

HAPPY PURIM



A girl in Jerusalem wearing a mask for Purim, which starts this year on Thursday, February 25. Credit: Paula Bronstein/Getty Images

Federal court blocks NY Gov. Andrew Cuomo's capacity limits on houses of worship

By Shira Hanau
NEW YORK (JTA) — A federal judge has struck down an executive order by New York Gov. Andrew Cuomo that instituted percentage-based capacity limits on houses of worship in his state's COVID cluster zones where cases were increasing.

Tuesday morning's (February 9) decision by the Brooklyn District Court constitutes a major victory for Orthodox groups, like the advocacy organization Agudath Israel, which challenged the executive order on religious discrimination grounds.

The U.S. Supreme Court and

2nd Circuit Court of Appeals had blocked some of Cuomo's restrictions last year.

"There was never any legitimate reason to treat religious worship less favorably than office work and shopping," said Avi Schick, the lawyer who represented Agudath Israel in the case. "We are grateful that religious practice has been restored to its constitutionally mandated place as an essential activity."

The executive order, which was first put in place in October and limited attendance at houses of worship in areas with high COVID (See **Court** Page 2)

George Shultz, secretary of state who pressed for freedom for refuseniks, dies at 100

By Ron Kampeas
NEW YORK (JTA) — George Shultz, the Reagan administration secretary of state who made it his mission to bring about freedom for Soviet Jewry, has died at 100.

The Hoover Institution at Stanford University, where Shultz has been a distinguished fellow for decades, announced his passing

on Saturday, February 6. It did not give a cause.

Shultz was a moderate Republican who in a number of economic Cabinet positions during the Nixon presidency advanced affirmative action as redress for discrimination. He was the rare instance of a Nixon Cabinet secretary who emerged (See **Freedom** Page 2)



Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir, left, shakes hands with Secretary of State George Shultz in Washington, Nov. 27, 1983. Credit: Mark Reinstein/Corbis via Getty Images

Nikki Haley broke with President Trump. It could make her a Jewish GOP favorite in 2024

By Ron Kampeas
WASHINGTON (JTA) — Nikki Haley has finally and decisively broken with Donald Trump in a move that puts her at the front of the potential Republican presidential pack for moderate conservatives, including pro-Israel Jews who mainly stuck with the party over the past four years because of Trump's foreign policy.

After serving as his U.N. ambassador and not taking a stand for months on what his lies about election fraud would mean for his legacy, Haley made the final cut on Friday, February 12, in a Politico interview. Trump's inflammatory post-election rhetoric, which Democrats argue culminated in the deadly Jan. 6 riot at the U.S. Capitol, was the final straw.

"We need to acknowledge he let us down," Haley said. "He went down a path he shouldn't have, and we shouldn't have followed him, and we shouldn't have listened to him. And we can't let that ever happen again."

Her break is a risky move: Trump still commands enough loyalty in the party that Republican senators are privately telling folks they are scared to convict him in his impeachment trial underway last week.

But Haley, the former South Carolina governor, has a canny sense of when it's time for conservatives to let go of driftwood. She removed the Confederate flag from the state Capitol after a white supremacist gunned down nine Black churchgoers in Charleston in 2015. The move, which would have sparked outrage a week before the killing, went down without a hitch.

Haley was until now one of the few Trump officials who managed to walk a fine line between distancing herself from some of his outrages and earning his blessing by embracing his agenda. She has also been a star among pro-Israel Republicans for her pledge as U.N. ambassador to "take names" of countries that go against the United States when it backs Israel.

In effect, she had emerged from the Trump years as a political survivor capable of walking that line into the White House. Her clear break from Trumpism is a sign that more Republicans on the fence will need to stake out a side.

Many GOP Jews will be happy with Haley's decision and could help her with her presidential ambitions.

Haley made fighting anti-Israel policy the centerpiece of her United Nations tenure, removing the United States from the U.N. Human Rights Council because it focused an uneven amount of energy on Israel. She also took the lead in the U.S. decision to cut funding for UNRWA, the U.N.-affiliated body that assists Palestinian refugees, and which Republicans say is perpetuating the conflict. (President Joe Biden plans to reverse both policies.)

Her frontline pro-Israel advocacy has made her extremely popular at the annual American



Nikki Haley at a campaign rally for Kelly Loeffler in Monroe, Ga., Oct. 30, 2020. Credit: Tom Williams/CQ-Roll Call, Inc via Getty Images

Israel Public Affairs Committee conference, where she always earned the loudest cheers — the mere mention of her name by another speaker guaranteed applause.

She memorably coined the phrase that came to define her U.N. gig at the 2017 AIPAC conference: "I wear high heels. It's not for a fashion statement, it's because if I see something wrong I will kick it every single time."

At the 2019 conference, after she had quit her U.N. job, she used her AIPAC appearance to launch her advocacy website, Stand For America, a typical stage setter for people contemplating a presidential run. The site solicits donations and emails.

She has a very warm relationship with Jewish Republican groups, including the Republican Jewish Coalition (at an RJC event last July, Haley urged Jewish voters to ignore Trump's coarse conduct and focus on the "results" his policies have yielded).

Jewish Republicans are disillusioned with Trump after the Jan. 6 riot, which attracted explicit displays of anti-Semitism. Fundraising among Jewish donors ahead of

2024 likely will be a hard slog for any presidential candidate who is Trump-adjacent.

"I would certainly hope under any circumstance that our community shows their appreciation, in any endeavor that she undertakes," Fred Zeidman, a Houston businessman who is a major Republican pro-Israel donor, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. The more important effort right now, he said, was to steer the party away from association with Trump's disastrous final months. "What Nikki is trying to achieve right now is to retake the House and retake the Senate."

Haley's 2019 political autobiography, "With All Due Respect," includes a chapter — and chunks elsewhere in the book — on Israel policy, including her battles with then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, whom she depicts as resistant to her advice to quit UNRWA.

She also gives four pages over to a topic that had no bearing on her U.N. responsibilities — the deadly neo-Nazi march in Charlottesville in 2017. Trump's equivocation upset her enough, she writes, that (See **Haley** Page 2)

Jewish Historical Society to host The Four Rabbis: Hear Their Stories

The Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South (JHS) will present a special virtual program entitled: The Four Rabbis: Hear Their Stories, on Sunday afternoon, March 7, at 2 pm, according to Lorraine Wolf, president of the Society.

Open to the community, the program will feature Rabbi Rachel Bearman, Rabbi Karen Kriger Bogard, Rabbi Michael Danziger, and Rabbi Jeff Dreifus, who will each give a presentation and join a panel discussion led by moderator Sally Rosenberg. Each of the rabbis grew up in Memphis at Temple Israel.

"I was fascinated to hear about

their choices and wondered what made them choose to become a rabbi, said Phyllis Groskind, JHS' co-vice president of programming. She originated the idea for the event and helped to plan it.

"Everyone is very excited about this opportunity to learn more from our home grown Rabbis, and they are thrilled to share their stories and contribute to our knowledge of Memphis Jewish history," said Ms. Wolf.

Rabbi Bearman became the associate rabbi of Congregation Shaare Emeth in St. Louis in 2020. She is a native of Memphis, where seven generations of her (See **Rabbis** Page 2)



Rabbi Jeff Dreifus



Rabbi Karen Kriger-Bogard



Rabbi Michael Danziger



Rabbi Rachel Bearman



Sally Rosenberg

Rabbis...

(Continued From Page 1)

family have been part of the city's Jewish community. She attended Middlebury College, where she received her undergraduate degree in Religious Studies.

