



**Panelists offer thoughts on rise of anti-Semitism**

**Our Towns 4**



*Standing behind Cantor David Wisnia in Auschwitz-Birkenau's "sauna" building are his son Rabbi Eric Wisnia and family, wife Judith and children Sara and Avi. As a prisoner, David worked in the delousing facility; today it is an exhibit hall at the Auschwitz Museum.* PHOTOS COURTESY AVI WISNIA



**In remembering Kobe, don't erase his mistakes**

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## Cantor, Auschwitz survivor, 'affirms life' at liberation ceremony

David Wisnia says his family is 'proof Hitler did not succeed'

**Michele Alperin**  
NJJN Contributing Writer

Cantor David Wisnia has returned to Auschwitz five times since his internment there, most recently for the 75th anniversary of the camp's liberation in January. "Every time you go back, you feel like you're back home — believe it or not — whether you like it or not," he said.

In an interview at his home in Levittown, Pa., upon his return, he said going back to the camp is "affirming that I am alive, that I managed to survive

that atrocity."

This anniversary visit the cantor was joined by his son, Eric, rabbi emeritus at Congregation Beth Chaim in Princeton Junction, and his wife, Judith, and their children, Sara and Avi. Cantor Wisnia said he and others realize the most recent ceremony at Auschwitz will be the last major commemoration that will draw any sizable number of those who suffered as inmates. "Now we still had a few survivors who were prisoners who can relate details, but there won't be anymore," he said.

Avi, a singer, songwriter, and pianist who lives in Philadelphia, was also at the interview. During the visit to Poland, he accompanied his grandfather to a concert at the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews, in Warsaw. He said he and his family went to Poland to support each other and make sure his grandfather had another opportunity "to

*Continued on page 6*

## Summertime, and camp living, is anything but easy

New grant supports mental well-being of campers and staff

**Johanna Ginsberg**  
NJJN Senior Writer

Last summer, counselors at Camp Young Judaea Sprout Lake in New York met once a week with a social worker to discuss their own issues, and the results were dramatic, according to executive director Helene Drobena: One counselor left mid-summer to see a therapist at home, another checked into treatment at the end of the summer to address an eating disorder. The initiative was part of an increased focus at the camp on the mental, emotional, and social health (MESH) needs of campers and staff.

Once upon a time, when summer arrived, kids gleefully went to camp and lived happily with their friends in communal bunks enjoying swimming, art, sports, and Shabbat rituals. Counselors were often college or high school students who muddled through the session with minimal training and support, while managing to have fun with peers while supervising their campers.

*Continued on page 11*



*Camp Havaya, pictured here, is one of several Jewish camps at the forefront of providing support for the mental health and well-being of campers and staff.* COURTESY CAMP HAVAYA

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## As right as rain

In a true only-in-Israel moment, a boy who went foraging for mushrooms following recent rains stumbled upon an archaeological artifact that was brought to the surface by the downpours.

Stav Meir, 13, from Caesarea was hunting for wild mushrooms with family members when he noticed a stone slab with a Greek inscription protruding out of the ground.

"I immediately recognized that it was something ancient," the seventh-grader said. "I studied archaeology in school with the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), so I can easily identify antiquities when I see them."

Stav reported his finding to the IAA, which was able to identify the marble slab as a burial inscription naming the grave's location and the identity of the deceased.

"The quality of the slab discovered by Stav indicates the wealthy status of the person entombed, as well as the customs and beliefs of inhabitants of Caesarea in the Byzantine period," said Peter Gendelman, a Caesarea researcher at the IAA.

The IAA awarded Stav with a certificate of appreciation and will come to his class for a special lesson addressing the discovery he made. — ISRAEL21c



*The forager with his antiquities find.*

ISRAEL ANTIQUITIES AUTHORITY VIA ISRAEL21C

## Coronavirus grounds flights

Israel's El Al Airlines will stop flying to China for two months due to the spread of the deadly coronavirus, JTA reports.

The airline announced that its flight arriving from Beijing on Jan. 30 would be the last until March 25. El Al operates three flights a week between Tel Aviv and Beijing.

Israel's national carrier joins several airlines who have halted flights to the country, including United, American, and British Airways.

In addition, Israel's Health Minister Yaakov Litzman announced that he would prohibit the entry of flights from China to Israel to prevent the spread of the virus, Israel's national broadcaster Kan reported. Litzman also said that anyone who has come from China will be required to stay in solitary confinement for 14 days.

Chinese officials say more than 360 people have died from the virus and that it has over 17,000 confirmed cases, the New York Times reported on Feb. 3.



*El Al cancels Beijing-Tel Aviv route.*

EZRA ACAYAN/GETTY IMAGES

## A book about nothing



*Comic and author Jerry Seinfeld in July 2019.*

EMMA MINTYRE/GETTY IMAGES FOR NETFLIX

According to reports, the book will show how Seinfeld's comedy has evolved since he broke into the comedy biz in the 1970s as a college student.

"Seinlanguage," from 1993, was among the top sellers that year. Seinfeld also is the author of the children's book "Halloween" from 2002.

Get ready with the "yada yada" references, Jerry Seinfeld is coming out with another book about comedy, JTA reports.

More than 25 years after he sold a million copies with "Seinlanguage," the star of the megahit "Seinfeld" and "Comedians in Cars Getting Coffee" will present the best of his stand-up material from nearly a half-century honing his craft.

Simon & Schuster said the as-yet untitled book will be out in early October.

According to reports, the book will show how Seinfeld's comedy has evolved since he broke into the comedy biz in the 1970s as a college student.

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**CORRECTION** — The name of the funeral home was omitted in "Princeton rabbi remembered as devoted friend and family man" (Jan. 14). Arrangements were made by Orland's Ewing Memorial Chapel, Ewing.



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# Our Towns

## Perspectives on the ‘oldest hatred’

Three experts on history, consequences of anti-Semitism

**Shira Vickar-Fox**  
NJJN Managing Editor

We live today in a society where the moral guard rails have come down and we have to help establish them and set them up,” said Deborah E. Lipstadt during a panel presentation on “Anti-Semitism — Past and Present” held at the Institute for Advanced Study (IAS) in Princeton on Feb. 5.

Her comment was made in the context of how to combat anti-Semitism, which she called “the oldest hatred,” and one she said she’s not sure “we can ever wipe out.” But she did have suggestions for the rapt audience of over 200 in the packed theater, including challenging hate-filled comments and exposing their “delusional quality.” She likened this strategy to being the “unwelcome guests at the



Deborah E. Lipstadt, at right, historian and author of “Anti-Semitism: Here and Now,” was one of three panelists in a program at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton. PHOTO BY ANDREA KANE/IAS

dinner party” by speaking out and educating those in proximity to the one who is goading.

This was her clarion call for all

people because, as she said, “No healthy democracy has ever harbored anti-Semitism and been a healthy democracy.”

Lipstadt is the author of several books, most recently “Anti-Semitism: Here and Now” (Penguin Random House, 2019). The two other panelists, both from the United Kingdom, were Julie Gottlieb, a professor in Modern History at The University of Sheffield, and Daniel Finkelstein, associate editor of The Times in London and a member of the House of Lords.

During her introduction, moderator Karina Urbach, a historian and visiting scholar at IAS who is originally from Germany, recounted interactions she’d had with German historians at academic conferences that she said make her “anxious.” For example, she said one colleague excused Emperor Wilhelm II’s comments from the 1920s — among them that Germany won’t have peace until “all the Jews have been slaughtered” — as so-called “reactive anti-Semitism”; another, she said, white-washed the

## Refusenik background still colors life of TV personality and political activist

**Jed Weisberger**  
NJJN Staff Writer

Political activist and Democratic strategist Julie Roginsky, the former Fox News Channel cohost who was also a contributor at CNBC and whose columns have appeared in Politico, Forbes, and The Star-Ledger, said her approach to life today owes something to her experience as the child of Soviet-Jewish dissidents.

“I was born in Moscow and raised initially by my grandparents,” said Roginsky, 46, in a phone interview with NJJN. “I didn’t even really meet my parents until we were told we could leave the Soviet Union on Feb. 18, 1980....” Her grandparents, who were denied exit visits and became Refuseniks, she said, “were forced to stay there until 1990. I was taken away from those who raised me until I was 7. After that, nothing else scares you.”

She certainly said fear did not prevent her from filing her 2017 sexual harassment lawsuit against Fox News, its former chair and CEO Roger Ailes,



Political activist Julie Roginsky, left, said her experience as a young Jewish immigrant from the Soviet Union has affected how she approaches life. PHOTO COURTESY JULIE ROGINSKY

and its copresident Bill Shine, which was settled in December of that year. “I went through that with Gretchen Carlson” — the broadcast journalist who left Fox News in 2017 and also filed a lawsuit against Ailes. “What I went through when I was young has helped me focus.”

Roginsky said life wasn’t easy after

she and her parents, Abram and Tanya, departed the Soviet Union — they left with \$90 — as the three worked their way through Vienna, Paris, London, and New York before settling in Plainsboro.

“My parents were both educated people, but in the United States, they had to take menial jobs to start,” she said.

“I was able to attend a private school, Princeton Day School, as a scholarship kid, but that didn’t stop me from being bullied and called a ‘commie.’”

She overcame the obstacles and went on to earn both her bachelor’s and master’s degrees at Boston University and was hired by EMILY’s List — a political action committee whose mission is to help elect pro-choice Democratic female candidates to office — to work on a campaign in Maine. She entered New Jersey politics for the first time in 1998, helping U.S. Rep. Frank Pallone (D-Dist. 6) defeat Republican challenger Mike Ferguson.

In 1999, Roginsky ran the Democratic coordinated campaign in New Jersey — the first woman to hold the position; in 2001, newly elected Sen. Jon Corzine (D-N.J.) appointed her as his Washington-based communications chief.

In 2003, she formed the Comprehensive Communications Group, a political consulting and public relations firm located in Hoboken that is Roginsky’s

*Continued on page 22*

guilt of William II's oldest son, a Nazi sympathizer.

"Something is happening in our society and we do not know if we will soon face a tidal wave or a tsunami," Urbach said, before posing a horrifying question to the audience: "Is anti-Semitism and a rehabilitation of Hitler's supporters now socially acceptable?"

However, the panelists' responses lacked prognostication and instead seemed like three disconnected presentations by experts in their fields.

Lipstadt's comments were primarily rooted in her newest book. She's a Modern Jewish History and Holocaust Studies professor at Emory University in Atlanta who famously won a libel case against a Holocaust denier that was turned into the 2016 film "Denial." (IAS hosted a free screening of the movie at the end of January in advance of last week's panel.)

