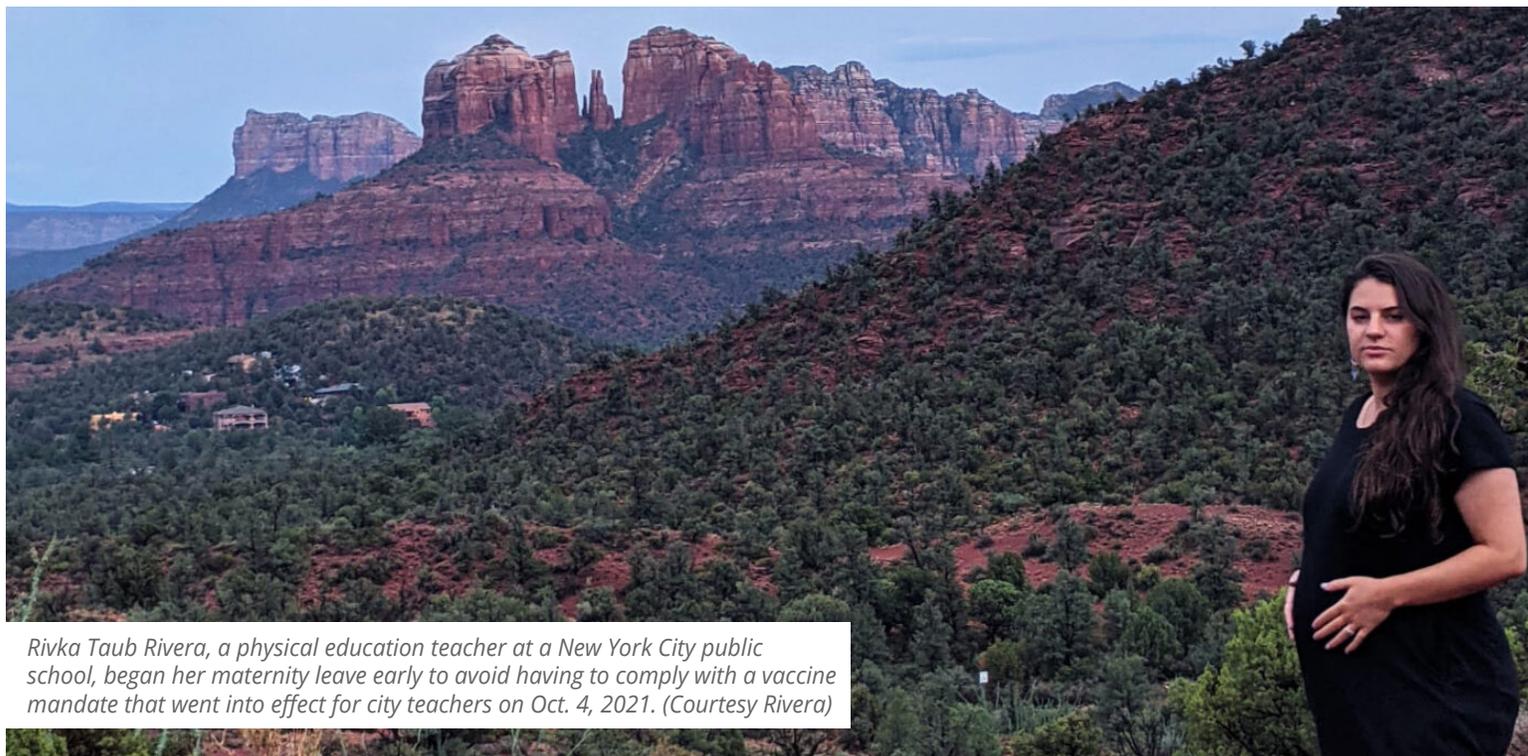


The New York Jewish Week/end

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Rivka Taub Rivera, a physical education teacher at a New York City public school, began her maternity leave early to avoid having to comply with a vaccine mandate that went into effect for city teachers on Oct. 4, 2021. (Courtesy Rivera)

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● NEWS

These Jewish NYC Schoolteachers Want a Religious Exemption from the City's Vaccine Mandate

Leaders within all of the major Jewish denominations have endorsed the COVID-19 vaccines.

By Philissa Cramer

When Rivka Taub Rivera decided to apply for a religious exemption to New York City's vaccine mandate for teachers, she didn't turn to the rabbis of Borough Park, the Orthodox neighborhood in Brooklyn where she lives.

Instead, she asked Michael Green, a Chabad rabbi who has openly opposed vaccination, to submit the required letter from a clergy member. Based in Massachusetts, Green was disaffiliated by a Chabad organization because of his an-

ti-vaccination social media posts and has become a folk hero for some Orthodox Jews who oppose vaccines.

"I'm not going to lie, when the Chabad community, when the political establishment is going against you for speaking out and for having a unique voice, then you're probably doing something right," said Rivera, who teaches physical education at an elementary school in an affluent neighborhood of Brooklyn.

Rivera is part of a vocal minority of Jews arguing that their religious beliefs preclude them from being vaccinated, even as leaders within all of the major Jewish denominations have endorsed the COVID-19 vaccines.

The city education department had not ruled on her request for an exemption by Sunday, and Rivera, who is nine months pregnant, had not changed her mind about getting vaccinated. That meant she became one of potentially thousands of city teachers barred from their classrooms once the vaccine mandate, the most sweeping in the country, went into effect Monday.

The vast majority of New York City educators were vaccinated before Mayor Bill de Blasio announced the mandate Aug. 23, and most of the rest have been vaccinated since. But thousands of teachers were still unvaccinated on Friday when U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor declined to consider a lawsuit on their behalf, meaning that if they did not get their first shot over the weekend, they must either go on unpaid leave or resign with severance.

While teachers may apply for religious exemptions to the vaccine mandate, an option sought by their union, city officials made clear that they did not intend to approve them freely. Exemption-seekers are required to submit a letter from a clergy member, and a binding agreement between the city and union lays out that "requests shall be denied where the leader of the religious organization has spoken publicly in favor of the vaccine ... or where the objection is personal, political or philosophical in nature."

Those guidelines are more complicated to apply when it comes to Judaism than in some religions, such as Catholicism, where doctrine is set centrally. (The Pope has endorsed vaccination requirements.) In Judaism, major denominations issue guidelines for their members, but

individual rabbis make rulings for their communities, and disagreements are common.

All of the major non-Orthodox denominations have issued statements endorsing COVID-19 vaccines, and in the Orthodox world, where public health guidelines related to COVID-19 have been more hotly debated, a list has been circulating on social media of Orthodox rabbis who have expressed opposition to vaccination either publicly or privately, including some in Borough Park. But many more Orthodox rabbis have gone on the record as endorsing vaccination, including through concerted campaigns aimed at raising vaccination rates in Orthodox communities; Yeshiva University, the flagship school of Modern Orthodoxy, is requiring its students and staff to be vaccinated.

That does not sway Stephanie Edmonds, a Jewish 10th-grade global history teacher who does not want to be vaccinated.

