

## Federation grants will rise by 5 percent this fiscal year to more than \$2.2 million

By CHARLES BERNSEN

**T**he board of the Jewish Federation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee has approved a plan to distribute more than \$2.2 million in grants to 84 Jewish programs and institutions in Nashville, Israel and around the world during the fiscal year that begins on July 1.

The total distribution of \$2,207,872 is an increase of \$107,000 – about 5 percent – over the previous year and represents about 93 percent of the latest projections for the Federation’s 2017 annual campaign, which is on course to raise about \$2.325 million. The remaining 7 percent goes toward the Federation’s operations.

The plan approved by the board was developed by its Grants Committee in cooperation with local institutions, agencies and organizations that provide services to the community.

“I want to thank the Grants Committee and all our service providers for their hard work, diligence, and thoroughness that they put into the grants process,” said Mindy Hirt, who co-chaired the committee with Robin Cohen. “We all have the same goal in mind, which is to deliver the best services to Jews most in need anywhere they live.”

The largest share of grants – more than \$1.34 million – will be distributed locally, including about \$500,000 for the Gordon Jewish Community Center, almost \$100,000 to help fund a variety

of counseling and assistance programs at Jewish Family Service, and almost \$240,000 in scholarships for local children to attend Akiva School, the city’s Jewish pre-K schools and Jewish summer camps.

An important component of the local funding is the Federation’s New Initiative Grants program, which was established eight years ago to provide seed money for new grassroots programming and services that address key communal priorities: Engaging young adults and developing the next generation of leadership, services for seniors, Israel advocacy and education, expanding services beyond the demographic core, and outreach to newcomers, those who are unengaged or marginally engaged and interfaith couples.

“The New Initiatives allow us to innovate and plan creatively to meet the challenges of our Nashville Jewish community in partnership with our local leaders,” said Hirt.

Many New Initiative Grant programs such as Shalom Taxi, a transportation service for seniors, and PJ Library, which provides Jewish-themed reading material for children, have become integral to the community. In addition to providing more than \$214,000 to support 17 ongoing New Initiative programs from previous years, the spending plan includes \$60,000 for 11 new ones. They are:

- BlendedGEN, an initiative of Congregation Micah, Congregation Sherith Israel, and Akiva School to

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## Kholos musical adaptation of memoir *The Jew Store* opens in Cincinnati

By CHARLES BERNSEN

**E**ven before reading *The Jew Store*, a 1998 memoir of a Jewish family’s experience running a rural West Tennessee dry goods store during the 1920s, Nashville playwright Jay Kholos knew he wanted to adapt it for the stage as a musical.

“It was the title,” he said. “I was knocked out by the title.”

The problem was that the rights to *The Jew Store* were owned by country music icon Dolly Parton, who was hoping to develop it as a feature film.

But Parton’s project never happened, and last year Kholos finally acquired the rights. Just nine months later, his musical adaption – “Jew Store: The New Musical” – premiered in Cincinnati’s Aronoff Center for the performing arts with a cast and crew from Nashville. Among the 1,000 people who saw the play at the center’s Jarson-Kaplan Theater was 95-year-old Stella Suberman, the author of the memoir on which it is based, along with more than a dozen family members.



As they arrive in Concordia, the Bronson family encounters T.J. (played by Matt Stapleton, far left), who tells them they are the first Jews he’s ever met in person. Playing members of the immigrant Jewish family are Andrew Raney, Cole Strosberg, Abigail G. Nichol and Madison Graves. (Photos courtesy of Orchard Street Productions)

“Our family laughed and cried and truly loved the production,” said Suberman, who participated in an audi-

ence “talk back” after the last of three performances, a Sunday matinee.

In addition to writing the words and

music, Kholos produces and directs “Jew Store,” which fits the creative niche he has carved out for himself with his previous nostalgic, Jewish-themed musical comedies – “A Stoop on Orchard Street,” which tells the story of early 20th century East European Jewish immigrants to New York, and “My Catskills Summer,” a paean to the upstate New York resorts that became so popular with the growing Jewish middle class after World War II. (Both shows premiered at the Gordon Jewish Community Center, and “Orchard Street” went on to run for more than a year off Broadway in New York.)

In a way, “Jew Store” picks up where “Orchard Street” left off by focusing on one of those New York immigrant families – Aaron and Reba Bronson (Andrew Raney and Madison Graves) and their children Miriam (Abigail G. Nichol) and Joey (Cole Strosberg, son of Rabbi Saul Strosberg and Daniella Pressner). Seeking opportunity beyond the teeming tenements of New York, the family moves to a rural Southern town in 1920 and opens “Bronson’s Low-Cost Dry

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## Fifteen students, two chaperones, two weeks in Israel – and a million memories

**T**he 15 Nashville teenagers who took part in the 2017 Get Connected trip to Israel returned on June 20 tired but happy and with lots of memories -- dancing at the Kotel on Shabbat, hiking to the top of Masada, swimming in the Dead Sea, digging for ancient artifacts at an archeological site, making friends in Hadera Eiron, the Nashville Jewish community's sister region in Israel.

On the trip were Rachel Cohen, Matthew Friedman, Daniel Saul, Jake Rosen, Jordan Cohen, Becky Hackett, Ellis Brustin, Madeleine Aikin, Rachel Karp, Carter Koch, Joey Frank, Ben Guzman, Sam Oppenheimer, Kaitlyn Stout, and Elliot Tishler. They were accompanied by chaperones Mindy Drongowski and Adi Ben Dor, Nashville's community *schlichta*.

Here's a daily account of the trip drawn from updates and photos the teenagers posted on Facebook:

### JUNE 7

Shalom friends and family! Today all 15 of us flew from Nashville to Newark to Tel Aviv, and then drove to Jerusalem. As soon as we arrived at our hotel, we dropped our suitcases off in our rooms and rushed to our first meal in the Holy Land.

Afterwards, we changed clothes and strolled through the Old City of Jerusalem and discussed our feelings towards the trip. We are all eager to embark on our adventures in Israel and look forward to making lifelong memories and friendships.

• Rachel Cohen

### JUNE 8

Being in a place that is the home of some of the most important historical events of all time is awe inspiring. We could look out and view history from the wall of the Old City to the modern borders.

Jerusalem has been both visually and mentally stunning. We've been able to walk through the past in a very real way.

• Matthew Friedman

### JUNE 9

We started the day with breakfast at the hotel at 8 a.m. Then we headed to the Holocaust museum at Yad Vashem. We ate lunch right below the museum. Next, we visited the cemetery at Mt. Herzl containing the remains of great Israeli world leaders, young soldiers, and famous people of Israel. It was a pretty cool experience. We are currently about to go to the Western Wall to celebrate Shabbat.

• Daniel Saul

### JUNE 9-10

As we entered the courtyard of the Western Wall on Friday evening, there were more people than any of us has expected. Thousands of Jews from all over the world were gathered to celebrate Shabbat and place written notes in the wall. People were praying in many different ways, from reading siddurs to dancing and chanting. Many of us joined in on the dancing and we all had a great time.



The group poses for a photo at the Kotel, the Western Wall, early in the trip.

They did not see us as outsiders, as Americans, or as different. They saw us as one. We are part of the story. So many Jews around the world dream of celebrating Shabbat in Jerusalem, and we were able to experience it as one. It was an incredible, unforgettable experience.

I woke up at 7 the next morning, put on my nice Saturday morning outfit, and went downstairs to meet Jordan, Rachel, and our tour guide, Asaf, to have an early breakfast before heading out to the optional Saturday morning Shabbat service. The four of us decided to attend this service since it's not every day we can experience a service in Israel. It was a 15 minute walk to the synagogue, and after entering, the girls went upstairs while Asaf and I stayed downstairs. (Here the males and females are separated during services.) We walked into the main sanctuary, which was a lot smaller than the one I'm used to at Congregation Micah. The siddur I received was printed only

in Hebrew, although some siddurs had Italian translations as well. They asked me to help undress the Torah, which was wrapped in a beautiful yellow-gold cloth. We stayed there for just under two hours before returning to the hotel at 11 a.m. to meet up with everyone else to prepare for the study session.

What is Zionism? It's the re-creation and protection of a Jewish land, known today as the country of Israel. As we sat in a circle on the couches in the hotel, our guest speaker explained to us some history of Israel, as well as the significance of Israeli technologies in the modern world, and how these impact the lives of everyone worldwide, not just within Israel itself.

After the study session, we had about an hour to get ready to go to a museum that has a stone model of the Old City of Jerusalem, as well as the Dead Sea Scrolls. The stone model was so detailed. It had perfectly constructed small stone replicas of buildings and other places

we have visited, such as the Western Wall. When we first got there, I looked for our hotel in the model, but I was soon informed that this was a model of Jerusalem thousands of years ago, shortly after the destruction of the first temple. We then walked into the other side of the museum, which is home to the Dead Sea Scrolls, a collection of ancient Hebrew writings. There was a photocopy of the scrolls in a circular exhibit in the middle of the room, as well as bits and pieces of the original documents in glass cases surrounding the main exhibit in the center. It was so fascinating to see such old Hebrew writing and how different it looked from today's.

In the evening, we left the hotel and took a 20-minute walk to Ben Yehuda Street, which is somewhat similar to 12th Avenue South back in Nashville, as they both are "hip" streets with ice cream shops, restaurants, and a unique shopping experience. We were given an hour and a half to go have dinner at any restaurant on the street of our choice. Most of us including went to Moshika, a falafel restaurant. If anyone ever travels to Jerusalem in the future, I will recommend eating there if you are looking for some quick, good food. We also enjoyed ice cream across the street. We then went to get some waffles down the street, which we enjoyed on our walk back to the hotel.

• Jake Rosen



Rachel Karp holds an ancient piece of pottery found at an archeological site in Beit Guvrin National Park.

### JUNE 11

Today left behind the Holy City, Jerusalem. It was bittersweet because we were leaving a place full of so much of our Jewish history, but what was waiting for us made it worth it. We drove past the hills and greenery of the desert to arrive at the Beit Guvrin National Park where we took part in excavating the 89-cave system. We discovered shells, bones, and pottery that have been underground for over 2,000 years. We had the honor of being the first people to touch these artifacts since the fall of the Maccabees.

Rachel Karp and Daniel Saul found complete and still intact bowls. Madeleine

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Watching the sun set near the Bedouin village.



## Students

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also found half a plate with a strange crown engraving, puzzling to all. Another amazing discovery was a window leading to a mysterious new cave which we named Nashville. After collecting BUCKETS full of these findings, we created a bucket brigade to haul them back to camp and sift through to find smaller items such as charcoal.

As a reward for a hard day's work, we had the privilege of being led by our archeologist guide, Missy, down into a candlelit complex cave where we faced fears and learned about a system used to collect water during rare rain and how they housed pigeons for food and fertilizer inside of the caves. Missy then showed us some of the best finds from the area including the oldest record of Hanukkah which was written in ancient Greek on a huge stone tablet larger than a person. Missy let us take with us some pieces of pottery from the dig to remind us come Hanukkah of the Maccabees that were around when this pottery was used.

Next we traveled to the Salad Trail where we got to pick delicious tomatoes, cucumber, carrots, and herbs – and tried a corn maze. This is amazing considering how difficult it is to have vegetation in a desert. Thanks to Israeli agricultural technology, the gardens here thrive.

After an already wonderful day of learning, exploring and – best of all – eating we learned about our tour guide's experience during the Gaza conflict and his desire for peace. He handed us each a pigeon to hold and let us set them free. We all let go and watched them taste freedom in the desert air. Turns out doves aren't the actual symbol of peace, pigeons are! The English wrongly identified them through a translation slip up.

After arriving at our hostel, we ate dinner, stopped at the supermarket for Israeli snacks, and looked at a gorgeous view of the canyon from our hostel, a great end to an unbelievable day. We are waking up super early tomorrow to go hiking so I'm heading to bed now.

• Jordan Cohen

### JUNE 12

Today we woke up before dawn and went for a hike in the desert to watch the



The group got up early one morning for a sunrise hike in Nachal Havarim in the Negev.

sunrise. It was very beautiful! After lunch we headed over to David Ben-Gurion's grave. Afterwards we went to a crater called Makhtesh Ramon. Again, that was beautiful. There we learned about Ilan Ramon, the first Israeli in space. Next, we went to a cool soap factory, then headed over to the Bedouin village and rode camels, went shopping and ate dinner! Finally, we had a campfire and went to bed in our Bedouin tent.

• Becky Hackett

### JUNE 13

Today we rolled out of our tent at 4 a.m., had Bedouin tea and biscuits, and then hopped on the bus to Masada. By the time we got there it was we had 15 minutes to get to the top before sunrise.

Out of breath (at least I was), we made it to the top with some time to spare. We all sat on a wall and watched as the sun began to rise. As it peaked over the top of the mountain, someone began to play "Here Comes the Sun." It was beautiful.

We then walked around the remains of a bathhouse, a cistern and some temples and learned about King Herod and the story of the Jews of Masada. We descended Masada via cable car and got a breathtaking view of the mountain and landscape surrounding.

Next up was breakfast and the Dead Sea. I wasn't really sure what to expect from the Dead Sea, only that it's salty and you float. While both of those things were correct, I wasn't expecting the water to feel oily and to burn a bit. We covered our bodies in mud and later swam in a freshwater pool as well.

Lunch and the two-hour ride to Tel Aviv left us exhausted after all the excitement from the morning (the bus ride was very quiet).

We got to the hostel, had dinner, and walked to Jaffa Port. We made wishes on a wishing bridge with our zodiac signs and took some cool climbing photos in a statue.

Can't wait to meet our host families tomorrow!

• Ellis Brustin

### JUNE 14

Right now, we are all at the homes of our host families, resting after a day of bus rides, museum tours, and meeting new people. We woke up around 7 a.m.,



The Nashville teens and their Israeli counterparts paint a mural at Haklai High School in Hadera.

packed our bags, ate breakfast, and hopped on the bus to the Palmach Museum.

The Palmach was created by the British when they were in control of the land to fight the Nazis but was then officially disbanded. The soldiers continued on, in secret, working and training at kibbutzim under the guise of being a youth movement. At the museum, we followed the story of a group of soldiers, walking from room to room and watching a collection of films showing the hardships that the Jews faced after the Holocaust, being shoved into displaced persons camps and struggling against the British mandate that would not permit excessive Jewish immigration.

People in the squad were from all over the world, some survivors of the Holocaust and some born and raised in Jerusalem. We watched these people's lives unfold as they helped to fight the Nazis, sabotaged the British, and fought in Israel's revolutionary war. A theme of this trip has been to put faces and names to the Jews whose lives were lost fighting to keep Judaism alive, and this was an incredible addition to our time spent learning about the Holocaust and the IDF.

Next we had lunch in the aqueducts of ancient Caesarea, watching the waves and sitting in the shade beneath the arches. We walked around, seeing the ruins of the ancient palace, the theater, and what used to be a square pool of fresh water for bathing, surrounded by ocean. This port city loved to flaunt its wealth with public toilets and aqueducts and beautiful, intricate floor mosaics.

Back on the bus again, this time headed to meet our host families. We played a few games to get to know everyone, and then headed back to the houses, where we met the families.

• Madeleine Aikin

### JUNE 15

Currently we are all at our host families relaxing after a jam packed day of fun. We started the day off with a morning hike up a cliff at Mt. Arbel National



After riding camels, the Nashville teens spent the night in a Bedouin tent.

Park. Not only did we walk, but we had to climb down the mountain. After around two hours we got back on the bus to have lunch at a mall in Tiberias.

After that we went to the Jordan River, where we split into three groups to compete against one another. Then we started a drive back to the school to paint a mural in the school and a delicious barbecue dinner followed by an interesting discussion on the Israeli conflict. Enjoy the videos and pictures we've posted. Can't wait to tell you more amazing stories.

• Rachel Karp

### JUNE 18

Since we didn't have any tours to go on as a group while staying with our families, we organized a full group meet up at the beach. We had so much fun. After the beach, the guys all went to a burger place called Humongous, and some of the girls went to a mall to hang out.

Then almost everyone chose to go to Shir's house for late night pizza. After the party, we all went straight home and fell asleep the second we got home.

• Carter Koch

Learn more about the Jewish Federation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee at [www.jewishnashville.org](http://www.jewishnashville.org)



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# FROM THE FEDERATION

## Grants

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- reach out to both affiliated and unaffiliated interfaith couples in Middle Tennessee who are seeking to create a Jewish home and raise Jewish children. It will include immersive seminars, congregational celebrations, films, holiday workshops, and other cultural offerings. (\$10,000)
- NextDor Night of 100 Seders, a coordinated community-wide initiative of The Temple to organize young adults in hosting home-based seders by providing food and religious support. (\$3,000)
- Tot Shabbat Celebrations and Dinners, an initiative of Akiva School, Congregation Micah and Congregation Sherith Israel for a series of user-friendly Shabbat dinners for families with children 4 years old and younger. The aim is to introduce the families to each other, the Akiva educational experience and staff, and local congregations and to form relationships before kindergarten decisions are made. (\$1,500)
- Next Dor Shabbaton, an initiative of West End Synagogue and NowGen Nashville for a Shabbat retreat at Montgomery Bell State Park. The idea is to provide young adults a total Shabbat experience and find ways to incorporate Shabbat-inspired values of balance, community, spirituality into their weekday lives. (\$3,500)
- Summer Series with Akiva, an initiative of Akiva School and NowGen Nashville that will offer educational sessions for parents of preschool and school-aged children emphasizing

ing Jewish values and teachings. The sessions will be offered at locations around Middle Tennessee and focus on the social thinking and development of children, healthy snacks, and the benefits of meditation and yoga. (\$2,000)

- Young Teachers Engagement, an initiative of Akiva School and NowGen Nashville, will offer programming for Jewish young adults who teach in a variety of settings. The aim is to create a cohort to build social, professional, and Jewish connections with Akiva. (\$1,000)
- Music City Shabbat, sponsored by young local singers and musicians and the Jewish Federation, will organize a monthly self-led Shabbat dinner and worship experience with a focus on music and song in the Jewish summer camp style that attracts both affiliated and non-affiliated participants. (\$1,500)
- Vanderbilt University Faculty and Staff Engagement is an initiative of Vanderbilt Hillel to create a cohort of Jewish staff and faculty at the university and its medical center. Its aim is to increase their awareness of and connection to both Hillel and the Jewish community and to develop initiatives that will benefit the campus. (\$ 5,500)
- Journeying for Justice in Tennessee is an initiative of Congregation Micah and the Federation's Community Relations Committee (CRC) in partnership with Lee Chapel AME. It will follow up on the theme of the CRC Social Justice Seder and offer a low-cost tour of significant civil rights sites in Tennessee and will include a

Shabbat experience. (\$6,500)

- Next Generation Civil Rights Tour, an initiative of the Temple and the GJCC, will seek to engage young adults in a multi-day, multi-state civil rights tour of the South. The aim is to seek ways for the Jewish community and general community to deal with xenophobia, racism, bias, and discrimination. (\$7,500)
- Community Outreach and Engagement Coordinator, a post sponsored by the GJCC and Jewish Federation, will be the central point of contact and service for newcomers, engagement opportunities, and volunteers. The coordinator will work with the membership staff of all Jewish organizations to create a seamless community-wide network. This effort is addressing the top recommendation from the BJN2.0 process which is to increase outreach to newcomers and those who would like to become more involved in Jewish life. (\$18,000)

In addition to the funding for local programming, the Federation will provide more than \$808,000 for programs in Israel and elsewhere overseas, primarily through two major umbrella organizations, the Jewish Agency for Israel and the American Jewish Joint Distribution Agency. But the Nashville Federation also provides \$162,000 in elective funding for a number of overseas programs, including \$60,000 to aid poor and elderly Jews in the former Soviet Union as well to \$20,000 to Maksam, a network of neighborhood centers for disadvantaged youth in Hadera-Eiron, Nashville's Partnership2Gether region in Israel.

