

# The Jewish Journal

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Jewish Federation  
of Ocean County  
*Celebrating 49 Years!*

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Jewish Federation 732-363-0530 [www.ocjf.org](http://www.ocjf.org)

## As We Remember the Past, We Plan(t) for the Future!



International Holocaust Memorial Day – the anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz – Tuesday, January 27



Tu BiShevat – Jewish New Year for Trees – 15 Shevat – this year on Sunday night - Monday, February 1-2

**See page 10 for more information about these special days.**

**Local News - see pages 4, 5, 6 and 7**

**Heroes Against Hate Event - see pages 16-17**

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## What a Year it has Been!



By Keith Krivitzky, Managing Director  
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I want to share with you some of the remarks shared at our Community of Caring event on December 18.

Thank you so much for joining us this evening – and for honoring our Heroes Against Hate.

The Jewish Federation is committed to combatting antisemitism in our community and elsewhere – and we recognize that this fight is not just about us

It's one thing for a particular community, or individual, to complain or raise concerns when they get picked on or bullied or targeted. It is another when others come

### This is why we are here as a Jewish Federation.

to their defense – and are, in fact, the first voices to speak up and the loudest.

And when multiple voices rise up – that's when we can make a difference and bring about change.

And so, the Jewish Federation began this effort several years ago to encourage upstanders in our community, in addition to our partnership with Ocean County through the Culture & Heritage Commission, the County Prosecutor's office, and Chhange – the Center for Holocaust, Human Rights, and Genocide education.

What a year it has been!

I can't say it has been a good year in many respects – given the ongoing fight in Ukraine, hostages still missing, those who have been killed, unrest and anxiety at home and abroad.

What I can say is that this is why we are here as a Jewish Federation – to address the needs of our community – the Jewish community and our greater community

in Ocean County. And we have stepped up in myriad ways.

You can read more details in the Ocean JPages and The Jewish Journal and online – and I encourage you to do so.

I just want to share some highlights with you here tonight...

Did you know that this year the Jewish Federation gave away more funds in grants than ever? More than \$200,000 in total in the past year...

We sponsor the Jewish Family & Children's Service, our largest grantee, which provides needed social services and counseling to our community, Jewish and non-Jewish.

We have already been increasing our impact helping Jews in need around the world – helping the poorest Jews around the world and underserved populations in Israel, including special needs and other vulnerable kids and teens.

And we are also increasing our impact locally, through supporting Fulfill, the Perlmutter Food Pantry, and the great work of One Ocean County – such as their Superbowl party for the homeless ... kudos again Avi...their community

garden and festival.

We are serving more Holocaust survivors than ever before – who have greater need than before. Our dedicated team is finding new sources of support and funding to help these survivors and seniors be able to live out their years with dignity and respect.

More kids are receiving PJ Library than ever – such a great program.

And you have already heard about our efforts to counter hate and antisemitism.

What has been truly impressive in the past year and a half is how our community has stepped up to show support for Israel as it has been attacked and under threat from its neighbors. Not to comment about politics in Israel at all – the past few weeks have been truly amazing.

And we have provided grants to organizations and needs that are so important and which have not been high on the radar screen – where our community can have a big impact.

I encourage you to take a look at the sheets on your tables – but we have a lot to be proud of ... and so much more to do!

## From which Direction Does the Sun Rise?



By Rabbi Eli B. Perlman  
Beth Am Shalom, Lakewood  
[www.bethamshalom.org](http://www.bethamshalom.org)

Once there was a child who was moving to Ocean County, NJ, from California. On his last day in school the teacher asked him from which direction the sun rises. The child answered, "Here in Los Angeles it rises in the east, but I have no idea where it rises in New Jersey!"

Another child moved to our neighborhood here in NJ from a farm in Iowa. She was repeatedly late to school. Finally, the teacher asked her why she was tardy so

often and always appeared so tired. The student answered, "In Iowa the roosters crowed and woke me up on time. Here, the roosters don't crow. Instead, I hear sirens and trucks going by all night, so it is hard to sleep at all!"

Obviously, the sun rises in the east everywhere, and there are cities in Iowa where the same noises sound at night. We get so used to what goes on around us, and since things change so slowly, we do not notice. It is like sitting outside and watching the grass grow. That is until...

I spent my elementary school years in Des Moines, IA. Every morning, we started the day with The Lord's Prayer; that was everybody but me. One day, the teacher, right in front of the entire class, ordered me to say that prayer. I refused. She told me there is nothing wrong with it. I told her I was Jewish and did not want to say it. She said I had to pray with the rest of the class. I sure got her back! When she started to say, "Our Father which art in heaven..." I stood up in my

**... the ever-growing antisemitic activity can no longer be tolerated. It happened so slowly, it was hidden from us. We cannot ignore it anymore. We must respond, but we must do it in positive and respectful ways.**

seat and blasted out "Shema Yisrael..." I was immediately sent to the principal's office. He called my father. That was the last time they started the day with The Lord's Prayer in that school. Instead, we had a moment of silence every morning. That worked really well for everyone.

Then, when December came, all the students and teachers sat around a very beautiful tree to sing Christmas carols; that was, everybody but me. Yes, I came, but I sat and listened to the beautiful me-

lodies, refusing to sing about things I did not believe in.

Sure, there were Jews in Des Moines, but nobody complained. Since we were not forced to do what we did not believe in, we sat silently and enjoyed the sound of very pretty music. In our religious school classes, we would laugh about how embarrassing it would be to sing our songs like "I had a little dreidel..."

Back when this happened, none of us imagined this would be the root of today's antisemitism. As my grandfather said, "make haste slowly" and that is what was happening.

The sun still rises in the east and roosters crow at sunrise, even in NJ, but the ever-growing antisemitic activity can no longer be tolerated. It happened so slowly, it was hidden from us. We cannot ignore it anymore. We must respond, but we must do it in positive and respectful ways. We must challenge misunderstandings and ignorance without emotion.

*Continued on page 3*





## The Jewish Federation of Ocean County celebrates its 49th year of making an impact - in Ocean County, Israel, and around the world!

### Which Direction

*Continued from page 2*

The question I must ask is how many of us know enough about our amazing history and our delicious Jewish spiritual heritage to be able to do that? Jewish education is critical for Jews of all ages to properly combat this scourge. Look into ways to learn more. Call your local synagogue and ask if they offer adult education and go. You will not regret it.

*The Jewish Journal is pleased to host a monthly Rabbi Column, rotating among our community's pulpit rabbis. The views and opinions expressed are those of the writer, and do not necessarily reflect those of The Jewish Journal, the Jewish Federation of Ocean County or the author's Congregation.*



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## Local News

### Meeting Eli Sharabi, Former Hostage

By Ellen Keller

On December 11, almost 1000 people gathered in Marlboro Jewish Center to hear firsthand testimony from the lips of Eli Sharabi, who survived 491 days of captivity after being abducted by Hamas from Kibbutz Be'eri on October 7, 2023. Sharabi hoped that his wife Lianne and his two daughters would be safe because they held British passports. He had no way of knowing that they were murdered by Hamas terrorists immediately after his abduction. Sharabi's book, *Hostage*, offers a poignant look at his indomitable spirit, despite starvation, physical torture, and mental abuse at the hands of his captors. His memoir also shows how Sharabi helped his fellow captives, decades younger than he, survive under these terrible conditions, by instituting exercise, prayer, and mutual comfort. It can be compared to Elie Weisel's *Night* or *The Diary of Anne Frank*.

MJC Rabbi Michael Pont interviewed Sharabi, who recounted the events of

that terrible morning when the kibbutz was attacked and the months of horror that followed. Sharabi lost his wife, daughters and brother on that fateful day. Yet, he states that "I don't want to survive just for them. I don't want to live just for them. I want to live for myself too. For me, Eli Sharabi. I want to live. I love life. I crave it." His spirit helped his fellow captives survive too. We, the audience, were transfixed by his words and his spirit. Thanks to all at MJC, to the many sponsors, to the police department, and to everyone who made this event a reality.

Those of us in attendance that night were witness to history. There were many young people, teens and young adults, who will be able to remember Sharabi's words and be able to recount them in the future. The events of October 7 cannot be forgotten or rewritten. We see too many examples of horrific antisemitism daily to forget.

### Beth Am Shalom, Lakewood, Installed its New Rabbi

On Friday evening, December 19, Beth Am Shalom installed their new rabbi, Rabbi Eli Perlman, in a very moving and spiritual service. It began with Rabbi Emeritus Stephen Gold opening the Ark and taking out the Sefer Torah. Rabbi Gold then passed the Torah to the Temple President, Fran Gimpel, who then passed it on to Rabbi Perlman. As this was all transpiring, Cantor Jon Saouma was chanting L'Dor V'Dor. Rabbi Perlman then gave a brief speech. This was followed by the entire congregation standing up with out-stretched arms as they all chanted the Priestly Benediction to Rabbi Eli and his wife, Lynne Perlman. Many of Rabbi Perlman's family were in attendance to celebrate this wonderful simcha. A delicious Oneg Shabbat reception followed the service.



# Temple Beth Or welcomes you to join us!

We pray from the depths of our hearts  
for true peace in Israel, an end to violence,  
and the safe return of all hostages to  
their families.

Contact us about our upcoming  
services, programs, events  
and adult learning opportunities -  
in-person and on Zoom.

Call us at 732-458-4700 or email us at [templebethorbrick@gmail.com](mailto:templebethorbrick@gmail.com).  
Chaim Respes, Rabbi Dr. Sharon Monter, President

Many congregations are  
conducting prayer services and  
classes online which may be accessible  
from a computer or a telephone.  
Contact each congregation  
for further information  
to access these events.



