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Kesser celebrates Israel's 75th



Clockwise from top left: Congregation Kesser Israel hosted a cook-out, sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, to celebrate Israel's 75th birthday Monday, July 31; Freida Leah Skolnik works the cotton candy maker; the congregation's new event tent stands adorned with Israeli flags; Reuven Grossman, left, and his son Zechariah load up on watermelon for dinner. (Photos by Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

Weekly Monday minyan meeting 7am at EJC

By ROCKNE ROLL

Erez Rubin couldn't find a morning minyan (prayer service) in East Portland; a space that felt inclusive of queer Jewish identity while also embracing more traditional elements of Jewish practice.

So they're making one.

"I love being able to go to services and then start my day," Rubin, a resident of Moishe House and an educator at Congregation Shir Tikvah, said. "I think there's something really powerful about having time to check in, hang out with your community, do some prayer, sing a little, drink some coffee and then go to work."

The minyan currently meets Mondays at 7 am at the Eastside Jewish Commons. Rubin said the minyan is still in its early stages; seven attendees came on a recent Monday, and they are hopeful that they can soon consistently get the 10 attendees required to read Torah in the mornings.

"I'm just trying to build a following and build a community and then see where it goes," Rubin said.

Those interested in attending or learning more can email Rubin at j.emrubin@gmail.com.

"Last Day Of Camp" for young adults starts Aug. 25 at BB Camp

B'nai B'rith Camp is presenting "Last Day of Camp" for adults ages 21-35 Friday through Sunday Aug. 25-27 at camp outside Lincoln City. From classic summer camp activities to adults-only pastimes like beer-in-hand sunbathing, Last Day of Camp is an all-inclusive weekend for those missing their camp days or those who missed out as kids. Registration is \$180 and includes lodging in modern, air-conditioned cabins, meals, drinks and all activities. For more information or to sign up, visit bbcamp.org/lastday/.

OJCYF Philanthropy Program Now Accepting Applications

The Oregon Jewish Community Youth Foundation is accepting applications for the 2023-2024 program. Be a part of OJCF's award-winning youth philanthropy program and experience firsthand the challenges and rewards of serving on a nonprofit board while getting to know teens from all around the area and collaboratively allocating funds to improve the community. Incoming 9th through 12 graders with a connection to Judaism are welcome to apply. Make a strong philanthropic impact in the greater Oregon & Southwest Washington community while gaining skills to become empowered, confident, and effective leaders who influence and drive change. Applications reviewed in the order received. Limited slots are available but filling up fast. For details, visit ojcf.org/programs/ojcyf or call 503 248-9328.

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Knowledge to nosh on

New class on Middle Eastern food to launch in UO's Judaic Studies program

By ROCKNE ROLL

University of Oregon students looking for an engaging, even mouthwatering, introduction to Israel and the broader Middle East may not have to wait too much longer.

"Food and Cultures of the Middle East," a course developed by Dr. Bassem Hosny and Rabbi Meir Goldstein in The Harold Schnitzer Family Program in Judaic Studies, has been approved by the University's Global Studies Department and is on track to join the course catalogue, perhaps as soon as Spring of 2024.

"We're going to look at different groups within the Middle East, particularly focusing on different cultures and cuisines found in Israel and different cultures and cuisines found in Egypt," Rabbi Goldstein, who is also the Senior Jewish Educator at Oregon Hillel, said.

Rabbi Goldstein and Dr. Hosny will now begin developing

a prospective syllabus. The curriculum and its materials can be prepared in a relatively short time, but because of the approvals process and the advanced scheduling required, it is most likely that the course will be offered beginning in the 2024-25 academic year.

A key component of the course is exploring how external influences have altered the culinary landscape of Israel. Much as the introduction of the tomato from the Western hemisphere fundamentally altered Italian cooking, the flavors and ingredients that have come with immigrants to Israel have made an indelible impression on the region in staples like shakshuka and zhug, while others like hummus have been cornerstone foods of the region since the time of the First Temple.

"All food, all cultures, are constantly evolving. Societies that have a high influx of immi-

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Religious School Roundup Online

Updated with the latest on supplemental education programs around the area

tinyurl.com/JR-schools-2023



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Moishe House to release zine on Jewish Portland experience, host event for Jewish Zine Festival

Submissions accepted through Aug. 10

By ROCKNE ROLL

Portland has long been a hub for zines – limited-run, homemade publications made with an emphasis on creativity, expression, and a do-it-yourself ethos – and now Moishe House is getting in on the act.

Working with Thursday Bram, a Jewish writer and zine-maker in Portland, Moishe House is creating a zine (a name that's a shortened version of "magazine") as part of this year's Jewish Zine Festival, put on by the Jewish Zine Archive of Tucson, Ariz. This zine will be based on the theme "How does living in Portland affect or inform your Jewish practice or identity?" and is set to be released Saturday, Aug. 26 at a Jewish Zine Festival pop-up event at Books With Pictures, 1401 SE Division St. in Portland, at 5 pm, followed by a Havdalah service.

Erez Rubin, who is heading up Moishe House's work on the zine project, envisions this as an exploration of how Portlanders put their Judaism into practice.

"We are a religion that prays with our feet," Rubin said. "As my girlfriend lovingly puts it, we are a mutual aid religion, and I think that it really reflects here in Portland."

While Bram has written for a wide variety of national publications, she views zines as a powerful tool to build community.

"I'm a big fan of any way that makes like information both very easily shared, but also lets you be artistic and have some creativity around you too," she said.

"It's not supposed to be like this big cohesive thing," Rubin added. "It can just be what it is, it's just something that you share with your community."

The lo-fi aesthetic of zines makes them great venues for those trying out new means of expression. Rubin said Bram has been

encouraging them to contribute artwork, a process that has been freeing for Rubin.

"You don't have to be perfect at it. You just have to show up just how you are and encourage others to just show. Up how they are," they said. "My drawings don't have to be perfect. I can just do what I want."

Bram said zines are frequently inspired by, and respond to, one another in a way that she finds parallels within classic Jewish texts.

"You put out a zine and, a lot of times, somebody else puts out a zine in response to that. It really speaks to me coming out of a Jewish background because so many Jewish texts are 'no way, that guy who just said something is totally wrong and let me tell you all about it.' That sometimes is a key part of Zine culture as well. Sometimes it's a little bit more like, 'That zine over there gives me a great idea that I want to expand on.'"

She went on to look at haggadot, the written order of Passover seders, as something of a small scale zine.

"Every family at some point makes their own or adds an article here or takes out a blessing there or adds another item to say your plate," she explained.

For Rubin, zines are a connection not just to the ideas they contain but the people who made them and who receive them; many zines are small enough in scale that their audiences all share a connection to the author or authors.

"This is something that I made," Rubin said, speaking to the idea of zine-making, "and even though I'm not like a fancy artist or a fancy writer, I just did this with my friends, and this is the product of that. It's also very much a product of love."

More information about the Jewish Zine Festival is available online at jewishzinearchive.com/jzf5783. For more details on Moishe House's project, email moishehousepdx@gmail.com.

Trybal Gathering at Camp Solomon Schechter to run Sept. 7-10

Trybal Gatherings is bringing the adult summer camp experience to the Pacific Northwest Thursday through Sunday, Sept. 7-10 at Camp Solomon Schechter in Olympia, Wash. All meals, snacks, drinks and activities are included as well as exclusive Trybal PNW merchandise. Over 50 activities available each day from classic camp pastimes to out-of-the-box adventures, including Bubbe's Beer Garden. Eight-person cabins and private lodging available. Registration starts at \$795 and is available through Aug. 24 at trybalgatherings.com/pnw.

CLASS (continued from page 2)

grants, it evolves more quickly," Rabbi Goldstein explained.

A crucial dimension that Rabbi Goldstein hopes to add is a hands-on element; cooking and eating. There are kitchen facilities on campus, and the hope is that the program can make use of them to help the curriculum come to life.

"It will be such a unique experience for the students," Rabbi Goldstein said. "Students who might not be interested in history or language might very well be interested in food."

The course will be offered at an introductory level without any prerequisites, what the University calls a "lower division" course. One of the administrative hurdles to clear before the course's initial offering is how and where it will fit within the University's array of gener-

al education course categories. Rabbi Goldstein explained that most students select courses outside their academic major based on how they fit into the fulfillment of these general education requirements, and that courses that don't fulfill any of those category requirements often do not meet the university's minimum enrollment requirements to be offered. The general education category will also require some tailoring of the course syllabus.

Rabbi Goldstein studied anthropology at the University of Arizona before earning a master's in rabbinic letters and his rabbinical ordination at the American Jewish University. Hosny earned a bachelor's, master's and doctorate in Modern Hebrew Language from Alexandria University in Egypt.

For Rabbi Goldstein, the opportunity to co-teach with Hosny is one he looks forward to.

"The two of us getting to teach together also would be a unique experience for us and also for the greater community here," he said.

He believes the course itself will offer an opportunity to learn about the daily lives of people in a region that carries a fraught history and is experiencing a challenging present; a way to understand a diverse and rapidly evolving culture at a foundational level.

"I just think it will be a fantastic experience for students to [learn] not only to different people and the way they live their lives, but to make it a part physically of themselves," Rabbi Goldstein said. "We all love to eat. Many of us love to try new things."