An additional \$38,250 will go to regional and national organizations like Taglit Birthright Israel, which provides immersion trips to Israel for college students, and the Jewish Children's Regional Service, which provides a range of social services for at-risk Jewish children in Tennessee and six other southern states. •

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## A departing message

By CHARLES BERNSEN

**T**his is my 47th and last issue as editor of *The Jewish Observer*.

I am taking a position this month as visiting assistant professor of religious and Jewish studies at Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, Pa.

I'm excited about this opportunity to teach full time, of course. It's been my goal since moving to Nashville in 2004 to get a doctoral degree from Vanderbilt University.

But it's also bittersweet. During our 13 years in Nashville, my wife and I have come to love the city (the traffic on Hillsboro Pike, notwithstanding) and to think of it as home, not just the place where we've been living.

More important, during my four years as editor of this newspaper, I have developed an appreciation of and fondness for this city's Jewish community – and for many of you per-

sonally. As a Jewish studies scholar, I have regular conversations about the issues of Jewish continuity and communal life, and I always find myself commenting – bragging, really – about Jewish Nashville's unique vibrancy and cohesiveness.

I am grateful for the opportunity to have served this remarkable Jewish community as the editor of *The Observer* and appreciate the many kind comments about the newspaper that have come my way over the past few weeks.

The good news is that Kathy Carlson is coming on board as the "new" editor of *The Observer*. If that name sounds familiar, it should. Kathy was the editor of the newspaper for a year before I took over. She has had a long and successful career as a print journalist, and is an especially good reporter and writer. I'm confident *The Observer* is in good hands.

I've learned enough over the past four years not to say goodbye but rather *l'hitraot* – so long for now. •

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*The Jewish Observer* is committed to making corrections and clarifications promptly. To request a correction or clarification, call Editor Charles Bernsen at (615) 354-1653 or email him at charles@jewishnashville.org.

### Editorial Submissions Policy and Deadlines

The Jewish Observer welcomes the submission of information, news items, feature stories and photos about events relevant to the Jewish community of Greater Nashville. We prefer e-mailed submissions, which should be sent as Word documents to Editor Charles Bernsen at charles@jewishnashville.org. Photos must be high resolution (at least 300 dpi) and should be attached as jpegs to the e-mail with the related news item or story. For material that cannot be e-mailed, submissions should be sent to Charles Bernsen, The Jewish Observer, 801 Percy Warner Blvd., Suite 102, Nashville TN 37205. Photos and copy sent by regular mail will not be returned unless prior arrangement is made. Publication is at the discretion of The Observer, which reserves the right to edit submissions.

To ensure publication, submissions must arrive by the 15th of the month prior to the intended month of publication.

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## Jew Store

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Goods Store.” (The play uses the same fictional name for the town – Concordia – that Suberman uses in her memoir. Her father’s store was in Union City, Tenn., where she was born in 1922.)

Kholos describes “Jew Store” as a “classic fish-out-of-water story.” The Bronsons are the only Jews in Concordia, and both the comedy and dramatic tension arise from their encounters with an unfamiliar culture in a community where they are initially viewed with curiosity by many and hatred by some.

The first townspeople they meet, for example, is T.J., a polite, well-meaning young man who immediately takes a liking to the Bronsons – and is smitten by Miriam. Wrestling to overcome the negative Jewish stereotypes he had heard his whole life, he sings, “So once again I’m certainly confused. Why am I supposed to dislike Jews?”

The play is narrated in Suberman’s voice by Nashville actor Francine Berk-Graver. A regular in Kholos’s productions, she also plays the key role of T.J.’s aunt, Miss Brookie, a wealthy and eccentric spinster who treats the strange Jewish

family with kindness and open-mindedness (and who, we learn, eventually leads the effort to end child labor at the town’s shoe factory).

Of course, a two-hour musical can’t begin to convey the nuance and details of Suberman’s 300-page memoir, and Kholos acknowledges taking a few liberties for the sake of dramatic effect – as when Aaron invokes the “kineahora curse” (a reference to “the evil eye”) to expose the ignorance of hooded Ku Klux Klan members who invade his store on opening day singing “Jews get out now or it’s six feet underground.”

The play covers a 12-year period that ends with the Bronsons return to New York shortly after the onset of the Great Depression, though not before their store has become a fixture in Concordia and the family has gained the respect of most of the town’s residents after helping save it from bankruptcy. The townspeople express their fondness for the Bronson’s – if not for all Jews – in the play’s penultimate song, “Our Jews.”

Following several extended narrations that reveal details about the lives of the Bronsons and some of the residents of Concordia after the events of the play (including the romantic relationship



**Stella Suberman, author of the 1998 memoir on which the musical is based, was in the audience for its premier in Cincinnati and answered questions afterwards.**

between Miriam and T.J.), “Jew Store” ends with the song “Shalom, Concordia” in which the family and townspeople promise never to forget one another.

After runs scheduled later this year in Atlanta, South Florida and Philadelphia, Kholos said he hopes to take the production off Broadway in New York. •

## Drama coming alive at the Gordon JCC

**T**he Gordon Jewish Community Center recently hosted two very different theatrical productions: “Moses Speaks,” an original staged reading written and produced by Nashvillian Jerry Klein, and a production of the Jewish composer Jason Robert Brown’s musical “The Last Five Years” by the Minneapolis-based Really Spicy Opera Company.

Almost 200 people came to see the two productions, and Klein hopes their reception signifies a revival of the performing arts at the GJCC.

“We need to get the younger generations and the new Jewish transplants involved in sharing their formidable talents with our broader community,” said Klein, whose staged reading about Moses was based on the book *America’s Prophet: Moses and the American Story* by Bruce Feiler.

GJCC is reaching out to a number of theater groups and producers in

the hope of bringing performances and theater workshops to the Jewish community during the 2017/2018 season, said Program Director Michael Gross.

Among them is Theatre Dybbuk of Los Angeles, which is named after malicious spirit who, according to Yiddish lore, possesses another person’s soul. Let by artistic director Aaron Henne, Theatre Dybbuk also is exploring options for bringing a play about the Lost Tribes to Nashville next spring, Gross said.

The GJCC also has been in contact with Kat Atkinson and Karen Harris, whose are producing a musical, “Part of the Plan,” based on the music of Dan Fogelberg that will premiere in Nashville in September at the Tennessee Performing Arts Center.

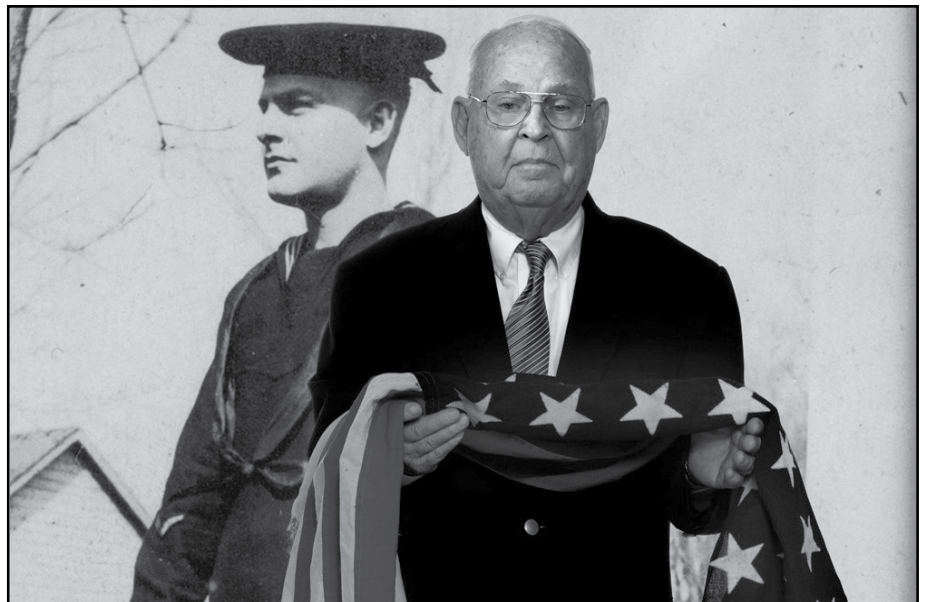
“Atkinson and Harris are embedding themselves into Nashville’s creative and Jewish communities and are exploring ways to work with the JCC in advance of the performance of the play in September,” said Gross.

All of this excites Ruth Klar, a long-

time theatre maven who directed Klein’s staged reading on Moses.

“More and more great artistic and creative things are happening in

Nashville and we are glad the JCC is trying to harness this and bring its rich history of performing arts to a more diverse audience.” •



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## Federation annual meeting includes elections and reports of its impact and ongoing initiatives

By CHARLES BERNSEN

**H**ilary Mirowitz described her participation in an interfaith couples trip to Israel last winter as “transformational” — and not just because she and her Jewish husband, Eric Mirowitz, were able to share a deeply spiritual experience together in a land holy to both of them.

The trip, led by clergy from The Temple and Congregation Micah and underwritten by the Jewish Federation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee, also helped her feel more comfortable and accepted as a non-Jewish member of Nashville’s Jewish community, introduced her to a cohort of couples grappling with the kind of issues that arise in interfaith marriages, and gave her the confidence that, as a Christian, she can play an important role in raising her future children as Jews.

“I can’t thank the Federation enough for providing this opportunity,” Mirowitz said.

Her remarks were part of the program at the annual meeting of the Jewish Federation and Jewish Foundation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee on June 14. About 150 people attended the meeting at the Gordon Jewish Community Center, where the Federation elected the 2017-2018 officers for its board of trustees: President Lisa Perlen, Vice President Lori Fishel, Secretary Steve Hirsch and Treasurer Michael Doochin.

In addition to the officers, Aron Karabel, David Levy, David Steine Jr., and Janet Weismark were elected to three-year terms as board members, and Rabbi Saul Strosberg joined the board for one year as the representative of the local Board of Rabbis. (Continuing terms on the board are Tara Axelroth, Didi Biesman, Mark Cohen, Adam Dretler, Mindy Hirt, Leslie Newman, David Schwartz and Jeremy Werthan.)