## Local News

### Congregation B'nai Israel, Toms River, Honored Two Individuals with the Mensches of the Year Award



Photo credit: Mittleberg Family

On November 23, the Men's Club of Congregation B'nai Israel celebrated its second annual "Mensch-of-the-Year" ceremony — however, this year it was called "Mensches-of-the-Year," because the award went to husband and wife, Hy and Megina Mittleberg. This was the first time that a woman was included in the Men's Club award for "sustaining the tradition of Congregation B'nai Israel's Men's Club."

For the years that Hy Mittleberg was Club President, he and Megina worked as a team, and, along with co-President, Steve Pardes z"l, and all the wonderful Men's Club volunteers, offered many stimulating, educational, creative, and interactive programs, for which our Men's Club won Gold, Silver, and Bronze Torch Awards from the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs (FJMC). [Editor's Note: The list of programs is included in the Thank You from the Mittlebergs.] The list is long, but suffice it to say, the CBI Men's Club is still going strong! If you have any interest in the (many) fun events at Congregation B'nai Israel, please call the CBI office at 732-349-1244 for more information.

### "Thank You from Megina and Hy Mittleberg

By Megina Mittleberg

When we received the call from Phil Brilliant informing us that we were being honored as the 2025 "Mensches-of-the-Year" by CBI Men's Club, we were very surprised — but delightfully surprised. And, when



we hung up the phone, we had big smiles on our faces! Including me. Being the first female CBI Men's Club award-winner was especially exciting, and so very thoughtful.

So, on November 23, with three generations of our family and many of our CBI family present at a special dinner event, our hearts were "kvelling," as some very nice things were said about us, and we received a beautiful award "in recognition of our endless hours of service and for sustaining the tradition of Men's Club."

During those five years (or so), when Hy was Men's Club President, we worked as a team (along with Steve Pardes, of blessed memory, who we remember and honor for the time that he was co-president with Hy). And with the dedication, support, and participation of so many wonderful Men's Club's volunteers, we won awards (many from FJMC, the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs), produced educational (and fun) activities and programs, and got a great response from our congregation, which was really the goal we wanted to achieve.

Among the programs our team presented: Men's Club Student Scholarships; Students for Israel seminars for Hebrew High School students; Yom HaShoah/Holocaust Remembrance Day Yellow Candle Project, "Hearing Men's Voices"; Student Essay Contest; Musical Shabbat BBQ; Wine, Steak, and Scotch dinner; and the ever-popular (December 24th) Kosher Chinese Dinner & a Movie, a successful event for over 10 years.

We want to say a great big "thank you" to everyone and let you know how much we appreciate being honored in such a special way, with a special "thank you" to all the generous sponsors for this event. We want to acknowledge and thank CBI Men's Club, which continues to enhance our congregation in such a beautiful way.

### Hadassah Myrtle Wreath 2026



By Ellen Keller

Hadassah holds a Myrtle Wreath lunch annually, honoring those who have served the chapter in an outstanding manner. Our chapter, Bat Shalom, belongs to the Southern New Jersey Region, which has held a luncheon in Edison for the past three years. As a result, we began holding ours at Christie's in Howell. Its owner lives here and is most accommodating. This year, for the first time ever, we honored two men, rather than two women. Both of them are Associates, which means that they are members of the organization.

Gary Moliver became Records Administrator in 2024 and immediately brought our chapter into the 21st century. He was able to work the website, identifying members who had not paid their dues in years, often unknowingly. He rid our files of members who had moved or passed away. Gary, also on the board of Bridge Club, Yiddish Club, and the Men's Club, said that he was happy to do something he loves doing: making lists and working on the computer. Of course, he has also raised over \$32,000 for the Jackson Food Pantry by fixing garage springs. Partner of Gilda Brandman, our executive VP, Gary is the father of a son and a daughter and the grandfather of two. I'm not sure when, or if, Gary sleeps, with all the work he does for Westlake and Jackson.

Robert Shimony has been our Certificates chair for over ten years, providing beautifully calligraphed certificates for both good and sad occasions, thus bringing either joy or solace to the recipient, depending on the occasion, as well as bringing money to our coffers. Like Gary, Bob never has to be asked twice to do any task. Bob is also on the board of Congregation Ahavat Olam, where we are holding our



events during the ballroom crisis. He has been instrumental in getting us security, which is mandatory when events are held in a temple during these perilous times. Both men are examples of the support Hadassah women receive. Married to Linda, our Tower chair, Bob is the father of two and grandfather of five.

Our lunch featured scrumptious zucchini fritters and eggplant rollatini as starters, followed by a salad of your choice. Four entrees completed the meal; most guests were seen taking their lunch home in plastic boxes because they were saving what room they had for the piece de resistance: chocolate cake. Nadia Massuda's cakes are unbelievably beautiful and delicious. This one, which bore the simple word, THANKS, was no exception. Thanks to Nadia for all her help and expertise in helping to facilitate this event.

Once again, Bat Shalom thanks Gary and Bob for all the help they have provided to the chapter. We are proud that we have raised much needed funds during our almost 25 years as a chapter. Hadassah Hospital is on the cutting edge of research. They recently designed a protocol to help patients lose weight by hypnosis. Patients believe they have undergone gastric bypass without any of the side effects of surgery! Hadassah has recently done a heart and liver transplant, one of the first in Israel. The Gandel Rehabilitation Center provides state-of-the-art care. There is an operating center underground at the hospital. Their staff is multiethnic, as are their patients. Hadassah Hospital represents what the Middle East should be if all the hatred disappeared.

Thanks to all of you who have supported our events and helped Hadassah continue its extraordinary work. Thanks and mazel tov (congrats) to Gary and Bob!



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# Local News

## Jewish War Veterans of the USA Update

"A Jewish Voice for Veterans, A Veterans Voice for Jews since 1896"

By Al Adler; JWV Post 178

December is one of my favorite months for several reasons. The eight days of Hanukkah, the winter solstice which promises longer days and of course New Year's Eve Celebrations. Most of all, to me personally, it marks the birthday of my lovely wife Carol and my incredible daughter Tracey.

On December 16 members of the Jewish War Veterans (JWV) and the Jewish War Veterans Ladies Auxiliary (JWVA) attended a Hanukkah party at the Fort Dix Chapel. In attendance were Chaplain Zac Pells, Chaplain Menashe Miller, Rabbi Mendy Mangel, JWVA National President Carol Adler and JWV National Vice Commander Selina Kanowitz. JWVA National President Carol Adler lit one of the menorah candles. Once again Steve Levine and his family provided gifts for the children. It was a very enjoyable night for all who attended.

On December 17 JWV Past National Commander Mike Berman, JWVA Past National President and President of the National Museum of American Jewish Military History Elaine Bernstein, JWVA National President Carol Adler and Past State Commander and National Schlepper Al Adler attended a Hanukkah celebration at the National Museum of American Jewish Military History (NMAJMH) in Washington DC. Guest speakers included Amy Schwartz, President of the Jewish Study Center; Elaine Bernstein, President of the NMAJMH; Carol Adler, National President of the JWVA; and Scott Stevens, National Commander JWV. The guest speaker was Mike Rugel, NMAJMH Director of Programs and Content. Mr. Rugel spoke on American Soldiers and Displaced Persons During Hanukkah of 1945. Rabbi Arnold Resnicoff, US Navy (Ret) led the candle lighting services. Music was played by Machaya Klezmer Band and there was so much singing and dancing.

Several members of the Jewish War

Veterans attended the 2025 Jewish Federation of Ocean County's Community of Caring event celebrating Heroes Against Hate. Honored this year was Ocean County Sheriff Michael Mastronardy; Danny Hoffman, Executive Student Body President, Founder of the Student Advisory Committee, Student Liaison to the Barnegat Board of Education; and Christ Episcopal Church. This year's Mensch Award honoree was George Josephson. The lifetime achievement award was presented to Manny Lindenbaum, a Holocaust survivor, and his lovely wife Annabel. Both Annabel and Manny exemplify the title "Heroes Against Hate." Manny is a wonderful speaker who speaks to students and adult groups on the lessons of the Holocaust. Annabel is active in community events and is on the Board of the Jewish Federation of Ocean County. Congratulations to all of the honorees and Mazel tov.

My wife and I had the honor and pleasure of spending the Christmas Holiday in Boston Massachusetts. On Christmas Eve we flew into Logan Airport where we were met by JWVA Auxiliary 220 President Leslie Emack and Past National Commander Barry Lichinsky. On Christmas Day the members of the Jewish War Veterans Department of Massachusetts, National Commander Scott Stevens and his wife Bonny, JWVA National President Carol Adler and I served members of the Chelsea Veterans Home a Christmas Dinner. The dinner consisted of fried chicken, prime rib, soup, potatoes, green beans, salad, sandwiches, drinks, ice cream and assorted cakes. I would like to thank the Department of Massachusetts for their invitation and hospitality. We especially enjoyed the guided tour of Boston provided by Alan and Donna Lehman.

As I write this it is January 2, so I would like to wish all my dear readers a healthy and happy New Year.



