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'A little light dispels much darkness'

Leaders gather in Portland to welcome Chanukah, honor Sydney slain

Words and photographs by
ROCKNE ROLL

The Jewish Review

Chanukah is the Festival of Light – a joyous occasion celebrating an ancient Jewish triumph.

As Portlanders gathered at Pioneer Courthouse Square Sunday, Dec. 14 for the annual Portland Menorah Lighting, the joy was tinged with sadness as the ancient triumph was marked alongside a very modern Jewish tragedy.

Hours earlier that day in Sydney, Australia, another Chabad Menorah lighting was attacked by two armed men. The pair fired into the crowd gathered to observe Chanukah's *mitzvah* on Bondi Beach, killing at least 15 and injuring others.

One of the dead, Rabbi Eli Schlanger, z"l, was a mentee and friend of Portland's Rabbi Chayim Mishulovin.

"He was always trying to



Chabad of Oregon Rabbi Moshe Wilhelm lights the *shamash* (helper) lamp of the menorah in Portland's Pioneer Courthouse Square on the first night of Chanukah Sunday, Dec. 14. The ceremony also honored the victims of the attack on the Bondi Beach menorah lighting in Sydney, Australia earlier that day.

help out and be there for other students," Rabbi Mishulovin said of when he first met

Rabbi Schlanger. "I watched him in his 20s and thereafter. I would see Eli going out

there and really making a difference."

See **MENORAH**, page 10

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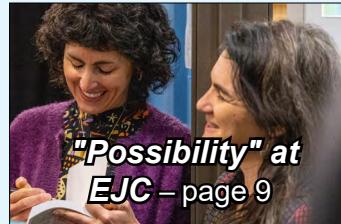
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**The
Jewish
Review
Podcast**



New episode Jan. 14

Tax code changes kick in Jan. 1, may affect gifts

The Jewish Review staff

When the clock strikes midnight on Dec. 31, more than the year number on the Gregorian calendar will change – with potential impacts for those who make philanthropy a priority.

The federal government's 2025 One Big Beautiful Bill Act made, among its 870 pages, significant changes to rules around the deduction of charitable contributions from personal income taxes – rules that will affect donations made on or after Jan. 1, 2026. For those who itemize deductions on their tax returns, only charitable donations that exceed one-half of one percent of the taxpayers adjusted gross income will be deductible, with a cap on deduction to the top of the 35 percent bracket for those in the top (37 percent) federal income tax bracket. Those who use the standard deduction will, however, be able to deduct up to \$2,000 (for married couples filing jointly) from their taxes in addition to the standard deduction. That standard deduction is going up as well; it will be \$31,500 for married couples filing jointly this year (tax year 2025), going up to \$32,200 in tax year 2026.

The net impact, Jewish Federation of

Greater Portland President and CEO Marc Blattner said in an email in November, is that fewer people will be able to itemize deductions, and the deductibility of gifts for some of those folks may be significantly changed.

"Some donors may want to 'bunch' gifts into certain years or use a DAF [donor-advised fund] to maximize deductions," Blattner said.

"Donors contemplating a significant gift after this year may want to make the gift in 2025 to avoid the new floor and ceiling rules," a letter from the Oregon Jewish Community Foundation in November said. Additionally, "accelerating contributions to a donor advised fund, including aggregating several years of contributions before the end of this year, will avoid or diminish the impact of these new floor and ceiling rules applicable to charitable deductions."

The foundation's President and CEO, David Forman, told *The Jewish Review* that aggregating contributions may be a valid strategy even after this year.

"You may want to combine two or more years into a single year to take an opportunity to itemize instead of using the standard deduction," he said.

Above all, Blattner and Forman (as well as this publication – see disclaimer below) emphasized that decisions on these subjects need to be made with qualified professionals who know all the ins and outs of both your unique financial situation America's increasingly complicated tax laws.

"You got to talk to your tax professionals about all of this," Forman told *The Jewish Review*.

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May the Festival of Lights brighten your days!



**Jewish Federation
of Greater Portland**

Zimmerman gives tips for talking about Israel

By ROCKNE ROLL

The Jewish Review

Talking about Israel can be challenging and fraught under the best of circumstances. Meir Zimmerman is on a mission to make those conversations a little bit easier.

