



THE Hebrew Watchman

CELEBRATING 95 YEARS | SERVING MEMPHIS AND MID-SOUTH JEWRY SINCE 1925

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Memphians receive certification from International Semichat Chaver program



Rabbi Naftali Zions of the Memphis Kollel presenting a Semichat Chaver certificate to participant Noam Davidovics at an event celebrating the participants' accomplishment.

Sixteen community members gathered last week to celebrate and receive their certification for having successfully graduated the latest semester of the Semichat Chaver Program (SCP). A project of the Orthodox Union (OU) and founded by Rav Elyada Goldvicht, SCP has close to 90 locations and over 2,000 weekly participants worldwide. It is an innovative, fast-paced, and interactive practical halacha learning program for men. With material specifically designed to be easily shared, every class includes thought-provoking questions and a segment on the philosophical

meaning behind the topic on hand. Upon successfully passing a written exam, participants receive Semichat Chaver Certification signed by Israel's Chief Rabbi Rabbi Shlomo Amar and Rabbi Herschel Schachter, Rosh Kollel and Rosh Yeshiva at Yeshiva University. Rabbi Naftali Zions of the Memphis Kollel delivers the weekly lectures, prepares review sheets, and interacts with the participants on group chats discussing practical questions that arise in their daily lives. Over 50 local community members participated in the program. Over the past year, all the lectures

have taken place over Zoom, which has presented both a challenge and an opportunity for the program. While the online lectures lacked the personal touch so crucial to the program, it also brought SCP into the participants' home in new ways. Steven Schwartzberg, an SCP graduate, noted, "Attending the classes from home with my family around and listening, made the topics we studied the center of our family's weekly discussions." David Katz, another Semichat Chaver Graduate, observed that, "The Hebrew term 'chaver' literally means 'friend,' and seeing how studying Torah over Zoom has enabled the group to maintain and grow our friendship was amazing." For the first time in a year, those that achieved certification were able to gather outside and celebrate their achievement with their families where they were presented with their certificates in an evening ceremony. Congratulations to Julius Besser, Jason Caplan, Noam Davidovics, Stuart Goodwin, Yossi Horowitz, Yosef Kahn, Allan Katz, David Katz, Lenny Plotitsa, Aryeh Rashkin, Eric Schubert, Steven Schwartzberg, Benzy Shani, Josh Segura, Zechariah Steiner and Shmuel Dov Zions on their achievements. The Semichat Chaver Program will begin a new semester on "Common Laws of Shabbos" Sundays at 8:15 p.m. To sign up, visit www.SCPMemphis.com or contact Rabbi Naftali Zions at rabbizions@memphiskollel.org. **HW**



KKL-JNF, Ant Group partner for research in sustainability, green development

(JNS) – Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael-Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF), one of the oldest green organizations in the world, and Ant Group, an innovative technology company, announced a scientific and technological partnership to develop innovative solutions for forestation and environmental conservation, and to promote green development for social good. Under a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by these two partners on Earth Day, a joint team of scientists and experts will be organized to conduct academic and applied research on environmental conservation solutions, such as making forest management sustainable, bolstering biodiversity and protecting natural ecosystems. Research results from the partnership will be applied to start green innovation forest projects and encourage public participation in environmental protection. The MOU was signed online and will be stored on AntChain, the group's blockchain-based technology solutions. **HW**

NASA to launch Rhodes-designed satellite into space

The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) will be launching a Rhodes satellite into space between 2022 and 2025, the first time Rhodes has launched a spacecraft. Rhodes is among 14 small research satellites and the only liberal arts college selected by NASA for the 2021 CubeSat Launch Initiative (CSLI). Rhodes is in the company of large institutions with well-established aerospace and space science programs. Rhodes' CubeSat (a small 10x10x10-centimeters satellite called RHOK-SAT), currently being designed and built by a collaboration of students, faculty, and staff, will fly as an auxiliary payload aboard a rocket to reach its low earth orbit. RHOK-SAT (RHodes-OKlahoma) is led by Professor of Physics Brent Hoffmeister, Associate Professor of Physics Ann Viano, project director for RHOK-SAT, Joe McPherson, and a group of students led by Giuliana Hofheins '22,

Ben Wilson '22, and Eli Matlock '21. "RHOK-SAT has been an invaluable experience for me at Rhodes," says student co-lead Giuliana Hofheins. "Working on a CubeSat project has combined my liberal arts background with a highly technical engineering project. Being a student leader on a team of all first-time CubeSat developers, I've been able to contribute to the project at a level most undergraduates would never have the chance to experience. RHOK-SAT and our work truly embodies NASA's Strategic Plan and the original goal of CubeSats: to open up space accessibility to small teams with big aspirations." Charles Robertson, Jr. '65 encouraged Rhodes to develop a proposal and generously provides funding for the project. The project itself was conceived by Rhodes students with a science investigation focus to test the space hardness of novel photovoltaic devices, or solar cells, for lunar and planetary

missions. The technology is not new but has never been tested in space. The photovoltaic materials are under active development and investigation by The University of Oklahoma and will be provided by them for the satellite. RHOK-SAT will be in orbit for over one year and transmit data to the now fully operational Rhodes ground station. Thanks to a Women in STEM-centered conference, Dr. Viano learned about the solar materials during a tour and helped develop the idea to test these solar cells, adding University of Oklahoma as a collaborator. Thanks to relationships with Rhodes alumni, The Aerospace Corporation has also supplied support for the project. "Rhodes' CubeSat collaboration will allow students to be fully engaged, equal partners in a large-scale space science and engineering project," says Dr. Viano. "Hands-on, experiential learning is absolutely essential in de-

"RHOK-SAT has been an invaluable experience for me at Rhodes," says student co-lead Giuliana Hofheins.

veloping future leaders in science and technology because students must think critically when applying what they have learned in classes, and they must develop skills to use available resources, like the collective knowledge and perspective of their collaborators, to learn outside the classroom. I am excited for our students engaged in this challenge and look forward to seeing them grow and develop skills used by professionals in not just aerospace engineering, but many other areas." The project also has a strong outreach component that will have Rhodes students bringing a curriculum entitled Solar Cells and Gravity Wells into Memphis high schools, designed to inspire the next generation of space scientists. **HW**



A fire burns amid violent protests in Jerusalem, April 22, 2021.
Credit: Olivier Fitoussi/Flash90

What you need to know about the violent clashes rocking Jerusalem last week

By Ben Sales

(JTA) – The videos circulating out of Jerusalem – of beatings, stone throwing and racist chants – are shocking. Reporters say it’s some of the worst fighting the contested city has seen in years. But the tensions that fueled the violence in the Old City last Thursday night are anything but new. Hundreds of Jewish extremists marched down Jerusalem streets chanting “Death to Arabs” and singing “Burn their village.” The demonstration followed days of unrest in eastern Jerusalem in which Palestinian residents clashed with police over restrictions imposed during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. In recent weeks, Palestinians have posted videos to TikTok showing them harassing visibly Orthodox Jews on the street, seemingly unprovoked. Videos shared on social media showed Jews attacking an Arab home in Jerusalem as children cried, as well as scuffling with police. Another video showed Palestinians beating a Jewish man, who was taken to the hospital. The Israeli media reported that more than 100 people in all were injured in the melee. Here’s what you need to know about the unrest now taking place. **Last Thursday’s violence was unusually bad, even for Jerusalem.** Jerusalem is no stranger to interethnic tensions, but the footage that emerged was among the worst in recent memory, according to reporters on the scene. It followed more than a week in which Palestinian residents of eastern Jerusalem protested barriers that had been erected around the Damascus Gate preventing crowds of Palestinians from partaking in an annual Ramadan tradition – sitting at the steps of the gate at night. The TikTok videos have also made the rounds on social media this week showing Palestinians knocking the hats off the heads of haredi Orthodox Jews, hitting them or throwing stones at them.