Jeser joins Federation

By ROCKNE ROLL

When Laura Jeser returned to Portland in 2022, one of the things that brought her back was the sense of inclusion and care she felt within Portland's Jewish community. Now she plans to help more people experience that feeling as Associate Campaign and Engagement Director for the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland.

"We are delighted to welcome Laura to our professional team," Federation President and CEO Marc Blattner said, "and we look forward to her work on the campaign and in engaging more people in Jewish life."

Jeser's engagement work will focus on connecting young adult and young family groups within Portland's Jewish community with each other and with the resources of the Federation.

"It's finding out what will bring them in, what would be appealing, what can we do to speak to our greater community," Jeser said. "I think that's really important."

She will also assist Chief De-

See JESER, page 7



Jewish Federation of Greater Portland Associate Campaign and Engagement Director Laura Jeser, pictured at the Federation's offices Thursday, Aug. 3. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

Managing Child Anxiety series returns

By ROCKNE ROLL

Jewish Family and Child Service and Congregation Neveh Shalom are bringing back their successful presentation series "Helping Your Child Manage Anxiety" beginning August 15.

The four-part series, sponsored by JFCS, Neveh Shalom and the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, kicks off with three Zoom presentations on consecutive Tuesdays, Aug. 15, 22 and 29, each from 7-8 pm. The fourth session, a panel discussion with the presenters from the series, will be held in-person Tuesday, Sept. 5, at the Eastside Jewish Commons at 7pm.

Mel Berwin, Neveh Shalom's Director of Congregational Learning, helped put the initial series together in May and said the turnout and response was impressive.

"We got really good feedback and we wanted to offer

See ANXIETY, page 6

Dernbach finds family at Cedar Sinai Park

By SYDNEY CLEVINGER

Harold Schnitzer Center for Living Resident Janet Dernbach minces no words about her living situation: "This place saved my life," she said. "I wouldn't have a home without it."

A stroke brought Dernbach to Cedar Sinai Park a few years ago. She has no living family. The former grain worker doesn't remember many details of what brought her here, but she is adamant that she is in a great place.

"After my stroke, I stayed in other places and they weren't nice like this one," Dernbach said. "The people are just wonderful here."

"The facility is unique. It's very comfortable as far as the

modern conveniences go, and kind of homey.

"It reminds me of the house I grew up in [in southeast Portland], and it's very relaxing to be here."

Dernbach attended Marshall High School (now a Portland Public "hotel school" used to house students whose schools are undergoing extensive renovations). After graduation, Dernbach moved to St. Louis to work briefly as a grain inspector, and then returned to Portland where she had a long career at Tektronix.

Dernbach is a regular at exercise class and enjoys going outside to "sit amongst the beautiful trees on a nice day." She says there is always "something to do" on any given day, wheth-

er it's cooking or playing Bingo or planting flowers or listening to music. Dernbach says she doesn't like country music, but when a country song comes on the radio, she knows all of the words.

"My mom liked country music, and I learned it with her," Dernbach said. "Once it gets in your brain, it kind of sticks there."

Dernbach said the diversity of residents at Cedar Sinai Park surprised her, in terms of religion and age and hometown. "It's more interesting than having everybody that's exactly the same no matter where you are," she said. "It helps you learn about yourself and other people."

She also enjoys having her



Janet Dernbach, pictured at the Harold Schnitzer Center for Living. (Courtesy Cedar Sinai Park)

own suite in which to live with a view of trees.

"I love it here. I very much want to stay here."



Summer Festival draws hundreds

Over 400 attendees converged on The Fields in Northwest Portland for the Jewish Summer Festival, put on by Chabad Northwest/Chabad Young Professionals Thursday, July 13. A drum circle and fresh-fried falafel preceded sunset Jewish Trivia and a screening of "Woman in Gold." The festival was cosponsored by the Oregon Jewish Community Foundation and the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland. (Courtesy Chabad Young Professionals)

ANXIETY (continued from page 5)

it kind of as a second round leading up to the new school year," she said.

"Repeating this program is so important given the mental health challenges that so many families are experiencing right now," added JFGP Director of Educational Initiatives and

Associate Director of Community Relations Rachel Nelson. "The ability to know where to go for resources and to find an ongoing network to support one another is vital."

Berwin will lead the first presentation in the series, titled "Supporting Youth with Anxiety Through a Jewish Lens." It's a subject that's personal to Berwin, as her own children each struggled with mental health issues. She started addressing the subject in trainings with her education staff at Neveh Shalom, adapting that work to speak to parents as their children face mental health challenges.

