

New York The Jewish Week/end

YOUR DOWNLOADABLE, PRINTER-READY SHABBAT READ FROM THE NEW YORK JEWISH WEEK



New York City mayoral candidate and Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams speaks after voting in Brooklyn's Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, June 22, 2021. (Michael M. Santiago/Getty Images)

Must read

Curtis Sliwa Calls Orthodox Jews a Drag on the Tax System in 2018
Video / Page 2

Michael Miller Is Retiring as New York's Jewish Peacemaker / Page 3

Two NYC Kosher Eateries Sent LGBTQ Pride Emails, They Didn't Mean To / Page 6

Editor's Desk / Page 7

Opinion / Page 8

Sabbath Week / Page 12

Musings, David Wolpe / Page 13

Books / Page 13

Events / Page 15

● NEWS

Eric Adams, Who Got Some Crucial Orthodox Support, Leads NYC Mayoral Primary

Progressive Jewish leader Brad Lander tops race for comptroller.

By Andrew Silow-Carroll

Eric Adams, a former New York City police captain who got some crucial Orthodox support, is leading the Democratic primary for mayor of New York by a significant margin.

Civil rights attorney Maya Wiley, a favorite of Jewish progressives, and former Sanitation Commissioner Kathryn Garcia, who picked up The New York Times endorsement, finished second and third in New York's first foray into ranked-choice voting. Andrew Yang, the former presidential candidate who had an early lead in the race, conceded.

In a city where registered Democrats outnumber Republicans by 7 to 1, the primaries usually determine November's winners. Under ranked-choice voting, the eventual winner must ultimately win more than 50 percent of the vote.

Adams, the Brooklyn Borough president, picked up some key endorsements from his Hasidic constituents. An African American, he pushed a law-and-order agenda that defied the "Defund the Police" left and appealed to many Jews in light of a spike in antisemitism and gun violence. He recently mused that he might one-day retire to the Golan Heights.

In the race for city comptroller, Brooklyn City Council Member Brad Lander had a strong lead with 96% of precincts reporting.

Lander has a long affiliation with the progressive group Jews For Racial & Economic Justice, whose political arm endorsed him, and had the backing of Rep. Jerry Nadler and a handful of young progressive lawmakers, including Reps. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Jamaal Bowman.

In other races:

Law professor Alvin Bragg held a 7,000-vote lead in the race for Manhattan district attorney over Brooklyn prosecutor Tali Farhadian Weinstein, with 24,000 absentee ballots to be counted.

Bragg, a former top deputy in the New York attorney general's office, would become the borough's first Black D.A. Farhadian Weinstein, a Jewish immigrant from Iran, had a huge war chest thanks to Wall Street interests and her own fortune; Bragg ran "slightly to her political left" with an emphasis on decarceration and declining to prosecute some low-level offenses.

The vote for D.A., technically a state office, was not done under ranked-choice voting.

In the race for a City Council seat in Brooklyn, Heshy Tischler, a radio host prosecuted for whipping up Orthodox anti-mask protests last fall, appears to have little chance of proceeding, earning only 4.98% of the vote. Steven Saperstein, who had run for the seat once before as a Republican, is leading the race with 31.15%.

And in District 29 in Queens, attorney Lynn Schulman has the early lead for the City Council seat. David Aron-

ov, with hopes of becoming the first Bukharian Jew to represent the district, had 13.39%.

● NEWS

Curtis Sliwa Calls Orthodox Jews a Drag on the Tax System in 2018 Video

The Guardian Angels founder and GOP nominee for mayor of New York says "all they do is make babies."

By Shira Hanau

Video from 2018 surfaced this week of Curtis Sliwa, the Republican candidate for mayor of New York City, describing Orthodox Jews as a drag on the tax system.

"We're not talking about poor, impoverished, disabled people who need help, we're talking about able-bodied men who study Torah and Talmud all day and we subsidize them," Sliwa says in the video. "And then all they do is make babies like there's no tomorrow and who's subsidizing that? We are."

"So are we the shmucks and putzes? Yes."

Sliwa's campaign did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

The video, which shows the founder of the Guardian Angels speaking at a meeting for the Reform Party, was posted originally to a Facebook page called United Hudson Valley on Oct. 25, 2018.

Sliwa, 67, won the Republican primary on Tuesday against Fernando Matteo, although with New York's overwhelmingly Democratic electorate he is unlikely to win in November.

In the video, Sliwa speaks repeatedly against the "bloc vote," referring to Orthodox Jews. He encourages the

meeting attendees to vote for Reform Party candidates to keep the “bloc vote” from continuing to control New York politics.

“They don’t vote the way normal Americans vote ... They’re being told by the rebbe or rabbi this is who you vote for,” Sliwa said.

He also spoke about political contributions from Orthodox donors.

“The politicians are rolling over [for] them. Why? ... Because they contribute, the big machers who write the checks and the checks don’t bounce,” he said.

Sliwa specifically criticized the Orthodox community for diverting tax dollars to non-public schools.

“If somebody comes in and tries to take over your community lock, stock, and barrel and break all the rules and expect the tax dollars to go to their community, and they’re taking away from you, and their kids aren’t even being serviced in the public schools, but they want all the money in the public schools to go to the yeshivas, then you got to righteously stand up and say no, it ends right here,” Sliwa said.

Sliwa was a member of the Reform Party until February, when he joined the Republican Party for his mayoral run.

He was known for founding the Guardian Angels, a volunteer patrol group, in the 1970s. The group patrolled the subways at a time when crime in the city, and particularly on the subways, was skyrocketing.

In recent years, as antisemitic attacks have increased against Jews on the streets of New York, Sliwa and the Guardian Angels have volunteered to patrol Jewish neighborhoods where attacks have occurred. The Guardian Angels were a prominent presence at the January 2020 No Hate, No Fear march against antisemitism in New York City.

Sliwa also appeared at a news conference in the Riverdale section of the Bronx in April to protest a series of attacks on synagogues there.

In the 2018 speech, Sliwa took issue with the idea that his own words might be construed as antisemitic.

“The moment you bring this to somebody’s attention, you’re called an antisemite,” he said. “You’re not an-

tisemites, you’re trying to preserve your community.”

Sliwa also says in the video that his two youngest sons are Jewish.

● NEWS

Michael Miller Is Retiring as New York’s Jewish Peacemaker. He May Be the Last of His Kind.

The head of the Jewish Community Relations Council presented a unified voice for an increasingly fractious people.

By Gary Rosenblatt

Is it still worth striving for a united Jewish community?

Once-bedrock issues like promoting democratic values and voting rights are up for debate. Generations disagree on how, and even whether, to support the state of Israel. The blue and red divide has cleaved a mostly Orthodox minority from a mostly liberal Jewish majority.

Even from within the organized Jewish community, the very notion of a large, successful consensus-based organization to represent its interests seems outdated.

Can our toxic culture and frayed relationships be repaired?

No one has thought more about these issues than Michael Miller, who has led the Jewish Community Relations Council of New York as executive vice president and CEO for more than 36 years. In that time, he was committed to forming and supporting a broad agenda of communal priorities.

Now, as he prepares to step down and take the title of CEO emeritus on July 1, he remains committed to a sense of common Jewish purpose, despite the obvious divisions.

“The very name and mission of this organization — the Jewish Community Relations Council — is about trying to bring people together to communicate with each other even if they disagree, fundamentally, with each other,” he said during an interview last week.

Miller, 72, is being honored Wednesday evening at a JCRC Virtual Gala. He will be succeeded by Gideon Taylor, 56, a JCRC executive board member who has led the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (best known as the Claims Conference) both professionally and as a lay leader.

The JCRC seeks to promote and protect the Jewish community of New York by working closely with political, ethnic and religious leaders. It has a long history of hosting goodwill tours of Israel for politicians and others in a range of fields, and sponsoring the annual Celebrate Israel Parade, the largest parade of its kind.

During Miller’s tenure, he and the JCRC have weathered the storms of antisemitism from outside the community — most notably the Crown Heights riots of 1991 — and political, religious and social tensions from within.

Most recently, the non-profit’s focus has been on the COVID-19 pandemic and resulting economic hardships as well as the worrisome spike in anti-Jewish attacks and efforts to delegitimize Israel.

In recent days the city announced a grant to protect houses of worship that will provide, through JCRC, an estimated \$300,000 to \$400,000 for synagogues in the wake of recent attacks.

Miller said that “the degree of hatred directed at our community” of late is deeply disturbing, as is the level of “polarization and demonization” among Jews themselves taking place here and in Israel.

The primary way to combat those trends, he believes, is to foster and strengthen interpersonal relationships among Jews as well as with a wide range of leaders, from top government officials to neighborhood activists. And although Miller has been a strong and articulate advocate for Jewish causes in public settings, much of his most effective work has been done behind the scenes, as he prefers.

Miller learned that power of persuasion at home. His fa-

ther, the late Rabbi Israel Miller, was a consummate religious and lay leader of his generation. In addition to his post as rabbi of an Orthodox congregation in the Bronx, he served as vice president of Yeshiva University, was president of the Claims Conference, and led a host of national rabbinic and lay Jewish organizations, including the JCRC, which he helped found.

“The Jewish world was a constant topic at our Shabbat table, and many of its leaders, including top Israeli officials, joined us,” Miller told me. “My Dad had a tremendous impact on me,” he said, noting, “I was always interested in going into Jewish organizational life.”

He followed in his father’s footsteps in receiving rabbinic ordination at Yeshiva University, serving as a U.S. Army chaplain (at Fort Knox in Kentucky as the only rabbi among 40,000 soldiers) and taking a pulpit (for six years in Springfield, Mass.).

In 1984 he was hired by Malcolm Hoenlein, the founding executive of New York’s JCRC, and succeeded him when Hoenlein was tapped to lead the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations two years later.

Shortly before he took the post, Miller made a solo trip to the Soviet Union to meet with refuseniks and bring them encouragement, along with prayer books and other religious items he smuggled in illegally. He knew he was being followed by KGB agents during his two weeks in the USSR, and he says he has never experienced loneliness like he did then.

“The experience was very powerful,” he recalled, and helped deepen his conviction to make a career of serving the Jewish community.

Several of the people I spoke to this week have worked closely with Miller, from outside as well as inside the Jewish community. They asked not to be identified due to the sensitivity of their work. Each noted the respect he is given, from Albany to the boroughs. One lay leader cited his “integrity above all, but also his modesty” in a position of authority, his willingness and ability to talk to anyone and everyone, and his deep devotion to the Jewish people.

“Michael has had a remarkable ability to achieve con-

sensus through his leadership,” one observer said, primarily through close relationships, developed over the years, with top government officials and a wide range of civic, business and faith leaders.

No doubt his detractors would agree with that description; their key complaints underscore the seemingly impossible high wire act of achieving communal consensus.

“The fact that Michael is a peacemaker is, to his critics, a weakness,” one lay leader noted. “People want more clarity today. To those on the right, he’s wishy-washy, and to those on the left, he’s conservative.”

A prime example of a JCRC dilemma concerns its policies regarding the annual Celebrate Israel parade, which has long been both a major source of pride and a constant headache to the organization. It often attracts major press and big crowds. But tensions within the community over Israel play out in terms of which groups are allowed to march and which — particularly progressive ones — are not.

