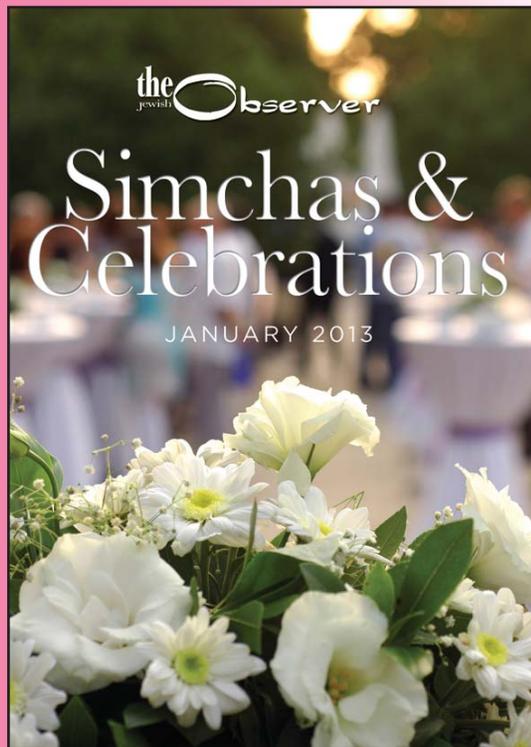


# the Jewish Observer

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### Simchas & Celebrations issue



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## World's Fair tells stories from Nashville to Ethiopia

By KATHY CARLSON

**F**rom the exotic to the haimish and comforting, Our World's Fair: The Tradition Continues offers something for everyone.

The Jewish Federation of Nashville's second World's Fair event is set for Sunday, Jan. 27, from 4-6 p.m. at the Gordon Jewish Community Center. The event is part of Federation's 2013 Annual Campaign.

This year's World's Fair combines videotaped vignettes of families talking about their traditions, along with exhibits that inform and educate about Jewish traditions around the world, from Shabbat in the United States to an Ethiopian Jewish holiday that Israel has recognized as a holiday for the entire country.



"In Ethiopia there's a very strong Jewish component," said Linda Kartoz-Doochin, who is working on the Ethiopia exhibit along with Community Shlichah Hadar Moskovitz. When Kartoz-Doochin and her husband, Michael Doochin, traveled to Ethiopia in 2010, she said, "I happened to walk into a little shop and saw a beautiful silver necklace." The shop owner told her, pointing to parts of the necklace, "That is the Torah and that is the sinagoga." She asked the shop owner if he had any

more of the necklaces – he had two – and he told her, "No, the people left."

Most of Ethiopia's Jews, known as Beta Israel, have made aliyah and now live in Israel. They brought their holiday of Sigd with them. It's celebrated on the 29th of Cheshvan, 50 days after Yom Kippur, according to the Knesset web site. The name "Sigd" comes from the Hebrew word "sgida," which means bowing or prostration, the site says.

Continued on page 6

## This year in Washington: Jewish priorities to watch for

By RON KAMPEAS

WASHINGTON (JTA) – Will we fall of the fiscal cliff? Plunge into war with Iran? One thing's for certain: There will be plenty of action in Washington that the Jewish community will be watching closely over 2013. Here are some likely focal points:

### Fiscal Cliff

Unless President Obama and the Republican-controlled House of Representatives work out their differences, the U.S. government will head off the fiscal cliff. That means that much of the federal budget will be subject to congressionally mandated cuts of about 8 percent (sequestration), and tax cuts pushed through 10 years ago under President George W. Bush will lapse.

But the government has told federal employees to expect furloughs, not dismissals, and even these will not occur immediately. That will give Obama and Boehner several additional weeks after Jan. 1 to work out a deal.

More negotiations will mean more intensive lobbying from the Jewish groups that serve the elderly and poor. Count on a broad array of groups to push back against cuts in funding to social services, said William Daroff, the Washington

director for the Jewish Federations of North America.

"We will continue to make sure any cuts made are not made disproportionately to vulnerable populations who rely on government assistance to stay alive," he said.

On the revenue side, expect Jewish groups to diverge a bit. Bend the Arc, a liberal group, is fighting against renewing tax cuts for incomes above \$250,000. But some other Jewish groups may sit out this issue, not wanting to irk wealthy donors.

Meanwhile, the Jewish Federations are pushing back against Obama's proposals that would reduce tax deductions for charitable donations from high earners, which charities worry could cause philanthropic giving to drop.

### Israel

With Obama facing down the fiscal cliff, contending with turmoil in the Arab world and pursuing negotiations with Iran, the conventional wisdom is that he is not likely to make an aggressive push to revive the Israeli-Palestinian peace process, at least for the time being.

A number of emerging factors, however, could renew U.S. involvement in the Palestinian-Israeli arena.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's slew of recent West

Continued on page 5

## Tzedakah Tzunday set for Feb. 10

**I**t's just the right time to sign up to volunteer on Tzedakah Tzunday, the Jewish Federation of Nashville's annual fund-raising event that brings the whole community together. The event takes place from 9 a.m.-6 p.m. on Feb. 10 at the Gordon Jewish Community Center. Tzedakah Tzunday's theme this year is tradition, in keeping with the entire 2013 Federation annual campaign.

Volunteers are most needed to call fellow community members from a bank of telephones at the GJCC. By volunteering to call others, you're not only helping them do a mitzvah for the community by contributing to Federation, but you're also letting them know about a whole Federation "village" of friendship and support. For donors, simply answering the call and making your pledge connects you to seniors in need of hot meals, children seeking a Jewish education, and young parents looking to make a connection to the Jewish community. No one gift touches more lives.

Volunteers can choose from four shifts: 9-11:30 a.m., 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m., 1-3:30 p.m. and 3-5:30 p.m. Trainers will show volunteers the basics of telephone solicitation, and, of course, there will be M&Ms.

To learn more about the Jewish Federation of Nashville, Tzedakah Tzunday or to volunteer, go to [www.jewishnashville.org](http://www.jewishnashville.org), or contact Susan Pankowsky, [susan@jewishnashville.org](mailto:susan@jewishnashville.org), 354-1676, or Barbara Schwarcz, [Barbara@jewishnashville.org](mailto:Barbara@jewishnashville.org), 354-1630. Please make Tzedakah Tzunday your own tradition by participating. □

# Get ready to celebrate 65 years of the Jewish homeland

This year, Israel will celebrate its 65th anniversary of statehood, marking Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion's first public reading of Israel's Declaration of Independence. The day was May 14, 1948 or the 5th day of Iyar in the Jewish calendar.

Currently, Israel is preparing activities for the anniversary. The Israeli news service Arutz Sheva reported that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu wants the theme of the celebrations to focus on "preservation of national cultural heritage." Official ceremonies are being planned and a push is under way for historical sites such as Tel Aviv's Independence Hall to be refurbished.

Last year, on its 64th anniversary, Israel created celebration events that featured the music and food of the Israeli street to link Jews in the Diaspora and supporters of Israel with the Jewish state, the JNS.org news service reported. Some painted their faces in the blue and white of the Israeli flag; others danced the hora. At the beginning or conclusion of each event, the notes of "Hatikvah" sounded, bringing emotions to a high, JNS reported.

On Israel's 60th birthday in 2008, writer Uriel Heilman of JTA mused about what Theodor Herzl, the founder of Zionism, would think of modern-day Israel if he could see it now. Heilman wrote:

"The malarial swamps of prestate Palestine have been replaced by rapidly growing cities with glitzy shopping districts, carefully landscaped parks and six-

lane highways that run between high-rise office buildings and limestone apartment complexes.

"The agricultural pioneers, the halutzim who struggled to sow the seeds of the new nation-state armed with triangular hats and simple hoes, have been succeeded by sunglasses-wearing settlers in the West Bank's Jordan Valley who have installed high-tech drip-irrigation devices to hydrate hybrid tomatoes for export to markets in London, Paris and New York.

"And the nation whose birth defied the odds in a war of independence against invading Arab armies to the north, east and south has become a regional military superpower with an assumed nuclear arsenal, a crack air force

and peace treaties with two of its four Arab neighbors.

"Agricultural settlements have turned into sprawling cities, the 1948 population of roughly 800,000 has swelled to more than 7 million and – perhaps most important of all – the Jewish state has become home for Jews from Russia, Europe, Iran, Ethiopia, Argentina, Egypt, North America, India and too many other places to count."

Much has happened in the five short years since Heilman wrote his article.

In April, the Observer will spotlight Israel at 65. Israel may be old enough for a Medicare card, but it's a young nation with millennia of history. In the issues leading up to April, we'll outline key

periods in modern Israel's history, so we all can participate more meaningfully in celebrating the Jewish homeland.

In the meantime, consider visiting the Israeli government's English language web site, [www.gov.il/firstgov/english](http://www.gov.il/firstgov/english), for historical information. Goisrael.com, the Israeli tourist ministry's web site, also shows how to tap into Israel's history. We'll also post articles from our news services about Israel's recent anniversaries onto the Observer web site, [jewishobservernashville.org](http://jewishobservernashville.org). □

*Observer editor Kathy Carlson wrote this article with information compiled from Observer news services and online information.*

## CRC-Hillel events tackle Middle East from Israeli, Palestinian viewpoints

Noted Middle East experts David Makovsky and Ghaith Al-Omari are headlining a series of events in Nashville on Sunday, Feb. 17. Their visit, cosponsored by the Community Relations Committee of the Jewish Federation of Nashville and Vanderbilt Hillel, will culminate in a program that evening at 7:30 p.m. at the Gordon Jewish Community Center.

They will discuss the peace process and how both sides can find areas of commonality and agreement. There will be a dessert reception preceding the program, and there will be ample time for



David Makovsky

Ghaith Al-Omari

questions from the audience. There is no charge for the program.

Earlier in the day, Makovsky and Al-Omari will be at Vanderbilt where they will be participating in programs sponsored by Vanderbilt Hillel. In addition to their moderated discussion, they will meet with Jewish and Muslim campus leaders and will speak to an interfaith group as well. Makovsky will be the featured speaker at their annual campus leadership event on Israel, an AIPAC-inspired program that brings together leaders of many campus groups for a discussion on Israel and its importance to the United States.

Makovsky is the Ziegler distinguished fellow and director of The Washington Institute's Project on the Middle East

Peace Process. He and Dennis Ross co-authored the book "Myths, Illusions, and Peace: Finding a New Direction for America in the Middle East." He is also the former executive editor of the Jerusalem Post, was diplomatic correspondent for Israel's leading daily, Haaretz, and is a former contributing editor to U.S. News and World Report.

Mr. al-Omari is the executive director of the American Task Force in Palestine. He previously served in various positions within the Palestinian Authority, including advisor to former Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas and director of the international relations department in the Office of the Palestinian President. In these capacities, he provided advice on foreign policy – especially vis-à-vis the United States and Israel – and security.

Both speakers have been featured numerous times separately and together on national talk shows and are leading commentators in newspapers (New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Washington Post, and others). In addition to speaking together at the 2011 AIPAC Policy Conference, this distinguished pair has appeared at Federations, synagogues, and Hillels across the country. □

## Nashville's Sacks prepares for Ramah Bike Ride

For five days this coming April, Nashville's Gene Sacks will be bicycling from Jerusalem to Eilat in the Ramah Bike Ride 2013.

The 600 km ride raises funds for Ramah's special needs summer camp programs for children, teens, and young adults with special needs.

The Ramah camping movement has always been close to Sacks' heart. He was one of the founders of Camp Ramah Darom in Clayton, Ga., which grew out of the 1993 annual conference of the Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs and the recognition of the need for a Ramah camp in the Southeast.

"Several years ago, when I was president of the Camp Corporation, I supported an initiative to start a special camp for children with autism together with families and siblings," he wrote. "Camp Yoffi has been an ongoing endeavor for some eight years and has served as a model for similar

programs around the country. Other Ramah camps have similar programs for other types of challenged kids. We call these Tikvah (hope) Programs. We charge a nominal fee for the families and raise, by the generosity of our patrons, the majority of the funds to run the program.

"Our families describe their experience as nothing short of miraculous," he wrote. "'This has been the best week of our lives,' and 'We never knew there were people who understood what we as a family go through and care as much as you do.'" Participating in the camp was a life-changing experience for Sacks and his wife, Ruthi, he wrote.

All riders pay their own expenses to participate and also need to raise a set amount of donations to support the Tikvah program. To learn more about the ride, go to [www.ramahbikeride.org](http://www.ramahbikeride.org). To contribute to Sacks' effort, go to <http://www.firstgiving.com/fundraiser/eugenegenesacks/ramah-bike-ride-2013>. □

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The onstage performances in the Pargh Auditorium bring out the photographer or videographer in everyone.