"Part of what I do in this workshop is actually to incorporate some of those unhelpful thinking patterns so that we can identify those when we have them or when our kids have them," Berwin said, "and then to present some texts right that can kind of push back against those unhelpful thinking patterns."

She mentions an example from the Talmud where the Almighty intervenes in a disagreement between Hillel and Shammai, declaring both their interpretations of a subject are correct with the phrase "Elu V'Elu," meaning "these, and these." This idea, Berwin explains, is a powerful tool to counteract that absolutist thought patterns that are a hallmark of anxiety and depression.

"This ancient text that says two things that feel very opposite and completely intractable can both be true, two different things can coexist at the same time, it interrupts

that always/never, all-or-nothing."

The second presentation, from JFCS child and family therapist Laura Cohen, is titled "A Taste of SPACE," referring to "Supportive Parenting for Anxious Childhood Emotions." Too often, Cohen explains, the natural tendency of parents whose children are facing emotional challenges is to attempt to alleviate those feelings instead of giving their child space to learn how to work through them. It can be tough for parents to hear, but as a parent who dealt with these same issues in her own home, Cohen can identify with those sorts of responses.

"I often say to parents I wish I knew then what I know now, which is that by engaging in these what we call accommodating behaviors," Cohen said, "the message that I was giving to my child, [was] 'I don't really think you can handle this, so I'm going to take care of it for you.'"

Cohen emphasized that she's not interested in blaming anyone, but in working with parents to explore a more effective model.

"Parents want the best for their kids," she said. "It is challenging for parents to take a step back, and to sometimes say, 'Wait a second. I might be a part of this situation. I might not be helping.'"

The third week's presentation, "Finding the Appropriate Mental Health Professional for Your Child," comes from Dan Rothenberg, a Neveh Shalom member and local therapist and teen resiliency coach. Rothenberg explained that as mental health treatment becomes more advanced, it has become more specialized.

"If I have a sore throat, I go to the nose and throat[doctor], or my primary physician refers me there," he said. "More and more, we're learning mental health is like that, too."

Finding a good fit between therapist and patient is important, but finding someone who is an expert on the patient's particular problems is also crucial, and Rothenberg wants to help parents avoid the kinds of pitfalls he regularly sees in his practice.

"What kind of therapist might you look for based on a lot of different factors of what's going on with your child," he said. "What could happen often is a young person finds a therapist and they like them and there's a good rapport, and then they might have to leave that therapist."

The series will again conclude with a panel discussion and chance for attendees to connect in person. This will continue moving forward with a monthly support group, meeting on the first Monday of each month at rotating locations throughout the Portland area, including EJC, Neveh Shalom, and farther west in Washington County. These sessions will start with a 45 minute group discussion, then move on to a 45 minute presentation from an expert in a particular area of children's mental health.

"We want to create this space for parents to feel comfortable talking about things and then also having a psychoeducational component to be able to learn about some things from experts in the field," Cohen said.

"We want to address eating disorders and self-harm and trans and gender issues and other topics that are more focused on some of the different pieces that we know our families are and their kids are struggling with," Berwin added.

The presentation series is free; pre-registration is required and available online at tinyurl.com/register-manage-anxiety-2023. For more information, email Berwin at mberwin@nevehshalom.org.



Students from Greater Portland Hillel pack up supply totes at Dignity Grows packing party at Lewis and Clark College in Portland. (Courtesy Dignity Grows)

Dignity Grows packing party Aug. 27

By ROCKNE ROLL

Dignity Grows is having a party – and you're invited!

The group will host a packing party at 1 pm Sunday, Aug. 27 at Congregation Neveh Shalom, filling the group's signature purple tote bags with menstrual and general hygiene products for those in need.

Dignity Grows is a national Jewish non-profit dedicated to ending what's called "period poverty," where those in need of menstrual supplies are forced to choose between buying those supplies or purchasing other essentials like food or housing.

"If they don't have enough money to buy the hygiene supplies, it's embarrassing," Bonnie Newman, head of Portland's chapter of Dignity Grows. "It can be unhealthy. Frequently people miss work miss school."

"The issue of period poverty is incomprehensible. Through the work of Dignity Grows our distribution partners, and especially our volunteers, the Jewish Federation is providing a lifeline," added Federation Chief Development Officer Wendy Kahn. "We are providing people with the opportunity to go to work or school with dignity. My hope and the hope of everyone who helps with this important effort is that one day this issue will be solved for good."

While Oregon provides menstrual supplies at schools throughout the state, government programs like SNAP or WIC can't be used to purchase these essentials. Dignity Grows, started in Portland in 2021, uses donations to purchase supplies from vendors and distribute packs to those in need through partner organizations. This distribution network covers a vast geographical area and serves a diverse range of communities, including A Safe Place, which supports victims of sexual violence in Clackamas County, and Virginia Garcia Memorial Health Center, a community health center in Washington and Yamhill counties.