"I don't think that Judaism is a monolith, and I don't think that really any religious leader of any faith can speak for all people within that religion," she told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency on Saturday night. "Definitely for Judaism, there's no singular voice that can speak for any individual's relationship with God."

Edmonds was tearful on Friday afternoon as she spoke to CNN from her Bronx classroom, where she said she was about to teach what she expected would be her last class in a New York City public school. She told CNN she would be participating in a class-action lawsuit teachers were bringing against the city over the mandates.

She said she had come to the decision not to be vaccinated after much prayer, even as she said she recognized that there was no tenet in Judaism that proscribes vaccination. "I have a deeply held religious objection. I believe that this goes against my faith," she said.

Edmonds told JTA that she was raised attending a Reform synagogue in her native Connecticut and celebrated her bat mitzvah there. She later was involved with Hillel at the University of Connecticut and lived for a semester during college in Israel, where she picked dates on a kibbutz near Eilat.

But more recently, she hasn't been involved with a synagogue or any form of organized Jewish life — putting her

in line with a large portion of American Jews. So she did not submit a letter from a rabbi in her exemption request, which is under appeal after being initially rejected. Last week, Edmonds was asked to explain her anti-vaccination beliefs in more detail during a hearing for her appeal, an experience she said she did not appreciate.

"I don't feel like I should have to justify my religious practices in front of a panel or in front of the public," she said.

Rivera, who grew up Hasidic but now prefers mainstream Orthodox synagogues, said she had no objections to explaining her resistance to being vaccinated in Jewish terms, although she said her objections run deeper than that. She said she knew people who had become seriously ill because of COVID-19 — and of people she believed had been saved after receiving treatments that were discredited by the medical establishment, including the drug cocktail promoted by a Jewish doctor named Vladimir Zelenko.

"In Torah law you're not permitted to inject yourself with a vaccine that offers no significant medical curative benefit to the patient, even if it's allegedly good for others," she asserted. "We've been told to get this vaccine because you know it's for the greater good, yet you can still get and transmit COVID. I don't think Hashem would want me to sacrifice my bodily autonomy for this."

Even rabbinic leaders in the denomination in which Green was ordained, Chabad, depart from that position. Rabbi Yehuda Sherpin, who writes a column on Jewish law for Chabad.org, noted that Torah requires individuals to take life-saving measures, like vaccines, in times of plague. "Guarding your own health doesn't only make sense, it's actually a mitzvah," he wrote in a column, "What Does Jewish Law Say About Vaccination?," that does not directly address COVID-19. "That means that even if you don't want to do it, for whatever reason, you are still obligated to do so."

Rivera said she had COVID-19 this spring and felt confident that she is protected by antibodies she developed in response to that infection, citing the guidance of a local doctor whom she said declined to write a letter endorsing a medical exemption because of fears of retaliation. The position that previous exposure to COVID-19 can serve as sufficient protection from the virus is widely held in many Orthodox communities, which were hit early and hard during the pandemic last year; Orthodox

media outlets have been pressing the de Blasio administration for natural-immunity data.

"It hasn't been a pandemic in Borough Park for the last year," Rivera said.

"Only about a third of pregnant people are vaccinated, reflecting widespread anxiety and misinformation about the vaccines' effects on fertility."

Rivera also said she was nervous about how the vaccine would affect her unborn child. The Centers for Disease Control is exhorting those who are pregnant to be vaccinated, citing a high incidence of complications among pregnant patients who contract COVID and the data showing the safety and efficacy of the vaccine. Only about a third of pregnant people are vaccinated, reflecting widespread anxiety and misinformation about the vaccines' effects on fertility. Those concerns have been especially prevalent in Orthodox communities, where fertility is prized; in response, several Orthodox rabbis in Long Island and Baltimore emphasized that the vaccines have had no observable negative effect on fertility when they collaborated on a Rosh Hashanah video this year encouraging their communities to get vaccinated.

For now, she is sidestepping the vaccine mandate by starting her maternity leave early. The teachers union recently negotiated paid leave for educators, so she'll be paid for six weeks and then be able to take vacation for another six. At that point, she said, she hopes the mandate will be relaxed, either because the pandemic has waned or because a new mayor takes office and lifts the vaccine requirement. (Eric Adams, who is likely to win November's mayoral election, has not spoken in detail about vaccine mandates but said in August, prior to the mandate for teachers, that he thought de Blasio was "going in the right direction" on the issue.)

If the mandate remains in effect, Rivera said she doesn't know what she'll do. She really doesn't want to be vaccinated, but her husband is currently without income after closing his kosher restaurant, a fried-chicken joint called Krispy Nuggets, because he could not hire enough workers.

That was before de Blasio announced that vaccination would be required for people eating in restaurants in the city, a mandate that has put pressure on kosher restaurants whose clientele include a substantial por-

tion who oppose vaccination. "It might have been a blessing in disguise honestly because we would have never enforced segregation," she said.

Rivera said some of the other Jewish public school teachers she knew who had not wanted to be vaccinated had gotten the vaccines in recent weeks, as it became clear that they would need to do so to keep being paid. She said she also knows teachers working in yeshivas in Brooklyn who have not been vaccinated.

"For the most part the other Jewish educators that I know are in private school," she said. "And this isn't really hanging over their heads like it's ours."

● NEWS

'I Will Protect You': At Jewish Museum, Gov. Hochul Unveils \$25M for Nonprofit Security

By Julia Gergely

New York Gov. Kathy Hochul announced \$25 million in grants to boost security at nonprofits threatened by hate crimes.

Speaking at the Museum of Jewish Heritage in Lower Manhattan Wednesday, where a Confederate flag was tied to its doors earlier this year, Hochul also announced the rollout of a new online hate-crime reporting system meant to help the state deploy resources immediately and effectively.

"You continue to wear that yarmulke every single day and I will protect you," said Hochul. "This stops now. We're letting people know that if they dare raise a hand to any New Yorker, they are picking a fight with 20 million others, starting with their governor."

The grants are part of the Securing Communities Against Hate Crimes Grant Program, which solicited grant proposals in spring 2020 from schools, day care centers,

museums and camps to boost infrastructure and security against hate crimes and hate-related incidents in New York. Hochul said the new funding will support another 800 projects across the state.

This year, the NYPD has already reported 371 hate-related incidents in New York City, across the Jewish, Asian, Black and LGBTQ communities. The Federal Bureau of Investigation's 2020 Hate Crime Statistics report showed that overall hate crimes were rising, and that antisemitic hate crimes made up 57% of all religious bias crimes.

The Jewish Community Relations Council of New York praised Hochul, saying "at long last" hundreds of organizations that submitted grant applications in spring 2020 will have access to funds to upgrade security hardware, planning and training.

● NEWS

Bahrain Official Woos New York Jewish Leaders

The kingdom signed a treaty with Israel. Now it wants to make friends with American Jews.

By Ben Sales

Sitting in front of a group of rabbis in New York City, the undersecretary for political affairs at the Kingdom of Bahrain's Foreign Ministry explained that he first learned his country would be signing a diplomatic treaty with Israel on a Saturday.

Except he didn't say "Saturday." He said "Shabbat."