A colleague observed: “Michael may well be more popular outside of the Jewish community than within it. He is a consensus human being in temperament and philosophy, and I’m not sure consensus is tenable at this time.”

Indeed, at a moment when New York will have a new mayor and the fragile Israeli government is seeking to enhance the state’s image amidst an increasingly vocal chorus of critics, the role of protecting and projecting the Jewish community’s interests is vital.

Some within the JCRC question — though quietly — whether its mission of representing the majority of New York Jews and achieving consensus within the community is possible at a time when demographic trends point to a deeper divide.

The recent Pew study showed that among younger Jews, there are two opposing trends: One is a move to the right politically and religiously among the growing Orthodox community. The other is an increase among progressives who have little affinity with the organized Jewish community or its interests.

The divisions are multiplying. Criticism of Israel by progressive Democrats appears to have grown sharper and more bold in the wake of the recent Hamas-Israel con-

flict. Upstart local organizations like The Jewish Vote, a project of Jews for Racial and Economic Justice, have endorsed some of these progressive candidates.

Last year, Matt Nosanchuk, President Obama’s former Jewish liaison, helped form New York Jewish Agenda, in order to amplify liberal voices for both social justice and a “democratic vision of Israel.”

And it is not just pressure from the left: Haredi Orthodox groups tend to go their own way in protecting the interests of their communities in Williamsburg, Borough Park, Crown Heights and other neighborhoods.

The nearly 50 groups that make up the JCRC tend to reflect the segment of the Jewish population most engaged in communal concerns. They skew older and more traditional, religiously and civically, but how representative are they of the larger Jewish community?

JCRC leaders are well aware of the problem, and acknowledge the challenge. Some think it may be time for the group to reinvent itself to reflect the current demographics, and seek to engage even those with no affiliation by offering them a seat at the table.

Michael Miller notes that while Jewish organizations like the JCRC have been in place for many years, “it doesn’t mean that they’re permanent fixtures.” He recognizes the need to engage younger people, pointing out that while rallies and demonstrations were effective in the days of the Soviet Jewry movement, the Jewish world must find new ways to speak out that fit the times.

“There are no simple solutions, no panacea here,” he told me. But he expressed faith in new leaders, in addition to his successor, who will “rise up from the ranks” and give voice to the calls for justice that have echoed since the days of the Bible.

Gary Rosenblatt was editor and publisher of *The Jewish Week* from 1993 to 2019. Follow him at garyrosenblatt.substack.com

Subscribe to The Jewish Week newsletters

Free to your inbox – sign up at:

<https://jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/signup/>

● NEWS

Two NYC Kosher Eateries Sent LGBTQ Pride Emails. They Didn't Mean To.

Kasbah's is "looking into it"; Mendy's in Crown Heights apologized to its customers.

By Shira Hanau

When Rabbi Mike Moskowitz got the Pride email from Kasbah BBQ & Deli, a kosher restaurant on the Upper West Side, he immediately went to Facebook to offer his feedback.

"Very impressed!" wrote Moskowitz, a longtime advocate for LGBTQ inclusion in Orthodox communities. He tagged the restaurant and shared the rainbow-colored image that touted "diversity in all its many flavors," along with a 10% discount code.

But not so fast: The emails offering discounts to those who support the LGBTQ community were sent out in the name of two kosher restaurants in the city apparently without the owners' knowledge. Kasbah's is "looking into it"; Mendy's, a kosher deli in Crown Heights, apologized to its customers.

While acceptance of LGBTQ Jews has grown within some Modern Orthodox communities in recent years, that is far from the norm in most Orthodox communities, which largely view the biblical prohibition on same-sex relations as binding. Pride Month, celebrated annually in June, is not widely acknowledged in most Orthodox spaces.

Mendy's sent a formal retraction and apology to customers just hours after its email went out, blaming the incident on a marketing company.

"Mendy's would like to apologize for an email that went out this morning that you may have found offensive," its retraction email said. "We work with a non-Jewish

company on marketing and promotions and, as the result of a miscommunication, the wrong campaign was launched on our behalf. We are now working with them in order to educate them so that they can better-serve the needs of our community going forward."

The email was news to Kasbah Deli, too. "This is our old logo, something here is wrong and we are looking in to it," Kasbah commented.

Both Mendy's and Deli Kasbah send promotions through a service offered by 9Fold, a company that operates digital services for restaurants.

Reached by phone, an employee of Mendy's said the discount code (15% off with code TOGETHER) had been sent out "without talking to the owner." The employee declined to give his name or comment further.

Deli Kasbah's email offered a 10% discount code. A representative of the restaurant said the manager was out of town and could not comment about the email.

But the restaurant's Facebook account responded quickly to the post from Moskowitz, who is currently a scholar-in-residence at Congregation Beit Simchat Torah, an LGBTQ synagogue in Manhattan.

"We don't know where was this sent from we are looking in to it our self's as well," it wrote.

"Thank you and to be clear, we are very supportive of it and hope that you do not apologize for celebrating people," Moskowitz answered. "If I can be supportive in any way, please PM me."

The Jewish Week welcomes letters to the editor responding to our stories. **Letters should be emailed with the writer's name and address. Please keep letters to 300 words or less.** The Jewish Week reserves the right to edit letters for length and clarity. Send letters to editor@jewishweek.org.

● EDITOR'S DESK

What I Will Miss About the Pandemic (Kosher Edition)

I stopped wondering what I was missing out on and learned to appreciate what I can actually have.

By Andrew Silow-Carroll

Stephen Colbert's late-night talk show returned before a live studio audience last week, 15 months after moving first to what looked like his basement and later to a closet-sized studio in Times Square.