Members of the JWV Department of Massachusetts and guests at the Chelsea Veterans Home on Christmas Day



Manny and Annabel Lindenbaum speaking at the Jewish Federation of Ocean County's event



JWVA National President Carol Adler and Chaplain Raphael Berdugo lighting the Menorah at the Fort Dix Hanukkah Party



Elaine Bernstein President of the NMAJMH speaking at the JWV Hanukkah Party at the Museum in Washington DC



JWV National Commander Scott Stevens speaking at the JWV Hanukkah Party at the Museum in Washington DC



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Local News

Menorah Lighting at Jackson Town Hall



By Ellen Keller  
Photo credit: Bill Zukowski

Even the recent snowfall couldn't deter the annual Jackson Township menorah lighting on December 15. Bat Shalom Hadassah had begun the tradition over two decades ago with the help of its members, Honey Greenberg, Marcia Fishbein, and Linda Selznick. Although Honey has passed away, and both Marcia and Linda have moved, we continue the tradition. For the past nine years, we are fortunate to have Chabad Rabbi Naparstek to help us. This year, in the shadow of the tragedy at Bondi Beach, it was even more important to show that we will continue this long-standing tradition.

The program began with Mayor Kuhn asking for a moment of silence for the victims of the dastardly attack in Australia. Council President Bernstein welcomed us. Annabel Lindenbaum offered greetings from Jewish Federation of Ocean County. Rabbi Naparstek recalled the history of Chanukah. I mentioned recently seeing Eli Sharabi, who was released from Hamas captivity after 491 days. Sharabi's indomitable spirit, despi-

te unthinkable personal loss, is the spirit of Chanukah. We must choose to live, to bring light into the world, to appreciate what we have, even on the darkest of days. After the indoor portion of the ceremony, we moved outdoors. There Rabbi Naparstek lit a candle on behalf of Hadassah while Alan Tannenhaus lit the second one on behalf of The Westlake Yiddish Club. The attendees then sang Maoz Tzur, a traditional Chanukah song.

We are grateful to the township recreation staff for providing us with adorable Chanukah "toys," such as necklaces and cute glasses adorned with menorahs and dreidels. Thanks to Chabad for the warm blue hats that were useful when we lit the menorah outside. Thanks to Westlake Yiddish Club for the generous donation that bought us delicious jelly donuts from Gelbstein's. Many thanks to Marsha Inzelbuch and Carolle Weiner for picking up the donuts despite the cold, icy weather. Thanks to Marsha for facilitating the event, as well. We hope that everyone who celebrated the eight days of Chanukah enjoyed the warmth of family, friends, and of tradition.



Jewish Federation of Ocean County

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Pre-dawn shabbat Jackson, Mississippi's only synagogue Beth Israel was set on fire. The damage was extensive.


This is the same synagogue that was bombed by the Ku Klux Klan in 1967.

Help us provide critical resources for rebuilding, restoration, and recovery, ensuring that Congregation Beth Israel can continue to serve as a place of worship, gathering, and Jewish life.

Jewish Federations stand united against hate and in solidarity with the Jackson Jewish community.

Donate to help at [www.jewishoceancounty.org/disaster](http://www.jewishoceancounty.org/disaster).






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## Jewish Federation of Ocean County IMPACT

### YOU Made an Impact through the Jewish Federation of Ocean County – Crossroads

From Robbie Sassoon, Director of Crossroads, to the Jewish Federation of Ocean County:

I thought you would appreciate this story. It's not every day that we see a long-term impact story like the one below.

At fourteen, Deb arrived at Crossroads overwhelmed by severe anxiety, depression, and a chaotic home life that left her feeling completely alone. At Crossroads Jerusalem, she not only connected with a compassionate therapist – she found an entire community of peers and staff who supported her through her darkest moments.

When Deb came close to taking her own life, Crossroads helped her access inpatient psychiatric care and continued to guide her and support her afterward.

Through the programs and people she

met at Crossroads, she discovered healthy ways to express herself: playing music, joining theatre activities, and eventually discovering her passion for computers. Her natural talent grew into real skill, leading her to a job and inspiring her to pursue a degree in computer science.

The journey wasn't easy – college pressures nearly caused her to give up – but she pushed through, determined to keep going. As she grew stronger, Deb chose to give back, helping younger teens with math just as others had helped her.

Today, the girl who once couldn't imagine a future is helping others shape theirs. Deb didn't just find support at Crossroads, she found a community that empowered her to thrive.

Have a great day!

### From Israel Emergency to Israel Recover

The challenges facing the Jewish community demand decisive action. Antisemitism rises, Israel rebuilds and recovers, and the future of our communities is at stake. Now is the time for us to choose action, unity, and strength. Your gift fuels our efforts to build a thriving Jewish future for generations to come. Donate now: [www.jewishoceancounty.org/IsraelRecover](http://www.jewishoceancounty.org/IsraelRecover).



### YOU Made an Impact through the Jewish Federation of Ocean County – Jewish Relief Network Ukraine

Dear Ms. Greenberg –  
Thank you so much for the generous and impactful donation made by the Jewish Federation of Ocean County. The Jews of Ukraine need our help more than ever -- Your continued support has been a tremendous boost to our efforts. Thank you again,  
JRM  
Judi Garrett COO  
P.S. We have used the funds to buy food for the High Holidays as directed.

(Text of the Thank You letter in the photo)

Dear Ms. Greenberg –  
Thank you so much for the generous and impactful donation made by the Jewish Federation of Ocean County. The Jews of Ukraine need our help more than ever – your continued support has been a tremendous boost to our efforts. Thank you again. [Hebrew] Shanah Tovah  
Judi Garrett, COO, JRNU  
P.S. We have used the funds to buy food for the High Holidays as directed.

[Editor's Note: Judi from JRNU has subsequently sent JFOC a further message about the people that they help. JFOC's support helps them help others.]  
Sergey Medvedev, 57, is disabled, but for many years he managed to help out a great deal within the Jewish community. Currently he is unemployed. Mr. Medvedev lives with his wife who works as a nurse in a kindergarten; she earns the minimum wage. Most of the couple's money is spent on medications and medical care. In the winter, the family does not have enough money for heat. There are no opportunities for extra work as a result of the ongoing war.

*Ukraine update, January 12:*

Things on January 8 at night were absolutely horrendous; probably the worst 24 hours of the war. We are evacuating people to an area in Zhytomyr where we can provide safety from the massive air

strikes, as well as heat, power, and potable water. We are also urgently trying to deliver fuel for generators to heat the orphanages, senior homes, and community centers.

The Mayor of Kyiv, Vitali Klitschko, recommended that residents who have the ability to leave the city go to safe places where there is electricity, water, and heating. Half of Kyiv's apartment buildings – nearly 6,000 – are currently without heat supply due to damage to the capital's critical infrastructure caused by a massive enemy attack. In addition, there are disruptions to the city's water supply.

Infrastructure workers have provided heating to social institutions, including hospitals and maternity wards, using mobile heating stations... [W]e are doing everything possible to complete this as quickly as possible. However, last night's combined attack on Kyiv was the most painful for the capital's critical infrastructure facilities. Municipal services are operating in emergency mode. Unfortunately, according to forecasts, weather conditions in the coming days will be harsh.

Outside Kyiv things are no better. In Kryvyi Rih, there was a double missile strike – the city was under attack for two straight days. Residential apartment buildings were hit, and there are many wounded. And Dnipro is in complete darkness and there is a water crisis. The water co-

*Continued on page 9*



# Community Project Ideas for Children Under 5



PJ Families – These are wonderful opportunities for Get Together Grants!

Community projects are a great way to help your children to be more aware of the people around them and the wider world that they’re living in. It’s an effective way of developing compassion for others, because they engage with people and projects within their local community. Children could help the elderly, the environment, or even other families. Very young, and very small children can still make a BIG difference, and it’s empowering for them to know that. Besides

benefitting your local community, each idea also addresses Jewish values, and together they go a long way toward tikkun olam, making the world a better place.

Community projects can be simple; the important thing is to explain to children why they’re doing them so that they begin to understand the wider implications of their actions. Also, it’s important to choose the right project for young people to get involved with, so here are some ideas:

**Find out what your local food bank needs.** Then gather donated food items and take them there.

**Donate unwanted clothing to a local shelter** or charity shop.

**Pick up litter in local greenspaces.** Remember to wear protective gear and check with the local parks department or landowner to ensure safety for all.

**Make a picture or card** for older people who are living in nursing homes or even speak to the homes and see if they have certain visiting times for children. Children can help bring joy to the elder-

ly and many nursing homes have special programs for these types of visits.

**Donate films, games, toys, crayons, paper or books** to the local children’s hospital. Bikur cholim, visiting the sick, is an easy, but impactful mitzvah to perform.

**Help to plant trees, flowers, and vegetables** in the local community.

**Help an older neighbor with their gardening** (e.g. you could mow the lawn and your children could gather the grass) and check in with them from time to time.

**Visit homebound neighbors.** You could do some baking ahead of the visit and bring round the homemade treats to share.

**Help out at a local animal shelter,** either by donating items they need, by spending time socializing with the animals, or cleaning out their cages, etc. It’s a wonderful way to teach tza’ar ba’alei chayim, the ethical treatment of animals.

**Set up your home for recycling** and get your children involved in recycling items into the right bins. This makes for a

perfect lesson in bal tashchit, preventing waste.

There are so many things your children can do to help others and to start to contribute to their own community. Start small and make sure they’re comfortable with what they’re doing. Also, always check that the recipients are happy to have you help or visit, and that the environment will be a safe one for your children.

## Jewish Relief Network Ukraine

*Continued from page 8*

ming from the taps is dirty and unsafe for use. Residents are buying drinking water from supermarkets.

Finally, and very troubling, in addition to the casualties and loss of all power, graffiti showed up in Dnipro saying, “We hate Jews and kill all the Jews.”