In response, bands of Jewish extremists have roamed the streets of Jerusalem looking for Palestinians to assault. It all came to a head last Thursday night when a crowd of hundreds of far-right Jews marched together on the Old City. They were organized by Lehava, an extremist group that seeks to prevent intermarriage or coexistence between Jews and Arabs. Its leader is Bentzi Gopstein, a disciple of the late Rabbi Meir Kahane, a Jewish extremist who opposed the presence of Arabs in Israel. As the Lehava march neared the Old City, hundreds of Palestinian counter-protesters gathered chanting “With spirit and blood we’ll redeem you, O Aqsa!,” according to The Times of Israel. Police attempted to separate the two crowds, who shouted insults at each other. Eventually, well after midnight, police dispersed the crowds using tear gas, water hoses and stun grenades. **But violent protest is far from rare in the Old City.** Last Thursday’s unrest, if shocking, was anything but unique in Jerusalem, and particularly in its Old City. Home to Jewish and Muslim holy sites, and at the center of one of the most bitterly contested cities on Earth, the Old City has seen conflict of one kind or another throughout history. In recent years, the fighting has centered on the Temple Mount, the holiest site in Judaism, which is revered by Muslims as the Noble Sanctuary. In an arrangement more than a half-century old, the site is under Israeli control but governed in practice by a Jordanian-affiliated Muslim body. Jews may visit during limited hours and their rights are otherwise restricted there. A group of Jewish activists has pushed for expanded rights at the site. Palestinians have protested, sometimes violently, in response. This has sparked no shortage of clashes, from bombings,

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Weekly Torah Portion: Emor

attacks and shootings, to protests, to diplomatic tensions between Israel and Jordan. In 2015, anger over restrictions at the Temple Mount set off a wave of Palestinian attacks across Jerusalem. Jewish Israelis and Palestinians have also been fighting over the future of the Old City as a whole, which Israel captured from Jordan in the 1967 Six-Day War. Israel claims the Old City as part of its undivided capital, while the Palestinians see it as the heart of their own capital in a future state. Most of the international community views the eastern part of Jerusalem, including the

Old City, as illegally occupied by Israel. On Jerusalem Day nearly every year, right-wing Jews march through the Old City, some chanting “Death to Arabs,” the slogan heard last week. For years, right-wing Jewish families have been buying property in the Old City’s Muslim Quarter, as well as in the adjacent neighborhood of Silwan, saying that they are seeking to live in an area rich with Jewish historical and religious significance. The Palestinians complain that Israeli courts have used unjust means to evict Palestinian families that have lived in the area for generations, transforming an Arab neighborhood into a Jewish one. **The uncertainty seems bound to continue.**

While last week’s violence did not flare up again that Friday, renewed unrest would not be surprising. Palestinians often clash with Israeli police during Ramadan, which ends on May 12. Israel’s political quagmire could also feed the unrest. The future leadership of the country remains in limbo as Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has so far failed to assemble a new governing coalition following last month’s election. Meanwhile, for the first time in years, another follower of Kahane, Itamar Ben-Gvir, holds a seat in Israel’s parliament, the Knesset. It’s also unclear whether Palestinian elections, scheduled for next month, will actually take place. Meanwhile, the ideological disputes behind the violence remain, leaving Jerusalem again primed for conflict. **HW**



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Jim Steinman once said the label that released ‘Bat Out of Hell’ didn’t want his Jewish-sounding name in the title



Jim Steinman

Credit: JimSteinman.com

By Gabe Friedman

(JTA) – Jim Steinman, the prolific songwriter who penned 1980s pop hits and the tunes for Meat Loaf’s “Bat Out of Hell,” one of the most popular albums in history, died Monday, April 19, 21, at 73.

Steinman, who had a Jewish father and grew up on Long Island, in suburban New York, was never all that forthcoming about his Jewish identity. But in one famous instance, his Jewishness became a liability.

He became friends with Meat Loaf while the two toured in a National Lampoon show together, and Steinman showed the actor and singer songs that he had written in 1974 for what he envisioned would be a futuristic musical version of “Peter Pan.” The pair began turning some of those songs into “Bat Out of Hell,” which would go on to sell tens of millions of copies worldwide.

But the success didn’t come without struggle – they were rejected by the major record labels of the time, often demoralizingly (CBS exec Clive Davis reportedly told Steinman that he didn’t know how to write a song). Meat Loaf said Steinman lived in an apartment with an unknowable number of roommates, his bed doing double duty as his kitchen table.

Eventually a small subsidiary label under CBS released the record in 1977, and while it wasn’t an immediate hit, “Bat Out of Hell” is now listed as one of the best-selling albums ever.

Steinman was the clear creative force behind the project, completely writing all the songs (Meat Loaf would later claim that he contributed some of the lyrics) and even helping to design the iconic cover. He wanted equal

billing on the cover, or for the album title to include “Jim Steinman presents ...” But he wouldn’t get that – the final product featured Meat Loaf’s name and the title at the top, with the words “Songs by Jim Steinman” eventually in a faint font at the bottom.

Steinman would later argue that the album’s marketing team thought his name was “too Jewish” to include at the top of the cover and would hurt sales.

His relationship with Meat Loaf deteriorated from there, and even though they would release a “Bat Out of Hell” sequel together in 1993 (again with all songs written by Steinman), Steinman registered the “Bat Out of Hell” name as his trademark in 1995. Meat Loaf released a third album of the same name in 2006 – with some songs by Steinman, who sued the singer.

The two reportedly did not stay on bad terms forever, according to multiple reports and obituaries. And Steinman eventually would get his Jewish name in the spotlight in the form of a successful “Bat Out of Hell” musical, which played in London and Toronto in 2017 and 2018. It was promoted as “Jim Steinman’s Bat Out of Hell: The Musical.” **HW**

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Bipartisan bill to boost cybersecurity cooperation between US and Israel

(JNS) – A bipartisan group of lawmakers introduced a bill last week intended to foster closer cooperation in cybersecurity between Israel and the United States.

If passed, the U.S. Israel Cybersecurity Cooperation Enhancement Act – made up of Senate Bill 1193 and House Bill 2659 – would establish a grant program in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security to facilitate cybersecurity research and development, demonstration and the commercialization of cybersecurity technology.

The bills were introduced in the Senate by Sen. Jacky Rosen (D-Nev.) last week and in the House of Representatives by Rep. Jim Langevin (D-R.I.) on Monday.

They were joined by Sens. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-R.I.), Susan Collins (R-Maine), Todd Young (R-Ind.) and Rep. Andrew Garbarino (R-N.Y.) in an announcement of the act last Monday.

“As cybersecurity threats continue to grow in scale, frequency and sophistication, it’s critical that we find innovative solutions to acquire new technologies,” Rosen said in a news release. “To help us stay ahead of the curve, this bipartisan legislation would enable greater collaboration between the United States and Israel – a major hub for new and emerging cybersecurity technologies. Together, we can develop forward-thinking cybersecurity technologies and initiatives that protect both nations from malicious cyber actors.”

According to the release, the grant program will be funded with \$6 million annually over five years, with private companies, nonprofit organizations, academic institutions and government entities being eligible to receive funding as long as they are engaged in a joint venture with the corresponding institution in the other country.

“At a time when our cyber defenses are being tested like never before, we must explore every avenue available to invest in cutting-edge cybersecurity research and innovation,” Langevin, co-founder and co-chair of the Congressional Cybersecurity Caucus, said in the release. “This bill will devote resources towards strengthening our cybersecurity partnership with our staunch ally Israel and yield valuable solutions to help keep Americans safe in cyberspace.”

Rosen previously introduced the U.S. Israel Cybersecurity Center of Excellence Act (S. 2309) during the last Congress, which required the State Department to investigate the potential benefits of establishing a joint U.S.-Israel cybersecurity center.