I sort of liked the pandemic version of what he called "A Late Show," whose only audience appeared to be his wife Evie and a camera operator. Somehow the laughter of just two people feels (to me, anyway, watching on YouTube) more genuine and well-earned than the guffaws and cheers of a live audience. The quarantine version of Colbert's show felt warm and intimate. Like Evie, my wife was my only audience for the last year and a half, and happily we never got sick of each other, and if possible grew even closer. And when at times Colbert would look frustrated with the format it was just validation of what we were all feeling in our homes.

I wouldn't have wished this awful plague on my worst enemy. The death toll was obscene, doubly so when you consider all the ways a competent government could have handled it from the start. For so many people – those raising school-age kids, caring for an elderly or disabled loved one, stuck in dangerous or abusive households – the pandemic was a nightmare.

But I'd be lying if I said I hadn't learned or grown as the result of it. In fact, I will miss some of the claustrophobic feeling of the pandemic. The restrictions imposed false boundaries on my choices, social circles, leisure time and activities. Within them I was forced to improvise, adapt, change.

In that sense, COVID restrictions reminded me of the artificial (and in my case voluntary) limitations that come with Jewish religious observance. Keeping kosher, for example, is a day-long, every day exercise in forced limitations: You can eat this but not that. As Rabbi Ruth H. Sohn once put it, "The laws of kashrut offer a Jewish spiritual discipline that is rooted in the concrete choices and details of daily life — to be practiced in an area that seems most 'mundane.'"

Keeping kosher tames the "Paradox of Choice," psychologist Barry Schwartz's term for how an overabundance of choice is increasing our levels of anxiety and depression and feelings of social inadequacy. We are all Robin Williams in "Moscow on the Hudson," fainting in the coffee aisle. Ten years after first identifying the syndrome, Schwartz suggested things are only getting worse: Social media has increased the average person's fear that "[n]obody's good enough and you're always worried you're missing out."

The kosher laws create their own anxiety, but they also limit my choices in a good way. The boundaries in that sense are liberating – I stop wondering what I am missing out on and learn to appreciate what I can actually have.

Shabbat does this with time. On Friday nights I find myself entering a vestibule into a different dimension, shutting the door on the cares and shmutz of the week before, and hunkering within the day's limitations until another door opens on Saturday night. Inside what Heschel calls the "cathedral" of Shabbat I am forced to find, and appreciate, different ways to use my time.

Of course, Shabbat only lasts 25 hours. I wouldn't want to live forever inside a cathedral, and like many I am relieved when it is over. The pandemic often felt like 4:00 p.m. on a Saturday afternoon in June, when you've read and napped and eaten all you possibly can and can't believe there are still five hours to go. Unlike with Shabbat, we don't know when the pandemic will end.

That led the philosopher Patrick Levy to compare the pandemic to the torment of insomnia: "We know we are powerless to hasten the end of our waiting but feel pressure to be productive," he writes. "We should enjoy this extra time we have on our hands, either spending it with our loved ones or taking the chance to improve ourselves. Needless to say, for many such pressure is oppressive."

Now that the end is in sight, however, I can look back on the pandemic as a sort of sabbatical — “the pause between the notes,” in the musical metaphor used by Rabbi Debbie Young-Somers to describe Shabbat.

“There will be literature of nostalgia for the lockdown, when the world was cleaved into categories of the sacred (or healthy) and profane (or dangerous).”

A common critique of religious rituals of abnegation is that they are a retreat from the cares of the world — that we fetishize our self-denial while turning our backs on the pleasures, and challenges, of being fully human. I get that. In lockdown I was all about my own ego: my space, my time, my anxieties. My home became a fortress and my mask became my armor, not just keeping me inside but keeping the world out. To some degree I’ve lost the habit of going out into the world, and feel I could happily cocoon myself long after the pandemic is a memory.

No doubt I will get used to the world very quickly, and I’ve already started: museum trips, restaurants, in-person Shabbat dinners. But I am willing to bet there will be literature of nostalgia for the lockdown, when the world was cleaved into categories of the sacred (or healthy) and profane (or dangerous). When the things we couldn’t do made us appreciate the things we could. When thrown back on our own devices (sometimes all too literally) we figured out new ways of being ourselves.

Andrew Silow-Carroll (@SilowCarroll) is the editor in chief of *The Jewish Week*.

From Midtown to Mideast – we cover your world. Find more news, opinion, arts and events on [thejewishweek.com](https://www.thejewishweek.com)

● OPINION

The New York Primaries and the Jewish Left: Five Takeaways

Reports of the electoral irrelevance of progressives were greatly exaggerated.

By Mik Moore

After several years of big wins for insurgent progressive Democrats in New York, this week’s municipal primary was regarded by some as a test of their strength, especially when a surge in shootings and homicides has provided fodder for attacks on their criminal-justice policies by Republicans and “law and order” Democrats.

Because New York is basically a one-party town, the primary provides a window into some of the internal debates among Democrats here and nationwide.

So when former NYPD captain and current Brooklyn Borough President Eric Adams emerged as the frontrunner for mayor after Tuesday’s first-ever ranked-choice voting (RCV) ballot, a narrative emerged that the left, feeling energized after last year’s George Floyd protests, had seen a reversal of fortune.

Let’s take a look at the reality, in five takeaways:

THE LEFT IS NOT DEAD.

Reports of the electoral irrelevance of the left in New York were greatly exaggerated. Yes, it’s true that the two candidates embraced by most of the left in the mayor’s race fizzled out (City Comptroller Scott Stringer and non-profit executive Dianne Morales), but progressives rallied around civil rights attorney Maya Wiley. She came in second and has an outside chance of beating Adams.

