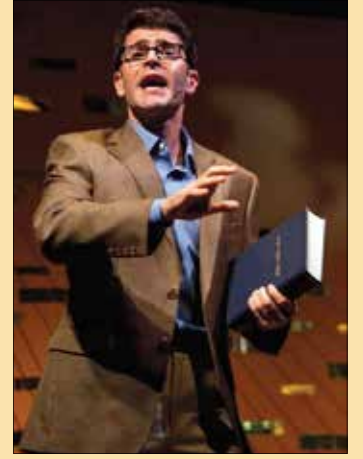


THE JEWISH WORLD

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Can you party in Saratoga?

page 13



It's grilling season!

Tangy barbecue recipe

See page 3



Who's committing war crimes?

page 4



OR CURRENT RESIDENT

What letter is backwards?

page 7



All dressed up—Can I go somewhere?

page 8



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Connections promote unity—family to family

By ETGAR LEFKOVITS

JNS

When Abi Bitton came to visit his fiancée in Jerusalem for a quick holiday on Oct. 5, the trajectory of his life's journey would forever change. The 35-year-old, who worked in real estate development in New York, had already picked out the flat where they would live in the Big Apple.

The Oct. 7 Hamas massacre changed all that. As it did for so many others, the worst attack on the Jewish people since the Holocaust had a profound impact on the young entrepreneur.

"We can't leave Israel," he told his fiancée, Natasha, who had herself moved to Israel two years earlier from Argentina, but had agreed to his request to relocate to New York after their marriage. "This is a defining moment for our nation, and we need to do something about it."

A 'Global Community'

Bitton, who was born in Argentina but raised in Mexico, Uruguay (his father served as Uruguayan chief rabbi) and New York, with a stint in Israel, sprang in action. He became determined to connect Diaspora Jews with Israelis

in real time. He wanted to make a long-term change.

Family In Israel?

Abandoning his job, he approached a New York financier, Ari Bergmann, with the lofty goal of creating a platform for a global community of Jews, which would connect Jewish families from all over the world with Israeli families.

And so, Our Mishpacha (family) was born.

Launched online in the week after Oct. 7, the organization has since connected 1,000 Jewish families in the United States, United Kingdom, Argentina, Australia and Brazil with an equal number of Israeli families. They are matched by a team of coordinators and then connect via Zoom, and sometimes in person as well.

A total of 5,000 Israeli families have already signed up, many of them with the head of the household currently serving in the army.

Our Unity

"We may be the smallest nation, but we are the biggest family in the world," Bitton said in an interview with JNS. "Our enemies want to bring us down and divide us. My goal is that we

become stronger than ever before."

The project quickly drew the interest of veteran Jewish organizations such as the Bnei Akiva youth movement, the World Zionist Organization and the Jewish Agency. It took off, with 55 synagogues in the diaspora signing on, although the number of Israelis signed up in the free-of-charge English and Hebrew online platform has outnumbered the diaspora applicants by five to one.

"I need diaspora Jews," said Bitton. While 4,000 Israeli families are on the waiting list to be connected, the biggest beneficiaries of the family connection are Jews in the diaspora, he said. A small team of nine employees work at the organization, which, Bitton hopes, will eventually become self-sufficient.

For those paired, the online interactions have frequently developed into personal friendships as well, with American families visiting their new Israeli families during solidarity trips over the last eight months of war, or alternatively meeting in the United States.

One Israeli mother who joined the platform told organizers that "after Oct. 7 her kids learned of those who hate us for the sole reason that 'we are Jewish,'" Bitton recounted. Now, the mother added, "We are learning about



Abi Bitton, the founder of Our Mishpacha, which seeks to unite Israeli and diaspora Jewish families.

those who love us for one reason: 'We are Jewish.'"

For Bitton, there is no turning back. While he always felt that he had to come back to Israel having served as a lone soldier in the Paratroopers and then meeting his wife at a Nefesh B'Nefesh Thanksgiving Dinner in Jerusalem, Oct. 7 has proven to be a game-changer for him.

"I couldn't leave and go back to my regular job showing apartments in New York," he said, rolling his eyes at the thought of it.

"We are living in a defining moment for the Jewish people and within this period of tumult we have an opportunity to become better, stronger and more united than ever before."

Israeli book publication down

The Oct. 7 Hamas massacre and subsequent war in Gaza led to a 10 percent drop in Israeli book publication last year, an annual survey has found. Six thousand thirty-seven books were published in Israel in 2023, a significant decrease from the previous year, when 6,791 books were published, the National Library of Israel report revealed.

According to the survey, the marked decrease in printed books, particularly in the genre of Jewish studies, is partly attributed to "changes made by publishers due to the war."

At the same time, there was a 40% increase in the publication of digital books, including electronic versions of hard-copy books published in previous years, the survey stated.

One hundred and eight comic books and graphic novels were published in 2023, a rise of 35% for this genre, as compared with 2022, according to the annual report.

About 10% of books released in Israel were self-published and author-financed, the survey found.

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Put this on the grill, with peach salsa

Recipe for a quick, fun, kosher BBQ

Fresh fish, kosher franks or brined chicken breasts on the grill, topped with fresh peach salsa. Serve with steamed or grilled fresh corn on the cob and vegetarian baked beans!



Peach salsa

- 4 fresh, ripe peaches, diced
 - ½ medium red onion, diced
 - 2 large tomatoes, diced
 - 1 large clove of garlic, diced or 1 TBSP jarred diced garlic
 - Optional – seed and dice 1 jalapeno pepper
 - ½ cup chopped fresh cilantro
 - Juice of 1 large lime
 - Kosher salt and pepper to taste
- Combine all ingredients in a large



bowl, folding ingredients together. Refrigerate before and after serving. