate ingredients well and mix on medium speed, stopping mixer and using silicone spatula to coax any loose flour into dough, until dough is shaggy but unified, 3 minutes.
- (Recipe continues at jlifespv.com)

GOOD FAITH NEGOTIATIONS?

Calling for a Ceasefire, Without First Calling for the Unconditional Release of the Hostages, is Inhumane

BY NOAH LEDERMAN

On October 7, 2023, more Jews were killed than on any other single day since the Holocaust. In addition to brutally raping, torturing, and murdering 1,200+ innocent Israelis and others on October 7th, Hamas captured and took hostage 240 men, women, and children, ranging in age from 10 months old to 86 years old.

Hamas is an internationally-recognized terrorist organization. Rather than pursue diplomatic solutions to the plight of the Palestinian people, Hamas committed an act of war. In response, Israel mounted a military campaign to locate and rescue the hostages and eradicate Hamas.

Reportedly, Hamas' strategy was always to be able to use the hostages as leverage to secure the release of their fellow terrorists.

This should not be seen as an ordinary prisoner swap - the hostages Hamas captured are, by and large innocent non-combatant civilians while many of the prisoners in Israeli custody are terrorist criminals who had engaged in acts of violence against the people of Israel, including ten for attempted murder, thirteen for inflicting serious bodily harm, nineteen for placing a bomb or throwing an incendiary device, seven for shooting at people, and five for assault; they are terrorists who have violently attacked border guards and stabbed police officers in the streets of Jerusalem.

What is happening in Gaza now may seem disproportionate, due to the higher number of reported casualties that have amassed on the Gazan side. However, it is crucial to recognize that Hamas is a master of propaganda, portraying Israel as the aggressor, when in fact Israel is merely acting in self-defense against a terrorist organization whose charter literally calls for the destruction of the Jewish state.

When the IDF soldiers entered Gaza, they were not intentionally seeking out innocent women and children to murder like Hamas did. The innocent Gazans who have perished were, like the Israelis, victims of Hamas. There is also, however, a degree of responsibility to be shared by even the non-combatants in Gaza who provide refuge, aid, and comfort to the Hamas terrorists in their midst, including those who allow Hamas to hide out in their schools, hospitals, and homes, and who permit them to build and use tunnels under their buildings. That being said, it is entirely unknown, and impossible to know, how many of the non-combatants were complicit out of sympathy for Hamas, and how many were forced at gunpoint.

If Israel were to accede to the calls for a unilateral ceasefire and lay down its weapons notwithstanding the continued daily barrage of rockets launched from Gaza and elsewhere, what would become of the remaining hostages? Certainly, Hamas would continue to use them as human pawns to be traded away for even more high-value Hamas terrorists. What is Israel to do, though, if Hamas were to keep increasing its

demands? Tear down the security fence?

Remove the blockade?
Compromise all of its other security measures?

In fact, between November 24th and November 30th, a ceasefire was in place between Israel and Hamas during which time 78 hostages were released. However, on November 30th, Hamas broke the ceasefire when two Hamas terrorists shot and killed at least three people at a

Jerusalem bus stop. I have seen countless social media posts that call for a "ceasefire now". However, I did not see a single one of the accounts that posted about a "ceasefire now" in any way condemning Hamas for violating the ceasefire. Where was the world's outrage then?

Calling for a cease-fire without first calling for the release of all the remaining hostages is antisemitic because it implies a form of tacit endorsement signaling to Hamas, and the world, that what Hamas did on October 7 is acceptable. Consider what would happen if the United States Embassy in Jerusalem had been breached, its staff members murdered, and the ambassador and his family taken hostage. The United States famously "does not negotiate with terrorists" - so why should Israel? The US would send in the Marines and not stop until the hostages were released and the threat eradicated. No one in the international community would fault the US for such a response or dare call for a ceasefire.

Indeed, there cannot truly be any sort of good faith negotiation with Hamas so long as it is actively holding hostages, so why are so many calling for a ceasefire anyway?

The answer, it would seem, is that they do not value Israeli lives.