Gottlieb spoke about the history of extremism and anti-Semitism in Britain, asserting that women are both the "victims and purveyors of hate." She said the DNA of anti-Semitism includes a "double helix of hate," which is the combination of racism and sexism. In her lengthy remarks she also spoke about the "continued interest and prominence of fascism in British society," and wondered if that

fascination is now "turning into fear and hatred."

Finkelstein, a member of Great Britain's Conservative party, expressed the unease of Jews in his country. He said he's "nervous about the rise of nationalism and populism in Europe," and that anti-Semitism from the left has had the "most immediate impact" on Jews.

However, Finkelstein said he saw a silver lining in the rise of Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn, who has called Hamas and Hezbollah his "friends" and has consorted with Holocaust deniers.

"Politically, it turned out to matter," he said, because Corbyn's behavior educated people who were previously unaware of the concept of anti-Jewish hatred. Corbyn's rhetoric — condemning racism while condoning it among his party — "undermined his leadership," according to Finkelstein, and people found it "not prime ministerial" to be fighting with a segment of the British population.

Topics during a question-and-answer session included the etymology of anti-Semitism, Jewish support of populist leaders, the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement, and whether, given the uptick in violent anti-Semitism, U.S. Jews should be packing their bags for

the safety of Israel.

To that last question Lipstadt responded, "this is not 1938," and called suggestions of Jews needing to move to Israel "short-sighted and silly." To illustrate her point she told a story about a young student at a Jewish boarding school who ran to a police officer for help on the night of Kristallnacht, but the officer said he refused to help Jewish children. "That's not today," she said.

Another audience member asked about the validity of connecting anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism. Finkelstein shared a metaphor strongly connecting the two.

"When someone throws a rock at a Jew you don't pick it up and go 'I wonder whether that was an anti-Semitic rock or an anti-Zionist one,'" he said.

In addition to anti-Jewish hatred, Finkelstein said, anti-Zionism must be fought because the existence of the

State of Israel is "an absolute necessity for the Jewish people." (Anti-Zionism is not criticism of the policies of the Israeli government, it is a prejudice against the Jewish movement for self-determination and the right of the Jewish people to their homeland in Israel, as defined by the ADL.)

Toward the end of the program, Lipstadt warned audience members not to consider their political divide in the fight against anti-Semitism, as it comes from the right and the left. "And if you only see it on one side, then what I would conclude is that you're really not interested in fighting anti-Semitism. You're interested in scoring political points." ■

A live stream of the presentation is available at [ias.edu/ideas/anti-semitism-past-present](http://ias.edu/ideas/anti-semitism-past-present).

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## NJ festival at Rutgers offers film based on 'Tevye'

A DOUBLE FEATURE of particular interest to the Jewish community is among the offerings of the Spring 2020 New Jersey Film Festival.

Taking place through Feb. 28, the festival is presented by the Rutgers Film Co-op/New Jersey Media Arts Center, in association with the Rutgers University Program in Cinema Studies.

The festival's Sunday, Feb. 16, program will begin with "Anne" (USA, 2019), a short film written and directed by Vijay Renga that offers a modern musical take on a love story inspired by Anne Frank's diary.

It will be followed by "Tevye's Daughters" (Ukraine, 2018, 120 minutes; in Russian, with subtitles). Directed by Vladimir Lert, the film tells the story of Sholem Aleichem's most famous character and the central player in "Fiddler on the Roof," Tevye the Dairyman. As he struggles to keep his family intact and placate his wife

Golde, their daughters are tempted to stray from Jewish traditions upon entering the marriage market, while growing anti-Semitism threatens their lives and homes. Legendary Russian actor Evgeniy Knyazev stars as Tevye. The film is set in authentic Ukrainian locations, and its story line hews to Sholem Aleichem's original tales.

The festival showcases new international films, American independent features, experimental and short subjects, classic revivals, and documentaries; over 40 films will have their New Jersey or Middlesex County premiere.

The programs (which are subject to change) are on select Friday, Saturday, and Sunday evenings at 7 p.m. in Voorhees Hall, No. 105, on the College Avenue campus in New Brunswick. Admission ranges from \$9 to \$14; screenings on Feb. 21 and 28 are free. Contact 848-932-8482, NJ-MAC12@gmail.com, or NJMAC@aol.com or visit njfilmfest.com.

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# Lawrenceville native takes helm of Congregation Beth Chaim

**Jed Weisberger**  
NJJN Staff Writer

**U**nder certain circumstances and conditions, Rabbi Adena Blum, the newly appointed senior rabbi of Congregation Beth Chaim in Princeton Junction, will officiate at interfaith weddings. She said her sensitivity to issues of inclusion was shaped by her family when she was

growing up.

"Not all families have two Jewish adults in the family — my father was not Jewish, and that's why I am so passionate about this," she said. "We're really focusing in on inclusion at large, trying to create a community everyone can feel at home no matter what their challenges are."

Blum will assume her new position on July 1. The Lawrenceville native has served as assistant

rabbi for Beth Chaim, the largest Reform synagogue in Mercer County, since 2014. Though Rabbi Brian Beal has served as the congregation's interim senior rabbi for the last year, Blum is effectively succeeding Rabbi Eric B. Wisnia, who retired in January 2019 after 42 years at Beth Chaim.

"It's never easy, in any synagogue, when a congregation has to replace a senior rabbi," said Beth Chaim president Ken Pogrob, a Plainsboro resident who works in financial services. "The transition was especially true for our congregation." Of Beal, Pogrob added, "We have been blessed to have his leadership, knowledge, and involvement with our temple community."

Blum is certain to continue the Wisnia legacy, as she grew up attending Har Sinai Temple — at the time the congregation was in Trenton but it has since relocated to Pennington — where David Wisnia, Eric's father, was cantor. And "then I had the experience of working with his son," she said. "Eric took me under his wing and wanted me to assume his mantle. It's amazing how things fell into place. Because I am from here, I care so much about this community and I wanted it to have success and thrive."

Pogrob said that the search process to find Wisnia's successor included surveys, town hall meetings, and speaking with as many congregants as possible. At the end of the day, "Rabbi Blum was our unanimous choice," he said. "She had been with us since 2014, identifies well with both our younger and older congregants, and fits what we need."

Since joining Beth Chaim, Blum has led the congregation's transition to the Reform movement's latest Shabbat and festival prayer book, "Mishkan T'filah." She restructured the b'nai mitzvah process to provide more engagement with families, and has also established an annual interfaith family Shabbat service to honor the non-Jewish members of the congregation who are raising Jewish families.

Blum earned a bachelor of arts degree in Near Eastern and Judaic studies and minored in religious studies at Brandeis University, graduating magna cum laude. She was ordained at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in New York, where she also received in 2014 her Master of Arts degrees in Hebrew literature and religious education.

Prior to coming to Beth Chaim, Blum — who lives with her husband, Sean, and their sons Jonah and Ari — served as the rabbinic intern at Beth Haverim Shir Shalom in Mahwah and Anshe Emeth Memorial Temple in New Brunswick. Blum is a member of the Association of Reform Jewish Educators, the Association of Reform Zionists of America, the Women's Rabbinic Network, and the Central Conference of American Rabbis. She's also a faculty member at URJ Camp Harlam, a role she plans to continue. ■

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# Remembering all of Kobe

Fallen Laker's greatness can overshadow — but should not erase — his mistakes

**Gabe Kahn**  
NJJN Editor

Somewhere hidden in my scattered possessions is an old CD, laptop, external hard drive, or some other kind of electronic record of a March 2, 2005, interview with Kobe Bryant.

It's from my former life as a sportswriter on the NBA beat, and he had been in Boston with his L.A. Lakers speaking to a gaggle of reporters minutes before tip-off of a 104-101 loss to the Celtics. Despite my never-wavering devotion to all-things Boston sports, I took my job seriously and did my best to act like a professional and divorce myself from my fandom so as to ensure unbiased coverage. But I was so stunned to see him that it took me a moment to remember to turn on my recorder.

Not that I could really blame myself



## Garden State Of Mind

for the lapse. I mean, it was Kobe Bryant!

Now the late Kobe Bryant, after the Jan. 26 tragic helicopter crash that killed him, his 13-year-old daughter, and seven other people (my sincerest apologies to their families: The other victims deserve to be more than a footnote in a famous person's

death), was for a long stretch the most famous basketball player in the world, and his overall celebrity so widespread that he need only be referred to by his first name, particularly impressive in that it's not altogether uncommon. (The chances you will ever meet someone named Elvis, Madonna, LeBron, Tupac, or Barack is remote, whereas many of us already



ROB CARR / GETTY IMAGES

know someone who goes by some spelling of Kobe.)

On the days I wasn't wearing my press fedora I confess to despising Kobe, at least the younger version who enraged his teammates and coaches alike with his selfish play and surly attitude. The brash 18-year-old who inspired opposing crowds to don replica Bryant jerseys whenever the Lakers came to town, a testament to the teenager's flashy, if not winning, plays. I didn't need any convincing, by the way. In addition to the well-known and deep-seeded animosity for all things New York Yankees, native New Englanders are taught to hate the Lakers even before they're out of the womb. How I reveled in Kobe's gloom when the Celtics beat the Lakers to win the NBA championship in 2008, and how despondent I was (fine, still am) that he won the finals' MVP and the championship at Boston's expense two years later.

Even so I couldn't help but respect  
*Continued on page 16*

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Shommer Shabbas

# How to shoot an assassin

In 'Incitement,' about the Rabin killing, Yaron Zilberman walks a tightrope in portraying Yigal Amir and 'the forces that acted upon him'

**George Robinson**  
Special to NJJN

**M**aking a fact-based historical film might look easy. The facts are there, the events are often common knowledge, and all the filmmakers have to do is provide a dramatic structure.

Yaron Zilberman, director of "Incitement," the new film about religious nationalist Yigal Amir and his 1995 assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, which officially opened in New York on Jan. 31, begs to differ.

"It's a minefield, and you don't have a map," he said in a recent phone interview. "When we made 'Incitement,' I realized that it's much harder to do than to make something up from your own imagination."

The problem, he said, is that "life doesn't follow screenplays."

Zilberman, whose two previous directorial efforts were the chamber-music drama "A Late Quartet" (2012) and the documentary "Watermarks" (2004), had never undertaken such a complex project before. He found the metaphorical minefield seeded with questions that kept nagging at him throughout the filmmaking process.

"When can you change the order of history?" he asked. "Do you have to follow the chronology completely? Does it matter when Yigal acquired his gun?"

Given the subject matter, the answers to such questions carry a weight that few directors ever face.

