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# Jewish Exponent

Publisher & Chief Executive Officer Craig Burke cburke@midatlanticmedia.com

Associate Publisher Jeni Mann Tough jmann@midatlanticmedia.com

#### **EDITORIAL**

Editor | **Andy Gotlieb** 215-832-0797 agotlieb@jewishexponent.com

Staff Writers Jillian Diamond, Sasha Rogelberg, Heather Ross, Jarrad Saffren

#### ADVERTISING

Account Executives Alan Gurwitz, Robin Harmon, Pam Kuperschmidt, Jodi Lipson, David Pintzow, Sara Priebe, Sharon Schmuckler, Samantha Tuttle, Sylvia Witaschek

#### MARKETING

Audience Development Coordinator Julia Olaguer 410-902-2308 jolaguer@midatlanticmedia.com

#### CREATIVE

Art Director | **Steve Burke** Graphic Designers | **Ebony Brown, Lonna Koblick, Jay Sevidal, Frank Wagner, Carl Weigel** 

Digital Media Coordinator James Meskunas

#### 7605 Old York Road, Melrose Park, PA 19027

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#### BUSINESS

Accounting Manager **Pattie-Ann Lamp** 410-902-2311 plamp@midatlanticmedia.com accounting@midatlanticmedia.com

Accounts Receivable Specialist Sarah Appelbaum

sappelbaum@midatlanticmedia.com

Legal Notices legals@jewishexponent.com

#### Main Office: 215-832-0700

editor@jewishexponent.com 215-832-0797 circulation@jewishexponent.com 215-832-0700, ext. 1

sales@jewishexponent.com 215-832-0700, ext. 2

classified@jewishexponent.com 215-832-0749

If you're having problems receiving your Philadelphia Jewish Exponent in the mail, and live in an apartment or suite, please contact our circulation department at **215-832-0700, ext. 1** or **circulation@jewishexponent.com**.



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# Weekly Kibbitz

#### **Brad Ausmus, Kevin Youkilis Join Team Israel Coaching Staff for 2023 World Baseball Classic**

Former MLB All-Stars Brad Ausmus and Kevin Youkilis have joined Team Israel as coaches ahead of the 2023 World Baseball Classic.

The team's manager, Ian Kinsler, a former Jewish MLB All-Star himself — and a former Team Israel player announced the news last week on the Flippin' Bats baseball podcast hosted by Ben Verlander, an analyst and former minor leaguer (and brother of ace pitcher Justin Verlander). "There's going to be some guys with some great experience that I can lean on a little bit, and I just think it's going to be a great tournament," said Kinsler, a former second baseman and World Series champion who acknowledged that he is nervous to manage for the first time.

Ausmus, himself a former Team Israel manager, has five years of experience as a manager in the big leagues. He coached Kinsler on the Detroit Tigers

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from 2014 to 2017, and also helmed the Los Angeles Angels in 2019. Over the course of an 18-year playing career, Ausmus won three Gold Glove awards for his defense.

Growing up, Ausmus occasionally celebrated the holidays with his mother's side of the family, but he has said that coaching Team Israel brought him more in touch with his Jewish roots.

The fan favorite Youkilis was an accomplished big-league hitter during his 10-year MLB career, spent primarily with the Boston Red Sox. He won two World Series titles with the Sox, made three All-Star teams and also won a Gold Glove award. He will serve as Team Israel's hitting coach, despite having no prior coaching experience.

Since he retired in 2014, Youkilis has run an award-winning brewery in California, and in 2022, became a part-time Red Sox broadcaster.

The Greek-sounding surname was not the family's original last name; family lore has it that a relative escaped persecution in Romania in the 1800s and took on the name of a family friend for protection. Youkilis had a bar mitzvah in a Conservative synagogue.

In addition, Jerry Narron, who has 30 years of experience as a manager or coach with eight different MLB teams and served as third base coach for Israel at the 2017 World Baseball Classic qualifier, is rejoining the Team Israel coaching staff. Narron is a Christian Zionist and frequently visits his daughter who lives in Jerusalem.

Kinsler played for the victorious



Brad Ausmus, top, and Kevin Youkilis, bottom, have joined Team Israel's coaching staff for the 2023 World Baseball Classic.

Team USA in the 2017 tournament and later joined Team Israel for the 2020 Olympics. Since he signed on to manage the team in June, he has recruited the highest number of MLB players yet for the squad's roster, including All-Star outfielder Joc Pederson, and pitchers Dean Kremer and Eli Morgan.

"It means so much to the players when they wear the jerseys of their home country or whoever they're representing," Kinsler said on the podcast. "It just means so much to them, and to be a part of it, to experience it, the energy, the environment, was just incredible."

# Barrack, JNF-USA Announce \$10 Million Endowment for Study Abroad Program

Sasha Rogelberg | Staff Writer

ack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy in Bryn Mawr and Jewish National Fund-USA announced on Dec. 18 the establishment of a \$10 million endowment to fund Barrack's study abroad partnership with Alexander Muss High School in Israel.

The endowment is funded by philanthropic gifts from Leonard Barrack and the Max and Bella Stein Charitable Trust (Stein Trust) as well as other donors from the Barrack community and matched by JNF-USA.

The largest of its kind, according to a press release, the endowment will ensure the continuation of a trimester-long study abroad program for Barrack's 11th graders. The partnership between Barrack and Muss, a JNF-USA-operated school, was established in 1994, according to Barrack Head of School Marshall Lesack.

"Our school, which began in 1946, has been committed to Israel and has grown up — I think it's fair to say — side-by-side with the state of Israel," Lesack said. "We have believed for a long time, especially when we started sending groups to Israel, that immersive Israel experiences are essential for the strengthening of Jewish identity, for the commitment to the Jewish people worldwide and for the long-term strength of our Jewish community."

"Creating an endowment assures that funds will be available in perpetuity for all students participating in this life-changing experience," Barrack added.

Over an 11- or 12-week period, students from Barrack are immersed in an "experiential education" of Israel, according to Muss' website. In addition to fulfilling their secular and Judaic studies, students travel to the historic sites in Jewish and Israeli history.

"Imagine sitting on a hill in Israel and hearing about the battle between David and Goliath, to a location in Israel and seeing where in 1948 it was a major battle founding the state of Israel," said Joe Wolfson, the Muss board of governors chair. "You learn it, but you live it and visualize it."

For Barrack alumni, the trip had a profound impact on their Jewish identities.

Mike Stein of the Stein Trust said that not only did his daughter, who attended Barrack, return from a semester at Muss transformed, but her experience, in turn, transformed the family.

"She returned with a deeper bond to not only her Judaism but to her classmates," Stein said.

According to Russell Robinson, JNF-USA CEO, the

Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy students have participated in a study abroad program at Alexander Muss High School in Israel since 1994.

Muss study abroad program has practical implications as well. He said that abroad programs in high school are growing increasingly popular and reflect well on college applications.

"The whole idea of leadership of being away from home, of having to do your own studying, how you deal with dorm environments — all that gives you much more ability to develop better students," Robinson said.

Robinson's goal for the endowment is to not only have it sustained indefinitely but for it to be integrated into Barrack's tuition, putting less pressure on parents to have to pay for the program.

Lesack agreed that the need for the endowment is there. About 50% of Barrack students receive some sort of financial assistance.

"We are committed to Jewish education," Lesack

said. "We have families from across socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as across the region."

Alexander Muss High School was created in 1972 as a way for students from both secular and religious, public and private schools to complete an immersive educational experience in Israel. Since its founding, the school has hosted more than 40,000 students.

In addition to its trimester-long study abroad program for 11th graders, Barrack holds a shorter trip for eighth graders. While Lesack sees the trip as a way for the school to show its commitment to Israel, Robinson sees it as Israel's investment in the future generation.

"We're just going to build the leadership for the Jewish organizations of tomorrow," Robinson said.

srogelberg@midatlanticmedia.com

# Jewish Fraternity Reinvents, Preserves 100-year Legacy in New Chapter

#### Sasha Rogelberg | Staff Writer

ne hundred years after its 1917 founding, Sigma Alpha Rho, a Jewish fraternity for high school boys founded in West Philadelphia, was a ghost of what it used to be.

local

Once with more than 50 active chapters spanning from Pennsylvania and New Jersey to California and Canada, SAR, by the 2010s, was "limping along," according to Larry Blumenthal, past international president of the SAR Fraternity Alumni Association.

At the alumni association's 2017100th anniversary celebration, Blumenthal and a few other alumni announced to the more than 650 attendees that SAR was all but done.

"We looked at the reaction — not that people were shocked because people know that things have changed over the years — but the disappointment was definitely there," Blumenthal said.

But the disappointment was motivation for Blumenthal. He believed that there was still great interest in the fraternity and, along with some other alumni in the Philadelphia area, he decided to revive and revamp the organization.

In December, SAR inducted its first new chapter in 10 years as 12 high school boys from Bucks County became brothers of the fraternity.

"Once you become part of Sigma Alpha Rho, you become a brother," said Sean Klein, 16, a new inductee from Richboro. "It's a really inspiring thing to be treated on the same grounds as some of the people who are very influential in their fields, who are very respected as adults, and it's very inspiring to be brothers with them."

Just like their brothers decades before them, today's SAR members are tasked with organizing and running community events, instilling values of independence, according to Blumenthal. So far, the high schoolers have organized self-funded dinners, a paintball event open to nonmembers and a haunted hayride.

"It's typical friend group activities," said new inductee Ethan Lynn, a 17-year-old in Southampton. "But the difference is that it's held together with the motivation to have a Jewish community."

The group has also volunteered with Jewish Relief Agency to package food boxes to deliver to food-insecure community members. In the future, the group hopes to organize a ski trip and attend a Broadway musical.

The idea of a rebooted organization is exciting for Lynn, who wants to experience a group of young men "maturing together."

"I liked the idea of really building a community for myself and seeing it form before my eyes," he said.

Even in an age of social media and three years of COVID-hindered social lives, that core value of leadership and community is what connects the old generation of SAR brothers with the teenage members of today, alumni said.

"It gave us the opportunity to make decisions on our own and plan our own events, whether they were dances, Jewish Community Center events, sporting events or meeting up with other chapters," said Joel Hollander, president of SAR Alumni Association and an active member of the fraternity in the late 1960s.

After 11 young men founded the West Philadelphia fraternity in 1917, the organization, originally founded as a "social and athletic" club, took off four years later, with another Philadelphia chapter of 10 Central High School students forming in 1921. A regional chapter was formed in January 1924, and the next month, the organization launched a national newspaper.

By the late 1920s, the fraternity, filled with young men eager for social connections, had formed a chapter in



Sigma Alpha Rho's 12 new inductees from Bucks County, the group's first new chapter in 10 years



A SAR chapter from the 1960s

Louisiana and continued to grow, even after World War II, with the organization spanning the country by the 1960s. At one point, Cherry Hill, New Jersey, had five chapters.

Chapters hosted dances, had baseball teams, and met up for regional and national conventions, funding their housing, entertainment and travel with car wash fundraisers and ad sales. At age 20, Hollander hosted an international convention in Washington, D.C., with 300 brothers in attendance.

After the Vietnam War, interest in the fraternity waned, but Blumenthal believed that a self-led Jewish youth group still had appeal to young men today. After SAR's 100th anniversary, he, as chair of the group's reactivation committee, worked with a marketing firm to hold a series of focus groups, gauging the interest of a group to young men. His hunch proved correct. "We had to start somewhere," he said. "And I'm pretty bullish on this group expanding."

SAR will likely induct another Philadelphia-area chapter this month.

Though Blumenthal was eager to give the organization a facelift with a new website and branding, appealing to the teenagers of today, part of the draw of SAR is its storied history. Lynn's father was a member of the organization decades ago and encouraged him to join.

"I was kind of motivated to keep this organization with such a long history going," Lynn said. "And just the fact that we're building a community with just a bunch of friends, I mean, there's nothing bad about it."

srogelberg@midatlanticmedia.com

# KleinLife Throws New Year's Party for Ukrainian Refugees

#### Jarrad Saffren | Staff Writer

Between 6,000 and 10,000 refugees from the war in Ukraine have resettled in Northeast Philadelphia since the conflict started in February, according to KleinLife President and CEO Andre Krug. Many are children who, after leaving their country of birth and early life with no advance warning, lost their sense of normalcy in a new land.

So on Dec. 28, KleinLife tried to give it back to them for a couple of hours.

From 4-6 p.m., Krug and his team threw a New Year's party for "Ukrainian refugee children and their families," according to a news release. There were games, holiday treats, gifts, singers, arts and crafts, cookies and more. Between 75 and 100 children attended. Each one left with a \$50 gift card to Target.

"What we wanted to do is to give children kind of a festive atmosphere," Krug said. "It's probably the most important part of this. Give them back their childhood."

Ukrainian refugees have resettled in Northeast Philadelphia because many existing residents speak Russian like they do, according to the CEO. They started arriving in April and May, shortly after Russia's late February invasion of Ukraine, and "asking for all kinds of help," Krug said. The community center, which is "inspired by Jewish values," according to its website, decided to step up and offer that assistance to a group of mostly non-Jews.

Krug is from the Eastern Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, and his neighborhood was destroyed in the war. So he said he feels "very passionate about this issue." And his staff does, too, as most of them are immigrants as well. Helping refugees also is in line with those Jewish values that KleinLife is inspired by, Krug said.

"The strangers came to our neighborhood, and we welcomed them," he said. "We're just trying to help." And they are helping.

In the summer, KleinLife took more than 50 Ukrainian children into a free camp program. When the school year began in the fall, the community center started an after-school program for refugee kids, also free of charge. Most of the adults are mothers since fathers are fighting in the war, so KleinLife has offered English as a second language classes and assistance with documents for school registration and work authorization. It also has connected them to the Jewish Federation of Greater



Ukrainian refugees got presents at KleinLife's New Year's party on Dec. 28.

Philadelphia's food pantry and to a dental office on campus run by Temple University's School of Dentistry. The dental care is free as well.

To pay for those services, KleinLife is raising money "constantly," the CEO said. It is writing grants, asking the Jewish Federation for help and mobilizing volunteers. The Jewish Federation helped cover the cost of the summer camp and volunteers gathered the Target gift cards for the New Year's party.

There is no financial planning involved here. Krug said the community center's approach is that it will provide the service and the money will appear.

"These people didn't choose to leave. It just happened. When the bomb hits your house, you sometimes don't have any choice anymore," Krug added. "It's been an uneasy process for most of them because it's not like they were getting ready for years or even months to come here."

KleinLife's new mission is not that different from the one it had started to undertake before the war. The immigrant population in the Northeast continues to grow by "leaps and bounds," according to Krug. Firstgeneration immigrants now make up between 30-40% of the population in zip codes that KleinLife serves. And



they come from 30 or 40 different countries.

Krug expects working with immigrants to become an even bigger part of what the community center does moving forward. It's helpful for the refugees to find so many services in one place, he explained.

There are some Jews in these groups, but not too many. Nonetheless, Krug does not plan on changing the institution's identity as one that is rooted in Jewish values. He said that welcoming the stranger is an American value, too.