Zimmerman, who serves as Mid-Atlantic Regional Director for the Jewish Grad Organization, came to Portland Wednesday, Dec. 3 to talk about how to approach those conversations, especially conversations with those who aren't predisposed to a positive view of the Jewish state. He started off his presentation in a packed Stampfer Chapel at Congregation Neveh Shalom by digging into what makes those conversations so challenging.

"We need to know our story better," Zimmerman said. "The Jewish story; not what's happening today in Israel, but the full Jewish story. [We need] to be proud of it and to be knowledgeable about it."

Because Judaism existed before modern conceptualizations of religion, nationality and ethnicity, it can be hard to explain. Thusly, it's often not fully explained at all, especially to non-Jewish audiences. This has given space for misconceptions to flourish.

"A misconception about Jews is we're a religious group from Europe, right? The misunderstanding around Jews often stems from a lack of information," Zimmerman explained. "If you ask someone in the street, someone that doesn't know many Jews, how many Jews exist in the world, you would be shocked by their answers - from hundreds of millions, maybe a billion." (The real



Meir Zimmerman, left, takes an audience question read by Congregation Neveh Shalom's Director of Congregational Learning Mel Berwin following his presentation Wednesday, Dec. 3 at the synagogue in Portland. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

answer is 15.7 million)

There are many other misconceptions, which led into Zimmerman's first suggestion for approaching the topic of Israel.

"I would encourage you to not argue semantics. Educate them," he said. "Help them understand more about the Jewish people, understand more about the importance of Israel to you, to the Jewish people."

Second was to know your audience. Zimmerman divided this into five rough groups. The first may have never even met a Jew, Zimmerman explained; "someone whose ideas about Jews and Israel come from hearsay, media, social media, and are shaped by stereotypes and misinformation."

Folks in the second group, he continued, probably know a Jew; they "have a personal connection, but they may not understand Jewish identity, Jewish history."

Group three, Zimmerman

said, knows Jews in the plural. This is no guarantee against misconceptions, however. A 2023 survey by Boundless Israel found that just 34 percent of Americans were familiar with the term "Zionism," and less than half of those could correctly define it advocating a Jewish state in the Jewish homeland.

The fourth group only views Jews through the lens of Israel, usually negatively. They often describe themselves, Zimmerman said, as anti-Zionist and/or as pro-Palestinian - terms they may use interchangeably, but which Zimmerman distinguishes between.

"This is a really important thing. You need to separate pro-Palestinian and antizionist. You can be pro-Palestinian and pro-Israeli. They're not sports teams," he explained. But being pro-Palestinian is not being angry that the ceasefire happened because it was brought about

by Trump. Being pro-Palestinian is caring about the safety of the people... If you're antizionist, you're anti the Jewish state's existence. To me, that's where it crosses the line."

Conversations with people in groups four and five (the last being reserved for abject antisemites) are often not worth the time because these individuals hold deeply embedded negative views about Jews, Israel, or both. But understanding your audience goes deeper.

"In addition to their knowledge about Jews, it's important to understand what lived experience they bring into the room with it as well," Zimmerman said. "Why? Because everyone brings their own lived experience."

People from Western European countries and their former colonies, Zimmerman continued, often project their own experiences onto

See **ISRAEL**, page 11

PPB, ADL host community forum on bias crimes



Portland Police Bureau Sgt. Matt Jacobson addresses questions at a community meeting on security issues Thursday, Dec. 4 at the Mitteleman Jewish Community Center in Portland hosted by the Anti-Defamation League. "We are lucky in Oregon to have some of the most progressive bias and hate crimes laws in the country," Jacobson said, though how those laws are used can still be confusing as, on occasion, not charging someone with a bias crime can lead to more severe consequences. "It's not an exact science," he said. Read more in Jessica Anderson's Security Corner on page 12. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

Work for the World returns to PJA Jan. 19

By ROCKNE ROLL

The Jewish Review

Work for the World is back this Martin Luther King Jr. Day.

Portland Jewish Academy, the Mitteleman Jewish Community Center, PJ Library and the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland will host the fifth edition of the school's family volunteer service day Monday, Jan. 19, 2026 at PJA. Founded in 2020 by now-retired PJA Service Learning Coordinator Elana Cohn-Rozansky, the event began as an in-house activity for PJA students and families but has grown by leaps and bounds – nearly 100 families joined in last year from across the community.