Likewise, the undersecretary, Shaikh Abdulla bin Ahmed Al Khalifa, told a story to the group about encouraging an Israeli official to wear his kippah at a conference in Manama, Bahrain's capital, last year. And he chuckled about going diving this year with the director-general of Israel's Foreign Ministry in an Israeli town close to the Lebanese border, just miles away from territory con-

trolled by the terror group Hezbollah.

It was all part of a two-day trip meant to meet, connect with and charm leaders of the American Jewish community in New York City. The trip came against the backdrop of Bahrain's normalization agreement last year with Israel, called the Abraham Accords, which also established full relations between Israel and the United Arab Emirates.

Al Khalifa also made a direct pitch to American Jews: He wants them to invest money in Bahrain and travel to the country as tourists. In addition — following criticism of Bahrain's human rights record and authoritarian government — he wants American Jews to spread the message of, in his words, "the values of coexistence and acceptance and tolerance that Bahrain has been upholding for so long."

"Every one of you has influence over your Jewish communities — encouraging them to visit Bahrain, encouraging them to have investments in Bahrain, to get to know Bahrain," he told the rabbis.

"When the Abraham Accords were signed, all of a sudden, there was a spike in the attacks against Bahrain, mainly in the human rights arenas, from European institutions who for some reason believed that they are responsible for the wellbeing of Bahrainis. So focusing on that would very much support Bahrain."

Al Khalifa began his trip on Monday by speaking with leaders of New York's UJA-Federation. He then met the rabbis, and afterward headed to Yeshiva University to meet students and faculty. Later on Monday, he was scheduled to meet privately with former Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, who was in New York.

The next day, he met with the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and with a group his aide described as Jewish business leaders.

"The main vision was to build bridges of peace and prosperity not only with Israel and Bahrain but also with the Jewish community," he said in an interview Monday with the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. "This is a warm peace. It's not only between leaders, government to government, but it's also between the people."

When Bahrain and the UAE signed the Abraham Accords

last year on the White House lawn, it was a landmark shift for the region — the first time Israel had signed a major diplomatic agreement with an Arab country in 25 years. Two more countries, Morocco and Sudan, are also in the process of establishing official ties with Israel.

In the past year, both Israel and the United States have elected new leaders, but normalization is proceeding apace. Days before Al Khalifa's visit, Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid visited the kingdom and opened Israel's embassy there. The Biden Administration has also affirmed its commitment to the accords. Bahrain's first-ever commercial flight to Tel Aviv landed last week.

Al Khalifa and a Jewish special adviser to the king, Rabbi Marc Schneier, both said to the rabbis that they want to encourage Jewish investment in Bahrain. In the meeting with the rabbis, Schneier touted direct routes to Israel and New York City launched by Bahrain's national airline, Gulf Air. Synagogue missions to Israel, he said, could first make a stop in Bahrain before heading to Tel Aviv.

"The American Jewish community can contribute to Bahrain economically," Schneier, the founding rabbi of the Hampton Synagogue in New York, told JTA in an interview. "Tourism is a very, very important source of revenue for Bahrain, and the grand prize is not Israeli tourists, it's American Jewish tourists."

He added, "No one really thought about, ever, visiting the Gulf, and I think there is a great opportunity where the American Jewish community can make that contribution from an intercultural, interreligious, and also from an economic point of view."

Al Khalifa said Bahrain was open to people of all backgrounds. He noted that the country has had a Jewish community for well over a century, including a synagogue in Manama, and that Jews enjoy designated representation in Bahrain's Shura Council, a legislative body appointed by the king. He also listed several actions the king has taken in the name of protecting human rights, such as placing an ombudsman at the country's Interior Ministry and establishing a commission to track the rights of prisoners and detainees.

Human rights watchdogs, however, say that such institutions have done little to ameliorate the country's authoritarian system, in which the king controls all branches of

the government and there is no free press. The situation has gotten worse, they said, in the decade since the government quashed protests during the Arab Spring in 2011. Amnesty International said human rights mechanisms in the country “remained ineffective in safeguarding human rights and punishing violations.”

In a report last year, Freedom House called Bahrain “one of the Middle East’s more repressive states,” which “has systematically eliminated a broad range of political rights and civil liberties, dismantled the political opposition, and cracked down harshly on persistent dissent concentrated among the Shiite population.”

Al Khalifa called the country’s human rights protections “second to none in the region.” But he also said there should be boundaries on free speech.

“When we say freedom of expression, it’s protected by the [Bahraini] constitution,” he told JTA. “But there’s a limit to your freedom of expression when your expression would interfere with or would affect national security or would instigate hatred or sectarianism.”

The rabbis received Al Khalifa warmly and took a group photo with him, asking how they can learn more about Bahrain, which countries may be next to establish ties with Israel and how the Abraham Accords relate to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

“When an Arab country makes peace, not just any peace, but a warm peace with Israel, the American Jewish community becomes your home,” said Rabbi Yehuda Sarna, honorary chairman of the Association of Gulf Jewish Communities and a chaplain at New York University. “There are very few things more popular with American Jews than Arabs and Israelis making peace.”

Rabbi Rachel Ain said she appreciated the opportunity to connect across cultures and learn about Bahrain. She said she’d be amenable to taking her congregants there once international travel resumes.

“When we only speak to ourselves, whether that’s politically or each government, or our own ideology, then we’re going to miss the nuance of what can actually be created,” said Ain, rabbi of the Sutton Place Synagogue in New York. “Conversations like this morning show us that the tapestry of the world is much better when diverse voices are brought together.”

Rabbi Bini Krauss, principal of the Modern Orthodox SAR Academy, likewise said he looked forward to learning more about Bahrain before he would advocate for or publicly criticize it. He said, “I didn’t come out of this meeting feeling like I’m an ambassador of Bahrain.” He added, “There’s a lot to learn.”

The normalization agreements signaled a realignment in the Middle East, in which Israel is becoming an open partner of nations that it once dealt with only clandestinely. Before the Abraham Accords, nearly all Arab countries had said they would normalize relations with Israel only after the end of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank. Palestinian leadership called the agreements a “stab in the back.”

But Al Khalifa said the treaty with Israel did not preclude supporting core Palestinian demands, including an independent state with its capital in East Jerusalem. He added that having relations with Israel could allow Bahrain to play a part in mediating future conflicts in Gaza. Egypt and Jordan, which both signed peace treaties with Israel decades ago, have filled that role in past conflicts.

“Look at what happened in Gaza recently,” he told the rabbis, referring to the conflict in May between Israel and Hamas. “Who was able to ease the tensions? It was Egypt and Jordan. Bahrain is very well respected in the region and globally. His Majesty, personally, his leadership — the Palestinians respect him a lot.”

Al Khalifa also said that Israel and Bahrain were both on the same page vis-à-vis the threat posed by Iran, and could begin cooperating on security matters. On a recent visit to Israel, Al Khalifa met with a senior official from the Israel Defense Forces. Khalifa was careful to note, however, that the Abraham Accords were “not intended against a certain country.”