"What we're also trying to show is this is what this country is all about. This is a country of immigrants," Krug said. "It behooves us to help these immigrants."

jsaffren@midatlanticmedia.com

# Community members share their resolutions for the upcoming year

A new calendar year marks the symbolic opportunity for reflection, recommitment and change. As 2023 begins, the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia asked community members to share their resolutions on how they can make a difference, both locally and overseas. From creating inclusive Jewish spaces to prioritizing safety, here are some of their intentions for the new year.

Our New Year's resolution is to build and maintain a strong and inclusive Jewish community. We believe that all individuals and families should feel a place of belonging and feel welcomed in every Jewish setting. Hilary Levine & Tyler McKinley, Honeymoon Israel Participants

The Jewish New Year falls on the first day of the Hebrew month of Tishri, which coincides with the month of September. I hope to build a warm and welcoming environment in which to share the richness and joy of learning Torah and to engage the community in prayer. I want to continue to foster the valuable trait of unity among Jews here in Philadelphia." Rabbi Yosef Zarnighian, Congregation Mikveh Israel





My resolution for the new year is to continue to ensure that marginalized communities within Israel have access to opportunities and resources to break socioeconomic barriers. I will work to expand our pluralistic community and nurture a comforting environment where every Jew can express themselves." Tali Lidar, Jewish Federation's Director of Israel and Global Operations

I am reigniting my commitment to the community, infusing values into my work that enrich Jewish life for all who want to participate in it. I will continue to grow and expand our organization as a trusted philanthropic entity, where community members can see the true impact of their giving." Michael Balaban, Jewish Federation's President and CEO

#### Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia

Looking for a new year's resolution? Support your Jewish community at jewishphilly.org/donate

# YOU SHOULD KNOW ... Lauren Biederman



#### Sasha Rogelberg | Staff Writer

n the week between Christmas and New Years — a particularly busy week for Biederman's Specialty Foods — owner Lauren Biederman processed between 200-300 pounds of smoked fish, but she still isn't sick of the stuff.

For her New Year's Eve meal, she dined on fondue, caviar and the requisite champagne, and for brunch the next day, a bagel spread with her choice of Scottish salmon or pastrami lox or whitefish salad, topped off with trout roe.

"Sounds pretty perfect to me," Biederman said.

Biederman's Specialty Foods will mark its second birthday on Jan. 15. The shop on Christian Street, despite its home in Philadelphia's Italian Market, is undeniably Jewish: Designed after New York's appetizing stores, Biederman's serves schools of smoked fish, from the classic Nova and kippered salmon to Scandinavian spins such as vodka dill gravlax.

Beyond their fileted fare, Biederman serves a swath of caviar — though the true caviar from a sturgeon is not kosher — as well as other specialty goods, such as tinned fish, Kaplan's New Model Bakery bagels and New York's Seed + Mill halvah.

Biederman, 27 and a Queen Village resident, grew up with Jewish appetizing stores ingrained in her childhood. Hailing from Killington, Vermont, she would frequent the tri-state area, visiting appetizing stories in Bridgeport and Fairfield, Connecticut, where her grandmother is from, in addition to the myriad appetizing stores in New York, a result of the Eastern European immigrants, with deep cultural roots of preserving fish, who settled there.

"My family, we would go into New York City all the time when I was a kid," Biederman said. "For Christmas, we'd do dim sum in Chinatown and then appetizers the next day."

Biederman shied away from calling Biederman's an appetizing store because she was worried that few people would recognize the homage or understand what she was selling. But the location of the store at 824 Christian St. transports the shop to a feeling that Biederman's New York ancestors may have experienced a century ago.

"The Italian market, to me, is one of the more special places in the world," Biederman said.

"Most of these businesses are 100 years old, third-generation families are operating them — or fourth generation maybe — and it's been pretty nice," she continued. "I do feel like the Italian Market embraces lots of different cultures now, more than just Italian food. Obviously, you have tons of Mexican food; there's tons of Vietnamese food or spice shops."

The community there has welcomed Biederman's, which, as a new company, is continuing the specialty food tradition defined by the neighborhood. Biederman has also spent almost half her life in food service, adding to her pedigree. At 15, she began busing and hosting at Three Tomatoes Trattoria, an Italian joint with a Jewish owner that her family frequented throughout her childhood.

From there, she worked at a steakhouse in Burlington, then a nightclub and later a French restaurant, before going to the University of Vermont. Biederman never formally studied hospitality or the culinary arts.

Instead, she moved to Philadelphia, attracted by the city's food scene, and continued her front-of-house work at Osteria and Zahav. Her work as a waitress only grew her love of food.

"It's a very boring job if you don't care about the food a lot," she said. "And it's a lot more fulfilling if you do care about those things and if you have that same respect for the back of house and for the people who are actually doing the cooking."

By the time Biederman was thinking about moving on, she became interested in opening a specialty food shop, excited by the idea of selling what she loved to eat. Specialty stores were also having a moment of popularity, with customers able to buy unique foods they could cook at home during the pandemic. But the time of the store's opening was precarious: January 2021 marked a spike in COVID cases.

When the store first opened, only three people were allowed to enter at a time, creating a line down the block, adding to Biederman's image as a popular store. But with no more COVID restrictions at the store, the line out the door at Biederman's is still there, sometimes.

The store now has three full-time workers, and Biederman said the holiday season was busy.

"I was nervous that I wasn't getting the word out there fast enough," Biederman said. "But it seemed to have worked."

srogelberg@midatlanticmedia.com

#### editorials /

# Where Is the Progress on Immigration Reform?

n a 5-4 ruling last week, the Supreme Court blocked the lifting of a Trump-era Title 42 order on immigration, which left in place the federal directive that has been used to prevent the entry of millions of asylum seekers at the southern border.

The Biden administration promised to lift Title 42 — a public-health-based order implemented at the beginning of the COVID pandemic, which has been used by both the Trump and the Biden administrations to expel more than 2 million migrants on public health grounds. While the Biden administration outwardly sought to terminate the rule, it is actually breathing a grateful

sigh of relief at the Supreme Court's Title 42 extension. That's because the administration hasn't yet developed a plan to handle the mounting mass of migrants gathering along the U.S.-Mexican border and seeking asylum or other grounds to enter America.

The United States is the destination of choice for tens of thousands of people from Latin America who are fleeing violence, gangs, poverty, corruption and the depravity of their own governments. But we have no comprehensive plan in place to deal with the ever-growing immigration demands. And, even with Title 42 in place, the migration wave has



overwhelmed border states.

The last time this country made a serious effort at immigration reform was in 2005, in a bill co-sponsored by Republican Sen. John McCain and Democratic Sen. Ted Kennedy. Their effort was supported by President George W. Bush. But the bill never got a vote in the Senate. Eighteen years later, as the demand for entry from the south has increased many-fold, there is still no answer. Everyone acknowledges the problem.

The most affected states in this mess are Republican-led. And the stunts from those states — like Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis sending two planeloads of migrants to Martha's Vineyard in Massachusetts in September and Texas Gov. Greg Abbott sending three busloads of migrants to Washington, D.C., on Christmas — are offensive. But the off-putting moves by Southern governors are driven by genuine frustration. Their states are unable to cope with the many challenges presented by rising migrant numbers, and there is no federal plan to help.

Nearly two years ago, President Joe Biden appointed Vice President Kamala Harris as his "border czar" to tackle the immigration crisis. We don't know what the vice president has done regarding that assignment. But we do know that

since Biden took office in 2021, we have seen increasing levels of migrant crossings, further inundating a border already heavily strained by irregular migration and an overwhelmed asylum-processing system. It is clear that the longer the problem is not addressed with a comprehensive plan, the worse it is going to get.

The Supreme Court bought the administration some additional time to get its immigration act together. We call on the administration to develop an updated, comprehensive and realistic immigration policy. If the vice president can't lead that effort, then find someone who can.

# Bill Clark/Newscor

# **Trump's Tax Returns**

ate last month, following a successful multi-year battle over the right to see former President Donald Trump's tax returns, a House panel voted along party lines to release several years of those tax returns to the public. The returns were released on Dec. 30, just days before Democrats will turn over control of the House of Representatives to Republicans.

Reactions were predictable. Republicans called the move a vindictive, partisan cheap shot, wholly inconsistent with historical practice. And they said the move would result in retaliation against President Joe Biden and other Democrats when Republicans take control of the House. Democrats claimed that the release of the returns was "in the public interest," arguing that American citizens have a right to know financial information about their president and his claims of wealth and financial success.

When the House Ways and Means Committee first sought copies of Trump's tax returns several years ago, it argued that it needed them to help craft legislation regarding the Internal Revenue Service's presidential audit program. The committee was also troubled by the fact that Trump refused to release his returns when running for president or while in office, as had become the tradition since the Nixon administration.

But those past disclosures were all voluntary — as there is no law that requires presidential candidates or those in office to make those disclosures. Trump's decision not to release his tax returns — despite repeated, vocal demands that he do so — was a political risk he was willing to take. He got elected anyhow.

The Ways and Means Committee may be right that changes are necessary in the IRS' presidential audit program. And the issues of regular audits of presidential tax returns and the mandatory disclosure of tax returns and other financial information by those seeking the presidency may be appropriate issues for consideration going forward. We can even accept the argument that the committee needed access to Trump's returns in order to help evaluate the need for

#### such legislation.

But we are hard-pressed to understand how any of those considerations justify the public disclosure of Trump's tax returns for the period of 2015-20. Instead, it is pretty clear that the primary purpose for the disclosures was a purely political effort to embarrass the former president.

Yet here, too, reactions to the disclosed information were mixed, with Trump critics claiming that it shows him to be a terrible businessman, a tax cheat and worse, and others accepting of Trump's claims that he took advantage of legitimate, legal loopholes to allow him to avoid significant tax payments. We leave that analysis to others.

What bothers us is the precedent. In our hyper-polarized political environment, the Democrats on the House Ways and Means Committee have invited a tit-for-tat response from Republicans. That is not a good thing. We urge Congress to rise above petty partisanship and to respect personal privacy, even of their political rivals.



# Menorahs on Public Property Can Lead to Trouble

**Paul L. Newman** 

Some Jews were beaming with pride that there were large displays of Chanukah menorahs on public property in prominent locations in cities across America and around the world.

Sometimes, non-Jewish political leaders were given the honor of lighting these large religious displays.

I, for one, am not happy, but before anyone burns a Jewish star on my lawn or calls me a Jewish Grinch, allow me to explain.

I'm not opposed to Chabad

leading a menorah parade through Center City, as it's akin to parades organized by other groups, both religious and secular. Nor am I against Chabad, the group that's universally behind these PDJ (public displays of Judaism), but I am against placing a menorah on public property.

In the past, Chabad has been involved in multiple lawsuits in several cities as to whether it can erect a menorah on public property. The Supreme Court ruled that a menorah, like a Christmas tree, is not a religious symbol, and therefore can be erected on public property.

One doesn't have to be a rabbi or a constitutional law expert to know that a menorah is not a secular object. One can celebrate Christmas without a Christmas tree, however, it's nearly impossible to celebrate Chanukah without a menorah of some kind to hold the candles/oil.

Furthermore, the menorah reminds Jews of the miracle that occurred after the Maccabees captured the Second Temple. A mere day's worth of pure oil, used to light the Second Temple's menorah, miraculously lasted eight days.

The menorah was so representative of Judaism that an image of one, stolen by Jerusalem's Roman conquerors, was carved into Rome's Arch of Titus. It's challenging to find a synagogue that doesn't employ a menorah image carved into its building, depict one in its stained glass or possess a large replica inside its sanctuary. After Israel was founded, a menorah was selected as the emblem of Israel.

Some may wonder why I, a proud Jew, would seemingly be against the prominent public display of this Jewish religious symbol.

I grew up in Cincinnati with a Jewish



population that's less than 10% of Philadelphia's. Thirty years ago, Chabad insisted on placing a large menorah on the main square of Cincinnati. Soon thereafter, the local Ku Klux demanded the right to erect its cross on Fountain Square. Despite objections from a host of Cincinnati community leaders, including the Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, federal courts permitted the Klan cross to be erected on Fountain Square. Luckily, "good vandals"

destroyed it every time it was erected and re-erected. In

1995, the KKK won a Supreme Court case allowing it to erect its symbol of hate on the lawn of Ohio's state capital after Chabad was permitted to erect a menorah there.

Moreover, it's religiously incongruent that America's non-Jewish presidents and mayors, like Jim Kenney, have been honored with lighting a Chanukah menorah. I understand their being invited to attend a ceremony and respectfully watching the event, but there's something fundamentally not kosher with non-Jewish officeholders leading a Jewish ritual.

Chabad has done much good. The 1972 Jewish Catalog listed fewer than 100 Chabad centers in America and a mere handful worldwide. Today, there are more than 3,500 Chabad centers across America and around the world. Chabad has provided welcoming places for unaffiliated Jews to reconnect with their Judaism.

Chabad locations also serve as safe havens for Jews traveling to the most remote parts of the world. A friend's daughter is alive today because a Chabad rabbi rescued her from a filthy third-world Laotian hospital and brought her to Bangkok for proper treatment. She wouldn't be alive today without that Chabad rabbi.

The explosive growth of antisemitism and the ability of the KKK or another hate group to be legally protected in erecting symbols of hate on public property cement my feeling that the Supreme Court erred in its multiple decisions on menorahs.

Paul L. Newman of Merion Station is an amateur historian of African American history working on a miniseries docudrama on the African American civil rights movement of the first half of the 20th century.

#### letters /

#### **Dignity, Trump Like Oil and Water**

It was written in "Trump for Sale" (Dec. 22) that someone "expected a level of dignity and restraint in how the man seeking he highest office in the land conducts himself." Sorry, but dignity and restraint are characteristics unknown to Donald Trump.

It was also suggested that "Trump literally promoting himself as a cartoon character just to line his own pockets — seems to go too far." Really? Trump already went too far many decades ago, as he lied, cheated and deceived his way to the funds of other people — those who made the mistake of trusting him — and others who, either purposefully or unknowingly, "went along for the ride" on the Trump train. His despicable, soon-to-be-clearly-demonstrated illegal behavior has been out there for all to see for his entire life.

Surely, we can't be noticing just now that he is nothing more than a common criminal, a loser and a weak and fundamentally dishonest lowlife (his words, not mine). Indeed, there is nothing wrong with anyone "trying to make money," but surely not deceitfully, on the backs of others.

Frank Friedman, Delanco, New Jersey

#### Why Publish Editorial?

Is there some good reason you published this "Trump for Sale" editorial (Dec. 22)? Does it have to do with any Jewish cause?

I found it to be a most disrespectful and inconsequential piece of writing, no matter where your politics lie. I would not be surprised to be reading it in the National Enquirer in line at the supermarket. Do you think you could find something less partisan to comment on? As much as Trump's popularity has dropped, it seems as though the people that dislike him cannot get enough of him!

I thought the Exponent under new management was changing. This was an extremely substandard piece of writing, and I hope you did not get any false satisfaction from writing it.