"We have built it to be more of an outward facing event over the years that we've done this, and last year it became the biggest outward facing opportunity that we'd had so far," PJA Admissions Director Sarah Glass said. "a big focus of the event is to provide opportunities for those littler hands, those smaller children, to be able to do something that feels like it's meaningful, like they're helping. There's not a lot of organizations out there that invite children in to do service, so this is a really nice opportunity for families, for

parents and children, grandparents and children, to be able to come in and do things together."

It doesn't just feel meaningful, as it turns out, it is meaningful. 2025's Work For The World event assembled 100 Winter Care Kits and 320 peanut butter and jelly sandwiches for Blanchet House and raised \$500 for LA wildfire relief, among other accomplishments.

While planning is still in progress for the upcoming event, the Westside Watershed Resource Center, homeless youth mentorship nonprofit P:EAR, homelessness services agency Path Home, Jewish Family & Child Service and Oregon Dog Rescue are among the groups who have confirmed their participation. The wildfire relief fundraiser from last year's event was organized and led by PJA students, and MJCC Youth Programs manager Holden Regnier said this year would feature a similar student-led effort.

"They'll be for some different causes, but we're just excited to kind of keep expanding this great program here with the help of Merit {Pinker, Federation's Volunteer Coordinator,} and some great connections to other organizations that we weren't work-

ing with before."

While Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King was not Jewish, PJA's annual event in observance of his birthday is a tribute to the values of making the world better – *tikkun olam*, in Hebrew – that King and Jews in Portland and around the world share.

"So many religions share these values of loving your neighbor and making the world a better place. When we as Jews really lean into that, and those of other faiths lean into that, we have more in common than we have different," Pinker said. "Martin Luther King was a beautiful example of that, and to be able to build upon that legacy in this way, even though what we do during the Work for the World Fair doesn't necessarily have much to do with Martin Luther King himself, but it just builds upon those ideas."

"[King]also provided a legacy for those who are not in communities of color to also be active to make all of our communities stronger, more resilient, more inclusive, more welcoming and to help lift everybody up," Glass added.

Registration will be available for the upcoming fair at pjaproud.org.

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Kleinstein Lecture addresses social breakdown



Dr. Thomas Weber delivers the first annual Kleinstein Memorial Lecture at Congregation Beit Haverim in Lake Oswego Tuesday, Dec. 9. Weber, a leading scholar on the history of Nazi Germany, discussed his recent work in comparative analysis of democratic breakdown. "People view good government as the way out of crisis. But good government isn't good enough. What is needed is good narratives," he said. "If we want to put the genie back in the bottle, centrist politicians need to know how to wield the power of narratives." (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

The Menschkins, Frank's first, share the light of Chanukah

The Jewish Review staff

Debra Frank is rolling out some Chanukah fun – just in time to light the candles.

"The Menschkins present The Story of Hanukkah" will be available in the coming days on Amazon through L'dor V'Dor Press. The Chanukah-themed story and activity book, Frank's first published work, is inspired by her 4-year-old son.

"There's a lot that's been happening in our world, and I just felt like I needed to do something that infused some light into the world," she said.

Enter the Chanukah story, as told by a cast of anthropomorphic Jewish animals led by Saba, the *kippah*-topped owl. The book also ties in personal exploration and growth, and ends with a dis-

cussion of a light that last far beyond the eight nights of Judaism's winter festival: the *ner tamid* –"eternal flame" in Hebrew - in every synagogue.

"It reminds us that there is always light in the world. Hope can shine even when things feel dark. We carry our own light inside us; our traditions connect us to every generation and to Jewish

people around the world," Frank said. "On Chanukah, we celebrate a light that lasted longer than anyone expected. The *ner tamid* reminds us that some lights never go out."

Frank is already working on future installments of The Menschkins series. Find "The Menschkins present The Story of Hanukkah" at themenschkins.com.

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Jewish Federation
of Greater Portland

Thalheimer's 'Abraided' selected for 'Stories That Need to Be Told 2025' anthology

By ROCKNE ROLL

The Jewish Review

Writer Eleanore Thalheimer's first foray into published fiction is a deeply personal tale – and a successful one, to boot.