Sometimes, staff from those agencies pick up the packs at the end of the party.

"We love to have them come in and tell stories about the people that are being impacted by our work, that's a profound part of the packing experience for all of us," Newman said.

Dignity Grows began nationally in 2019 through the Jewish Federation of Greater Hartford (Conn.) and has distributed more than 15,000 of its tote bag kits each year. The local chapter, the 15th established nationally, is supported by the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland's Women's Philanthropy. Newman helped establish Portland's chapter when she and her husband moved here from Texas in 2021 as a way to meet the local community and also an embodiment of her Jewish values.

"It really embodies the values of *tzedakah* (charity) and *tikkun olam* (repairing the world)," Newman said. "We see it as a way to make the world a better place, to do for our neighbors what we would want done for us."

Newman, along with Nancy Judson, Mindy Becker, Arlene Cogen and Mahri Weitz help manage the group, setting up the vendor agreements for supplies, liaising with the distribution partners and managing the logistics of the packing parties. They make sure to build a social hour in after everything is packed up – putting the "party" into the process and helping build the connections that brought Newman on board to begin with.

"It's a nice time for people to meet each other, get to know each other," she said. "Sometimes we just get so busy in our own little worlds, we don't have time to reach out to friends."

To learn more, sign up for the packing party on Aug. 27, make a donation to Dignity Grows or join one of the committees, visit jewishportland.org/dignitygrows or contact Newman at bnatorfan1015@gmail.com.

JESER

(continued from page 5)

development Officer Wendy Kahn with the Federation's Annual Campaign.

"Laura is exactly the type of individual we want in development and engagement. Her energy and can-do spirit are delightful," Kahn said. "I could not have asked for a better partner for myself and to work on behalf of the entire Jewish community."

Jeser has extensive experience in non-profit development. After graduating from the University of California, Los Angeles with a degree in sociology, she worked with the Directors Guild, the Alzheimer's Association, the Boy Scouts of America and Volunteers of America. She also performed as a stand-up comic during this time, a path she went on to pursue full-time before becoming a scholarship program manager with Diverse Minds Writing Challenge. This brought her to Portland where her husband, Michael Jeser z"l, worked as JFGP's Chief Development Officer.

When Michael was diagnosed with cancer in 2017, Laura Jeser said she felt Portland's Jewish community rally around her and her family.

"I realized what a Jewish community really means," she said. "I grew up very secular. I didn't grow up part of any kind of Jewish community."

The family moved to San Diego when Michael was appointed President and CEO of the Jewish Federation of San Diego County. After he died in 2021, Laura felt pulled back to Portland, taking on a development role with B'nai B'rith Camp in Portland, and joined the Federation for the opportunity to not only use her non-profit skills, but to build and enhance the community that meant so much to her.

"I want others to feel not just the safety, but the love of the community that I have felt," she said.

Much of her time outside of work goes to her daughter, 6-year-old Eleanore, though she does also make time for true-crime podcasts, decorating her new home and comedy, though she no longer performs.

"I love hiking with my daughter. I love baking with my daughter," she said.

There's also a smaller sense of returning to community for Jeser in working with Kahn and the rest of the Federation staff, many of whom were colleagues of her husband's.

"I just feel like I'm home," Jeser said of her new role.

Chaplain's Corner

Effects of alien visitation?

By **RABBI BARRY COHEN**

What if we learn that we are not alone in the universe? What would be the implications? Politically? Philosophically? Theologically? Religiously?

A congressional subcommittee met on June 26 to discuss issues surrounding unexplained anomalous phenomena (UAP) (formally referred to as "UFOs")

I have always been a skeptic about UAP sightings. I have generally concluded that people who cannot explain what they see in the sky are too quick to conclude that they are witnessing craft flown or maneuvered by inter-stellar aliens. I was comfortable thinking that these people have simply seen too many science fiction movies and are desperate to make sense of what they see.

Not so fast. What I heard from the congressional subcommittee testimony is turning me from a non-believer to an agnostic. In other words, I remain curious.

At the hearings, three people gave testimony: David Grusch, former US intelligence officer; and two pilots, David Fravor and Ryan Graves.

Grusch testified that the government has conducted a "multi-decade" program which collected and attempted to reverse-engineer crashed UFOs. In a statement I found shocking, he said that federal agencies have recovered "non-human biologics" from some of the craft.

When Graves, an F-18 pilot, spoke, he reported seeing unidentified aerial phenomena off the Atlantic coast "every day for at least a couple years." He added that UAP sightings were so common that they became part of daily briefs.