"This is such a sensitive topic, arguably the most traumatic event in Israeli history," Zilberman says. "What we



A scene from "Incitement," Yaron Zilberman's new film about religious nationalist Yigal Amir and his 1995 assassination of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin. COURTESY GREENWICH ENTERTAINMENT

show on screen could have an effect on the discourse in Israeli society. One step in the wrong direction and you land on a mine and it explodes."

That ominous realization has an impact on the dramatic choices he made, as well.

"If you show [Amir] as a monster, there's little to be learned from that," Zilberman explained. "If you go too far in the opposite direction, you make him too likeable. The more you suggest that he was incited to his act the more you alleviate his responsibility, but you have to show the forces that acted upon him."

As the film's title suggests, this last tightrope walk is at the center of the film.

Zilberman devised several ingenious responses to these conundrums, but in the end the answers were fundamental.

"We have to be responsible," he said. "We did lots of research, four years of research, talking to everyone, reading all the material — the court files and transcripts, the investigations by the police and the security services." His chief researcher even spoke to Amir in prison by telephone.

Of course, it's not enough to "let the facts speak for themselves," as the cliché goes. Inevitably, Zilberman and co-screenwriter Ron Leshem (author of the novel "Beaufort") had to deal with how they would depict Yigal Amir.

The film begins as the initial Oslo agreement is announced on the White House lawn and follows the events as Amir experiences them. Played by Yehuda Nahari Halevi, Amir is almost never off-camera. Yet we watch him, both metaphorically and sometimes literally, from a distance. That effect was the product of careful planning by Zilberman and his excellent cinematographer Amit Yasour.

"We decided that in every scene [Amir] will be there, [that] we will not cut into security or surveillance or television footage; we are always following him," the filmmaker said. "[Audiences] are accustomed to the [central character] being someone we like to identify with. That's not the case here. [Yasour and I] decided to film events from Amir's point of view, but never to allow for identification."

Think about the master of cinematic identification, Alfred Hitchcock. Hitchcock is constantly cutting between his protagonist and what the protagonist sees, bringing us into his mind and what aspects of him we can identify with. But Zilberman cleverly eschews the reverse-angle shot of the object of Amir's gaze. Audiences watching "Incitement" will feel that they are watching Amir at an emotional remove; they see what he is doing and what he is seeing but won't necessarily feel a kinship with him.

Zilberman explained, "The decision was to use two main shots for Amir. We see him in an over-the-shoulder tracking shot, so we see his point of view but without seeing him [react]. Or we see him in a close-up but always from the side, in an awkward camera set-up, so we see him not as a hero but as someone whose brain we're trying to get inside of. We see his point of view but not in a comfortable way."

The effectiveness of such directorial choices had to be largely carried by Halevi's performance. The actor was, Zilberman says candidly, cast because audiences would be unfamiliar with him.

"He acted in some TV shows, but he's relatively unknown," the director said. "That worked to our advantage because the audience could see him but wouldn't remember him from other projects. He could immerse himself in the role completely," with no prior associations to cloud viewers' responses.

Halevi really did immerse himself in Yigal Amir. He and Zilberman worked together for a year in preparation. The actor enveloped himself in Amir's world, whether

*Continued on page 22*

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# J-Asians Shabbat celebrated at Princeton

New campus group welcomes students of both Jewish and Asian heritage

**Naomi Hess**

Special to NJJN

**O**n a recent Friday night, approximately 180 Princeton University students ate ramen matzah ball soup, General Tso's chicken, and tofu lo mein at Shabbat dinner at the Princeton Center for Jewish Life (CJL). This was no ordinary Shabbat: This was J-Asians Shabbat.

Sakura Price '22 co-founded J-Asians in spring 2019 as a student group for students of both Jewish and Asian heritage.

"I guess I wanted to have a space on campus where I felt like I had people that totally related to my experiences, not just as a Jew or just as an Asian person, but as a Jewish Asian person," Price said.

J-Asians received funding from Co-CREATE, the CJL's incubator program that provides grants for student-led projects. J-Asians recently became recognized as a student group by the Princeton University Student Government.

Rabbi Ira Dunn, the senior Jewish educator at the CJL, supported the group as they got started.

"We really, at the very core of it, want to make sure that everyone has a place and everyone is comfortable here and can find a home here, period. I think it's one of our most central priorities," he said.

A recent study estimates that at least 12-15 percent of American Jews identify as Jews of color. However, the authors recognize that Jews of color are often undercounted. Events such as J-Asians Shabbat are meant to demonstrate the diversity present in Judaism today, on college campuses and beyond.

To plan for the Shabbat, Price and the J-Asians team worked with the CJL chef on a menu. They created posters featuring baby pictures of J-Asians members and ordered chopsticks and customized fortune cookies.

Price invited Arielle Korman, founder of the New York-based Ammud, the Jews of Color Torah Academy, as the guest of honor. Korman spoke during and after the event.



*"I guess I wanted to have a space on campus where I felt like I had people that totally related to my experiences," says Sakura Price, co-founder of J-Asians.*

PHOTO PROVIDED BY NAOMI HESS

Ben Bograd '22, another founding member of J-Asians, felt inspired by the way Korman — whose mother, Rabbi Mira Rivera, is the first Filipino-American woman to receive ordination from The Jewish Theological Seminary — sees her intersectional identity.

"When I talked to Arielle Korman ... she mentioned the fact that the way she sees herself is not a collection of percentages. She's not a fraction where 50 percent of herself is Jewish and 50 percent of herself is Asian," he said.

"She sees herself as fully Jewish and fully Asian and I thought that was a really, really great and poignant idea, like the fact that we don't need to cut ourselves in half and cut ourselves off from certain communities," Bograd continued.

Price described how rewarding it was to plan J-Asians Shabbat and get to eat her Shabbat dinner with chopsticks at the CJL.

"That's how Shabbat works at my house and I'm sure a lot of other Jewish-Asian people, their Jewish holidays are similarly structured, so it was just meaningful to see that normalized and embraced and celebrated at the CJL," she said.

Previous J-Asians events include a kosher sushi study break and a shaved ice study break. In the future, J-Asians hopes to collaborate with the other Jewish affinity groups on campus, such as J-Lats, a group for students of both Jewish and Latino backgrounds.

Price, Bograd, and the rest of Princeton J-Asians hope that events such as J-Asians Shabbat show the Princeton community that there is more than one way to be Jewish.

"I hope that these affinity Shabbats are a great way for people to see the Jewish community is a far more diverse religious community than plenty of people perceive it to be in their minds," Bograd said. ■

**Naomi Hess is a sophomore at Princeton University. This piece is part of "The View From Campus" column written by students on campus. If you would like to contribute to it, email [lily@jewishweek.org](mailto:lily@jewishweek.org) for more info.**

## The Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life

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## Survivor

*Continued from page 1*

tell his story in his own voice."

But it was more. "For a long time under the Nazi regime, my grandfather experienced a lot of horror and torture, but also loneliness because he lost his whole family," Avi said. So it was particularly meaningful for his family members to be there, "and for him to know he will always have his family, and we will always be there for him." Wisnia's wife, Hope, died in 2018.

Before the celebration, Wisnia told his family, "My grandchildren are the proof that Hitler did not succeed." That, Avi said, "was what being there as a family meant."

Wisnia, born in 1926, grew up in a well-to-do family in the Warsaw suburb of Sochaczew, and during



## Bellow, in film

Rutgers University's Allen and Joan Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life will screen the first documentary about the life of 20th-century novelist and Nobel- and Pulitzer Prize-winner Saul Bellow on Tuesday, Feb. 25, at 7 p.m. at Rutgers Cinema, 105 Joyce Kilmer Ave., Piscataway (Livingston campus).

The 85-minute film, "The Adventures of Saul Bellow," tells Bellow's story through original interviews, previously restricted footage, and visits to the places that shaped him, and will feature a post-screening discussion with filmmaker Asaf Galay and Louis Masur, Rutgers distinguished professor of American studies and history.

The free Bildner Center event is the Abram Matlofsky Memorial Program supported by the Karma Foundation. It is cosponsored by the Department of American Studies and the Americanist Seminar of the English Department.

Tickets are required for entry; visit [Bildner-Center.Rutgers.edu](http://Bildner-Center.Rutgers.edu).

*Outside the Jewish cemetery in Cantor David Wisnia's hometown of Sochaczew, Poland, are his family members Sara, Judith, and Eric Wisnia.*

the trip to Poland he and the others stopped at their former residence, 17 Staszica St., to say Kaddish. Wisnia's father, who owned an upholstery shop in Warsaw, was an opera buff; he expected his talented son to become an opera singer and, in fact, bought David a tuxedo at age 9 to wear to a live performance.

The family moved to Warsaw in 1937, and when the ghetto was formed in 1941, they were able to stay in their apartment, which fell within its boundary. Perhaps "by premonition," Wisnia said, his father sent him to the Okecie Airport in his place to clean an office. When he returned, he found his whole street had been blocked off "because they found a gun on my father" — who, Wisnia thinks, "must have been part of the underground." His father, 41, mother, 37, and 13-year-old brother had been shot and killed.

Wisnia escaped with the help of one of his father's non-Jewish workers, then moved from place to place. His luck ran out in 1942 in Nowy Dwor, a town under German control, where he was searched and, because he had no papers, was put on a train, among 1,500 people, to Auschwitz.

In the camp, Wisnia said, "my job, because I looked strong and I was strong, was to carry the dead bodies of people who had committed suicide — all they had to do was go in the ditch next to the barbed-wire fence and a guard would shoot them. I would collect them, put them in a wheelbarrow, and they would burn the bodies."

But during the second week of his internment, someone yelled out, "Wisnia sings." The Germans heard, and were interested. "I became slowly a privileged prisoner," he said. "I entertained them at their drunken parties on occasion, and I got a plush job in what was called 'the sauna,' [where] those destined to live were deloused."

Avi first visited Auschwitz with his grandfather in 2003, when he turned 21. "It was the first time I heard his whole story from beginning to end," Avi said. Before that, the family "knew these little scenes," but not the details of his survival or what happened to his fam-

ily. In Wisnia's 2015 memoir, "One Voice, Two Lives," he at last shared his full story. Avi also accompanied his grandfather to the 70th liberation commemoration.

On Wisnia's first trip back to Auschwitz, in the early 1950s, he carved his name on the bunk where he had slept for two-and-a-half years; he was sorry he was not able to see it again on this trip. "That was my home; it was where other people were murdered, and I remained alive," he said.

The trip held some surprises, one having to do with a story Avi had heard since he was young — that his grandfather had once spent three months in a penal colony because he overslept and missed a Sunday morning roll call. What amazed Avi was having the head of the archives at Auschwitz present his family with documents that described that punishment. "To have proof not only that this story happened, to have the date, to see it in black and white, was really stunning," Avi said. "It shows you the twisted attention to detail that the Germans had."

Avi also noticed a difference in Poland's Jewish landscape on this trip. During his first two visits, he said, "It seemed like the Jewish Poland that my grandfather knew was dead — successfully destroyed by the Nazis and really erased. It was devastating and sad."

But on this trip he was heartened. "We actually went to Shabbat services with a budding Jewish community in Warsaw, Beit Warszawa," Avi said. That evening David, Eric, and Avi Wisnia helped lead services. Rabbi Eric gave a sermon about what it meant to him to be back in Poland. His father led Torah study, and Avi played music while everyone sang and danced.

"To see my grandfather's face as we were doing Israeli dancing and to be in a community and praying together and singing 'Hinei Mah Tov' in the same tunes as we would in America and in Israel — to feel that solidarity was amazing and uplifting," Avi said. "It makes you feel hope that there were Jews and there was Jewish life in Poland and not everything was erased. They tried to erase everything that was, but some of it lives on." ■

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## Camp

*Continued from page 1*

But camp was never that idyllic for everyone involved. The mental health and well-being of staff and campers was often subsumed by the veneer of carefree summer living. Or as Sheira Director-Nowack, director at Camp Havaya in Pennsylvania, said in describing her days as a camper, some kids, particularly those who needed more attention, were “tolerated until they left.”

The Foundation for Jewish Camp (FJC) has just announced that it will be making 32 grants over three years of \$32,000 each to support MESH at Jewish summer camps.

“Over the last decade, the needs of our campers and staff have changed,” said Marissa Becker, senior program manager at FJC, who observed that the “demands on kids start younger and younger.”

“Away from home, they react to things differently, and they are in a different routine.” She added that “college-age staffers are going through huge transitions in their lives, so we really need qualified professionals at camp” to work with both groups.

Among the 32 selected from a pool of 90 applicants are eight camps popular with N.J. families, including Pennsylvania camps Camp Havaya, URJ Camp Harlam, and Pinemere Camp; New York’s Camp Ramah Nyack, Camp Young Judaea Sprout Lake, and Eden Village Camp; Camp Ramah in the Rockies; and URJ 6 Points Sci-Tech Academy in Massachusetts. The grants are made possible by The Marcus Foundation, Inc. of Atlanta.

The main goal of the grant is to enable day and overnight camps to hire more mental health professionals. It will also provide more staff training and implementation of self-care best practices for campers and staff alike, such as mindfulness, yoga, and journaling.

MESH is about creating an environment that supports general wellness. That could be focusing on resilience and self-advocacy, creating quiet spaces in a day full of activities, or providing the tools to understand and manage emotions.

Becker pointed out that many camps have long hired parents to give campers some extra love if they are having a hard time, chalking their needs up to symptoms of homesickness. Hiring “camp moms” is now



A grant from the Foundation for Jewish Camp will expand Eden Village’s farming program to include horticultural therapy. PHOTO COURTESY EDEN VILLAGE CAMP

falling by the wayside, according to Becker. “It probably was not the best practice,” she said.

Some, like Sprout Lake, Camp Harlam, Eden Village, Ramah in the Rockies, and Camp Havaya, are among pioneers in the MESH field; they represent one of three distinct bands of recipients. The others are those in the middle ground and those now dipping a first big toe into MESH waters.

Of the total sum awarded to each camp, \$20,000 is for a mental health professional, \$6,000 is for staff training, \$4,500 will go toward a program area, and \$1,500 may be applied toward marketing.

Each new hire will participate in what is known as a community of practice, a cohort for learning and sharing together across all of the camps.

Some camps’ MESH grants will have a particular focus — at Sprout Lake it’s on having a separate social worker designated for staff, but also includes, for example, adding certified yoga teachers to enable relaxation for both staff and campers.

Camp Havaya will add computers to a quiet room where campers, if needed, can Skype with home therapists (they used to have to bring their own computers).

“I’d rather a kid miss canoeing if it means we’ll see what’s really going on,” said Director-Nowack.

According to her, Havaya campers tend to be “real thinkers” who are also anxiety ridden, and a segment of their population also deals with the nuances of coming out, being part of the LGBTQI community, or coming from racially diverse backgrounds, which bring their own challenges to Jewish adolescents.

“Not every kid needs an extra coun-

selor,” said Director-Nowack, “but we try to make sure every kid feels heard and listened to.” The grant, she said, will help them implement that focus on mental health.

At Eden Village Camp, Beth Praver, a psychologist and director of parent engagement, said the focus there would be on enhancing staff training to focus on what she called the teen “fascination” with suicidality and self-harm. “It permeates the culture,” said Praver.

The new training will also focus on de-escalation and trauma, and they will be bringing horticultural therapy to their already existing farm and expanding their camper care team. Praver sees the grants as filling a need at Jewish camps. She pointed out that even five years ago, FJC offered plenty of training for inclusion of kids with special needs at camp.

“But there was a vacuum for kids needing mental health support,” she said. “This is really filling in that area.” ■

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# Editorial

## To forge ahead, reclaim our community's past partnership with African Americans

This year more than most, the important commemorations of Martin Luther King, Jr. Day and International Holocaust Remembrance Day on consecutive weeks — and on the heels of Black History Month in February — make for a particularly odd juxtaposition. After all, following the recent acts of violence against Jews in New Jersey and New York, mostly at the hands of African-American suspects and seemingly motivated by anti-Semitism, the once-strong relationship between our communities, which has been increasingly strained in the last several years, appears to be approaching a crisis point.

At times the rift makes us feel like it's been even longer than the 55 years since Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel and King marched together in Selma, Ala. Putting the recent spate of attacks against Jews aside for a moment, it's difficult to imagine that such

a close friendship would precede a movement that would one day single out Israel — only Israel — for condemnation in a charter that otherwise advocates for justice and racial equality, or devout people who pray for peace three times each day but continue to use a vile Yiddish word to refer to members of another race.

Admittedly, Jews and African Americans had more in common during the civil rights movement than we do today. In those days Jews, though on their way to becoming accepted members of American society, were still considered "other," often suspected of dual loyalty toward Israel and the U.S., accused of having questionable financial ethics, and bearing responsibility for the death of Jesus. The situation was far worse for members of the black communities — in the South, of course, but even above the Mason-Dixon line — but the murder of six million European Jews based solely

on their ethnicity gave us some credibility regarding the purity of our intentions regarding our unity with another downtrodden group, and the experience of having been turned away from various establishments open to most white Americans made it feel like we were indeed kindred.

For American Jews, that's largely and literally history. We have become entrenched in the technology, financial, medical, and legal sectors, prominent in the media and entertainment industries, and in spite of the scourge of Jewish poverty, we are perceived as successfully climbing in upward mobility. Rather than being thought of as "other," now Jews benefit from white privilege, a concept which would have been a ridiculous notion just a few decades ago.

In the years since the march on Selma, the acceptance of the black community in the U.S. has also, thankfully, risen, but despite the election of Barack Obama to the

highest office in the nation, the community continues to fight institutional racism and pervasive discrimination whose effects are apparent in discriminatory lending practices, public health crises, high incarceration rates, and more.

The ADL New York/New Jersey and the NAACP New Jersey State Conference recently announced a partnership to combat hatred and bigotry in the Garden State. The steps they pledged to take — providing anti-bias education to elected officials; building tolerance and understanding between the constituencies of the two organizations; and responding to all incidents of racism and anti-Semitism in the state with one voice — sound good on paper, if also familiar and, to an extent, tired.

But it may be our only path toward returning to how our communities thought about each other all those years ago: two distinct people with one shared vision for equality in the United States. ■

## 'Anti-Semitism' by any other name

**I**s it time to retire the term "anti-Semitism"?

It's not a new question, although it was given new life by historian Deborah Lipstadt and new urgency amid a months-long spike in anti-Jewish attacks in the United States and Europe. Lipstadt points out in her recent book "Antisemitism" that the hyphenated version of the word implies that there is "such a thing as a 'Semitic' people," when the word "Semitism" itself was coined to describe a group of similar languages. The term also has roots in what the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance calls "a form of pseudo-scientific racial classification that was thoroughly discredited by association with Nazi ideology."

Lipstadt doesn't counsel letting go of the term entirely. But she does away with the hyphen and spells it "antisemitism" because

such an "illogical, delusional passion" doesn't "deserve the dignity of capitalization." The IHRA also

ments, the lower-case, no-hyphen spelling hasn't become standard in the Jewish world. The American

tism," as does the Simon Wiesenthal Center.

In the Jewish media, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, the Times of Israel, the Forward, Tablet, and NJJN/The New York Jewish Week all use "anti-Semitism." In the general media, "anti-Semitism" remains the preference of the Associated Press and The New York Times. European media tend to use some variation of the lower-case spelling.

We at NJJN have weighed the pros and cons and haven't yet adopted "antisemitism," mostly for the sake of consistency and continuity. For some, the lower-case somehow demotes the word or concept itself, or represents a solution to a very minor and rarified problem. We've even heard arguments to bypass the word entirely, on the theory that a vile form of bigotry should just be called what it is: Jew hatred. ■

Lipstadt does away with the hyphen and spells it 'antisemitism' because such an 'illogical, delusional passion' doesn't deserve the dignity of capitalization.'

prefers "antisemitism," and in 2015 seems to have convinced Microsoft to adjust its auto-correct feature to allow both spellings.

Despite the logic of these argu-

Jewish Committee, World Jewish Congress, and Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust authority, have adopted "antisemitism," but the Anti-Defamation League still uses "anti-Semi-

# Trump's 'take-it-or-leave it' Mideast gambit

**Thane Rosenbaum**  
Special to NJJN



For an American president who has turned the White House into a Rose Garden-variety reality TV show, with a steady dose of "West Wing" chaos, a special counsel investigation without collusion, and a Senate impeachment trial where Joe Biden and John Bolton became quid pro quo for each other, how did Donald Trump's "deal of the century" manage to come about in virtual silence and without scandal?

Only within the frenzied Trump administration could the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, which ordinarily commands more headlines and causes more headaches, be reduced to a negligible footnote. The president moved the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem; defunded UNRWA, along with any aid destined to reward Palestinians for murdering Israelis; shut down the PLO offices in Washington, D.C.; and blessed Israel's decision to extend sovereignty over the Golan Heights and its intention to annex the Jordan Valley as well.

And all of that scarcely merited the world's attention. Indeed, the Persian Gulf states were so pleased that Trump was taking the hard line against their common enemy, Iran, and with Israel starting to resemble a strategic partner, the Palestinians had outlived their usefulness as a blemish on the democratic bona fides of the Jewish state.