Langevin had previously introduced the bill in 2016 after a fact-finding visit to Israel. The act passed the House of Representatives numerous times.

“Cyber threats are now more prolific than at any time in our history, as is the indiscriminate targeting of the federal government, private sector, state and locals and private citizens,” said Garbarino in the release. “We must do more to defend against these threats by working closely together with our allies. I am pleased to join this bipartisan, bicameral effort to facilitate a stronger cyber partnership with Israel and ultimately develop more sophisticated cybersecurity technologies in order to thwart the next SolarWinds campaign.”

The Senate bill has been referred to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee while the House bill was referred to the House Homeland Security Committee for consideration. **HW**

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What really happened in the skies near Israel’s nuclear reactor?



View of the nuclear reactor in Dimona in southern Israel. Aug. 13, 2016.
Credit: Photo by Moshe Shai/Flash90

Former intelligence officer Tal Beeri tells JNS that “an alternative and unfounded narrative of a warning strike” on Dimona’s nuclear research center is playing out in media channels affiliated to the Iran-led axis. Days before the incident, two suspicious Iranian cargo planes landed in Damascus.

By Yaakov Lappin

(JNS) – Two days before a Syrian surface-to-air missile flew into southern Israel in response to reported Israeli airstrikes on targets in the Damascus area, two suspicious Iranian cargo planes landed at Damascus International Airport, likely carrying advanced weapons, a former IDF intelligence officer has told JNS.

Early on Thursday morning, international media reports said that the Israeli Air Force hit a number of unknown targets in Syria, which triggered a Syrian SA-5 surface-to-air missile battery to fire on the Israeli aircraft.

Maj. (res.) Tal Beeri, director of the research department at the Alma research center, which uses open-source material to shed light on security threats to Israel emanating from Syria and Lebanon, spent 20 years in IDF intelligence specializing in Lebanon and Syria. He said that according to online public flight tracking programs, the Iranian cargo planes landed at the Damascus airport on April 20.

“Those who follow Iranian cargo planes movements from Iran to Damascus are not surprised by airstrikes that follow them,” he said. “We don’t know what the specific target of the Israeli strike was, but I am certainly linking it to the arrival of the cargo planes,” added Beeri.

During the reported attack, as

in many previous Israeli strikes, Syrian air-defense missile batteries launched interceptor missiles.

“The SA-5 is an old, Russian-built surface-to-air missile,” explained Beeri. “It can reach a range of some 400 kilometers and an altitude of some 40,000 feet. It has a 200-kilogram warhead.”

The missile is originally designed to shoot down larger air targets, like transport planes.

“If it doesn’t strike a target in the air, it continues to fly until it falls because its flight trajectory ends,” said Beeri. “We saw in recent years quite a few incidents during airstrikes in which these missile launches from Syria had unexpected results. Airstrikes can lead to Syrian missiles reaching all sorts of surprising places.”

Examples include the SA-5 missile that was successfully intercepted by an Israeli Arrow 2 missile over the Jordan Valley in March 2017, and the SA-5 missile that knocked an Israeli F-16 out of the sky in February 2018. During that same incident, a second SA-5 missile fell in the Greek-populated region of Cyprus.

In September 2018, recalled Beeri, an SA-5 missile hit a Russian intelligence-gathering aircraft while trying to hit an Israeli jet with tragic and deadly consequences.

In July 2019, an SA-5 fired

from Syria fell on the Turkish-populated side of Cyprus.

“From our understanding of the incident, the SA-5 fired [on April 22] was launched south of Damascus. The missile did not hit any aircraft, and its trajectory took it over Jordan. When it was over the Dead Sea, it crossed over into Israeli territory and traveled in a straight line until reaching the Beersheva region,” said Beeri.

At that stage, warning sirens went off in the region of the Bedouin village of Abu Qrenat, in the northwest Negev, stated the Israel Defense Forces.

An Israeli air-defense system fired a missile at the Syrian missile but failed to strike it, according to Defense Minister Benny Gantz.

“The IDF acted against necessary assets [in Syria], preventing potential harm against Israel,” he said during a press conference. “An SA-5 crossed border. There was an attempt to intercept that didn’t succeed. The air force is investigating the incident. In most such cases, we see other results.”

Shortly afterwards, the IAF “struck the battery from which the missile was launched and additional Syrian surface-to-air batteries in the area,” the IDF Spokesperson’s Unit said in a statement.

‘Revenge’ a totally baseless claim

A Syrian military source told the Syrian Arab News Agency (SANA) that the IAF hit targets in the Damascus and Golan regions.

SANA said in its reports that four Syrian soldiers sustained injuries in an Israeli strike south of Damascus and that the attack also caused some damage.

Beeri added that there were also indications that a Syrian officer at the rank of captain was killed in the attack.

Nevertheless, he said, when taken into the context of four incidents in the past three years, even such “unusual” incidents become somewhat routine.

“The fact is that the Syrian missile flew until it could not fly any further. This time, it reached the Beersheva region,” he stated.

This has not stopped social-media accounts and media channels affiliated with the radical Shi’ite-Iranian axis from holding what Beeri described as a “celebration” over the incident.

The narrative of “revenge” — in which a surface-to-surface ballistic missile was deliberately fired at the Dimona-based Negev Nuclear Research Center as a “warning strike” to prove what the Iranian axis can do — has taken hold there.

“Here is the ‘revenge,’ but this is totally baseless claim,” said Beeri. “They are linking the incident to recent incidents at the Natanz nuclear site in Iran,” he added, referring to the April 11 blast that tore through the facility, taking thousands of Iranian centrifuges offline and for which Iran has blamed Israel.

Asked if this alternative narrative could still provide a face-saving outlet for Iran, Beeri said that public sentiments in narratives can, in principle, calm desires for revenge, but only if formal decision-makers and military chiefs in Iran agree to use such an outlet.

He added that it remains unclear whether the Iranian leadership, which is aware of what really happened, would do so. **HW**



Rare ‘fortress synagogue’ to return to Jewish ownership in Lutsk, Ukraine

By Cnaan Liphshiz

(JTA) – A municipality in Ukraine pledged to return to Jewish ownership what’s left of a 17th-century synagogue that the Nazis partially destroyed and the Soviets turned into a sports school.

The building that contains parts of the former Great Synagogue of Lutsk will be gifted to the Jewish Community of Lutsk, a nonprofit that represents Jews there, a city official told the news site Suspilne last week.

The former synagogue is in poor condition, requiring millions of dollars to be renovated. Hanna Matusowska, a local Jewish community leader, said the community will raise funds to renovate the building and reopen it as a synagogue that also functions as a museum.

Robust and frescent of a medieval castle, the synagogue is one of a few Jewish houses of wor-

ship built to also serve as a fortress, according to the London-based Foundation for Jewish Heritage.

In 1942, German occupation forces destroyed parts of the synagogue, which was built in 1626.

The Soviets rebuilt the building to serve as a sports facility. Since 1981, it has housed the Dynamo sports school, where some 177 students are taught, Suspilne reported. An alternative facility will be made available to them, according to the Lutsk official, Pavlo Rudetsky.