Ellyn Katz-Levy, Bryn Mawr

#### **SEND US LETTERS**

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opinion <sub>/</sub>



# The Iran Nuclear Deal Is Dead. Or Is it?

By Ben Cohen

ike the parrot in that wonderful Monty Python sketch, American and European diplomats have been trying to persuade themselves that the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran isn't dead. It's just resting.

In the period since the 2018 U.S. withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action — the technical name for the deal between Iran, the U.S. and five other world powers — it has become painfully clear that the main foreign policy achievement of former President Barack Obama's administration is demised, passed on, ceased to be, expired, run down the curtain, no more. In a word, dead.

The diplomats know this, but they have been unwilling to make the announcement, preferring instead to claim at frequent intervals that a revived deal at negotiations that have dragged

on for more than a year in Vienna is "imminent."

Will that position change, now that amateur video of President Joe Biden declaring that the deal is "dead" has surfaced? The answer, maddeningly, seems to be both yes and no.

Biden's comments on the deal were not intended for public consumption, and he uttered them a while ago — on Nov. 4 to be precise, at a campaign stop in Oceanside, California, as voters headed to the midterm elections. In the video, a woman with a Persian accent can be heard asking the president off-camera whether he will declare the JCPOA dead. "No " he answered

"No," he answered.

Pressed as to why, Biden replied that it was a "long story" and that there were "a lot of reasons." But he then went on to explicitly acknowledge that the JCPOA is, in fact, "dead, but we're not gonna announce it."

While the video showed only a small portion of their encounter, it didn't sound like Biden's interlocutor was particularly impressed. "We just don't want any deals with the mullahs," she emphasized. "They don't represent us, they're not our government."

"Oh, I know they don't represent you," Biden replied. "But they have a nuclear weapon that they'll represent." He then headed off, only to appear later at a rally with a message of solidarity for the historic anti-regime protests that have raged across Iran since



President Joe Biden delivers a speech to the nation in front of Independence Hall in Philadelphia on Sept. 1.

September. "Don't worry, we're gonna free Iran," he told a group of activists displaying "Free Iran" signs. "They're gonna free themselves pretty soon."

So, is the Iran deal dead? Going by these comments of Biden's, one can only conclude that his answer is both a yes and a no. He used the hardly ambiguous word "dead" to describe its status. But his remarks also begged the question of whether something like the Iran deal can truly be considered dead if this fact cannot, or will not, be recognized in a public forum.

Other voices in Washington, D.C., have been similarly downcast on the prospects for a revival of the JCPOA without going as far as calling it "dead." Back in April, Secretary of State Antony Blinken confessed that he was not "overly optimistic at the prospects of actually getting an agreement to conclusion," while in October, the U.S. envoy to Iran, Rob Malley, said that the U.S. administration was not going to "waste time" pursuing a deal while the Tehran regime engaged in its brutal crackdown against protesters.

After the video of Biden surfaced, it was unclear whether senior U.S. officials were bolstering his comments or undermining them, as they insisted that no deal was possible in the present climate but did not directly rule out such an arrangement in the future.

As a result, according to John Kirby of the National Security Council, the administration's focus has shifted from the deal to "practical ways to confront Iran" over both its repression of the protests and its growing military alliance with President Vladimir Putin's regime in Russia, while for State Department spokesperson Ned Price, "the JCPOA is not on the agenda" and "hasn't been for some time." Very, very negative, to be sure, but it still leaves the door to a future agreement ajar.

What can explain this reticence? In part, it's the old negotiating tactic of not showing your hand if you don't absolutely need to; let the Iranians be the ones to take the blame for the failure of talks seems to be the idea here. Yet the Europeans are also a factor, in that the EU remains wedded to the goal of a revived JCPOA, despite announcing a new round of sanctions on the Iranian regime after the protests erupted. As long as the EU believes there is even the faintest hope of a breakthrough with the mullahs, the U.S. is unlikely to place an official stamp upon its commander-inchief's off-the-cuff comments.

This kind of ducking and weaving by

the west sends the signal to Tehran that it still has a role to play, by arriving at an outcome that western nations badly want. To deliver on a deal, the regime has to remain in power. Yet if our goal now — as Biden stated at the rally in California — is to "free Iran" and to offer every assistance we can to the ordinary Iranians driven by this goal, then we need to do the exact opposite. The robust sanctions that have been imposed on numerous Iranian individuals, military organizations and government agencies need to be amplified by a freeze on diplomatic contacts with the Iranians.

Foremost, this would mean formally ending the negotiations in Vienna to resurrect the JCPOA. Biden's judgment that the deal is dead would thus become official policy. And as well as ending the nuclear talks, Western nations should suspend diplomatic contacts by pulling their ambassadors out of Tehran while leaving lower-level staff in place to monitor the repression of the protests.

While it is perhaps too big of an ask that regime change should also become Western policy, there should be less of an objection to helping the Iranians achieve their liberation themselves. The JCPOA is dead. Let the Iranian regime follow in its path.

Ben Cohen is a New York City-based journalist and author who writes a weekly column on Jewish and international affairs for JNS.



# American Jews Must Embrace Their Own Identity Politics

#### By Benjamin Kerstein

he unprecedented rise of antisemitism in the United States has taken many by surprise, in particular, because it is, for the most part, new in American history.

For the first time, antisemitism is being "mainstreamed." It has emerged as a major political and social phenomenon on the far-right and the far-left, in the Muslim community and certain sectors of the Black community. American Jews appear to be facing a perfect storm.

No one in the Jewish community seems to know quite what to do about this, but they know they must do something. It is possible that the answer to this urgent question may be found by asking what American Jews' primary relationship with America has been until now, since it is this relationship that has been disturbed by the tidal wave of hatred.

For the most part, the relationship has been defined by a single ideology, and it is an ideology in the most literal sense, a way of conceiving of and being in the world: assimilation.

Put simply, the Jews made an unspoken bargain with the United States: America would accept the Jews as free and equal citizens, and in return, Jews would do everything possible to become Americans as this was understood at the time.

Until quite recently, this appeared to be working. Over time, assimilation came to be seen as a done deal: The Jews had succeeded in becoming Americans in every sense, even the most Orthodox among them. They were proud of it, they embraced it and they began to take it for granted.

But they were wrong. In the face of the new American antisemitism (a phrase I had hoped never to write), it is clear that assimilation has failed. It didn't work. To the surprise of many, American Jews turned out to be Jews just like all other Jews. They have discovered, or at least sense, that they are not exceptions to history.

What, then, should American Jews do?

Some of the more fervent among us, mostly American Jews who have moved to Israel, are urging immediate aliyah, but this is at best unrealistic, and American Jews have a right to attempt to continue to be Americans.

On the other extreme, there are Jews who have doubled down on assimilation, asserting that it



can be achieved if the Jews completely divest themselves of any Jewish partisanship (especially their attachment to Israel) and appease the antisemites by becoming exactly like them. Needless to say, this would be an abomination and effectively erase the American Jewish community by making them indistinguishable from those who hate them — the ultimate endgame, perhaps, of assimilation.

Somewhere between these two extremes is a large contingent that might be called Jews of indifference. Children of decades of unquestioned assimilation, they lack a religious connection to Judaism and regard Israel with disinterest at best. They feel little or no urgency about the rise of the new antisemitism, as they are not visibly Jewish and have only the vaguest sense of solidarity with the rest of the community. Thus, they have largely escaped the current upheaval unscathed and see no reason why they will not continue to do so. To the extent that they think about it at all, they appear to believe that apathy will save them.

Their answer to the rise of American antisemitism is, in other words, to do nothing. If anything is certain, it is that this is not a viable option.

There is a certain model that might be adopted, however, though it is uncomfortable for many on both the left and right of the Jewish community because it has often been wielded as a blunt scythe through American society: identity politics. Today, a great many American minorities — Black Americans, Hispanics, LGBTQ people and numerous others — have made their identity as minorities an essential part of their way of being in the world. They feel a strong sense of compact solidarity, which demands an essential struggle, and they formulate their political and social ambitions accordingly.

Though this does present, as critics point out, the threat of balkanization, it nonetheless grants these groups considerable power, above all because it makes them strong, militant and unafraid to express their anger. These are delicate materials, but they are often essential to social change.

Except, perhaps, for Asian Americans, American Jews are the only minority group that has not adopted this stance. Still clinging to their old ideology, they have no identity politics.

To overcome antisemitism, this must change. American Jews must become strong, militant and unafraid of express-

ing their anger, not to separate themselves from America but to become part of it on different terms. They should not seek diffusion into American society but engage with it as a compact minority that has replaced the urge to embrace conformity with a particularist identity. An identity that must be accepted by the majority in the same way the majority has accepted, albeit after many troubles, that of other minority groups.

There are, thankfully, some indications that American Jews are moving in this direction. Jews are now accepted as a "protected group" under the Civil Rights Act. There is a small but growing contingent of young Jewish activists who take a more militant and uncompromising stand against antisemitism and for their Jewish identity. And the American Jewish leadership has succeeded in pushing antisemitism to the top of America's sociopolitical agenda.

We may hope that these seeds continue to grow, however much it may disturb a century-old ideology in which so much hope was placed only to be frustrated by history. What American Jews require now is a new hope. If they wish to remain Americans, they must find a new way of being Americans. And while it is still in a delicate infancy, this may finally be taking shape.

Benjamin Kerstein is a writer and editor living in Tel Aviv.

opinion /



# Can US Jews Love the Real Israel — or Only the Fantasy Version?

Jonathan S. Tobin

he Israeli government that was sworn in on Dec. 29 brings with it new challenges for those who care about the Jewish state.

The characterization of the latest coalition led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as the "most right-wing" in the country's nearly 75-year history is not wrong. And most American Jews are not happy about it.

The question is whether enough of them can swallow their abhorrence for Netanyahu or his coalition partners, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, to avoid the kind of open break between the two communities that would do real, perhaps permanent, damage to the U.S.-Israel alliance.

The answer is that they should, for a number of reasons — not the least of which is that a palpable breach in the relationship will be exploited by the intersectional left wing of the Democratic Party and others who are either anti-Zionist or indifferent to Israel's fate. It's far from clear, however, that mainstream liberal Jewish groups are capable of transcending their ideological differences with the new constellation in Jerusalem.

Nor is it likely that they'll demonstrate the leadership required to unite a divided community behind the idea that the wishes of Israel's voters should be respected, and that U.S. pressure to "save the Jewish state from itself" should be vociferously opposed. For one thing, the split has an obvious cause.

Israel is a center-right country, with a clear majority preferring parties of the Netanyahu-led right-wing/ religious bloc. American Jews lean heavily to the left, with most supporting Democrats over the generally more pro-Israel Republicans.

The partisan aspect of this dilemma mustn't be underestimated. At a time when politics has replaced the role that religion used to play in the lives of most Americans, the fact that a growing number of American Jews regard the Jewish state as the moral equivalent of a red state creates an enormous barrier between them and Israelis. If Americans — including Jews — are now more opposed to "inter-political marriage" than to interracial or interfaith relationships, Jewish Democrats are bound to find it increasingly difficult to feel close to Israel.

Religious differences are also important. The majority of Americans identify with the non-Orthodox denominations the center of whose faith is liberal politics. And though most Israelis are not religious, even the secular tend to see Orthodoxy as the only legitimate form of Judaism. Americans have trouble fathoming this mindset and the fact that more than 26% of Israelis voted for the explicitly Orthodox parties of varying stripes whose representatives make up half of the governing coalition.

Yet the difference between these two tribes goes beyond politics or religion, and extends into the realm of identity. It's about whether liberal Americans are able to accept the idea of a sectarian state.

The United States is a country whose existence is rooted in universal values that seek to break down the barriers between peoples and faiths. In contrast, Israel like most other nations — is an embodiment of particularism. Its priority is to reconstitute and defend sovereignty in the ancient homeland of the Jews, not to be the last and best hope of all mankind.

The inherent tension between a state whose purpose is sectarian, but which seeks to govern itself democratically and with respect for the rights of the religious and ethnic minorities within its borders, is a perennial theme of Israeli debates. The current coalition represents the view that defending Jewish rights and safety should be prioritized, even while honoring and upholding — despite the slander of its opponents — basic democratic principles.

Meanwhile, the assumption that American Jews were always steadfast proponents of Zionism, and only began to become disillusioned by the ascendancy of the Likud in 1977 — especially over the 13 years of Netanyahu's unprecedented run as prime minister — is a myth. The periods of the greatest American-Jewish enthusiasm for Israel were more the exception than the rule.

American-Jewish resistance to Zionism was ferocious in the half century from its founding to the birth of Israel in 1948. Though two Reform rabbis — Stephen Wise and Abba Hillel Silver — became leading advocates for a Jewish state in the 1930s and 1940s, the Reform movement was ideologically opposed to any thought of a promised land other than the United States. Mainstream groups like the American Jewish Committee had a similar bent.

The Holocaust, and then the drama of Israel's creation and early wars, effectively squelched anti-Zionist sentiment as an active political force for a time. But that consensus ended once the murder of 6 million Jews who had no homeland to flee to before there was an Israel — was safely in the distant past. After 1973, the possibility of a second genocide, should the Jewish state suffer a catastrophic military defeat, no longer seemed realistic.

The revival of the pre-1948 debate about Zionism was inevitable. An Israel still confronted with the arduous, often messy problems of conducting a generational war against Islamists and Arab nationalists incapable of accepting the legitimacy of a Jewish state was bound to horrify Jews.

For the first decades of Israel's existence, the above differences with Americans were papered over by the dominance of Labor Zionism, whose universalist rhetoric meshed nicely with liberal sensibilities, even if the security policies it pursued did not. But even in its most idealized form, a particularistic project such as Zionism has been a difficult sell for American Jews, the overwhelming bulk of whom see sectarian concerns not only as antithetical to their well-being, but possibly racist, as well.

Having found a home in which they were granted free access to every sector of American society, and in which the non-Jewish majority proved willing to marry them, they unsurprisingly have had difficulty with an avowedly ethno-religious state with such a different raison d'être.

Moreover, an American-Jewish population in which the acceptance of assimilation has created a large and fast-growing group the demographers call "Jews of no religion" is bound to take a dim view of a country that specifically defines itself as a Jewish state, no matter how generous its policies toward the Palestinians or the non-Orthodox denominations might be. If many American Jews are no longer certain that their community's survival matters, how can one possibly expect them to regard the interest of Israeli Jews in preserving their state against dangerous foes with anything but indifference?

Many Jews talk about their willingness to support a nicer, less nationalist and religious Israel than the one that elected Netanyahu and his allies. They support efforts by Democrats to pressure it to make suicidal concessions to Palestinians who, whether Americans are willing to admit it or not, purpose Israel's elimination. They also want it to be more welcoming to liberal variants of Judaism that Americans practice, and for the Orthodox to have less influence.

But even if you think those changes would make Israel better or safer, a majority of Israelis disagree. So, while much of the criticism is framed as a defense of democracy to sync with Democratic Party talking points that smear Republicans, there's nothing democratic about thwarting the will of a nation's voters or seeking to impose a mindset they regard as alien to their needs.