"My name is Noah Lederman, and I am a student enrolled in the joint degree program with Columbia University. I am studying Philosophy at Columbia University, while also obtaining a degree in Jewish Ethics at the Jewish Theological Seminary. In high school, I participated as a group leader for Student-to-Student (STS), a peer-led initiative of Jewish students that leads presentations at local schools on combating antisemitism through education and awareness. During my time with STS, I discovered the primary cause for most hatred is ignorance, and subsequently found my passion for education.

With tensions so unnaturally high on campus, I continue to actively engage in my mission of education by organizing and attending dozens of protests and counter protests, all in reaction to the current conflict in Israel.

I have written this article in response to the countless signs and chants that I have been witness to, all of which called for "cease-fire now" but exclude any mention of the Jewish/Israeli hostages." ☆



COMMUNITY CALENDAR

SATURDAY,

JANUARY 6

10:00 AM - 1:00 PM

Shabbat Mevarchim

Contact

Rabbi Sholom Harlig

info@ChabadInlandEmpire.com, CIE

SUNDAY,

JANUARY 7

10:00 AM - 12:30 PM

Jewish Federation's

Annual Meeting

Pasadena Jewish Temple

and Center

1434 North Altadena Drive

Pasadena, CA

RSVP is required -

626.445.0810 or

www.jewishsgpv.org

Cost \$30.00, JFGSGPV

FRIDAY, JANUARY 12 & 26

10:00 - 11:30 AM

Gan Katan – PJ Library's Little

Garden Playgroup,

Contact Debby Singer

(626) 445-0810

dsinger@jewishsgpv.org

JFGSGPV

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7

2:00 - 5:00 PM

MONDAY, JANUARY 8

TUESDAY, JANUARY 9

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11

6:30 - 9:00 PM

AUDITIONS: Fiddler on the Roof

Jewish Federation of the

Greater San Gabriel and

Pomona Valleys

114A W. Lime Avenue

Monrovia, CA

Contact Cantor Judy Sofer

jsofer@jewishsgpv.org,

JFGSGPV

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27 -

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28

7:00 - 8:00 PM

Every Person Has a Name

Contact Jason Moss

jmoss@jewishsgpv.org,

JFGSGPV

SUNDAY, JANUARY 28

NOON - 3:00 PM

Spa for the Soul,

Contact

Rabbi Sholom Harlig

info@ChabadInlandEmpire.com, CIE

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)

www.templebnaiemet.org

Temple Sinai of Glendale

(TSG)

http://temple-sinai.net

Temple Sholom of

Ontario (TSO)

www.templesholomofontario.org

Tree of Life Preschool

(formerly TBI Preschool)

(ToL)

<https://tbipomona.org> ☆

EVERY PERSON HAS A NAME

25-HOUR HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE PROGRAM

Pasadena City Hall & on Zoom

Honoring 30 Righteous Gentiles

January 27, 2024, 7 p.m.

COMMEMORATION CEREMONY

January 27, 2024, 8 p.m. - January 28, 2024, 8 p.m.

READING OF THE NAMES

co-sponsored by The City of Pasadena



Please join us for the 6th Annual Every Person Has a Name – our community’s 25-hour Holocaust commemoration and vigil. The event will begin at 7:00 p.m. with a commemoration ceremony with remarks from local elected officials and then will be immediately followed by volunteers reading names of those who were murdered during the Holocaust. Come to the ceremony or stop by to sit and listen to the name reading. There will also be an exhibition entitled *The Righteous Among the Nations*, made available to be shown by Yad Vashem, Israel’s National Holocaust Museum, and sponsored by Pasadena Jewish Temple & Center’s Sisterhood. The exhibition shares the stories of over 30 people who willingly sacrificed their own freedom, and sometimes their own lives, to save Jews during the Holocaust.

NEWS & JEWS



Oct. 7 Nova Music Festival Massacre Survivor, Combat Antisemitism Movement Public Affairs Officer, Reunited with Her Rescuer

On Monday, December 19, Natalie Sanandaji, a survivor of Hamas's unprovoked attack against civilians at the Nova Music Festival on October 7, 2023, reunited with the man who saved her that day, Moshe Sati. Moshe, a father of four who dropped everything to help evacuate survivors away from the festival in his truck, met with Natalie on her first trip back to Israel.