In 2014, Rabbi Bearman was ordained at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Cincinnati, Ohio. Before coming to Shaare Emeth, Rabbi Bearman served as the sole rabbi of Temple B'nai Chaim, a reform congregation in Georgetown, Connecticut.

In addition to her work at Shaare Emeth, Rabbi Bearman is currently serving as the communications and marketing vice president of the Women's Rabbinic Network and is the co-creator and co-author of Midrashic Monologues, a project that strives to restore the unspoken voices of biblical figures.

Rabbi Kriger Bogard is a rabbi at Central Reform Congregation in St. Louis. She grew up in Memphis as part of a proud Southern Jewish family. She graduated from Newcomb College at Tulane University with a double degree in Jewish Studies and Religious Studies and continued her learning at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion. After Rabbinical school, (where she met her husband Daniel Bogard) she shared a pulpit with him at Anshei Emeth in Peoria, IL. She was also Judaica Director at Peoria Hebrew Day School and was a Co-Rabbi with her husband at Adath Israel in Cincinnati.

She has been a Brickman Fellow with the Religious Action Center, a part of the Shalom Hartman's Women's Rabbinic Cohort, and a recipient of the Jonas Weil Endowment Inter-faith Inclusion Grant. She also has a fellowship

with 18 Doors focusing on multi-faith work with couples and families in St. Louis.

Rabbi Danziger is a native Memphian, where his father, Rabbi Harry K. Danziger, served as senior rabbi of Temple Israel. Upon graduating from the University of Texas with a degree in Organizational and Community Leadership, Rabbi Michael Danziger became the assistant director at URJ Henry S. Jacob Camp in Utica, Mississippi. After several years, he returned to Memphis and Temple Israel, where he was the youth and family life director. He is now the new assistant rabbi at Isaac M. Wise Temple in Cincinnati and was ordained from HUC-JIR this past spring. While in Rabbinical school, Michael interned at Temple Sholom and with HUC's National Office of Recruitment and Admissions. He also holds the distinction of being a professional stand-up comic.

Rabbi Dreifus has just been appointed the first director of Innovation, Engagement and Strategic Partnerships at Temple Israel. He will be ordained in May 2021 from Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion and will direct TI-Crosstown's space and partner with social justice causes in Memphis as well as lead Temple's life long adult learning.

As a student, Jeff served congregations in Juneau, AK and Rye, New York. Prior to rabbinical studies, he co-founded ConnectTI, Temple Israel's Underground Shabbat Community and the Temple Israel Fellowship for college students and recent graduates.

The TI Fellowship was recognized by Slingshot as one of the most innovative Jewish programs in the United States. Jeff graduated Cum Laude from Washington University with a BA in Economics and Environmental Studies.

Ms. Rosenberg was born in New Orleans and grew up in Memphis, where her family has played an active role at Temple Israel. She speaks five languages and is a foreign language teacher at St. Mary's Episcopal School and a co-teacher at Temple's Embracing Judaism class.

Known as the "Mikveh Lady", she assists at the mikveh at Beth Sholom Synagogue. A creator of innovative teaching curriculum and a facilitator of many classes at Temple, she has also led a "Torah, Talk, and Walk" and designed the Rosh Chodesh program now used

by Temple Sisterhood. She is also an artist who creates one of a kind Mezuzot for her clients.

She received her B.A. at the University of Texas in Plan II In-

Freedom...

(Continued From Page 1)

from that administration squeaky clean: As Treasury secretary, Shultz stood between Nixon and the president's desire to harass his opponents with the Internal Revenue Service.

Shultz left the Nixon Cabinet in 1974 and joined the oil industry services giant Bechtel, eventually becoming president. Reagan tapped Shultz to be secretary of state in 1982 after Alexander Haig's career imploded over his incautious battles with colleagues.

One of Haig's perceived indiscretions was to defend Israel too fiercely, including in the war that Israel launched in Lebanon that year. Shultz's blank slate on Israel and his dealings as an executive with Saudi Arabia immediately sparked wariness among the pro-Israel community.

He soon calmed the waters.

Haley...

(Continued From Page 1)

she called him. She said he should be as unequivocal as she was after the Charleston massacre. He said the two situations differed.

"I replied to the president that the two situations were not really different," Haley writes.

She said she advised the president, "You have to stop acknowledging the haters."

She and Trump had a kind of "strange respect between us," she acknowledged in the book. She describes being on the wrong end of a Trump tweet after attacking Trump at a rally for the candidate she backed in the primaries, Marco Rubio: "The people of South Carolina are embarrassed by Nikki Haley!"

She replied on Twitter, "@realDonaldTrump, 'Bless your heart.'"

"It was southern woman code," Haley said. "Three polite words that let the receiver know you mean something not so polite."

Trump has vowed to return to the political realm in some capacity. But as she told Politico, Haley is focused on moving beyond the debate over his future.

"I don't think he's going to be in the picture," she said. "I don't think he can. He's fallen so far.

international Studies and Languages.

The community is invited to zoom in on this program. It is free and open to the public. For more information on the program, go to

jhsmem.org.

Zoom Meeting ID: 882 2756 2945; Passcode: 974958;

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Shultz was an enthusiastic proponent of Reagan's determination to calm tensions in Lebanon, but he also stood firm against terrorism, and was rattled by the 1983 bombing of the Marine barracks in Beirut killed 241 U.S. military personnel. Shultz had served in the Pacific as a Marine in World War II.

Shultz strongly advocated preventive measures to stop terrorism, quoting among others a rising young Israeli political star, Benjamin Netanyahu.

Shultz's diplomacy led to Yasser Arafat's recognition of Israel in 1988, although it did not lead to talks for at least another three years.

Shultz's passion was his advocacy for Soviet Jews. He was among the doves in the Reagan administration who sided with the president in nuclear disarmament talks with the USSR, but he

leveraged that influence on behalf of Soviet Jews.

Shultz said a highlight of his career was the surprise Passover Seder he convened in 1987 at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow, to which he invited refuseniks, or Jewish dissidents seeking permission to emigrate to Israel.

In 1988, shortly before completing his turn in the job, he said that when Ida Nudel, who attended the Seder, called six months later from Israel, he teared up. "Mr. Secretary, this is Ida Nudel, I'm home," he recalled her saying.

Abraham Foxman, the retired director of the Anti-Defamation League, called Shultz a "great statesman."

"His alarm about terrorism's threat to democracy alerted the world," Foxman said on Twitter. "His hosting a Passover Seder for refuseniks in Moscow was historic."

Court...

(Continued From Page 1)

test positivity rates to 25% and 33%, depending on the severity of the positivity rates, were challenged by Agudath Israel, as well as the Brooklyn Catholic Diocese, in an appeal for an emergency injunction from the U.S. Supreme Court.

The court, with its new conservative majority, ruled in favor of Agudah and the diocese in November, saying that Cuomo's limits on cluster zones favored secular establishments like liquor stores over houses of worship by only imposing capacity restrictions on the latter and treating the former as "essential." Restrictions that kept services to 10 people or fewer, regardless of the size of the house of worship, were eliminated.

Further, the high court ordered an appeals court to reevaluate

an earlier ruling that allowed the restrictions and in December, a federal appeals court followed the Supreme Court's lead, ruling that the capacity limits on houses of worship in areas with rising COVID-19 cases constituted a violation of religious liberty.

The appeals court then sent the case back to the district court to decide if the percentage capacity limits — which limited attendance to 25% of the building's capacity in "red zones," where COVID positivity rates were especially high, and 33% in "orange zones," where positivity rates were somewhat lower — were needed to accomplish the government's aim of slowing the spread of COVID-19.