Both countries have expressed uneasiness about the US reentering the Iran nuclear agreement, a process the Biden administration is currently negotiating following former President Donald Trump’s withdrawal from the deal. Al Khalifa wants the Iran deal, known by the acronym JCPOA, to also limit Iranian support for regional terror groups. He praised Trump’s sanctions on Iran, which Trump referred to as “maximum pressure.”

“We have seen how the maximum pressure campaign has had its effect,” he told JTA. “Having the JCPOA is bet-

ter than not having a JCPOA, but having a JCPOA that would address the concerns of the region and not only focus on one aspect of the nuclear program, but cover the other aspects, is very important.”

But despite his title, Al Khalifa wasn't in New York City this week primarily to talk policy. Instead, he wanted to begin a relationship between American Jews and his kingdom — and to convince them to visit.

“There are certain perceptions about Bahrain in certain fields that do not reflect the reality on the ground,” he told JTA. “But seeing is believing.”

● NEWS

Social Media Blackout Was a Test for Orthodox Jews Who Depend on WhatsApp

By Julia Gergely and Shira Hanau

Asher Lovy was expecting a flood of notifications on Monday morning when he posted information about a sexual abuse case to several WhatsApp chat groups devoted to tracking the work of his organization, which provides support to survivors of sexual abuse within the Orthodox community.

Instead, he heard nothing. WhatsApp, the Facebook-owned messaging app he uses, was down, along with Facebook and Instagram, three of the most widely used social platforms in the world.

“I was worried that people who were trying to reach us wouldn't be able to,” Lovy said. He began to worry about what would happen if the outage extended later into the week, when Za'akah would ready its mental health hotline for Orthodox Jews who have crises on Shabbat, when many other services are closed or inaccessible.

“We have people contacting us on WhatsApp to get re-

ferred for resources for therapists or lawyers, or just to talk and receive support,” he said. “I get texts at 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock in the morning from people in crisis who need support or resources, who do they reach out to if not us? ... The thought of Whatsapp going down on Shabbos is terrifying.”

Lovy's fears did not come to pass: WhatsApp was back up after eight hours, along with Facebook and Instagram. But the outage, which Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg said was the most significant interruption in service in years, brought into sharp focus the degree to which WhatsApp is baked into the communication infrastructure for most of the world's Jews — and how vulnerable that infrastructure may be.

With more than 2 billion users worldwide, WhatsApp is by far the most widely used instant messaging service in the world. Its simple platform, which works even on older flip phones, is the communication standard in many countries in Africa and the Middle East, and its early adoption in Israel and the relative unpopularity of iPhones there means it remains the country's text messaging app of choice.

In the United States, its dominance is perhaps most clear in the haredi Orthodox world.

Even as Orthodox rabbis were warning about the dangers to religious life posed by WhatsApp way back in 2014, as Facebook began to consider acquiring the platform, the app became popular in Orthodox communities as an easy way to communicate. “The rabbis overseeing divorces say WhatsApp is the No. 1 cause of destruction of Jewish homes and business,” the Hasidic newspaper *Der Blatt* reported in Yiddish that year. Its dominance in the communities only increased over time, with misinformation and anti-mask activism spreading quickly through group-text channels that were already well established before the pandemic.

It's not just rumors that take hold on Orthodox WhatsApp chats. “We run all our groups of employees on various businesses through WhatsApp,” said Mordy Getz, a community leader who owns a health clinic and Judaica store in Borough Park, Brooklyn.

A unique confluence of factors drives the penetration and lasting power of WhatsApp in Orthodox communities.

Many community members have filters on their phones to prevent them from accessing external websites and social media platforms, so they receive all their information through WhatsApp, according to Getz. (This creates its own problems, as misinformation can circulate easily and quickly without the ability to fact-check.)

What's more, WhatsApp's integrated voice notes option allows people with wide-ranging skills in written language to communicate with each other, a potential issue in communities where critics have charged that yeshivas do not always leave graduates with a strong secular education.

And WhatsApp video and phone calls don't carry long distance calling fees. For Jewish families in which some members are Orthodox and others are not, or some members live in Israel and others in the Diaspora, WhatsApp can serve as a vital convening ground.

"Every Orthodox Jew has people in Israel and Europe," said Getz. "You have to have WhatsApp if you want to talk to them."

When that stops working, the distance can feel greater.

Orli Gal, a Philadelphia nurse, said her family, which includes people in Israel and across the United States, would have been celebrating a milestone in her sister's medical training over WhatsApp Monday when the outage cut off their communications.

"We've got people all over the world, and some of them are pretty elderly. This is the only way they know how to get in touch," she said. "WhatsApp is the only thing that connects us all."

Mendel Horowitz, a therapist and teacher in Jerusalem, was suddenly unable to be in touch with his 20-year-old son, Alty, who was vacationing in Egypt's Sinai Desert with friends.

"I don't want to say I was up all night worried because I wasn't," he said. "But it was on our minds that this is the only way to reach him and we can't."

The outage got Horowitz thinking about his own family's reliance on WhatsApp and whether it was wise given the app's vulnerabilities. "It's not an emergency, but it gets us thinking about the next time somebody goes somewhere, we should have a plan B," he said.

Horowitz wasn't alone.

If WhatsApp were to disappear, "there would be no backup infrastructure" for communication within the Orthodox community, said Lovy.

The outage, Gal said, "mostly made me rethink: Why did we allow Facebook to buy it in the first place?"

● NEWS

Nobel Winner David Julius Remembers His Youth in 'Dense, Gritty' Brighton Beach

The physiologist attended Abraham Lincoln High School before heading to MIT.

By Shira Hanau

Brooklyn native David Julius, a professor of physiology at the University of California, San Francisco, whose grandparents fled antisemitism in Czarist Russia, was awarded this year's Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine on Monday.

He shared the award with Ardem Patapoutian, a molecular biologist and neuroscientist at the Scripps Research center.

The Nobel Prize committee cited Julius and Patapoutian's research "for their discoveries of receptors for temperature and touch," which have improved treatments for pain caused by a range of diseases.

Julius was born in 1955 and grew up in Brighton Beach, which was then home to a large population of Russian Jewish emigres. In accepting the 2020 Kavli Prize in neuroscience, Julius wrote an essay saying he has lived in Northern California for more than half of his life, but "I re-

main a native New Yorker in temperament and humor.”

He described Brighton Beach as “a landing pad for Eastern European immigrants like my grandparents, who fled Czarist Russia and antisemitism in pursuit of a better life. Consequently, my parents are first-generation Americans. They grew up in this NYC enclave, attended public schools, and earned first-class higher educations at tuition-free Brooklyn College, exemplifying what some of us still cherish as the American credo of open borders and opportunity for all.”

Julius attended Abraham Lincoln High School, whose alumnae include Arthur Miller, Joseph Heller, Mel Brooks, Beverly Sills, Neil Diamond and scientists Arthur Kornberg, Paul Berg and Jerome Karle.

“Brighton Beach was dense and somewhat gritty, but not a bad place to grow up, with easy access to the beach and just a subway ride from the metropolis of Manhattan,” Julius wrote. “And in the days before ‘dynamic pricing,’ museums, concerts and Broadway shows were generally affordable, enabling even a middle-class kid to experience transformative culture moments. At the same time, there was plenty of opportunity for pickup games of basketball or summer frolicking at the beach alongside a million or more New Yorkers who would flock to Brighton or nearby Coney Island to catch a breeze on a hot and muggy summer day.”

A graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of California, Berkeley, Julius has spent his career researching the way human senses like touch, pain, and heat function and has used capsaicin, the chemical in chili peppers that makes them burn, to explore how human nerve endings feel heat.

“These breakthrough discoveries launched intense research activities leading to a rapid increase in our understanding of how our nervous system senses heat, cold, and mechanical stimuli,” the Nobel Prize committee wrote in its announcement of the winners.

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● REMEMBERING

David Eliach, Beloved Educator Who Led Yeshivah of Flatbush for Decades, Dies at 99

By Philissa Cramer

The longtime and pioneering leader of Brooklyn’s Yeshivah of Flatbush, Rabbi David Eliach, died Thursday.

Eliach, who was 99, supervised the education of thousands of children at the Modern Orthodox school between 1953, when he moved from Israel to teach there, until his retirement as dean in 1997 at age 75. He remained closely involved at the school for the rest of his life, visiting multiple times a week to mentor teachers until the pandemic forced him to transition to phone calls instead.

“His contribution to Jewish education across the globe is unparalleled and his impact on thousands of students will be felt for generations,” the school wrote in an email announcing Eliach’s death late Thursday.

“To me, Rabbi Eliach is synonymous with YOF,” the head of the high school, Rabbi Raymond Harari, told the school’s magazine last year.

Born in Jerusalem in 1922, Eliach studied at a yeshiva in Hebron and devoted himself to teaching after working with children who had come to pre-state Israel after being orphaned or separated from their parents during the Holocaust. It was in that context that he met his wife Yaffa, a Lithuanian survivor who later became a pioneering Holocaust historian. Yaffa Eliach died in 2016.

The couple moved to the United States after Eliach was recruited to join the Yeshivah of Flatbush by its founder, Joel Braverman. He quickly gained a reputation as an inspiring teacher who was deeply devoted to Modern Hebrew.

He spoke in “a very clear, beautiful Hebrew that was so

expressive,” Joseph Telushkin, the rabbi and author, told the New York Jewish Week in 2012 about Eliach, who had been both his teacher and camp counselor.

By 1967, Eliach had become the yeshiva’s high school principal, then its dean. Under his leadership, the school added a community service requirement, introduced Israel study that became de rigueur for Orthodox high school graduates and pushed students to engage in political issues of Jewish significance.

“Great institutions can die if they don’t adjust themselves to a new era, if you think you’re so good that you don’t have to change,” Eliach told the Jewish Week just before his 90th birthday. “I always knew I wasn’t good enough, that I always had to change and adapt. You can always learn.”

Over the years, Eliach racked up an array of honors, including an honorary doctorate from Yeshiva University in 1987 and the Covenant Award, a prestigious Jewish education prize, in 1992. He told the Covenant Foundation that he was proud that Yeshivah of Flatbush graduates were leaders in their fields and in their Jewish communities.

Selected as a Covenant winner in 2019, a Yeshivah of Flatbush teacher who also graduated from the school said Eliach’s mentorship was central to her success. “He’s a true mensch,” Sally Grazi-Shatzkes told the foundation.

In 2020, Gefen Publishing House published a collection of his Hebrew poetry, “Shurot.”

Eliach is survived by his two children, each an educator: Yotav Eliach is the principal of a yeshiva on Long Island, and Smadar Rosensweig is a professor of Bible at Yeshiva University. His funeral will be held Friday morning at the school.

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● EDITOR’S DESK

Noah and the Ark Is One Weird Bedtime Story

Come for the adorable animals, stay for a troubling debate about divine retribution.

By Andrew Silow-Carroll

Our oldest son is named Noah, and as a result we collected a lot of children’s books based on the Bible story (which will be read in synagogues this Shabbat). On its face, the story of Noah and the flood, with its parade of animals, is just right for kids. In truth, it’s a weird and woolly story that gets weirder and woolier the more you think about it. If bedtime reading was supposed to be relaxing, we picked the wrong story.

Every kids’ version of a Bible story is a “midrash,” which is a Jewish method for explaining and expanding on the Hebrew canon. The closest English word is “homily,” but midrash is really literary analysis, except written in the form of parables, legal arguments and fan fiction. A midrash can fill in the gaps of the typically terse Torah. The famous bit about Abraham smashing his father’s idols? That’s a midrash, made up by the rabbis to explain how the future patriarch of the Jewish people came to reject his father’s bad example.

There is a formal literature of midrash, but the spirit of the enterprise lives on whenever people use the Bible as inspiration for novels, films, comic books – and children’s books.

Midrash is also what you leave out of a story. When it comes to Noah, there’s an awful lot an author or parent might prefer to leave out. First of all, it presupposes an exasperated God who, terrifyingly, decides to wipe out nearly all of humanity because of the sinful ways of the people He created. A kid just might ask exactly what all those sinners did to deserve annihilation.

And while Noah, his family and the animals survive their 40-day ordeal, and God makes a rainbow as a sign that he'll never do it again, you can't help but think about the 41st day. In his new book, "The JPS Jewish Heritage Torah Commentary," Rabbi Eli L. Garfinkel notes that when the Noah story is told to children, the tale is given "an age-appropriate cheery patina, depicting the ark and the animals with bright, primary colors. The actual biblical text, however, is anything but colorful and happy. It is a dark, dismal story, a tale of people who are left to mourn a lost and destroyed world."

Sweet dreams, kids.

Kids' books about Noah tend to glide past the sticky theology, but some deal with it. "Two by Two" by Barbara Reid, with amazing illustrations fashioned out of modeling clay, is a whimsical, pun-filled poem ("Space within was so restricted/Even the boas felt constricted"). But it opens by acknowledging that people "turned to evil ways" and with God declaring "Let them drown!"

Bright children might also wonder — just as the classic midrash does — why Noah doesn't do more to save people outside of his immediate family. The rabbis solve this by suggesting that he took so long to build the ark — perhaps 52 or 70 years — because he wanted to give his fellow humans time to see what he was up to and repent. But there's also Bart Simpson's midrash, which comes to the opposite conclusion: Acting out the story, Bart has the people cry out, "Noah, Noah, save us!" To which Bart, as Noah, replies tersely, "No."

The Little Golden Books "Noah's Ark" deals at some length (for a kid's book) with Noah's unease and his neighbors' contempt. After God tells Noah he is going to "Wash away the evil in the world," Noah is next seen telling his wife and kids, "We must obey God!" You are left to imagine, as any good midrash writer would, the heated family discussion that came before this declaration. Any parent who tells his kid "We must obey God!" has probably lost the argument.

For those who don't want story time to devolve into a debate over theodicy, there are books, like "On Noah's Ark" by Jan Brett, that leave God out of the story entirely. Instead, Brett's version begins with, "Grandpa Noah says that the rains are coming." No God, no bad guys. Of course, this only ends up shifting the conversation from

"Must we obey God?" to "Must we obey Grandpa?"