In many other races, progressive candidates won or currently lead. The two other citywide offices, public advocate and comptroller, will be filled by, respectively,

Jumaane Williams and, if his lead holds through several rounds of instant runoff voting, Brooklyn City Councilmember Brad Lander.

Progressive candidates are leading the heavily contested races for Manhattan and Brooklyn borough presidents. Alvin Bragg, one of four progressive candidates running for Manhattan district attorney, overcame a huge financial disadvantage to beat out the more centrist, establishment candidate Tali Farhadian Weinstein. Around half of the new City Council will be made up of progressive-to-liberal members, with a number of true AOC-style superstars joining the Council.

Oh, and a democratic socialist beat an centrist Democrat in the Buffalo mayoral primary. All in all, progressive organizations and unions in the Working Families Party and Democratic Socialists of America orbit are feeling pretty good today.

THE DEMOCRATIC MACHINES AREN'T DEAD EITHER.

With Republicans largely irrelevant in a city that registers overwhelmingly Democratic, the big fights are between independent progressive Democrats and machine-driven, real estate/Wall Street/NYPD aligned Democrats.

On balance, independent progressive Democrats continue to get stronger, but still have a way to go. Adams's campaign shows that Democratic machines can still deliver, particularly when they are working closely with powerful monied interests. Beyond the mayoral race, Democratic machine candidates — often backed by millions in outside expenditures — won handily over several widely endorsed independent challengers.

Assuming things don't change after all the votes are tallied and that both Adams and Lander win, the race for City Council speaker will be particularly critical. If progressives can elect one of their own as speaker, it means Adams would have to contend with a progressive public advocate, comptroller and speaker, a somewhat progressive Democratic legislative majority in Albany, and, potentially, a governor not named Cuomo in a couple of years.

Yet the Democratic machines are traditionally major players in the race for speaker, as they pressure the members of their borough delegations to vote as a bloc. Powerful committee chairmanships are often traded for support.

In the year ahead, the big intra-Democratic fights to watch in New York will be for City Council speaker and governor.

THE TIMES ... AND THE TIMES.

The New York Times may have been the single most influential player in this year's primary (yes, even more than Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, whose endorsement was coveted by progressives). Without the Times's endorsement, Bragg, Lander and mayoral contender Kathryn Garcia would have struggled to do as well as they did.

Public safety is a big issue for voters. But this primary showed that it isn't the only issue, and it's clear that anti-carceral candidates can still do very well in this environment. That said, without some improvements to public safety, it will likely not stay that way for long.

THE JEWISH VOTE STILL MATTERS.

Jewish voters were a key part of several successful coalitions. Adams worked hard to build support from Orthodox Jews and outer borough Jewish homeowners. Lander and Bragg were buoyed by more liberal Jewish voters in Manhattan and brownstone Brooklyn.

The Jewish Vote, a progressive group affiliated with Jews for Racial and Economic Justice and the Working Families Party (and on whose steering committee I serve), endorsed and campaigned for dozens of progressive candidates, helping to elect rising stars like Sandy Nurse, Shahana Hanif and Tiffany Cabán.

“On balance, independent progressive Democrats continue to get stronger, but still have a way to go.”

Lander and Lincoln Restler, Jewish candidates leading their races for comptroller and city council, respectively, are poised to be important standardbearers for progressive Jewish New Yorkers while maintaining strong relationships with Hasidic communities.

RCV WAS A MIXED BAG FOR VOTERS.

This year saw the first citywide election to use ranked-choice voting, which allowed voters to rank, in order of preference, up to five candidates for each office (except for district attorney, which is technically a county office and thus governed by state election law).

It's too early to assess the impact of ranked-choice voting. My guess is candidates and voters will get used to it, and come to appreciate it, in time. We saw a small number of races where candidates cross endorsed rivals and even campaigned together. That said, despite my overall excitement about RCV, I think it can discourage consolidation around a single candidate. Having progressives divided among three candidates probably hurt all three of them because none of them could get the attention they needed.

It was also very difficult to get voters to care about second-choice endorsements, and almost no one had the energy or inclination to actively campaign for two or more candidates for the same office.

Finally, while in theory voters will rank ideologically similar candidates, in reality second and third choices are much more unpredictable. We'll know a lot more when all the votes are counted in a few weeks.

***Mik Moore** is the CEO of Moore+Associates, a creative agency based in New York City that works with political campaigns and non-profit organizations. He is the co-founder of Schlep Labs, a Jewish Super PAC, serves on the steering committee of The Jewish Vote and on the boards of several Jewish non-profits.*

● OPINION

Three Things to Take with Us as We Leave the Pandemic Behind

A collective trauma could make us a bit wiser, a bit stronger and changed for the better.

By Rabbi Elliot Cosgrove

For the first time, in a very long time, there is hope in the air.

Restrictions are lifting, masks are coming off and people are returning to synagogue. Kids are leaving for summer

camp, and the vaccines debates are no longer about availability, but whether enough people will avail themselves to them.

To be sure, there is no victory lap to be had. 600,000 people have died in our country, hot spots remain around the globe, and the bottom could drop out at any moment. But there is hope in the air and talk of a return to normal.

Theologically speaking, I do not believe there is any providential purpose to the pandemic; as the ailing Rabbi Hiyya said to Rabbi Yohanan in the Talmud, "I welcome neither the suffering nor its reward." And yet individually and collectively, we have adjusted, we have adapted, and we have confronted our mortality.