The district court blocked those percentage capacity limits Tuesday, February 9, leaving houses of worship subject to the 50% capacity limit that was in place before the cluster zones plan.



People walk by a synagogue on November 27, 2020, in New York City. Credit: Spencer Platt/Getty Images

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SUBSCRIPTION RATES:

\$25.00 per year • Payable in Advance

Member of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency

THE HEBREW WATCHMAN (USPS #807-360) is published weekly every Thursday for \$25 per year by THE HEBREW WATCHMAN, PO Box 770846, Memphis, TN 38177-0846. Periodical postage paid at Memphis, Tenn. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to THE HEBREW WATCHMAN, PO Box 770846, Memphis, TN 38177-0846. Contents of THE HEBREW WATCHMAN may not be reproduced without express permission of THE HEBREW WATCHMAN. We are not responsible for the kashrut of any product or establishment advertised in THE HEBREW WATCHMAN. The opinions of contributors do not necessarily reflect those of THE HEBREW WATCHMAN. 2/18/2021.

A Jewish librarian spied on New York Nazis in the 1930s

By Andrew Silow-Carroll
(New York Jewish Week via JTA) — There is zero evidence that Florence Mendheim was the inspiration for Batgirl. But the real-life Jewish woman from the Bronx and the fictional daughter of Gotham City's Commissioner Gordon were both librarians who led secret double lives fighting bad guys.

In Mendheim's case, the villains were German-American Nazi sympathizers who met in taverns and beer gardens throughout New York City in the mid-1930s. The daughter of a German-Jewish family that still had close contact with relatives back in Berlin, Mendheim would end her day's work at the New York Public Library branch in Manhattan's Washington Heights neighborhood and go spy on meetings of the Friends of New Germany, later the German American Bund.

Pretending to be a Nazi sympathizer herself and working under various aliases, she'd gather names, take notes and collect pro-Nazi and anti-Semitic material for the American Jewish Congress.

Boxes of that material now sit at the New York branch of the Leo Baeck Institute, the research library and archive focused on the history of German-speaking Jews.

"I don't know whether she was recruited or volunteered, but it was clear from what was happening in Germany and to her relatives — and just being Jewish — she really was dedicated to stopping the Nazi threat in this country," said Michael Simonson, head of Public Outreach and archivist at the Leo Baeck Institute.

On Tuesday, February 9, Simonson joined a virtual panel about Mendheim co-presented by the Museum of Jewish Heritage-A Living Memorial to the Holocaust, Leo Baeck Institute and the Brooklyn Public Library. His fellow panelists included Marshall Curry, director of "A Night at the Garden," a short film about a 1939 Nazi rally at Madison Square Garden, and Daniel Greene, president and librarian at the Newberry



From 1933 until about 1938, Florence Mendheim would travel to pro-Hitler meetings throughout New York City, sometimes at great personal risk. ++ Credit: Leo Baeck Institute/Florence Mendheim Collection of Anti-Semitic Propaganda

Library in Chicago and curator of the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum's "Americans and the Holocaust" exhibit.

Although planned well before the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, the panel focused on a hero of another era in which private citizens and interest groups were ahead of law enforcement in grasping the threat from right-wing domestic extremists.

In the 1930s, pro-Nazi sentiment was prevalent throughout New York: in Bay Ridge, Brooklyn; Ridgewood, Queens, and in the historically German neighborhood of Yorkville on Manhattan's East Side. Hitler's deputy Fuehrer, Rudolf Hess, gave immigrants permission and direction to establish Friends of New Germany to support National Socialism and isolationism. By 1935, Hess understood that a pro-German American organization should be seen as homegrown and ordered all German citizens to leave the group, as well as the name change to the German American Bund — "to make it sound more pro-American," said Simonson.

The organizations would sponsor concerts and summer camps, leading many Americans to assume they were simply cultural

organizations.

Mendheim, a single woman living with her family in the Bronx, was likely brought into the domestic spy trade through the American Jewish Congress.

The group's founder, Rabbi Stephen Wise, had already started a boycott campaign against German goods in response to the Nazis' anti-Jewish boycott in Germany. Wise saw support for the Nazi cause among German immigrants, and realized their meetings were more sinister than a typical "home country" gathering, or "verein."

From 1933 until about 1938, Mendheim would travel to pro-Hitler meetings throughout the city, sometimes at great personal risk. Often after a meeting she'd be offered a ride home by another participant — Simonson said she was never sure whether the driver was being kind or perhaps had suspected her. Mendheim never let them drive her back to the Bronx, and asked to be dropped off at an address on 86th Street in Manhattan. She'd skulk in the lobby until the car drove away, then dash into the subway for home.

Sometimes she'd been taken to the Café Hindenburg on East 86th Street to meet with other Nazis. The meetings were a goldmine of information — but also frightening. Members would greet each other with a German phrase meaning "kill a Jew." Meanwhile, her two brothers would be waiting for her at home, terrified she wouldn't return. "It was scary," Simonson said of Mendheim's late nights at the cafe. "Has she been found out? Had they hurt her or beat her up? Or was a Nazi going to try and make a pass at her — which Florence would have found even more repellent?"

Calling herself Gertrude Mueller, Mendheim went so far as to work as a secretary for Friends of New Germany. Some accounts suggest that she quit the inside job because her cover was blown, but Simonson hasn't found any evidence of that.

The boxes in the Leo Baeck collection are largely propaganda

produced by the Nazi sympathizers and other hatemongers, and Mendheim left behind few personal writings.

"I think her idea was always that the American Jewish Congress would give their reports to the FBI," Simonson said. "I'm not sure if they did that or not, but it's certainly possible."

Either way, lawmakers had access to pro-Nazi material when they launched a series of hearings in 1938 to investigate allegations of Nazi infiltration. Later, as the House Un-American Activities Committee, the body became notorious for hounding real and alleged communist sympathizers.

"It's hard to say how much she was able to tell, but I think quite a bit," Simonson said. "Everybody had an alias, even in these meetings, and she had to fraternize and get them to reveal their real names."

America's entry into the Second World War led to a quick crackdown on pro-German groups, and their leaders were often interned or deported. Little is known of what happened to Mendheim after she quit spying, probably in 1938, although Simonson said she taught Jewish adult study classes and tried her hand at writing novels

— thrillers, in fact, that often starred a daring femme fatale. Never married, she later served as secretary of the Committee for Arab-Jewish Understanding, an organization promoting a binational Arab-Jewish state in prestate Israel.

She died in 1984, and the material kept by her brothers eventually made it to the Leo Baeck Institute. The Center for Jewish History has written about Mendheim and her archive, and an exhibit at the New-York Historical Society included a panel about her life and work.

"There are sad things about this story," Simonson said. "She didn't write about her time as a spy, and later in life she didn't talk about it, and when she did people didn't pay much interest. Later in life she'd call herself 'Ye Olde Heroine.' She was quite a character."

Asked if the extremist activity Mendheim infiltrated had resonance for today, Simonson said, "I've been thinking about it a lot. It is interesting to see how these racist arguments and anti-Semitism don't change. It's a constant repetition of these rehashed theories."

He recalled a comment that Donald Trump made about Henry Ford, saying the industrialist and notorious anti-Semite had "good (See Librarian Page 6)



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'We've lost almost an entire year': COVID-fatigued communities prepare for a distanced Purim

By Shira Hanau

NEW YORK (JTA) — In any other year, the mask-decorating party planned for later this month at Congregation Beth El Ner Tamid in Broomall, Pennsylvania, would make perfect sense: Costumes are part of the ritual for festive Jewish holiday of Purim, which begins February 25.