A lot of the children's books pick up instead on the Jewish tradition of reading Noah as an ecological cautionary tale, based in part on one of its verses: "The earth became corrupt before God." (Genesis 6:11) A literal reading suggests that humankind's evil had infected the earth itself — a potent metaphor and prophecy for environmentalists. And Noah, as the savior of all life on earth, can be portrayed as the very first eco-warrior. In a science book for kids, "Planet Ark: Preserving Earth's Biodiversity," author Adrienne Mason takes the ark as a metaphor for the earth itself: "In many ways, our beautiful blue home — planet Earth — is like an ark sailing through the universe," she writes. "Thankfully, there are many modern-day Noahs — groups and individuals — who are working hard to preserve Earth's biodiversity."

"A lot of the books pick up instead on the Jewish tradition of reading Noah as an ecological cautionary tale."

One of our favorite versions of the Noah story, "Aardvarks, Disembark!" by Ann Jonas, is essentially a roll call of the animal pairs as they leave the ark. The kids loved hearing us recite the odd names — aurochs, gerenuks, lechwes, peludos, urumutums — and we adults understood that a lot of these animals were extinct or endangered.

Parents know their kids best, and it's up to them to decide what sort of lessons they'd like to impart and what books best help them do that. Is Noah about the wages of sin? The possibility for forgiveness and a fresh start? The need to protect a fragile planet? If your kid doesn't ask you what they did with all the poop on the ark, you're missing out on a peak parenting moment.

My Noah is all grown up, and the children's books have been set aside in the hope that we'll one day read them to grandkids. Given the headlines, I suspect that the Noah story and its themes — a reckless populace, a degraded environment, a retributive flood (or fire, or pandemic) — are only going to become more relevant. Bedtime with grandpa is going to be a bummer.

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

● OPINION

Judaism Often Thrives on New Technologies. That Doesn't Mean Impossible Pork Should Be Kosher.

By David Zvi Kalman

The Orthodox Union won't certify Impossible Pork as kosher, representing a break from the way that decisions about certifying kosher food are normally made. But as someone who studies Judaism's long relationship with technology, I would argue that it is undoubtedly the right move.

Since the OU first started certifying products a century ago, kosher supervision has always remained doggedly focused on objective fact-finding: Food is kosher because of what's in it and how it's made (and, occasionally, who makes it) and that's basically it. To get this information, modern kosher supervision agencies have built out fantastically complex global operations that keep track of complicated and constantly shifting supply chains. These systems are often incurious about almost everything not directly related to the food processing itself, including whether factory working conditions are acceptable, whether the ingredients are sustainably sourced, or whether the certified product will kill you (though politics sometimes leaks in anyway).

So it was unusual when the OU — the largest certifier of kosher products in the world — denied certification to Impossible Pork, a next-gen meat substitute, despite the fact that every ingredient in the product is kosher. The OU explained that it could not certify a product that described itself as pork.

Despite protestations to the contrary from hungry Jews and my own deep culinary curiosity, I believe that the OU made the right call. Though it seems that the decision was

narrowly decided, the move to withhold kosher certification may in fact turn out to be one of the most important Jewish legal decisions of the 21st century. This may seem like a hyperbolic way of talking about soy protein slurry, but I really think it isn't. The OU's move is a first, tentative step towards a stance on technological innovation that desperately needs to become more common.

To understand why, we need to understand the effect of new technologies on legal regimes. Law needs to be specific to be effective, and so well-constructed law is often carefully tailored to the nitty-gritty details of specific objects, systems and ways of behaving. When a new technology comes along and replaces the old — even if the new tech does exactly the same thing as the old — it can make the old law irrelevant unless lawmakers intervene with an update. Interventions are especially important when the old technology has been around for a long time and law has grown intertwined with it. Regulating cryptocurrency, for example, is crucial precisely because so many financial regulations assume that transactions take place exclusively through state-issued currency that is mostly stored in banks.

But if the job of lawmakers is to create continuities between old and new tech, many modern tech firms, with their "move fast and break things" culture, often seem hellbent on tearing them apart. The makers of new technology like to call things "unprecedented" because it generates hype, but disconnecting new technologies from old ones is also a good way of shielding themselves from ethical and legal responsibility for how those technologies behave.

This new tech dynamic plays out in Jewish law, too. How should the rule forbidding leather shoes on Yom Kippur — because they were considered an indulgence — apply in an era of comfortable synthetic shoes? Must one wear tzitzit (ritual fringes) at all when modern shirts don't have the four corners that triggered the Biblical requirement of tzitzit? On a larger scale, the Shabbat elevator, the Kosher Lamp, as well as a host of technologies developed by Israel's Tzomet Institute, all employ new technologies to circumvent existing rules while keeping within the letter, if not the spirit, of the law.

Sometimes Jews have allowed these rules to be eroded because the stakes didn't feel high enough, but when a new technology threatens to undermine Jewish tradi-

tion, the rabbis have tended to respond appropriately.

The best example of this is the ban on turning electricity on or off on Shabbat. For millennia, the experience of Shabbat was shaped by the Biblical prohibition on lighting fires; with the advent of electricity at the turn of the last century, that ban threatened to become irrelevant. Orthodox rabbis responded by coalescing around the argument that electricity is fire, or was covered by some other well-established prohibition. That electricity is not actually fire didn't matter; the argument carried because it was understood by leadership and laity alike that electricity was coming to replace fire, to do everything fire could do and more. Today, the restrictions on electricity are a cornerstone of the Shabbat experience, so fundamental that it is hard for many observant Jews to imagine Shabbat without it.

Is Impossible Pork the 21st century version of electricity? There's a good case to be made that it is. The rise of plant-based meat substitutes has been spurred by ethical and environmental concerns around meat production. Their success depends on their being so delicious that they escape from the boutique realm of eco-conscious consumers and take on the same cultural role as meat. That Burger King offers an Impossible Whopper signals that this is already happening, as does the fact that major meat producers have invested heavily in the growth of plant-based alternatives to their own products.

These developments should be celebrated—but rather than diminishing meat's special cultural meaning, its substitutes have only served to burnish it.

Meat has a special significance in Judaism, too. God is a big fan of animal sacrifices, and many holidays still involve the ritual or cultural use of meat — and inasmuch as meat matters, it matters that the meat isn't pork. It's irrelevant that the Ancient Israelite origins of the ban are obscure; it's enough that modern observant Jews (and Muslims) still treat the ban on pig products as a cultural touchstone. We should be glad that technology has created a meaningful difference between veggie beef and veggie pork — but if the distinction is there, the ban on the pork must be, too.

The OU's ruling does not yet amount to a full-fledged policy that all fake meat should be treated like real meat; a kosher restaurant can still serve plant-based "cheeseburgers" without fear that its license will be revoked. But

even if it was not intended to be profound, the OU's decision is an example of how all regulators, both religious and governmental, can fight back against the cultural unmooring that the present onslaught of new technology continues to cause. In this unprecedented age, creating continuity between the past and the present serves to ground society in the wisdom and norms of its own past.