## GJCC rocks with Chanukah celebration

Scores of parents, friends and young children headed for the Gordon Jewish Community Center on Dec. 16 to mark the last day of Chanukah with song, dance, and traditional foods.

Students from all five of the community's religious schools participated in singing "Not by Might." Following them were young performers from Micah Children's Academy, the GJCC Ballet Dancers and Hip Hop Class, Temple Preschool, and GJCC Early Childhood

Learning Center. Rabbi Saul Strosberg of Congregation Sherith Israel accompanied performers on piano, while Congregation Micah Cantorial Soloist Lisa Silver accompanied singers on guitar. Community Shlichah Hadar Moskovitz led the candle lighting; children from the community's three preschools made table centerpieces, and volunteers helped organize and run the afternoon program.

and his team turned out freshly fried latkes along with traditional accompaniments of sour cream and applesauce. Those attending the Chanukah Festival also could shop from a variety of vendors who set up shop outside the Pargh Auditorium, where the Chanukah Festival was held. GJCC Director of Youth and Camp Claire Bernstein organized the Chanukah Festival.

The Jewish Federation of Nashville funded the event. □

Chef extraordinaire Bernie Pargh

## Teri Simon leaves legacy of courage, friendships, teaching

By Kathy Carlson

Teri R. Simon – mother of three, writer, activist, musician and friend to many – died on Dec. 15 after living bravely and wholeheartedly with cancer for three years. She was 50.

Simon turned living with serious illness into two books, educating others through writing and speaking, and achieving one of her main goals: helping others. She had posted a blog entry on her web site, <http://flyingelephant-book.wordpress.com>, on Dec. 9, signing off "With love and a super good week, Teri, the flying elephant."

Teri grew up in Ohio and after graduating from Tulane University, moved to Nashville because of its music industry. Music was a theme throughout her life, from her singing and songwriting with Congregation Micah Cantorial Soloist Lisa Silver to shepherding scores of Micah youngsters through the temple's kids' choir. Teri held a master's degree in social work, worked as a medical social worker and advocated for sexually abused children. She drew on her interests, education, friends and family as she tackled what she called "lung junk" in her blog.

No one was more shocked than she was to learn on Dec. 2, 2009, that lung cancer had caused the visual problems for which she sought medical care. Teri had never smoked, there was no history of cancer in her family, and she had no other risk factors. By being asked "Did you smoke?" and answering "No" many times, she learned of the stigma surrounding lung cancer, that some believe

it's a disease people have brought on themselves by smoking and that if you don't smoke, you won't contract it.

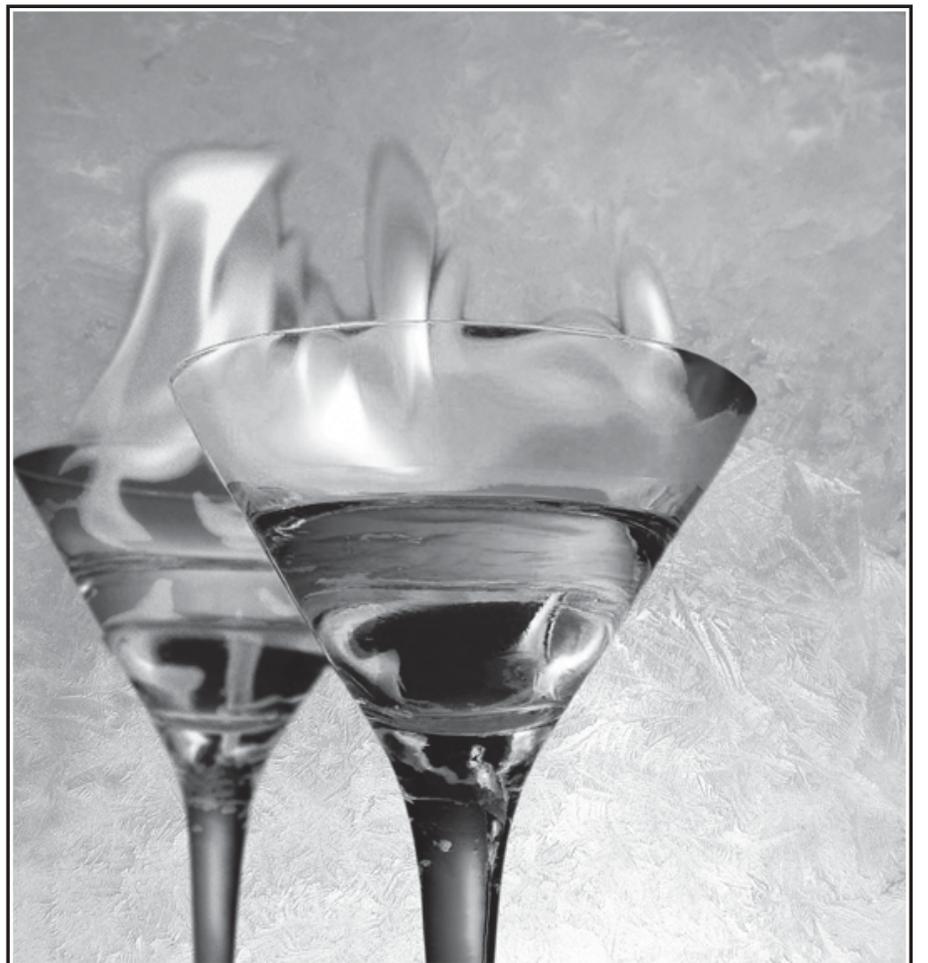
It became her mission to counter the stigma through education. Teri took her story first to a Hadassah group in Oak Ridge and became active with the nonprofit LUNgevity, which provides cancer research funding and support for those with lung cancer. She volunteered with LUNgevity's online lung cancer support efforts, by acting as a LUNgevity LifeLine phone buddy with others and writing blogs.

Her blogs became two books, both available online, and 75 percent of all proceeds benefit Gilda's Club Nashville, LUNgevity, and The National Lung Cancer Partnership. Micah member Kim Phillips designed the books including covers, and Silver provided illustrations.

"It's so important to be around people who understand without having to overexplain," Teri said in an Observer interview in early 2012. Do you know that it hurts when hair falls out from chemo, she asks. "They told me that at Gilda's Club. ... If you shave (your head) it won't hurt. They get it."

"It's hard – a hard disease. It's not without its challenges," she said. "It changed life – ruined life in a lot of ways. ... On the other side, generous, wonderful, kind-spirited (people) help me. There's nothing more beautiful than that."

Teri is survived by her parents, David and Edria Ragosin; her sister, Tami Mader and her brother, Sam Cole; and her children, Emily, Taylor and Joey Simon, along with nephews, nieces and many friends. In lieu of flowers, please support Teri's legacy by visiting [www.flyingelephantbook.wordpress.com](http://www.flyingelephantbook.wordpress.com). □



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# commentary & opinion

## The 2012 Jewish year in review: victories, confrontations, passings

By ERICA BROWN  
JNS.org

**W**e're in the middle of 5773, having just turned the corner on 2012 and saying goodbye to a year of making history.

January brought us the 10th Israeli film nominated for an Oscar, "Footnote." Sadly, it did not win, but there were many Jewish wins to celebrate in 2012. Robert Lefkowitz won the Nobel Prize in chemistry; Serge Haroche won it in physics; Alvin E. Roth won it in economics. Israeli tennis player Noam Gerhsony took the gold in wheelchair tennis at the September Para-Olympics, and Aly Raisman brought her team the gold in a floor exercise performed to "Hava Nagila." Seems like all those bar mitzvah dance parties paid off. Another young face stole our Jewish hearts this year: 14-year-old Edon Pinchot charmed the crowds all the way to the semi-finals of "America's Got Talent" with his pop songs and his yarmulke.

Perhaps the biggest competition of the year was the U.S. presidential election, and Jews were not quiet about the vote. In fact, sometimes we were downright nasty to each other about our very partisan perspectives, while both candi-

dates tried in different ways to outdo each other in the sport of supporting Israel. This year brought us Jack Lew as a new chief of staff for the White House, and critical issues about America's role in the Middle East. Charity caps and health care will be on our community docket in the months ahead. Let's try some bipartisanship in 2013.

It's not easy for us to celebrate any victories, however, with the defense pockmarks in the political landscape of the Middle East and the recent anxiety over Operation Pillar of Defense. The question of Iran's threat loomed large in 2012, and despite the current ceasefire, no one is going into 2013 overly optimistic about the Arab-Israeli conflict.

On the anti-Semitism radar, three shootings in Toulouse and Montaubon, France, shook the Jewish world with the loss of seven lives in March. And Germany's ban on circumcision caused a world outcry and more anguished debate. This was shadowed by the 40th anniversary of the Munich Olympics, when 11 members of the Israeli team were taken hostage and then murdered. The fact that Olympic organizers would not honor their memory with a moment of silence was a subject of much consternation for many Jews worldwide.

Jews across the globe did come together to mark another significant event in 2012: the Siyyum Ha-shas, or completion of the entire Talmud that takes seven and a half years at the rate of one folio page a day. Tens of thousands of people gathered in athletic stadiums, synagogues and schools to complete the last

lines of the last page together. Many began the process again the very next day.

Dec. 6 marked another special Jewish get-together that occurred 25 years earlier when we held the National March for Soviet Jewry on the National Mall. We stood 250,000 strong to protest more than a million Jews held behind Russia's Iron Curtain. In a historic Gorbachev/Reagan meeting, we discovered a voice that rang out with the biblical phrase: "Let My People Go." It was a voice that changed our people, opening doors to Soviet Jews in Israel and across the world map. And in a special cap to this anniversary, Gal Beckerman, who traced the movement in his book, "When They Come For Us, We'll Be Gone," won the 2012 Sami Rohr prize for literature.

Talking literature, Philip Roth announced that he would write no more books in 2012, but Blake Bailey did get a lucrative book deal to write Roth's biography. He believes it will take 8-10 years. Herman Wouk did us proud by writing his recent book, "The Lawgiver," in 2012 at the prized age of 97.

If all this book talk is making you hungry, try what's new in kosher in 2012. The New York Times identified Mexikosher as the new phenom in kosher dining. This Los Angeles concoction was started by Mr. Katsuji Tanabe, who has a Japanese father and Mexican mother and opened a kosher restaurant that serves Korean, Indian, and Vietnamese food along with a dash of Southern barbecue. New Yorkers—eat your heart out.

We close the 2012 review with the loss of two relatively unknown heroines who deserve a special mention. Vladka Meed died in November at 90. She posed as a gentile in World War II to become a partisan in the Warsaw Ghetto, smuggling pistols, gasoline, dynamite to resistance fighters. Meed was one of the first to tell of the Holocaust's travesties in a book she published in Yiddish in 1948, "On Both Sides of the Wall."

Lastly, we note the death this past August of Florence Warren, who also smuggled arms to resistance fighters but in a different guise. She was a member of one of the most famous ballroom dancing teams in Europe, and often danced on stage in front of German officers without them realizing that she was actually hiding herself while shuffling in the spotlight. As we lose more survivors with every passing year, we take a moment to honor their memories and their service.

So what made 2012 a special Jewish year for you? □

*Editor's note: This article is distributed with permission of Dr. Erica Brown. Subscribe to her "Weekly Jewish Wisdom" list at <http://leadingwithmeaning.com>. Brown, a writer and educator, works as the scholar-in-residence for the Jewish Federation of Greater Washington and consults for the Jewish Agency and other Jewish nonprofits. She is the author of "In the Narrow Places" (OU Press/Maggid); "Inspired Jewish Leadership," a National Jewish Book Award finalist; "Spiritual Boredom" and "Confronting Scandal."*



Erica Brown

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## WES concert features Prince of Kosher Gospel

**J**oshua Nelson, The Prince of Kosher Gospel, will kick off West End Synagogue's 2013 Concert and Cultural Series with a performance on Saturday, Jan. 12, the synagogue announced in a news release.

Nelson will perform at the music venue 3rd & Lindsley, near the Howard Office Building just south of downtown Nashville. There will be a Patrons Party on Thursday, Jan. 10, at the home of Tina Kon and Jeff Hymes. Concert seating is limited, so for more information and to purchase tickets online go to [www.westendsyn.org](http://www.westendsyn.org) or contact Marcia Stewart, (615) 269-4592, email at [office@westendsyn.org](mailto:office@westendsyn.org).

This year's signature event comes in the days leading up to the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. celebration on Monday, Jan. 21, and echoes his message of love, peace and unity. Nelson, who is African-American and Jewish, was born and

raised in New Jersey by observant Jews who trace their roots back to Senegal. He also was educated in Israel.

"We are thrilled to once again bring a world-class performer to Nashville," WES President Steve Hecklin said. "Joshua Nelson's artistic vision continues Dr. King's legacy by bringing people from all walks of life together."

At age 8, Nelson discovered an album by the late American Gospel singer Mahalia Jackson in his grandparents' record collection and the rest, as they say, is history. For Nelson, Kosher Gospel is a way to honor both parts of his cultural identity and audiences around the world are being inspired by his unique musical style.

He has been featured on the Oprah Winfrey Show, sung with stars from Aretha Franklin to the Klezmatics and is the subject of a feature documentary, "Keep on Walking." Nelson passes on his musical gift as artist-in-residence at synagogues around the country and his own congregation in New Jersey, where he taught Hebrew school for 15 years.

WES created its Concert and Cultural Series to share the richness and diversity of Jewish music with the greater Nashville community. The concert is made possible in part by the Janet Levine March Memorial Cultural Affairs Fund. □

## DEADLINES

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In the previous Observer, the Thank you ad listing Observer advertisers on page 2 incorrectly listed Fête Nashville Events & Design. We apologize for this error.

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Sara Fried

# This year in Washington: Jewish priorities to watch for

Continued from page 1

Bank and eastern Jerusalem building announcements – announced in retaliation for the Palestinians' successful bid for statehood recognition in the U.N. General Assembly – has earned a rebuke from the Obama administration. If Netanyahu wins Israeli elections on Jan. 22 and, as expected, forms another right-wing government, he may feel domestic political pressure to accelerate building in the West Bank and eastern Jerusalem.

The Palestinian Authority will be watching closely. It already has announced its intention to call for a renewal of negotiations with the precondition that Netanyahu freeze building in settlements and eastern Jerusalem. If that does not happen, Palestinian leaders say they will use their new U.N.-conferred status to seek war crimes charges against Israelis and suspend the security cooperation that has left the West Bank relatively quiet.

In this event, Israel likely would ask for U.S. diplomatic assistance to inhibit any Palestinian standing in the international court system. The collapse of Israeli-Palestinian defense cooperation, seen as a signature U.S. policy achievement over successive administrations, could force Obama into crisis-management mode.

Other sources of regional turmoil include an empowered Hamas, the struggle in Egypt fueled by the power seizures of President Mohamed Morsi and his Islamist backers, and the civil war in Syria.

## Iran

Ending months of tensions with Obama over what would be the trigger for a military strike on Iran, Netanyahu, in his September 2012 speech to the U.N. General Assembly, gave the United States some space to press forward with efforts to resume negotiations between Iran and the six major powers attempting to get it to halt its suspected nuclear weapons program.

Reportedly on the table from the United States are a lifting of some sanctions, including one that bans the sale of parts for civilian aircraft, and allowing Iran to enrich uranium to civilian-use levels, up to 5 percent. In exchange, Iran would agree to a much more intrusive inspections regimen by the International Atomic Energy, the U.N. nuclear watchdog.

Those terms do not please the pro-Israel community. A letter backed by the American Israel Public Affairs Committee urging Obama to enhance

existing sanctions and insist on no uranium enrichment has garnered the signatures of 73 U.S. senators.

The Iranian nuclear issue could be a source of tension between the Obama administration and Congress over the next year. And if talks fail to yield progress, the debate over Israeli or U.S. military action could heat up again.

## U.S. Supreme Court

The Supreme Court is considering at least two hot-button social issues that Jewish groups have weighed in on: same-sex marriage and affirmative action. Liberal Jewish groups have been strong supporters of same-sex marriage. Orthodox opponents of same-sex marriage worry that their religious freedom could be curtailed – for example, by penalizing a kosher caterer for refusing to provide services for a same-sex wedding.

The court will be weighing the constitutionality of the federal Defense of Marriage Act, which was passed in the 1990s and defined marriage as only between a man and a woman, as well as a California court ruling quashing a referendum that sought to ban same-sex marriage in that state. Liberal Jewish groups plan to join amicus briefs supporting same-sex marriage, while at least one Orthodox group, Agudath Israel of America, has indicated it will file on the other side.

Also on the docket, once again: race-based affirmative action in public university admissions. But whereas in previous cases major Jewish groups have been divided on the issue, this time they have lined up in support of the university policy favoring affirmative action. The Supreme Court already has heard arguments in the case, and its ruling is pending.

Liberal Jewish groups also are considering joining a defense of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which requires states once afflicted by Jim Crow to pre-clear district changes with Washington. Conservatives on the court have signaled that they are ready to retire the act. Obama's reelection, meanwhile, clears the way for the court's two older liberal judges to step down, although neither of them – Stephen Breyer, age 74, and Ruth Bader Ginsburg, 79 – have suggested they're interested in leaving. Ginsburg and Breyer, like the most recent appointee, Elena Kagan, are Jewish.

Justice Antonin Scalia reportedly has told friends he's thinking about retiring, but the staunch conservative may try to stick around until there is a Republican president to pick his successor. □

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# Teachers to meet their peers in P2G exchange program

Two Nashville preschool leaders – Melissa Worthington, director of the Gordon Jewish Community Center’s Early Childhood Learning Center, and Corye Nelson, director of The Temple Preschool – will participate in the Educators Delegation to Israel. The two were to spend a week in Israel, from Dec. 24 to Dec. 31, with fellow teachers, both American and Israeli.

The Educators Delegation is part of Nashville’s Partnership2Gether program, through which the Jewish Agency for Israel has partnered global Jewish communities directly with Israeli communities. The Jewish Federation of Nashville provides funding to make participation possible for the two teachers.

Nelson and Worthington will join 32 other teachers from the eight communities that participate with Nashville in the Southeast Consortium/Hadera Eiron partnership region. As part of the Educator’s Delegation exchange,



Temple Preschool Director Corye Nelson and GJCC Early Childhood Learning Center Director Melissa Worthington sort through the costumes they’ll be sharing with youngsters in Hadera, Israel. PHOTO: KATHY CARLSON

Nashville will host teachers from Israel next year.

“I’m looking forward to finally experiencing what you hear so much about,” Worthington said. It will be her first trip to Israel. She and Nelson spent a recent afternoon at the GJCC sorting through donated children’s costumes for Hadera kids to wear on Purim. Toys also have been donated by preschool parents.

“It’s an amazing opportunity,” Nelson said of the every-other-year visits to Israel. “It’s a fabulous partnership. I think we’re going to make some pretty strong connections.”

“The goal is for the ... Jewish Preschool Directors of Nashville to receive a firsthand education on Israeli life and to build relationships that will benefit our students, our families, and our communities,” Worthington wrote in an email to ECLC parents. “This is an honor I do not take lightly and I look forward to sharing my experience with the children of the ECLC and you.” □

# World’s Fair tells stories from Nashville to Ethiopia

Continued from page 1

On that day, the community celebrates the renewal of the alliance between the people, God and Torah. The community also prays, pleas to return to Zion and holds communal self-examination so that people can mend their ways to be worthy of returning to Jerusalem from exile.

Ethiopian Jews continued to observe the holiday in Israel, and the Knesset passed the Sigd Law-2008 and made the

29th of Heshvan a national holiday, the site says.

Kartoz-Doochin said she and Hadar will gather “some artifacts and pieces that give a representation of this festival and Ethiopian Jewry so people can have a feeling for some of the cultures that have become an important part of Israel now.”

Closer to home, three generations of women in one family share their traditions on a short video piece.

Raye Ann Greenbaum, daughters



Lori Fishel and Betsy Hoffman, and granddaughter Gracie Hoffman talk about their family’s traditions.

“We usually do Friday nights together,” said Lori Fishel. She, her brother and her sister used to live in different cities but moved to Nashville, where their parents live, to be closer together. The extended family includes six grandchildren ages 10-22.

“Basically we really talk about getting together as a family and trying to get together on Friday,” said Greenbaum. If the family can’t get together on Friday for Shabbat dinner, they choose another day but they all touch base once a week and celebrate Jewish holidays together.

“Everyone has their different memories (of times spent together),” Fishel said, “but in a way they’re all the same.”

For those looking for ideas for Shabbat, Dianne Berry is developing an exhibit. It will include a table set for Shabbat, complete with challah, plus menus with “good dishes to show people what they can do for their Shabbat,” she said.

“It’s very important,” Greenbaum said. “We make time to do it and it’s a priority for us. If you want to start something, it has to be a priority. ... You can’t just say that would be nice” and do nothing more.

“I do believe it’s perpetuated from generation to generation,” she continued. “I had grown up in that situation and loved it and wanted to make sure my

children had that feeling growing up.” It’s been gratifying to her to see grandchildren come home from college and want to spend time with the family.

To see the full story – and those of Barbara Cohen, Karen Weil and Joseph Weil; Deena Prichard and Ruth Sacks; and Tara Lerner, Matt Strauss and Craig Zimberg, you’ll have to come to the World’s Fair.

There’s also live theater and refreshments catered by Sova Catering. Organizers include Campaign Special Events Chair Karen Yazdian, Annual Campaign Chair Steve Hirsch and World’s Fair Exhibit Chair Sara Hanai. □

## It’s easy to attend

There is no charge to attend the World’s Fair. Reserve your space by Jan. 18 by contacting Barbara Schwarcz, events coordinator, at (615) 354-1630 or [barbara@jewishnashville.org](mailto:barbara@jewishnashville.org).

The performance is recommended for school-age children or older. Babysitting will be provided but reservations are required and also can be made by contacting Barbara Schwarcz.

You will have the opportunity to make your commitment to the 2013 Jewish Federation Annual Campaign. □

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# Camps Issue!

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# Community shlichah: 'Howdy' and 'Shalom' to Nashville

By **HADAR MOSKOVITZ**  
Community shlichah

It's hard to believe that I've only been in Nashville for four months. I feel very lucky to be part of this community! I would like to thank to all the great people that I have met so far. I appreciate your interest, curiosity, love and support for Israel. If we haven't yet met, I would love to see you at one of my upcoming programs! Or you can also invite me to come to your group or organization. I

would be happy to offer an Israel-themed program that fits your needs.

Here are some examples of the programs I've offered so far:

Hebrew Coffee – a twice-a-month program in which I teach conversational Hebrew. Good for all levels.

Sifriyat Pijama – a monthly Hebrew storytelling and activities, for families with at least one Hebrew speaking parent.

Religious School Educational Programs – for all ages and about various topics and issues related to Israel.



Staff of Nashville's Jewish agencies sample traditional foods at a Rosh Hashanah event at the Gordon Jewish Community Center.



Staff of Nashville's Jewish agencies sample traditional foods at a Rosh Hashanah event at the Gordon Jewish Community Center.



Hebrew Coffee participants gather at the Gordon Jewish Community Center.



Congregation Micah religious school students get acquainted with the map of Israel.



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Also: Speaking at Federation events, Hebrew language instruction at Akiva School, Get Connected pre-trip programs, Partnership2Gether activities, Jmingle events, NowGen and Hillel events and programs.

Part of my Shlichut is getting to know you and your community, so I would also be happy to join your group's events if my schedule allows. And, if you

plan to travel to Israel please contact me. I can suggest sites and offer contacts to make your trip even more meaningful.

The Community Shaliach Program is offered by the Jewish Agency for Israel and funded by the Jewish Federation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee.

Hope to see you soon להתראות

Hadar Moskovitz

Community Shlichah/ Educator

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# GJCC art show features 4 artists

The works of four artists will be exhibited at the Gordon Jewish Community Center this month. A reception for the artists will be held on Wednesday, Jan. 9 at the GJCC from 7-9 pm.

Doris Wasserman's paintings have been shown at Vanderbilt University and the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum and are part of many private collections in the United States and Canada. Wasserman was educated in Canada and has shown her works at The Temple, the Marnie Sheridan Gallery at Harpeth Hall School, and in the Watercolor Society Annual Exhibition at Cheekwood, among many other venues. In August 2010, her work was chosen as Best of Show in the National Arts Program at Vanderbilt.