Fravor stated that the technology he witnessed was far superior to anything we currently have. He added that our current means of flight cannot duplicate the UAPs' means of propulsion and maneuverability. ("UFOs back in spotlight as 'surreal' Washington hearing buoys believers," The Guardian; "Analysis: Whistleblower testimonies did not change our basic understanding of UFOs," PBS News Hour)

While I am surprised more coverage has not been devoted to these hearings, I am not surprised that government officials have been quick to discredit Grusch, Fravor and Graves. It's as if we are being told, "Move along ... there's nothing to see here."

I would argue that proof of alien visitation, whether flown by non-humans or pilotless, would be comparable to proof that the earth was no longer the center of the



Rabbi Barry Cohen is the Jewish community chaplain of the Greater Portland area. chaplain@jewishportland.org

universe. This would change everything.

Concerning the implications of such a realization, I will only focus upon how organized religion would respond. This could challenge the legitimacy of religions that have thrived for thousands of years. If humanity is not the only intelligent species in the universe, then why would G-d, Jesus or Mohammad make separate and unique covenants with different peoples? Why would any higher transcendental power claim that Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism or Taoism represents the correct path? Why continue to practice the various and diverse Native American religions?

Proof of alien intelligent life could lead not only to a theological crisis, but an existential crisis for almost all currently practiced religions.

How would these organized religions respond? They could lock themselves in place and refuse to change. They could modify their core story, teachings, wisdom and identity to fit within an inter-stellar setting. Or they could fade away.

That being said, learning about the existence of alien life/intelligence could radically affect in a positive way our spiritual identities. I would love to be part of a society responding to "first contact" with an alien race (providing that this race does not want to colonize us). Think of what we could learn about our place in the universe. We would not only be witnesses, but participants in the greatest chapter of human history.

I am especially curious about how Judaism would respond. Would we continue to be resilient? Will we embrace this new reality as an opportunity to grow? Or will we give up our Jewish identities to embrace a different form of spirituality? I have no idea. But I would love to be a participant in that process.

In the meantime, I hope that this story continues to be covered. I look forward to learning more about these UAP sightings and their implications upon the ongoing evolution of our religious identities.

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Clergy Corner

Divine Art and Music

By CANTOR EYAL BITTON

As a cantor, I'm always seeking to improve, whether it's improving my own abilities or improving the melodies that I use in services. Why? Because the Torah teaches us that God loves art and that God seeks the greatest art. So, if the greatest art is what God cherishes, shouldn't we keep striving to produce the greatest art, the greatest music?

When I was seven, I came across a photograph of one of Michelangelo's sculptures, his Moses. I was incensed. I thought the placing of horns on Moses was an antisemitic depiction. Years later, however, I came to understand that this depiction was as a result of a misreading of the Torah, which tells us that Moses descended from Mount Sinai with the two stone tablets and "was not aware that the skin of his face was radiant" (Exodus 34:29). The Hebrew word for "radiant" is related to the word "horned" - and thus, the misreading.

Years ago, as an adult, I traveled to Rome. I entered San Pietro in Vincoli and couldn't believe my eyes as I gazed upon this brilliant work. It meant so much to me because I had related to it as a young child, because it signified my introduction to the genius of the divinely-gifted Michelangelo, and because of the significance of Moses in Judaism, in my own Jewish identity.

And what does the Torah tell us about art? Consider this passage: "The Lord spoke to Moses: See I have singled out by name Bezalel son of Uri son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. I have endowed him with a divine spirit of skill, ability, and knowledge in every kind of craft" (Exodus 31:1-3).

The artist, Bezalel, is identified by God as being uniquely gifted. In fact, his skill is described as divine! But it is not because of his subject matter. It is his skill. God does not select the most pious. God does not select just any artist. It is not equity that God seeks in art; it is greatness. After first seeing Bezalel's talent, God has that talent put to use in the construction of religious objects - the Tent of Meeting (ohel mo'ed), the Ark of the Covenant, and other related items.

The sequence is very telling. It is not because Bezalel's works deal with praise of God that he is called a divine artist. No. It is because he is a brilliant artist. It is his brilliance and genius as an artist that is seen as a divine gift.

A few lines later, God says: "I have also granted skill to all who are skillful" (Exodus 31:6). And this is how the Torah teaches us that great artists, and therefore great art, are God-kissed.

Art, whether visual, dance, music, or other, is expression. Art is freedom. Art is individualistic. When art is censored and feared, it is because personal expression, freedom, and individualism are feared. And since the Torah tells us that art is a heavenly gift, then we understand that personal expression, freedom, and individualism are actually divine.