This year, though, the masks being decorated aren't meant for a carnival — they'll be appropriate to use as personal protective equipment as long as the coronavirus pandemic lasts. The gathering, and the subsequent synagogue-wide celebration, will take place on Zoom.

The party represents Beth El Ner Tamid's effort to preserve the spirit of the holiday, even as its very celebration offers a cruel reminder that an entire year has elapsed since COVID-19 turned life upside down, seemingly overnight.

"There's a lot of grief in the fact that we've lost almost an entire year of synagogue life and our personal lives," said Rabbi Janine Jankovitz of Beth El Ner Tamid. "I know people are tired and sad, and we're trying to bring them just a little bit of joy."

In 2020, Purim began on the

evening of March 9, just before the country shut down to stop the spread of the coronavirus. For some Jewish communities, the holiday was the first celebrated over Zoom. In others, the typical parties gave way to more somber, hand sanitizer-soaked services, stripped of the raucousness that characterizes the holiday. By the following Shabbat, they had canceled in-person services, too.

But in other communities, traditional Purim celebrations appear to have turbocharged the spread of the virus, resulting in a brutal toll in the following weeks.

A year later, the holiday is symbolic of one thing for everyone: an entire Jewish calendar year in which the holidays, the Shabbats and all the rituals in between have been adapted under the burden of the pandemic and its restrictions.

For non-Orthodox synagogues, that means a Zoom production that builds on a year of expertise.

Temple De Hirsch Sinai, a Reform congregation in Seattle, Washington, located near an early outbreak, canceled last year's "Star Wars"-themed Purim programming but vowed that its annual Purim spiel would be "back next year, bigger and better than ever." This year, its schedule boasts multiple online events, including a spiel inspired by the viral video app TikTok.

But some elements of the celebration — including the reading of the Megillah, the scroll containing the Purim story — do not lend themselves to the practicalities of pandemic broadcasting. Listeners typically use groggers, small noisemakers, to cancel out the name of Haman, the villain who tries to destroy the Jews, whenever it's mentioned in the story.

"How do you do the groggers on Zoom?" Jankovitz wondered,

bemoaning the fact that the experience for little kids, for whom the silliness on Purim is a special treat, won't be the same. "The sense that we're going to have to mute people in between really does take away from the joy and festivity of Purim."

At the Orangetown Jewish Center, a Conservative congregation in Rockland County, just north of New York City, this year's Purim costume parade will be replaced by a car parade through the town, with congregants decorating their cars for the occasion and the fire department leading the way. For the Megillah reading, congregants will gather in the parking lot to hear the story on their car radios.

While the synagogue did host its services in person last year, the crowd that assembled for that Megillah reading was smaller than usual as the coronavirus was spreading in nearby Westchester County. The very next day, the synagogue notified its members that someone who attended that service had tested positive for the coronavirus.

This year, with congregants able to safely distance from one another in their cars, Rabbi Craig Scheff hopes the setup will be an opportunity to feel connected as a community while staying safely distanced.

"We've been playing with the idea of drive-in movie-style programming of some kind where people could be in their cars but safely apart," Scheff said, noting the Jewish legal issues with a drive-in service on Shabbat. "Purim seemed like the perfect opportunity."

The Leffell School, a Jewish day school in Westchester County, an early epicenter of the pandemic in New York state, had already switched to online learning by Purim last year.

"Because everything was so new on Zoom, there was this excitement of what Purim would look like online," Rabbi Yael Buechler of the lower school recalled.

This year the school, like many other Jewish day schools, has operated in person since September, so Purim celebrations will morph yet again. Students will listen to a streamed Megillah reading from their classrooms. But they won't be able to sing or shout — behaviors that add risk by propelling air particles more forcefully — and there will be no all-school assembly.

"This whole year has been a bit of a 'v'nahafoch hu' experience," Buechler said, using a Hebrew phrase from the Megillah meaning "it will be turned upside down" that symbolizes the topsy-turvy nature of the Purim story.

For Rabbi Shaanan Gelman, this Purim will in some ways be more normal than last year.

Gelman, who leads the Modern Orthodox Kehilat Chovevei Zion in Skokie, Illinois, attended last year's AIPAC convention in Washington, D.C., where he came in contact with someone who later tested positive for the coronavirus. So while his congregation met in person, he was in quarantine at home and listened into the



Students at the Leffell School in Westchester County celebrated Purim from home in 2020. Westchester County emerged as an early epicenter of the coronavirus outbreak last spring in New York State.

Courtesy of Yael Buechler

synagogue's phone line to hear the Megillah reading while reading along from a scroll on Purim night.

The next morning, a colleague read the Megillah for him from outside his bedroom upstairs in a scene that played out across the Orthodox world, where it is considered preferable to hear the Megillah read in person, even though Purim is the rare holiday where technology is permitted.

This year, Gelman's synagogue will host multiple services and provide a livestream option for those who are not able to attend, though Gelman stressed that the streaming option is not an ideal way to fulfill the obligation to hear the Megillah. Depending on

the weather, the synagogue may even host an outdoor service in a tent where they have held Shabbat services for months.

"A lot of what has become synonymous with Purim is not going to be happening this year," Gelman said. "Hopefully next year we'll get back to the bigger celebration of Purim."

While Gelman noted the fatigue that had set in around continued pandemic restrictions on daily life, he said being able to attend services in person this year should not be taken for granted.

"I am appreciative that I can, God willing, come to shul and hear the Megillah live," Gelman said. "I think we've all become grateful for the little things."

Celebrate Purim night with ASBEE

Anshei Sphard-Beth El Emeth Congregation (ASBEE) will hold its annual Multi-Media Wacky Purim Megillah Reading on Thursday evening, February 25, at 6:35 pm in the Marsi Moss Social Hall at Baron Hirsch Synagogue.

For the event special Box Schvarma Dinners To Go will be offered following the Megillah reading in lieu of the usual Purim Soiree generously sponsored every year by the Rosenberg family at ASBEE.

This year, the Rosenberg and Weiss families are sponsoring the To Go Dinners following the readings at both the ASBEE Minyan and the Baron Hirsch MInyan in memory of their parents and grandparents, the late David and Belle Rosenberg and the late Dr. Henry and Dorothy Dan Weiss.



Rabbi Joel Finkelstein dressed for merry-making at a recent ASBEE Purim carnival.

The community is very appreciative of their generosity and efforts to increase joy even during this pandemic year.

The ASBEE Megillah reading will be a fun, interactive experience accompanied by music and an audio-visual power-point presentation. Each year, a new element of surprise is added, so you never know what to expect.

Everyone is invited and encouraged to come in costume and bring noisemakers. ASBEE will also distribute additional groggers. Because of COVID, attendance is limited and people can sign up by emailing ASBEE. Masks and social distancing are required. (not just Purim masks—but masks over the nose and mouth!)

"Purim is so important," said Rabbi Joel Finkelstein, spiritual leader of ASBEE, "because it symbolizes the notion that we can withstand any threat—we can survive any ordeal and come out laughing about it with the help of God and after heartfelt prayer. Purim teaches that although radical evil exists in this world and knows no bounds, it can be defeated. It gives us hope during these trying times."

Following the first megillah reading at 6:35 pm, there will also be a second, no frills megillah reading at 8 pm Central Time. Both readings will be zoomed for those who absolutely cannot attend in person though the halacha strongly encourages everyone to hear it in person if possible. For those at risk, it is advisable to stay home for pikuach nefesh—to save and preserve life.

Additional readings during the day and at night can be arranged personally with Rabbi Finkelstein. For more information, call (901) 682-1611.