Larry Martin lives in Tennessee with his wife and two cats. Although in his career he has worked in accounting, linguistics, music and financial management, Martin was always interested in art. He began painting seriously after he retired at age 65 and has been painting for 10 years now, working in oils on canvas, acrylics on canvas and watercolors on archival paper. His work includes jazz paintings, abstracts, landscapes, seascapes, sunrise-sunsets, florals, and other works he describes as "strange and odd combinations in vivid colors that just pop." Martin's paintings can be found in public and private art collections both in the United States and abroad.

Stacey Irvin is an award-winning



Photograph by Stacey Irvin

world and humanitarian photographer, freelance graphic designer and web developer in Nashville. Irvin has a bachelor's degree in philosophy from

Vanderbilt University. She travels and photographs worldwide, producing candid images that invite viewers to appreciate the individuality and integrity of her subjects while illuminating our shared humanity. Irvin is particularly interested in promoting preservation and appreciation of rural and indigenous cultures and is available for special projects, exhibits, speaking engagements and assignments worldwide.

GJCC Gallery Curator Carrie Mills will present paintings and mixed-media works. Mills is an accomplished artist and designer. She was awarded a scholarship to attend

Parsons School of Design in New York and went on to design for the studio of Anne Klein. Over the course of her career she has designed handbags, accessories and business products before moving to Nashville to pursue her music. While designing by day and singing and writing songs by night, Carrie joined the Plowhaus Gallery in East Nashville and discovered other sides to her artistic expression – photography, collage and painting. Much of her work is now commissioned and in many private collections. She has since established a name for herself painting pet portraits. □

## Register now for Alive Hospice grief support groups

Alive Hospice's winter grief support groups will begin meeting this month in Nashville, the organization said in a news release. Support is available for adults and children grieving the loss of loved ones.

Registration is required and continues through Friday, Jan. 4, or until the groups are full. To register or for more information, call the phone numbers listed for each group. There is a cost for participating, but this fee may be waived due to financial need.

Support groups in Nashville include the following:

Loss of Spouse: Two groups will meet in Nashville, one on Monday mornings and the other on Monday evenings.

Loss of Parent, Sibling or Other

Loved One (for adults): This support group for adults will meet on Tuesday evenings in Nashville.

Parents' Loss of Children: This ongoing support group meets every other Thursday evening in Nashville.

Children Experiencing Loss: This support group for children (ages 6-14) will meet on Monday evenings in Nashville.

To register for these four groups, call (615) 963-4732.

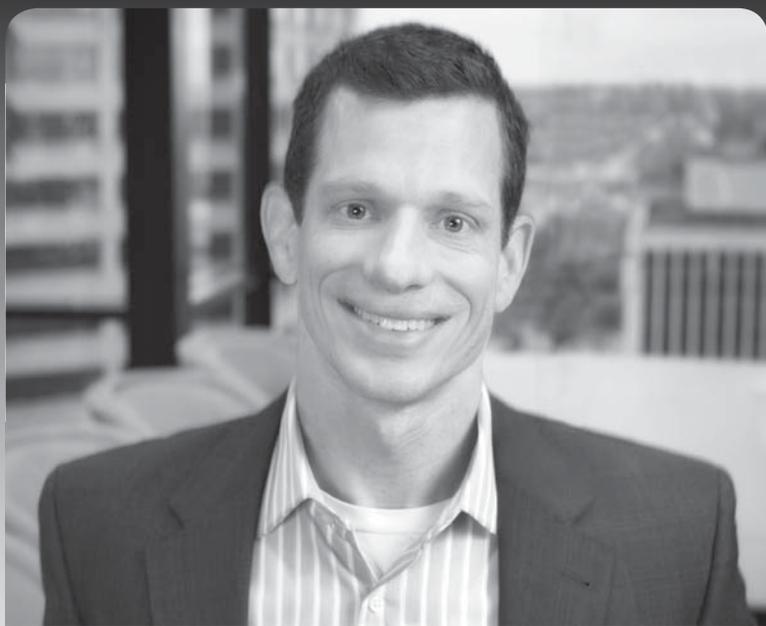
In addition, Alive Hospice offers Same-Sex Loss of Partner grief support

groups. Call 615-346-8364 for more information.

Support groups also are offered in Murfreesboro, Brentwood and Hendersonville. For information on these groups, go to [www.alivehospice.org](http://www.alivehospice.org).

Alive Hospice's grief support groups and individual counseling services are available to anyone who has experienced a loss, regardless of whether a loved one was served by Alive Hospice. Call (615) 963-4732 or visit [www.alivehospice.org](http://www.alivehospice.org) for more information. □

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The 2012 Akiva Lions pose with Coach Doug Friedman. They've added a ninth player for the 2013 season.

## Experienced Akiva team hits b-ball court this month

Did you know that Akiva School has a student basketball team? Last year, the fourth-grade Akiva boys played in the West Nashville Sports League Basketball League as the Akiva Lions.

Each week, the boys met to practice and play a game. As the season progressed, the athletes showed tremendous improvement in their skill and teamwork.

"From the first day of practice, the kids played hard and listened. They were extremely competitive and enjoyed coming to practice each week! Our scrimmages were fun, and I think that they enjoyed playing against each other even more than playing the games!" said coach Doug Friedman.

The support that the players received was unbelievable, as their classmates and their teacher, Liza Dansky, attended several of the games. This is not surprising, as it represents the community atmosphere that Akiva promotes!

"My main 3 goals were in the following order: 1. Have fun. 2. Learn basketball and practice teamwork. 3. Play hard and support each other," Friedman said.

"We accomplished each of the goals as the boys continued to improve and ended up winning three of their last four games."

After winning their final game, the Akiva Lions celebrated a big achievement. They were one of the few teams recognized in the league with a large trophy for their sportsmanship and competitive spirit. They displayed the trophy in their classroom for the rest of the year with tremendous pride.

As the coach, Friedman said his proudest moment has been that all eight of the players from last year's team came back to the team this year. To top it off, they have added a ninth player. All nine boys in the Akiva fifth grade are on the team this year. They are practicing and will begin their season in January. □



## Akiva Corner

### New kindergarten teacher discovers home at Akiva

By **JESSICA FARMER**  
Akiva Kindergarten General Studies Teacher

I found Akiva almost on a whim. This past June I was visiting family in my hometown of Nashville. I had recently graduated from Erikson Institute in Chicago where I received my master's degree in early childhood education. During my time in Chicago, I worked as an assistant teacher at the Francis W. Parker School, where I learned with progressive, innovative teachers who advocated for their children's learning with grace and vigor, inspiring me to do the same.

When I received my master's degree this past spring, I was hungry for my own classroom. I wanted to build a secure kindergarten community where children worked together, grew to accept both the differences and similarities among their peers, and advocated for each other. In academics, I wanted kids to experience mathematical concepts in ways that felt like play, to serve them later when solving algebraic equations or geometry proofs in high school. I wanted a classroom of young learners to think of themselves as readers, writers, and storytellers, in charge of their creativity with a voice that was to be heard. I thought I would find this opportunity in Chicago. I found it at Akiva School in my hometown of Nashville.

I am a general studies kindergarten teacher at Akiva and I love my job. Our kindergarten is an amazingly small group of eight passionate children, eager to question, eager to debate, and eager to play! I work to build autonomy and confidence into the social and independent learning experience of each child. For example, we engage in a daily literacy practice of independent reading and writing as well as daily choice time, where I navigate the challenging negotiations and compromises that confront all children in free play with peers. In literacy, each week we restock our personal book boxes with both child choices and teacher recommendations that support appropriate reading levels.

In addition to our traditional, explicit reading instruction, each Friday we engage in storytelling and dramatization. With our small class size, the assistant and I are able to dictate each child's original story on a weekly basis. This dictation activity connects personal meaning to the child's concept of print and relays the message that their imaginative stories have value and space in our classroom. After dictation, the children

perform their stories for the group. The physical practice of story-acting scaffolds the child's understanding of narrative. The children may choose to play characters, settings, or audience members in the short plays. We are in the process of discussing how much freedom the actor has from the written script. What does it mean to truly be a character, an author, or a playwright in kindergarten collaboration?

Nearly every activity brings with it a new inquiry to be fostered by the teacher. In our child-centered classroom one of our weekly jobs is peacekeeper. When conflicts happen, often a fellow student outside of the problem is more skilled at resolution than a teacher. In this leadership role, the children experience the serious work that peacekeeping entails.

Lastly, Akiva's dual-language curriculum was an exciting connection to my graduate study of dual language learning. In my Erikson ESL (English as a Second Language) classes we studied the complexity and benefits of bilingualism for young children. For example, researchers argue that multilingual children develop a strong concept of the arbitrary essence of linguistic symbols, building a foundational understanding of the symbolism that is necessary to participate in any academic endeavor. The community of Erikson Institute stressed the obligation of teachers to honor each child's cultural and familial linguistic identity, and with it, the child's unique process of developing and maintaining bilingualism.

Each day our kindergarteners are instructed in Hebrew and Judaic studies led by Morah Daniella Pressner, who also serves as Akiva's head of Judaic studies. Morah Daniella models a multisensory approach to language learning, accessing the children's unique needs in acquiring or refining the Hebrew language. The collaborative rapport with which she operates serves as a constant reminder to me of the benefit of working in the intimate setting of Akiva School.

The work with classroom parents has been one of the most rewarding parts of our small classroom setting. Similar to my relationship with Morah Daniella, the parents often teach me, sharing their child's history, struggles, and growth. Akiva's nurturing environment has fostered the confidence in me to reach out and ask the hard questions of parents and colleagues as we engage in the important work of teaching our children about the citizenship of school and ultimately the world at large. I am happy to be home and to have found Akiva School in Nashville. □

## Music, humor reign at Sherith Israel's 'SPBS' event

Members of the Nashville Jewish community who attended last year's "Shtetel Home Companion" at Sherith Israel will be happy to know that the same creative writers and producers are planning a new show, called "SPBS, An Evening of Great Humor, Great Music and Great Food," scheduled for Saturday, Jan. 26, at 7 p.m. Anyone who accidentally missed last year's show will want to make a special point of attending "SPBS" this year.

SPBS producer and creative director Jonathan Yudkin said, "Our shows are original and specially written for the Sherith Israel fundraisers. We want people who attend to have a unique experience that is worthy of their contribution to the synagogue. The feedback we got from last year's show was overwhelmingly positive and those who missed it will now have a chance to enjoy an evening of humor and music held together with duct tape, baling wire, and Elmer's

school glue. Warning to those allergic to comedy — this show was created in a nut-filled environment." The show, with its original comedy script and music, will feature professional musicians and members of Sherith Israel.

The co-producer of last year's "Shtetel Home Companion," Adele Berkon, said, "As fabulous as last year's show was, this year's show, 'SPBS,' promises to be even better. Roy and I invite all our friends to join us on Jan. 26 for a night of wonderful entertainment and desserts."

The doors will open at 7 p.m. on the night of the performance and cocktails will be served. The performance will be at 8 p.m. and a lavish dessert catered by Bobbie Limor will follow the show.

Early-bird tickets will be available until Wednesday, Jan. 16; tickets thereafter will be full price. Call the Sherith Israel office at (615) 292-6614 for more information or to purchase tickets. To purchase tickets online, go to [www.sherithisrael.com](http://www.sherithisrael.com). □



### Sympathy

... to the family and friends of **Albert "Cookie" Irvin Wolf**, who died on Dec. 19 at age 87 at Methodist Hospice Residence in Memphis. He was the widower of Faye Fisher Wolf and is survived by his two daughters, Lainie Feigenbaum (David) and Maureen Gordon (Doug), along with four grandchildren, Lissa Klein (Dan), Michael Feigenbaum, Barry Gordon, and Nikki Gordon, and his great-grandson, Samuel Ethan Klein. The family requests that any memorials be sent to Temple Israel Memphis, The Temple Nashville, or the Methodist Hospice Residence.

Pollack and Casey and Marley Elinger. Memorials may be made to Alive Hospice.

... to the family of **David Belsky**, who died on Dec. 22 at age 75. Mr. Belsky was born in Brooklyn, grew up in New Rochelle, N.Y. and spent much of his adult life in New York City, but lived for the past quarter century in Murfreesboro. He is survived by his wife, Janet, and son, Thomas. A celebration of his life will be held at a later date.

... to the family of **Kenneth Chalal**, who died on Dec. 22. Funeral services took place in Philadelphia. He is survived by his son, Dr. Richard (Betsy) Chalal.

... to the family and friends of **Hedy (Chaya) Pollack**, who passed away on Dec. 20. She is survived by her children, Mark (Wendy) Pollack, Robin (Jerry) Elinger and Annette Pollack, and her grandchildren, Shawn, Asher and Bennett

... to the family of **Charlotte Nelson**, who died on Dec. 26. She is survived by her granddaughter, Caryn (Benjamin) Tamber-Rosenau, and extended family members.