In Gaza, the weekly "March of Return" protests along the border with Israel in 2018, and more sporadically in 2019, were almost never the big news of the day. Meanwhile, the Palestinian Authority was becoming an afterthought — even to its own people.

For their part, the president's "ultimate deal"-makers — senior adviser and presidential son-in-law Jared Kushner, Middle East Special Envoy Jason Greenblatt, and U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman — operated out of the spotlight and, unlike so many of all the president's other men, avoided firings, scandals, and jail sentences.

They were far more likely to

blow shofars than whistles.

And this is the reason why the Palestinians — famous for missing exponential opportunities — should seriously consider this deal. It is their only way to re-enter a conversation that no longer includes them. By not accepting Trump's team as honest brokers and choosing to skip the economic summit last summer in Bahrain that was largely for their benefit, everything that has taken place was done in their absence.

And no one seemed to miss them.

The many decades' strategy of rejectionism has failed miserably, and the world has grown tired of it. Even an unpopular American president has not rallied nations to their defense. Their moment as the world's most favorite refugees has passed them by. And even with all of the kangaroo-court resolutions condemning Israel in the United Nations, Israel has, improbably, never been more admired and sought after globally. Quietly, yes, but many countries now wish to be Israel's secret friend.

And the message to the Palestinians is this: The delegitimization game only plays well on campus, or with Roger Waters and a few talentless rock bands. No one else is buying it, or rather, choosing to boycott Israel. Israel innovates too superbly, and its people are far too industrious to be rejected.

This is what years of refusing to negotiate with Israel has gotten you. Magical thinking that the world would simply grant Palestinian statehood and impose conditions on Israel has achieved the exact opposite outcome. By waiting too long, a state in-waiting, attached with too many strings and a wholly discontinuous map, is now being foisted on you in a "take-it-or-leave it" gambit with no leverage or allies of your own.

Palestinian petulance has run its course. The Trump administration has done them a favor by speaking honestly, "Do you want a state, or do you wish to remain as perpetual refugees and terrorists? Choose. You can't be both."

A people who so quickly gather in "Days of Rage," or to stab Israelis or mow them down in cars is not ready for prime time on the world stage. Your future will depend on whether you *want* a future. And that can only be demonstrated by building infrastructure, universities, and hospitals, rather than rockets and terror tunnels.

Intifadas do not lead to peace with a neighbor who is not planning on leaving the neighborhood.

As real estate industry executives, the Trump's deal-of-the-century troika made nation-building a priority. Yes, Israel got more land to ensure its safety, but the Palestinians and Arab states received \$50 billion, which is a lot of garbanzo beans for the kind of building that will lead to true Palestinian prosperity.

The Trump administration treated the Palestinians like New Yorkers savvy enough to know when they are being offered the

insider's price on a new condominium with free amenities. The problem, however, is that Palestinians have never been swayed by money — or land, for that matter. They didn't seem to mind when Jordan occupied the West Bank and Egypt occupied Gaza. Instead, they were always fixated on dead Israeli's in a vanquished Jewish state.

Now after rejecting too many earlier peace deals that would have netted them more land and immediate sovereignty, they are going to have to choose a different road to save yet another generation from stagnation and dependency. After all, a continuous strategy that finds glory only in dead Jews is not a fulfilling national project. ■

**Thane Rosenbaum** is a novelist, essayist, law professor, and Distinguished University Professor at Touro College, where he directs the Forum on Life, Culture & Society. Follow him at [thanerosenbaum.com](http://thanerosenbaum.com).

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# I thought I understood the Shoah. A visit to Auschwitz changed that

Touring the death camp for the first time is a physical confrontation with the unfathomable

**Andrew Silow-Carroll**

Special to NJJN

**A**uschwitz overwhelms. That sounds both obvious and an understatement. The Holocaust is an overwhelming fact of any Jew's life. It shapes how we think about our Jewish past, present, and future. It informs our politics. It's the frequent backdrop to our relationship with Israel. And it is a religious challenge, perhaps beyond all others.

But on my first-ever visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau, I finally understood how physically overwhelming the site is. On Tuesday, Jan. 28, I joined a delegation from the World Jewish Congress in Poland for ceremonies marking the 75th anniversary of the liberation of the death camp by Soviet troops. Under a pale sun that barely cut the gloom, we followed the crowds through Auschwitz I, the brick barracks that have largely been converted for displays of shorn hair, eyeglasses, shoes and, maybe most haunting of all, confiscated prosthetics and crutches.

Later we trudged — often through thick Polish mud — around the perimeter of Birkenau, the vast industrial killing complex where about 90 percent of the camp's victims died — about a million people. Rows upon rows of barracks, all but a few reduced to their foundations. Miles of concrete fence posts and barbed wire. A factory city whose product was death. Multiply this by the other familiar death camps — Belzec, Sobibór, Treblinka — and the thousands of sub-camps and improvised killing fields, and you get only a terrible hint of the obscene logistical effort that went into wiping out a people.

And it is not just the vast scale that changes your understanding of the tragedy. There are small spaces too. The foundation of a gas chamber and its attached crematorium, barely bigger than a two-family home. The cubby-like wooden pallets where prisoners, always two and sometimes many more, slept head to toe. One of our guides was Menachem Rosensaft, WJC's general counsel, whose parents both survived the camp. He led us into the notorious Block 11



ANDREW SILOW-CARROLL/JW

in Auschwitz I, and showed us the closet-sized cells in its basement; in one of them, his father and four others spent five terrifying days after he was accused of plotting an escape. Why he wasn't executed is another small detail of Auschwitz, but one that saved the Rosensafts' world.

events surrounding the anniversary of the liberation. I heard the testimony of survivors and speeches by the machers, and the "lessons" they draw from the Shoah are as individual as they are. Ronald S. Lauder, president of the WJC and chairman of the Auschwitz-Birkenau Memorial Foundation, told

had a more universal message. Marian Turski, 93, said, "Don't be indifferent" — not to historical lies, nor "when any minority is discriminated against." Elza Baker, persecuted as a Roma, hoped "that everyone would stand up for democracy and human rights."

At Monday's dinner, Ukraine's president, Volodymyr Zelensky, said the lesson was that "human cruelty knows no boundaries."

Many of the children and grandchildren of survivors, meanwhile, focused on the tenacity of their parents and the lives they built after the horrors. "Hitler did not win," said Debbie Bornstein Holinstat of North Caldwell, whose father Michael Bornstein was 4 when he was liberated at Auschwitz. "Hatred did not win."

All these statements can be true, and are. The Holocaust is as vast as the numbers of people who experienced it, of their descendants, and of those who learn about it, from any distance. At times I embrace each of these messages and interpretations.

And yet. I walked almost five miles during my brief tour of Auschwitz. I read the unfathomable numbers: crematoria that could burn 8,000 corpses a day; 232,000 children sent to Auschwitz; 110,000 shoes kept forever behind a glass wall. But the scale of the losses is infinite when you factor in the unknown generations that were cut off with each death. Add to that the unspeakable example that the Nazis provided to the despots and terrorists who still feel inspired by them, and I find it hard to see beyond the darkness.

But I tried. At the visitors' entrance to Auschwitz I is an installation by architect Daniel Libeskind that features testimonies and photographs of survivors. There's a portrait of Sara Kestenbaum of Florida, who was 13 when she arrived at Auschwitz. Added to her 2017 testimony is this biographical coda: "89 years old, 3 children, 9 grandchildren, 13 great-grandchildren." Those are numbers that give me something that looks like hope. ■

**Standing at the 'hallowed ground' of Auschwitz imparts perspective all its own.**

If you've made the pilgrimage, you know what I am talking about. If you haven't, you might think I am sounding naive, having come to some sort of overdue epiphany about the Holocaust that shouldn't have escaped me as a Jewish adult. I almost agree. I've read the literature, studied the history, met survivors. I've been to the museums. But standing at what Rosensaft called the "hallowed ground" of Auschwitz imparts perspective all its own.

What to do with this understanding is the next question. I arrived in Krakow the preceding Friday to cover the

me that Auschwitz must stand as a permanent reminder of what was done to the Jewish people and how anti-Semitism can never be allowed to roar back, not on the right or left. At a dinner that night for survivors and their families, he added that the Holocaust taught the Jews "not to count on anyone else except us." At Tuesday's main ceremony at the camp, he reiterated, "If for no other reason than the fact that not a single country on earth would take in Jewish refugees when they begged for their lives, that is why the Jewish people need Israel."

Some survivors at the ceremony

**Andrew Silow-Carroll** is editor in chief of **The New York Jewish Week**, NJJN's sister publication. He served as NJJN editor for 13 years.



## Bridging the gap — computer lessons for savvy seniors

On a Tuesday afternoon, one can find Randy Fisher teaching residents at Stein Assisted Living how to complete a task of their choice in the Media Center.

"For many of the residents, it's about learning, discovery, and even companionship," Randy explains. He often uses metaphors and simplified methods for teaching new concepts. For example, when explaining the concept of web addresses, he likens it to using a street address to find the location of a store. After using this idea with one resident, Sophie, they then proceed to visit a department store website and learn about online shopping. In another instance, he shows another Stein resident, Tina, how to navigate a web browser by using the concept of finding everything you need at home — thus clicking the home-button to get there.

Some residents are even hoping to one day take their learning to new heights. "I'm here for help using my iPad. I can do my banking on it and everything, but one day I want to develop an app!" one resident, Sandy, shared during his session.

These lessons also enable Stein's residents to communicate with friends and family in a way that many of them had not imagined possible. "One of my favorite times teaching this class was when I put a resident on a video call with her grandchildren in Israel. The pure unadulterated joy on her face — it was great to be able to do that for her!" Randy recalls.

Having patient and encouraging staff is important to effective learning, but so is the technology used. The Stein Media Center is equipped with Telekin touch-screen computers that include home screens with easy access to email, web, video chat, news, and more. Large-print keyboards are also used to make the typing process easier.

Stein Assisted Living is part of The Oscar and Ella Wilf Campus for Senior Living, which is also comprised of Wilf At Home, Wilentz Senior Residence, Stein Hospice, and Wilf Transport. For more information, visit [wilfcampus.org](http://wilfcampus.org).

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## Kobe

*Continued from page 7*

him. Anyone who plays in an NBA game is among the world's most talented athletes, but Bryant set himself apart through a skill set that comes along once in a generation — his was a combination of sheer determination and a maniacal work ethic. Undeniably handsome, unusually self-aware, and whip-smart in spite of not having had a formal education beyond a high school degree — he was fluent in English, Italian, and Spanish, and reportedly learned to trash talk in several other languages to get into the heads of foreign-born players — when he wasn't wearing a uniform, Kobe's million-watt smile made him seem relatable, even though he was nothing like us.