Aside from a presentation on the interfaith couples trip by Mirowitz and two other participants, Diana Landa and Amy Friedman, the meeting also featured a number of reports about important ongoing and upcoming Federation initiatives:

- Hirsch and former Federation President Carol Hyatt outlined the five-year planning and spending blueprint dubbed Best Jewish Nashville 2.0 that is based on the 2015 demographic study of the local Jewish community funded by the Federation. The pair chaired a committee of 47 community volunteers that identified five communal priorities -- engaging young adults and developing the next generation of leaders, providing services for seniors, Israel advocacy and education, expanding services beyond the demographic core, and outreach to newcomers, those who are unengaged or marginally engaged and interfaith couples.
- Steine and Adam Landa, chair of the Nashville Jewish Foundation’s development committee, gave an update



Speaking at the annual meeting of the Jewish Federation and Foundation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee, Hilary Mirowitz described her experience on the Federation-funded interfaith couples trip to Israel as “transformational.” (Photos by Rick Malkin)



Perlen presented Frank Boehm with a plaque and a tzedakah box in recognition of his service as chair of the Jewish Federation’s 2017 annual campaign.

on Jewish Nashville’s participation in Life & Legacy, an initiative of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation to help Jewish communities across North America boost endowment giving. Thirteen local Jewish agencies are participating in the effort, including the Nashville Federation and Foundation. Life & Legacy has already secured commitments of more than \$3 million, said Landa, who expects the local effort to reach its first-year goal of 234 commitments.

- Perlen, in her president’s report, described the upcoming year as one of the Federation’s most exciting. Among the initiatives she cited is the Federation’s participation in Violins of Hope Nashville, a collaborative effort that will bring a collection of restored Holocaust violins to the city in March for a weekend of concerts by the Nashville Symphony and a 10-week exhibition at the Nashville Public Library.

The meeting also included the presentation of the Federation’s Young Leadership Award to Ben Russ, a former Federation board member who last month became board president of Jewish Family Service, as well as recognition of volunteers leaders Robin



In a videotaped ceremony played at the annual meeting, Ben Russ (right) became the first recipient of the Federation’s annual Young Leadership Award since it was named for the late Sandy Averbuch. Presenting the award were Larry and Sam Averbuch, her husband and son.



Robin Cohen (left), outgoing Grants Committee chair, and Faith Haber Galbraith (right), outgoing Partnership2Gether Committee chair, were recognized by Federation President Lisa Perlen for their work over the past year.

Cohen, Faith Haber Galbraith and Frank Boehm, who are stepping down as chairs of the Federation’s Grants Committee, Partnership2Gether Committee and 2017 Annual Campaign Committee.

Russ was the first recipient of the young leadership award since it was named in honor of longtime communal leader Sandy Averbuch after her death last year. Though he was out of town and unable to attend the annual meeting, the award was presented earlier by Averbuch’s husband and son, Larry and Sam Averbuch, and a videotape of the ceremony was played at the meeting.

Recalling his wife’s lifelong dedication to the Federation, Akiva School and the Jewish community, Larry Averbuch said she “would be unbelievably honored that this award has been named for her.”

For his part, Russ said he was particularly honored to receive an award named

for Averbuch. “If anything I’ve done is seen as emulating her, then I guess I’ve done okay,” he said. “I’m proud to follow in Sandy’s footsteps.”

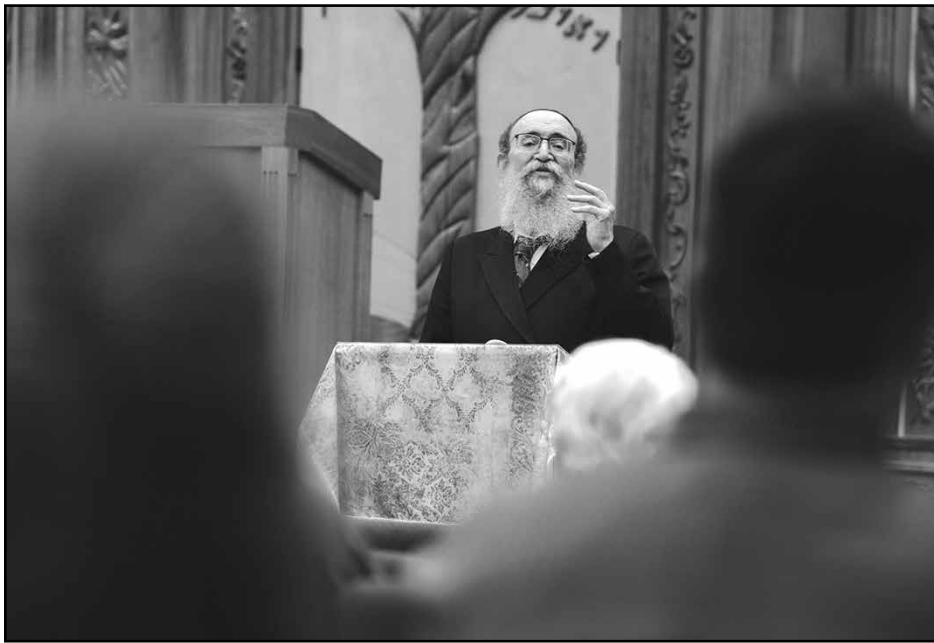
The meeting concluded with a brief and personal report from Mark S. Freedman, who will be retiring next June after seven years as executive director of the Nashville Federation and more than 35 serving various Jewish communities in a number of capacities. Stepping away from the demands of communal service will allow him to focus his attention on family, especially his wife, Leslie Klein, he said.

But Freedman said he was grateful for his career in Jewish communal service, particularly in Nashville.

“This is a remarkable Jewish community,” he said. “For the past six years you have been my family ... You will always be my family.” •



## @ Chabad



Scholar in residence Rabbi Shlomo Tiechtel from New York delivers a talk during a marathon Shavuot Bible study last month attended by people from a broad cross section of the Nashville community. He presented lectures on the lives of various Biblical characters including Ruth and Boaz, King Saul and King David. The program was underwritten by a grant from the Jewish Federation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee.

## CSI and Beit Tefilah will hold joint Tisha B'Av service

Congregation Beit Tefilah Chabad and Congregation Sherith Israel will hold a joint Tisha B'Av Memorial service with a candlelight reading of the Book of Lamentations, known as the Book of Eicha.

The service, which will be led by Rabbi Yitzchok Tiechtel and Rabbi Saul Strosberg, will take place at 8:30 p.m. Monday, July 31 night at Congregation Sherith Israel.

On Tuesday, Aug. 1, Beit Tefilah Chabad will have a Tisha B'Av Mincha service and Torah reading at 7 p.m., followed by a light break fast after dark.

Often referred to as the Jewish Memorial Day, the fast of the ninth of the Jewish month of Av, Tisha b'Av, marks the end of a three-week mourning period during which Jews remember the series of events that led to the Babylonian conquest of Jerusalem and the destruction of the first Temple on that date in the year 586 BCE. In the Jewish tradition, the date has become associated with many of the most painful moments in Jewish history.

Tisha B'Av starts at sundown of the eighth of Av and lasts till the following night-fall. During this Jews have traditionally fasted and eschewed pleasurable activities while lamenting the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the Jewish people.

For more information or to learn more about Tisha B'Av go to [chabadnashville.com](http://chabadnashville.com).

## Beit Tefilah to screen film about Jewish parents dealing with loss of children to terrorism

Congregation Beit Tefilah will host a screening at 6 p.m. on Aug. 1 of the documentary film, "With My Whole Broken Heart," which tells the wrenching but inspiring stories of parents whose children's lives were claimed by terror.

The 45-minute documentary also follows the lives of two of the youngest survivors of Auschwitz and Buchenwald who emerged from the darkness and transformed the Jewish landscape.

The film is framed around the response of Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson to the 1956 terror attack in Kfar Chabad that claimed lives of five students.

The film features interviews with Ruth and Judea Peral, the parents of Wall Street Journalist Daniel Pearl, who was kidnapped and executed in 2002 by Pakistani terrorists, and Sherri Mandel, the mother of Kobi Mandell, one of two teenagers who were kidnapped and murdered in 2001 near an Israeli settlement in the West Bank. It also includes interview with former Israeli chief Rabbi Yisrael Meir Lau; and Auschwitz survivor Rabbi Nissan Mangel.

The screening will take place at Chabad of Nashville, 95 Bellevue Road. All are invited to participate. There is no cost to attend this event. For more information go to [chabadnashville.com](http://chabadnashville.com)

The Observer is online at  
[www.jewishobservernashville.org](http://www.jewishobservernashville.org)

## @ The Temple

### Harmony in Unison Shabbat set for July 28

The Temple will mark a first on Friday, July 28 when it celebrates Shabbat with music written by its own members and community.

Inspired by the Harmony in Unison Facebook project, the service will feature original Jewish liturgical music composed by Cantor Tracy Fishbein, Stacy Beyer, Ellie Flier and others from the Temple family. Beyer, co-creator of Harmony in Unison, will talk about the project and its success.

The service is at 6 p.m.

### Temple planning excursion to Cheekwood for Family Night Out

The Temple is organizing an outing on Thursday, July 6 for the weekly Family Night Out at the Cheekwood Botanical Garden.

The evening begins at 6 p.m. and will feature music from the WannaBeatles, a Beatles tribute band that includes The Temple's Dennis Scott. Bring blankets and snacks. General admission prices apply. (The outing is weather-permitting. If the heat index reaches the mid-90s, it will be rescheduled.)

### Also this month at The Temple:

- Lunch with the Rabbi, 11:30 a.m. July 20. Discussion begins at noon.
- Golden Lunch Bunch, 11:30 a.m. July 18.
- Summer Song Session with Cantor Tracy Fishbein, 6-7 p.m. Tuesday, July 25.
- Taste of Judaism, 7 p.m. on July 11, 18 and 25 with Rabbi Rami Shapiro.