The challenge for liberals is not just how to cope with an Israel led by Netanyahu, Smotrich and Ben-Gvir, or to put aside the partisan hyperbole branding it as a fascist or fundamentalist tyranny. It's accepting the fact that Israel is not a Middle Eastern variant of the blue state enclaves where most American Jews live.

They need to grasp that simple, but still difficult-to-accept concept and forget about the Israel of liberal fantasies. If they can, it should be easy for them to understand that no matter who is running Israel — or how its people think, worship or vote — the sole Jewish state's continued survival is still a just and worthy cause.

Jonathan S. Tobin is editor-in-chief of JNS (Jewish News Syndicate).



#### **RJC CEO: George Santos 'Will Not Be Welcome' at Our Events**

George Santos' first Chanukah party with the Republican Jewish Coalition will be his last, JTA.org reported.

The group says it will not host the newly elected Long Island Republican after the congressman-elect lied to RJC officials and the public about being Jewish and the descendant of people who escaped the Holocaust.

Santos participated in an event with the group on the first night of Chanukah on Dec. 18, where he was feted as one of two incoming Jewish Republicans in Congress; he was elected in New York's 3rd Congressional District. The next day, The New York Times published a story detailing countless fabrications in his personal and professional resume.

The head of the Republican Jewish Coalition, Matt Brooks, first said he was satisfied with Santos' account of his family history but reversed course after more damning information was unveiled.

"We are very disappointed in Congressman-elect Santos. He deceived us and misrepresented his heritage. In public comments and to us personally, he previously claimed to be Jewish," Brooks said. "He has begun his tenure in Congress on a very wrong note. He will not be welcome at any future RJC event."

#### Latin America's Biggest Online Retailer Says it Reduced Antisemitic Products by 89%

Latin America's largest online retailer has stripped its digital shelves of antisemitic content this year, the result of a push by the regional branch of the World Jewish Congress., JTA.org reported.

Mercado Libre ("free market" in Spanish) was founded in 1999 in Argentina by a Jewish businessman there; it boasts 140 million users, making it more widely used than Amazon in Latin America, where it operates in 18 countries.

Last year, the company announced that it would purge books such as "Mein Kampf" and "The Protocols of the Elders of Zion," as well as Nazi coins, posters and memorabilia, from its offerings. On Dec. 23 it announced that in the first half of 2021, the number of items available for sale that violated the company's policies related to violence and discrimination was down 89% compared to the year before.

Federico Deya, Mercado Libre's senior legal director, credited the work the company had done with the Latin American Jewish Congress in effecting the change, which a report from the company said also included a 23% increase in the detection of hate speech in publications for sale on the site.

#### Israel's Population Rises 2.2% to More Than 9.5M

Israel's population increased by 2.2% in 2022 to 9.66 million, JNS.org reported, citing Central Bureau of Statistics figures released on Dec. 29.

Of the country's residents, 7.11 million are Jews (73.6%), 2.04 million are Arabs (21.1%) and 513,000 are of other denominations.

The population increase dwarfed the 1.8% growth in 2021, with the difference being attributed in part to a larger number of immigrants in the past 12 months.

Approximately 73,000 new immigrants arrived in Israel in 2022, compared to 25,000 last year, 80% of them coming from Russia and Ukraine.

#### **Google Fixes Antisemitic Definition of 'Jew' Following Uproar**

Google users who typed "Jew" in the search feature on Dec. 27 found that the top definition was an antisemitic stereotype, JNS.org reported. The search engine's first listed definition of "Jew" was: "to bargain with someone in a miserly or petty way."

Jewish advocacy groups flagged the offensive definition to Google and demanded an explanation.

After fixing the error, Google Search Liaison Danny Sullivan took to Twitter to apologize on behalf of the search engine company.

"Our apologies. Google licenses definitions from third-party dictionary experts," Sullivan posted. "We only display offensive definitions by default if they are the main meaning of a term. As this is not the case here, we have blocked this & passed along feedback to the partner for further review."

#### Zambia to Get First Rabbi in Six Decades

Rabbi Mendy and Rivky Hertzel will move to Zambia early next year to establish a Chabad House and assist the small but thriving Jewish community in the southern African nation, JNS.org reported.

Zambia has not had a rabbi in more than 60 years.

There are an estimated 100-150 Jews in the country of almost 20 million people.

The first Jews to arrive in Zambia were Ashkenazim from Eastern Europe (mostly Lithuania) who migrated in the 19th century when it was a British colony. The Jewish population peaked in the 1960s at around 2,000.

- Compiled by Andy Gotlieb



#### feature /

# ARMENIA HAS HAD FEW JEWS AND A POOR RELATIONSHIP WITH ISRAEL. THAT COULD BE CHANGING.



By Larry Luxner | JTA

**YEREVAN, ARMENIA** — Just outside a remote village two hours' drive east of Yerevan, in a clearing reachable only by hiking down a steep embankment and crossing a rickety wooden bridge, looms a remarkable sight: a blue metal gate decorated with a Star of David that guards the entrance to one of the world's most unusual Jewish cemeteries.

Here, in a pastoral setting disturbed only by the chirping of birds and the rushing waters of the Yeghegis River, lie 64 complete tombstones and fragments of others dating from 1266 to 1346. Their inscriptions, written in both Hebrew and Aramaic, have been studied by scholars for years. Among them is the epitaph of a young Jewish boy that reflects the profound grief of his parents: "Your dead [shall live], corpses shall rise, awake and sing for joy, O dwellers in the dust! For [your dew] is a radiant dew."

The medieval cemetery, rarely visited these days and in an obvious state of neglect, is nevertheless proof that a Jewish community has long existed and even flourished in Armenia — the world's first Christian nation and, according to tradition, home of the mountain upon which the biblical Noah's Ark came to rest.

That community is today among the smallest of the 15 republics that until 1991 formed the Soviet Union, although it has swelled in recent months, if only temporarily, with Jews fleeing Russia. In addition, even as Israel is home to the oldest Armenian diaspora community and Jerusalem's Old City boasts an Armenian quarter, Armenia's relationship with Jews and Israel is difficult, both for historical reasons and because Israel is a key ally of Armenia's archenemy, Azerbaijan.

Rimma Varzhapetyan, 74, chairs the Yerevan-based Jewish Community of Armenia. Her organization, which

has been around for 25 years, occupies a small office on the ground floor of an institute for deaf and mute people.

Varzhapetyan took issue with a 2019 poll by the Pew Research Center, in which 32% of Armenian respondents said they wouldn't accept Jews as fellow citizens — the highest percentage of any of the 18 European countries included in the survey.

"There is no antisemitism in Armenia," said the Russian-speaking Varzhapetyan, who was born in Ukraine's Dnipropetrovsk region but has lived in Armenia for the last 52 years. "It's true that our economy isn't that developed, so many Jews — scientists, doctors, journalists and others — made aliyah. Today, there isn't much religious life, but we do try to celebrate all the Jewish holidays."

After the Soviet collapse, about 15,000 Armenian Jewish families emigrated to Israel, she said, and these days, the Maryland-size country of about 3 million is home to around 280 Jewish families, though it's hard to say for sure since the country's few Jews are mostly intermarried.

Varzhapetyan's numbers are far more optimistic than those of Rabbi Gershon Burshteyn, the spiritual leader of Yerevan's Mordechay Navi Jewish Religious Center of Armenia since 1996. Burshteyn, a locally born Orthodox Jew with a striking resemblance to "Tevye the Dairyman" (he even speaks with a Yiddish accent) said most Jews here are from families that arrived after World War II from Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Uzbekistan and, to a lesser extent, Azerbaijan.

"Before the 1920s, there were two Jewish communities here: one from Poland and one from Iran. At the time, they made up 17% of the population of Yerevan," said the 60-year-old. "But during the Armenian genocide of 1915, there were rumors that the Russian Army would hand Yerevan to the Turks, so Persian Jews went back to Iran." Today, he said, no more than 100 to 200 of Armenia's 2.9 million inhabitants are Jews; nearly all of them live in Yerevan, except for a handful in Vanadzor, Armenia's third-largest city. But those numbers are confusing, since at least 500 Armenians would qualify for aliyah under Israel's 1953 Law of Return, meaning they have at least one Jewish grandparent. On the other hand, because intermarriage is so prevalent here, only 20 or so Armenians are the offspring of Jewish mothers and fathers, according to Burshteyn.

No more than 25 people attend Shabbat services, and the worshippers are almost all 45 years of age or older. Kosher meat is available thanks to a *schochet*, or kosher ritual slaughterer, who visits once or twice a month from Tbilisi, the capital of neighboring Georgia. The High Holidays tend to attract more, about 100 people.

#### 'I feel comfortable here'

Ida Zilman, 71, is a painter and designer who teaches arts and crafts at a local primary school. Her father, a Ukrainian Jew from Odessa, was seriously wounded while fighting for the Soviet Red Army, and in 1944, he was demobilized and sent to the Caucasus to work as a geologist. "He helped establish the metallurgy industry in Armenia, and it was here that he met my mom," said Zilman, a grandmother who attends synagogue services on Jewish holidays. With her late husband, she also visited Israel, where she has a stepsister in Ashdod.

"I adore Israel, but I feel comfortable here in Armenia," she said. "There are rumors that it's antisemitic, but that's not true. When I tell people I'm Jewish, they smile."

Six years ago, Israel issued a stamp commemorating the famed French-Armenian crooner Charles Aznavour, his parents and his sister Aida, all of whom had sheltered Jews at their home during World War II. In addition, dozens of other Armenians across Europe who protected or saved Jewish lives are honored at Yad Vashem in Jerusalem.

However, those warm feelings are not universal, cautioned Ilya Dorfman, a software entrepreneur in his early 50s who lived in Moscow, Toronto, San Francisco and New York before deciding to return to his native Armenia. "Sometimes, I speak with young people here, and they have the idea that Jews are always against Armenians. But it never translates into hatred against the Jews," he said. "It's certainly not anything like the antisemitism I felt when I lived in Russia or even Ukraine after independence."

Much of the ill will that exists between Armenia and Israel stems from Israel's extensive military support of oil-rich Azerbaijan, with which Armenia has fought numerous wars over the Nagorno Karabakh region claimed by both former Soviet states. Fighting raged from 1988 to 1994, claiming the lives of 16,000 Azerbaijanis and 4,000 Armenians.

The long-simmering conflict exploded into war again in late 2020. Azerbaijan — led by President Ilham Aliyev and heavily aided by Turkey and Israel — eventually recaptured the 20% of its territory it had lost to Armenia in 1994. (Azerbaijan's forces included soldiers from that country's Jewish population of about 8,000.) Last fall, renewed border skirmishes between the two countries left nearly 300 people dead on both sides, with predominantly Muslim Azerbaijan and largely Christian Armenia trading accusations of genocide and humanrights atrocities.

"The fact is that Israel supplied weapons to this criminal gangster Aliyev and his brainwashed elite. He gave medals to soldiers who cut off the heads of Armenian and Yazidi soldiers," said Dorfman. "You wouldn't believe how many letters we wrote from the Jewish community here exposing what really happened. But in Israel, this is not a very popular subject."

(Azerbaijan "categorically denies" it has committed human rights abuses against Armenian soldiers or civilians and says that Armenia has committed war crimes, including during its recent shelling of Ganja, a border town.) Artiom Chernamorian, the founder of a nonprofit group called Nairi Union of Armenians in Petach Tikvah, Israel, said he's disgusted with official Israeli policy towards the country of his birth, as well as Israel's alliance with Azerbaijan. "Israel has so much money for NGOs around the world, but not even one shekel to support the Jewish community of Armenia. It's a shame," said Chernamorian, who made aliyah 20 years ago.

Armenians also deeply resent the fact that Israel refuses to officially recognize the Ottoman slaughter of 1.5 million Armenians in 1915 as a genocide, for fear of offending Turkey, with which it re-established diplomatic relations last year after a long hiatus. At the entrance to Yerevan's Armenian Genocide Memorial Complex, visitors are greeted with a quote from Adolf Hitler, who, one week before his 1939 invasion of Poland, said: "Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?"

#### 'That was not the right decision'

One man working hard to improve Israeli-Armenian relations is Achot Chakhmouradian. Since 2013, he has been Israel's honorary consul in Yerevan. His office, on the second floor of his family-owned auto dealership, is decorated with framed certificates in Hebrew and Armenian, along with his pet python, which he keeps in an enormous glass tank.

"Our two countries have so much in common," said Chakhmouradian, who's not Jewish. "Both are landlocked and surrounded by Muslim countries. And we are both ancient people with modern tragedies: the Armenian genocide of 1915 and the Holocaust. As a consequence, we have large communities abroad, but the Armenian diaspora is even bigger than the Jewish one."

Chakhmouradian said that in 2018, following a change of government in Armenia, his country finally decided to open an embassy in Tel Aviv, and relations flourished, with high-level visits and an active interparliamentary friendship group. But two years later, when war broke out between Armenia and Azerbaijan, the ambassador was recalled in protest over Israel's weapons sales to the Baku government. "In my opinion, that was not the right decision," he said. "Israel is not the only country selling weapons. For example, Russia is a much bigger ally of Armenia, and they were also selling weapons to both sides."

Chakhmouradian said nearly 180,000 Israelis visited Georgia in 2019 before the pandemic hit; that same year, Armenia received barely 5,000 tourists. While there are more Israelis with ties to Georgia than Armenia, Chakhmouradian said he was optimistic that the number of tourists to Armenia could increase dramatically with direct flights from Tel Aviv to Yerevan — a flying time of less than two-and-a-half hours.

Things may be looking up. In April, Israeli President Isaac Herzog met Arman Akopian, Armenia's new ambassador to Israel, who presented his credentials and signed the official guest book in unusually fluent Hebrew. The two men discussed the 1,700-year-old history of the Armenian community in Israel and affinities between their people.

In addition, Moscow's invasion of Ukraine and Russian President Vladimir Putin's recent mobilization of reserves to fight that war has led tens of thousands of Russian citizens to immigrate to Armenia, one of the only places where they can still travel easily. That includes at least 450 Jews who have taken up residence in Yerevan, according to Rabbi Burshteyn — dramatically boosting the size of the local Jewish community, even if only temporarily.

And on Oct. 6, Azerbaijan's Aliyev met informally with Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, marking the first top-level talks between the Turkish and Armenian leaders in decades. That followed Erdoğan's recent rapprochement with Israel and the resumption of diplomatic ties between them.

"There's a huge Armenian presence in the Old City of Jerusalem, and many Armenians want to visit Israel on pilgrimage. But nobody wants to lose a whole day traveling," said Chakhmouradian. "If there were direct flights, I'm sure some of these tourists could also become businessmen or potential investors. The potential is enormous."



Rabbi Gershon Burshteyn, spiritual leader of the Mordechay Navi Jewish Religious Center of Armenia, seen outside the center he leads



People walk past the Holocaust memorial in Yerevan, which is inscribed in Hebrew and Armenian: "To be or to forget: Remember the victims of the Shoah."