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# Noted ceramics artist Sylvia Hyman dies at 95

Sylvia Hyman, whose trompe l'oeil ceramic pieces captured the look and feel of a canvas tote bag, sheet music, an old violin case, a pencil, dice – even fresh eggs, died on Dec. 23. She was 95.

Ms. Hyman participated in art exhibits through last year, when her work was shown at The Temple Arts Festival. Before that show, she spoke about how she developed her signature works after a career as an art teacher.

“After many years of working with clay in more or less traditional ways, I ventured in a new direction about 20 years ago when my imagination turned to a form of sculpture known as ‘trompe l’oeil’ (to fool the eye),” she wrote in an artist’s statement for the Festival.

The porcelain clay she used looked like paper when fired to a high temperature, she said. That inspired her to create items that looked like paper – diplomas, envelopes, letters.

She branched out into other paper objects – books and scrolls, for example. Learning how to screen-print onto wet clay allowed her to incorporate the written word into her works, sheet music and old maps that looked so real that it seemed you could turn a page.

“To enhance the deception, my work also includes the use of stoneware clay, which I use to make containers that imitate corrugated cardboard and wooden boxes. Bases for my sculpture that appear to be marble, leather, or metal are made of either porcelain or stoneware,” she wrote.



Sylvia Hyman in her studio in 2007.

“...My fascination with the ability of human beings to communicate thoughts in diverse ways by using diagrams, maps, numbers, written languages, musical notes, and various other kinds of markings, is the impetus that underlies the theme of my work.”

In 2007, Ms. Hyman’s works were shown at the Frist Center for Visual Arts in an exhibit titled “Sylvia Hyman: Fictional Clay.” The show honored her on her 90th birthday.

Also that year, Nashville’s Film House produced a 23-minute documentary, “Sylvia Hyman: Eternal Wonder.” The film premiered at the Nashville Film Festival and was produced with the contribution of the Frist Center, where parts of it were featured in the exhibit. The film was updated in 2009 and is available on DVD.

“Sylvia’s work is completely unconventional and really pushes the boundaries of her medium,” Film House Chief Executive Officer Curt Hahn said in a 2007 news release. “Making this film has been an absolute delight. We’ve been able to spend time with her and really delve into the career of one of Nashville’s most beloved artists.”

Ms. Hyman is survived by her husband, Arthur Gunzberg; son Paul M. (Myrna) Hyman; daughter Jackie Diamond Hyman and son-in-law Kurt Wilson; stepson Guy (Joan) Gunzberg; and grandsons, step-grandsons and step-great-grandsons.

Funeral arrangements for Ms. Hyman were incomplete at press time. □

## around the town

### WES Adult Education

Starting on Sunday, Jan. 13, West End Synagogue is offering two adult education courses. Ruthi Sacks will teach Hebrew for Adults, a six-session course in which beginners can learn to read Hebrew and others can brush up on their skills to make services more meaningful.

The classes will be held in Room 204 of West End Synagogue Room 204 on the following Sundays: January 13, 20 and 27 and February 3, 10 and 17. Sacks will teach Beginners Hebrew from 9-10 a.m. and Advanced Beginners Hebrew from 10-11 a.m.

A second course for adults is titled ‘Text Messaging’ with God: An Exploration of Jewish Liturgy. This course also runs for six sessions on the same six Sundays and takes place from 10:45 a.m. to noon in the East Chapel. Each Sunday session has a different theme and different teacher. Teachers include Rabbi Joshua Barton, assistant director of Vanderbilt Hillel; Rabbi

Shlomo Rothstein of Chabad Jewish Student Center at Vanderbilt; WES Cantor Marcia Lane, Rabbi Saul Strosberg of Congregation Sherith Israel, Rabbi Shana Mackler of The Temple; Rabbi David Harary, former spiritual leader of the Farmingdale Jewish Center in New York, and Michael Rose, associate professor of composition at the Blair School of Music. Information on each session is found at [www.westendsyn.org](http://www.westendsyn.org).

### WES Sisterhood, Men's Club Shabbats

On Sisterhood Shabbat, set for Saturday, Jan. 19, the morning service is presented entirely by the women of the West End Synagogue Sisterhood. There are many opportunities to participate, so please contact Ellen Vinocur Potash, [ellenpotash@gmail.com](mailto:ellenpotash@gmail.com), for more information or to volunteer for your role in this service.

The WES Men's Club Shabbat will be held on the following Saturday, Jan. 26.

### Upcoming Jewish Learning Institute course tackles ethical issues

Nashville’s Jewish Learning Institute presents an all-new, Winter 2013 course, “Living with Integrity: Navigating Everyday Ethical Dilemmas,” starting in February.

Rabbi Yitzchok Tiechtel will conduct the six course sessions at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesdays, starting Feb. 6, at Chabad of Nashville. The course has been accredited for nine hours of dual continuing legal education credit in the state of Tennessee, Rabbi Tiechtel said in a news release.

“There’s a lot of talk about ethics for government and big corporations, but almost every day we confront complex ethical decisions in our own relationships,” Tiechtel, Nashville’s JLI instructor, said. “From nanny cams to our responsibilities to our parents, Living with Integrity will provide a framework for making balanced decisions for ourselves and for the people we care about.”

Like all previous JLI programs, Living with Integrity is designed to appeal to people at all levels of Jewish knowledge, including those without any prior experience or background in Jewish learning. All JLI courses are open to the public, and attendees need not be affiliated with a particular synagogue, temple, or other house of worship.

Interested students may call (615) 646-5750 or visit [www.myJLI.com](http://www.myJLI.com) for registration and other course-related information. JLI is the adult education branch of Chabad, and courses are presented in Nashville in conjunction with Chabad of Nashville.

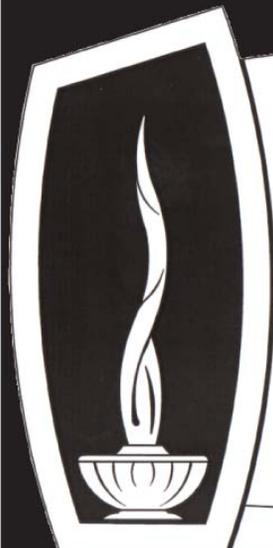
JLI offers programs in more than 300 U.S. cities and throughout the world. More than 320,000 students have attended JLI classes since the organization was founded in 1998. Every JLI course is offered concurrently in all locations, helping create a true global learning community. □

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# In Obama's second term, will Israel-Palestinian issues cause sparks or be on back burner?

By **RON KAMPEAS**

WASHINGTON (JTA) – Is history about to repeat itself?

President Obama's first three years in office saw some serious tussling with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the peace process and settlements. Now, with Obama beginning his second term and Netanyahu looking pretty certain to win this month's Israeli elections, will there be a replay of past tensions?

Not for now, experts suggest, saying that the Obama administration does not seem eager to wade back into the Israeli-

Palestinian morass – preferring to keep it on the back burner.

David Makovsky, director of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy's Project on the Middle East Peace Process, dismissed as overblown pre-election suggestions that Obama would ramp up pressure on Israel over the peace process in his second term.

"I don't think a lot of the political physics are suspended in a second term," he said. "... Obama's going to want to use his replenished political capital carefully."

Makovsky said that between tough negotiations with the Republicans on fis-

cal issues and foreign policy challenges looming – including Iran's nuclear program and tumult in the Middle East – Obama is not going to make Israeli-Palestinian issues a priority.

Moreover, Makovsky suggested, there is no clear opening right now for a breakthrough.

"It's probably safe to assume that right now there's no grand deal to be done between Israelis and Palestinians," Makovsky said.

Steve Rosen, a former foreign policy director of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee who has previously

criticized Obama for pressuring Israel, said that the president seems to have accepted that there are limits to what Americans can do without willing partners.

"I think Obama no longer buys the catechism that we are this close to an agreement and all we need is presidential involvement," Rosen said. "I don't think it's just a political calculation or he's distracted or he's afraid of the pro-Israel lobby. He never had a secret plan to go for broke after the elections. The plan was ascribed to him by a combination of people on the right who feared it and people on the left who dreamed of it."

American journalist Peter Beinart recently wrote in *The Daily Beast* that the Obama administration, frustrated with Netanyahu, had decided to pursue a policy of "benign neglect" toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Beinart, a prominent critic of Israel's policies toward the Palestinians, cited unnamed administration officials who said that while the U.S. would still provide military and diplomatic assistance to Israel, it would no longer push to re-launch direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

"Senior administration officials believe the Israeli leader has no interest in the wrenching compromises necessary to birth a viable Palestinian state," Beinart wrote. "Instead, they believe, he wants the façade of a peace process because it insulates him from international pressure. By refusing to make that charade possible, Obama officials believe, they are forcing Netanyahu to own his rejectionism, and letting an angry world take it from there."

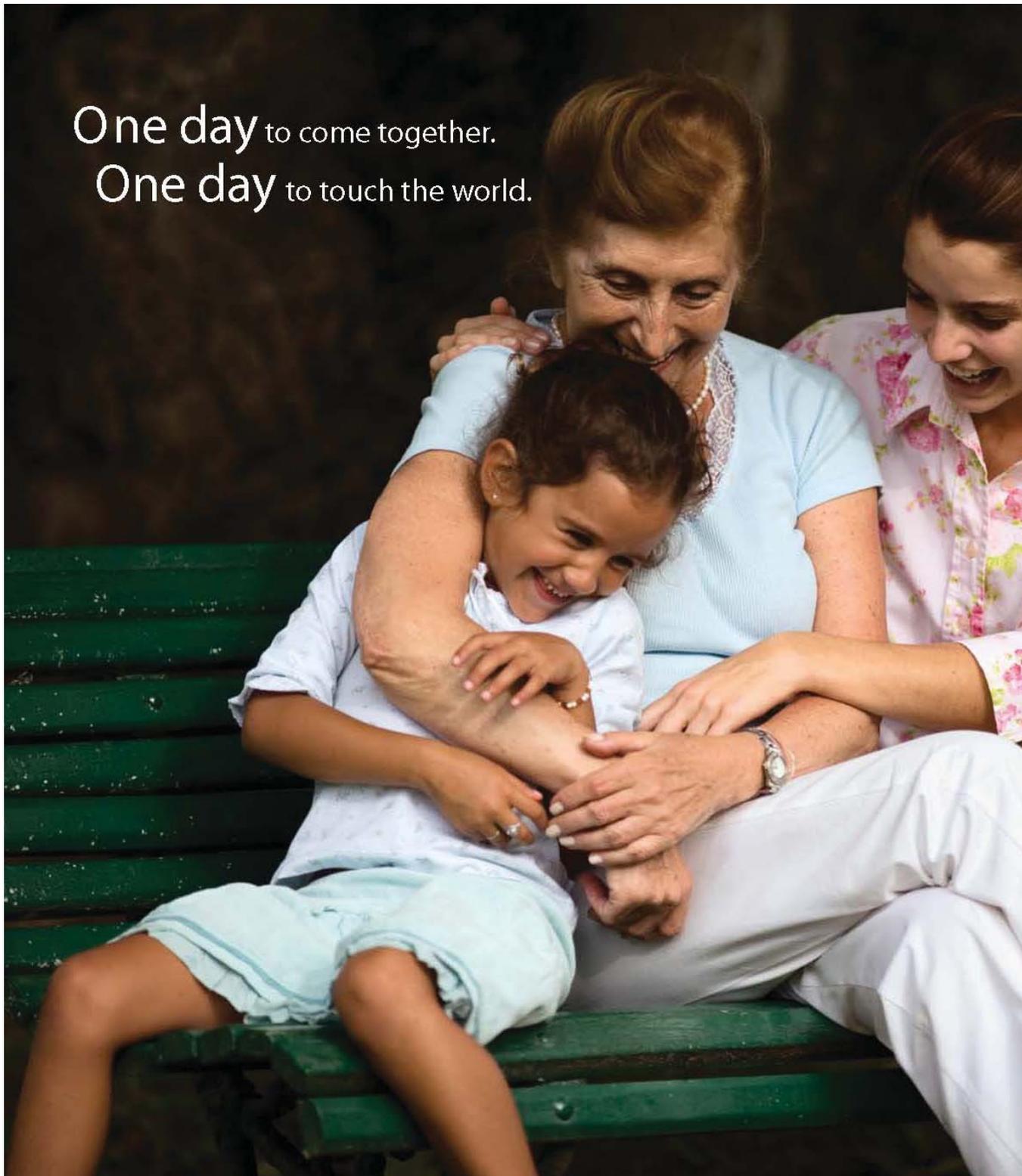
But in an interview with reporters earlier this month, Israel's ambassador to the United States, Michael Oren, said that the two countries were in agreement that the fault for the lack of negotiations belongs to the Palestinians, who have refused to rejoin talks in the absence of a settlement freeze.