## @ Micah

### Celebration in Israel



Lukas Rabiner and Ryan Estrin become b'nai mitzvah overlooking the Old City during Congregation Micah's Family Trip to Israel last month.

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## @ Sherith Israel

### New young leadership takes the helm at one of Nashville's oldest synagogues

By **MOSH KOCH**

Congregation Sherith Israel is celebrating the ascendance of a new generation of young leaders following the election last month of a board of directors led for the most part by members in their 30s and 40s.

"I thought about the rising number of young members in our shul and realized that the future of the shul rests with them," said Evelyn Koch, head of the synagogue's nominating committee. "So we nominated more young members for both officers and directors on our slate than ever in our history."

Sherith Israel's new officers are President Yuri Livshitz, 35; Executive Vice President Evan Rittenberg, 51, Vice President of Membership Polina Vorobeychik, 33; Vice President of Programming Cara Suvall, 32; Secretary Pam Kelner, 48, and Treasurer Larry Sacks, who at 60 is the "elder statesman" of the group.

New board members include Jonathan Poster, 43, Michael Woolf, 45, and Adam Horn, 50.

"The Jewish community has been talking about continuity for decades, and has been pressured with next-generation engagement," said Sherith Israel Rabbi Saul Strosberg. "Thankfully, as a sign of strength and good faith, our shul is actually implementing next-generation leadership in the most significant way – not for lack of options but rather for doing what's best for today and tomorrow."

Outgoing President Roberta Walter Goodman said she was proud "to turn over the leadership of Sherith Israel to a new generation of leaders. I am anticipating great things from Yuri, Cara, Polina, and Evan as well as our new directors. I am thrilled that we have attracted such talented people and have such an incredibly deep bench upon which to draw."

Livshitz, the new president, said the election of a cadre of young leaders reflects the congregation's confidence and hope for the future.

"The opportunity being given to the new officers and me is a huge vote of confidence not only in the people being elected, but also in our position as a thriving and growing community," he said. "Our new officers are incredible people with diverse talents, and we will work hard to continue the growth and stability that has come through the previous administrations. Personally, I am totally psyched about this role, and really appreciate this tremendous opportunity."

Rittenberg said his job as vice president of administration is "to make sure that



**Congregation Sherith Israel's recently elected officers and board members reflect a new generation of leaders. They include (top, from left) Cara Suvall, Pam Kelner, Polina Vorobeychik, Evan Rittenberg, and (bottom, from left) Jonathan Poster and Yuri Livshitz.**

things run smoothly. I get to do a lot of the behind-the-scenes work, and I get an insider's view about what all goes on, and how many people we actually serve—which is far beyond our membership. We are involved in many facets of Jewish life both within and beyond the walls of the shul."

Other board members talked about their plans for the synagogue.

"I am interested in working on growing membership through an emphasis on expanding the women's minyan and davening engagement," said Horn, who is from Los Angeles. "I also have a vision for increasing fundraising at our annual event through the development of a greatly enhanced silent auction."

As treasurer, Sacks said he aims to "keep the synagogue on a stable fiscal path and continue Shelly Lutz's good stewardship of the synagogue's finances."

"I am excited to be joining the Sherith Israel executive board because the synagogue has been such a warm, welcoming community for me and my family," said Suvall, who is from New Rochelle, NY. "I am hoping to continue the tradition of fun and meaningful programming at Sherith Israel, and I am looking forward to focusing on programming that continues to strengthen and deepen our connections to each other. These personal relationships are what make our shul such a wonderful community for those already connected to our community as well as those looking to connect. I am particularly excited to help plan events that will engage young families."

Poster, who is from Toronto, said he envisions "developing a strategic plan to help grow our membership base," and Woolf, a Nashvillian, said he wants to "help support my shul family in developing resources to allow us to continue to succeed through communication, cooperation, and collaboration with all our members." •

The Observer's Annual

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# Back To School Issue

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Jewish family values are the cornerstone of MCA's curriculum and help to shape students' budding social mores with lessons on helping others *mitzvot*, protecting the earth, and promoting peace. In Judaica class, these teachings are reinforced with innovative dramatic play and hands on activities. MCA's curriculum also utilizes the Tennessee Early Learning Developmental Standards to establish goals for every age group and adapt them to each child's needs. A focus on project based learning, where children work together to solve a problem or create a finished work, promotes big picture thinking and investigative minds.

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For more information or to schedule a tour, call Theresa LePore at (615) 942-5162 or visit [www.micahchildrenacademy.org](http://www.micahchildrenacademy.org).

## Beit Miriam: A comprehensive Jewish education from pre-K through high school

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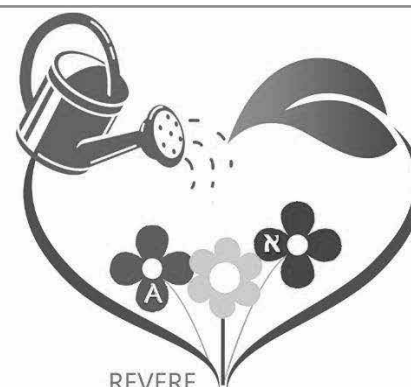
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Our regular menu features grilled sandwiches, made-from-scratch soups and salads, and vegan cookies and muffins that are so good you'll order them for an appetizer. Our daily specials include choices like chile relleno, szechwan noodles and Indian veggie curry, and are posted daily at [bongojava.com](http://bongojava.com). Check us out on Instagram at [grinsvegcafe](https://www.instagram.com/grinsvegcafe) for colorful photos, and on Facebook at Grins Vegetarian Café.

## Aunt Mary's Pet Sitting: Exceptional pet care in your home

Aunt Mary's Pet Sitting LLC is a licensed and insured company focused on delivering exceptional pet care services in your home. We serve southwest Davidson county and northwest Williamson county.

If you are planning to take your child to college for the first time this fall, or you are looking forward to traveling now that the crowds have dissipated, you can count on us to care for your pets and your home. Our services are highly customized to the needs of our clients and the rhythms of their homes. We understand the dietary laws and respect all the customs of your house.

In order to get to know you and your pet, we require an in-home interview for all first-time clients. Please provide plenty of time in advance of your need for services to schedule this meeting.

For more information, contact owners Mary Cornelius and Elaine Taubin at 615-500-2534 or visit [www.auntmaryspetsitting.com](http://www.auntmaryspetsitting.com).

## Temple Pre-school: Focusing on the whole child

The Temple Preschool is a play-based, child-directed learning environment that welcomes infants and children through Pre-K age. With a focus on the whole child as part of a supportive community, we rely on a number of ideals that support cognitive and socio-emotional health. 1) Our emergent curriculum creates hands-on learning opportunities for children to develop a deeper understanding of language, math and science concepts while offering opportunities for conflict resolution, persistence and problem solving through social interactions. 2) We consider an environment rich in open-ended provocations, authentic and natural materials and child-made materials an integral part of our learning experiences. 3) Teachers consider their role to be co-researchers and facilitators of learning by working alongside children to foster creativity, curiosity and community.

We would love to give you a tour of our program. Please contact us by phone (615)356-8009 or via email at [preschool@templenashville.org](mailto:preschool@templenashville.org). We are open 7:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. Monday through Friday and offer a variety of part-time and full-time enrollment opportunities.

## Bertram and Beatrice King Chabad Hebrew School: Putting the FUN in fundamental

The Bertram and Beatrice King Chabad Hebrew School (CHS) has earned an 18-year reputation of being an innovative program in which students excel in their Hebrew reading, Jewish knowledge, and pride of their heritage. The director is Mrs. Esther Tiechtel,

Located at the Genesis Campus for Jewish Life, CHS meets weekly on Sunday mornings and caters to students ages 5 through 13. The new academic year will begin on Sunday, September 10.

Chabad Hebrew School emphasizes exploring the Jewish heritage in a creative and fun way, putting the FUN in FUNDamentals, with special focus on not only accumulating knowledge, but applying those lessons to our everyday life.

During classes on Jewish values and holidays, children engage their minds through peer discussions and hands-on experiences, and are challenged to analyze, evaluate, and compare texts, ideas, and ethical dilemmas.

Chabad Hebrew School creates confident Jewish learners by giving them the tools to read Hebrew and participate in the prayer services. The Alef Champ Program is famous for instilling a love as well as fluency in Hebrew reading. This year, students will be offered centers on Hebrew writing and language as well as interactive vocabulary.

Children and teens are invited to Shabbat family dinners and have workshops around the holidays where they learn from talented craftsmen, teachers and artists. They have a correspondence program with their peers, and see the meaning in their Jewish roots and feel a part of the world Jewish community.

For more information or to register, call (615) 646-5750, or go to [chabadnashville.com](http://chabadnashville.com).

## The Revere Jewish Montessori Preschool: Imparting a love of beauty and Judaism

The Revere Jewish Montessori Preschool is Tennessee's only Jewish Montessori Preschool. It is committed to enriching Jewish life and learning for every child in the Nashville community. It endeavors to impart a love for the beauty of the Jewish tradition and culture.

The Preschool is conveniently located on the beautiful Genesis Campus for Jewish Life. Tucked away on nine acres, the preschool's backdrop is a lushly wooded area complete with meandering walking paths and plenty of flora and fauna for investigating. A custom play structure and large play surface give children a starting point in which to use their imagination in countless, energy-burning ways.

The objective of the preschool is to create a warm, healthy and happy environment where children can grow and develop emotionally and cognitively as well as physically. In early childhood, the seeds of learning, Jewish identity, curiosity and caring are planted. This program spans a period of personal, social, and academic growth. The teachers are sensitive to the wide range of abilities within this age group, and offer creative activities that fit into the broad developmental continuum represented by the students.

The preschool creates a stimulating and enriching educational environment for each child. The Montessori program helps children learn socialization skills, building their self-confidence and teaching them the preliminary skills to explore and experience the world independently from their parents.

The Revere Jewish Montessori Preschool seeks to ignite a spark in each child to lay claim to their Jewish heritage and to a lifetime passion for learning.