*Reminder from the Jewish Federation of Ocean County: Make an impact and donate at [www.jewishoceancounty.org/ukraine](http://www.jewishoceancounty.org/ukraine).*

# JOIN US

## Rabbi Eli Perlman & Cantor Jon Saouma

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

## Foods of Tu BiShevat

*Jewish Treats by NJOP*

**T**oday, Jews around the world celebrate Tu BiShevat, the new year of the trees. Tu BiShevat is often celebrated with the 7 species for which the Torah praises the land of Israel: “A land of wheat and barley, of vines, figs and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey (from dates)” (Deuteronomy 8:8). This year, Tu BiShevat (15 Shevat) occurs on Sunday night-Monday, February 1-2.

**Wheat (chitah):** The Sages noted the importance of wheat in Pirkei Avot (Ethics of the Fathers 3:21): “Where there is no flour, there is no Torah. Where there is no Torah, there is no flour.”

**Barley (seh'o'rah):** At Passover time, the Omer offering (a measure of barley from the new harvest) was brought to the Temple, symbolic of the start of the spring harvest.

**Grape (gefen - literally grape-vines):** The transformation of grapes into wine reflects humankind's ability to choose to uplift itself or debase itself depending upon how they use the grape.

**Fig (t'aynah):** “... All the figs on one tree do not ripen at once, rather a few each day. Therefore, the longer one searches in the tree, the more figs one finds. So too with Torah: The more one studies, the more knowledge and wisdom one finds” (Eruvin 54a).

**Pomegranate (rimon):** According to the Midrash, the pomegranate has 613 seeds equivalent to the number of commandments in the Torah.

**Olive (zayit):** “...Just as the leaves of an olive tree do not fall off either in summer or winter, so too, the Jewish people shall not be cast off--neither in this world, or in the World to Come” (Menachot 53b).

**Date (tamar):** While the Torah uses the word d'vash, honey, it is understood as referring to date-honey because the date is frequently boiled to make a type of honey. “The righteous shall flourish like a date-palm tree” (Psalms 92:13), for those who act holy are sweet in God's eyes.

(For other “Jewish Treats: Juicy Bits of Judaism, Daily” and many other Jewish resources visit [www.jewishtreats.org](http://www.jewishtreats.org) and [www.njop.org](http://www.njop.org).)

## International Holocaust Memorial Day

*Jewish Treats by NJOP*

**S**peak of the Holocaust and the first word that many think of is Auschwitz. It was, and is, the most infamous of the concentration camps established by the Nazis. In fact, Auschwitz was not one camp, but rather several. Some sections were labor camps, other parts were specified for (non-Jewish) prisoners of war, and then there was Birkenau (also known as Auschwitz II), which was the Jewish death camp.

On January 27, 1945, the Soviet army arrived at the gates of the already notorious death camp. Nothing could have prepared them for the horrible conditions, the malnourished prisoners or the unimaginable horrors they discovered.

When the Red Army arrived, there were less about 7,000 prisoners in the camp. Over 50,000 other prisoners had been removed from the camp by the Nazis and sent on the infamous death march. Many died on the road, too weak to march.

The liberation of Auschwitz was an incredibly momentous event. In recogni-

tion of that fact, January 27 is now the official date of International Holocaust Remembrance Day, as sanctioned by the United Nations in November 2005, by General Assembly Resolution 60/7.

The resolution, which was initiated by the State of Israel, came after the 60th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, perhaps as a recognition that in a decade or so, the aging survivor community would no longer be able to share their experiences. Resolution 60/7 honored the memory of the Holocaust's victims, rejected Holocaust denial, called for the preservation of the historical sites that verify the atrocities and pushed for educational programming.

It should be noted that since 1953, Jews have observed a special Holocaust memorial day on 27 Nisan in the Jewish Calendar, Yom Hashoah. Many traditional Jews mourn those who perished in the Holocaust on Tisha b'Av, the ninth of Av.

(For other “Jewish Treats: Juicy Bits of Judaism, Daily” and many other Jewish resources visit [www.jewishtreats.org](http://www.jewishtreats.org) and [www.njop.org](http://www.njop.org).)

# JOIN US


## For An Evening of Music with Noah Aronson

### April 18th - 7 PM

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



## Combating Hate

Ocean County schools are encouraged to send students to the annual colloquium. The Jewish Federation of Ocean County sponsors the students from Ocean County by providing the cost of their registration. Schools are also eligible for bussing grants from the Jewish Federation of Ocean County's partner at Ocean County Cultural & Heritage Commission. The annual colloquium is the culmination of the yearlong focus on the theme of Resistance.



# Resistance: Mothers' Quest for Justice

## Join Chhange for Our 44th Annual Colloquium!



Lucía Díaz Genao is a mother who became an activist and leader in the fight to find the disappeared in Mexico. Lucy will share how her world was turned upside down in 2013 when her 29-year-old son, Luis Guillermo, a popular DJ, was kidnapped. When the Mexican authorities failed to act, Lucy decided she had to do something. That began her tireless search for her son, a quest that is ongoing.



Dr. Matthew Hone is currently conducting investigations focused on Latin America and working as an adjunct professor at Stockton University teaching courses on genocide, state violence in Latin America, and enforced disappearances. He is co-author of the recently published book, *Victim Activists in Mexico: Social and Political Mobilization amid Extreme Violence and Disappearances*.

  
 Wed., May 20, 2026  
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## FedBeat from JFNA – Jewish Federations of North America

jewishfederations.org

### Federations' BeWell Adds BaMidbar & Blue Dove, Boosting Mental Health Aid



From JFNA  
December 16, 2025

Jewish Federations of North America are proud to announce a major expansion of BeWell, Federations' national initiative dedicated to supporting mental health and well-being across Jewish communities. BaMidbar and The Blue Dove Foundation, two trailblazing organizations that have shaped Jewish mental health education, awareness, and resilience, will now become part of the BeWell ecosystem.

These acquisitions represent one of the most comprehensive investments Jewish Federations of North America have ever made in Jewish mental health and wellness. Their combined expertise, educational reach, and community-based approaches will significantly deepen BeWell's capacity to serve youth and adults in every corner of the Jewish world.

"The Hamas attacks on Israel – and the surge in antisemitic incidents it precipitated – have had profound psychological repercussions for Jewish communities throughout the United States," said Shira Hutt, Executive Vice President of Jewish

Federations. "There is a desperate need for mental health support and resources, and with these new expanded resources in our BeWell program, Jewish Federations are ready to answer that call."

BeWell is the only platform uniting education and engagement professionals and clinicians working in Jewish settings to address youth mental health through prevention and early intervention, training both Jewish professionals and youth to identify those who are struggling and help them access care and support. Thanks to BeWell's efforts, over 10,000 professionals and 1,000 teens have been trained, and \$1.5 million of funding have flowed into Jewish mental health initiatives.

For years, BaMidbar and Blue Dove have been recognized as leaders in Jewish mental health education and engagement.

BaMidbar, originally launched as the first Jewish organization focused exclusively on the mental health and resilience of Jewish teens and young adults, has delivered groundbreaking experiential and educational programming for youth, families, and the professionals who support them. BaMidbar has served as a vital resource for Jewish teens and young adults facing mental health challenges. Its evolution from a pioneering Jewish wilderness therapy program to a national provider of mental health education and clinical support allowed the organization to respond dynamically to the needs emerging during the Covid pandemic and the rise in antisemitism following October 7. In recent years, BaMidbar

partnered with 22 organizations to deliver 94 educational programs for more than 2,300 Jewish communal professionals and launched outpatient clinical services in Boston that reached more than 2,000 participants.

These combined resources will now be amplified through BeWell's expansive distribution networks, professional partnerships, and the influential Resiliency Roundtable, ensuring that communities of all sizes have access to evidence-driven and culturally resonant mental health support.

"BaMidbar was founded on a vision that the mental health of Jewish teens and young adults matters and deserves dedicated investment from the Jewish community," said outgoing BaMidbar CEO Whitney Fisch. "We were the first Jewish organization focused solely on the mental health and resilience of young people. The fact that BeWell will now carry BaMidbar's mission forward is a profound gift to our community. I am deeply grateful that BaMidbar's work will continue to grow through Jewish Federations' extraordinary commitment to supporting well-being in every corner of Jewish life."

Blue Dove's work has reached hundreds of thousands of individuals through psychoeducation, community programs, and resources that connect mental wellness with Jewish identity, values, and rituals. "The power of this partnership lies in our shared mission and complementary strengths. The Blue Dove

Foundation brings over seven years of Jewish mental health and wellness content, grounded in lived experience and community engagement. BeWell offers an extraordinary national platform and reach," said Justin Milrad, President & Co-Founder, The Blue Dove Foundation. "Together, we have the opportunity to scale meaningful change, break stigma, and bring culturally rooted mental health programming to every corner of the Jewish world."

Blue Dove's flagship offerings include: Educational Workshops for all ages that connect mental health topics with Jewish tradition and values; Holiday and Ritual-Based Resources that infuse Jewish learning with pathways to wellness; Community Engagement Initiatives such as Mental Health Shabbat and the #QuietingTheSilence campaign, amplifying storytelling and breaking stigma; and Practical Tools like the Jewish Mental Wellness Toolkit.

The integration of BaMidbar and Blue Dove into BeWell and the Jewish Federations system marks a transformational moment for Jewish communal mental health. With these expanded resources and continuing its deep partnership with the Network of Jewish Human Service Agencies, Jewish Federations will continue to meet this moment with strength, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to the well-being of the entire Jewish community.

### Federations' Statement on the Terrorist Shooting in Australia

From JFNA  
December 14, 2025

Jewish Federations are horrified by the antisemitic terrorist shooting in Australia.