Lutsk, which is situated about 200 miles west of Kyiv, the Ukraine capital, once was a major hub of Jewish life in the region. In 1937, the city had 15,879 Jews, constituting about 40% of its population, according to YIVO Encyclopedia. In 1941, the Germans and locals murdered nearly all the Jews there. **HW**

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Hillels of Memphis student leaders team up with Memphis Jewish Federation Lions of Judah



Memphis Lions of Judah attend yoga class and gather food for college students

Two Hillels of Memphis student interns, Aaron Bardos from University of Memphis and Eliza Leiberman from Rhodes College, spearheaded a community service initiative with the Lions of Judah to gather goods for the Tiger Food Pantry. Lions gathered non-perishable food and toiletry items and brought them to their yoga class to donate to the Tiger Food Pan-

try, which is the primary resource for food-insecure college students at University of Memphis. The Hillels of Memphis Serve the Moment internship is a collaborative community service initiative spearheaded by Hillels of Memphis, Hillel International and Repair the World. Both Lion of Judah and Hillels of Memphis are programs of Memphis Jewish Federation. **HW**



Eliza Leiberman from Rhodes College (l) and Aaron Bardos from University of Memphis with Hillels of Memphis Director Sophie Bloch

Aide for New York city council candidate says Upper West Side 'too Jewish and white'

(JNS) – The campaign manager for a Democratic New York City Council candidate said last week that Manhattan’s Upper West Side is too white and Jewish, the Jewish Press reported. Quinn Mootz, who is Jewish, serves as campaign manager for Sara Lind’s run to replace Councilman Helen Rosenthal in the Upper West Side (District 6) in the June 22 Democratic primary. On April 13, Mootz said in a series of Twitter posts, which have since been deleted, that “Jews are not POC [People of Color] for just being Jewish sorry.” Mootz also tweeted, “As of 2018: 10.8% of the population is Asian, 4.1% Black, 14.1% Hispanic, and 68.4% White. So yeah ima go ahead and say the UWS has a diversity problem. Of your 191,000 residents ... 130,795 are white.” Upper West Side resident Ste-

ven Dzik said, “I have to assume the campaign manager’s views reflect the candidate’s. Mootz’s comment shows contempt for the residents of the neighborhood she hopes to represent,” the New York Post reported. “The Upper West Side is not simply predominately white. More than half the white people are Jewish,” he continued. “Jews have been a separate people for a millennia. To simply group Jews as white people comprising one undifferentiated homogenous group is bigoted and is engaging in simplistic stereotyping.” Jordan Jayson, a spokesperson for the Lind campaign, said Mootz’s comments “are being taken out of context to be used against [her]. They’re liars.” Lind’s campaign is now officially off Twitter because of the backlash Mootz received. **HW**

Facebook disables PA-linked accounts ‘used for spying’

(JNS) – Facebook announced last Wednesday that it had disabled accounts it said were being used by the Palestinian Authority’s Preventative Security Service (PSS), its internal intelligence organization, to spy on political opponents, journalists and human-rights activists. “Today, we’re sharing actions we took against two separate groups of hackers in Palestine – a network linked to the PSS and a threat actor known as Arid Viper – removing their ability to use their infrastructure to abuse our platform, distribute malware and hack people’s accounts across the internet,” said Facebook’s Mike Dvilyanski, head of Cyber Espionage Investigations, and David Agranovich, director of Threat Disruption, in a statement. The PSS-linked accounts “targeted primarily domestic audiences in Palestine,” the statement said, with the activity originating in the West Bank. These accounts also targeted, to a lesser extent, users in Turkey, Iraq, Lebanon and Libya. “It relied on social engineering to trick people into clicking on malicious links and installing malware on their devices. Our investigation found links to the PSS – the Palestinian Authority’s internal intelligence organization,” said the statement. “This persistent threat actor focused on a wide range of targets, including journalists, people opposing the Fatah-led government, human rights activists and military groups including the Syrian opposition and Iraqi military.



They used their own low-sophistication malware disguised as secure chat applications, in addition to malware tools openly available on the internet.” According to an AFP report last Wednesday, the U.S. social-media giant also said it had identified and disabled a group affiliated with Hamas and based in Gaza, which was engaged in espionage operations. In its statement, Facebook did not name Hamas directly, but said that the malicious activity “originated in Palestine and targeted individuals in the same region, including government officials, members of the Fatah political party, student groups and security forces.” “Our investigation linked this campaign to Arid Viper, a known advanced persistent threat actor. It used sprawling infrastructure to support its operations, including over a hundred websites that either hosted iOS and Android malware, attempted to steal credentials through phishing or acted as command and control servers,” said the statement. **HW**

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School News

Yom Ha'atzmaut at MHA-FYOS

It was fun-filled day with activities for every grade level.

Yom Ha'atzmaut at MHA-FYOS was filled with great programming and lots of ruach. In the ECE, each class started the day by boarding their "flight" to Israel. Before boarding, each student went through airport security and presented their passport to the gate agents. Once they were on the plane, they watched the El-Al flight safety video and "toured" various cities in Israel. In Grades 1-8, there was an exciting Color War breakout after Hallel. The Junior High students were the cap-



tains and co-captains of the two teams, and it was incredibly special to watch them take the lead by writing cheers and songs, planning skits, writing Divrei Torah, and serving as excellent role models for the younger students. In the high school, students from MSG and CYHSB set off on their respective field trips after tefilah. The CYHSB students played baseball and other sports at the Alrose Avenue Park followed by paintball at Battlefront. The MSG girls played laser tag and enjoyed a picnic. At the end of the day, all of the students and staff joined together for a COVID-safe Israel march from MHA to Baron Hirsch. Everyone wore blue and white, sang and danced, and waved the Israeli flag for all to see. [HW](#)

When Purim pizza turns into a BBQ

By Rabbi Akiva Males

This past Purim, Young Israel's (YI) Rabbi's Discretionary Fund (RDF) attempted to engage in another uplifting project. For the fifth year in a row, YI decided that Purim would be the perfect time to reach out and thank the brave soldiers of Israel's Defense Forces (IDF) who are doing their best to protect our extended family in Israel. While away from the festive Purim atmospheres of their own homes and locales, those soldiers work hard to keep their fellow citizens safe and

sound. Toward that end, YI partnered with an Israeli organization that specializes in supplying IDF soldiers with donated items (especially fresh pizzas). Through this partnership, YI's Rabbi's Discretionary Fund was all set to supply an entire platoon of active-duty IDF soldiers with enough pizza and soda to make their Purim festive. Unfortunately, due to ever-changing COVID-19 regulations, just before Purim we were informed that IDF bases would not allow visitors to deliver



the pizzas and sodas we had ordered. However, by April, Israel began loosening some of the coronavirus restrictions they were forced to put in place. On Thurs., April 15, I received an email – along with the pictures below – that instead of pizzas, an entire IDF platoon was treated to an Israeli Independence Day (Yom Ha'atzma'ut) BBQ courtesy of Young Israel of Memphis. This barbecue dinner certainly served

as a long-distance embrace from our congregational family. Hopefully, knowing that a caring synagogue in far-away Memphis, Tennessee was thinking of them provided this IDF platoon with a much-appreciated morale boost. YI thanks the many generous sponsors who made this gift possible. Young Israel of Memphis' Rabbi Akiva Males can be reached at rabbi@yiom.org. [HW](#)

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Yiddishe Cup Online Trivia Tournament brings community together while benefiting Hillels of Memphis for college students



2021 Yiddishe Cup Co-Chair Carolyn Schrier helps pack sponsor packets for mailing ahead of this year’s version of the Cup, an online Memphis trivia tournament. This year’s event raised \$17,000 for educational programs, social events, Shabbat meals and more for Hillels of Memphis student at Rhodes College and University of Memphis.

Like so many other programs and events, Yiddishe Cup transitioned online this year in the form of a virtual trivia tournament. Forty households tuned in to test their knowledge in each of these categories: Jewish Memphis, Memphis Music, Memphis Sports, Memphis History, University of Memphis and Rhodes College History and Hillels of Memphis History. Seventy sponsors raised \$17,000 for Hillels of Memphis to continue to serve Jewish students at University of Memphis and Rhodes College.

While the event was successful in helping bring rich Jewish experiences to college campuses in Memphis through its fundraising, it was also successful in bringing students, community members, and supporters together for a bit of competitive fun. During the one-hour program, multiple-choice questions came rapid fire, and contestants fired back answers as quickly as they could. Which famous actor was born in Memphis in 1937? What is the official tree of Memphis? Which famous author dubbed Memphis the ‘Good Samaritan City of the Mississippi?’ Read on for the answers.