“Abraided,” a short story inspired by Thalheimer’s experiences living in post-Oct. 7 Portland, was selected to TulipTree Publishing’s “Stories That Need to Be Told 2025,” the publishing house’s 11 annual collection of short fiction.

Thalheimer, who has published three books on cycling in the Pacific Northwest and written extensively on cycling, travel and more for a variety of outlets, has been writing fiction for herself for a decade. “Abraided” sprang forth from her desire to share the story of the aftermath of Hamas’ terror attacks, not in Israel or elsewhere in the Middle East, but here in Portland, in her own community.

“This is a story that’s not being talked about, which is the betrayal,” she said. “People you thought were your people but actually could turn on you

in a second. That’s just not a story that lots of people are interested in, want to explore, or want to hear. I actually didn’t think about an audience when I was writing it. I just wrote it because I wanted to get it out.”

“Abraided” centers on Dana, a Jewish mom in Portland who was engaged in progressive politics and alienated from her conservative family. While the attacks in Israel are never mentioned by date, Dana’s reality shifts as neighbors, friends and community members show a different side of themselves and force her to reassess her connections and her own way of looking at the world – particularly in an explicit scene at a Phish concert that serves as an allegory for self-congratulatory politics.

While Dana shares a number of key characteristics with Thalheimer – motherhood and a passion for baking challah among them – Thalheimer is not a Phish fan, she says, and while several scenes are autobiographical, the character is meant to speak beyond her own experience.

“[‘Abraided’] was influenced by things that happened to other people, too, but we stay very, very quiet about it,” Thalheimer said.

She’s the first to say she’s not an expert on Israel or the Middle East or any of the intensely complicated subjects that make up the conflicts in that part of the world. But she can speak to events here.

“People think that they’re so right about what’s going on politically, and then what has happened historically. I wanted to stay really far away from that and just focus on the story of a woman who is Jewish after Oct. 7 and feels betrayed by her lefty community, Thalheimer said. “I’m not an expert [on the Middle East.] But what I can do is write a story about a woman’s emotional journey.”

It’s a story that needed to be told – just ask TulipTree Publishing.

“Stories That Need to Be Told 2025” is available now from major booksellers, including Amazon, Barnes & Noble and Powell’s Books.

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FEBRUARY 19

STOP THE BLEED

TRAINING PEOPLE HOW TO
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IN SITUATIONS

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JANUARY 8
FEBRUARY 11



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Rabbi Adina Allen of the Jewish Studio Project, left, chats with Portland's Alicia Jo Rabins during an event for her new book, "The Place of All Possibility," at the Eastside Jewish Commons in Portland Thursday, Dec. 4. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

Rabbi Allen's book explores "Place of All Possibility"

By ROCKNE ROLL

The Jewish Review

B'reshit bara elohim, the Torah starts. "In the beginning, G-d created..." Three Hebrew words that carry immense meaning for Rabbi Adina Allen.

"The first thing we learn about G-d is that G-d is the creative force of the universe," she said in her Thursday, Dec. 4 conversation with Alicia Jo Rabins at the Eastside Jewish Commons. "A few verses later, we're told that we are all created *B'tzelem Elohim*, in the divine image. So I take that to mean each and every one of us are created creative and created to create, and when we're in touch with our creativity, we are in touch with whatever we think of as G-d."

Rabbi Allen, the co-founder of the Jewish Studio Project, is the author of "The Place of All Possibility: Cultivating Creativity Through Ancient Jewish Wisdom." As the daughter of a renowned art therapist, art has always been a part of Rabbi Allen's life – when she experienced difficulties as a young person, her mother had a habit of asking "have you made art about it yet," she explained. Following her rabbinic education at Hebrew College in Boston, where she was a Wexner Graduate Fellow, she began integrating her Torah learning and her artistic instincts into something that Jews, and Judaism, could benefit from.

"I started playing with what would it be

like... to engage in this art making practice as a way of elongating our relationship with the text, so the text has a chance to work on us, rather than us so actively working on it," Rabbi Allen said. "I think [we] have become very bifurcated and separated, where we do our intellectual thing here and we do our 'woo' thing over here, maybe, but the two shall never meet. What would it be like to actually reweave those parts of self, and what new insights might surface once the text was able to mix with the cells of who we are that wasn't already available to the intellectual surface?"