This was a deliberate terrorist act targeting the Jewish community in Sydney as they celebrated the first night of Chanukah and must be loudly and clearly called out as antisemitism.

The security of the Jewish community is the top priority of Jewish Federations across North America. All Federations

and their community security initiatives are on full alert for the Chanukah celebrations in their communities, working with all our law enforcement partners.

We mourn those killed in this horrific shooting, send our comforts to their families, and wish a speedy and full recovery to the injured.

Our community will never retreat in the face of hatred, and will never refrain from carrying on our Jewish traditions. Rather, we will use every tool at our disposal to make sure our communities are safe and that our lights burn all the brighter.



**See page 24  
for an article  
about the  
Jewish Community  
of Australia.**



## Farewell from Laurie Salka, Holocaust Survivor Services Coordinator



Over six years ago, I began my journey as Holocaust Survivor Services Coordinator for the Jewish Family and Children's Service of the Jewish Federation of Ocean County. Little did I know how much I would learn and the deepness of the relationships that I would forge with the Survivors and their families. It has been my

privilege and honor to be part of their lives and to assist the Survivors to remain in their homes in safety and with dignity and to expand the services provided.

One of my personal goals is to make a positive impact on all who I encounter and make a meaningful difference. Hopefully, I have succeeded.

Due to my upcoming retirement at the end of March, I will be starting a new journey. I leave you in wonderful hands with Drew Staffenberg as the new Holocaust Survivor Services Manager. I will miss working with the Survivors, their families, my colleagues at JFCS/JFOC, and the partnerships in the community and other agencies that have been developed. I wish everyone all the best. Should our paths cross in the future, may we only hear good things.

## Drew Staffenberg Rejoins the Staff of the Jewish Federation of Ocean County



By Keith Kravitzky  
JFOC Managing Director

We are excited and grateful to welcome back Drew Staffenberg to the ranks of the Jewish Federation of Ocean County. Thanks to his incredible commitment to the Jewi-

sh community, Drew will be serving as Holocaust Survivor Services Manager, taking over from Laurie Salka.

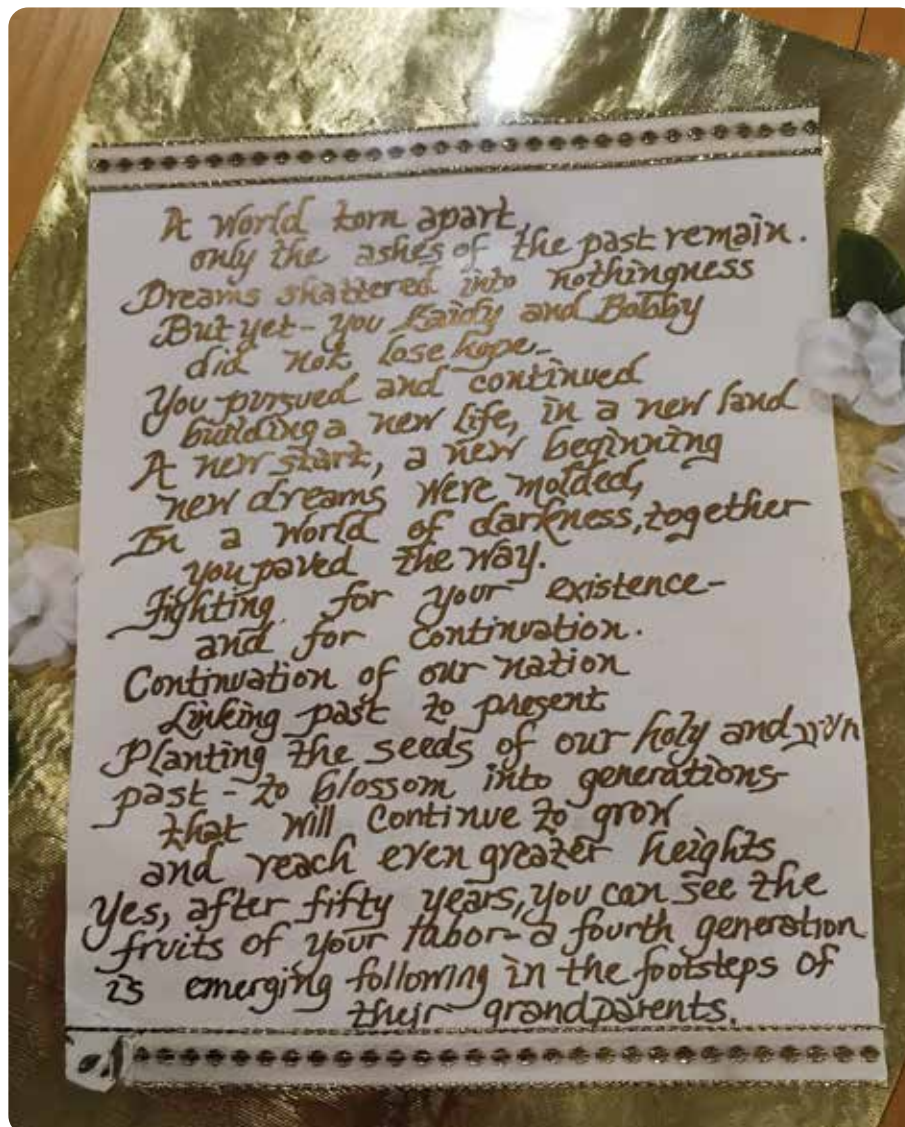
Drew is a former Executive Director of the Jewish Federation and has had a storied career in the Jewish community as a nonprofit executive, though his original training was as a social worker. He has remained connected here as a consultant and advisor – and, with Laurie's retirement, he saw an opportunity to become more involved and get back to his roots and give back to our Holocaust survivors.

We are thrilled Drew is working with us again!

## 50th Anniversary Poem Written by the Granddaughter of Two Holocaust Survivors

*(They wish to remain anonymous)*

A world torn apart  
Only the ashes of the past remain.  
Dreams shattered into nothingness  
But yet – you Zaidy & Bubby  
Did not lose hope.  
You pursued and continued  
Building a new life in a new land  
A new start, a new beginning  
New dreams were molded  
In a world of darkness, together  
You paved the way  
Fighting for your existence –  
And for continuation.  
Continuation of our nation  
Linking past to present.  
Planting the seed of our holy and sacred  
Past – to blossom into generations-  
That will continue to grow  
And reach new heights  
Yes, after fifty years, you can see the  
Fruits of your labor, a fourth generation  
Is emerging following in the footsteps of  
Their grandparents.





# Jewish Community Calendar – February 2026

Compiled by the Jewish Federation of Ocean County based on submissions from the event hosts – Events can be submitted at [www.jewishoceancounty.org/calendar](http://www.jewishoceancounty.org/calendar). Most of the Jewish Virtual University webinars are emergent with only a few days’ notice and are updated on the page [www.jewishoceancounty.org/jvu](http://www.jewishoceancounty.org/jvu) and our facebook page [facebook.com/jewishocean](https://facebook.com/jewishocean).

**Tuesday, January 27 – International Holocaust Remembrance Day**, see page 10 for related article

**Tuesday, January 27, 12:00 Noon – Jewish Leadership in Small Communities in Poland during the Holocaust**, with Dr. Katarzyna Person, see [www.jewishoceancounty.org/jvu](http://www.jewishoceancounty.org/jvu) for details

**Sunday night-Monday, February 1-2 – Tu BiShevat / Jewish New Year for Trees**, see page 10 for related article

**Tuesday, February 3, 1:00 PM (and every Tuesday) – Grief After Loss Group** led by Rita Sason, Jewish Family and Children’s Service, virtual online, 732-363-8010

**Thursday, February 5, 12:15 PM (and every Thursday) – Torah with the Times: Timeless Torah, Timely Wisdom**; study and discussion of the weekly Torah portion with Rabbi Isaiah Rothstein, see [www.jewishoceancounty.org/jvu](http://www.jewishoceancounty.org/jvu) for details

**Thursday, February 5, 1:15 PM (and every Thursday) – Queering the Parsha: A Weekly Study Group toward an LGBTQ+ Perspective on the Weekly Torah**

**Portion**, with Rabbi Nikki DeBlosi, Ph.D., a Laasok program cosponsored by Keshet and A Wider Bridge, see [www.jewishoceancounty.org/jvu](http://www.jewishoceancounty.org/jvu) for details

**Thursday, February 5, 7:30 PM (and the first Thursday of every month) – Caregivers Group** led by Rita Sason, Jewish Family and Children’s Service, virtual online, 732-363-8010

**Tuesday, February 10, 12:00 Noon – The Jews of Edirne: The End of Ottoman Europe and the Arrival of Borders**, with Dr. Jacob Daniels, see [www.jewishoceancounty.org/jvu](http://www.jewishoceancounty.org/jvu) for details

**Monday, February 16 – Presidents Day**

**Wednesday, February 18, 12:00 Noon – Welcoming the Stranger: Discover the Torah behind Refugee Shabbat (March 13-16) and How the Present Reality of Immigration Impacts our Community Today**, with the Center for Human Dignity and Public Policy of the Conservative/Masorti Movement, see [www.jewishoceancounty.org/jvu](http://www.jewishoceancounty.org/jvu) for details

For information, contact the event host or see related publicity in this issue of The Jewish Journal.