“As a member of the Hillels of Memphis Advisory Council, I love seeing Jewish college students from both Rhodes and U of M engaging together,” said Carolyn Schrier, who served as co-chair of this year’s Yiddishe Cup and opened the online program, welcoming participants with a pep-talk. “The COVID pandemic arrived just before Yiddishe Cup 2020 was scheduled to happen, and there wasn’t time to shift to something else, so the students missed out last year. Being able to have the event online this year, reimagined as a trivia tournament of epic proportions, helped foster a sense of community and bridge the distance between the two campuses.”

Carolyn’s co-chair counterpart and fellow member of the Hillels of Memphis Advisory Council, Daniel Snyder, closed the program with remarks.

The Yiddishe Cup serves as the primary community fundraiser for Hillels of Memphis, a program of Memphis Jewish Federation. Proceeds benefit students at University of Memphis and Rhodes College through educational programs, social events, Shabbat meals and much more.

“Not only is Yiddishe Cup an important annual fundraiser for Hillels of Memphis, enabling more and rich-

er programming to students, it’s also a fun date on the calendar each year for Jewish students who may or may not have connections to the Memphis Jewish community to hang out with locals of all ages and do something fun together,” said Emma Jane Hopper, president of the Rhodes Hillel Student Executive Board. “I’m glad we were able to switch to an online event that got us all together digitally, while also offering some friendly competition.”

Jennifer Roberts took third place in the tournament, Rose Ostrow claimed the second spot, and Sheldon Dan won first prize among individual contestants. Cumulatively, the University of Memphis Hillel won the team prize. All prizes were provided by Prize Sponsor Robert Irwin Jewelers. The Hebrew Watchman served as media sponsor.

For those eager to test their knowledge, a recording of the program is available at hillelsofmemphis.org/yiddishecup. The answers to the questions above are Morgan Freeman, the Dogwood and Mark Twain. **HW**

Yom Ha’atzmaut at the MJCC



While the Memphis-Shoham Partnership is “housed” at Memphis Jewish Federation, the relationship with Shoham belongs to the entire community. At the April 2021 Israel Drive-Thru Celebration sponsored by the Memphis Jewish Community Center, the Partnership sponsored a beautiful Israel games gift box for all program participants. Jason Caplan and his children volunteered to staff the Memphis-Shoham table at MJCC’s celebration.



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New monument pays tribute to archive hidden by Jews in Warsaw Ghetto



A building from the Warsaw Ghetto with pictures of Jews on the facade.
Credit: Anastasia Petrova/Shutterstock

It includes official documents, underground publications, statistics on those who died, firsthand testimonies, ration cards used in the ghetto, medical prescriptions, even candy wrappers.

(JNS) – A new monument in Poland that honors a Holocaust-era archive compiled by Jews who lived in the Warsaw Ghetto was unveiled last Monday on the 78th anniversary of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.

The monument, a glass cube placed above an underground chamber, stands on the same ground where the collection was buried in secret in 1942, AFP reported.

On display inside the cube is a will from the archive that was handwritten by Dawid Graber, a 19-year-old who helped hide the documents from the Nazis. The will, written on a page torn out of a schoolbook, states that “what we were not able to pass through our cries and screams, we hid underground.”

Nazi Germany created the ghetto after it invaded Poland on Sept. 1, 1939.

Between July and September 1942, the Nazis deported or murdered as many as 300,000 Jews in the ghetto. By early 1943, those left numbered between 70,000 and 80,000. On April 19, 1943, a band of Jews led an armed revolt against the German authorities, keeping them at bay until May 16, when they were defeated and rounded up.

The archive includes official documents, underground publications, statistics on those who died, firsthand testimonies, ration cards used in the ghetto, medical prescriptions, even candy wrappers.

The materials were collected and buried by a group of activists called “Oyneg Shabbes” (Sabbath Pleasure.) The archive is currently on display in the Jewish Historical Institute in Warsaw. All documents have been digitized and are available online.

On Monday, the first stone was laid for a monument to honor the members of “Oyneg Shabbes” at the Jewish Cemetery in Warsaw. **HW**

Billy Crystal and Tiffany Haddish are besties in new film ‘Here Today’



Tiffany Haddish and Billy Crystal in a trailer for the new movie “Here Today.”
Credit: Screen capture: YouTube

By Philissa Cramer

(JTA) – Comedian Billy Crystal and actress Tiffany Haddish are so close that Crystal read a Torah portion at Haddish’s 2019 bat mitzvah ceremony in Los Angeles.

Now the two Jewish celebrities are taking their friendship to the big screen in a buddy comedy called “Here Today.” The first trailer for the movie, out May 7, includes a shot of Crystal and Haddish taking part in a massive hora, the traditional celebratory Jewish dance.

The trailer offers a snapshot of a heart-felt plot: Haddish’s character reluctantly goes to lunch with Crystal’s character, a past-his-prime version of himself, after her husband purchases the date for \$22 in a charity auction. There, she has an allergic reaction to her food, requiring a trip to the emergency room that bonds

the pair tightly. Over time, Haddish’s character learns that Crystal’s character is losing his memory because of dementia, and he invites her to help him complete his life’s work before it’s too late.

The on-screen relationship follows a longstanding offscreen one for the duo, in which their shared Jewish identity is a bonding force. Crystal, who attended Hebrew school as a child in Long Beach, New York, has spoken frequently about his deep love for Jewish music. Haddish worked as a bat mitzvah performer but did not learn about her own Jewish heritage until she was 27, when she met her father, an Eritrean Jew. She studied Hebrew in advance of her bat mitzvah, celebrated in December 2019, and explored her Jewish identity in a comedy special, “Black Mitzvah,” released the same day. **HW**

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University of Haifa to take part in research aiming to communicate with whales

The project, estimated to last at least five years, will combine expertise from marine biology, acoustics, artificial intelligence and linguistics.

(JNS) – The University of Haifa has embarked on a global research project to learn how to decipher sperm whale communication, which may enable humans to understand the dialogue between these large sea creatures.

To that end, it has joined forces with educational institutions such as the City University of New York, Harvard University, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Imperial College London and the University of California, Berkeley. At a press conference held this week in Dominica in the Caribbean, where the project will take place, researchers revealed plans for what they are calling the Cetacean Translation Initiative (CETI).

The project, estimated to last at least five years, will combine expertise from marine biology, marine acoustics, artificial intelligence and linguistics. Researchers will leverage machine learning and non-invasive robotics to listen and translate the whales’ language and attempt to communicate with them.



Three sperm whale calves.

Credit: Amanda Cotton

Why this particular species?

As Project CETI explains, “The sperm whale is the animal with the largest brain, and like humans, it has a complex communication system and lives in tightly knit family groups. These whales also help keep carbon out of the atmosphere, support our oxygen supply and increase marine life. We now have the tools to identify and translate the deep structure of their communicative patterns and to kick-start the path towards meaningful dialogue with another species. By illustrating whales’ incredible intelligence and advocating for legislation, we can accelerate conservation efforts.”

One of the project’s leaders, Professor Dan Tchernov of the University of Haifa’s Leon H. Charney School of Marine Sciences and scientific director of the Morris Kahn Marine Research Station

elaborated further, saying “these primates make a clicking sound at varying frequencies when they are in the company of other whales. The question is: Is this just a simple code or a true language?”

“Right now, our database is not comprehensive enough to know the answer to this question,” he explained. “However, with the advancement of machine learning and advanced linguistics, we realize that if we gather enough data about their voices, the context in which these sounds are employed and understood, and the behavior and motivation behind these sounds, then we can then develop an algorithm to determine whether they have an authentic language.”

“Of course,” he said, “the dream would be if we are able to communicate with them on their terms.” **HW**

A 1998 Spielberg-produced Holocaust documentary on Netflix

By Shira Hanau

(JTA) – An Oscar-winning documentary about the experience of Hungarian Jews during the Holocaust that was produced by Steven Spielberg will be made available for streaming on Netflix.