That led to the Jewish Studio Process, and from that the Jewish Studio Project that Allen leads in Berkeley, Calif. Her book goes over the journey of the project and delves into ideas and practices that readers can use to engage art and spirituality – whether Jewish or not.

"I really believe that each one of us are a channel or a vessel for what needs to come into the world now, and we each, given our life experiences and lineages and affinities and all of those things, have a unique wisdom that can come through each one of us and that we are all needed in that project."

Learn more about the Jewish Studio Project and order a copy of "The Place of All Possibility" at jewishstudioproject.org. The book can also be found at major booksellers, including Powell's Books.

Horenstein named NSA Oregon chapter President-Elect

The Jewish Review staff

Portland author and motivational speaker Dorice Horenstein has been named the President-Elect of the Oregon Chapter of the National Speakers Association.

"This role feels like a natural extension of my life's work. As a Jewish educator, I spent years helping people find clarity, courage, and meaning through the spoken word," Horenstein told *The Jewish Review*. "Today, as a professional speaker, I bring those same values into organizations, leadership teams, and conferences—helping people navigate stress, uncertainty, and disconnection. Leading the Oregon chapter allows me to elevate voices that create meaningful impact in the world."

Horenstein, the former Education and Program Director at Congregation Shaarie Torah who has since published "Moments of the Heart" and, most recently, "Choose to Be Your Own Champion." She joined the board of NSA Oregon in 2022 and was elected as the organization's next president earlier this year.

"My vision is to create a thriving, inclusive community of professionals who use their voice with intention," she said. "I want Oregon to be known as a place where speakers sharpen their skills, strengthen their businesses, and use communication as a force for good across industries."

The NSA has over 3,500 members in chapters across the United States.

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MENORAH (continued from page 1)

"I know that if Eli were here right now, he would not want us to be upset," Rabbi Mishulovin continued. "He would want us to be positive, be strong, and be a source of light for ourselves, for our families, for our communities and for the whole world."

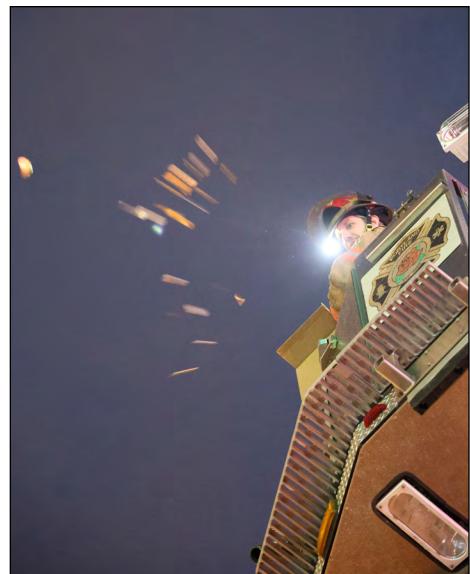
Numerous representatives of those communities were on hand. These included leaders of the Jewish community in Portland, including Jewish Federation of Greater Portland President and CEO Marc Blattner, Oregon Jewish Community Foundation President and CEO David Forman and Rabbi Eve Posen and Rabbi Cantor Eyal Bitton of Congregation Neveh Shalom. Elected leaders on hand included Secretary of State Tobias Read, State Treasurer Elizabeth Steiner, Rep. Maxine Dexter, State Sen. Lisa Reynolds, State Reps. April Dobson, Dacia Gruber and Tawna Sanchez, Portland Mayor Keith Wilson, Portland City Council President Elana Pirtle-Guiney and Portland City Councilors Mitch Green, Angelita Morillo and Eric Zimmerman. Steiner read remarks from Gov. Tina Kotek.

"I denounce antisemitism for the evil that it is. Let us come together as Oregonians to protect our state as a welcoming place where everyone has the opportunity to thrive. *Chag Sameach*, Happy Chanukah. May your candles burn bright this season," the statement read in part.

Shortly after, the candles did burn bright following their ignition and blessing by Rabbi Moshe Wilhelm. Hundreds crowded into the tent to sing the Chanukah blessings along with Rabbi Wilhelm.