For a tour or to register all (615) 646-5750 or go to [jewishmontessoripreschool.com](http://jewishmontessoripreschool.com)

## The Temple Religious School: Growing and nurturing strong Jewish identities

Our educational program at The Temple seeks to impart the most important aspects of Reform Judaism to our students while building a sense of community and shared values. We believe that it is in the context of community – teachers, clergy and parents, both Jewish and non-Jewish, working together – that Jewish learning is successful. Through this partnership, we foster a deep knowledge of and commitment to Judaism in all of our children.

Our Pre-K Parent-Child Program provides a monthly 'taste of Religious School' for families that explores Jewish values and holidays through music, stories and fun projects.

Children in grades K-3 explore Jewish identity and values through the study of Jewish holidays, Bible stories, prayer, music and Hebrew.

Children in grades 4-6 learn Hebrew prayers on Wednesdays in addition to classes on Sundays. Topics include the Jewish lifecycle, family values at home, the people and history of Israel and the great Jewish debates.

Children in junior high and high school have a grade level core class on Sundays and get to choose from interesting and relevant electives throughout the year; 11th and 12th graders continue to wrestle with what it means to be Jewish on a weekly basis on Wednesday evenings.

The classroom is one component of our broad program which includes youth group, worship, family education, social action projects and other informal experiences. Through all of these experiences, our students become both competent and confident Jews with a deep sense of who they are, where they came from and where they are going into the future.

To hear more about our dynamic program at The Temple Religious School, contact Rabbi Michael Shulman, RJE, director of education, at [rabbishulman@temple-nashville.org](mailto:rabbishulman@temple-nashville.org) (615) 352-7620.

## Akiva School: Helping student pursue academic excellence and build character

Akiva School is a high-performing, K-6th academic institution and a leader among Jewish day schools in the South. Akiva's mission is to pursue excellence, foster critical inquiry and inspire informed Jewish living. Graduates are consistently accepted into the most selective private middle and high schools and are recognized as leaders in both character and academics in their schools and in Nashville.

The rigorous curricula in both general studies and Jewish studies challenges students to analyze, investigate, question and take risks. The curriculum is center on applied project-based learning and includes strategies to strengthen science, technology, engineering, art, and math (STEAM). Many students graduate from Akiva with exceptional language skills and are able to analyze and understand high-level texts in both Hebrew and English.

Akiva students participate in extracurricular activities such as after-school clubs and sports teams. Last year, we placed 4th overall in NYA's city league. We host a variety of events throughout the year including the Nashville Opera, Nashville's annual Math Olympics, and our famous Purim Carnival.

Akiva takes pride in the diversity of our student body and we truly embody what it means to be a community school. Our smaller class-sizes provide a nurturing atmosphere that enables us to meet the individual needs of our students and ensure their success.

Akiva is accredited by the AdvancED and received an accreditation score in the top 25% of over 34,000 schools internationally. For more information contact Julie Fortune, director of admissions and outreach, at (615) 432-2552 or [jfortune@akivanashville.net](mailto:jfortune@akivanashville.net).



# Will Gal Gadot become the biggest Israeli superstar ever?

By GABE FRIEDMAN

(JTA) — Who are the most famous Israelis in history? Not necessarily the most consequential or “important” — like any number of Nobel Prize winners or behind-the-scenes Middle East peace deal negotiators — but those who are most universally recognizable.

Most lists would likely include a pioneering role model (Golda Meir), a supermodel who once dated Leonardo DiCaprio (Bar Refaeli), its seeming prime-minister-for-life (Benjamin Netanyahu), a politician with crazy hair (David Ben-Gurion), a war hero with a pirate-like eye patch (Moshe Dayan) and a virtuoso violinist (Itzhak Perlman).

But a new name may soon go at the very top of the list: Gal Gadot (pronounced “gahl gah-DOE”).

The actress and model stars in the upcoming remake of “Wonder Woman,” a film based on the legendary DC Comics series that hit U.S. theaters on June 2.

Starring in the average Hollywood superhero blockbuster instantly makes any actor an international sensation. But this isn’t your average superhero flick.



Israeli Gal Gadot stars in “Wonder Woman.” (Photo by Clay Enos/DC Comics)

“Wonder Woman,” featuring one of the few iconic female superheroes, carries the kind of symbolic weight that could turn Gadot into a global feminist torch-holder for decades to come — especially since the film grossed an eye-popping \$105 million on its opening weekend in the United States, shattering projections and setting a domestic record for a film directed by a woman (Patty Jenkins).

Gadot, 32, has long been a household name in Israel, where she has been a supermodel since winning the Miss Israel pageant at 18 in 2004. Unlike Refaeli, the famed Israeli model she is often compared to, Gadot is known, too, for carrying out her mandatory two years of military service in the Israel Defense Forces. She is married (to Israeli real estate businessman Yaron Versano).

Gadot scored a part as an ex-Mossad agent in the fourth film of “The Fast and the Furious” franchise in 2009 — in part, she has said, because director Justin Lin was impressed with her military experience. Since then she has had a few other small roles in Hollywood films, such as “Date Night” (starring Steve Carell and Tina Fey). Her first appearance as Princess Diana of Themyscira (Wonder Woman’s real name) came in 2016 in “Batman v. Superman: Dawn of Justice”

starring Ben Affleck and Henry Cavill.

Gadot isn’t yet widely known outside of Israel, but her public profile is about to radically change given the film’s success.

Beyond the numbers, “Wonder Woman” bears the weight of the feminist anticipation that has been building steadily around the film for years. The hype only increased when Jenkins took over the project in 2015, making “Wonder Woman” the first female superhero film to be directed by a woman.

It won’t hurt Gadot’s popularity that she seems to be, as the original Wonder Woman character was in the comics, sculpted from clay by a god. On screen, she has a magnetic quality — simultaneously graceful, elegant, tough, athletic and bursting with sex appeal.

It’s hard to say how popular Gadot will become. Other recent female superhero movies have starred actresses who already were well-known — Jennifer Garner in “Elektra,” for example, and Halle Berry in “Catwoman.”

One thing is for sure: Gadot will go down in history as a distinctly Israeli actress. Unlike Natalie Portman, an international superstar and Oscar winner who was born in Israel but left at age 2, Gadot speaks English with an Israeli accent. She talks openly about being from a small Israeli city, Rosh Haayin, and her love of the Israeli character.

“In Israel, people have chutzpah,” she said in a recent cover story in Marie Claire. “People take issue with it, but I’d rather have that than play games. Here, everyone’s like, ‘We love you; you’re so wonderful.’ I prefer to know the truth, not waste time. •

## Adi Ben Dor returning to Israel to pursue her love – working with at-risk kids

By CHARLES BERNSEN

As one of the two chaperones on last month’s Get Connected trip to Israel, Adi Ben Dor accompanied the 15 Nashville teenagers on a visit to a Bedouin camp in the desert.

There she ran into a young man she had once counseled for drug addiction in her previous work with children at risk for drug abuse and other social and emotional dysfunctions. Clean and employed now, he thanked her and expressed his determination to stay away from drugs.

“Things like that make you realize that this is the right field to be working in,” said Ben Dor, who for the past year has been the community *shlichah* (Israel emissary) at the Jewish Federation of Nashville and Middle Tennessee.

Ben Dor returns this month to Israel, where she is enrolling at Oranim Academic College to get a master’s degree and special training in teaching and counseling at-risk children.

“This is my field,” she said. “This is a place I can leave a mark.”

In a bit of serendipity, replacing Ben Dor as community *shlichah* next month is Sharon Ben Ami, who also has experience working with at-risk children. As an undergraduate at the Academic College of Tel Aviv-Yafo, she worked at *Chinuch L’psagot*, a nonprofit that provides enrichment programs for underprivileged children. Since October she has worked as a manager at the Branco Weiss Institute, an nonprofit that develops and implements teaching and organizational innovations in



Sharon Ben Ami



Adi Ben Dor (foreground) snapped this selfie as Nashville’s Get Connected contingent was returning from a two-week trip to Israel. “To ... see the country through their eyes was quite revealing,” she said. Ben Dor is leaving her position as community *shlichah* to get a master’s degree in teaching and counseling at-risk children.

Israeli schools with the aim of reducing educational disparities.

Asked about her most memorable experience as *shlichah*, Ben Dor mentioned the recent Get Connected trip.

“To go to Israel with the Nashville students and see the country through their eyes was quite revealing,” Ben Dor said. When the group went to the Kotel, for example, “one of the first things they asked was why the men’s section is so much bigger than the women’s section — the boys asked this. It took Israelis 50 years to ask about that.”

In general, being a *shlichah* has helped her understand the effort required to be a Jew in the diaspora.

“It makes you realize that even in Israel we should not take anything for granted,” she said. •

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# How Mah-Jongg became a Jewish game

By MEREDITH LEWIS

**F**our women sit around a table, each with a card of various numbers and colors, arranged like a secret code. Tiles are exchanged like a perfectly choreographed dance: right, across, left, then left, across, right. Tossing tiles into the middle of the table, the players call out mysterious names—"Four Crak! Three Bam! Eight Dot!" Finally the winner shouts "Mah-Jongg!"

To the uninitiated, the process is foreign. To those familiar with the game, this is just a typical evening with the girls, evenings that have been happening in America for nearly 100 years.

There's no question that scores of Jewish women have played Mah-Jongg, a betting game that requires matching domino-like tiles into rummy-like patterns. From the tenements of New York City to the bungalows of the Catskills and the vast American suburbs, Jewish women have kept alive a game that otherwise fell out of fashion in the 1920s.

And yet the Jewish Mah-Jongg connection is hard to explain. As one Internet writer asked: "How on earth did a 19th century Chinese parlor game come to be a favorite pastime for middle-aged Jewish women?"

## The Rise and fall of Mah-Jongg

Mah-Jongg's precursors may be centuries old, but the game most Americans know dates back only about 150 years. Around 1846, a servant of the Chinese emperor combined the rules of popular card games of the time, and replaced cards with tiles to create Mah-Jongg. The name itself means sparrows – an allusion to the pictures of birds often engraved on the tiles. The advent of Mah-Jongg coincided with China's opening to foreign traders, and by 1920 an Americanized version was being sold at Abercrombie and Fitch, then a sporting and excursion goods store.