There has been something deeply humanizing about this pandemic — we all put on our sweatpants one leg at a time. We have learned that not every meeting needs to be in person, that going for a walk with a friend can be better, cheaper and healthier than a lunch, and that our children can dance on Tik-Tok with a freedom and rhythm that their parents can only dream of.

But beyond the externals — the puppies and Pelotons purchased — are there more profound and enduring take-aways? Is there anything from this experience that we want to bring with us on our journey forward? I can identify three baskets, three interconnected categories to consider: appreciation, attention and intention.

FIRST: APPRECIATION.

Ideally, it shouldn't take a pandemic to recognize the precariousness of existence and appreciate the blessings of our lives. To be healthy, to have a roof over our head, to have the sun rise and set every day. This was the first time in my life, at least since the gas lines of '79, that I actually thought about scarcity.

To have dinner with my children every night — something that I hope will pay dividends for the rest of my life. Before COVID I didn't call my parents every day — I do so now. For many, COVID has brought families closer — conversations about mortality, kids parenting parents, doing shopping for them, setting up their IT needs, scolding them for going out when they should know better.

This pandemic has prompted us to consider our family outside our biological family — whom we choose to be

in our bubbles. We have been reminded of the importance of community, both because we have missed it desperately and because it has been our lifeline when done virtually.

As a congregational rabbi, I am grateful that this pandemic has democratized the b'nai mitzvah experience. What a discovery it has been to realize that one's Jewish identity is not contingent on the extravagance of the celebration. It is not just that we appreciate life more now that we did before. It is that we are appreciative of that which matters more than we did before. A values clarification that I hope will endure long into the future.

SECOND: ATTENTION.

All of us, in ways we may not have done before, are paying attention to the cracks of our society. If I ever heard the term "essential worker" prior to the pandemic I cannot recall. A pandemic that has prompted millions of women to drop out of the work force should prompt us to sit up and ask ourselves about our societal obligation to provide ample childcare. A pandemic that has shone a spotlight on educational disparities should make it obvious that infrastructure is not just about roads and bridges but about Wi-Fi access and virtual education. What about health care? Remember those photographs of hospital nurses wearing garbage bags for lack of proper protective wear? How is it that this pandemic caught us so off-guard?

This pandemic has brought into full relief uncomfortable truths that both preceded the pandemic and extend far beyond the pandemic. We now know that what happens in China does not stay in China. It is true of a pandemic, climate change, immigration and a whole lot of other global forces that neither know nor care about borders and boundaries. This pandemic has taught us how our actions, be it wearing a mask or getting a vaccine, matter both for ourselves and our collective well-being. These truths existed before COVID but we are paying attention in ways we had not been before, and we need to keep paying attention long after this moment.

THIRD AND FINALLY: INTENTION.

Now that we know, more than ever, that we cannot control the world in which we live, we can nevertheless seek to control those choices within our sphere of influence. I recently went for a walk with a friend who shared with

me that this pandemic has prompted her to reflect more deeply on the career she is choosing, the relationship she is building, and the Jewish life to which she aspires to be living.

"What a discovery it has been to realize that one's Jewish identity is not contingent on the extravagance of the celebration."

Maybe because we realize that life is precious, maybe because we are all coming out of our bubbles, folks are pressing a soft reset on their lives. Institutions are rethinking work-life balance and people are rethinking lifestyle, geography, career and otherwise. A collective and liberating declaration of "Who wrote the rules?" as received assumptions are being questioned before jumping back onto the hamster wheel of life. In work, in family and in community, now is the time to take steps to live with increased intention — in a manner that reflects the active effort to make our ideals a reality.

I hope that this pandemic will pass soon. I look forward to the day when a great grandchild of mine calls me up for an interview because her social studies assignment is to speak to someone who lived during the time of the "Great COVID Pandemic." That day is still a ways away. Perhaps the best we can do right now is to emerge from this pandemic a bit wiser, a bit stronger and changed for the better.

Most importantly, we can resolve to go forward with a greater appreciation of our blessings, greater attention to our world in need of repair, and a heightened commitment to live intentionally — filling our days with purpose, meaning and impact.

Elliot Cosgrove is the rabbi of Park Avenue Synagogue, Manhattan.

CANDLELIGHTING, READINGS:

Tammuz 15, 5781 | Friday, June 25, 2021

- **Light candles at:** 8:13 p.m.

Tammuz 16, 5781 | Saturday, June 26, 2021

- **Torah reading:** Balak, Numbers 22:2–25:9
- **Haftarah:** Micah 5:6–6:8
- **Shabbat ends:** 9:22 p.m.

● **SABBATH WEEK / PARSHAT BALAK**

What's the Opposite of a Role Model?

Sometimes we learn lessons from those who act exactly as we shouldn't.

By Steven Genack

Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin writes that the names of the weekly Torah portions, like the names of people, speak to the heart of the portions' message. So why are two parshiot in the Torah — last week's and this week's — named Korach and Balak?

Korach is the rebel who challenged Moses' leadership. Based on the idea that we know who we are by what we are not, Korach serves as the primary example of what not to be in life. By giving him a portion in the Torah, we are shown that those who are embroiled in the traits of kinah, taavah and kavod — jealousy, physical desires and pursuit of honor — are literally "taken from this world," swallowed by the earth. The message is clear: Adopt an opposite lifestyle of this person.

But what's the message of naming a portion after Balak, a king of Moab intent on cursing the Jewish people? On the one hand, he persisted in trying to realize a curse against Israel. On the other, Ruth will become a descendant of his, which the Talmud teaches is a reward for Balak's having offered sacrifices to God, though he lacked any intent. How are we to identify Balak?

I believe the answer is that Balak is another person whose example we should use for how not to act. Balak missed a fundamental point. He hired the seer Bilam to curse Israel because he believed the Jewish military victories came by way of sorcery. This was a fundamental error. A king must be a student of history and internalize examples of the past.