Despite the height of the menorah, the first candle and the *shamash* (helper) burning atop it could not overpower the lights of the stage, the lights of the Portland Fire and Rescue truck used to drop armfuls of *gelt* onto waiting children at evening's end or the floodlights illuminating The Pioneer Courthouse across the street. They didn't have to, as Rabbi Motti Wilhelm had explained earlier in the evening, repeating the sentence for effect.

"A little light dispels much darkness," he said.



Amb. Lipstadt to give Oseran Family Lecture Jan. 27 at CBI

By AMELIA LUKAS

For the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education

On Jan. 27, 2026, Congregation Beth Israel and the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education will present a timely and deeply resonant public lecture by Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, the United States Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Antisemitism. The program, *Eighty-One Years After Liberation: Why Remembering Still Matters in the Fight Against Antisemitism*, is the 2026 Oseran Family Lecture and will take place in commemoration of International Holocaust Remembrance Day. The program will begin at 6:30 pm in the main sanctuary at Beth Israel in Portland.

As one of the world's foremost historians of the Holocaust and a leading voice in confronting contemporary antisemitism, Ambassador Lipstadt brings unmatched expertise to this moment. Her remarks will explore why remembering the Holocaust remains essential, not only as a matter of historical responsibility, but as a vital tool in combating denial, distortion, and the alarming rise of antisemitism around the world.

At a time of profound social and political turbulence, Lipstadt will address the urgent relevance of Holocaust education; the responsibilities of individuals and institutions in safeguarding truth; and the ways communities can rebuild trust, resilience, and connection across political and ideological divides. Speaking to a Portland audience that reflects a wide range of Jewish experiences and perspectives, she will

consider the state of antisemitism and authoritarianism in America today, and how shared memory can help strengthen democratic values and civil society.

Congregation Beth Israel's Senior Rabbi Designate Rachel Joseph said that, "Remembering the Holocaust is not only a Jewish obligation; it is a democratic responsibility. Welcoming Ambassador Lipstadt to Portland creates space for Jews and for the broader community to learn and to recommit ourselves to confronting antisemitism with clarity, courage, and compassion. Our hope is that this evening strengthens our community's resolve to defend human dignity and the fragile work of democracy."

OJMCHE Executive Director Rebekah Sobel added that, "International Holocaust Remembrance Day calls us not only to honor the victims and survivors, but to confront forces that threaten Jewish communities worldwide. Ambassador Lipstadt's leadership and clarity are indispensable as we navigate this complex moment."

The Oseran Family Lecture, an annual highlight of Congregation Beth Israel's public programming, brings distinguished scholars, diplomats, and thought leaders to Oregon to examine issues of contemporary significance through the lens of history. This event takes place with additional support from Richard and Shirley Plotzker; Ruth and Gerald Cohen, in memory of Sarah Cohen-Doherty, z"l, and her passion for Holocaust Education; and Sheldon Klapper and Sue Hickey.

The event is free – preregistration is required and available online at bethisraelportland.shulcloud.com/form/Lipstadt.



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ISRAEL

(continued from page 4)

the Jewish state.

Knowing your audience helps tailor your message, because as Boundless Israel's 2023 data showed, different arguments in favor of Israel – its status as a safe haven for the Jewish people, its promotions of democratic values, the stability it provides to the region, etc. – resonate more (or less) with different kinds of people. Attendees received a copy of a slide deck on Boundless Israel's research – a copy is available at tinyurl.com/BI-Zionism-Survey.

Some broader dos and don'ts, Zimmerman explained, were to add nuance to the conversation without delving into the nitty-gritty of current affairs. He also encouraged empathy for Palestinians.

"You can identify as pro-Israeli and pro-Palestinian. In fact, I encourage it," he said. "Just believing that the Palestinians have the right to self-determination is not antisemitic."

Instead, listen to what other people are saying, approach the conversation as an opportunity to share and not as a debate to win, and, Zimmerman emphasized, lead the conversation off the way he led off his presentation.

"I led with our story tonight" he said. "I didn't start with a big sheet from Boundless Israel with all that data, I led with a story about our people."

A recording of Zimmerman's presentation is available at youtube.com/watch?v=S9fEk2ptzV4.