Rimma Varzhapetyan, chair of the Armenian Jewish community, at her office in Yerevan, Armenia

senior lifestyle /

# There's No Age Limit to Hobbies

Stefanie Smith | Special to the JE

f you've retired from a full-time job, you may be at a loss for what to do to fill your time.

Some retirees use their newfound freedom to check stuff off their "to do" list. But after you've seen the sights, visited relatives, caught up on your reading list and organized your home, what's next? It may be just the perfect time to pick up an old hobby, continue one you're already experienced with or even try something new.

#### **The Health Benefits of Hobbies**

Besides being an activity where the main goal is doing something you enjoy, having a hobby can positively impact your life. Some examples include:

**Stress relief:** Doing a pleasurable activity can help you relax and take your

mind off other things in your life.

A sense of purpose: The more you learn while doing your hobby, the more satisfied you'll be with your progress and have a sense of accomplishment. A hobby can also give you something to look forward to doing.

**Explore new frontiers:** A hobby allows you to enjoy the process of learning something new without feeling discouraged if you're not good at it right away. It can also encourage you to venture out of your comfort zone by picking something that challenges you in new ways.

**Discover hidden talents:** Until you try something, you're never sure what you can do. A hobby can help you discover something you're good at.

**Earn additional income:** You could find you're good at something others will pay you to do.





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**Improved self-confidence:** Learning something new and pushing your limits to achieve things you might not have thought were possible can give you a feeling of being able to do anything.

Gain new perspectives: By taking up a hobby, you're certain to be exposed to new opinions, ideas and ways to look at life. You could even make new friends.

**Improved memory and mood:** Craft hobbies like sewing and beading can improve your focus to help ward off depression and memory loss. In addition, doing something because you want to do it can create excitement that can carry over into other areas of your life.

#### **Hobbies to Consider**

If you're looking for some ideas for hobbies after retirement, here are a few suggestions to get you started.

**Travel:** Stay close to home or visit faraway places. Once you pick a spot, there are a lot of online resources to help you find things to do, sites to visit and places to stay that can accommodate a variety of budgets.

**Volunteer:** Whether once a week or every day, volunteering can enrich your life while making a difference in the lives of people in your community. Check with local libraries, schools, hospitals and nonprofit organizations that cater to



causes you're passionate about.

Arts and crafts: Try new artistic and creative endeavors or perfect ones you've enjoyed all your life. Some arts and crafts ideas include painting, making jewelry, knitting, quilting, pottery, woodworking, stained glass and gardening.

**The performing arts:** If you want hands-on involvement, call some local community theaters and community centers to see what opportunities exist.

If you'd rather enjoy it from a seat in the audience, connect with your friends to see a weekly or monthly performance.

**Clubs and associations:** There are several local and national clubs and associations that can provide you with fun and engaging activities. A quick internet search or visit to your local community center is a great start.

**Exercise:** You could try a low-impact exercise routine like walking, swimming, yoga or tai chi to get in shape or help



you stay in shape. Of course, make sure to talk to your health care provider before beginning any workout routine.

**Cooking:** Find inspiration in cookbooks, magazines or online cooking videos, and then try some recipes that appeal to you. You can also surprise neighbors by making baked goods.

**Teach:** Adult education programs are frequently looking for part-time evening instructors. You can teach a younger generation about your previous profession or one of your hobbies.

**Connect with family:** Invite your family over more often or offer to babysit your grandchildren so your kids can have some time to themselves.

Whichever hobby you choose, remember that it's about staying active and having fun.

Stefanie Smith is the executive director of Clarendale Arcadia senior residences in Phoenix.



# Walnut Street Theatre Honors **Neil Simon Through the Ages**

Sasha Rogelberg | Staff Writer

t the end of the Walnut Street Theatre's 1961 season, 34-year-old Neil Simon debuted his first full-length play, "Come Blow Your Horn," a comedy that would go on to run for 678 performances on Broadway later that year.

The Center City theater that helped launch the Jewish playwright's career is spotlighting his work once more with its production of "Last of the Red Hot Lovers," running from Jan. 10 to Feb. 5.

Written in 1969, "Last of the Red Hot Lovers" combines Simon's deprecating and witty humor with his cogent observations about the human condition to tell the story of a nebbish Barney Cashman, deep in his midlife crisis, in his quest to become part of the sexual revolution of the time by committing adultery.

The play takes place in his New York City apartment, where three women he tries to court filter in (and mostly out) of his apartment.

Though over 50 years old, Walnut Street Theatre didn't have to do much to breathe new life into the show - the charm of which comes from finding comedy in crisis, according to President and Producing Artistic Director Bernard Havard.

"Simon manages to find laughter in adversity, which I've always found to be reassuring about his work," Havard said. "He takes dire circumstances and turns them into grips of laughter."

Havard knows firsthand about Simon's writing prowess. He and his wife met Simon and his producer Emanuel Azenberg in Philadelphia after Havard read Simon's farce "Plaza Suite." The party discussed the production of "Come Blow Your Horn," which Simon wanted to eventually take to Broadway, despite Azenberg's reservations, Havard recounts.

"He felt that he put it in good hands with me and the Walnut, and we had big success with it," Havard said.

Simon seemed to agree. In a Dec. 11, 1994 letter to Havard, Simon wrote, "The memories of that experience, as wonderful as it was, was also fielded with terror for me. If we failed there, we would not have gone on to New York and me to a lifetime of writing plays."

Beyond Simon's connection to Philadelphia is his homage to his Jewish roots, reflected in his layered characters and zinging sense of humor.

"Humor has often been used by Jewish comedians and writers as a defense against anti-Semitism and exclusion, and Simon is no exception," Gary Konas writes in the introduction of "Neil Simon:



Jennifer Childs (director, center) with actors Scott Greer (Barney) and Susan Riley Stevens (Jeanette) at a dress rehearsal of "Last of the Red Hot Lovers"

#### A Casebook."

Blending self-deprecating digs with Yiddish words that have now become ubiquitous in American vernacular, Simon integrated Judaism so seamlessly into his works that it became effortless to him.

In an interview with Jackson Breyer, Simon said his Judaism was "so deeply embedded in me and so inherent in me that I am unaware of its quality," according to a 2018 JTA article shortly following Simon's death.

Simon's shows "Brighton Beach Memoirs," "Biloxi Blues" and "Broadway Bound" are semi-autobiographical, featuring a Jewish protagonist, as many of his shows do.

Though Simon's legacy is in his ability to capture humanity in its vulnerable states, the Walnut's productions of "Last of the Red Hot Lovers" had to take into consideration its place in history and its relevance today.

To do this, director Jennifer Childs, who is making her directorial debut at the Walnut, said that protagonist Barney's apartment fills the center of the theater's stage, but the set is also flanked by two other apartments to create the illusion of a cramped

New York studio apartment. Sound design for the show created a soundscape to nestle Barney's story among the many others happening concurrently in the city.

But besides tweaking some language around race and directing acting choices to contextualize the play's misogynistic-at-times depiction of women, Childs changed little of Simon's vision.

According to Childs, Simon's works have been "mimicked by some, but it's never fully or as well done," with other playwrights unable to fully emulate Simon's style of unrelenting wit and candor.

Following a challenging 2022 - and financial hardships many theaters, including the Walnut, have endured - the appeal of "Last of the Red Hot Lovers" lies in its universal message of reflection and gratitude.

"There's something about investing in what you have that's in front of you, as opposed to looking for something outside yourself all the time," Childs said. For more information about the show, visit walnutstreettheatre.org/season/show/last-ofthe-red-hot-lovers-2022.

srogelberg@midatlanticmedia.com

Courtesy of the Walnut Street Theatre

# **Tahini: The Power Ingredient**

#### Keri White | Special to the JE

hen we think of tahini, most of our minds jump to the key flavoring in hummus or the delicious dressing that tops many Middle Eastern salads and dishes.

Accurate, to be sure, but narrow in scope, considering the versatility that tahini offers. I riffed on tahini recently in two very different ways, and both turned out quite well.

The first was one of my "necessity is the mother of invention" events. I had cleared out all the late herbs and greens from my garden and started to make a pesto — only to discover that I had no pine nuts, or indeed any other nuts in my pantry.

As I peered desperately through the cabinets, my gaze lit upon a jar of tahini, and I eyed it quizzically ... I figured it would behave more or less like nuts in a recipe, and it did! The flavor complemented the herbs, garlic and cheese, and now I have a stash of a unique pasta sauce or bread spread in my freezer for a rainy day.

Photos by Keri White

The second recipe goes in an entirely different direction. A neighbor recently traveled to Israel and brought me back the best halvah I have ever tasted. It was dense, just sweet enough, laden with nuts and deeply, madly, robustly sesame forward. It inspired me to consider how to integrate tahini and/or sesame more into desserts.

Some time ago, I experimented with a gluten-free, dairy-free peanut butter cookie recipe which was shockingly good. This seemed like a good starting point. I replicated the recipe using tahini instead of the peanut butter and added chocolate chips. Success!

#### "GOODBYE GARDEN" PESTO WITH TAHINI

Makes about 1¼ cups pesto

My summer garden, a first foray into farming beyond a pot of basil in a sunny corner, was modestly successful. The warm fall weather enabled it to thrive quite late into the season, and I only recently harvested the last of the lingering herbs and greens. These



included nasturtium, watercress, basil, kale and parsley.

Serve this over pasta, schmear it on bread, spread it on roasted vegetables, mash it into potatoes or slather it on fish. We drizzled it on roasted acorn squash (recipe below), and it was sublime.

- 4 cups assorted herbs/greens, such as parsley, basil, arugula, kale, watercress, rinsed and drained
- <sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cup olive oil
- 6 cloves fresh garlic
- 1/3 cup tahini
- <sup>2</sup>/<sub>3</sub> cup Parmesan cheese

Red pepper to taste (I used about 1/2 teaspoon)

Cold water if needed

Place all the ingredients except the water into a food processor or blender. Puree until smooth. If the mixture is too thick, add cold water a tablespoon at a time to loosen it.

Store the pesto in the refrigerator for several days or freezer for several months.

#### **ROASTED ACORN SQUASH** Serves 2

 large acorn squash, seeded and cut in wedges
Olive oil to coat (scant ¼ cup)
Salt and pepper

Heat your oven to 375 degrees F. Line a rimmed baking tray with parchment. Place the acorn squash wedges on the tray, cut side up, and brush them generously with oil. Sprinkle them with salt and pepper. Roast the squash for about an hour until it is soft and beginning to brown at the edges.

Remove it from the oven, spread it with pesto if desired, and serve.

#### TAHINI CHOCOLATE CHIP COOKIES

Makes about 9 cookies

These cookies are gluten-free and,



depending on your chocolate, dairyfree. These features make the cookies versatile, inclusive and, above all, delicious.

A note on the brown sugar quantity: Tahini can vary in flavor and texture; some are sharper and more bitter, while others are milder. Similarly, some brands are thinner in consistency, and some are thicker. The brown sugar quantity can be adjusted to sweeten and/or thicken the batter as needed.

This can be adapted to personal preference; skip the chocolate and add cinnamon, cardamom or nutmeg to the dough. Stir in chopped nuts, raisins or candied ginger.

- 1 cup tahini
- 1/3 cup brown sugar (approximately)
- 1 egg
- 1/3 cup chocolate chips

Heat your oven to 350 degrees F. Mix the tahini, sugar and egg well, taste for sweetness and adjust the sugar, if needed. Add chocolate chips. Drop large spoonfuls of the batter onto a parchment-lined baking sheet. You may have to use your hands to condense the dough a bit to form cookies.

Bake for 12-15 minutes or until the cookies are lightly brown on the edges and the center is solid. Cool the cookies completely and store them in an airtight container.



#### **BLACKMAN**

BERNIE will be missed by his brother Henry Soll (Marlene), nieces and nephews, great nieces and nephews and grand nieces and nephews! Most of all he will be missed by his Niece Gale Horn (Wishnefsky) who considered Bernie her second dad. "My Uncle Bernie was a very special and unique individual. He was as I would say a proud American Jew. His characteristics were honorable, caring, smart and grateful. Although Bernie never married he said God allowed him to travel the world and see amazing things. I believe he almost visited every country in the world. He was proud to say he spent 830 days on cruise ships. He left this world on his own terms and surprise individuals with a part of his legacy. He is greatly missed." -Gavle Horn, Niece, Contributions in his memory may be made to the American Cancer Society.

#### BURDEN

JEROME S., a retired pharmacist, died December 25, 2022. Beloved husband of the late Elaine. Devoted father of Ilene (Randy) Needles and Karen (Alan) Fishman. Adoring "Pop Pop" of Jenna (Michael) Shinbrot, Danielle Fishman (fiance' William Goodman), Jared Katz and Lauren Fishman. Contributions in his memory may be made to the Philadelphia College of Pharmacy at St. Joseph's University or a charity of the donor's choice.

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#### CHARLESTON

DON - December 22, 2022, age 92, of Huntingdon Valley, PA formerly of Feltonville and Melrose Park. Loving father of Cindy Charleston Rosenberg (Jeremy), Bonnie Charleston (Jay Resnick), Amy Charleston, and Lee Charleston; adoring grandfather of

Aaron Daniel (Catherine), Max, Joshua (Brooke), Rachel, and Sara (Michael) and great-grandchildren Gian, Colette, and Eric. He is also survived by many beloved cousins, nieces, and nephews. He is pre-deceased by his parents Abe and Sara Charleston and his brother Mark Charleston, Don was a proud organizer of the Merchant Seamen's Union, a member of the US Navy, and worked as a CPA having built a successful accounting firm. He was a true Renaissance Man - passionate about the sea, the arts, woodworking, music, social justice, and the written word. Above all, he was most passionate about his family, who are devastated by his loss. In lieu of flowers, contributions in Don's memory may be made to MoveOn (moveon. org).

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#### COWAN

MURRAY J., 85, of Jenkintown, PA; Husband of Barbara nee Evans; Father of Eric Cowan and Sharon Collison, Grandfather of Lauren and Rachel Collison. Contributions in his memory can be made to the American Cancer Society. www.americancancersociety.com

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#### DASH

ALAN B., December 27, 2022 of Lafayette Hill, Pa. Beloved husband of the late Miriam Dash (nee Stein). Devoted father of Ken (Kelly) Dash and James Dash. Proud grandfather of Jack and Melissa. Dear brother of the late Richard M. Dash (Nancy Dash). Services and interment are private. The family requests that contributions in his memory be made to Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia or a charity of the donor's choice. For any additional information contact: Joseph Levine & Sons

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#### FARBER

JACK, 89, who resided in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania and Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, passed away peacefully on Wednesday December 7, 2022. Jack was born on June 18, 1933, to parents Morris and Elizabeth in Philadelphia, PA. After Jack graduated from Olney High School in 1951, he studied business and accounting at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. After graduating with a degree in accounting, Jack started his career at Price Waterhouse, where, at 34, he was the youngest ever employee make partner. From there, Jack went on to become President of what would become Philadelphia Industries, Inc. (PII), where he managed the company's portfolio of underperforming businesses. Jack eventually merged PII with CSS Inc., where he served as the President, Chief Executive Officer and Chairman of CSS until 2015. Jack earned the nickname "The Garbage Man," a reference to his ability to turn around struggling companies, and also the title of his self-published memoir. As lifelong philanthropists, Jack and his wife, Vickie, have made a lasting impact on the Philadelphia community. Their commitment to giving back drove their support of The Liberty Museum, the American Jewish Committee, and the ALS Association, among others. Together, Jack and Vickie created The Vickie and Jack Farber Institute for Neuroscience at Jefferson Health, The Vickie and Jack Farber Vision Research Center at Wills Eye Hospital, The Vickie and Jack Farber Institute for Neuroscience at Policlinico Gemelli in Rome, and, most recently, the David Farber ASPIRE Center for suicide prevention and awareness. Jack believed strongly in the causes of all of these organizations and was proud to take an active leadership role in each, taking the same detail-oriented approach in philanthropy that he had in business. In 2015, Jack retired and split his time between Philadelphia and Florida. He enjoyed spending time with his family and friends, playing golf, traveling, taking classes, and continuing to engage in philanthropy. Most of all, Jack loved enjoying a cigar while reading the newspaper, reading through financial statements and going to the clubhouse for dinner with Vickie. Jack is survived by his wife, Vickie, his daughter, Ellen, his sisters Carole and Marlene, and his four grandchildren, Billy(Jen), Kenny (Shelby), Leigh (Lee), and Blake (Maya). In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to The Vickie and Jack Farber Institute of Neuroscience at Jefferson Health or the David Farber Aspire Center at Jefferson.

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#### GOTSDINER

JUDITH Z. (nee Sherzer) December 20, 2022. Beloved wife of the late Leon Gotsdiner, loving mother of Marci Zinn (John Miller), and Denise Gotsdiner (Andrew Clibanoff), loving grandmother of Alana Zinn (Jeremy Beyda), Brandon Zinn, Callie Clibanoff, Leo Clibanoff, loving great-grandmother of Jacob and Sophie, loving sister of Harvey Sherzer (Susan). Contributions in her memory may be made to the Philadelphia Orchestra www.philorch.org or to Beth Israel Congregation Vineland www.bethisraelvineland.com

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#### GOTTSAGEN

SHIRLEY (nee Friedman) on December 22nd, 2022. Beloved wife of the late Samuel Gottsagen. Devoted mother of Dr. Mitchell Gottsagen (Joan) and Nancy Gottsagen. Loving grandmother of Melissa Wawrenzski (Mark) and Eric Gottsagen (Danielle). Dear great-grandmother of Noah and Sofia Gottsagen. Sister of Dr. Joseph Friendman (Pearl). Contribution in her memory may be made to the Horsham Center for Jewish Life, 1425 Horsham Road, North Wales, PA 19454.

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#### KNOPMAN

ADELE MARKOWITZ, 97, passed away on December 12, 2022 in Philadelphia, PA, Born in 1925 in Strawberrv Mansion, Adele was youngest of 10 children. She was pre-deceased by her husband of 36 years, Aaron Knopman and then Rob Feinberg of 10 years. The matriarch of a large family, Adele is survived by her beloved children: Martin Knopman, Harriet Bernstein, Phyllis Laufer, Richard Knopman, and Ilene Steinberg. She is also survived by eight grandchildren and four great-grandchildren. Following her retirement from the Naval Supply Depot, Adele started her 25-year career as bookkeeper for Stein Brothers' Famous Deli. After retiring from that position, she devoted 15 years to Klein Life Jewish Community Center, volunteering every Monday and Friday, until early Nov 2022. Adele lived her life with joy, bestowing her gift of laughter, quick wit, and sincere concern for others upon all who crossed her path, including multiple friends as well as her dear family. Mother, wife, grandmother, great-grandmother, and valued friend, Adele Knopman will be sorely missed. Contributions in her memory may be made to KleinLife, 10100 Jamison Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19116.

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#### **KRIK**

BERNARD H. on December 22, 2022. Husband of Miriam "Mim" (nee Hollander). Father of Pninah (Marc) Miller, Dena (Morey) Goldberg and Justin (Julia) Krik, Esq. Grandfather of Elle, Joss and TJ Miller, Natalie, Aaron (Fawn), Shane and Eli Goldberg, Sophia, Rebecca and the late Nora Krik. Contributions in his memory may be made to yadvashem.org or beyondceliac.org GOLDSTEINS' ROSENBERG'S RAPHAEL-SACKS www.goldsteinsfuneral.com

#### MANDEL

GILDA C., (nee Candeub), 96, passed away peacefully on December 22, 2022. Beloved wife of the late Dr. Benjamin L. Mandel. She is survived by her son Bates Mandel (Peg Mulligan), daughters Taffy Mandel (Howard Barman), Merridyth Sokoloff (Mark), and Mona Mandel, grandchildren Max Shmidheiser (Alyssa Rosen), Jennifer Sokoloff Burfield (Mike), Caitlin Shmidheiser Doeuk, (Gil), Gabrielle Mandel (Steven Kleinman), Allie Sokoloff Carley (Matt), and Austin Mandel, and great-grandchildren, Eva. Hannah, Lyza, Amelia, Ella and Noah. Services are private. Contributions in her memory may be made to Deborah Heart and Lung Center (www.demanddeborah.org)

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#### MILSTEIN

SYLVIA (nee Cleiman) on December 27, 2022. Beloved wife of the late Bernard; Loving mother of Janis Murphy (Lawrence) and Bonnie Milstein; Devoted grandmother of Lara, Max (Lacey), Madeline (Blake), and the late Andrew; Adoring great-grandmother of Cameron. Contributions in her memory may be made to The ALS Assoc. Greater Phila Chpt .- Ambler, 321 Norristown Rd., Ste. 260, Ambler, PA 19002

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#### RATTNER

SUSAN L., MD of Media, PA died on December 22, 2022 at age 70 after a courageous 3 year battle with AL amyloidosis as well as more than 60 years of type 1 diabetes. She was born on August 8, 1952 in Troy, NY to Jerome Rattner and Florence Goldstein Rattner. She graduated from Troy High School ('70) and Union College ('74) (BS Biology, magna cum laude) where she was a member of the first class which included women. She won a St. Andrews Scholarship at Union and spent her junior year in Scotland. She then attended Columbia College of Physicians and Surgeons (MD, P&S '78), marrying in 1976. She was elected to the medical honor society, Alpha Omega Alpha. She completed a residency in internal medicine at Columbia-Presbyterian Hospital in 1981. Susan was Board Certified in Internal Medicine and joined a faculty practice at Presbyterian for the next two years while her husband finished a cardiology fellowship and the couple welcomed a daughter They moved to Wallingford and Susan joined the faculty at Hahnemann University; during this time the family grew to include another beautiful daughter. Susan joined the Dean's Office at Hahnemann as

Assistant Dean for Student Affairs in 1987. During sabbatical year she earned an MS degree in Clinical Epidemiology from the University of Pennsylvania. She moved to Jefferson Medical College in 1994 continuing to practice internal medicine and work in the Dean's office where she rose to become Vice Dean for Academic Affairs/Undergraduate Medical Education. She was elected to Fellowship in the American College of Physicians in 1999. She was active in medical education with a particular interest in developing and mentoring young faculty. She published numerous articles in peer reviewed journals and was an editor of the book Professionalism in Medicine: The Case-based Guide for Medical Students. Susan was the recipient of several awards and honors including a Sidney Kimmel Medical College Career Educator Award. In 2016, she retired from Jefferson as Professor of Medicine. With a deep desire to continue caring for patients in need, she joined the physician staff in Women's Health at the Philadelphia VA. She also volunteered in internal medicine at the Community Volunteers in Medicine clinic in West Chester, PA. She was a long time faculty advisor for the Foundation for the Advancement of International Medical Education and Research (FAIMER), enjoying contact with physicians from around the globe until the end of her life. Susan was the beloved wife of Kenneth Mendel, MD; loving mother of Jennifer Mendel Whitehill, PhD (Ethan Todras-Whitehill) and Judith (Robert) Van Alstyne, MPH; cherished grandmother of Tessa, Wesley and Alexander; devoted

sister of Laurie (John) Schatzberg, PhD and Ellen (Gilbert) Zmithrovitch; loved daughter of Florence and the late Jerome Rattner. Services were private. Contributions in Susan's memory may be made to Community Volunteers in Medicine (CVIM) (www. cvim.org).

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#### RUBIN

ANNE (nee MAZER), died on December 21, 2022. Beloved wife of the late Solomon; loving mother of Ronald (Janet Souza) Rubin, and Elliot Rubin; and adored grandmother of Max and Janice. Contributions in her memory may be made to the Jewish National Fund (Trees for Israel).

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#### SCHOR

Dr. STANLEY - December 26, 2022 formerly of North Phila, PA. Beloved husband of the late Irene (nee Sternberg); loving father of Mark Schor (Gina), Robin Schor, Randi Schor, and the late Jay Schor; adoring grandfather of Sydney Greene and Rachel Schor; cherished uncle of Jackie (Ian) and their daughter Olive. He is predeceased by parents Joseph and Dorothy and brother Ernest. More details about Stanley can be found at obits. levinefuneral.com/stanley-schor. In lieu of flowers, contributions in his memory may be made to K9s for Warriors (k9sforwarriors.org). JOSEPH LEVINE & SONS www.levinefuneral.com

#### **SHAPIRO**

AL, lovingly known as Ashap to his closest friends and family, passed away peacefully in his home in Penn Valley, PA on December 20th, 2022 after a long, happy, and productive life. Al was born on September 23rd, 1927 to Charles and Emma Shapiro in Philadelphia, PA. Al is survived by his wife Teresa, son Dean (Hanni), and daughter Erica (Peter) Hart. Preceding Al in death were his parents, his sister Gladys Sussman, and his brother Jerald. After AI graduated from West Philadelphia High School, he went on to study at Drexel University earning a bachelor's degree in Electrical Engineering. Al worked in the engineering field for a number years including time in the Army and on military radar systems, while at RCA. In 1967, Al embarked on his real estate career by purchasing the first of many apartment buildings. At age 91, Al decided to give writing a try and published Evangeline Evershine and the Case of the Biggest Disappearance Imaginable. While Al's career was long, varied, and very successful, his greatest passion was his family. He was known to say that having children was the best thing he'd ever done. He is also survived by 10 grandchildren and four great grandchildren. Some of his fondest memories were during the childhood of his daughter, Erica, who he had somewhat late in life and doted on immensely. It was not Al's wish to have

the typical proceedings of a funeral or shiva. His family looks forward to a celebration of his life with their dearest friends in the near future. In the meantime, in lieu of flowers, Al would have been pleased to know that donations to the Zionist Organization of America, Philadelphia Chapter, were made on his behalf.

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#### **SHAPIRO**

RUTH (nee Birnbaum), On December 23, 2022. Beloved wife of the late Harry Shapiro. Devoted mother of Debbie Rose (Douglas) and Sherri Farber (Robert) Dear sister of the late David Birnbaum (Irene). Loving grandmother of Sean Rose (Jaime), Devon Rose (Ray Chan), and Brooke Farber (Jack Ross). Dear great grandmother of Anakin, Lennon, Sawyer, and Jasper. Funeral services and Interment will be private. Contributions in her memory may be made to American Friends of Meir Panim www.meirpanim.org, Jewish National Fund www.jnf.org or a charity of the donor's choice.

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#### SOPIN

HARRY "Hal"- On Dec. 22, 2022. Husband of Marilyn (nee Weiner). Father of Craig (Ruth) Sopin, Esq. and Caren (Mitchell) Hartka. Brother of Florence DeSouza. Grandfather of Pamela (David) Miranda, Brooke (Reid) Rosebthal, Carly (Louis) Gold and Robert Sopin. Great grandfather of Vivian, Arlo, Anna, Peri, Jade and Hana. GOLDSTEINS' ROSENBERG'S RAPHAEL-SACKS

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#### YAKATAN

GERALD JOSEPH, of Del Mar, California, died December 23, 2022. Jerry is survived by his wife of 58 years, Una (nee Gittleman), daughter Nicole (Steven Hamberg), son Brook (Ellie), grandchildren Gus and Abria Hamberg, sister Beverly Y Cohen (Jim Walsh), sister-in-law Debra Lyman, several cousins, nieces and nephews, colleagues, and friends. Born May 20, 1942, in Philadelphia, PA to the late Bella and Nathan Yakatan, Jerry graduated from Central High School (212 class), earned his BS and MS from Temple University School of Pharmacy and his PhD from the University of Florida. He enjoyed a long career in pharmaceutical research and drug development. Contributions in his memory may be made to any organization supporting Israel.

#### ZASLOW

BURTON - On December 23, 2022. Beloved brother of Rochelle Zaslow. Contributions in his memory may be made to a charity of the donor's choice.

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May Their Memory Be For a Blessing

The Philadelphia Jewish Exponent extends condolences to the families of those who have passed.

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#### What's happening at ... Congregation Beth Hamedrosh

# Congregation Beth Hamedrosh a Destination for Jews on Spiritual Journeys

Jarrad Saffren | Staff Writer

bout 75 people show up every Saturday to Congregation Beth Hamedrosh in Wynnewood for Shabbat morning services. Then throughout the week, 10 to 20 congregants attend morning and evening minyans.

For a synagogue with 80 or so families, that's a high percentage of devoted members.

Many of them are Orthodox or, as some like to say, traditional, after growing up in a Conservative or Reform Jewish community, or even outside of a religious community altogether. Their spiritual journeys took them to Orthodoxy, Wynnewood and Beth Hamedrosh. And now it's the center of their weekly lives.

"Certainly the members that have been part of the congregation a while, over a decade, are extremely dedicated," said Mark Solomon, a congregant in his 11th year. "Those that have joined have adopted those practices."

Solomon attributed that dedication to "a love of Judaism." It's not just the services, either. It's a learning environment that includes morning Talmud study sessions and evening Torah classes. It's also a spirit of helping one another during periods of childbirth, deaths in the family and other major life events. Congregants step forward to "provide meals or whatever families may need," said Beth Razin, a member in her 32nd year.

Solomon, who was ethnically Jewish but not religious, found Beth Hamedrosh after his parents died within 10 months of each other a little over a decade ago. He started looking for morning minyans, and the Wynnewood synagogue was on his route to work in Delaware. He stopped in once and then kept coming back.

"I found that people there cared about davening and Jewish law," he said. "That was something that was growing more and more important to me."

Razin discovered Beth Hamedrosh when it was still located in Overbrook Park in 1990. After growing up in the Conservative movement, she became shomer Shabbos with her husband and started looking for other observant families so her kids could make friends. They moved to Overbrook Park and joined the synagogue that was two blocks away.

The longtime member remained dedicated to her spiritual home even after her kids grew older and the home moved down the street to Wynnewood. Today, she needs to walk 1.1 miles instead of two blocks. But she's OK with that. "It was important to have shomer Shabbat families that our kids could play with," Razin said. "We realized that would only really happen in an Orthodox community."