David Zvi Kalman is the scholar in residence and director of new media at the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America and the owner of Print-o-Craft Press. He holds a PhD from the University of Pennsylvania.

● SABBATH WEEK / PARSHAT NOACH

Before We Cancel Noah, Let's Not Forget the Burden He Carried

Even biblical saints have flaws — an important lesson in an age of media takedowns.

By Dvir Cahana

"Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless in his generation; Noah walked with God." (Genesis 6:9)

Before we even find out anything about Noah's life in this week's eponymous Torah portion, he is given quite distinctive high praise. Noah is described as bearing supernatural righteousness "in his generation," guiltless in his deeds and walking in the way of Hashem.

Without an utterance from his mouth, or a thorough cross-examination, the Torah is ready to shower Noah with adulation. However, as the story progresses and as we get to know more about our hero, his sexual impropriety and alcoholism paints a different picture for us. It becomes more evident that these accolades are through a warped aspirational lens. Perhaps it is the very pressure of this hyperbolic first impression, creating an unwarranted spotlight, that imposes a psycholog-

ical burden on Noah.

The tension between idealized and real Noah challenged our rabbis. They are forced to make comparisons between him and Abraham, an individual also recognized for his righteousness. In the Talmud (Sanhedrin 108a), they subdue the portion's first sentence by emphasizing the qualification that Noah was the only righteous individual of his "own" generation. Compared with the likes of Abraham and Moses, he doesn't stand a chance.

Noah was certainly no Abraham. When God disclosed to Abraham the plan to destroy all of Sodom and Gomorrah for their wickedness, Abraham advocated on behalf of the Sodomites. Noah does no such thing. Noah merely makes sure he and his family attain safe refuge from God's omniscient deluge. Though the two circumstances are incomparable, when extracted out of context, they expose for the rabbis the self-serving undertone to Noah's piety.

The rabbis continue to show how, upon a second read, the text damns him with faint praise. The Midrash explains (Genesis Rabbah 30:10) that Noah needed God's guidance to walk the righteous path, while Abraham came to God's path through his own deductive reasoning.

But at the same time, something else is drawn out of this initial description. Noah is introduced parenthetically, in the middle of a sentence beginning "This is the progeny of Noah" and ending with the names of his offspring. This delay in phrasing provides an opportunity to praise Noah with less implicitly troubling implications. In other words, says the Midrash (Genesis 30:6), his lineage is built on the foundation of his character. This does not weigh Noah against anybody else other than the generations that would proceed through the Noetic genetic tree.

The rabbis' reluctance to embrace the surface praise for Noah requires us to think about complicated role models who leave us disappointed and disillusioned.

I read Noah's story in parallel with the news about the last Afghani Jew. With his country in ruins, Zebulun Simantov has continued to cling to his Jewish identity. For decades he rode out the storm, and only this past week did he agree to be safely transported to America. I can only extrapolate from the few published accounts how challenging living as a Jew must have been in his isolated Kabul life. Without knowing anything else about him, his

heroism as the remnant of a once vibrant culture spanning over 1,500 years is nothing short of praiseworthy.

And yet, like Noah, his character becomes more complicated the more we learn about him. Twenty years ago, he had an opportunity to escape, but the Israeli agents who were working to get him out asked that in exchange for his freedom, he grant a Jewish divorce, or get, to the woman he had been married to. He declined. From my own perspective, it is hard to give a get denier any benefit of the doubt. My father was highly involved as a rabbinic adviser in the Canadian Supreme Court case, *Bruker v. Marcovitz*, that awarded a woman damages for her husband's refusal to grant a get. From a young age I was taught to deeply empathize with the victims of the callous abuse inflicted through the agunah, our "chained wife," crisis.

My confusion deepened as I read about how well-liked Simantov had been in his Afghani community. Taxi drivers consider his place a local landmark and journalists frequented his humble abode.

This, I think, is the lesson of the Torah. Noah's distinction, deservedly or not, is pressed upon him, no less than our celebrities who have been given glorified social media platforms. On the one hand, the platform itself demands a responsibility of the individual who receives it. On the other hand, we interact with them on a strictly two-dimensional plane, and are quick to press "unfollow" the moment they fail to uphold the standards of what it means to be chosen.

Despite all the scrutiny, the incredible psychological burden that Noah must have gone through — to be transplanted from a previous generation and to be solely responsible for the generations that follow — can easily be recognized. The trauma of knowing that he was the sole survivor of a cataclysm that destroyed all civilization pri-

CANDLELIGHTING, READINGS:

Cheshvan 2, 5782 | Friday, October 8, 2021

- **Light candles at:** 6:08 p.m.

Cheshvan 3, 5782 | Saturday, October 9, 2021

- **Torah reading:** Noah, Genesis 6:9–11:32
- **Haftarah:** Isaiah 54:1–10
- **Shabbat ends:** 7:05 p.m.

or and that the lineage of the entire world would henceforth pass through his loins is unfathomable.

When we look at Noah's life after the flood, there are several indications that in fact Noah can sit at the table among the great saints. Chizkuni notes that Noah lived 350 years after the flood, double the lifetime of Abraham. Perhaps this is a reward for all he went through?

And there are comparisons between Noah, who protected his own family at all costs, with Abraham, who unquestioningly climbed Mount Moriah to sacrifice Isaac — one of a number of moments indicating Abraham's devotion to his mission came at the expense of his commitment to family.

It is good to challenge our beliefs, it is necessary to bring nuance to our lives and it is okay to venerate those who aren't perfect. We can appreciate the symbol of a biblical saint and the complex human being behind it. We can allow ourselves to expect more from a hero like Noah while realizing how unjustified that expectation truly is.

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● MUSINGS

The Gift of Growth

By David Wolpe

One of the unfortunate aspects of current culture is that the antagonisms are counterproductive: Insulting someone makes them less susceptible to change. Who would wish to join the side that has vilified them? The ratcheting up of rhetoric makes others less likely to have a change of heart and make common cause with a side that was so unkind to them.

This is partly a symptom of a tragic view of human beings: that they cannot or will not change. When someone apologizes, the instant response is to distrust its sincerity. When a person does change a position or outlook, we tend to ask — well, what is in it for him?

Judaism is premised on the idea that people can change and do change. It sometimes seems unexpected, even incongruous, but as Buckminster Fuller said, "There's nothing in a caterpillar that tells you it's going to be a butterfly."

Growing up, I never thought I would be a rabbi. I never thought I would be a vegetarian. I never thought I would live on the West Coast. I could go on and on. We pigeonhole people at our own peril. Give yourself and others the space to change and the gift of growth.

*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.*

● BOOKS

'Fiddler' Meets 'The Sopranos': A Gritty, Forgotten Novel by Sholom Aleichem Is Published in English for the First Time

"Moshkele the Thief," translated by New Yorker Curt Leviant, is a famed Yiddish writer's take on the gangster story.

By Penny Schwartz

Move over, Tevye the dairyman. Make room for Moshkele the thief, the rough and tumble rogue hero from the wrong side of the shtetl in a newly rediscovered work of fiction by Sholom Aleichem.