“The Last Days” will be remastered from the original 35 mm film before its streaming release on May 19.

The documentary, which won the Academy Award for best documentary feature in 1998, tells the stories of five Hungarian Jews who survived the Holocaust. One was Tom Lantos, who would go on to become a congressman from California from 1981 to 2008.

The film follows the survivors after the war as they return to their hometowns, as well as visit the ghettos and concentration camps where they were imprisoned.

Spielberg was an executive producer together with the USC Shoah Foundation, which he founded after directing the 1993 Oscar-winning film “Schindler’s List” about the life of German industrialist Oskar Schindler and the Jews he saved during the Holocaust. The foundation houses more than 55,000 Holocaust testimonies. **HW**

“Temple Israel Caregiver Support Group offers community, connection”

By Sarah Thomson

Each second Sunday of the month, caregivers meet via Zoom to share communal understanding of the daily tasks, emotions, and challenges that the role invokes. Under the pastoral care of Temple Israel senior Rabbi Micah D. Greenstein, the group invites a spirit of community necessary for navigating the peaks and valleys of caring for a loved one. At a time where so many feel neglected, lost, and weary due to COVID-19, caregivers are especially vulnerable to burnout, fatigue, and isolation with loved ones at home or in facilities. Caregiving, for many, is a round-the-clock job, and most would express that the emotional toll is far more difficult than any physical labor.

Sarah Thomson, the founder of Caregiver Café, began her caregiving journey at age 30 when her husband of five years had a massive stroke and entered a nursing home in 2014. The importance of her Jewish faith and fellow caregivers’ wisdom was something she hopes to foster for others with Caregiver Café. The group initially started with three caregivers, including Thomson, and has grown into an anticipated monthly event for the current members.

Each meeting begins with a blessing from Rabbi Greenstein then opens for individual sharing in a safe, confidential environment. Attendees are welcome to come and listen or observe – the group does not require more participation than any person feels comfortable with. The experience each member brings is invaluable and in this multi-generational collective, the community and shared understanding in grief and love is a wel-

come respite in the month. The hour is a time for renewal, replenishment, inner strength and encouragement needed for any stage in the caregiving journey.

Caregiver Café is wholeheartedly a Jewish space. Members share the importance of their faith in helping them survive the years of caring for a loved one. Jewish values and wisdom, from ancient Torah Parshas to more modern sources, such as the works of Rabbi Steve Leder, give meaning and purpose to even the most tedious of daily tasks. Many in the group express finding a simple, humble holiness in caring for another human in such an intimate and visceral capacity. Joy, no matter how great or small, is in the quotidian.

Anyone who cares for a family member or friend is invited to join. The individual circumstances of each member may differ, but the emotional and practical aspects of caregiving remain universal. Someone who has cared for a spouse for 20 years has the same experiences that another person feels after only a few weeks.

Despite the difficulties caregivers experience, Caregiver Café remains a positive and uplifting community. Members express relief and joy each month as the meeting comes to a close, and a familial bond organically developed as the months have passed. The group continues to meet via Zoom for convenience and availability, as many cannot leave their loved ones alone for extended periods. Caregiving is often a silent and lonely position. Caregiver Café allows a space to feel seen, heard, understood and loved. **HW**

Youth fitness expands at MJCC

The Fitness Team is excited to offer new youth fitness classes this month – all with appropriate social distancing and safety practices.

“It is important for even our smaller MJCC members to stay active,” says MJCC Assistant Fitness Director Josh Wright. “Youth Fitness at the MJCC is very important, and we strive to keep our youth moving.”

This spring, Creative Dance is being offered to tiny dancers ages 3-5. This introduction to dance helps develop coordination, rhythm and self-expression while learning the fundamentals of ballet in a fun, playful and safe environment. The classes have been full, but will continue in the fall with new classes.

This fall the MJCC partnered with local company USA Karate for Karate classes. This new class teach-

es confidence, respect, focus and self-defense skills. The foundation of USA Karate’s curriculum is to help with the development of life skills such as a positive attitude, perseverance, self-confidence and self-control.

For strength and agility, youth ages 3-5 may sign up for the new Ninja Warrior Class. This is a fun-filled action-packed class that focuses on functional movements for kids. Children will learn to navigate through obstacles, while learning how to control their body through awareness, balance and coordination activities.

The MJCC Fitness Team is constantly brainstorming ways to offer new and fun youth activities. If you or someone you know have an interest in any of these youth programs, visit www.jcc-memphis.org/youthfitness or contact Josh Wright at 901.259.9241. **HW**

Baron Hirsch co-sponsors the Inaugural Global Family Health & Halacha Conference

After an unprecedented year comes an unprecedented conference. The community is invited to take part next week in a global virtual conference focused on family health and halacha (Jewish law).

Baron Hirsch’s Yoetzet Halacha Atara Segal will be speaking at the Inaugural Global Family Health and Halacha Virtual Conference. Nishmat’s Miriam Glaubach Center (MGC) and Mizrachi Canada have partnered to produce a virtual conference devoted to strengthening our spiritual, emotional and physical well-being and relationships.

On Tues., May 4 at 2 p.m., Atara will join Dr. Ellen Warner and Melissa Rosen of Sharsheret to discuss “Learning your Family Business – and Preventing Cancer.”

Throughout the conference, which runs May 2-5, 2021, men and women will gain access to renowned speakers from all over the world. Nishmat Yoatzot Halacha (women advisors in Jewish Law), rabbis, rebbetzins,

medical and mental health professionals and community leaders will facilitate conversations rooted in Torah’s timeless wisdom, cutting-edge medicine and psychological insights.

Nishmat’s Yoatzot Halacha support women as they observe Jewish laws relating to women’s health, and they have fielded thousands of questions regarding the difficulties presented by the pandemic. Currently, 25 MGC Yoatzot Halacha are employed by over 50 synagogues and schools throughout North America, including Atara Segal at Baron Hirsch.

Visit www.healthandhalacha.com to register and learn about all the sessions, speakers and opportunities available over the jam-packed four-day experience. Pre-registration is required, and participants can build their individualized schedules based on their life stage, medical and spiritual interests. This Global Family Health & Halacha Virtual Conference is a service to the community and free of charge. **HW**

MJCC youth summer job opportunities

The MJCC camp and youth teams are busy planning a fun and safe summer for this year’s 71st Summer Camp season.

And great counselors and staff make that happen. The staff are the friendly faces that the children see every day. They have the incredibly important job of keeping children safe, entertained, and are often great mentors. The MJCC is proud to hire an amazing group of youth every summer to complete this task.

Memphis Jewish community members often talk about their family connections through Summer Camp. And many past MJCC camp counselors now have children attending camp.

Know of someone who would be a great counselor and is searching for a

fun, meaningful summer experience?

Learn more at www.jccmemphis.org/campstaff.

There is also an opportunity for lifeguards. Lifeguards are critical to a successful and safe summer. This position provides an important role and serves as a learning experience for a growing adult. The J offers a lifeguard training program with a couple of different training sessions. For more information about lifeguard training, visit www.jcc-memphis.org/lifeguard.

For more information or questions, reach out to MJCC Camp, Youth, & Family Services Director Juliana Harkavy at 901.259.9215 or MJCC Aquatics Director Danny Fadgen at 901.259.9208. **HW**

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OBITUARIES

Paul Bradley “Brad” Olswing

Paul Bradley “Brad” Olswing passed away at his home Thursday morning, April 22, 2021. He is survived by his wife, Suzanne Eber Olswing; daughter Kimberly Olswing; son Andrew (Lesley) Olswing; granddaughters Madeline and Amelia; dog Ellie; brother Randy (Theresa) Olswing; sister Debra Olswing; sister-in-law Beth (Steve) Margolin; nieces and nephews Keith (Laura) Olswing, and their children Beckett, Piper and Crosby; Mandy (Jarrod) Hailey, and their children, Hannah and Henley; Samantha Brooks; Judy (Andrew) Landau, and baby Emma; Rachel (Josh) Arbit, and Amy Margolin.