Beth Hamedrosh's spiritual leader, Rabbi Yonah Gross, arrived in 2009 from an Orthodox synagogue in Phoenix. He had never heard of Wynnewood before, he said. He also had no idea that it was part of the Philadelphia suburbs.

But when the rabbi got here, he quickly discovered that the synagogue was a good fit. He enjoys the challenge of answering halachic questions, and he likes to meet Jews where they are to help them figure out how to move forward in their journeys. In the Wynnewood community, his job is to do both.

Razin said that when Gross first arrived, he got 30 volunteers to go around to people's doorsteps during the High Holidays and leave little bags with apples and honey in them just to say happy holidays. Solomon credited Gross with convincing him to join the synagogue in 2011. It was evident that the rabbi "cared about all Jews," he said.

"He's the one who reaches out to all different Jews," Solomon added.

According to Solomon, Beth Hamedrosh's parking lot is closed on Shabbat. But if someone parks around the corner and walks in, Gross and the members greet them at the door.

"They are a Jew when they walk in the door," Solomon said.

Beth Hamedrosh's congregation includes baby boomers, Gen Xers and millennials. According to Razin, families from 40 or 50 years ago have moved out and been replaced by younger households. Those young families move into Wynnewood neighborhoods, then walk to Beth Hamedrosh, since Orthodox Jews don't drive on the Sabbath.

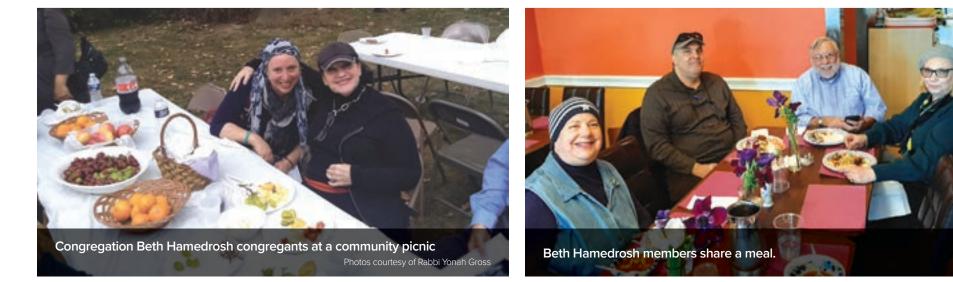
This cycle has allowed the synagogue to keep its membership base steady. Razin and Gross don't believe it has declined or increased since Gross started 13 years ago.

"As the rabbi said, it's a good place for a starter home," Razin said of Wynnewood.

But Solomon explained that, over the past 30 years, the Main Line has shifted from a Conservative Jewish area to a more Orthodox region. He also said that more Orthodox people continue to move to the Philadelphia area and that they have a younger median age than other Jewish denominations.

"Ten years from now, there are going to be a lot more people in this building," he concluded. ■

jsaffren@midatlanticmedia.com





# Internecine Conflict in Jewish History

#### By Rabbi Lance J. Sussman

#### Parshat Vayechi

he French writer Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr (1808-1890) is best known for his aphorism, *"Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose"* or "The more things change, the more things remain the same."

For better or worse and contrary to popular perception, the application of Karr's insight to Jewish history confirms that internecine conflict, not communal unity, characterizes much of the Jewish experience. For example, in ancient Israel, the united monarch quickly dissolved into two different states. Better known is the Chanukah story which, refocused on tensions in the Jewish story, is as much a story of civil war as it is of resistance to including the authenticity of conversion performed by different streams of Judaism, the Jewishness of various groups in Africa and India, the religious status of immigrants from East Europe to Israel and the scope of Israel's Law of Return.

In particular, the religious and legal legitimacy of non-Orthodox Judaisms, not unlike 40 years ago, is again in the headlines in the Jewish world as a new government takes shape in Israel. In addition to these issues, basic questions about the place of the LGBTQ+ community and the question of settlements and a two-state solution are in play.

In particular, the inclusion of far-rightwing politicians like Avi Maoz of the Pleasantness party, Bezalel Smotrich of the Religious Zionism party and Itamar teaching that "the more things change, Lance J. Sussman is a professor of the more they stay the same." Lance J. Sussman is a professor of Jewish studies at Gratz College and

Perhaps some comfort can be found in this week's Torah portion in Jacob's words that "the scepter shall not depart from Judah nor the ruler's staff from between his staff as long as men come to Shiloh" (verse 10). In other words, despite all the tensions and controversies, it may yet be possible that a higher, transcendent unity in Jewish life will remain, that we can have our internal conflicts and still remain a single people and not dissolve into irreconcilable factions. Certainly, our common enemies hope for our dissolution as a people.

Let us pray that, in the words of Jacob, we will continue "to come to Shiloh" and remain, in spirit and in practice, Am Echad, a single people.

Lance J. Sussman is a professor of Jewish studies at Gratz College and scholar-in-residence of the Holocaust Awareness Museum and Education Center. He was the senior rabbi of Reform Congregation Keneseth Israel for 21 years and was named rabbi emeritus in July 2022. The Board of Rabbis of Greater Philadelphia is proud to provide diverse perspectives on Torah commentary for the Jewish Exponent. The opinions expressed in this column are the author's own and do not reflect the view of the Board of Rabbis.



# Yet again, we have a moment of reckoning in the Jewish world.

assimilation and the quest for religious freedom as most American Jews would understand it.

This week's Torah portion, Vayechi, which concludes the Book of Genesis, points to substantial tensions among the Hebrew tribes. Jacob's blessing (Genesis 49) begins with an appraisal of the tribe of Reuben as "unstable as water" (verse 4). The patriarch then proclaims that the "kinship" of Simeon and Levi are "weapons of violence" and that they will be divided and scattered. Dan, Jacob teaches, will behave like "a serpent in the way" and that Benjamin is a warlike wolf (verses 5-27).

In short, the Torah hardly offers a picture of familial harmony on the eve of liberation from Egyptian slavery or of peaceful coexistence in Israel.

What about today? Deep divisions exist in the Jewish community over the question of "Who is a Jew," Ben-Gvir from the Jewish Power party have raised concerns, not only about the preservation of even a modicum of Jewish unity, but about the democratic (and secular) nature of Israeli society.

Calls to shut down egalitarian prayer areas near the Western Wall and to repeal the grandparent clause of the (amended) Law of Return have set off alarm bells across the Jewish world. Defenders of the emerging coalition insist that Israel is a true democracy, and the will of the Israeli electorate is above moral judgments.

By contrast, Netanyahu's critics are concerned that Israel is moving beyond the bounds of a democratic state and risks delegitimizing itself in the eyes of the world and the majority of the Jewish people.

Yet again, we have a moment of reckoning in the Jewish world and sadly are experiencing the truth of Karr's

# <text><text><text>

<u>calendar /</u>

# JANUARY 6-JANUARY 11

### WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 10



#### 'LAST OF THE RED HOT LOVERS'

Walnut Street Theatre presents Jewish playwright Neil Simon's "Last of the Red Hot Lovers," a comedy running from Jan. 10-Feb. 5. *Start times and ticket prices vary.* 825 Walnut St., Philadelphia.

#### FRIDAY, JAN. 6 PARSHA FOR LIFE

Join Rabbi Alexander Coleman, a Jewish educator and psychotherapist at the Institute for Jewish Ethics, at 9 a.m. for a weekly journey through the Torah portion with eternal lessons on personal growth and spirituality. **Go to ijethics.** org/weekly-torah-portion.html to receive the Zoom link and password.

#### **MUSICAL KABBALAT SHABBAT**

Join Beth Sholom Congregation's Rabbi David Glanzberg-Krainin, Cantor Jacob Agar and the band at 6 p.m. for a musical Kabbalat Shabbat. The community is welcome to attend. *Call 215-887-1342 for information. 8231 Old York Road, Elkins Park.* 

#### **INLIQUID EXHIBIT**

InLiquid's Ursula Sternberg: Daydream is a celebration of the career of Philadelphia-area artist, the late Ursula Sternberg, whose life and career spanned many mediums and multiple continents, taking her from Nazioccupied Germany to Elkins Park. This exhibit runs through Jan. 21 and is open from 12-6 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays. **1400 N American St. #314, Philadelphia.** 

#### MONDAY, JAN. 8 MAHJONG GAME

Melrose B'nai Israel Emanu-El Sisterhood invites the community to join our weekly mahjong game at 7 p.m. Cost is \$36 per year or free with MBIEE Sisterhood membership. *For more information, call 215-635-1505 or email office@mbiee.org. 8339 Old York Road, Elkins Park.* 

#### TUESDAY, JAN. 9 BINGO WITH BARRY

Join Barry at Tabas KleinLife for an afternoon of bingo at 12:45 p.m. on Jan. 9 and 10. Free parking and free to play with snacks available on Jan. 10. For more information, call 215-745-3127. 2101 Strahle St., Philadelphia.

#### WEDNESDAY, JAN. 10

#### SISTERHOOD STUDY PROGRAM

The Congregations of Shaare Shamayim's Rabbi Sandi Berliner will teach a class on "Words of Wisdom from Jewish Ethics" as part of the Sisterhood Study Program at 10 a.m. on every Wednesday in January and the first two Wednesdays in February. *For further information, call the synagogue office at 215-677-1600. 9768 Verree Road, Philadelphia.* 

#### ENTERING THE MISHKAN

In this three-part series, starting at 10:30 a.m., Congregation Kol Ami and Rabbi Jennifer Frenkel will look at our Shabbat prayerbook, Mishkan T'filah, its design and use, including opportunities for personal and communal prayer and reflection. *Register at kolaminj.shulcloud. com/event/enteringmishkanjan2023. Questions? Email AdultEd@kolaminj.org or call 856-489-0029.* 

#### INTRODUCTION TO JUDAISM

Introduction to Judaism at Congregation Kol Ami is an engaging, multi-session course for anyone who wants to gain a deeper understanding of Jewish life, from Nov. 2-March 8 at 7-8:30 p.m. No charge for congregants. \$180 per device for non-congregants. **For more information, contact Ruth Scott, director of community engagement: ruth@kolaminj.org. 1101 Springdale Road, Cherry Hill, New Jersey.** 

#### THURSDAY, JAN. 11

#### JRA FOOD PACKING

Volunteers will assist with Jewish Relief Agency's predistribution preparation from 10 a.m.-noon. During this time, volunteers will tape boxes, pack toiletries and assemble family-friendly food bags. *For more information about JRA's volunteer schedule, visit jewishrelief.org/calendar. 10980 Dutton Road, Philadelphia.* 

#### CANASTA GAME

Ohev Shalom of Bucks County Sisterhood invites the community to a weekly canasta game from 1-3 p.m. Open play is \$4. *Call 215-968-6755 for more information. 944 Second Street Pike, Richboro.* 

#### social announcements /

#### BIRTH

#### LUCY JANE SOLOMON

Sharon Imber of Yardley, Bruce Solomon and Sandy Sloane of Warminster, and Bruce Goldstein of Belle Mead, New Jersey, announce the birth of their granddaughter, Lucy Jane Solomon, on Dec. 20.

Lucy is the daughter of Sara Goldstein and Jordan Solomon of Plymouth Meeting. Lucy is named in loving memory of her maternal grandmother, Linda Goldstein, and her paternal great-grandfathers, Jack Solomon and Jerry Shapson.

Also celebrating her arrival are great-grandmother Evelyn Goldstein; uncle Daniel and aunt Alyssa Goldstein; uncle Evan Solomon and aunt Sarah D'Angelo; and cousins Arthur Solomon, Ascher Goldstein and Shoshana Goldstein.













Courtesy of the Abrams Hebrew Academy

Beth El Synagogue in Margate, New Jersey, donated 48 new winter coats to the Jewish Family Service of Atlantic & Cape May Counties for people in need.
The American Heritage Credit Union gave Chanukah gifts to six area families. American Jewish Committee Philadelphia/Southern New Jersey and the Consular Corps Association of Philadelphia hosted their annual Diplomatic Hanukkah Reception on Dec. 14 at the PNC Building Amenity Center in Center City.
Abrams Hebrew Academy students enjoyed an early-Chanukah bowling trip.
The Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia and the Friends of Ofanim held a Men's Mission alumni reunion on Dec. 8.

JEWISHEXPONENT.COM 27

# AT 85, **Stephanie Cohen** CONTINUES TO TEND TO HER GARDEN

#### Jarrad Saffren | Staff Writer

n the early 1940s, Stephanie Cohen moved with her parents to Camden, New Jersey, so her father could take a job.

People in the city were planting "victory gardens," as instructed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, who encouraged Americans to try to feed themselves and their neighbors as much as possible. This would help a government trying to take care of its military overseas that was fighting World War II as well as a population at home.

Cohen's parents participated like the good Americans they were, but about two years in, their daughter had a question.

"Why aren't we growing flowers?" she asked.

Her folks bought her a petunia, a

geranium and a marigold. She took care of all three. "And I liked it," Cohen added.

And she still does.

The 85-year-old Collegeville resident and Tiferet Bet Israel member in Blue Bell is known in horticultural circles as "the perennial diva." She not only builds gardens but talks about how to build

them, too. Cohen spent more than two decades as a horticulture professor at Temple University, according to a 2018 Nursery Management profile; she designed a four-year program in the practice at Temple Ambler; and she held jobs "hybridizing orchids for John DuPont" (yes, that John DuPont) and working in management at Waterloo Gardens on the Main Line.

Cohen also appeared on PBS and QVC as the "perennial diva" and became a best-selling author with titles like "The Perennial Garden's Design Primer" and "The Nonstop Garden."



She remains an editor emeritus at Fine Gardening, a lifestyle magazine that she contributed to for three decades.

"From a very early age, I liked to take care of things. Maybe they were colorful. Or maybe it was because the bees and the butterflies were attracted to them. Who knows?" Cohen said. "But there was something about them."

Cohen discovered her passion at a young age. But she did not pursue it until much later. Before she went to college, her mother asked her, "Do you want to be a nurse, a secretary or a teacher?" which were three common options for women at the time. Cohen did not have an answer, but she ultimately chose teaching. She thought she would like it more than the other two.

By the late '60s, she was a high school English teacher with a husband, Dr. Richard Cohen, and three young kids, Abby, Douglas and Rachel. As a mother, Cohen had little time to cultivate a garden outside her home. But she did get "caught up in the 1960s house plants craze," as that 2018 Nursery Management article explained it.

The plant enthusiast put hundreds of them around her house. It was not a big house, either. Cohen had to put a few plants on top of a television and, on two separate occasions, she burned out the TV while watering them. Dr. Cohen told her that maybe she should take her hobby outside.

So, Cohen went back to school to study horticulture, earning a degree from Temple Ambler and a master's from Arcadia University in Glenside. She also helped out at the Temple greenhouse. After graduating, she landed her teaching job at Temple and went on to mentor hundreds of "public garden directors, garden center owners and heads of arboretums," according to the Nursery Management article.

"As Jews, we were told that we were the caretakers. That we're supposed to be taking care of our communities and the soil and everything else," Cohen said. "It fits together with what you learn as a good Jewish person."