The recent publication of “Moshkele the Thief: A Rediscovered Novel” (Jewish Publication Society/University of Nebraska Press), translated from the original Yiddish and with an introduction by Curt Leviant, marks the first ever English-language translation of the novella by perhaps the most popular and most widely read Yiddish writer.

Sholom Aleichem, the pen name of Shalom Rabinowitz (1859-1916), was a masterful storyteller whose keen eye, wit and humor earned him the reputation as the Jewish Mark Twain. He left a legacy of novels, plays, essays and stories that have been translated into dozens of languages. His fictional stories of Tevye, the everyman’s philosopher of Jewish life, family and faith in a shtetl village in Czarist Russia, inspired the musical “Fiddler on the Roof.”

But even though Aleichem could write about flawed characters and the grittier side of shtetl life, Moshkele is a far cry from Tevye. The all-but-forgotten tale, first serialized in Yiddish in a Warsaw newspaper in 1903 — a year before Rabinowitz would leave Kyiv for New York City, and three years before his death at 57 — explores the underside of Jewish life in Eastern Europe. The novella brims with the doings of horse thieves, cheats, swindlers and a pious tavern keeper who doesn’t hesitate to show off his comely daughters to sell a few more bottles of vermouth.

The book also captures relations between Jews and non-Jews, another rarity in popular Yiddish writing of the day.

It took the astute eye of Leviant, a seasoned translator and scholar of Sholom Aleichem’s work, to spot references to “Moshkele the Thief” (“Moshkele Ganev” in Yiddish) while doing research at the Hebrew University Library in Jerusalem. A retired Rutgers University professor of Hebrew literature and the author or translator of more than 25 books (including the forthcoming novel, “Me, Mo, Mu, Ma & Mod”), Leviant was thumbing through old copies of the Yiddish quarterly “Di Goldene Keyt” when he noticed a brief mention of the title. “Moshkele” is not included in the 28-volume “The Complete Works of Sholom Aleichem,” published after his death.

“I felt I was at the edge of a gold mine,” Leviant wrote in an email.

Back at home in New York, his query to the National Yiddish Book Center turned up copies of the three Yiddish

editions of “Moshkele Ganev,” dating from 1913 (Warsaw), 1927 (Kiev) and 1941 (Moscow).

“I read this short novel in one sitting and decided that his gem must make its way to the public,” Leviant recalled. He immediately began translating.

Leviant captures the broken syntax and jargon of the shtetl demimonde, who prefer euphemisms like “I shot a bird” or “I whistled it out of the shed” to refer to their crimes.

Moshkele prefers horses to his religious school rabbi from a young age, and is portrayed as an intimidating but lonely soul, rejected in love and disdained by his co-religionists in the small town of Mazapevke — anticipating misunderstood literary gangsters from Isaac Babel’s Benya Krik to James Gandolfini’s Tony Soprano.

The story unfolds over the course of 20 brief chapters, reflecting the rhythm of its original run as a serial, cliffhangers and all. Early on, the narrator teases with the tantalizing scandal of Tzirele, the beautiful unmarried daughter of Chaim Chosid, who runs Mazapevke’s tavern. Unlike her sisters, Tzirele wants more to life than being matched in marriage and mothering a brood of children.

“The next generation of Yiddish writers – including Sholem Asch and Isaac Bashevis Singer – ‘had no qualms representing the seamy side of Jewish life.’”

In a rebellious turn that might have shocked contemporary readers, Tzirele runs away with the town’s Christian liquor tax collector, who arranges for her to take up residence at the local monastery until they can be married. With nowhere else to turn, Tzirele’s bereft family pins its hopes on Moshkele for her rescue.

Even amidst the trauma, the book’s tone remains wry: The monastery garden is “an earthly paradise, as it was called in Mazapevke, even though no Jew had ever had the privilege of setting foot in it.” Sholom Aleichem also occasionally breaks the fourth wall and addresses the reader directly: “But let’s cast philosophy aside and return to our novel,” he writes at one point.

Sholom Aleichem himself was pleased with the novel, Leviant explains in the book’s introduction.

“I now feel as if I’ve been born anew, with new – brand new – strength. I can almost say that now I’ve really begun to write. Until now, I’ve only been fooling around,” Sholom

Aleichem wrote in a letter published in a later biography.

It certainly opened up possibilities for other writers in Yiddish. Leviant writes that the next generation of Yiddish writers – including Sholem Asch and Isaac Bashevis Singer – “had no qualms representing the seamy side of Jewish life.”

By the time “Moshkele Ganev” was published, Sholom Aleichem was at the height of his literary career and popularity, Leviant noted. “Perhaps earlier, he would not have attempted a portrait of a ganev,” he wrote. “The fact that the book was serialized in full shows that readers were clamoring for the next installment.”

UPCOMING EVENTS

October 9 | 8:00 p.m. \$56-\$76

Bubby's Kitchen

Singer, songwriter and cantor Shira Ginsburg's acclaimed “Bubby's Kitchen” will be presented for one night only at Westhampton Beach Performing Arts Center (76 Main Street, Westhampton Beach, NY). Ginsburg shares songs and stories from her journey in this one-woman show, depicting her ties to her family's past, her financially unstable present (including odd jobs like selling Ginsu knives) and her aspirations for a musical future.

Get tickets at <https://www.bubbyskitchen.com> or call 631-288-1500.

October 10 | 7:00 p.m. Free

Advancing Menstrual Justice with Anita Diamant & Teen Feminist Fellows

Join Moving Traditions' conversation with Anita Diamant, best-selling author of “Period. End of Sentence.,” featuring two Kol Koleinu teen feminist fellows advocating for menstrual justice, following Period Action Day. The webinar will help parents and Jewish educators break through the taboo and have conversations to support preteens who will be getting their periods, teens who menstruate, and

UPCOMING EVENTS

those who don't but still need to know.

Register at <https://bit.ly/3mB1scj>

October 11 | 6:00 p.m. Free

Against Forgetting

UJA-Federation of New York and The Jewish Week present writer Dara Horn — author of the new essay collection, “People Love Dead Jews: Reports From a Haunted Present” — in conversation with Abraham Foxman, national director emeritus of the Anti-Defamation League. Their wide-ranging conversation will touch on Jewish memory, history, identity and antisemitism.

Register at <https://bit.ly/2ZWlrJO>

October 11 | 6:00 p.m. Free

I Have Cancer In My Family: How Genetic Testing Can Prevent Breast, Ovarian & Prostate Cancer

Robert Siegel, former senior host of NPR's “All Things Considered,” hosts a webinar on how genetic testing can prevent breast, ovarian and prostate cancer. With Dr. Kenneth Offit (Chief, Clinical Genetics Service, Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center), Dr. Susan Domchek (Executive Director, Basser Center for BRCA, University of Pennsylvania), and David Margel, M.D., PH.D. (Institute of Urology & Founder of Male BRCA Clinic, Israel's Rabin Medical Center). Presented by American Friends of Rabin Medical Center.

Register at <https://globalconnections.splashthat.com>

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