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Cantor Aryeh Samberg and his daughter Esti at an ASBEE Purim carnival when she was younger.

Anshei Sphard-Beth El to host virtual Purim Extravaganza

Anshei Sphard-Beth El Emeth Congregation (ASBEE) will hold a not to be missed, one of a kind virtual Purim Extravaganza on Sunday morning, February 21, from 9-10 am Central Time, according to Steve Gold, program chairperson of the congregation. "ASBEE has hosted an all

day Purim Carnival for as long as anyone can remember, and in these challenging times we needed to come up with something safer and still have fun. We will be having two separate events on the (February) 21st," said Linda Joffre, a board vice president of the congregation. Rabbi Joel Finkelstein, spiritual

leader of ASBEE, will lead off with a virtual costume parade for the young and young at heart. Everyone will get a chance to be seen and heard—so come as your favorite Purim character, book character or anything that makes you happy. Little Kids and big Kids are all welcome and grown-ups too.

In addition, Cantor Aryeh Samberg will lead a special Purim Sing Along—with favorite tunes and new ones to add to your repertoire. You don't have to have a

good voice to join in because it's all virtual, and you can be muted.

Also, Community storyteller and Maggid educator Lynnne Mirvis will share a humorous Purim tale along with special surprise visitors—so you don't want to miss it!

On the same day ASBEE Sisterhood will hold a Drive By Purim Carnival at Winter Oak Portico off Shady Grove Road on the Baron Hirsch campus—giving away all kinds of goodies from 12 noon to 3 pm. Food has to be pre-ordered

and sign up for bags can be found at asbee.org. To join in the extravaganza, go to ASBEE's zoom room or call (901) 682-1611.

To participate by phone: Step #1—Dial 1 312 626 6799, Step #2 When prompted, enter Meeting ID: 660 785 9383. To participate on your computer/tablet/smartphone: Step #1 Click on this link: <https://zoom.us/j/6607859383>. If prompted click "allow" or cruise to the Zoom website (www.zoom.us) and enter Meeting ID # 660 785 9383

Baron Hirsch announces Purim services

Baron Hirsch Congregation has once again found ways to safely and creatively come together as a community for holiday observance.

With Purim marking one year since the beginning of the pandemic, the congregation announced this week a schedule allowing many in the community to hear the reading of the megillah, one of the main observances of the holiday.

The congregation will offer both indoor and outdoor readings of the megilla, allowing up to fifty people to participate in each read-

ing. All attendees will be masked and socially distanced from each other. Some readings will also allow children as young as first grade, marking the first time that children of that age will be able to attend services since the pandemic began.

On Purim eve, Thursday, February 25, there will be readings of the megillah at 6:20 pm, 6:40 pm and 8 pm. During the first two time slots, readings will take place both inside and outside the congregation's building. Participants are encouraged to come in costume, although face masks will continue to be required by all.

Several readings will take place during the day of Purim as well, on Friday, February 26. An indoor minyan will take place at 6:20 am, and an outdoor minyan will take place at 7:15 am. There will be an additional reading at 10 am. Also at 10 am will be the congregation's annual megillah reading for women and by women. This year, the women's reading will take place outdoors in the

congregation's tent.

As part of the observance Baron Hirsch will host a Purim Parade in lieu of the annual Palooza and Seudah that draws families from all over the community to dress up and attend the festivities each year. The clergy will parade around the neighborhood with music and treats for everyone. Please look for the route of the Purim Parade to be released soon! The parade will kick off at 2 pm on Purim afternoon, Friday, February 26.

Reservations are required for all megillah readings, and sign up is at www.baronhirsch.org/minyansignup.

Ex-teacher wins appeal on conviction of molesting student at Amsterdam Jewish school

By Cnaan Liphshiz
AMSTERDAM (JTA) — A Dutch appeals court has reversed the molestation conviction of a former teacher at an Orthodox Jewish school.

The Gerechtshof Amsterdam appeals court ruled Monday, February 8, that there was insufficient evidence to support the 2018 conviction of Ephraim Schrijver, 33, in Rechtbank Amsterdam regional court, De Telegraaf daily reported.



The Orthodox Cheider school in Amsterdam referred cases of alleged sexual abuse to Dutch police. Credit: Creative Commons

Of the five complaints against

Schrijver, who had taught at the Cheider school in Amsterdam until 2012, only one was deemed sufficiently credible by the appeals court. Schrijver in that complaint was accused of massaging a male teenager's shoulder and neck.

This does not meet the legal threshold for sexual abuse, "however inappropriate this may be," the appeals court ruled.

The lower court had sentenced Schrijver to two years in prison, with six months of the term suspended. He had served the actual prison time while awaiting trial.

A lawyer representing the alleged victims said he hoped prosecutors would appeal to the Supreme Court.

Monday's (February 8) ruling followed appeals by the prosecution, which sought a longer prison sentence, and Schrijver, who has denied the charges.

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Bar Mitzvah

Jack Kampf, son of Anat and Cantor Ricky Kampf, will celebrate his Bar Mitzvah Saturday, February 20, at Baron Hirsch Synagogue.

Rabbi Binyamin Lehrfield and Cantor Ricky Kampf will officiate at the services.

To mark the occasion Jack will read the Torah portion, chant the Haftora and daven Mussaf, all taught to him by his father.

Jack completed the learning of the Tractate of Megillah with his brother-in-law, Andy Stahler.

Jack attends the Margolin Hebrew Academy, where he is in the seventh grade. He participates in the National Bible Contest, loves sports, both playing and watching, and spending time with friends.

He is the grandson of Lottie Kampf of Memphis and the late Jack Kampf and Sandy Haddad of Memphis and the late Yitzchak Haddad



Jack Kampf

Nothing new under the Sun

By Ted Roberts

Solomon, the reputed author of Ecclesiastes, was no dummy and certainly not lazy.

He must have allocated himself an hour or so a day away from his 1000 voluptuous wives ("Sollie, are you going back to that silly book?") to write Ecclesiastes wherein he stated, "There is nothing new under the sun", a very wise statement that Purim brings to mind.

Consider Iran – formerly Persia – the bloody stage for the deadly drama of Purim. They wanted to kill us THEN and they want to kill us NOW. Once more, "There is nothing new under the sun".

Nothing changes except that the new Persia, Iran, has Hezbollah, Hamas, and other gangster allies who would delight in our murder. Solomon should have lived to see this second Persia – it would have verified his hypothesis, overwhelmingly the most famous of his conjectures.

We all know the scroll of Esther in our Tanach – how a young Jewish girl, probably still a teenager, saved us. How she disguised her Judaism, sort of like Superman concealed his power in the mild mannered persona of Clark Kent.

Wonder how she kept kosher and Shabbos and ate chopped liver in the king's goyishke court. Then one fateful day, propelled by Mordecai, she burst into the throne room wearing her "Jerusalem, My Hometown" T-shirt. The king, not nearly as bloodthirsty as his current successor, President Hassan Rouhani, yields to the young girl's blandishments. We're saved. You know the rest of the story. Esther even gets to keep her T-shirt which

she proudly wears every day.

Strangely enough, the current version of The Book of Esther in our Tanach ignores our Divine Deliverer and the invisible role He plays in the whirlwind of the world's affair. Gratitude to the "outstretched hand and a mighty arm" of He who dubbed us his Chosen People is ignored. In fact, the name of G-d is omitted from the entire book.

Compare this to the rest of our Bible where G-d stands guard over Israel, beginning with the Exodus, from every threat to our national existence. A conundrum. Especially since the original Septuagint version of Esther – the mother of our current book – contains prayers to He who made both Esther and Haman. In the conversion from Hebrew to Greek (most of the Egyptian Jews couldn't read Hebrew) one of the 70 scholars did some red-penciling. Why? Ask your Rabbi – I'm only a scribbler.