Save the date - **Saturday, April 18, 7:00 PM** for an **Evening of Music** with Noah Aronson at Beth Am Shalom, see page 10 for details



**"For the Lord thy God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and grapevines, figs and pomegranates; a land of oil olives and date honey."**  
**Deuteronomy/Devarim 8:7-8**

**The Jewish Federation helped to build Israel. Today, we help keep it strong.**

**Am Yisrael Chai - The people of Israel lives!**





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EVERY BODY  
NEEDS A  
HUG

We thank Helen Cocuzza for her past service on the board and we mourn the loss of our board member Mona Sternbach, may her memory be a blessing.



Securing Our Community

Jewish Federation of Ocean County  
Helps Synagogues Strengthen Security



For this past High Holiday season, our local Jewish Federation of Ocean County (JFOC) was able to provide funding for High Holiday security to our congregational partners: Beth Am Shalom (Lakewood), Chabad of Jackson (Lakewood), Congregation Ahavat Olam (Howell), Congregation B'nai Israel (Toms River), Jewish Community Center of Long Beach Island (Spray Beach) and Temple Beth Or (Brick). Ac-

tual checks were distributed at the Community of Caring Heroes Against Hate event on December 22. JFOC will also be working with our congregations on upgrading their security apparatus and setting up emergency operation plans. This is another example of how the Jewish Federation and its security partner – JFed Security – is enhancing our community’s security and assisting our congregational partners!

The Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) established the Secure Community Network (SCN) in 2004. The SCN is a non-profit organization that works to ensure the safety and security of the Jewish community in North America. The SCN's mission is to help individuals and organizations develop a culture of awareness, preparedness, and resilience through training, consultation, and information sharing. The SCN works with over 300 independent communities, 146 federations, and 50 partner organizations, as well as with partners in the public, private, academic, and non-profit sectors.





# The Ocean County Community Celebrated the Community of Caring on December 22

Many people came together for a festive evening honoring this year’s Heroes Against Hate – Ocean County Sheriff Michael Mastronardy, student Danny Hoffman (Student Upstander Award in honor of Hersh Goldberg-Pollin) and Christ Episcopal Church in Toms River. George Josephsen was honored with the new Mensch Award. Annabel and Manny Lindenbaum were honored with the Lifetime Achievement Award. For the Annual Meeting component of the event, Jewish Federation security grants were awarded to local synagogue partners (see page 16) and the Jewish Federation Board of Directors was approved for the new year. See the inspirational videos at [jewishoceancounty.org/communitycaring](http://jewishoceancounty.org/communitycaring).



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Special thank you to Debbie Abrahamovic-Kay and the Captain's Inn for their donations.





This is a defining moment for the Jewish people.

We face a convergence of challenges that demand decisive action and a unified response. Jewish Federations are uniquely positioned to meet this pivotal moment.

We are the backbone of Jewish life in North America. **As One**, we mobilize our vast resources and global network to confront today's pressing issues: rising antisemitism, Israel's post-war recovery, and the vitality of our communities at home.

**As One**, we secure our synagogues and community centers. **As One**, we empower Israel's recovery and revitalization. **As One**, we advocate for our community's urgent needs on Capitol Hill and in our state capitals and city halls. **As One**, we inspire Jewish engagement in over 400 communities across North America.

From our local communities to the global stage, your gift is strategically deployed to make a difference across the spectrum of Jewish life. Thanks to your generosity, Jewish Federations provide unparalleled reach and impact, making a flourishing Jewish future possible.



As One

We Inspire.  
We Protect.  
We Rebuild.

As One,  
We Inspire Jewish Connection

Today's challenges have awakened a powerful desire for Jewish connection and belonging. In times of uncertainty, our diverse Jewish experiences give us strength and purpose. Now, more than ever, we must deepen our connections to the Jewish community.

**As One**, we must empower our communities to live their Jewish values with pride. We must build welcoming spaces for Jews of all backgrounds. We must create meaningful experiences that inspire a lifelong passion for our traditions, values, and culture.

As One,  
We Stand United Against Hate

Our communities are under threat from rising antisemitism. Synagogues vandalized. Students harassed on college campuses. Families afraid to openly express their Jewish identity. This may be our reality but we will not be defined by fear and hatred.

**As One**, we must confront antisemitism wherever it arises. We must secure our synagogues, schools, and community centers. We must advocate for change on Capitol Hill and in our state capitals and city halls. We must empower our communities with the knowledge, tools, and resources to ensure their safety.

As One,  
We Rebuild Israel

From our own communities, we reach across continents to Israel, where the October 7th attacks and subsequent war have left deep scars. Communities devastated, families ripped apart, and a sense of security shaken to its core. Yet, Israel's strength and resilience continues to shine through.

**As One**, we must invest in long-term resilience, strengthening the fabric of Israeli society. We must offer healing and hope to those grappling with trauma. We must restore livelihoods, rebuild shattered communities, and empower individuals to reclaim their lives. We must ensure a vibrant future for the Jewish homeland.



“Belonging to Yed[a’]yah(son of) Asayahu”

## Tiny 2,600-year-old Clay Sealing Inscribed with Biblical Name Found in Temple Mount Soil

Minuscule artifact discovered at the Jerusalem-based Temple Mount Sifting Project may reference an official who worked for King Josiah and who appears in II Kings and II Chronicles



Temple Mount Sifting Project archaeologist Mordechai Ehrlich holds a First Temple period clay sealing reading “Yed[a’]yah (son of) Asayahu” found in July 2025. (Temple Mount Sifting Project)

By Rossella Teractin

July 30, 2025

[timesofisrael.com](http://timesofisrael.com)

A clay seal from the First Temple period bearing a Hebrew name that appears in the Bible has been uncovered by archaeologists at the Temple Mount Sifting Project in Jerusalem, the organization announced on July 29. The tiny artifact carries an inscription in Paleo-Hebrew reading “Belonging to Yed[a’]yah (son of) Asayahu.”

“This is only the second time since the Temple Mount Sifting Project began over 20 years ago that we’ve uncovered a sealing with such a complete inscription – nearly every letter is clearly legible,” said archaeologist Zachi Dvira, who co-directs the project alongside Dr. Gabriel Barkay.

“We usually do not go public with new finds so quickly,” he told The Times of Israel over the phone of the sealing, which was spotted in July. “However, in this case, the artifact was very recognizable, and Dr. Anat Mendel-Geberovich, who works in our lab, is one of the leading experts in ancient Hebrew script. So we decided to move forward, also because we felt it was very significant that the sealing was found just before Tisha B’Av.”

Tisha B’Av, a Jewish day of mourning which this year falls on Saturday night-Sunday, August 2-3, marks the anniversary of the destruction of both the First Temple at the hands of the Babylonians in 586 BCE and the Second Temple at the hands of the Romans in 70 CE. Based on the writing style, the researchers dated the sealing to the 7th or 6th century BCE.

The name Asaya appears in the Bible



A group of visitors working at the Temple Mount Sifting Project in an undated picture (Temple Mount Sifting Project)

several times in the context of the kingdom of Josiah, the 16th king of Judah who reigned in the second half of the 7th century BCE. “The king gave orders to Hilkiah, and Ahikam son of Shaphan, and Abdon son of Micah, and the scribe Shaphan, and Asaya, servant of the king,” reads II Chronicles 34:20. The same story appears almost exactly in II Kings 22:12, “And the king gave orders to the priest Hilkiah, and to Ahikam son of Shaphan, Achbor son of Michaiah, the scribe Shaphan, and Asaya the king’s minister.”

The version of the name inscribed on the sealing, “Asayahu” contains an extra letter Vav, a type of suffix that was often added to ancient Hebrew names to testify to their connection with God (Y-H-V-H). “The longer and shorter versions of the name were often used interchangeably,” Dvira said.

“The name Asayahu also appears on another clay sealing with the words ‘servant to the king,’ that was identified some 20 years ago,” he added. “However, since the artifact came from the antiquity market, and not from an archaeological context, it is more difficult to be sure of its authenticity.”

During the First Temple period, clay impressions, also known by their Latin name bullae, were used for the management of storehouses. Dozens of such clay sealings have been unearthed in Jerusalem, at times carrying names that also appear in the Bible.

“Obviously, we are not sure that the Asayahu mentioned on the sealing is the same that appears in the Bible,” said Dvira. “However, several such artifacts found in the area of the Temple Mount carry biblical names, and it does make sense, because these were not objects used by common people.”

In ancient times, the lumps of clay were pressed over the knot of a cord securing a doorknob or a vessel. The manager of a treasury would then impress his, or his superior’s, seal upon the clay to prevent others from tampering. Dvira explained that both the Temple and the royal treasuries stood in the area of the Temple Mount in biblical times. “The owner of this seal was one of the administrators of the storages on the Temple Mount,” he said. “We cannot say if it’s the Temple treasury or the royal treasury.”

In light of its sensitive nature as a holy site for Jews and Muslims, who call it the Noble Sanctuary or Haram al-Sharif, no archaeological excavation can be conducted on the Temple Mount, which is managed by the Islamic Waqf (religious trust). However, between 1996 and 1999, the Northern Branch of the Islamic Movement illegally conducted a large-scale construction project to build a subterranean mosque in an area colloquially called Solomon’s Stables.

The seeds of the Sifting Project took root then, after Barkay and Dvira salvaged some 9,000 tons of dirt from the construction site that had been dumped into the Kidron Valley. From 2005 until 2017, the Sifting Project was housed at a facility administered by the City of David.