Brad was preceded in death by his parents, Irving and Ellen Olswing.

Contributions in Brad’s memory may be made to Temple Israel: Rabbi Greenstein discretionary fund, the Alvin D. Eber music fund at Baron Hirsch synagogue, or the charity of donors’ choice.

Irving Ashley Evans

Irving Ashley Evans passed away peacefully, surrounded by his loving family, on Tuesday, March 23, 2021, at the age of 93. Born on October 27, 1927, he was the son of the late Nate and Ray Moskowitz Evans. He was preceded in death by his beloved wife, Phyllis Bloom Evans, and son Randall Martin “Randy” Evans. He leaves his sister, Evelyn Evans (Jerome) Makowsky, his children, Philip (Alyse) Evans, Vicki Evans Braslow, Raymond (Susan) Evans, Julie Evans, and Alan (Crystal Yocum) Evans, 21 grandchildren, 17 great-grandchildren, a host of nieces, nephews and cousins, and hordes of close and dear friends,



many of whom are proud to be considered part of his “extended family.”

Irving, a man of faith and family, was blessed to follow in the footsteps of his parents to be a multi-talented musician, performer, composer, arranger, writer, director, showman, as well as a developer, contractor and pioneer in the greater Memphis community.

The memory of his passion for music, the pioneering of developments throughout his hometown of Memphis and the memories he made with his family and friends will live on in their hearts forever. The family requests that any memorials be sent to the Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab, Temple Israel, Anshei Sphard Beth El Emeth or to Baron Hirsch Synagogue or to the charity of the donor’s choice.

IsraAID sending team of responders to Caribbean in wake of volcano eruption

(JNS) – IsraAID is sending a team of Israeli emergency responders to St. Vincent and the Grenadines, a chain of islands in the Caribbean, where a volcano on the main island has been spewing ash since earlier this month, endangering lives and homes.

More than 20,000 people have been displaced with some 12,000 staying in public shelters since the La Soufrière volcano began erupting on April 9. It was the first time it has erupted since 1979.

Villages are covered in ash, drinking water is hard to find, and crops and livestock have been destroyed, even as the coronavirus pandemic continues to impact the island. The United Nations has started a global fund to help cover the estimated \$29 million that is needed to help residents.

“The level of destruction that has befallen this beautiful country and the widespread disruption caused by this event will forever be etched in my mind,” said Didier Trebucq, U.N. resident coordinator for Barbados and the Eastern Caribbean, in a press release. “The devastating impact of this event on thousands of people is undeniable.”

The IsraAID response team – some of whom will be relocated from current aid missions on the island of Dominica and in the Bahamas – will provide displaced residents with clean water; distribute hygiene supplies and other needed materials; and offer “psychological first aid” for people grappling with the effects from the volcanic activity.

“The ongoing volcanic activity in St. Vincent puts thousands of people’s lives

More than 20,000 people have been displaced with some 12,000 in public shelters since the La Soufriere volcano began erupting on April 9.

and homes at risk,” said Michal Bar, IsraAID’s head of emergency response programming. “IsraAID’s team will utilize our longstanding experience in the region to partner with affected communities and provide urgent support now and towards a resilient future.” **HW**

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The Baal Shem Tov’s Midnight Visitor



Editor’s note: This story is being reprinted in memory of Ted Roberts in appreciation of his longtime service as a newspaper columnist.

By Ted Roberts

The followers of the Baal Shem Tov love to tell of his courage in facing up to his opponents. The holy man, they used to say, could walk among wolves without drawing a deep breath. But the most epic confrontation of his life is rarely told. And never when children are near. And never after nightfall. It is a fearful story unless one has pulled the cloak of faith tightly around one’s body and even then it’s best to first recite the Shema under your breath.

It happened on a February night in Meziboz. Our teacher had just finished reading the story of Daniel. He put down his book softly, with reverence, the way a man puts down his wine cup after enjoying a rare, delicious wine. The story continued to roll through the mind of the holy man as he smiled in recollection of the prophet’s courage.

His thoughts were interrupted by a rustling of the curtain, which framed his open window. The wind? No, there was definitely something concealed by the folds of the drape. Like a human, but shorter with a grotesque back. Still half hidden by the drape, it spoke:

“Israel Baal Shem Tov, my master the adversary has sent me to make a bargain with you.”

Israel knew with whom he was dealing, but he gazed without fear at the deformity hidden behind the drape and went right to the point. “A bargain? Your master has no power and no home in the human heart.”

The drape rustled wildly. “You’re a fool,” croaked the devil’s minion. “Who do you think enticed Joseph’s brothers to sell him into bondage and made David lust for Bathsheva and tells the gentle milkmaid who brings you the cool milk to skim off just enough cream so you won’t notice?”

“So, tell me the bargain,” said the BESHT.

“It is a simple one; your heart’s desire in exchange for your allegiance to my master. He recognized your wisdom even if HE, whose name I am not allowed to speak, and some of the district rabbis don’t. Why slave in the forest or run a tavern? Your hands should hold rings of gold and bracelets of emeralds, not wood saws; and your mind should dwell on the world’s mysteries, not barroom accounts.”

The BESHT thought of Elijah facing the priests of Baal, the prophet Nathan striding into a vengeful king’s throne room, shouting accusations; Daniel among the snarling lions; and he was not afraid.

“Riches will be yours,” cooed the seducer in the drapes. “And all the pleasures of love, which remember come from our creator. I’ve seen your wife.”

added the evil spirit, “a fine helpmate for carrying those clods of clay from the forest, but no Bathsheva. Why eat

boiled cabbage, when a roasted chicken is in the oven? Knowledge you shall have also. You shall unlock the secrets of the Kabala like a child unwraps a honey cake. Your brilliance shall eclipse both the TSAR and the chief Rabbi of Moscow. They shall both kneel down to you; together if you wish.”

Maybe, thought the BESHT, with all this promised wealth and power he could make justice – tame the wild heart of his fellow man.

He looked away from the shape beside the window and stared out at the hillside made silver by the moon and melodious by the wind that played it like a lyre. He was silent for many minutes, and then he spoke calmly to the minion from the world’s underside.

“What must I do for you and your master?”

The drape rustled with a sudden excitement.

“One deed,” said Satan’s servant. “A single imperfect act that will allow my master to boast for generations to come that the BESHT of Meziboz served two masters – The Prince of Darkness as well as the G-d of light.”

“Your neighbor, the old man who spends most of his day in bed complaining about his ills and eating porridge, which leaks all over the bed clothes – he will die in two days, says my master who owns him. He is of no value. Press a pillow over his face. Tonight.”

“No,” said the BESHT. “I have observed that in the morning when his daughter goes to the river to wash clothes and gather firewood, he watches

her child and amuses her with stories.”

“All right – all right. Then go slay the goat in the backyard who kills the trees by eating their bark; and frightens the children with his horns. Take a rock and break his head. He is of no use.”

“And who will supply the children’s milk?” responded the holy man.

The drape was rustling with anger. The bounty of the devil could not be purchased by swatting a mosquito. Some substantial evil must be committed.

“Here’s my final offer,” stated the messenger. “That scruffy cat with the maimed ear who’s been curling around your leg our entire conversation – squeeze his neck until the light in his yellow eyes dies. He’s only a carrier of fleas and vermin; and besides, I don’t like the way he’s been glaring at me.”

The BESHT answered softly. “But he kills the mice who hide in the dark corners of the house. He has a place in the universe. AND YOU DON’T,” he shouted as he rushed to the drape and grabbed the shape enclosed in its folds. With a pitiful whimper, it shrunk under his hands into a small, struggling thing like a toad. It fell to the floor.