The collective attitude toward Bryant transformed as his 20-year career wound down and he became the league's elder statesman, mentoring younger players, most notably superstars LeBron James and Dwyane Wade when the three played together in the 2008 Summer Olympics in Beijing. One couldn't help but admire his grit when, minutes after rupturing his Achilles tendon in 2013, he sank two

free throws to tie up a game up late in the fourth quarter before limping to the locker room, a year of rehab in front of him. And with God as my witness, in 2016 I found myself rooting for Kobe as he finished the game, and his legendary career, with a 60-point masterpiece. It's difficult to imagine a more incredible finale.

But here's the thing: Most of the world is acting like that's the whole story — a tale of redemption for someone drafted into a league of professionals before he could vote who evolved into a five-time champion, 18-time All Star selection, and one of the most respected players ever. It's not, however, and leaving out that one critical chapter renders the Kobe narrative nothing less than a lie of omission.

In 2003 Bryant was accused of sexual assault and false imprisonment of a 19-year-old woman at a hotel in Vail, Colo. The criminal charges were eventually dropped when the accuser decided not to testify against the young NBA champion, 24 at the time. No one will ever know if Kobe truly raped the woman as she claimed, but these facts are not disputed: When he was initially questioned about the incident, Bryant told the police three separate times that nothing of a sexual nature occurred.

Only after he was informed by the police that the woman submitted to a physical exam — we later learned that her injuries were "not consistent with consensual sex," according to the nurse who conducted the examination — did he admit that they had sexual intercourse, but insisted it was consensual. He asked police whether he could quietly pay the accuser in return for her silence, and he also fessed up to having an extramarital affair with another woman "a lot."

As a condition to dropping the criminal charges, Kobe eventually offered a public apology, saying that "Although I truly believe this encounter between us was consensual, I recognize now that she did not and does not view this incident the same way I did." He and the accuser eventually settled a civil case out of court, and Bryant's wife, Vanessa, was seen sporting a \$4 million, 8-carat diamond ring, no doubt penance for her husband's multiple indiscretions.

It feels dirty, even callous, to bring this up now before funeral arrangements for Kobe and his daughter have even been announced. Yet just as it would be wrong to lead Kobe's obituary with the allegations, it's equally inappropriate to leave those details out altogether, however uncom-

fortable it feels.

There can be no doubt that Kobe matured over time, morphing into a leader and making friends around the NBA. He seemingly learned from his early experiences and turned his focus, outside of basketball, on his family in the years since the settlement. We can also debate whether anyone guilty of such serious allegations is ever truly redeemable, but none other than King Solomon wrote in Proverbs that "A righteous man falls down seven times and gets up." He would know, as some Jewish scholars have interpreted that King David's affair with Bat-Sheva — Solomon's parents — amounted to rape, and the Book of Samuel unambiguously states that David deliberately placed his mistress' husband on the front lines of battle to ensure he would be killed.

God forgave David, but he kept the story of his grave failings in the Torah so that his people could learn from it forever. Kobe was not better than David and we are certainly not better than God, so let's remember Kobe for all that he was, even the parts we'd just as soon forget. ■

Contact Gabe Kahn via email: [gkahn@njewishnews.com](mailto:gkahn@njewishnews.com), or Twitter: @sgabekahn.



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# LifeCycle

## Obituaries

### John Brandner

John "Jack" Ashworth Brandner, 81, a longtime East Windsor resident, died Nov. 4, 2019. He was born in Paterson and later resided in New York City before moving to East Windsor, where he lived for 42 years.

Mr. Brandner held positions in editing and medical writing for the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and Academy Professional Information Service. He left behind an archive of letters and other writings.

He received a scholarship to Union College, from where he graduated with a degree in mathematics in 1960.

He was enrolled in ROTC and, following college, spent two years in the Army Reserves.

He studied and converted to Judaism through Congregation Beth Chaim of West Windsor, where he remained a member for over 40 years.

He is survived by his wife of 51 years, Susan; two daughters, Andi (Tabb) and Jacquie (Saul); a sister, Dorothy; and seven grandchildren.

Services were held Nov. 6 with arrangements by Bloomfield-Cooper Jewish Chapels, Manalapan. Memorial contributions may be made to Alzheimer's Association or Jewish Family and Children's Service of Greater Mercer County, Princeton.

### Harold Abramson

Harold I. Abramson, 82, of Lawrenceville died Jan. 3, 2020. Born in Brooklyn, he was a resident of Lawrenceville for the past 60 years.

Mr. Abramson was a chemical engineer at the American Institute of Chemical Engineers in New York City before retiring.

He was a graduate of The Cooper Union and earned a master's degree at Drexel University.

He is survived by his wife, Francine Ferman Abramson; two daughters, Sheila (Stuart) Kaufman and Sandra (Gilbert) Franc; his son, Franklin (Ellen Stamey) Abramson; nine grandchildren; and a great-granddaughter.

Services were held Jan. 7 with arrangements by Orland's Ewing Memorial Chapel, Ewing. Memorial contributions may be made to Adath Israel Congregation in Lawrenceville, Meals on Wheels, or St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

### Roberta Epstein

Roberta Epstein (Horowitz), 74, of Pennington died Jan. 7, 2020. She was born in Brooklyn.

Mrs. Epstein was a New York City schoolteacher for 30 years, mostly in the English Department at Richmond Hill High School.

She is survived by her husband of 53 years, Michael; her son, Stephen; her daughter, Caryn Hirsch; a sister, Cynthia Vandenberg; and four grandchildren.

Services were held Jan. 9 with arrangements by Orland's Ewing Memorial Chapel, Ewing.

### Herbert Shaber

Herbert H. Shaber, 85, of Springfield died Jan. 8, 2020.

A pioneer in the food truck industry, Mr. Shaber later served as manager of Pathmark in Union, where he worked for 20 years.

He is survived by his wife of 62 years, Joyce; three sons, Matt, Larry, and Marc; and six grandchildren.

Services were held Jan. 14 at BG William C. Doyle Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Wrightstown, with arrangements by Orland's Ewing Memorial Chapel, Ewing.

### Kenneth Singer

Kenneth Singer, 81, of East Windsor died Jan. 8, 2020.

Mr. Singer is survived by his wife, Carol, and his daughter, Nicole Koller.

Services were held Jan. 10 with arrangements by Orland's Ewing Memorial Chapel, Ewing.

### Judge Mark E. Litowitz

The Hon. Mark E. Litowitz, a lifelong Trenton-area resident, died Jan. 9, 2020, a day before his 91st birthday.

Judge Litowitz's legal career began at the law

firm of Montis and Litowitz. In 1964, he became an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the Trenton office of the U.S. Department of Justice. In 1967, he was appointed Judge of Worker's Compensation, eventually becoming the Chief Judge of Compensation for the State of New Jersey, a position he held for over two decades. During his tenure, he presided over and decided thousands of cases involving New Jersey workers and employers. In 1990, then-Gov. James Florio appointed him director of New Jersey's Department of Worker's Compensation. In that capacity, he oversaw the State's Worker's Compensation system, one of the largest and most complex in the nation. Following retirement from public service in the mid-1990s, he returned to private practice, becoming of-counsel to the Princeton law firm Hill, Wallack.

He attended Trenton Central High School and Pennington Prep before enrolling in Rutgers University, where he received his undergraduate and law degrees.

He was a veteran of the Korean War, where he served in the Army Counterintelligence Corps.

He received numerous honors and awards, including The Jack O'Brien Service Award recognizing his achievements during his career.

*Continued on next page*



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*Continued from previous page*

Active in the community, he served on the board of directors of Jewish Federation of Princeton Mercer Bucks and Greenwood House. In 1998, he and his wife received The State of Israel Independence Issue Award, recognizing their years of service and philanthropy.

Predeceased in 2005 by his wife, Selma (Urken), and a daughter-in-law, Karen Dubin, he is survived by his son, Robert (Mariah) of Washington, D.C.; two daughters, Debra Frank of Yardley, Pa., and Carol (Andrew) Golden of Princeton; a sister, Natalie Fulton; and eight grandchildren.

Services were held Jan. 12 with arrangements by Orland's Ewing Memorial Chapel, Ewing. Memorial contributions may be made to Greenwood House, Ewing.

## Carolyn Crawford

Carolyn E. Crawford, 70, of East Windsor died Jan. 17, 2020. Born in Brooklyn, she was a resident of East Windsor for the last 42 years.

Mrs. Crawford was a graduate of Baruch College.

Predeceased by a son, Todd, she is survived by her husband, Steven G.; a son, Jason (Heather); a daughter, Dana; a brother, Stanley Dorfman; and two grandchildren.

Services were held Jan. 19 with arrangements by Orland's Ewing Memorial Chapel, Ewing.

## Sarah Morgenstein

Sarah Morgenstein (Knauer), 89, of Plainsboro died

Jan. 18, 2020. She was raised in the Bronx and later lived in Old Bridge.

Mrs. Morgenstein and her husband Abraham ran a successful plastics manufacturing business (Arose Ornaments) together for many years. She continued running the business for 10 years after his death.

Predeceased by her husband, whom she married in 1949, she is survived by three daughters, Phyllis (Robin) Hein, Miriam Dubin, and Gail (Dennis) Alba; seven grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

Services were held Jan. 21 with arrangements by Orland's Ewing Memorial Chapel, Ewing. Memorial contributions may be made to Greenwood House in Ewing or St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

## Lenore Weiner

Lenore Weiner, 95, of Skillman died Jan. 23, 2020.

Mrs. Weiner is survived by two daughters, Felice Weiner of Princeton and Daphne Weiner of Portland, Ore.

Services were held Jan. 27 with arrangements by Orland's Ewing Memorial Chapel, Ewing.

## Harold Waldenberg

Harold Waldenberg, 99, of Whippanny died Jan. 25, 2020. Born and raised in Brooklyn, he raised his family in Great Neck, N.Y., and retired to Boca Raton, Fla. He moved to Whippanny a few years ago.

Mr. Waldenberg was vice president and senior counsel with ITT Corporation in Nutley.

He was a World War II veteran who served in the

U.S. Army Air Corps.

Predeceased by his wife, Jeanette (Starr), in 2015, he is survived by three sons, Joel of Pennington, Alan (Sadie Beth) of Pound Ridge, N.Y., and David (Nancy) of Livingston; six grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren.