"Our position remains unchanged – we are willing to negotiate with the Palestinians, today, not tomorrow, in Washington, Jerusalem, Ramallah, wherever, directly without preconditions on all the core issues to reach peace," Oren said. "That's not only our position, that's the position of President Obama and the administration."

Aaron David Miller, a former Middle East negotiator under both Republican and Democratic administrations, agreed that Obama is likely to pull back from engaging with the Israeli-Palestinian issue, having been burned by it in the past. He also said that Obama needs to maintain amicable relations with Netanyahu as he works to find a non-military solution to the Iranian nuclear issue.

But Miller predicted that the president would eventually reengage, if only because he did not want to be remembered as the president who let the two-state solution die.

"It doesn't mean he has to rush, but I'm betting you that by the time he's done, he'll have engaged in some way on the Israeli-Palestinian issue," said Miller, a vice president for new initiatives at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington. □



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## Welcome to the Observer's 2013 Simchas & Celebrations Guide

Welcome to the Observer's 2013 Simchas and Celebrations Guide

Whether you're planning a once-in-a-lifetime event or an impromptu get-together, knowledge is power. So every year the Observer gathers together information and insights from local businesses – along with timely articles – to help you put together whatever event you choose – be it a wedding, bar and bat mitzvah, anniversary, birthday or a block party with neighbors.

Take a look at the articles in this 2013 Simchas and Celebrations issue for some great ideas to organize your event, find invitations, caterers, music, venues, gifts and more. There are ways to customize your celebration, no matter what your budget is.

Sometimes it seems so difficult to find the right vendors to provide the goods and services that will create a special atmosphere to enhance the joy and spirit for our parties. The articles and advertisements in this Simchas and Celebrations issue help make it a breeze to choose memorable gifts and prepare for your big event. For do's and don'ts on making toasts, read on. There's guidance on weddings, including tips and tactics recent brides wish they had known.

Our advertisers' years of experience in bringing dreams to reality have resulted in simcha celebrations that range from warm and intimate to sophisticated and elaborate.

When you contact any of the businesses advertising here, please let them know you found them through the Observer's Simchas and Celebrations issue.

Working with them, you can bring your personal touch to your event and create an experience that you and your guests will remember for years to come.

Kathy Carlson, Editor  
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# To craft an event with personal flair, turn to these specialists

**B**ehind every successful occasion, large or small, there's a team of people making it work. The team can include special venues, special menus, lodging for out-of-towners, party planners and more. Even a low-key gathering can use a little extra help, perhaps in the form of unusual foods or just the right vintage wine. These local vendors and services can help you pull together all the elements of a wonderful event.

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At Nashville Delicatessen, our goal is simple: to prepare and serve the highest quality food in a friendly, comfortable atmosphere. Nashville is not only a delicious place to visit for breakfast, lunch and dinner (Midtown only), but is also great for catering.

Whether you are getting together at the office or entertaining at home we will customize your menu to meet your individual needs, offering a wide variety of assorted trays, platters and box lunches.

Nashville also has three locations that can be reserved for private parties: Cool Springs, Green Hills and Midtown. Anything from wedding rehearsal din-

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Come see why Nashville has been voted Best Delicatessen every year since 1997 and remember Nashville is an eating experience, not just a place to eat! So, "Make Your Mother Happy...Eat and Enjoy!" Visit our website at [www.nashville.com](http://www.nashville.com) for more details.

## Treat guests to comfortable stay at Hampton - Green Hills

Complete confidence that out-of-town guests will feel "right at home" is a primary concern for every host or hostess, no matter what the social event that draws your visitors. Hampton Inn & Suites - Green Hills specializes in just that: making our home, their home away from home, while attending your special event.

We are a boutique-style select-service hotel right in the heart of Green Hills, a fantastic shopping, dining and entertainment district. We can offer

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The atrium-style sixth-floor Belle Meade room offers a dynamic view of the Green Hills area, perfect for brunches, luncheons, rehearsal dinners, receptions, and birthday parties. To keep your visitors entertained during those free times of your special event, we are within walking distance of the Mall at Green Hills, fifteen restaurants, and a sixteen-screen cinema.

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## Restore special jewelry with Belle Meade Jewelry & Repair

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Very few jewelry shops specialize only in repairs. Often people are hesitant to leave their valuable pieces in fear of having them sent out to a third party. We offer while-you-wait repairs and since we are located next to a Starbucks we can size a ring or repair a chain in the amount of time it takes to drink a latte.

Our goal each and every time is to treat your jewelry with respect and make every effort to restore each piece to its original condition. The mark of an expert repair is when a customer cannot tell where the item has been mended. When this is done properly you haven't changed the piece, you've just made it functional again. We understand that oftentimes jewelry has been handed down from a loved one and may have a great deal of sentimental value.

## Turn to Hutton Hotel to celebrate life's milestones

Happy fourth anniversary to The Hutton Hotel. The Hutton has become a staple in the market for first-class accommodations, ideal for weddings, bar and bat mitzvahs and or any other celebration. The hotel's amenities and customer service, combined with a commitment to the environment and to the community, sets them apart from other venues. Jane Bubis, of JB Events, states, "I have coordinated many Bar and Bat Mitzvah celebrations at the Hutton Hotel. My clients are always happy and their guests have a great time in a lovely event space that can be transformed into any theme."

National publications such as Conde Nast Traveler, New York Times Style Magazine, and The Wall Street Journal praise the Hutton Hotel. Located in the heart of Midtown, the Hutton Hotel is a perfect spot for the guest of honor and those attending the special occasion. The Vista Ballroom has fourteen-foot windows overlooking the Nashville skyline and, with the top-rated amenities the Hutton Hotel offers, you are guaranteed to have a memorable event.

## With DK Ideas, gatherings reflect personal style

Diane Kimbrough is known for producing events with personality. From initial consult to coordination of the last detail, DK Ideas will bring excitement to all your life cycle events.

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opment of their event, while others enjoy the freedom of having an expert on board to manage everything. Diane moves easily and confidently among them all, creating the perfect atmosphere and tailoring each event to individual tastes and needs.

When you're blessed with a simcha, Diane is there to help you create a unique, personal expression that brings your celebration to life. "The greatest service I can give my clients is the confidence to completely relax and enjoy this once-in-a-lifetime experience."

DK Ideas clients say it best:

"Thank you, Diane, for your creativity and calm efficiency with Vivian's Bat Mitzvah. Your talents allowed us to enjoy without worry. You have great ideas and your special touches truly put you in a class by yourself. I absolutely loved working with you."

- Risa Herzog

"The first day I met with Diane is the day that all the stress left my body and all the fun began! Diane is AMAZING at organizing, creating, and making it all come together perfectly! My daughter's Bat Mitzvah was truly a joyful celebration."

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Contact DK Ideas because life is worth celebrating!

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### Sperry's combines tradition, great flavors at 2 locations

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Sperry's Restaurant, known for its undisputed attention to culinary detail, Southern hospitality and inviting ambiance, can accommodate an intimate dinner for two or help you entertain a memorable party for 75.

In addition to being one of the best steakhouses in Nashville, Sperry's boasts an extensive wine list with more than 188 selections, and a weekly happy hour that features unbeatable deals on martinis, wines and spirits and small-plate food options, fondly called Burton's Bites

after owner Al Thomas' grandfather Burton Sperry.

Must-try menu items at Sperry's include beef entrees, Sperry's famous salad bar complete with homemade green goddess dressing and the bananas foster dessert.

Sperry's Restaurants are located in Belle Meade at 5109 Harding Road just past the Belle Meade Plantation, and in Cool Springs at 650 Frazier Drive next to Thomasville Furniture. Go to Sperrys.com for more information and to make reservations.

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### Bud's helps you choose beverages for a couple or a crowd

With the new year come new plans to socialize and entertain, to mark life's big events, and to just relax. Whether you're planning a small gathering or hosting an extravagant dinner party, wine, liquor and liqueurs are essential ingredients to a great experience.

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Continued on page 6

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Continued from page 5  
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Contact lenses are medical devices that contact the surface of the eye. If the lenses are not cleaned properly each night and replaced on schedule, harmful deposits and bacteria accumulate in greater concentration. Sonsino says, "I often hear horror tales of patients replacing lenses far past their expiration, sleeping in lenses not designed for this, and not replacing their storage cases. If they knew of the potential for lost eyesight, most people would not continue these habits."

A recent study published in the Journal of the American Academy of Optometry showed that young males were more likely to exhibit non-compliant wear of their contact lenses. The optometrists at Optique recommend nightly rubbing and rinsing of contact lenses, replacing storage cases monthly, and complying with the replacement schedule of the specific lenses.

"I often get the question of why do I have to rub my lenses if the solution package says No Rub? My answer is that just because they advertise hamburgers from fast food on TV, doesn't make them safe and healthy," says Sonsino.

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# Don't burn the toast: Tips for crafting one that's praiseworthy

JointMedia News Service

**H**ilarious, boring, cringe-worthy—you've heard them all. And now it's your turn to take the stage, get up in front of hundreds of your closest friends and family (or strangers), and deliver a wedding toast. Be you in the wedding party, a parent of the bride or groom, or a guest, there are some simple rules to follow to ensure your words are received well by the audience.

JNS spoke with Toastmasters International President Michael Notaro and Executive Director Daniel Rex to determine how to craft a great toast. Save yourself the trouble of begging to fast-forward "that part" in the wedding video for years to come, and follow some of the suggestions below.

## 1. Be brief.

"Be concise. It's not about you, or a grand performance, it's about the couple," Rex suggests. Both Notaro and Rex advise one to two minutes for the aver-

age toast, and three to four minutes if you are the primary toaster.

## 2. Plan ahead.

"A lot of times people think they can wing wedding toasts, but that's not a good idea. Rehearse it. Plan ahead, think about what you're going to say. Come up with a good solid humorous anecdote that's about the couple; not too personal, not something that crosses any boundaries with your group," Rex says.

## 3. If you're not naturally funny, don't try to be. Or get help.

"If you're not naturally funny, don't try and force yourself into something you're not. It's not a comedy show; the objective is to give honor to the bride and to the groom. I favor being sincere and telling a sincere story concerning the bride and the groom, something that brings out something about their character that is positive and uplifting to the audience, that shows why this person would be successful or happy in the relationship," Notaro says.

Yet, if you'd like to go for it, Notaro

suggests self-deprecating humor as "always the safe place to be."

If you're set on delivering a comedic toast, Rex suggests to rehearse it in front of a smaller audience first. "If you know you have a challenge being funny, go find someone who's funny and have them help you," Rex advises.

## 4. Curb the drinking until after the toast.

"Do not get drunk; I've seen many people give wedding toasts who've had too much to drink, and embarrass themselves and everybody around them, certainly the bride and the groom," Notaro says.

## 5. Don't be afraid to weave in the cultural aspects, just know your audience.

"Attributes to any type of cultural and religious wedding that are personal and dear to the couple and the family... can be part of the toast. Whether it's terminology, or a cultural aspect of how they will live as a couple. At many weddings, though, there is a wide variety of attendees, so you might need to explain a bit, and that acknowledges the diversity that's there," Rex says.

## 6. A general process to follow.

Both Notaro and Rex have processes they follow when writing a toast.

Notaro: "I write the person's name out. I like to start with adjectives that describe the person's character: loving, considerate, maybe impetuous, and think about the things in their life that are important to her. I start to write some of those things down, and then I think about those adjectives and descriptors in terms of the new life they're going to have with their husband. Then I weave those into a brief toast. It's a little bit of a gestalt creative process. I write down the ideas, then I sleep on it."

"You've got those salient points that make the person unique, and then other people at the wedding reception will say, 'That's them!'"

Rex: "Start with a broad outline of the story you want to tell. A welcome and acknowledgement of the people who are there and are significant in the life of the couple (parents, etc.). Work into why it's a special event or how you first got acquainted with them as a couple; that's where the humor can come in—great wishes for future life, family."

"Take it from a broad outline, and make it more specific. You don't want to take it to a place where it's word for word. Don't read it or speak it, you'll lack sincerity with the group."