But Persia/Iran is still our threat. Only now they enjoy killing Christians as well as Jews. As I've said before, it's unbelievable that the Pope welcomed the President of Iran, also known as financier and inspirer of terrorism, at the Vatican with a hug and full State ceremony. I don't think even Solo-

Librarian...

(Continued From Page 3)
bloodlines."

"Who says that? Who knows that?" Simonson asked. "We do know that the Bund was very active in Queens" – where Trump grew up, the grandson of a German immigrant – "and Henry Ford's anti-Semitic book 'The International Jew' was a bestseller in Nazi Germany and sold well here."

Simonson said people look back on the 1930s and think "I can't believe it happened here," even though I'd argue, how could it not, when you look at America's history."

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mon would figure that out.

Of course when it comes to survival, since we haven't seen Esther for a couple of millennia, (Esther, Esther, where are you?) we place our hopes on Golden Dome, David's Sling, Patriot and similar anti-missile systems. But the faithful draw hope from an even deeper well – the well of divine deliverance. He, who shielded us from the Egyptians and the pagan tribes of Canaan will use his power as in the days

of yore. You'll awaken one sunny blue-skied morning to media blasts about sharp earthquakes in Iran. Strangely they strike the nuclear labs and launch sites of Persia (I mean Iran). What an odd coincidence. Solomon would smile and understand. "Nothing new", you know.

The syndicated humor of Ted, the Scribbler on the Roof, appears in newspapers around the U.S., on National Public Radio, and numerous web sites.

Chabad annual Purim celebration to be COVID conscious

Chabad of Tennessee will hold later this month its annual "Purim Around the World" celebration, albeit with a different twist to adapt for COVID regulations.

The event has been scheduled for Friday, February 26, at the Chabad Center for Jewish Life.

This year's celebration has been themed "Purim Around the Clock" as there will be multiple smaller celebrations throughout the Purim day to limit crowd size. Each program will start with the reading of the Megillah, followed by a full festive meal prepared in a Grab & Go format for all to enjoy in a safe way.

Participants will be able to choose one of three time slots they would like to attend, including a breakfast selection featuring bagels, schmear, coffee and more that will be available following the 8 am reading. There is also a luncheon featuring muffins, mimosas and more following the 12 pm reading, and a pre-Shabbat Dinner with BBQ Brisket, beer and the works following the 4:30 pm reading.

There will also be a Megillah

reading on the eve of Purim on Thursday, February 25, at 6:40 pm.

The evening, morning, and pre-Shabbat Megillah readings will be indoors and socially distanced; the 12 noon reading will be outdoors (weather permitting), to accommodate those who would prefer to stay outdoors to be able to hear the reading of the Megillah on Purim.

Each time slot will have limited availability so sign up early to ensure your spot. Costumes are encouraged; masks are mandatory.

"In keeping with Chabad's track record of great Purim dinners, this year's Purim party will be different, but promises to be another great celebration," said Rivky Klein, coordinator of the event, adding, "so sign up while we still have a place and we look forward to welcoming you." Reservations are required by Wednesday, February 24, and are on a first come first serve basis.

For more information and reservations visit www.Jewish-Memphis.com/purimsvp or call Chabad at 901-754-0404 for more information

ASBEE Sisterhood to present unique Purim carnival Sunday

Protecting against the spread of Covid-19 has unfortunately become a major part of everyone's life, but it shouldn't stop Jews, especially Memphis Jews, from celebrating Purim and having some fun.

And the Anshei Sphard-Beth El Emeth (ASBEE) Sisterhood's Purim Carnival committee believes this and will hold a Drive-Thru Purim CARNIVAL on Sunday, February 21, from 12-3 pm.

The carnival committee, composed of Rakhel Finkelstein, Linda Joffre, Patti Elster, Cantor Aryeh Samberg, Susan Brooks,

Marci Platkin, Tami Hershkovitz, Pam Malkin and Elaine Fox, are determined to prove to all those who participate that it's important to dress in one's Purim finest, be happy and have a good time during Adar.

The CARNIVAL will take place at the Winter Oak Portico off of Shady Grove Road on the Baron Hirsch Synagogue campus.

The ASBEE Sisterhood carnival committee said that they were grateful to Baron Hirsch for allowing them to use their grounds for this exciting event. You must sign up in advance for time slots for the games and to preorder food. This may be done at ASBEE.org. If you need additional information, call Linda Joffre at 901-239-0827.

Children will be able to play a few of the CARNIVAL's favorite games during their time slot, get their picture taken in costume at the special Purim photo booth and receive a Shalach Manot bag filled with paper Purim puppets (to be cut out) so they can pretend to be their favorite people in the Purim story with their family and friends as well as some other treats. The cost is \$5 for each car and will be paid for at the carnival when you drive in.

There will be frankfurter (beef or veggie) lunchboxes for those who have signed up for them in advance. Lunchboxes are \$5 each and must be paid for at the carnival. The lunchbox will also include chips, water and a cookie.

Once your group has played some games, you may drive around to the Yates Road side of Baron Hirsch (near the kitchen) and pick up your lunchboxes.

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MJF to launch new virtual series

The Memphis Jewish Federation announced this week the launch of a new, three-part virtual series entitled The City We Share: Community Conversations through a Jewish Lens.

The series opens on Wednesday, February 24, at noon with a program highlighting the complexities of the eviction crisis.

Moderated by local attorney and well known Jewish lay leader Jeri Moskovitz, the program will open with Rabbi Sarit Horwitz, spiritual leader of Beth Shalom Congregation, offering a Jewish framework for looking at the eviction issue.

Featured panelists include Roshun Austin, president and CEO of The Works, Inc., a Memphis-based community development organization; Daniel M. Schaffzin, associate law professor at the University of Memphis Cecil C. Humphreys School of Law and leader of Memphis' Eviction Settlement Program; and Nicole Upano, director of Public Policy for the National Apartment Association. All three presenters are experts in the area of eviction.

"Following Federation's participation in MIFA's fall 2020 Community Read of Matthew Desmond's book, Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City, there was an interest in learning more about this complicated issue,"



Roshun Austin

said Bluma Zuckerbrot-Finkelstein, MJF's executive vice president. "Thus the idea for this series was born. Our goal for this first program is to present different perspectives on this difficult and nuanced issue so that Jewish community members gain a deeper understanding of and appreciation for the challenges facing our city," she continued.

Future programs in the series will take place in March and April and will address policing and mental health and equity in education.

The Federation Coordinating Committee for this series includes Janis Finan, Cindy Finestone, Jamie Johnson, Jeri Moskovitz, Eileen Posner and Karin Rubnitz.

Pre-registration is required. To access the Zoom registration link, call 901-767-7100 or email crichardson@jcpmemphis.org.

Baron Hirsch sandwich project exceeds all expectations

When Baron Hirsch Congregation moved forward with its fourth annual sandwich project, organizers did not think they could come close to their previous year's record.

Last year, the congregation was able to bring over 300 volunteers together in a mass sandwich make. This year, they had to rely on individuals to make sandwiches in their own homes without a unifying event. They were very happy to be wrong.

The approach that was taken this year worked extremely well. People came in droves to pick up supplies and to drop off peanut butter and jelly sandwiches that were made at home with everyone heeding the safety guidelines that were given.

Some people went and purchased supplies, while others ordered from the shul. The participation reached an overwhelming amount, and in the end, over 10,800 sandwiches were made – far exceeding the 6,000 that were predicted.