The horns on Michelangelo's Moses are a physical manifestation of the figurative beams of light which emanated from Moses after speaking to God. Because true art, with its freedom of expression and individualism, is a divine gift, may it continue to emanate from humankind and be a blessing to all of us.

Cantor Eyal Bitton is Cantor of Congregation Neveh Shalom in Portland.

The Jewish Review regularly invites local clergy to share their insights with the community. These opinions do not necessarily reflect the views of the Review, the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, or its staff.

JCRC Column

Reclaiming Zionism

By BOB HORENSTEIN



Bob Horenstein is the Director of Community Relations and Public Affairs for the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland.

Approached by a Harvard student who was vilifying Zionists in October 1967, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. responded, "When people criticize Zionists, they mean Jews [emphasis added].

You're talking antisemitism." Yet, in the 56 years since King uttered that rebuke, it has become clear that not only is there no consensus on whether anti-Zionism is antisemitism, there's not even a common understanding of what the word "Zionist" means. Including, most troubling, among Jews themselves.

Sadly, the Jewish community's failure to reclaim Zionism's true meaning—belief in the right of the Jewish people to national self-determination in our ancestral homeland—has helped enable the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) movement to gain traction in its relentless campaign to defame Zionism. As a result, antisemitism on the far left is becoming normalized in American society under the guise of anti-Zionism.

Consider the case of Fatima Mohammed, who delivered the City University of New York (CUNY) law school's commencement address in May after being nominated to do so by her fellow graduates. A first-generation immigrant from Yemen, Mohammed used her moment in the spotlight to denounce Zionism and accuse Israelis of indiscriminate murder. So inflammatory was her speech that even an opinion piece in the liberal Nation magazine claimed she had invoked the sort of antisemitic tropes found in the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

Astonishingly, Mohammed's May 2021 tweet wishing for "every Zionist [to] burn in the hottest pit of hell" did not disqualify her from being elected as the graduation speaker. I'm going to go out on a limb (not really) and postulate that if she had directed such an odious tweet at, say, "every Hindu" or "every Catholic," it would have been a different student delivering the commencement address.

Predictably, the CUNY law school, whose faculty endorsed a boycott of Israel last year, did not issue any statement regarding Mohammed's hate-filled speech. Apparently, the school's leadership agreed with Mohammed when she insisted, "It's really dangerous to conflate antisemitism and anti-Zionism because those are two different things." What happened at CUNY is hardly unique. To cite only a few examples (among hundreds) from recent years:

Three Jewish women were expelled from a Chicago march in support of LGBTQ rights because they refused to disavow Zionism as integral to their Jewish identity.

The Presbyterian Church USA sent a "study guide" to all of its congregations entitled Zionism Unsettled, in which it proclaimed Zionism to be a source of "evil" on par with Nazism and "a heretical doctrine that fosters both political and theological injustice" (the booklet was endorsed by David Duke, a former grand wizard of the Ku Klux Klan).

A young Jewish woman was ousted as vice president of the University of Southern California student government by what she described as an aggressive social media campaign to "impeach [her]

See HORENSTEIN, page 10

Aug. 10: Cafe Shalom Israeli Folk Dancing

Weekly open Israeli dance session Thursdays, 8-10 pm at CHCC, 8936 SW 17th Ave in Portland. All experience levels and ages welcome. \$7. For more information, contact Alison Victor at allisuev@gmail.com.

Aug. 11: Community Connection on Zoom

Drop-in group hosted by Jewish Family & Child Service's Counseling Services Fridays at 10 am on Zoom. It is a space for anyone in the community to connect with others and share. Find Zoom link at jfccs-portland.org/services/counseling/.

Aug. 11-13: BB Camp Summer Shabbaton

Discover the magic of overnight camp with a Shabbaton weekend experience Aug. 11-13. Transportation is available from the BB Camp Office or drop off your camper directly at the Lincoln City overnight camp. This experience is open to rising kindergarten through sixth-grade campers. Register at <https://bbcamp.org/shabbaton>. For questions, contact day-camp@bbcamp.org.

Aug. 12: EJC presents Disco Mizrahi

Barak Kemeny (fCD) spins disco deep-cuts from the Mediterranean, Middle East, North

Africa at Disco Mizrahi at the Eastside Jewish Commons Aug. 12 from 5-9pm. Dancing, dance lessons, and beverages available. \$5, 21+. Tickets at ejcpdx.org/events.

Aug. 13: Hadassah's Cooking In Portland

Hadassah, The Women's Zionist Organization of America, presents a special cooking experience for women aged 25-50 at the Eastside Jewish Commons Aug. 13 at 10:30 am. Tickets are \$18, available online at tinyurl.com/3apjt6nb. For more information, email dmigdal@hadassah.org.