After a two-year hiatus, the sifting operations moved to the Mitspe Hamasuot (Hamasuot Lookout) site on Mount Scopus under the auspices of the Mount of Olives Ridge Jewish Communal Develop-



A First-Temple period clay sealing reading “Yed[a’]yah (son of) Asayahu” found at the Temple Mount Sifting Project in July 2025 (Temple Mount Sifting Project)



Visitors sifting buckets of earth from the Temple Mount at the relaunch of the Temple Mount Sifting Project, June 2, 2019 (Yosef Huri)

ment Fund and supported by the New York-based American Friends of Beit Orot. The group describes its mission as “preserving the historic and spiritual heritage of Jewish Jerusalem by supporting activities in the Beit Orot area,” and creating “a vibrant and enduring Jewish presence in Jerusalem.”

The Project operates under the academic sponsorship of Bar-Ilan University’s Institute of Archaeology. Over the years, more than half a million finds, including coins, jewelry, clay artifacts, and charred animal bones, have been retrieved by some 260,000 volunteers from Israel and across the world who carefully sifted through buckets of dirt.

After the visitors sift through the soil, they sort relevant findings in different categories with the help of the Sifting Project staff, separating bones and pottery (the most common finds), glass, coins, and more, and placing them in different containers that a professional archaeologist later examines.

It was as he examined one such container, collecting bones sifted around two years ago, that archaeologist Mordechai Ehrlich identified the tiny Asayahu bulla. “The artifact looked like a bone and had the color of a bone, but [Ehrlich] realized it was a clay object, and there was an inscription on it,” Dvira said.

To decipher the bulla, the researchers used special Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) photography. This technique creates a composite image by photographing an object multiple times from the same spot, under changing light conditions as the source of light moves at the same distance around the object.

*Continúa en pág. 31*

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## Australia's Jewish Community is defined by Holocaust Survivors, Yiddishkeit and Immigrants

The attack on a Hanukkah celebration in Sydney targeted a thriving Jewish community.



**Mourners gather to lay flowers at Bondi Beach in Sydney. Police say 15 people were killed and more than 40 others injured when two attackers opened fire near a Hanukkah celebration at Bondi Beach. Photo by Izhar Khan/Getty Images**

By Hannah Feuer  
December 15, 2025  
[forward.com](http://forward.com)

An attack on a Hanukkah celebration at Bondi Beach in Sydney on December 14 killed 15 people and left Jewish communities reeling worldwide. The violence has also drawn attention to the resilience of Australia's distinctive Jewish community, shaped by the world's largest concentration of Holocaust survivors outside Israel, a growing Yiddish revival scene, and a large number of South African Jewish immigrants.

### Demographics and culture

About 117,000 Jews live in Australia, according to 2021 Census figures adjusted for likely undercounting. The community is largely urban, with 84% living in either Melbourne or Sydney. Just over half of Australian Jews were born in the country. Among those born overseas, the largest immigrant groups come from South Africa and Israel.

Religious practice within the community is diverse, with roughly 4% identifying as Haredi, 18% as Modern Orthodox, 33% as traditional or Conservative, 11% as Reform, and 21% as secular. In other respects, the community is uniquely cohesive: About half of children attend Jewish day schools – the highest rate for Jewish day school attendance outside of Israel.

In recent years, the revival of Yiddish language and culture in Australia has drawn significant attention, with young people who view it as a “language of protest” leading the charge. Yiddish is a required daily subject at Melbourne's Sholem Aleichem College, a secular day school with roots in the Jewish Labor Bund.

The annual Australian “Sof-Vokh Oystalye” retreat immerses attendees in 48 hours of speaking Yiddish exclusively, while Kadimah, a Jewish cultural center and library in Melbourne, stages plays in the language.

Being in the Southern Hemisphere, Australians celebrate Hanukkah during their summer, taking pride in being among the first in the world to light the holiday candles due to their early time zone.

### A destination for refugees

The Australian Jewish population nearly tripled in size from 1938 to 1961. The influx was driven by Holocaust survivors, Hungarian refugees who arrived after the Hungarian Uprising of 1956, and British Jews who migrated under the “Ten Pound Poms” program, which allowed them to move to Australia for just 10 pounds.

In the aftermath of World War II, Australia accepted Holocaust survivors who were living in displaced persons camps, at a time when many countries either refused to take them or imposed strict quotas – including the United States. Not only was Australia one of the few countries willing to accept survivors, it was also just about as far from Europe geographically as one could get, offering a sense of safety in its isolation.

Yet the acceptance of Jewish refugees was at times begrudging. Minister for Immigration Arthur Calwell sold large-scale immigration in the aftermath of World War II not as a humanitarian concern, but under the slogan “populate or perish,” reflecting the need for population growth to boost the economy and enhance national security. Calwell also covertly introduced bureaucratic measures to limit the number of Jewish Holocaust survivors allowed to enter Australia, including restricting the number of Jewish survivors permitted on ships leaving Europe to a quarter of all passengers.

But Calwell's efforts to limit Jewish immigration ultimately fell short. In the aftermath of the war, roughly 27,000 Holocaust survivors settled in Australia. As of 2023, about 2,500 of those survivors were still living. One of them, Alexander Kleitman, who immigrated to Australia from Ukraine, was killed in Sunday's attack at Bondi Beach while protecting his wife.

### Australia's relationship with Israel

Relations between Israel and Australia have been increasingly strained in the past year. Prime Minister Anthony Albanese had been sharply critical of Israel's conduct in Gaza, calling Israel's “excuses and explanations” for blocking aid to Gaza “an outrage.” Tensions further escalated in September, when Australia was one of about 150 countries that moved to recognize a Palestinian state. In response, Israel revoked the visas of Australian representatives to the Palestinian Authority.

Yet Australia and Israel have historically been strong allies. Australia's first external affairs minister, Herbert Vere “Doc” Evatt, played a key role in the United Nations partition plan for Palestine and the creation of the Jewish state. In 2017, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu became the first incumbent Israeli leader to visit Australia, and former Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison had said he was considering recognizing Jerusalem as the Israeli capital. But that position was reversed in 2022 after Albanese, a member of the Labor Party, took office.

Relations deteriorated further after an arson attack on a historic synagogue in Melbourne in December. Netanyahu sharply criticized Australia's government, saying, “It is impossible to separate the reprehensible arson attack from the federal government's extreme anti-Israeli position.”

Following the attack on a Hanukkah celebration at Bondi Beach, Netanyahu doubled down, saying he had warned Albanese that “your call for a Palestinian state pours fuel on the antisemitic fire.” Albanese rejected any link between the two, arguing that support for a two-state solution is a widely held position.

*Hannah Feuer joined the Forward as a general assignment reporter in May 2025 after two years as a culture reporter at Seven Days, an independent weekly in Burlington, Vermont. Originally from the Washington, D.C., area, she is a 2023 graduate of Northwestern University's Medill School of Journalism.*

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## Holocaust Survivors Alert

If you are a Holocaust Survivor who has never applied for compensation, or was turned down previously, there are new funds and guidelines. For more information, you may call the Claims Conference in NY at 646-536-9100 or go to their website: [www.claimscon.org](http://www.claimscon.org). Click on survivor resources, then click on compensation programs. They have a FAQ (frequently asked questions) section which should be read prior to applying.

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# JEWISH FAMILY AND *changing lives...*

## Anxious Times, Intentional Lives

By Judith Sason, LCSW, Guest Writer  
 Jewish Family & Children's Service

You walk into a café and instinctively scan the room before choosing a seat.

**Y**ou hesitate before wearing a necklace you once put on without thinking.

You scroll the news, then put your phone down, only to pick it back up minutes later.

You're getting through your regular routine, yet something feels slightly off. Nothing dramatic.

Just an ongoing hum in the background.

If any of this feels familiar, you're not alone. Many people in the Jewish community are carrying a heightened sense of awareness right now. Antisemitism feels closer, louder, harder to ignore. And while staying aware is often necessary, staying alert constantly can quietly drain our energy. Feeling anxious in this moment doesn't mean something is wrong with you, it means you are maintaining awareness and paying attention. However, when vigilance becomes the default setting, it leaves us little room to breathe.

The New Year gives us a chance to slow that down just a bit. Not by ignoring what's happening around us, but by choosing how we hold it.

### Anxiety Doesn't Always Look Like Anxiety

When people think of anxiety, they often imagine panic or fear that's impossible to miss. But lately, anxiety has been showing up in quieter ways. It might look like overthinking simple decisions, feeling tired even after resting, or staying "on" all the time without realizing it.

In my work as a therapist, I see this often.

It's not that people are weak or failing to cope, I see people who care deeply – about their safety, their families, and their place in the world. Their nervous systems are doing exactly what they're designed to do: protect. Anxiety doesn't need to disappear for us to live well. It just needs to stop running the show.

### Holding Space for Others While Holding Myself

As a therapist, I work with people from many backgrounds and belief systems. My role is to remain open-minded, grounded, and fully present for my clients as they navigate their own mental health journeys. My commitment hasn't changed, what has shifted at times is the internal experience of doing that work while also holding my own identity. Like many Jewish clinicians, I'm used to keeping parts of myself quietly in the background so I can fully support others. And recently, that balance has taken more intention.

There are moments when I'm sitting with a client, listening carefully, staying regulated, while also managing my own internal reactions as a Jewish professional living in this moment. It's a reminder of something I often say in my practice: caring for ourselves doesn't take away from our responsibilities but rather strengthens our ability to meet them. Supporting others while caring for yourself isn't a contradiction. It's a practice.