According to Rex, the horrible toasts are those "where the toasters are a little tipsy, or where the jokes are inside jokes, only known to a handful of people there." □

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# Brides reflect: the most important takeaways for wedding planning

By **ALINA DAIN SHARON**  
JNS.org

**O**n my wedding day last fall, I was very nervous. My husband and I planned our celebration, to be held in Chicago, entirely on our own and all the way from Boston. We were also combining a Russian-Jewish family with a Sabra-Israeli family, and members of each took long flights to the U.S. for the wedding.

Needless to say, there were cultural and logistical difficulties from the start. Add to that the typical “Murphy’s Law” of weddings (our rabbi’s computer broke on the day, deleting all the notes he made for our ceremony), and it was a stressful prologue to the big day.

While the actual wedding was ultimately a happy occasion, looking back, there were things I wish I had known or done differently to ease my stress during the planning stages.

JointMedia News Service (JNS) decided to collect advice from a few brides to save future ones unnecessary angst. Follow their advice, and aside from potential technological glitches, your wedding day should be not only special, but also less stressful.

## Hire a wedding planner

“We used a wedding planner, which I would highly recommend to other brides if you find the right one for you,” said Amy Beth Green Sayegh, a Chicago actuary who got married in August of 2010. Using the planner turned out to be cheaper, Sayegh said, because she was well acquainted with the vendor packages in the area, and knew how to get the biggest bang for the buck.

Sayegh saw the value of a planner’s experience firsthand when she decided to select a photographer on her own. At their reception, the photographer wasn’t cooperative. He later refused to deliver on a promised photo-book and lost some of their pictures.

## Make friends, families more than just spectators

Nurit Friedberg, a social worker from Cincinnati, got married in June of last year. She said it’s important to involve both families in the celebration. “We accomplished this by inviting both of our rabbis to co-officiate. ... They were able to give us great advice on how to incorporate special details in the ceremony, such as my husband’s Zaidy’s tallit or my great-grandmother’s candlesticks.”

For Friedberg’s ceremony, her grandmother wove the chuppah, her aunt cre-

ated the ketubah, and family friends were involved in other aspects, such as playing the music. “Everything was more meaningful because it was created by someone we love,” she said.

Yael Mazor-Garfinkle married her husband in July 2011 in Lawrence, Mass., and asked a close friend from cantorial school to officiate their wedding.

“She took our vision for our ceremony and transformed it into a communal celebration,” Mazor-Garfinkle said. The wedding processional was sung by the bride’s sister, the groom’s aunt, and the officiator, and was accompanied by the groom’s uncle on guitar. The couple also asked seven sets of loved ones to read personally written blessings.

## Be prepared for difficulties

Sayegh’s mother always told her throughout the wedding planning process that weddings can make people very nervous. Sometimes incorporating different families into one celebration, and ultimately one life, can be challenging. Sayegh’s husband is Sephardic and the son of parents from Syria and Egypt. Due to some cultural differences and wedding nerves, it took time for everyone to establish the good relationship they have now.

Remember, your wedding day is about YOU and your beloved; make it a day you will love.

Alexander Polatsky and Inna Yalovetskaya from Phoenix, Ariz., got married in May of 2010 in an Orthodox ceremony, despite the fact that their fam-

ilies were mostly secular. “It was so hard to plan an Orthodox ceremony with parents who were not so into it. They knew nothing about it, they’ve never even seen one,” Yalovetskaya said. The bride’s mother found the experience especially stressful and weird, and had a minor emotional breakdown before the ceremony.

“We had a difficult time picking a rabbi who would want to do an Orthodox ceremony but would understand that the people would not be Orthodox and that the entire party hereafter would be held at La Mirage, which is a non-Kosher restaurant,” Polatsky also said. They also struggled to find an affordable kosher caterer to supply food just for those guests who require it.

At the end of the ceremony, the bride’s mother relaxed and decided she actually liked the wedding. “Make the wedding that you want to have for yourself and the one you want to remember. It’s OK if it’s the wedding that everyone else wants as long as it’s the wedding that you want.” At the same time, “try to be nice and accommodating as possible because it supposed to be for the whole family,” Yalovetskaya said.

At my own wedding, everything ultimately came together into the most beautiful day of our lives. The rabbi somehow ad-libbed a wonderful chuppah ceremony, my parents got over “losing” their only daughter and I married my best friend.

As Sayegh said, “It’s your life together that’s important, and the marriage, not the wedding day.” □

## What I wish I’d known: Important wedding tips from brides

By **ALINA DAIN SHARON**  
JNS.org

Add these ideas to your checklist and calendar for an enjoyable wedding:

- A ketubah can take nearly six weeks to be ready so order early.
- Order flower girl dresses with the wedding dress because they can take up to 6 months to be ready. Alternatively, buy dresses directly from a store. Quinceañera stores are a good option.
- Hire a driver. It’s a lot easier to have someone who knows where to go.
- A rented tuxedo can be cut differently from a purchased one. Research the options.
- Delegate tasks to different people.
- Consider an afternoon wedding to avoid exhaustion. If it’s a Sunday wedding, this will give out-of-town guests enough time to fly back and make it to work on Monday.
- Leave enough time for pictures and have a photo list so you don’t forget important family pictures.
- Include do-it-yourself projects, with the clothes, bouquets, or other decorations. These can be a great bonding experience with your bridal party or family, add a personal touch to the day, and are a good way to keep within your budget.
- Pictures are all you have to remember your wedding day by, so pick a good photographer and be willing to invest more money in a great one. A bad photographer, even if cheap, is not worth the headache you’ll experience after the wedding.
- READ all of your vendor contracts. Negotiate the details and don’t pay the whole sum to vendors until the work is completed in a satisfactory manner. It seems like a hassle, but arguing with bad vendors over bad contracts is a lot worse.
- If you’re inviting many out of town guests, consider hosting the wedding at a hotel near the airport. □



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# Books explore meaning of mitzvot to help guide mitzvah projects

By DVORA MEYERS

NEW YORK (JTA) – Here are three books that take a look at giving to friends, family and the community. One is for kids on the precipice of adulthood, one is for adults looking to infuse their daily lives with mitzvot, and one teaches communities how to act on their values. All can help in selecting mitzvah projects for the Bar and Bat Mitzvah and in building a tradition of giving throughout our lives.

## The Mitzvah Project Book: Making Mitzvah Part of Your Bar/Bat Mitzvah ... and Your Life

By Liz Suneby and Diane Heiman

The idea of writing a guide to bar and bat mitzvah projects was inspired in part by Mitzvah Day, a project that was started by Rabbi Bruce Lustig 20 years ago at Diane Heiman's synagogue, the Washington Hebrew Congregation in Washington.

"There would be 10 or 20 choices on things you can do on that day," Heiman recalled. "Wouldn't it be wonderful if kids realized that there are so many things they can do that match their own interests?" she thought.

Liz Suneby's revelation came as she watched her youngest daughter struggle to find a mitzvah project that fit who she was and what she cared about.

"I wanted her to do something that wasn't nameless or faceless," Suneby said.

Heiman and Suneby, both mothers of two, decided to write a guide. They organized the chapters around things that interested teens, from arts to bullying to animal care and protection, and suggested ways for the teens to launch their projects. But they're not looking to tell the young people exactly what to do.

"We don't want to be prescriptive," Suneby said. "We just want to inspire."

Heiman added, "I think having a resource like this gives a really good launching point for the kids because they can look up their own interests and hopefully springboard some ideas from the book."

Suneby and Heiman both mentioned the story of a boy who could not settle on a project that inspired him. He took one of the book's myriad ideas and put his own spin on it: Rather than merely compiling a cookbook as the authors suggested, he went to the senior citizens'

retirement community where his grandparents lived and began collecting recipes from the residents. In the process he interviewed residents about their lives. So his cookbook will have not only recipes but also the personal anecdotes.

"He's paying attention to elders, giving them time and a chance to be respected," Suneby observed, which is much more than the book had advised.

For young people who choose a project for which they have a passion for, the project could very well outlast the bar/bat mitzvah itself.

"It's amazing how many kids we've spoken to who have continued from a project they started for their bar or bat mitzvah," Suneby said.

## 1,000 Mitzvahs: How Small Acts of Kindness Can Heal, Inspire, and Change Your Life

By Linda Cohen

After Linda Cohen's father passed away, she decided to take some time off. The time off didn't turn into down time but became an opportunity to do mitzvot – a thousand of them to be precise. Cohen performed one mitzvah a day for 2 1/2 years, an odyssey that she has recorded in a book, "1,000 Mitzvahs."

Cohen says the idea to turn her personal grieving project into a book was not hers.

"A rabbi saw that it [the project] was helpful for me and thought it would be beneficial for others," she said.

The book is not arranged chronologically, starting with her first good deed and ending with her final. Instead it is structured according to theme, ranging from "green" acts to synagogue-related deeds to travel. The account of each mitzvah begins with a personal anecdote from Cohen before delving into more general advice and suggestions for action.

No mitzvah is too small or seemingly insignificant to make the list, and teach readers something important about charity. In fact, Cohen counts "changing the toilet paper" as one of her 1,000 good deeds. (She had been traveling with her husband in Spain and put a roll into the stall for the next person.)

"I think the point is that it isn't about the big thing. A lot of times people get stuck," she said, explaining the inclusion of smaller charitable acts. "I'm just showing people that it can be an everyday thing."

## Where Justice Dwells: A Hands-On Guide to Doing Social Justice in Your Jewish Community

By Jill Jacobs

Rabbi Jill Jacobs hadn't planned on writing a book after she completed "There Shall Be No Needy," which was published in 2009. In that volume she established that the imperative to engage in social action and social justice could be found in Jewish legal tradition. She thought her work on the writing front was done.

Yet as she toured with the book, readers often asked, "How do I get social justice work in my own community moving?"

"I wish somebody would just write a book about how to do social justice work within communities," she recalled thinking. That person, she soon realized, would have to be her.

"Where Justice Dwells" is Jacobs' practical guide to bringing social action to synagogues and communities.

"I broke down the different strategies that people use," she told JTA.

Though the book begins with some textual and theoretical information that supports the Jewish perspective on social action, Jacobs spends several chapters suggesting ways to engage, from direct service to giving money to advocacy to community organizing, along with warnings about the pitfalls to avoid when assembling a plan.

In addition to believing that the book will prove useful to communities that want to engage in social action, Jacobs also hopes that it helps to change the notion that this sort of work is an altruistic add-on, merely a nice thing to do rather than something that one is obligated to observe, just as many Jews regard the laws of kashrut.

"I want it to be obvious that every single Jewish community has to do social justice," she said. "Just as every synagogue has Shabbat services, every synagogue should have a social justice program." □

# Bar and Bat Mitzvah gifts can include a life lesson along with fun

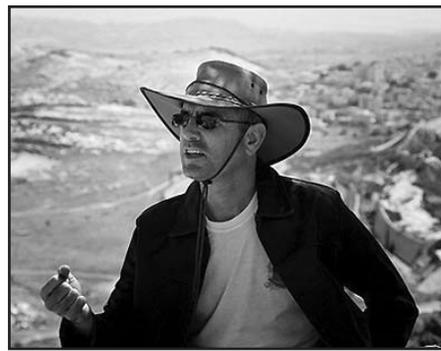
By MASADA SIEGEL  
JNS.org

Every few months, we find ourselves behind the newest gadget. That's why gifts of technology are a huge hit for bat and bar mitzvahs. But while those gifts are useful and fun, perhaps the best gifts—especially in the spirit of the bar mitzvah—are those that are meaningful.

"The whole idea behind a bar and bat mitzvah is not about a fancy party, but about using this moment as an occasion for parents to help their child realize that each one of us can have our own unique relationship with God," Rabbi Kenneth Brander, the David Mitzner dean at Yeshiva University, says.

"Society too often focuses on the 'I'—it's the iPad, iPod, i(Pod)touch," Brander says. "Even the game Wii is spelled with two I's. Today we design our own music, our own coffee, everything. A bar or bat mitzvah young person needs to realize life is about more than 'I.' There is our Jewish community and larger society and by giving we grow and feel a sense of purpose."

Myra Schindler, program director of the Bureau of Jewish Education in Scottsdale, Ariz., who has worked directly with kids for 35 years, agrees.



Archaeologist and tour guide Danny Herman takes his tour groups to ancient Jewish heritage sites, many of which he had a part in excavating. PHOTO: DANNY HERMAN

There are also a plethora of trips to choose from.