Aug. 13: From DNA to Genetic Genealogy

The Jewish Genealogical Society of Oregon presents the Zoom talk "From DNA to Genetic Genealogy: Everything You Wanted to Know But Were Afraid to Ask" by Steve Morse Aug. 13 at 10:30 am via Zoom. Register at tinyurl.com/mp-2b86r.

Aug. 13: Cooking for Outside In

Join us at Congregation Neveh Shalom for a cooking session for Outside In, whose mission is to help homeless youth move toward improved health and self-sufficiency, Aug. 13 at noon at the synagogue. For more information and to RSVP, please contact Head Chef Rick Botney at 8888octopus8888@gmail.com.

[gmail.com](mailto:8888octopus8888@gmail.com).

Aug. 13: Israeli Folk Dancing at SWCC

Enjoy Israeli folk dancing at the Southwest Community Center with session leader Rhona Feldman Sundays, 2:30-4 pm. More information at sites.google.com/site/pifdnews.

Aug. 14: East Side Minyan at Shir Tikvah

Prayer group for LGBTQ+ and allied Jews, meets Mondays at 7 am at Eastside Jewish Commons. See story, page 2.

Aug. 14: Folk Dancing at Leedy Grange

Enjoy Israeli folk dancing Mondays, 7:30 - 10:30pm with this friendly group in Cedar Mill (now in our 10th year). The session, run by Sue and Donna, starts with easier, classic dances and moves on to newer forms, couples' dances, line dances, and teaching, too. Find us on Facebook at "Israeli Folk Dancing in Portland, OR."

Aug. 15: Online Security Training

Join Secure Community Network for this training on responding to active threats Aug. 15 at 7 pm via Zoom. The goal is to provide participants with a better understanding of active threats and potential response options. Register online at tinyurl.com/5ar2hr5f. For more information, email janderson@securecommunitynetwork.org.

securecommunitynetwork.org.

Aug. 17: Support your Selective Eater

Portland Kollel, in association with the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland's Women's Giving Circle, present a workshop on strategies to support selective eaters Aug. 17 at 9 am via Zoom. Free. Registration and more information online at portlandkollel.org/mom.

Aug. 17: Wise Women Social Lunch

Wise Women is a friendly group at Congregation Neveh Shalom that is hosting a social brown bag lunch at CNS Aug. 17 at noon. Open to all ages and stages. No RSVP needed, just pack a lunch and join us! For more information, email richmond@nevehshalom.org.

Aug. 17: The Joy of Downsizing

Rose Schnitzer Manor at Cedar Sinai Park presents: Stephanie Brandt, marketing manager for Soft Landings Solutions for Seniors Aug. 17 at 2 pm at Zidell Hall at Cedar Sinai Park. Stephanie will share steps for how to get started with downsizing, along with resources for donating and selling possessions, and relatable examples of seniors who have downsized. For more information, email sydney.clevenger@cedarsinaiark.org.

HORENSTEIN (continued from page 9)

Zionist ass."

In May, I was scheduled to lead a professional development training on antisemitism for the faculty and administration at a local high school. At the request of the principal, I sent my PowerPoint presentation in advance. Two days later, however, I was disinvited because some of the "more progressive" teachers strongly objected to my labeling blatant discrimination against Zionists as intolerance toward Jews. "These teachers reject the idea that they're the same thing; they won't listen to you," I was

told.

Still, can we really expect to overcome such close-mindedness and combat antisemitism in the guise of anti-Zionism if we Jews can't even agree on what it means to be a Zionist?

A Brandeis University study of Portland's Jewish community conducted this year revealed that the majority of Jewish adults expressed views I consider Zionist: 87 percent believe that it's important for Israel to continue to exist as a refuge for the Jewish people; two-thirds consider it important for Israel to be a

Jewish state; 57 percent believe that caring about Israel is essential to their Jewish identity.

Nevertheless, only a quarter of Portland Jewish adults explicitly identify as Zionist. No definition of "Zionist" was provided by Brandeis, and it's quite plausible that many mistakenly equate Zionism with unwavering support for the Israeli government regardless of its policies. It may also be that many progressive Jews are influenced by their so-called progressive peers who tell them that identifying with Zionism is incompatible with

progressive values, falsely associating it with "apartheid" and "white supremacy."

If the American Jewish community is going to effectively counteract rising antisemitism on the far left, however, we must stop allowing outsiders to define Zionism and instead proudly reclaim its true meaning. Most importantly, we must call out anti-Zionism whenever and wherever it is an insidious attack on Jewish identity.

This article first appeared in an August issue of the Jerusalem Report Magazine.