"Due to Covid and the rise of poverty rates, an increase of gigantic proportions that tops even years before were seen within the Jewish community this year. Everyone from near and far lent a helping hand and it was inspiring to see the movement that sparked when a crisis and a need arises such as this," stated Rabbi Binyamin Lehrfeld, senior rabbi of the congregation.

Members of every congregation and Jewish agency participated. Sandwich home pictures were posted to Facebook with #sandwichproject21 from many different participants.

Beyond the individuals, many groups came together to help as well. The team from Zayde's New York City Deli devoted a Monday morning to participate in the Great Big Sandwich Make.

According to Zayde's owner Marisa Baggett, "While we believe that community involvement can start in the kitchen, it goes well beyond the plate! How great it is to see so many individuals, Jewish agencies, and now businesses taking part in this massive effort!" Together, the team made over 600 sandwiches.

Middle School students at Bornblum Jewish Community School took an hour of their day to make sandwiches for the Great Sandwich Make.

According to Bornblum Head of School Dan Weiss, "Our Middle School students and teachers were excited to participate in this year's sandwich make. Each student had their own work station to ensure for social distancing as they each made two loaves worth of sandwiches as part of Yom Kef (Fun Day) activities. Students learned that giving back to the community is not only important but fun." In working together, the classes made

900 sandwiches.

One of the largest contributions came from a group of ten lifelong friends who arrived at Baron Hirsch to deliver a total of 1,000 sandwiches – each person having made 100 sandwiches. In a normal year, these friends would share a table at the Sandwich Make. This year, they had to make their sandwiches separately, but still approached it with the same excitement and togetherness that they always enjoyed.

The group consisted of Sue Ann Lipsey, Judy Moss, Andy Uiberall, Carol Zalowitz, Rose Ostrow, Rose Ross, Diane Mendelson, Marlene Gerson, Mimi Grossman, and Henrie Marcus.

Several divisions of the Margolin Hebrew Academy/Feinstone Yeshiva of the South participated, including the middle school, boys' high school and girls' high school. Each division added hundreds of sandwiches to the total. A group from Plough Towers also

participated.

In addition to the physical contribution, many contributed financially to support the effort as well. The Memphis B'nai Tzedek Teen Philanthropy Group came by to make sandwiches. B'nai Tzedek has given several grants to the project over the last few years, and has been part of the project's great success. In addition to many individual contributions, Temple Israel also made a generous donation to help support the program.

"We are so happy to have created a community effort where we can all come together to accomplish great things," said David Fleischhacker, executive director of Baron Hirsch. "Even without being together, you could still feel the unity in the community brought about by the Sandwich Project.

Most sandwiches were donated to the St. Mary's food pantry, and will help feed the needy for the next several months. Other food pantries received sandwiches as well.

OBITUARIES

Sonya Krivcher

Retired Realtor Sonya Krivcher, whose mother was a co-founder of Plough Towers, died of natural causes on Saturday, February 6, at her home at the age of 93, less than a month before her 94th birthday.

A native Memphian who lived in Memphis her entire life, Mrs. Krivcher was married to Robert R. Krivcher for 41 years until his death in 1991.

Born in Memphis on March 4, 1927, she was the daughter of the late Joseph and Tillie Blen Alperin.

Mrs. Krivcher graduated from Central High School and Rhodes College (then Southwestern at Memphis).

During her career Sonya was associated with Coleman Etter Fontaine, and later with George Humphrey Realtors. She was a member of the "Million Dollar Club".

Mrs. Krivcher had many interests. She loved music and was an accomplished pianist. She enjoyed

ballroom dancing and was an avid reader.

Sonya was a very charitable person and contributed to many organizations and institutions.

She was a member of Temple Israel, a past member of the board of Memphis Jewish Housing Development Corp, governing body of Plough Towers, and belonged to several other organizations.

Most of all, Sonya loved spending time with her friends and family, and thoroughly enjoyed being a grandmother and great-grandmother. Sonya will be greatly missed by all who knew her.

Mrs. Krivcher is survived by a daughter, Jan Magids (Jack) of Memphis; a son, Richard Krivcher of Citrus Heights, California; a granddaughter, Ashley M. Gaines (Jeremy); a grandson, Scott Magids (Alexis); and four great grandchildren.

A private funeral service for the family only was held with burial in Temple Israel Cemetery. Canale Funeral Directors had charge.

The family requests that any memorials be sent to Temple Israel, Plough Towers, or LeBonheur Children's Hospital.



Sonya Krivcher

Cong. Cohen presides at hearing on abuse of Presidential Pardon Power

Congressman Steve Cohen (D-TN), chairman of the House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights, and Civil Liberties, presided recently over a hearing on "The Constitutional Means to Prevent Abuse of the Clemency Power."



Cong. Steve Cohen

As a senior member of the Judiciary Committee, Congressman Cohen has introduced joint resolutions in the current and previous Congresses to limit the pardon power outlined in Article 2 of the Constitution.

In his opening remarks, Congressman Cohen said, "There are few things more fiercely urgent than the need to grant clemency to

the thousands who suffer from the burdens of excessive and unjust imprisonment or the collateral consequences stemming from their criminal convictions. Perhaps not coincidentally, these burdens are disproportionately borne by people of color...

"It is my hope that President Biden will be a leading example of how the clemency power could be more effectively used, especially for those who may be more deserving, but whose pleas have not been heard..."

"Questions about the proper scope of the clemency power took on greater urgency during the Trump presidency. No President is permitted to abuse the powers of his office to obstruct a law enforcement investigation, yet the manner in which President Trump used the clemency power throughout his presidency raised the concern that he may have been willing to do just that to protect himself and his political allies."

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Why did Trump's impeachment lawyer David Schoen keep putting his hand on his head?

By Laura E. Adkins and Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA) — What Donald Trump's lawyer likely wanted: for America to spend this evening talking about how the former president was not responsible for the deadly Jan. 6 raid on the U.S. Capitol.

What he got instead: a firestorm of speculation about why he held his hand over his head every time he took a sip of water.

The Senate convened Tuesday, February 9, for a historic first: former President Donald Trump's second impeachment. David Schoen, one of Trump's impeachment lawyers, already asked (and then withdrew his request) for Trump's trial to pause for the Jewish day of rest. Was the fact that he covered his head while drinking also because he is an Orthodox Jew?

We didn't ask Schoen, but we can say: Almost certainly, yes.

Whenever observant Jews drink or eat, they typically recite a blessing that includes the name of God before and after doing so. Jewish law, known as halacha, stipulates that in order to say God's name,



Trump's impeachment lawyer David Schoen covering his head with his hand before drinking water. Screen Capture from CNN live broadcast

men (and in some opinions, women) should have their heads covered. Based on this fact, it's likely that Schoen covered his head with his hand while he recited a blessing before drinking from his water bottle.

So why wasn't he wearing a kippah or another head covering, as many observant Jewish men do?

"I just wasn't sure if it was appropriate, frankly," Schoen said after the hearing to a CNN reporter who asked him why did not wear a kippah. "I didn't want to offend anyone...It's just an awkward

thing and people stare at it."

While it's true that most Orthodox men regularly wear a hat or a kippah (also called a yarmulke) at all times, some elect not to wear a head covering at work or in situations where being identified as a religious Jew could cause harm.

In public courtrooms in particular, some observant Jews fear that wearing a kippah could bring extra scrutiny from anti-Semitic jury members, judges, or in this case, members of the public.