Services were held Jan. 26 with arrangements by Bernheim-Apter-Kreitzman Suburban Funeral Chapel, Livingston. Memorial contributions may be made to American Jewish Committee.

## Walter Sheiman

Walter Sheiman, 97, of Manchester died Jan. 12, 2020.

Upon the inception of the United Nations in 1945, Mr. Sheiman was hired as the supply officer in the Publishing Division. His career at the organization lasted for over 37 years.

He attended Evander Childs High School in the Bronx prior to enlisting in the U.S. Army, where he served in World War II as a sergeant and a German interpreter under Gen. George S. Patton.

He enjoyed participating in many activities after retirement, such as the Dance Club, Kiwanis, Jewish War Veterans, Westernaires, and the Players Club.

Throughout his life, he enjoyed baseball, bowling, and handball, as well as ballroom dancing with his wife, Beverly, who taught line dancing classes.

Predeceased by his son, Lee, he is survived by his wife of 70 years; his daughter, Rochelle of Brick; three grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

Private services were held with arrangements by Orland's Ewing Memorial Chapel, Ewing.

# Gallery



**YIDDISH POETRY** — David Stoller, a member of Kehilat HaNahar, The Little Shul by the River in New Hope, Pa., led a class on the Treasures of Yiddish Poetry at his home on Jan. 19. Participants learned about the history of Yiddish and read, in English, poems that had originally been written in Yiddish in the early- and mid-20th century.



**STAFF SCHOLARSHIP** — Dorine Viel, a Certified Nursing Assistant at Greenwood House (GWH) in Ewing, is the 2019 recipient of The Henry and Geraldine Glazer Greenwood House Scholarship Fund administered by the Jewish Community Foundation of Greater Mercer (JCFGM). The fund, named after a married couple who had lived at the senior facility, is designated for staff members to continue their professional training. Viel, center, shown with GWH executive director Rick Goldstein and JCFGM executive director Linda Meisel, is using the funds to earn her Registered Nurse degree at Mercer County Community College.

# Agenda

## Kosher Café

Jewish Family and Children's Service of Greater Mercer County offers a Kosher Café lunch program Tuesdays-Fridays at 11:30 a.m. at Adath Israel Congregation, Lawrenceville. RSVP to Debi Henritz at [debih@jfcsonline.org](mailto:debih@jfcsonline.org) or 609-987-8100, ext. 236.

## Interfaith concert

"One Community, Many Voices — A Concert of Unity and Harmony" will be presented by local choirs, churches, mosques, and synagogues on Sunday, Feb. 23, at 4 p.m. at Adath Israel Congregation, Lawrenceville.

Tickets are \$20. Call 609-896-4977 or go to [adathisraelnj.org](http://adathisraelnj.org).

## 'Degenerate' music

A concert sponsored by Princeton Adult School will feature Gregory Feldmann, baritone, and Nathaniel Lanasa, pianist, in a celebration of "degenerate music," the work of composers whose work was banned during the Third Reich, on Sunday, Feb. 16, 2:30-5:30 p.m.

The afternoon will feature works by Jewish composers Alexander Zemlinsky, Erich Krongold, and Kurt Weil, who fled the Nazis in the 1930s; Victor Ullman and Pavel Haas, who died during the Holocaust; and Franz Schreker, whose career was destroyed by anti-Semitism.

Cost is \$70. The exact location will be emailed to attendees about a week before the event. To register, go to [princetonadultschool.org](http://princetonadultschool.org), click on "register for spring classes now," then click on "special events" and go to the bottom of the displayed screen. For more information, call 609-683-1101.

## Work/life balance

Great Minds Salon: "Work-Life Integration: Strategies For Managing Your Personal And Professional Life" will be held on Thursday, Feb. 20, at 8 p.m. at The Jewish Center, Princeton.

Cost is \$5 for non-members. Dessert will be served. Call 609-921-0100.

## Jews Clues

"Jews Clues" will be presented by Beth El Synagogue of East Windsor Seniors and Jewish Family and Children's Service of Greater Mercer County on Thursday, Feb. 20, at 1 p.m.

Author Steven Cohen will explore hidden genealogical clues such as items in one's house, Jewish holiday traditions, and food customs.

RSVP by Feb. 17 to 609-443-4454 or go to [bethel.net](http://bethel.net).

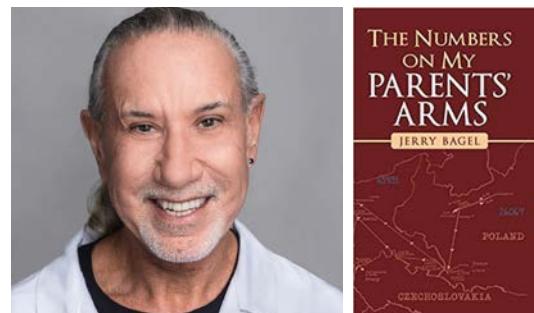
## Survivors' stories

Author Dr. Jerry Bagel will speak about his par-

ents, Sam and Helen Bagel — the subject of his book "The Numbers On My Parents' Arms" — on Sunday, Feb. 23, at 11 a.m. at Har Sinai Temple, Pennington.

Helen and Sam Bagel were Polish Jews who later came to America to be chicken farmers in East Windsor. They raised two children, one of whom is Dr. Bagel, a dermatologist.

RSVP to 609-730-8100.



## Family research

"Beginning Your Family Research" will be presented by the Mercer County Genealogy Society on Sunday, Feb. 23, at 7:30 p.m. at Beth El Synagogue of East Windsor.

Call 609-443-4454 or go to [bethel.net](http://bethel.net).

## Series on Islam

"The History and Practice of Islam" with Imam Adeyinka Muhammad Mendes will continue at The Jewish Center, Princeton, on Sundays, Feb. 23 and March 8, 4-6 p.m.

The Feb. 23 class will look at Muslim history as part of world history, including kingdoms and personalities, as well as food, architecture, clothing, and the arts.

The March 8 class will offer a brief history of Jewish-Muslim relations.

Contact [info@thejewishcenter.org](mailto:info@thejewishcenter.org) or 609-921-0100, ext. 200.

## Women in Judaism

Nosh & Knowledge: "Role of Women in Judaism" will be presented by Rabbi Adena Blum on Thursday, Feb. 27, at 12:30 p.m. at Congregation Beth Chaim, West Windsor. The program is cosponsored by Greenwood House and Jewish Family and Children's Service of Greater Mercer County.

A kosher lunch will be provided by Greenwood House; there is a requested \$5 donation per person. (Participants may also bring a kosher-style lunch.) RSVP by Feb. 21 to Beth Englezos at [bethe@jfcsone.org](mailto:bethe@jfcsone.org).

## Gift card bingo

The Women's League at Beth El Synagogue, East Windsor, will present Gift Card Bingo on Saturday, Feb. 29, at 8 p.m. (doors open at 7:30).

Gift cards will include Target, Amazon, and

Home Depot. Kosher hors d'oeuvres and desserts will be served; bring your own kosher wine.

Cost is \$25 in advance; \$30 cash at the door. RSVP by Feb. 21 at [BethEl.net](http://BethEl.net) or call 609-443-4454.

## Purim stories

A Purim Storytime will be held Thursday, March 5, at 4:45 p.m. at the Robbinsville Branch of the Mercer County Library.

Sponsored by Beth El Synagogue in East Windsor, the program for children of all ages (accompanied by an adult) will celebrate Purim with a craft, story, and snack. Pre-registration begins on Feb. 20 at [mcl.org](http://mcl.org).

## Holidays and grief

"Handling the Holidays: Programs for those Grieving the Loss of a Family Member," a series of sessions facilitated by Chaplain Beverly Rubman, will continue with "Passover: The Empty Chair," Wednesday, March 18, 10:30-11:45 a.m. at Jewish Family and Children's Service of Greater Mercer County, Princeton.

Each session costs \$10; light refreshments will be served.

RSVP to 609-987-8100, ext. 139, or [beverlyr@jfcsone.org](mailto:beverlyr@jfcsone.org).

## Family trees

"Where Do You Plant Your Tree?" will be presented by Susan Kobrin, president of the Mercer County Genealogy Society, on Sunday, March 22, at 7:30 p.m. at Beth El Synagogue of East Windsor.

Kobrin will discuss the benefits and drawbacks of creating and maintaining digital and paper family trees as well as the features of commercial family tree programs.

Call 609-443-4454 or go to [bethel.net](http://bethel.net).

## BUSINESS BRIEFS

**Princeton Symphony Orchestra (PSO)** will continue its 2019-20 chamber season on Wednesday, Feb. 12, at the Princeton University Art Museum.

At 5:30 and 8 p.m., Wang Guowei, Sun Li, and Wang Junling of Music from China perform traditional Chinese music on an erhu, pipa, and zheng, respectively, as an accompaniment to the museum's exhibit "The Eternal Feast: Banqueting in Chinese Art from the 10th to the 14th Century."

Tickets are \$25 and are available at [princetonsymphony.org](http://princetonsymphony.org).

For information on the PSO's 2019-2020 chamber concerts, go to the PSO calendar or chamber series links under "Tickets & Events" at [princetonsymphony.org](http://princetonsymphony.org).



## Let's Stay In Touch

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## Our incomplete understanding of the divine

**Yitro**

*Exodus 18:1-20:23*

**Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman**

I write this on the 75th anniversary of the liberation at Auschwitz: yes, Auschwitz, the very event that robbed so many Jews of their belief in God. It is, therefore, precisely the day to revisit the issue of God, especially in preparation for a Torah reading where the Israelites “came [to Moses] ‘lidrosh Elohim,’” literally, “to search out God,” but according to Malbim, to “investigate matters of the divine” (*iyun b’inyanei Elohim*).

Jews don’t do much “God-investigation” — unlike Christians, for whom theology (a doctrine of God) is central. Church fathers of the first few Christian centuries wrote copiously about God; the rabbis (their equivalent) concentrated on how to live.

To be sure, those fathers advocated proper behavior, and rabbis designated proper belief, but over time, we Jews have preferred arguing over human conduct, not the nature of God, to the point where many Jews wonder if they have to believe in God altogether.

The short answer is, “No.” You can be a Jew without it, obviously: millions are. And with Auschwitz always before us, it seems pretty clear that it takes a massive leap of faith to believe in an all-powerful God who intervenes to save the righteous.

But we are not the first to face that reality: our rabbis were never oblivious to the undeserved and cruel deaths that afflict the righteous just as much as anyone else. The Talmud itself warns against depending on miracles (*Kiddushin* 39b), so, failing probable miracles, it is science that has attracted Jewish attention over the years. Talmudic rabbis followed the sciences of their day; medieval rabbis were physicians as well; Jews would not have excommunicated Galileo; and today, we accept the universe as governed by inerrant laws of scientific certitude.