"If it wasn't for Moshe, I wouldn't be here today," said Sanandaji. "I will never be able to repay him for what he did that day, but I will spend the rest of my life honoring him by not letting the world forget about the innocent people who were murdered that day, and the antisemitism that fueled it."

Following her return home to the United States, Natalie joined the Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM) as a public affairs officer for the exact purpose of standing up to rising antisemitism, the same hate that fuels Hamas.

CAM CEO Sacha Roytman Dratwa accompanied Natalie on her return trip to Israel. "For 16 hours non-stop, Moshe saved lives," said Roytman Dratwa. "After rescuing all the survivors, he went into the heart of the chaos to help the wounded who couldn't escape. His wife shared that Moshe was so affected by what he witnessed, he couldn't speak for 2 hours, not a single word. Even now, he refuses to discuss what he saw, not wanting to shake people's belief in the goodness of humanity. Even if Moshe has trouble talking about what he did, CAM will not let his heroism be forgotten and it will never fail to stand up to antisemitism in the Middle East, the United States, and anywhere else Jews face hatred."

About the Combat Antisemitism Movement

CAM is a global coalition engaging more than 750 partner organizations and four million people from a diverse array of religious, political, and cultural backgrounds in the common mission of fighting the world's oldest hatred. CAM acts collaboratively to build a better future, free of bigotry, for Jews and all humanity.

For more information please visit <https://combatantisemitism.org>. ☆



On Our Way to Buenos Aires

Maccabi USA is sending its largest ever delegation to the Pan American Maccabi Games in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Nearly 650 team members will be joined by an additional 650 family members and supporters in an expression of Jewish strength and pride on a global stage. Maccabi USA is especially proud and excited that an Israeli delegation will be attending the Games, many with a direct personal connection to the 10/7 tragedy and ongoing response. Maccabi USA is arranging special opportunities for its athletes to spend time with these Israeli counterparts, to hear their stories, understand how life has been impacted in Israel, and to be inspired by their strength and courage. Through their testimony each of us has the opportunity to carry forward the story of this important time for our people. This is, at its core, the most powerful part of Maccabi events—the gathering of the Jewish People, through a shared passion for sports, to build personal connections with members of the Global and Israeli Jewish communities, to grow the shared history of our People, and to enhance each individual's Jewish Identity and sense of pride in being Jewish.

In this difficult time of increasing antisemitic acts at home in America and while the war continues in our Homeland of Israel, the importance of gathering as a People increases. In this moment each and every Jew feels their Jewish identity front and center. Regardless of how an individual previously framed their Judaism, whether strictly observant, "culturally Jewish", or completely agnostic, the current events have, either through personal choice or outside factors, resulted in all of us considering what it means to be Jewish. The realization that no matter how we think of ourselves, to many non-Jews we will always be identified and judged as Jewish is inescapable. Therefore, the Jewish People can and should use this as a chance to come together, to grow stronger as a community, and when the current events pass, be more united as a People and more connected to our Homeland.

In this light, these Pan American Maccabi Games are an important part of building a diverse and vibrant future Jewish world. Please follow along through the Maccabi Media team, social media, and the stories of the participants as they build Jewish identity and Jewish Pride through Sports.

For more information please visit <https://maccabiusa.com/maccabi-media-panam-2023-landing-page/>. ☆

*Wishing you a happy
& healthy 2024!*

- JLife



NO ONE SAVES MORE LIVES IN ISRAEL IN TIMES OF CRISIS.



This Chanukah, there are many ways to support Israel and its people, but none is more transformative than a gift to Magen David Adom, Israel's emergency medical system.

Your gift to MDA isn't just changing lives — it's literally saving them — providing critical care and hospital transport for everyone from victims of heart attacks to casualties of rocket attacks.

Join the effort at afmda.org or call 866.632.2763.