Plus, the Senate bans head cov-

erings, but carves out an explicit exception for religious requirements. The House, spurred on by Rep. Ilhan Omar and interfaith groups, overturned their 181 year ban on head coverings in 2019. Schoen wore a kippah heading into the Capitol building, but chose not to wear one on the floor.

If avoiding stares was Schoen's goal, he didn't succeed. The Mysterious Case of Hand on Head caused confusion for many viewers and frenetic discussions on Jewish Twitter, where political polarization fell away in favor of shared bemusement.

Even observant Jews expressed confusion about why Schoen repeated his hand motion every time he drank. Religious law only requires a blessing before one's first bite (or sip) and after eating or drinking is completed — and using your own hand to cover your

head doesn't really count as a valid exception for religious requirements according to most Orthodox interpretations of halacha. So why did Schoen repeatedly cover his head with his own hand?

Some claimed to see Schoen using a bottle cap to cover his head rather than just his hand (which would present its own halachic issues).

Others offered another suggestion, drawn from their own experience as regular kippah-wearers: Schoen could be displaying a reflex to keep his usually-there kippah from sliding off of his head.

Schoen was not the only Jewish lawyer in the courtroom Tuesday, February 9. Leading the team making the case for Trump's impeachment was Jamie Raskin, a Maryland Democratic congressman and a constitutional scholar. Also on the team is Rep. David Cicilline of Rhode Island.



Benjamin Netanyahu, on trial for corruption, pleads not guilty and walks out of courtroom.

Benjamin Netanyahu, on trial for corruption, pleads not guilty and walks out of courtroom

By Ben Sales

JERUSALEM (JTA) — Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu pleaded not guilty in his ongoing trial for corruption charges, then left the courtroom while the hearing was still underway.

Later on Monday, February 8, he dismissed the charges, as he has in the past, as "fabricated."

Netanyahu is on trial for fraud, bribery and breach of trust — the first time a sitting prime minister has stood trial in Israeli history. The investigations of allegedly illicit payments and favors stretch back years.

Netanyahu was officially indicted about a year ago, and his trial began in May in Jerusalem District Court. Successive delays due to COVID-19 restrictions have drawn out the process. This was the second time he has appeared in person.

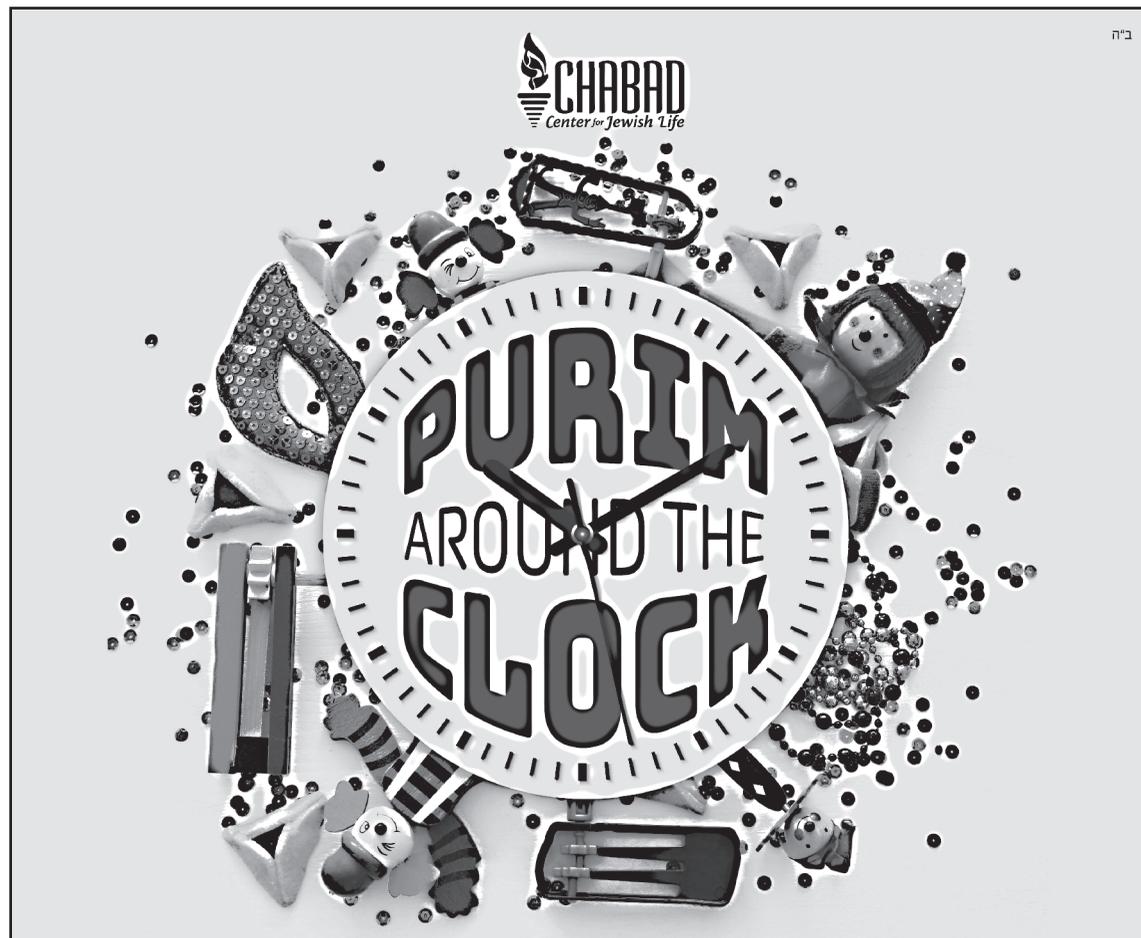
Ahead of Monday's (February 8) hearing, Netanyahu urged his supporters not to protest outside the courtroom. Hundreds of protesters who oppose the prime minister did show up outside the courthouse. The hearing came about six weeks ahead of Israel's election, the fourth national vote

in the span of two years.

Netanyahu affirmed that he was pleading not guilty, saying "I confirm the written answer submitted in my name." Twenty minutes later he asked the three judges hearing the case for permission to leave the courtroom and walked out with his security detail. (By Israeli law, any trial of a sitting prime minister is presided over by a three-judge panel.) The hearing continued without him as lawyers discussed the next steps with the judges. The hearing was adjourned with no date set to begin the evidentiary stage.

Later Monday, February 8, Netanyahu called the case against him spurious and said the court should not view the evidence against him until after the election. Over the course of the investigations, Netanyahu has chided the cases against him as "nothing" and a "coup," and called to "investigate the investigators."

"Everyone knows that the cases against me are fabricated," Netanyahu said. "I don't think they'll rush to the evidentiary stage before the elections. In any case, even if this isn't their intention, that would be seen as blatant meddling in the election."



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PURIM
BREAKFAST
8:00 AM

Megillah Reading Followed by Bagels, Schmear, Coffee and the works

Outdoors
A ROYAL
LUNCH
12:00 PM

Megillah Reading Followed by Muffins, Mimosas and More OUTDOORS (Weather Permitting)

PRE-SHABBAT
DINNER
4:30 PM

Megillah Reading Followed by BBQ Brisket, Beer and a Bash

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Welcome to the Chosen People! **ESTHER & PURIM**

Even though G-d is never mentioned in the book of Esther, His presence, timing and protection of the Jewish People are evident throughout. First Esther, a nice Jewish girl, wins a sort of beauty contest. The Persian king chooses her to be his queen. At the same time, the evil counselor Haman tries to carry out a plan to destroy all of the Jews. Esther's cousin, Mordechai tells Esther, and the plot is foiled. The Jewish People throughout the kingdom rejoiced, ... And so do we! — Happy Purim!

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