The cat was on it in a single bound. And devoured the residue of evil even before our teacher could examine it.

“Only evil is not crowned with a purpose,” said the BESHT as he stroked his cat with the mangled ear.

The syndicated humor of Ted, the Scribbler on the Roof, has appeared in newspapers around the US, on National Public Radio, and numerous websites. HW

COMMENTARY

Editor’s note: We want YOUR opinion. As a locally owned newspaper, we do not have the resources to personally report on national, international or Israeli news. Therefore, we rely on paid news sources such as the Jewish Telegraph Agency (JTA) and Jewish News Syndicate (JNS). Send us your opinion for consideration to info@HebrewWatchman.com

Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor,

A newspaper must be as unbiased as possible. Such as to show readers BOTH SIDES of an issue if there are two sides. This can be accomplished by LETTERS TO THE EDITOR or by a headline COMMENTARY or merely by putting differing opinions side by side. This was unfortunately not

happening for many years. Now the community paper Hebrew Watchmen is FINALLY being newsworthy and fair. Kudos to you. PLEASE CONTINUE WITH FAIR REPORTING.

Thank you,
Anonymous

Israel arrests 17 more rioters as Arab-Jewish clashes in Jerusalem continue



Israel police officers clash with Arabs outside the Damscus gate in Jerusalem’s Old City during anit-Jewish protests, April 24, 2021.

Credit: Yonatan Sindel/Flash90

Arrests since unrest broke out at the start of the Muslim holiday of Ramadan on April 13 is 157

By Yori Yalon and
Shahar Klaiman

(Israel Hayom via JNS) – The Israel Police announced on Sunday that it had arrested 17 people suspected of involvement in the violent clashes between Arabs and Jews in Jerusalem that began on April 13, the start of the Muslim holiday of Ramadan, and have been escalating over the past week. According to Jerusalem District Police Chief Doron Turgeman, the suspects arrested on Saturday night – for “assaulting police officers, throwing rocks, setting off fireworks and hurling firebombs” – join 140 others taken into custody since the beginning of the “unrest,” bringing the total number to 157. Most of those arrested so far have been Muslims, Turgeman told Kan Radio on Sunday morning. Turgeman also said that 54 of the detainees are being held under suspicion of attacks with a “racist motive.”

According to police, the unrest was sparked in part by a new social-media trend among young Arabs, which involves physically assaulting visibly Orthodox Jews and posting the attacks on TikTok. The first such video shows an Arab teen slapping a yeshiva student on Jerusalem’s light rail. Since last week, similar incidents have been posted to the popular platform. In one such incident, Eli Rozen, 27, of Jerusalem, was walking his dog when he was set upon by a mob of Palestinians, who beat him severely while filming the attack. Rozen, who believes he narrowly escaped death, described recent events in the city as a “third intifada.” Meanwhile, hundreds of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip held marches and demonstrations on Saturday in solidarity with the Arabs of eastern Jerusalem facing off with Jews in the capital. Later that night, terrorists in Gaza renewed rocket-fire from the night before. During the course of Friday night and the early hours of Saturday morning, terrorists launched 36 projectiles into southern Israel, resulting in damage to vehicles and buildings, but no casualties. The Israel Defense Forces reported that six of those rockets were intercepted by the Iron Dome missile-defense system. **HW**

Israeli artist sets Guinness World Record for longest megillah scroll

By Gabe Friedman

(JTA) – It’s the whole megillah, and more. This month an Israeli artist broke the Guinness World Record for longest megillah, the scroll that tells the story behind the Purim holiday. Avner Moriah’s creation is 28.03 meters long, just about the exact length of

a basketball court. He laid it out on a court for press photos earlier this month. Moriah said in a statement that it took him “15 years, tens of thousands of hours of work, and more than one million brushstrokes” to complete it. Hecallsitthe“GanzeMegillah,”“ganze” a Yiddish idiom for “the whole story.” **HW**

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Jewish groups react to guilty verdict for Chauvin, saying ‘justice has been served’



Protesters rally and march in Bryant Park, N.Y., on the first day of the trial of Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, accused of killing African-American George Floyd on May 25, 2020. Credit: Lev Radin/Shutterstock.

(JNS) – Jewish groups reacted to the verdict on Tuesday of former Minneapolis police officer Derek Chauvin, who was found guilty of murder and manslaughter in the death of George Floyd. Floyd’s death on May 25, 2020, touched off massive worldwide protests, violence and an examination of U.S. race relations and police conduct in the last year. The Jewish community – active in civil rights and with a long history of black-Jewish ties – reacted with out-

rage over Floyd’s death, one of a number of high-profile cases nationwide. Some groups, however, also condemned the riots that erupted as part of riots last spring and summer, including damage that occurred to synagogues and Jewish businesses. Chauvin, 45, was found guilty of second-degree murder, third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter. In a statement, the Anti-Defamation League said that the “decision to hold

Derek Chauvin accountable for the murder of George Floyd is a critically necessary first in securing #JusticeforGeorgeFloyd. It is long past time for our country to tackle systemic racism, reimagine what public safety looks like, and create transformational change to ensure justice and fair treatment for all people.” The American Jewish Committee said “nothing can bring back the life of George Floyd. But, at the very least, justice has been served today.” The Jewish Council for Public Affairs noted that the verdict is “an initial step towards accountability, justice and healing.” “We echo the sentiment expressed by JCPA’s member agency, the Jewish Community Relations Council of Minneapolis: ‘While no guilty verdict can bring George Floyd back or make his family and friends fully whole for their loss or unwind the trauma inflicted on the broader African-American community, we hope that today’s decision brings some measure of justice, healing and peace to his loved ones and for all Minnesotans.’” The Democratic Majority for Israel said the verdict “represents an important step towards addressing the grave injustices he and so many other people of color have suffered. DMFI will continue to advocate for policies that will dismantle the systemic racism that plagues our country.” **HW**

Spring brings swarm of locusts to southern Israel

By Ronit Zilberstein

(Israel Hayom via JNS) – Residents of Israel’s southern city of Eilat and Arava region have woken up for the past few mornings to enormous swarms of locusts in their gardens, fields and elsewhere. Farmers on Kibbutz Samar and Kibbutz Elipaz are worried about their crops, although residents of Residents of Moshav Hatzeva managed to catch some of the locusts using net traps set up in their fields. In Eilat, the swarm settled at an agricultural school near the bay, although individual locusts were spotted throughout the city. People’s bane can be a bonus for wildlife, however. Amir Balaban, who handles the urban nature depart at the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel, said that hundreds of bee-eaters had been spotted at Kibbutz Lotan on their way north from Africa to Europe. “They fly over fences and fill their beaks with the locusts landing in the area,” he said. Balaban called the locust event a “festival of protein” for Israel’s wildlife. “Much like the [way in which] a lot of migratory birds feed off the locusts on their way north. **HW**

Oscar-nominated filmmakers to produce documentary on French Nazi hunters Serge and Beate Klarsfeld

(JTA)–Two of the world’s most famous Nazi hunters, Serge and Beate Klarsfeld, are getting the documentary treatment. Alexander Nanau, a Romanian filmmaker whose documentary “Collective” is up for both best documentary and

best foreign film at this year’s Oscars on Sunday, will executive produce a film about the Klarsfelds, who have exposed Nazis around the world for decades. “It has been a huge privilege to have gained the trust and cooperation of Beate

and Serge to document their extraordinary lives both past and present,” co-director Mike Lerner said in a statement Monday to The Hollywood Reporter. Lerner’s 2011 documentary “Hell and Back Again” about a soldier

with post-traumatic stress disorder was nominated for an Oscar in 2012. The Klarsfelds have brought several prominent Nazis and French Vichy collaborators to justice, including the infamous Gestapo officer Klaus Barbie. **HW**



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