Throughout the 1920s, the game was a popular craze. Over time, to make the game more difficult and exciting, playing groups made up their own "table rules." As these homemade regulations



It's even said that when the last woman of a Mah-Jongg groups dies, it's her job to "bring" the Mah-Jongg set with her to the World to Come.

became more complex and convoluted, players eventually became turned off by the game and the challenge of ever-changing rules. By the end of the decade, the Mah-Jongg fad had died.

## A Jewish trend

But Jews, particularly Jewish women, did not let go of the game.

In 1937, a group of Jewish women formed the National Mah Jongg League (NMJL), which to this day strives to maintain consistency in the game. Each year the League issues a card listing winning tile combinations (which change every year) and standard regulations. This stability helped the game to survive.

According to Anita Luu and Christi Cavallero's book, *Mah-Jongg: From Shanghai to Miami Beach*, "Throughout World War II the game continued to be played among Jewish women's circles as it increased in popularity and became more prevalent in their lives." While their men were off at war, Luu and Cavallero explain, women found Mah-Jongg to be an inexpensive form of communal entertainment. In the urban setting of New York, the game quickly spread from friend to friend, mother to daughter.

Another group of historians suggests that Jews who fled Nazi Europe and made it to Shanghai got involved in local culture and adopted the game. Once those refugees immigrated to

America in the mid-20th century, they helped keep Mah-Jongg alive.

Ruth Unger, current president of NMJL, believes the game was perpetuated in part because it is a philanthropic money-making endeavor for Jewish organizations like synagogue sisterhoods and Hadassah chapters. These groups sell Mah-Jongg rule cards and receive donations from the League. In order to sell enough cards, they have had to keep people interested in playing the game, so they continue to teach Mah-Jongg to their members.

## Bungalow memories

Perhaps the most important factor in Mah-Jongg's survival is the role it played in the bungalow colonies, popular Jewish vacation sites in the mid-20th century.

"By the middle of the century, Mah-Jongg had spread from the city to the suburbs and the vacation resorts, it went along with the Jews," write Irwin Richman in *Borscht Belt Bungalows: Memories of Catskill Summers*. "The click, click of tiles and phrases like 'five bam' and 'two crak' filled the air many an afternoon at the large colonies."

New City, New York resident Joan Cooper recalls spending childhood summers at these colonies, where her mother and friends would play Mah-Jongg every weekday until their husbands and fathers drove up on Friday afternoon from New York City.



Women playing Mah-Jongg in the Catskills (Courtesy of the Museum of Jewish Heritage)

"The women would sit with big hats covering their face and the straps untied on their bathing suits, so they didn't get any tan lines," says Cooper. "The best time to ask something from Mom was during her games. She'd always give me a little money just to make me go away."

## Mothers, Daughters, Friends

Those little kids watching the games eventually grew up to become the next generation of Mah-Jongg players. Yet many of them didn't think they'd follow in their mothers' footsteps. When Cooper was asked who taught her to play Mah-Jongg, she interrupted her weekly game to call her sister, who, of course, was at her own Mah-Jongg game. Neither was certain, but they assumed they learned from their mother.

"We never wanted to be those old farts playing Mah-Jongg," Cooper says. "Look at us now."

Ruth Unger seems to agree: "Women didn't want to play a game they thought was a frivolous thing their mothers played. They wanted to do great things with their lives ... However, the game is persistent and seductive, and poetic justice is usually served when the daughter who has strayed ends up liking it far more than her mother ever did."

As newer generations take up the game, they learn that many true friendships can develop from it. And that's not frivolous at all.

In the documentary *Mah-Jongg: The Tiles that Bind*, seasoned players say that Mah-Jongg is their life. As women play for years and decades with the same people, they share life events – marriages and divorces, the birth of children and then grandchildren, work and retirement.

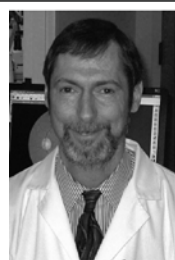
It's even said that when the last woman of a Mah-Jongg groups dies, it's her job to bring the Mah-Jongg set with her to the World to Come.

This story was originally published by My Jewish Learning at [myjewishlearning.com](http://myjewishlearning.com).

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# "Making Waves"

By: Yoni Glatt, [koshercrosswords@gmail.com](mailto:koshercrosswords@gmail.com) • Difficulty Level: Easy • Solution on page 22

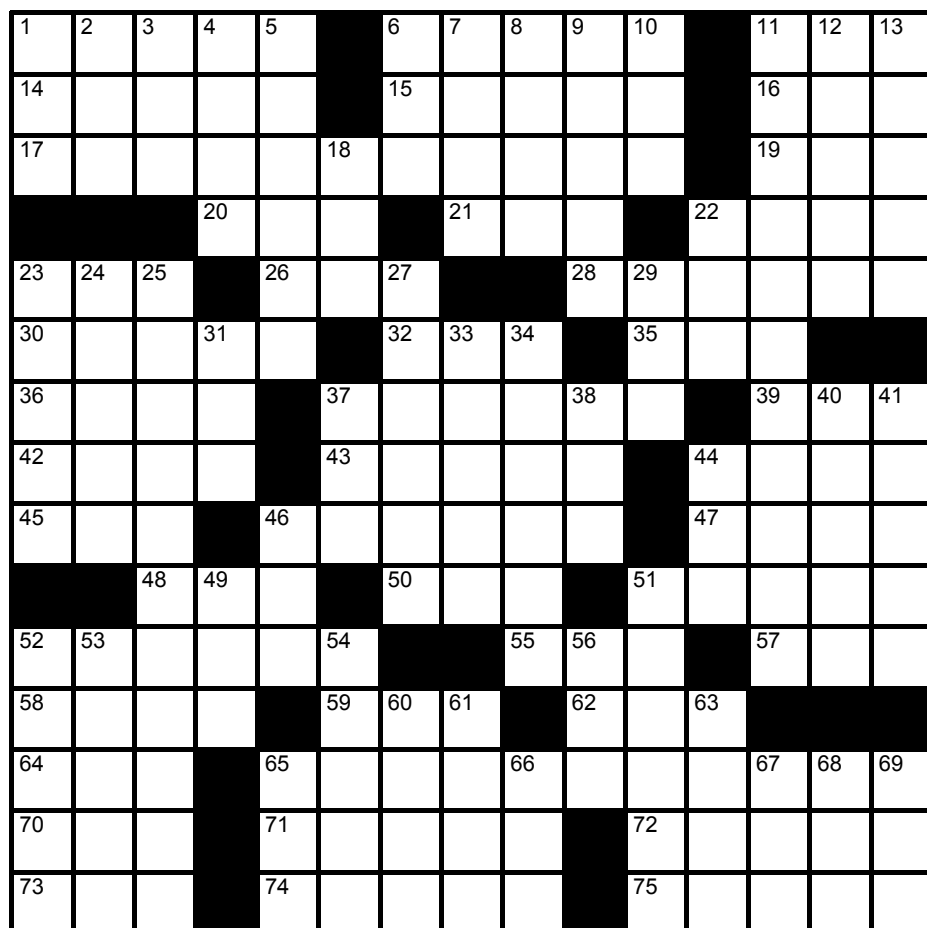
## Across

1. Kudrow and Loeb
6. Like Yoni Netanyahu or Judah Maccabee
11. "The Good Wife" ailer
14. First of a doubled month
15. Menachem with the alias Rabbi Israel Sassover
16. Like Israel in the Summer
17. 1999 Tim Allen hit
19. "Barefoot Contessa" chef Garten
20. Anti- Israel org.
21. Letters many consider inappropriate for the Western Wall?
22. Namesakes of the first lady
23. Pure tref
26. Capone and Michaels
28. Place for David's sword
30. Egypt to Israel, in 1948
32. Magen David Adom letters
35. Some settings on Braff's "Scrubs", for short
36. Jewish testimonials
37. Night prayer
39. Rabbinic title
42. Ya\_\_\_ (name in Hebrew meaning "precious")
43. With the start or end of 17 & 65-Across and 11 & 25-Down, she's making waves as Wonder Woman
44. Davidson of "Saturday Night Live"
45. Portman won this award one for "Black Swan"
46. Chaverim, like Juan and Julio
47. Marty Feldman in "Young Frankenstein"
48. Eilat slitherer
50. Kushner's political party (now): Abbr.
51. Cholent ingredients
52. Jewish basketball great Omri
55. Leah or Sarah, e.g.
57. Harper or Stan
58. Brother of Cain
59. \_\_\_-wee Herman
62. Drink in Maaleh?
64. Kirk's diary
65. Those who might motivate IDF soldiers

70. Actress Green of "Casino Royale"
71. Grace's last name on "Will & Grace"
72. Bombeck and Franklin
73. \_\_\_ Air (neighborhood of the Stephen Wise Temple)
74. Work by King David
75. Lior Raz's hit Israeli TV show

## Down

1. Day 33 in the Omer
2. \_\_\_ Crown Jewish Academy
3. Mineo of "Exodus"
4. Many a Ramallah resident
5. War that gave Israel back the Old City
6. 1-Down activity activity
7. Subscribe to this publication for another year
8. Like fine 11-Across
9. They aren't given to Israelis in some Arab countries
10. Sinus ent
11. Shot option when saying "L'chaim!"
12. Lisa of "The Cosby Show"
13. The Irgun might have had a secret one of weapons
18. CK1 alternative
22. Ending for "puppet" (e.g. Shari Lewis)
23. Glances (over the mechitza)
24. Country where Modi is in
25. Star in "A Touch of Class" and "The Goldbergs"
27. It's breathed on the Mediterranean
29. Lane for those carpooling to YU
31. NYC subway inits. or yeshiva
33. Madonna's nickname
34. Golani members
37. "Ben-Hur" studio
38. "Where \_\_\_ At" (Beck hit)
40. What one might do on Yom Kippur
41. Line in the Bible
44. Apple \_\_\_ (Rosh Hashana dessert, perhaps)
46. Austrian peak
49. Subj. for Israeli's who move to the US
51. Faith
52. Biblical spy with Joshua