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NEXT ISSUE

Issue date **Deadline**
JAN 7 **DEC 31**

Security Corner

A conversation about bias crime

By JESSICA ANDERSON

The Portland Police Bureau (PPB) has consistently been a strong partner to the Jewish community. This care was evident last week during a community meeting with Sgt. Matt Jacobson, of PPB's Bias Crime Unit. When approached about coordinating a meeting between law enforcement entities and the Multnomah County District Attorney's office, Jacobson was quick to counter with a request for a community meeting. The goal was to share PPB efforts at community policing, how they are keeping Portlanders safe, and answer questions. Jacobson also shared bias incident statistics and provided a long-term view of incident trends.

Jacobson's data was pulled from the PPB bias database. This public resource tracks all reported incidents and crimes. You can find it online and explore the different categories. Anti-Black incidents are far and away the most prevalent bias. Jacobson has spearheaded local reporting and feels that Portland is finally getting an accurate picture of incidents. Incident numbers have been increasing each year, and Jacobson sees this as a reflection of improved reporting and hopes to see it level off. <https://www.portland.gov/police/open-data/reported-bias-crime-statistics>

Jacobson talked about the importance of reporting (sound familiar?! wink, wink) and took some questions from the audience on the topic. I know it's common to feel that reporting doesn't really do anything.



Jessica Anderson is the Portland-area Director of Community Security. She was previously an FBI agent for 24 years. This position is funded by SCN (the official safety and security organization of the Jewish community in North America) and a local three-way partnership of the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland, Oregon Jewish Community Foundation Endowment Fund and multiple Jewish organizations in the region.

And, indeed, it might not do anything for that particular incident. But aggregated, incident data lets us know when bias-activity is increasing or decreasing. Within PPB, it supports funding requests and focuses police attention. FEMA uses it when making decisions about what communities are most in need of Non-Profit Security Grants funds. Jewish communities have received millions upon millions of dollars because the data of reported incidents shows they are the highest targeted religious group. So yes, reporting matters. (You can report incidents to me by email or via the JFGP website under Security and relevant ones are shared with PPB.)

He also clarified what constitutes a threat and how to prioritize your safety. For example, threats generally have to have an immediacy to them, and the person speaking has to have the ability to follow-through with the words. This is why a phrase like "Death to the IDF" can be uttered. If the person isn't planning to do harm to an IDF-affiliated person and doesn't have the capacity to do so, it would not be assessed to be

a criminal threat. A phrase like "From the River to the Sea" is viewed in the context of how and where it's used. Generally, this would be considered an anti-Nationalist statement and therefore protected speech. However, if it were accompanied by criminal activity towards Jews, it would require an additional assessment of whether the speaker has a hatred of Israel or a hatred of Jews.

The audience was comprised of organizational leaders and community members who have demonstrated to me a strong interest in topics around safety and security issues through the years. Some of you may be thinking, hey – I'd like to have been at that meeting! If this is something you'd like to be a part of in the future, drop me a line and let me know - I'd like to make this a recurring event, and it's important to me that people who care about this topic are engaged and can directly communicate with PPB. Hope to see you there next year!

A Random Note on Portland's 911 Response

See SECURITY, page 13

Yachad Arts program for girls launches at Maayan Torah

Maayan Torah

A new performing arts program for Jewish girls of all ages and backgrounds has arrived on the scene.

Starting Sunday, Jan. 18, 2026, Yachad Arts, a project of Maayan Torah Day School led by Jewish educator, wellness coach, social work student and performing arts enthusiast Miriam Carr, will be running a 6-week performing arts program, culminating with a girls' talent showcase Sunday, Feb. 22, 2026. This program is generously sponsored by the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland's Women's Giving Circle, which supports programs and initiatives with a focus on women and girls emphasizing justice and Jewish continuity. Girls of all Jewish backgrounds are encouraged to participate, as well as audition for the Purim-inspired talent show, including themes such as "The Queen Esther in Me," "Jewish Unity" and "The Hidden Hand of G-d." During the program, girls will learn about these themes in the Purim story while in choir, drama and/or their own auditioned pieces.