Another portion named after a person, Yitro, begins "Vayishma Yitro" — the father-in-law of Moses "heard" all that God had done for Moses. Balak begins "Vayar Balak" — Balak "saw" all that Israel had done in defeat-

ing the Amorites. There's a key difference between hearing and seeing. Hearing is indicative of pondering and internalizing, while seeing indicates a superficial glance without probing to the depth of the matter. Yitro heard and internalized God's miracles, while Balak glanced at them and failed to realize that Israel's conquests were not rooted in sorcery but in the Almighty.

In Mishnah, hearing is worth much more than seeing. It's only if you cause deafness to another that you are required to compensate them for their whole being, a penalty that doesn't apply to any of the other senses. Balak failed to "hear," instead relying upon his periphery vision.

Balak also failed to hear the sound of his own name. Balak is known as Balak ben Tzipor. We are told that "Tzipor" hints at his ability to perform magic through a certain bird, but it has another possible meaning. It can relate to the sacrifice of birds in the purification ritual of the metzora: Birds are made a sacrifice, says Rashi, because their chatter sounds like loshon hara, or careless, hurtful talk. Balak should have chattered less and deliberated more with his senses to arrive at clearer conclusions. Here we see a name as destiny, and a person who wastes his chance to fulfill it.

On the other hand, the namesake of next week's chapter, Pinchas, has a name that contradicts his mission. If you split up his name into two words, it spells "pen chas" — "maybe he will have mercy." And yet at the end of our portion, the priest Pinchas executes a couple engaged in a forbidden sex act in the Tent of Meeting, and is rewarded for his actions with a "Covenant of Peace." His name suggests mercy, but he brings a new idea to the world: peace through violence, a principle of the "just war."

"Two portions in the Torah serve a great purpose by being named after doomed characters."

Indeed, the names of portions and people's names define their essence. Two portions in the Torah serve a great purpose by being named after doomed characters. By studying them we can clearly see how not to act. After all, there are only two ways one can learn how to act: either to model or not model one's behavior after someone else.

The gift of Balak and Korach is that we are taught not to base our philosophies on shortsightedness and periph-

eral glances, but rather on introspection. We should not covet honor and glory, but rather seek humility, for it is in the humble that God resides.

Steven Genack is the author of the upcoming book, "Articles, Anecdotes & Insights: Genack/Genechovsky Torah" (Gefen Publishing House).

● MUSINGS

Inflexibility Breaks, Movement Preserves

By David Wolpe

When my brother and I were kids, we would go into the front yard and play egg toss. The idea of the game was to move farther and farther from one another and toss the egg so that the other could catch it without allowing the shell to break. My mother did not approve of this game.

The key to success was to move your hands with the egg as it arrived. If you caught it with your hands fixed, the egg would almost certainly break. If you could move with it, however, you had a chance of keeping it intact.

That simple action is true with relationships as well. Inflexibility breaks, movement preserves. As the Talmud instructs, "one should be flexible as a reed and not unyielding as a cedar" (Ta'anit 20b). Hearts can be broken against a wall; but softness and kindness can cradle them, as the egg in one's hand, and keep them whole.

*Named the most influential Rabbi in America by Newsweek Magazine and one of the 50 most influential Jews in the world by the Jerusalem Post, **David Wolpe** is the Rabbi of Sinai Temple in Los Angeles, California.*

For advertising opportunities, contact advertise@jta.org

● BOOKS

She Followed Rookie Doctors Through the Very Worst of COVID

Emma Goldberg's new book profiles young physicians thrown into the "crisis zone" of pandemic New York.

By Lori Silberman Brauner

For most New Yorkers, the early days of COVID-19 were synonymous with eerily empty streets, the constant wails of sirens, and the clapping and cheering for health-care workers. But what was it really like for the doctors and other health-care professionals who found themselves on the front lines of a city that was an epicenter for the global pandemic?

More than most city residents, Emma Goldberg, a young journalist building her career at The New York Times, saw what was happening to the people in those hospital wards — especially the young physicians who graduated a few months early from medical school in order to support the massive influx of coronavirus patients at New York's Bellevue and Montefiore Medical Center.

Her book, "Life on the Line: Young Doctors Come of Age in a Pandemic" (Harper), offers an in-depth look at how six newly minted young doctors — Sam, Gabriela, Iris, Elana, Jay, and Ben — began their medical careers in the very heart of a global, and frighteningly local, pandemic.

"I had never lived through a moment that hit New York that hard, where it felt like we were really living almost in a crisis zone of sorts, and it was really eerie, just seeing the streets completely empty out," Goldberg, 27, told The Jewish Week. "And so for me there was a real glimmer of hope in getting to talk with people who were around my own age, in their mid to late 20s, who were doing something incredibly constructive, incredibly valuable, in stepping up to the front lines to be of service to the city in this moment of need."

Goldberg, an editorial assistant at The Times with responsibilities that include research and fact-checking, was already reporting about issues of gender and health and the many inequities in medical education. In Nov. 2019, “I reported a story about all of the invisible costs of medical education, and, beyond the cost of tuition, all of the other sort of stumbling blocks for lower-income people who want to enter medicine.”

Those include the cost of flying to interviews for medical schools, exam fees and expensive study guides.

And then, on March 1, 2020, Gov. Andrew Cuomo announced the state’s first confirmed COVID-19 case — a healthcare worker believed to have contracted the infection while traveling in Iran.

By March 26, the state recorded 8,500 cases, 4,600 hospitalizations and 49 deaths. Goldberg reported a story that day about medical schools around the country that decided to graduate their fourth-year students early and send them, if they chose, to support the overwhelmed doctors treating coronavirus patients.