### Why This Moment Feels Heavy

Jewish life carries memory – personal, familial, and collective. That awareness can be grounding, but it can also make current stress feel heavier. When today's headlines echo older fears, our bodies

*Continued on page 28*

Together with the **Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany**

(**Claims Conference**) and a grant from the State

of New Jersey, the Jewish Family and Children's Service of the Jewish Federation of Ocean County

has been providing the sacred obligation of pikuach nefesh (saving a life in jeopardy) to Holocaust Survivors for many years. We realize that unless you are impacted directly, you may not fully appreciate how important this work is. **Every dollar you contribute will be matched 25 times!**





# CHILDREN'S SERVICE

## ...making a difference

### Avery Kannatt, New Intern at Jewish Family & Children's Service



ces for those navigating challenging life circumstances.

Prior to joining JFCS, Avery worked at the Affordable Housing Alliance as a Utilities Caseworker Intern where he assisted individuals, particularly seniors, in connecting them with essential resources and grants to help manage electric and gas expenses. This experience strengthened his commitment to client-centered practice and deepened his understanding of how advocacy and resource coordination can make a meaningful difference in people's lives.

Avery Kannatt is a new MSW Intern at Jewish Family & Children's Service (JFCS). He is currently pursuing his Master of Social Work at Rutgers University, with an expected graduation date of May 2027. He previously earned his Bachelor of Arts in Broadcast Journalism, which helped develop his communication and advocacy skills. He can now apply these strengths in his work within social services.

Avery is drawn to the field of social work because of his strong passion for helping, advocating for, and improving the lives of seniors, families, individuals, and marginalized communities. He is especially motivated by work that promotes dignity, equity, and access to supportive resour-

As an intern at JFCS, Avery is grateful for the opportunity to support an organization that is deeply committed to strengthening individuals and families through compassionate, culturally responsive, and community-based services. He is eager and excited to gain more experience and skills working with the Jewish population. His professional interests include working with older adults, mental health services, and reentry services for formerly incarcerated individuals. He looks forward to continuing to grow his skills while contributing to JFCS's mission.

Outside of work, Avery enjoys exercising, running in parks, hiking, and traveling to different countries to experience new cultures and perspectives.

## PJ Library Photos with Children

Do you have a photo of your child reading or holding a PJ Library book?

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**MEETINGS NOW HELD VIRTUALLY**



Anxious Times

Continued from page 26

sometimes react before our minds can catch up.

Many of us were also taught, directly or indirectly, to be strong, adaptable, and composed. These are real strengths. But they can make it harder to admit when things feel like a lot. Strength doesn't mean pushing through at all costs. Sometimes it means knowing when to slow down.

**Shift From Anxiety to Intention.** Managing anxiety in uncertain times doesn't require big changes. Often, it's the small, repeatable choices that help the most.

**Create boundaries with news and social media.** Staying informed matters. Being constantly immersed doesn't. Try choosing specific times to check updates instead of letting them fill every quiet moment.

**Let your body help.** Anxiety lives in the body as much as the mind. Walking, stretching, slow breathing, or sticking to simple routines can help your system feel steadier.

**Stay connected.** Anxiety grows in isolation. Spending time with people who understand your context – even quietly – can be grounding. You don't have to

explain yourself to feel supported.

**Choose what feels supportive, not what you “should” handle.** Some days that means showing up more. Other days it means resting. Both are valid.

**The New Year as a Gentle Reset** – The New Year doesn't need to come with big resolutions. It can simply be a moment to check in. What has been weighing on you? What helps you feel steadier? What would you like to carry forward, and what might you be ready to loosen your grip on? Even small intentions, practiced over time, can shift how our days feel.

**Moving Forward** – Being brave doesn't mean being fearless. It means continuing to live, connect, and care even when anxiety is present. Resilience isn't about staying on high alert. It's about finding your way back to balance, again and again.

As we move into this new year, the invitation isn't to ignore what's happening around us. It's to choose how we respond. To live with awareness and intention. To take care of our mental health while still making room for meaning, connection, and moments of ease. In anxious times, that choice matters more than we think.

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# Rob Reiner Asked the Big Questions. His Death Leaves us Searching for Answers.

The director and humanist was singularly inquisitive.



**Rob Reiner directing his film North. Photo by Andy Schwartz/Fotos International/Getty Images**

By PJ Grisar  
December 15, 2025  
[forward.com](http://forward.com)

Can men and women just be friends? Can you be in the revenge business too long? Why don't you just make 10 louder and have that be the top number on your amp?

All are questions Rob Reiner sought to answer. In the wake of his and his wife's unexpected deaths, which are being investigated as homicides, it's hard not to reel with questions of our own: How could someone so beloved come to such a senseless end? How can we account for such a staggering loss to the culture when it came so prematurely? How can we juggle that grief and our horror over the violent murder of Jews at an Australian beach, gathered to celebrate the first night of Hanukkah, and still light candles of our own?

The act of asking may be a way forward, just as Rob Reiner first emerged from sitcom stardom by making inquiries.

In *This is Spinal Tap*, his first feature, he played the role of Marty DiBergi, the in-universe director of the documentary about the misbegotten 1982 U.S. concert tour of the eponymous metal band. He was, in a sense, culminating the work of his father, Carl Reiner, who launched a classic comedy record as the interviewer of Mel Brooks' 2,000 Year Old Man. DiBergi as played by Reiner was a reverential interlocutor – one might say a fanboy – but he did take time to query Nigel Tufnell as to why his amp went to 11. And, quoting a bad review, he asked “What day did the Lord create *Spinal Tap*, and couldn't he have rested on that day too?”

But Reiner had larger questions to mull over. And in this capacity – not just his iconic scene at Katz's Deli in *When Harry Met Sally* or the goblin Yiddishkeit of *Miracle Max* in *The Princess Bride* – he

was a fundamentally Jewish director.

*Stand By Me* is a poignant meditation on death through the eyes of childhood – it asks what we remember and how those early experiences shape us. *The Princess Bride* is a storybook consideration of love – it wonders at the price of seeking or avenging it at all costs. *A Few Good Men* is a trenchant, cynical-for-Aaron Sorkin, inquest of abuse in the military – how can it happen in an atmosphere of discipline.

In his public life, Reiner was an activist. He asked how he could end cigarette smoking. He asked why gay couples couldn't marry like straight ones. He asked what Russia may have had on President Trump. This fall, with the FCC's crackdown on Jimmy Kimmel, he asked if he would soon be censored. He led with the Jewish question of how the world might be repaired.

Guttingly, in perhaps his most personal project, 2015's *Being Charlie*, co-written by his son Nick, he wondered how a parent can help a child struggling with addiction. (Nick was questioned by the LAPD concerning his parents' deaths and was placed under arrest.)

None of the questions had pat answers. Taken together, there's scarcely a part of life that Reiner's filmography overlooked, including the best way to end it, in 2007's *The Bucket List*.

Judging by the longevity of his parents, both of whom lived into their 90s, it's entirely possible Reiner had much more to ask of the world. That we won't get to see another film by him or spot him on the news weighing in on the latest democratic aberration, is hard to swallow.

Yet there is some small comfort in the note Reiner went out on. In October, he unveiled *Spinal Tap II: The Beginning of the End*, a valedictory moment in a long and celebrated career. Reiner once again returned to the role of DiBergi. I saw a special prescreening with a live Q&A after the film. It was the day Charlie Kirk was assassinated. I half-expected Reiner to break character and address political violence – his previous film, *God & Country*, was a documentary on Christian Nationalism.

But Reiner never showed up – only Marty DiBergi, sitting with Nigel Tufnell (Christopher Guest), David St. Hubbins

(Michael McKean) and Derek Smalls (Harry Shearer) at Grauman's Chinese Theater in Los Angeles. (Reiner later, with his wonted humanism, would weigh in out of character on Kirk, telling Piers Morgan that his reaction to his death was one of “absolute horror,” regardless of their political differences.)

The *Spinal Tap* interview was broadcast to theaters across the country, with viewer-submitted questions like “What, in fact, did the glove from *Smell the Glove* smell like?” (Minty.) And “Who was the inspiration for ‘Big Bottom?’” (Della Reese.)

DiBergi had one question for the audience: “How did you feel about the film?”

The applause was rapturous, but DiBergi still couldn't get over Nigel Tufnell's Marshall amp, which now stretched beyond 11 and into infinity. “How can that be?” he asked. “How can you go to infinity? How loud is that?” There's no limit, Tufnell assured him. “Why should there be a limit?”

Reiner, an artist of boundless curiosity and humanity, was limitless. His remit was to reason why. He'll be impossible to replace, but in asking difficult questions, we can honor him.

*PJ Grisar is a Forward culture reporter.*

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2,600-year-old Clay

Viene de la pág. 19



Illegal construction project on the Temple Mount in 1999 (Israel Police)

Dvira explained that in the past 20 years, as sifting techniques became more sophisticated and the practice more widespread in archaeological excavations across the region, the number of bullae from the field work has multiplied. “Because of their small size, clay sealings are difficult to identify,” he said. “In the past, most of the bullae came from the antiquity market, but as we developed new techniques to sift through massive amounts of dirt, more excavations have started to either employ our sifting services or carry out their own sifting. Now, there are maybe 10 or 20 times more known bullae found during controlled archaeological work than in the past.”


Dvira said they are already working on publishing an academic article on the ar-



Archaeologist Zachy Dvira, co-director of the Temple Mount Sifting Project on the Temple Mount. (Melissa Hensley)

tifact. Meanwhile, he said that the work at the Sifting Project is continuing, even though, as a result of the war started by Hamas’s October 7, 2023, atrocities, the number of visitors has significantly decreased. “Now that it’s summer, we have many Israeli visitors, especially families, even though we are not able to open every day because many of our staff are called up for reserve duty in the army,” Dvira noted. “I hope that next year, tourists from abroad will come back.”

Amanda Borschel-Dan contributed to this report.



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