Though unique in its vision, Yachad Arts is not the first program that has brought Jewish girls and women together through the creative arts. Seven years ago, Malka Weisman saw creativity and talent in her middle school students at Maayan and began to incorporate drama and song into her teaching. In collaboration with artist Diane Blitzer, the Zimrah Girls' Performing Arts Troupe of Portland was born. During

the pandemic, Weisman widened her cast and the troupe became Nashir B'Yachad - Hebrew for "Let Us Sing Together." Weisman directed six performances together with Blitzer, the last of which included Carr, leading the dance scenes. Since that last performance, Carr has taken the inspiration of Nashir B'Yachad to create Yachad Arts, which she hopes will reach an even wider, more diverse audience. Carr's vision is for all Jewish girls and women to be united in friendship and Jewish pride, no matter their affiliation or lack thereof. Through the arts, girls and women can find a common language, growth and fun in a non-pressured and safe environment.

Earlier this year, thanks to the WGC grant, fifth-through-eighth-grade girls at Maayan performed a professionally choreographed dance at a classmate's bat mitzvah and felt immense pride in the many months of practice leading up to it. In the spring, in conjunction with Maayan's middot (character) development program, students wrote their own play based on a theme they chose: *V'ahavta L'reiecha Kamocha* (loving your fellow as yourself). In addition, Carr created a small choir of girls and women which gave a private bikur cholim (visiting the sick) performance as well as a concert for the broader community in June 2025.

For more information about Yachad Arts or to audition for the Feb. 22 girls' showcase, please contact Carr at mcarr@maayanpdx.org.

SECURITY (continued from page 12)

I regularly get questions about the city's ability to respond to 911 calls. In response, I tend to cite a couple of instances I'm aware

of when people called 911 and were quickly connected. The other day, I was in a coffee shop on East Burnside when a patron had a medical

emergency. I called 911, and I'm happy to report I was speaking with a dispatcher within 10 seconds, and the ambulance arrived about five

minutes later. I think that's a great data point, and I'm happy to spread a positive narrative about this critical city function.

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January 11 - February 22, 2026

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Apply to join this 5-session cohort to explore how Shabbat can enrich, anchor, and nourish your family.

www.jewishportland.org/resetandrefreshfamily

Check out Portland's Chanukah celebrations at jewishportland.org/ourcommunity/chanukahresources25

Obituaries

Submit obituaries to The Jewish Review's online form at form.jotform.com/JFGP/jr-obituary

SIMONNE SIDLINE

Congregation Beth Israel mourns the loss of Simonne Sidline, z"l, who passed away on Dec. 8, 2025 at the age of 90.

Simonne is survived by her two children, John Sidline (Stacy) and Nathalie Mateer, and her four grandchildren: Samantha, Margo, Brody, and Maxx. Simonne is preceded in death by her husband, George Sidline, z"l.

A funeral was held Friday, Dec. 12 at Congregation Beth Israel Cemetery. Donations in Simonne's memory can be made to Hillel International.

LES GROUPE

With sadness, Congregation Kesser Israel shares the news of the passing of Les Groupp, z"l, at age 80, after a long illness.

Les is survived by his wife, Elyse Groupp; their daughter, Ayanne Groupp; and his grandsons, Shai and Aryeh Levy.

The funeral was held Thursday, Dec. 11, at the Kesser Is-

rael cemetery.

THELMA NEWSON

It is with deep sadness that Congregations Shaarie Torah, Beth Israel and Neveh Shalom announce the passing of Thelma Newson, z"l.

Thelma passed away on Friday, Dec. 12, 2025 at the age of 97.

She leaves behind a loving family: children Sam (Geri) Newson, Cyndi (Marty) Nolan and Stacie Newson; grandchildren Danielle (Michael) Indovina and Joshua (Mariana Shimonova) Newson; great-grandchildren Hurley and Kayce Indovina and Rami and Raya Newson and numerous nieces and nephews. She was predeceased by husband Harold Newson, z"l, parents Bessie and Charles Zidell, z"l, and brothers Jack and Ted Zidell, z"l.

The funeral was held on Tuesday, Dec. 16, 2025 at Shaarie Torah Cemetery.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Portland's Community Calendar contains information on local events, speakers, webinars, the arts, information for young families and much more!

MON TUE WED THUR

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Community Calendar

Jewish Federation of Greater Portland

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

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