“It was this moment of so much paralysis and anxiety, I think particularly for journalists, because we’re so used to being out there in the thick of the action, and instead we were all trapped in our apartments, just looking at headlines at how New York was a sort of war zone,” she said. “So I found it an incredibly inspiring story and I knew it was one that I wanted to continue following.”

Goldberg worked with the medical schools to identify young doctors who were willing to share their experiences. “They made the time because they were incredibly generous. They were working 10 hours a day in the hospital, and then they would call me...it was often late at night,” she recalled. Other times, they “would call me from the grocery store, or on their way home, and sometimes they would speak going on their lunch breaks and call me.”

A book contract followed, and she reported “Life on the Line” mostly from April to Dec. 2020. In it she describes brand-new doctors who “couldn’t spend any more time with their patients than was clinically necessary,” and who “spent much of their time helping their patients determine how they wanted to die.”

“And the grief felt all the sharper for those in the newest

cohort of doctors who didn’t look like their predecessors — working-class people and people of color who’d gone into medicine only to see Covid-19 ravaging the very communities they’d set out to serve,” she writes in an essay adapted from the book.

Goldberg, who grew up on Manhattan’s Upper West Side, has had no personal shortage of role models encouraging her journalistic pursuits, including her father, J.J. Goldberg, editor emeritus of The Forward. Her mother, Shifra Bronznick, served as founding president of Advancing Women Professionals and the Jewish Community, which is helping women break the glass ceiling in Jewish leadership roles.

“I always grew up just kind of revering books, like we had this home that was filled with books, and so it made me kind of from a really young age dream about wanting to write,” Goldberg said. The family was and continues to be involved with Minyan M’at, a lay-led traditional egalitarian minyan at New York’s Ansche Chesed.

She attended the pluralistic Abraham Joshua Heschel School, where she was involved with its student newspaper, writing about “questions of feminism in the Orthodox minyan and questions of kashrut at the school and meat-packing plants. I was kind of pursuing those Jewish stories and Jewish journalism was what kind of sparked my interest in going into the field.”

Along the way she received mentoring from Samuel G. Freedman, a journalism professor at Columbia University who volunteered as an adviser for Heschel’s student newspaper, the Helios. In an email to The Jewish Week, he wrote, “Emma has been a tireless reporter, a courageous thinker, a lucid writer, and, considering those talents, a strikingly modest person ever since I began working with her.”

After high school, Goldberg went on to receive her B.A. from Yale University and her MPhil in gender studies at Cambridge University. At an age when other reporters are happy to be collecting bylines, she was named best new journalist by the Newswomen’s Club of New York and received the Sidney Hillman Foundation’s Sidney Award for co-writing a story about the abuse of clients at the city’s Human Resources Agency.

Two of the six subjects in her book are Jewish, and one

of her favorite parts about reporting the book was connecting with them, hearing “where questions of faith were particularly challenging for them during the course of the pandemic.”

One of the interns, Elana, is an Orthodox Jew who struggled with the question of working in the hospital on Shabbat. Another intern, Sam, a member of New York’s Congregation Beit Simchat Torah, “was exploring how Jewish summer camp affected his views on sexuality and sexual health. So I felt like there was just this incredible bond, because I had the language and the kind of shared experiences to connect with them over the ways in which their Jewish identity informs their work.”

“I had the language and the kind of shared experiences to connect with them over the ways in which their Jewish identity informs their work.”

As a journalist at The Times since May 2019, Goldberg is aware of the outsized role it plays in the minds of the city’s Jews, from those who find it indispensable to others who insist it is biased in its coverage of Israel. “I’ll just say in general that their coverage is incredibly rigorous, balanced, fair, and strong and I’m proud at all times to work for the organization,” she said.

Goldberg, who lives in Park Slope, is gratified about the city’s gradual return to life since the pandemic’s darkest days; she has even had the delayed opportunity of having dinner in person with the doctors in the book.

“I’ve never felt so kind of connected to the city — and I did feel like New York City kind of felt like a character that was springing to life in the book, too.”

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 27 | 4:30 p.m. \$5

When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit

“When Hitler Stole Pink Rabbit,” a new film from director Caroline Link, will be screened in person in the Museum of Jewish Heritage’s Edmond J. Safra Hall. The historical family drama is based on the semi-autobiographical book with the same name by Judith Kerr. Register at <https://bit.ly/3y4l791>

UPCOMING EVENTS

June 28 | 1:00 p.m. \$10

Understanding the New Israeli Government, Prospects for Peace, and the Role of the U.S.

92Y presents “Understanding The New Israeli Government, Prospects For Peace, And The Role Of The U.S.,” with Aaron David Miller, Khalil Shakiki and David Horowitz in Conversation with Elise Labott.

Get tickets at <https://bit.ly/3wWqExV>

June 28 | 2:00 p.m. Free

Family History Today: Researching Your Historical LGBTQ+ Relatives

Professional genealogist Janice Sellers will show you how to research your historical LGBTQ+ relatives, the ethical concerns you should consider and why an understanding of gay history is critical to finding and understanding information about your LGBTQ+ forebears.

Register at <https://bit.ly/35NKiR1>

June 29 | 7:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. Free

Family History Today: Researching Your Historical LGBTQ+ Relatives

The talented brothers Ben, Jonah and Henry Platt join Abigail Pogrebin to discuss their professional achievements and aspirations, as well as how their Jewish experiences and involvements have influenced their careers.

Register at <https://bit.ly/3vTZWoo>

Do you have an event coming up? Submit your events online at www.jewishweek.timesofisrael.com/contact/submit-an-event