God does not play dice with the universe, Einstein famously proclaimed, and he was right. For the sake of such a rational universe, God has, as it were, retired from the work of massive miracle making.

For most of us, therefore, the micromanaging God who did not save the 6 million did indeed die in Auschwitz — if not before. But the God of the Jewish people, the God of all the world, was never that kind of God to start with. And the God that Judaism really does prescribe is still alive and well.

What did not die is a God demanding justice, goodness, and truth as non-negotiable ultimates, not endlessly malleable fictions. Morality is not relative. There are no conveniently alternative truths. The true, the good, and the just are absolute. The ultimate measure of them is what we call God.

Before Moses climbs Mt. Sinai to receive the Torah, he “brings the people to meet God” (19:17). It wasn’t

enough for the Israelites just to receive the commandments; they had to acknowledge God as their guarantor.

So too, Yitro insists that the judges Moses appoints must be “people of strength who fear God, truthful people who won’t take bribes.” It wasn’t enough to be just “truthful and not take bribes,” says Ibn Ezra, because judges who fear no power higher than themselves will consider themselves accountable to no authority higher than other people, and will lack the moral strength to stand up to those with power over them.

Judaism has always shied away from defining God too closely. When Moses hides in the cleft of the rock he discovers the impossibility of seeing God’s face. Maimonides assures us that whatever God is, the human mind cannot encompass it.

The point is not to know all about God, therefore. It is just to know enough about God to avoid falling into the trap of believing what the Talmud calls “*let din v’let dayan*”: that there is neither judge nor justice in the universe, so that anything goes. God did not show up at Auschwitz. God’s presence comes instead in the laws of physics, the truths of nature and of history, and the ethics that demands goodness and justice in all that we do.

**Rabbi Lawrence A. Hoffman is cofounder of Synagogue 3000 and a professor of liturgy, worship, and ritual at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.**

## Our Towns

### Refusenik

*Continued from page 4*

base of operations. Clients have included elected officials, such as New Jersey Sen. Cory Booker and the late Sen. Frank Lautenberg, as well as non-profit organizations and Fortune 500 companies. New Jersey Democratic campaigns over the last 20 years have sought her advice and she became an in-demand political commentator from the Democratic side.

In addition, since 2005 Roginsky has served on the board of directors for the Women’s Campaign School at Yale University, a nonpartisan leadership program whose aim is to increase the number of women in elected and appointed office.

“I’ve been very blessed in life and been able to build an incredible career after really coming from nothing,” she said. “Today, I want to be the one who speaks up for those who are unable. I have been quite upset, through my whole experience, with the toxic attitudes I have seen toward women in inner political circles. I feel it’s the same playbook as I saw before with television.”

Because of this, Roginsky believes many women are declining to work on New Jersey campaigns.

“In 1997, when Jim McGreevey ran unsuccessfully for governor his first time, his team’s makeup was 50-50 women and men. Today, I’m the only woman in the room because I guess I’m used to it. Most women working on political campaigns in New Jersey got fed up. The reason I survived is I kept my mouth shut for many years. Not now.”

That has brought Roginsky, this past December, to a partnership with Carlson and Diana Falzone, another Fox News alumna, in creating “Lift Our Voices,” an online initiative to put an end to non-disclosure agreements, which they believe are forced on women in sexual harassment settlements.

“Women just want to work and be appreciated for what they do,” said Roginsky, who lives with her son, Zachary, 7, in New York City. “We need to continue to speak. It’s important no other women go through what Gretchen and I and so many others out of the spotlight did. It’s a big part of my work now.” ■

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### Assassin

*Continued from page 8*

it was going to a mikvah, wearing tzitzit and a kipa, or going to shul and praying three times a day. He watched hours of footage of the real Amir and read hundreds of pages of the killer’s words.

The result rewards all that work. It would be worse than flippant to say that Halevi “becomes” Amir, but his stunning performance carries the film, from the opening images of the young man cleaning a family grave to the final image of him fading into the darkest recesses of history.

As for the impact on Amir of the various authorities who spurred him on, that is a difficult issue that the film handles deftly. A lot of screen time is spent in the debates among the ultra-right nationalist rabbinate as to whether Rabin is “an informant” or “a pursuer,” an active conspirator against Israel or just a dupe, and the discussions are presented with admirable clarity. Zilberman and Leshem depict the rabbis behind Amir as a spectrum running from fervent, even irrational true believers to cynics who will wink at the assassin’s plans without overtly endorsing them.

The screenplay is also careful to note that there were authorities who categorically and emphatically rejected any justification for murdering Rabin. As Amir’s father says, “A Jew doesn’t kill another Jew, whatever the reason.”

To its credit, “Incitement” also insists on the multifaceted nature of the anti-Oslo community; Zilberman shows the fractures and divisions — Ashkenazim vs. Mizrahim, class divisions, racism against Yemenite Jews like the Amirs — and basic differences of opinion and ideology.

But why make this film now?

“In every election in Israel they talk about the assassination,” Zilberman said. “It’s a conversation that’s alive every year, everywhere in the world. People will see the film as a cautionary tale; perhaps they will take more responsibility for their words and actions and inciting people against others. It’s a responsibility we all have.” ■

*For information about N.J. screenings, visit IncitementMovie.com.*

**George Robinson covers film and music for The New York Jewish Week, NJJN’s sister publication.**

# ExitRamp

## The siyum and the Super Bowl

**Merri Ukraincik**

NJN Contributing Writer

Years ago, we visited the Football Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio, as a stop on a road trip with our boys. The New York Giants had won the Super Bowl that season, and though I don't follow the sport, I teared up while watching the stirring museum video about the championship game.

I experienced the same wave of emotion this past New Year's Day when I attended the 13th Siyum HaShas at MetLife Stadium. The siyum celebrates the completion of the Daf Yomi (literally "daily page"), a worldwide cycle of Talmud study initiated in 1923 by Rabbi Meir Shapiro of Lublin. Marked by moving speeches, singing, and prayer, the event is a milestone for those who learned the entire Talmud — one page a day for roughly seven-and-a-half years.

You might wonder how I could correlate the experience of holy Talmud study with the earthly one of the Super Bowl, beyond the fact that the recent Siyum HaShas took place where the Giants play. The simple answer is that I was always certain I'd never be more than a spectator of both.

Like the other 90,000 people in the stadium that day, I came to celebrate the completion of the Daf Yomi cycle and was moved by the spiritual power of a communal event that connected Jews from different backgrounds around the globe. But I had no real personal experience of the Talmud,



**Close to Home**

just a brief exposure to it in a Jewish literature class I took decades ago. The volumes on our shelves at home belong to the men in the family, and curiosity has never moved me past the binding.

On the way home, I thought about how I might start the daily study of a Jewish text on my own, though I had no idea which or how. By evening, I decided it would be the Daf Yomi. By dawn, I'd downloaded an app

that transports me into a discussion of that day's page, with explanations of the basics — For example, who are the different rabbis? What periods were they debating in? — for listeners like me who haven't done this before.

Each morning after everyone else has left the house, I dive in. It's as close as I'll get for now to taking a book of Talmud off the shelf, though I admit it's not the same as sitting with my head bent over a heavy volume, my learning partner sitting across from me at the table. But it's an opportunity to enter what is for me a new holy space, and it feels like a good place to be.

Just days after the siyum at MetLife, more than 3,300 women and men gathered in Jerusalem at the first-ever women's Siyum HaShas. In a video from the evening, women — Torah scholars, leaders, and teachers — spoke about the importance of being a part of this life-changing moment in Jewish time, one that has forever altered the landscape of Talmud study. Those who finished the Daf Yomi cycle then took to the

stage to recite the moving prayer of completion, calling upon God to make the words of Torah sweet in their mouths, while I, watching on my phone, began to cry.

To be honest with myself, seven-and-a-half years is a long time. I hope God will bless me with life and health, as well as the stamina and inspiration to want to listen in on a discussion about a new page each day. Maybe I'll up my game at some point, but for now my approach is meaningful to me, and certainly better than none.

Judging by the availability of apps and discussion groups on social media, I'm not alone. Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks, in the video from the women's siyum, pointed out that it's a wonderful era in which the doors of the House of Study have been flung wide open. Men and women who never or only sporadically participated in Talmud study before are eager to join this Super Bowl of Jewish learning, to find their place in the volumes that are our legacy as a people.

I am writing this on the 11th day into the cycle, which feels like a drop in the deepest sea. But I already know this: While the siyum at MetLife revealed a longing inside me I did not know existed, the women's Siyum HaShas in Jerusalem convinced me that fulfillment is somehow within reach.

As Charlie says in "Flowers for Algernon," "There are so many doors to open. I am impatient to begin." ■

**Merri Ukraincik of Edison is a regular contributor to NJN. Follow her at merriukraincik.com.**

### Shoah-themed jazz opera, educator workshop to be presented at Rutgers

ACCLAIMED JAZZ pianist Ted Rosenthal will present "Letters to Erich: A Musical Performance and Talk" — about his jazz opera "Dear Erich," which he based on the letters his grandmother sent while trapped in Nazi Germany — on Tuesday, March 3, at 7:30 p.m. at Nicholas Music Center in New Brunswick.

Joining him in the program will be mezzo-soprano Sishel Claverie and baritone Peter Kendall Clark, who will perform numbers from Rosenthal's new work. He will discuss the backstory of the opera, which draws on more than 200 letters between Rosenthal's grandmother in Germany and his father, Erich, who was able to emigrate.

The event is free and open to the public. To RSVP, visit [BildnerCenter.Rutgers.edu](http://BildnerCenter.Rutgers.edu).

The next day, Wednesday, March 4, Rosenthal will be among those presenting "Using Personal Letters to Teach About the Holocaust," a free professional development workshop for middle and

high school teachers, also at the Nicholas Center.

It will explore the use of letters as primary documents for teaching about family separation, Holocaust history, immigration, and anti-Semitism. Others who will conduct the workshop are Debórah Dwork, the inaugural Rose Professor of Holocaust History and founding director of the Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at Clark University, and Colleen Tambuscio, the center's pedagogical consultant.

Advance registration is required; for requirements, visit [BildnerCenter.Rutgers.edu](http://BildnerCenter.Rutgers.edu).

Presented by Rutgers University's Bildner Center for the Study of Jewish Life and its Herbert and Leonard Littman Families Holocaust Resource Center, the events are cosponsored by an Arts and Culture Community Grant of the Association for Jewish Studies, the Mason Gross School of the Arts, the New Jersey Commission on Holocaust Education, and the New Brunswick Jazz Project.

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