53. Where some look for Heaven?
54. They might have a siddur or kosher app
56. Iconic role for Harrison
60. Ari\_\_\_ (female name in Hebrew)
61. Knievel who made people say "Oh my G-d!"
63. Book before Nehemiah
65. Year many students spend in Israel
66. Koufax had an incredible one
67. Bird in a land where Hannukah is in the Summer
68. "Magniv!" (In the 1960's)
69. Govt. agency that has your number

## lifecycles

### Sympathy

... to the family and friends of **Shmuel Goldring**, 60, who died on June 10 at his home surrounded by his loving family. He was preceded in death by his parents, Rivkah Zelig and Arie Goldring of Kibbutz Tel Yosef in Israel, where he was born. He is survived by his wife of 37 years, Ellen Goldring; two sons, Ariel and Oren Goldring; a daughter-in-law, Lisa Goldring, and siblings in Israel, Zvikah Kiserman, Yaakova Arazi, Irit Dudik, and Atara Tzur. Shmuel was a veteran of the Israeli Defense Forces and a small business owner. He was an avid hiker and artist who cared deeply about his family, friends, and every stranger he ever met. Services were on June 13 at West End Synagogue with burial in KKAJ Cemetery. Those who wish to make memorial contributions are asked to consider the West End Room in the Inn Fund or the Vanderbilt Ingram Cancer Center.

... to the family of **Joseph Zendlovitz**, 88, who died on June 20. Preceded in

death by his beloved wife, Sondra, he is survived by their three children, Martha (Ron) Emeson, Elaine (Kurt) Gerber, and Debra (Cheryl Meyer) Zendlovitz; grand-daughters Sara, Sydney and Rachel, and step-grandchildren Max and Monika. Joe loved sports and was an accomplished athlete. After serving stateside during the Korean War, he began working in mass merchandising during its infancy, working his way up to upper level management in several large companies including Service Merchandise. Later, he ran his own small chain of retail party goods stores. Following his retirement, he was an active volunteer. Twice named the Nashville Red Cross Volunteer of the Year for his dedicated service, he also volunteered for many other projects and entities and always helped friends and neighbors. He was an amazing husband, father, grandfather and friend. He will be sorely missed by all who knew him. The funeral was on June 22 at West End Synagogue. Donations may be made to Gilda's Club Nashville, University School of Nashville (the Sondra Zendlovitz Reading Room Endowment), or the Southern Poverty Law Center.

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# Only the Truth Will Liberate Us

By **RABBI YITZCHOK TIECHTEL**

Only in Israel does a store vendor offer you a “Chabad discount” as a token of appreciation and then hand you not only your change but also an extra dollar for “Shlichut Mitzvah” to give to charity when you get home.

Only in Israel could the taxi driver taking you to the airport declare, “I was there when we liberated the Kotel in 1967. I was the first one to hear the words: Har Habait B’yadeinu - “the Temple Mount is in our hands.” Such were my experiences in Israel this past week.

If you’re 60 or older, you recall the euphoria that gripped the Jewish world in the wake of the undeniably miraculous victory of the Six Day War. You remember the pride in being Jewish, the stirring of our national soul. You walked with your head held high as the world looked on in awe. In Israel, even the most ardent secularists streamed to the Kotel and with tears in their eyes, kissed its ancient stones. Men, by the hundreds of thousands (In Israel and around the world) rolled up their sleeves to lay tefillin and recite the Shema, per the Rebbe’s Tefillin campaign.

And yet only in Israel could the miraculous gifts handed to us by G-d – the Kotel, the Tomb of the Patriarchs in Hebron, Judea and Samaria, the Golan – still be “disputed territory,” their sta-

tus still “unresolved,” all because after the war we indicated to the Arabs and Americans our willingness to “return the territories,” much to their utter disbelief.

Thus was born the “pressure” and “unresolved Middle East conflict”.

Enough already – or as they say in Yiddish: *genuk shoin!*

As we recently commemorated 50 years of the unification of Jerusalem, it’s time to put this issue to rest. It’s time to declare before the world that this land is ours, never to be divided again. That we have returned to the Old City of Jerusalem, to Hebron, Efrat, Elon Moreh, to the Shomron and the Golan to stay forever, just like we returned to Tel Aviv, Ashkelon, Haifa and Be’er Sheva.

As long as we keep the “negotiation” door open, we will incur continued pressure to compromise.

Yes, it will take great strength – but we need not rely solely on human or national strength, which have proven insufficient time and again. We must derive our strength and the justification of our cause from its source: G-d and His promise as stated in the Torah. Our claim to legitimacy is that we are the only democracy in the Middle East. Important as it is, that claim has not prevented the rise of the BDS movement and rampant anti-Israel propaganda in academia.

The case for Israel is G-d’s conveyance of this land to the Jewish people, and the Torah is our deed. Every other “case” has and will continue to fall short and leave us less respected in the eyes of the world.

Fifty years is the Jubilee year, the year of freedom. It is time to free of ourselves from the captivity of world opinion. Instead of asking ourselves, “What will the world say?” ask ourselves, “What does G-d say?”

The good news is that G-d is very clear and unambiguous in the last portion of Leviticus: “If you pursue My laws, guard My commands and observe them...You will live safely in your Land. I will grant peace in the Land, and you will go to sleep with nothing frightening you...Foreign swords will not pass through your Land. You will chase away your enemies and they will fall dead before you. Five of you will be able to chase away a hundred, and a hundred will be able to chase away ten thousand”

The last two verses are a prophetic depiction of precisely what transpired during the Six Day War when we acted boldly, proactively, unapologetically,

unbeholden to world opinion.

May the spirit that lifted us 50 years ago, rise again, raising us above the false forays of politics and into the zone of truth and the strength that comes with it. Only the truth will liberate us. •

## Submission Policy

The Observer accepts original opinion pieces and letters from Nashville area residents on topics of interest to the Jewish community as long as they have not been published or submitted for publication elsewhere. Submissions should be sent by the 15th of the month prior to publication to Editor Charles Bernsen at [charles@jewishnashville.org](mailto:charles@jewishnashville.org) or 801 Percy Warner, Suite 102, Nashville 37205. The Observer reserves the right edit all submissions for clarity, length and style.

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## Crossword solution

|     |   |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |     |     |   |     |   |     |   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|-----|-----|---|-----|---|-----|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 1   | L | 2   | I | 3   | S | 4   | A | 5   | S   | 6   | B | 7   | R | 8   | A | 9   | V   | 10  | E   | 11  | C   | 12  | B   | 13  | S   |
| 14  | A | 15  | D | 16  | A | 17  | R | 18  | I   | 19  | B | 20  | E | 21  | G | 22  | I   | 23  | N   | 24  | H   | 25  | O   | 26  | T   |
| 27  | G | 28  | A | 29  | L | 30  | A | 31  | X   | 32  | Y | 33  | Q | 34  | U | 35  | E   | 36  | S   | 37  | I   | 38  | N   | 39  | A   |
| 40  |   | 41  | B | 42  | D | 43  | S | 44  |     | 45  | P | 46  | D | 47  | A | 48  |     | 49  | E   | 50  | V   | 51  | E   | 52  | S   |
| 53  | P | 54  | I | 55  | G | 56  |   | 57  | A   | 58  | L | 59  | S | 60  |   | 61  | S   | 62  | H   | 63  | E   | 64  | A   | 65  | T   |
| 66  | E | 67  | N | 68  | E | 69  | M | 70  | Y   | 71  |   | 72  | E | 73  | M | 74  | T   | 75  |     | 76  | O   | 77  | R   | 78  | S   |
| 79  | E | 80  | D | 81  | O | 82  | T | 83  |     | 84  | M | 85  | A | 86  | A | 87  | R   | 88  | 89  | I   | 90  | V   | 91  | 92  | 93  |
| 94  | K | 95  | I | 96  | R | 97  | A | 98  |     | 99  | G | 100 | A | 101 | D | 102 | O   | 103 |     | 104 | P   | 105 | E   | 106 | T   |
| 107 | S | 108 | A | 109 | G | 110 |   | 111 | A   | 112 | M | 113 | I | 114 | G | 115 | O   | 116 |     | 117 | I   | 118 | G   | 119 | O   |
| 120 |   | 121 | E | 122 | E | 123 | L | 124 |     | 125 | R | 126 | E | 127 | P | 128 |     | 129 | B   | 130 | E   | 131 | A   | 132 | N   |
| 133 | C | 134 | A | 135 | S | 136 | S | 137 | P   | 138 |   | 139 | S | 140 | H | 141 |     | 142 | E   | 143 | L   | 144 | E   | 145 | E   |
| 146 | A | 147 | B | 148 | E | 149 | L | 150 |     | 151 | P | 152 | E | 153 |   | 154 | 155 | 156 | 157 | 158 | 159 | 160 | 161 | 162 | 163 |
| 164 | L | 165 | O | 166 | G | 167 |   | 168 | 169 | 170 | G | 171 | A | 172 | L | 173 | V   | 174 | 175 | 176 | 177 | 178 | 179 | 180 | 181 |
| 182 | E | 183 | V | 184 | A | 185 |   | 186 | 187 | 188 | A | 189 | D | 190 | L | 191 | E   | 192 |     | 193 | E   | 194 | R   | 195 | M   |
| 196 | B | 197 | E | 198 | L | 199 |   | 200 | 201 | 202 | P | 203 | S | 204 | A | 205 | L   | 206 | 207 | 208 | 209 | 210 | 211 | 212 | 213 |

I like to come here, Franz. As I have for nearly twenty years now.

And the rose bush has turned into a lovely little tree.

# Franz

I never had such a green thumb as you did, Franz. Probably you helped me there a little bit, don't you think? And if one of the roots reaches down to you, then that means a little bit of you is in the blossoms and you can see the summer every year.

The people who run the cemetery said that the rose bush can stay when the lease on the plot runs out.



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