Former archaeologist Danny Herman is known for his private tours, which focus on ancient Jewish heritage sites. He even personally participated in some of the excavations. Herman said, "I also conducts various 'extreme' activities, such as live shooting and Segway tours, but all in all aim to develop affiliations with the Jewish people and the land of Israel."

A tour that mixes action and education might be perfect to suit the varying needs and interests of a family.

If you are willing to wait a few years for the gift of Israel, consider a gift of participation in a study program in Israel, such as the one offered by Alexander Muss High School in Israel. AMHSI is a nonprofit, study-abroad program in Israel for high school students. For eight weeks, students learn by traveling to the actual site where history took place. Israel itself becomes the classroom.

**Tikkun olam:** Every bar or bat mitzvah has different interests, and there are many areas of need in the world. Discuss locales across the world in which your child may have a particular interest, and then find a program where you can volunteer together as well as plan some fun activities on the side. Many programs

Continued on page 12

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# Spurred by a Torah portion, Alexis Kashar is breaking down barriers for deaf Jews

By LISA KEYS

NEW YORK (JTA) – It was an ancient sentence – a fragment, really – that changed everything for Alexis Kashar.

An attorney specializing in special education and disability rights, she has successfully argued high-profile litigations, including one against Los Angeles County for not making highway call boxes accessible to people with disabilities.



Alexis Kashar

Yet despite her focus on the rights of others, Kashar, 45, has repeatedly encountered a roadblock in her own life: access to the Jewish community. As a deaf Jew, she could not understand religious services or participate in organized Jewish life.

An unlikely call to action occurred three years ago as the eldest of her three children – none of whom is deaf or hard of hearing – was about to become a bat mitzvah. Her child's assigned Torah portion included the verse in Leviticus that reads: "You shall not curse the deaf nor put a stumbling block before the blind."

Learning that the Torah had something to say about deaf people, she said, was a "wake-up call" to push for unimpeded access to the organized Jewish community.

"I wanted a part of it, I wanted my kids to have a part of it," said Kashar. "If I didn't have a part of it, my kids wouldn't, either."

## Jewish inside and out

She knew that from experience. Growing up in New York and Texas, Kashar and her family -- her parents and grandparents are deaf -- had little interaction with the organized Jewish community. Nonetheless, she said they were culturally Jewish.

"I consider myself Jewish inside and outside," she said. "Whatever my parents did, they did something right."

For the past two years, Kashar has been president of the Jewish Deaf Resource Center, an organization that promotes and advocates full inclusion in organized Jewish life of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. Working closely with the center's executive director, Naomi Brunnlehrman, Kashar has spearheaded a variety of programs, including the application of a grant from the UJA-Federation of New York to subsidize interpreters for services and Jewish events.

"We're not just about one interpreter in one temple," she said about the Hartsdale, N.Y.-based JDRC. "We're about raising the Jewish standards, making the Jewish community available to anyone."

Speaking of deaf Jews, Kashar said, "We have excluded a group that is willing and capable. JDRC is making a bridge to bring the deaf community and the Jewish community together."

Brunnlehrman praises Kashar for helping to expand the organization and for forging partnerships with other Jewish organizations, including Jewish

Women International and the Jewish Funders Network.

"Our vision has widened," Brunnlehrman said. "Alexis really believes that when you open the doors for one group, you're opening minds and philosophies, so that we're welcoming to all people. We're trying to change the cultural landscape within the wider Jewish community. Alexis, in her discussions with people and her partnerships, has really tried to convey that vision."

## Accessible bat mitzvah

Kashar succeeded in doing that at her daughter's bat mitzvah celebration. Held at Scarsdale Synagogue Temples Tremont and Emanu-El in Scarsdale,

N.Y., the service was made accessible for deaf and hard-of-hearing people. It marked the first time that Kashar and her extended family prayed under the same roof, and it garnered her a new perspective on organized Jewish life.

"It changed the way I thought about social justice," she said. "It wasn't that they didn't want me to be a part of the community; it was just a lack of understanding and education. I didn't have to go to court. I just had to make the time. I had to be the change agent."

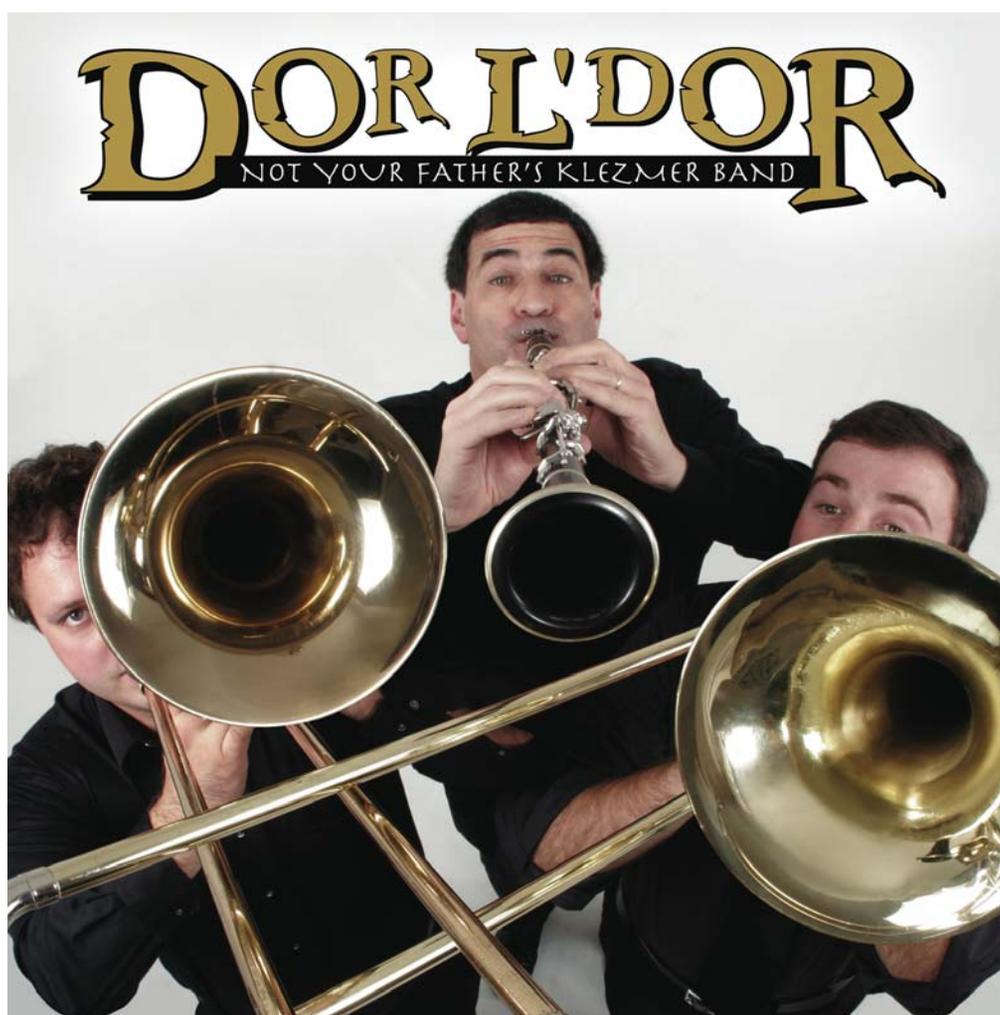
"I was raised with the notion that anything is possible. So when presented with a good challenge, I intend to take it on, especially when it involves social justice."

Kashar began her own education at a school for the deaf and transferred to a public school in the first grade. It wasn't until high school that Kashar and her family won a battle with the school district to provide an interpreter. The experience was transformative: Her educational opportunities expanded and Kashar realized she wanted to make special education law her career.

At the University of Texas, she received a bachelor's degree in finance and a law degree. There she met her future husband, Gary, who also is a lawyer.

The couple moved to Los Angeles in 1993, where Kashar worked at a private firm that was a "powerhouse" of

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# Bar and Bat Mitzvah gifts can include a life lesson along with fun

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offer the opportunity to spend time building homes or schools, while also touring the country and getting to know a new culture.

Fixing the world can be completed in myriad ways. Rabbi Brander explains: "Each child is different and through dialogue with them we will find a special way that the year or months leading up to the bat/bar mitzvah can be a time in which our bar/bat mitzvah child can begin to realize their potential in living a spiritual and meaningful life—a life of connection."

Donating to an organization does not have to be only a money event. It can be an interactive learning and growing experience of understanding the power of giving and its positive effects.

Many organizations have "mitzvah projects." The American Friends of Magen David Adom, for example, have a program called the "Red Bag of Courage." The Red Bag is a replica of the paramedic's kit which is used by all MDA vol-

unteer first responders when racing to the scene of a medical emergency.

Participants raise \$1,000—which is the price of a fully outfitted red first responder's bag filled with emergency equipment that is used to save lives in Israel. The organization thanks the participants by sending them their own monogrammed red bag.

We teach our children, "If you have saved a life you have saved the world." So why not start by saving lives in Israel?

**Parties that help:** To many young adults, a celebratory party is an important part of the occasion. A way to spread the joy is to ask for gifts for others. Birthday Angels Birthday Party Project is a non-profit organization that provides underprivileged children in Israel with their own birthday party ([www.birthday-angels.org](http://www.birthday-angels.org)). Only \$36 will buy the party kit necessary to celebrate the child's birthday.

Director Ruthie Luttenberg explains, "A \$36 donation puts a million dollar smile on the face of a child. There

are not a lot of charities that make your donations go as far as this one. Our Circle of Giving is designed to make a far-reaching difference in the lives of literally thousands of children at a tiny cost! Because we mass produce our party kits, recruit volunteers to give the party, we bypass the most expensive costs entailed in throwing a party."

**Celebrate their interests:** Children's interests are as varied as those of adults. Focus on their strengths and introduce them to a new skill. If a child is artistic, buy them a camera, but also enroll them in a class on how to use the camera in different ways.

If a child is interested in sports, find a class, a coach or a role model in the field, and go together to hear them speak or watch them play. Schools such as the Lenny Krayzelburg Swim Academy, which is located on both coasts, have many classes for kids. At just about every ice rink in the country there are "learn to skate" programs. It's

just a matter of understanding your child's interests and finding a location near you that caters to it.

Give the gift of adventure experiences like flying in a wind tunnel, swimming with dolphins, or learning to surf, figure skate or swim. Even money can be an interactive gift if you teach your child the art of wise investment. Find a stock, and watch the investment grow and fall. Discuss why. All of these experiences are fun and will gift the skills and education that will last a lifetime.

New skill sets build self-esteem and self-confidence, and when parents, family, and friends actually spend time with a young adult to foster their talents and creativity, it makes a world of difference.

Rabbi Brander says, "It's not about the gifts, it is about creating a legacy—which is the greatest gift a parent can give—a legacy of fulfillment and empowerment. Long after they are on their own and we are no longer physically around to guide them, this legacy beginning with the Bar/Bat Mitzvah will help our children navigate the tumultuous times in their lives." □

## Breaking barriers

Continued from page 11

lawyers for special education. It was an exciting time, as the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 was just beginning to make its impact.

"I had the opportunity to test the waters and really do the first group of litigations under the ADA," she said, including successful suits against Universal Studios and Weight Watchers to make their programs accessible to the deaf and hard of hearing.

### Starting new traditions

When the couple decided it was time to start a family, Kashar knew she wanted her children to have a Jewish education. So they joined a synagogue and later enrolled their eldest daughter in its preschool.

Still, she said, the congregation was hesitant to accommodate her needs. "I was asking for what seemed to be the impossible: occasional access to synagogue life via sign language interpreters," she recalled.

Kashar didn't push back; instead she agreed to provide some of the funding for an interpreter. The lack of precedent was one hurdle. Another was that for her daughter's sake, she didn't want to become "that difficult parent." Still, Kashar added, "with each child, I became bolder." (Over time, the synagogue ultimately assumed all financial responsibility, she said.)

In 2004, the family relocated to Scarsdale, N.Y., and since the move Kashar has dedicated herself to activism and pro bono work. In addition to her JDRC role, she is the board president at the New York School for the Deaf and chairs the public policy committee at the National Association of the Deaf.

Earlier this year, the JDRC sponsored the first Jewish Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Awareness Shabbat, encouraging rabbis of all denominations nationwide to address inclusion issues in their sermons. The event was timed to coincide with the same Torah portion that Kashar's oldest daughter read at her bat mitzvah two years ago.

"I would not have been involved if the Torah portion hadn't been given to her," Kashar admitted. □



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