Later in life, when their kids were older, the Cohens moved to a Collegeville property that "did not have one plant," Richard Cohen said. Now it has a garden featured in magazines and 50-80 house plants inside.

"She just loves plants and growing things," Dr. Cohen said.

Today, Cohen describes herself as semi-retired. But you never really retire from a passion, so she's still taking calls from friends and family members about how to grow gardens and care for specific plants. She gives her advice free of charge.

And at a moment when there's a general, digital-age desire to reconnect with the natural world, she's giving it to Jewish Exponent readers, too. First, according to Cohen, you must buy a gardening book and read it, too. Then go to a gardening center and buy a beginner plant, like a succulent, which you only need to water once or twice a week. The sunlight will take it from there.

"And then you just keep going," Cohen said. "You buy yourself another book."

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#### LEGALS

Foreign Registration Statement JAKLITSCH/GARDNER ARCHITECTS, PC, a professional corporation organized under the laws of the state of New York, has applied for registration in Pennsylvania under the provisions of Chapter 4 of the Associations Code. The address of its principal office under the laws of the jurisdiction of formation is 453 W. 77th St., 4th FL, New York, NY 10011 and the address of its proposed registered office in this Commonwealth is o'o M. Burr Keim Co., 2021 Arch St., Philadelphia, PA 19103. Offit Kurman, P.C. 240 North Third Street Suite 1101 Harrisburg, PA 17101

Notice is hereby given that Articles of Incorporation were filed with the Department of State of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania on 12/23/2022 with respect to a proposed nonprofit corporation, Lawrence Court Walkway Association, which has been incorporated under the Nonprofit Corporation Law of 1988

#### **QRE Property Management, Inc.** has been incorporated under the provisions of the Pennsylvania Business Corporation Law of 1988.

Court of Common Pleas - Phila. County, PA – TRIAL DIV. - Dec. Term '22/No. 373 - NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Petition of Noah Daniel Buboltz was filed in the above-named Court, praying for a Decree to change the Petitioner's name to NOAH BUBOLTZ DANIELS. The Court has fixed 2/3/23, at 10:00 A.M. in Courtroom 691, City Hall, Phila., PA, as the time and place for the hearing of said Petition, when and where all persons interested may appear and show cause, if any they have, why the prayer of the said Petition should not be granted. PATRICIA M. HOBAN, Atty. for Petitioner, 104 S. 20th St., #V15, Phila., PA 19103, 215.520.2323

Court of Common Pleas - Phila. County, PA – TRIAL DIV. - Dec. Term '22/No. 374 - NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Petition of Jonathan Daniel Klein was filed in the above-named Court, praying for a Decree to change the Petitioner's name to JONATHAN KLEIN DANIELS. The Court has fixed 2/3/23, at 10:00 A.M. in Courtroom 691, City Hall, Phila., PA, as the time and place for the hearing of said Petition, when and where all persons interested may appear and show cause, if any they have, why the prayer of the said Petition should not be granted. PATRICIA M. HOBAN, Atty. for Petitioner, 104 S. 20th St., #V15, Phila., PA 19103, 215.520.2323

#### **Dissolution Notice**

Notice is hereby given to all creditors and claimants of Lifestyle Collections, Inc a Pennsylvania Business Corporation that the shareholders have approved a proposal that the corporation dissolve voluntarily under the provisions of Section 1975 of the Pennsylvania Business Corporation Law of 1988. All claims must be presented in writing and must contain sufficient information to identify the claimant and the substance of the claim. Mail all claims to: Lifestyle Collections, Inc., 510 Bellevue Road, Wilmington, De. 19809 The deadline to accept claims is 60 days from this notice. All claims will be barred pursuant to 15 Pa.C.S. § 1992 if not received by this deadline

Equitable Community Development Corporation has been incorporated under the provisions of the Pennsylvania Nonprofit Corporation Law of 1988. Toppin Law, P.C. 1800 JFK Blvd. Suite 300 Philadelphia, PA 19103

ESTATE OF ANNA MARIE DeTRANO-ROSSI, DECEASED. Late of Philadelphia County LETTERS TESTAMENTARY on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment with-out delay to PASQUALE DeTRANO, EXECUTOR, c/o Howard M. Soloman, Esq., 1760 Market St. Ste. 404, Philadelphia, PA 19103 Or to his Attorney: HOWARD M. SOLOMAN 1760 Market St. Ste. 404 Philadelphia, PA 19103

ESTATE OF ASTER TECHENE METIKE, DECEASED.

Late of Philadelphia, PA. Letters of Administration on the above estate have been granted to the undersigned. All persons having claims against or indebted to the estate should make claims known or forward payment to, Sisay Beshah, Administrator, c/o John R. Lundy, Esq., Lundy Beldecos & Milby, PC, 450 N. Narberth Ave., Suite 200, Narberth, PA 19072.

ESTATE OF BLAKE JORMAN BRADLEY, DECEASED. Late of Philadelphia County LETTERS of ADMINISTRATION on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment without delay to HOWARD M. SOLOMAN, ADMINISTRATOR, 1760 Market St. Ste. 404, Philadelphia, PA 19103, Or to his Attorney: HOWARD M. SOLOMAN 1760 Market St. Ste. 404 Philadelphia, PA 19103

ESTATE OF DANIELLE N. RODIER, DECEASED.

Late of Philadelphia County LETTERS TESTAMENTARY on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment without delay to KATHRYN KRMPOTICH, Executrix, 82 Strathaven Dr., Broomall,

ESTATE OF DAVID EUGENE WARD, DECEASED.

#### Late of Philadelphia County

PA 19008

LETTERS TESTAMENTARY on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment without delay to CONSTANCE Y. MACK, EXECUTRIX, c/o Adam S. Bemick, Esq., 2047 Locust St., Philadelphia, PA 19103, Or to her Attorney:

ADAM S. BERNICK LAW OFFICE OF ADAM S. BERNICK

2047 Locust St. Philadelphia, PA 19103

#### ESTATE OF DORIS E. GNIEWEK, a/k/a DORIS GNIEWEK, DECEASED. Late of Philadelphia County

Late of Philadelphia County LETTERS of ADMINISTRATION on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment without delay to LAUREEN GNIEWEK, ADMINISTRATRIX, c/o Harry Metka, Esq., 4802 Neshaminy Blvd., Ste. 9, Bensalem, PA 19020, Or to her Attorney: HARRY METKA 4802 Neshaminy Blvd., Ste. 9 Bensalem, PA 19020

ESTATE OF FANIA LIBMAN a/k/a FANYA LIBMAN, FAINA LIBMAN, DECEASED. Late of Philadelphia County LETTERS TESTAMENTARY on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment without delay to EMIL LIBMAN and MICHAEL G. LIBMAN, EXECUTORS, c/o Nicole B. LaBletta, Esq., 200 Bar Harbor Dr., Ste. 400, Conshohocken, PA 19428, Or to their Attorney: NICOLE B. LABLETTA LABLETTA & WALTERS LLC 200 Bar Harbor Dr., Ste. 400 Conshohocken, PA 19428

ESTATE OF FRANCES AMELIA DUNMORE A/K/A FRANCES A. DUNMORE A/K/A FRANCES DUNMORE, DECEASED. LETTERS of ADMINISTRATION on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment with out delay to ERNEST C. DUNMORE. SR., ADMINISTRATOR, 1629 S. 15th Street, Philadelphia, PA 19145, Or to her Attorney: David H. Lipow O'Brien, Belland & Bushinsky, LLC 509 S. Lenola Rd Building 6 Moorestown, NJ 08057

ESTATE OF GEORGE JOSEPH CURETON, DECEASED. Late of Philadelphia County LETTERS of ADMINISTRATION on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment with-out delay to MARVIN DANDRIDGE, ADMINISTRATOR, 3751 N. St., Philadelphia, PA 19140, Bouvier Or to his Attorney: MARK S. HARRIS 920 Lenmar Dr. Blue Bell, PA 19422

ESTATE OF HAROLD LESTER HENDERSON, DECEASED Late of Philadelphia County LETTERS of ADMINISTRATION on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment without delay to HAROLD A. HENDERSON and LISA WILKS, ADMINISTRATORS, c/o Jay E. Kivitz, Esq., 7901 Ogontz Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19150, Or to their Attorney: JAY E. KIVITZ KIVITZ & KIVITZ, P.C. 7901 Ogontz Ave Philadelphia, PA 19150

ESTATE OF HERBERT CATALANO a/k/a HERMAN J. CATALANO, DECEASED. Late of Philadelphia County LETTERS TESTAMENTARY on the above Estate have been granted to the

undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment without delay to CHRISTOPHER L. CATALANO and JAMIE A. CATALANO, EXECUTORS, c/o D. Keith Brown, Esq., Two N. State St., P.O. Box 70, Newtown, PA 18940, Or to their Attorney: D. KEITH BROWN STUCKERT AND YATES Two N. State St. P.O. Box 70 Newtown, PA 18940

ESTATE OF IVAN GOLOVISTIKOV, DECEASED. Late of Philadelphia County

LETTERS of ADMINISTRATION on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment with-out delay to MARIANNA DMITRIEVA, ADMINISTRATRIX, 99 52 66 Rd., Apt. 1X, Rego Park, NY 11374

ESTATE OF JOHN P. HILL a/k/a JOHN HILL. DECEASED. Late of Philadelphia County

LETTERS of ADMINISTRATION on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make pavment without delay to ENEIDA HILL, ADMINISTRATRIX. c/o Kristen L. Behrens, Esq., 1500 Market St., Ste. 3500E, Philadelphia, PA 19102, Or to her Attorney: KRISTEN L. BEHRENS DILWORTH PAXSON LLP 1500 Market St., Ste, 3500E Philadelphia, PA 19102

ESTATE OF JOSEPH FRANCIS LAWSON a/k/a JOSEPH F. LAWSON, SR., DECEASED. Late of Philadelphia County LETTERS TESTAMENTARY on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment without delay to MATTHEW LAWSON, EXECUTOR, c/o Joseph T. Pace, Esq., 8515 Frankford Ave., Philadelphia, PA 19136, Or to his Attorney: JOSEPH T. PACE LAW OFFICE OF THOMAS J. METTEE, P.C. 8515 Frankford Ave Philadelphia, PA 19136

ESTATE OF JUANITA LANCIT a/k/a JUANITA WRIGHT, DECEASED. Late of Philadelphia County LETTERS of ADMINISTRATION on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment without delay to EDDIE B. LANCIT, ADMINISTRATOR, c/o Stephen M. Specht, Esq., 2332 S. Broad St., Philadelphia, PA 19145, Or to his Attorney: STEPHEN M. SPECHT GREEN & SCHAFLE, LLC 2332 S. Broad St. Philadelphia, PA 19145

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ESTATE OF KAREN C. HUMBERT, DECEASED.

Late of Philadelphia, PA. Letters of Administration on the above estate have been granted to the undersigned. All persons having claims against or indebted to the estate should make claims known or forward payment to, Faith Stallings, Administratrix, c/o John R. Lundy, Esq., Lundy Beldecos & Milby, PC, 450 N. Narberth Ave., Suite 200, Narberth, PA 19072.

ESTATE OF MARIAN SZCZEPANSKI DECEASED

Late of Philadelphia, PA. LETTERS OF ADMINISTRATION on the above estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same, and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment without delay, to Administrator, Piotr Bagniewski. Beneficiaries Renata Iwanska, Edyta Agnieska Zawadzka. The Law Offices of Jon Taylor, Esquire, PC, 1617 JFK Blvd., Suite 1888, Philadelphia, PA19103 the estate attorney

ESTATE OF MARIE ROSE McBRIDE, DECEASED.

Late of Philadelphia County LETTERS TESTAMENTARY on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment without delay to ALBERT EDWARD MCBRIDE, III. EXECUTOR, 1322 Amosland Rd., Prospect Park, PA 19076

ESTATE OF MARILYN E. GARDELLIS, DECEASED.

Late of Philadelphia County LETTERS TESTAMENTARY on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment without delay to GEORGE C. GARDELLIS, JR., EXECUTOR, c/o Harry Metka, Esq., 4802 Neshaminy Blvd., Ste. 9, Bensalem, PA 19020, Or to his Attorney: HARRY METKA

4802 Neshaminy Blvd., Ste. 9 Bensalem, PA 19020

ESTATE OF RITA A. WENDERWICZ, DECEASED. Late of Philadelphia County LETTERS TESTAMENTARY on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment with-out delay to LAURIE VERBINSKI, EXECUTRIX, 401 E. 80th St., Apt. 34D, New York, NY 10075, Or to her Attorney JOHN SLOWINSKI SLOWINSKI LAW 3143 Knights Rd. Bensalem, PA 19020

ESTATE OF ROSARIA PENA-MESTRE, DECEASED. Late of Philadelphia County LETTERS of ADMINISTRATION on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the

estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to decedent to make payment without delay to Joel Mestre, Administrator, 1626 West End Dr., Point Pleasant, NJ 08742

#### ESTATE OF SALI HELLER NEFF a/k/a SALI NEFF, DECEASED. Late of Philadelphia County

LETTERS TESTAMENTARY on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment with-out delay to ANDREW J. HELLER, Rd. EXECUTOR. 403 Atwood Glenside, PA 19038

ESTATE OF SONDRA HARTENBAUM Late of Montgomery County PA LETTERS of ADMINISTRATION on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment without delay to Executors GLEN HARTENBAUM, 3982 Martin Road, Huntingdon Valley, PA 19006 Or DAVID HARTENBAUM, 1600 White

House Road, Maple Glen, PA 19002.

ESTATE OF TAJ'ANAE SHATAYA VANESSA SILER, DECEASED Late of Philadelphia County LETTERS of ADMINISTRATION on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment without delay to WILLIAM ANTHONY CALANDRA, ADMINISTRATOR, c/o Kristen L. Behrens, Esq., 1500 Market 3500E, Philadelphia, PA Ste. 19102,

Or to his Attorney: KRISTEN L. BEHRENS DILWORTH PAXSON LLP 1500 Market St., Ste. 3500E Philadelphia, PA 19102

ESTATE OF THIEM OU GOV, DECEASED. Late of Philadelphia County LETTERS TESTAMENTARY on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make payment without delay to JIM ME GOUV EXECUTOR. c/o Martin J. Pezzner, Esq., 100 W. 6th St., Ste. 204, Media, PA 19063, Or to his Attorney: MARTIN J. PEZZNER GIBSON & PERKINS, P.C. 100 W. 6th St., Ste. 204 Media, PA 19063

ESTATE OF VIDAL MESTRE-HERNANDEZ, DECEASED, Late of Philadelphia County LETTERS of ADMINISTRATION on the above Estate have been granted to the undersigned, who request all persons having claims or demands against the estate of the decedent to make known the same and all persons indebted to the decedent to make pay-ment without delay to JOEL MESTRE, ADMINISTRATOR, 1626 West End Dr., Point Pleasant, NJ 08742

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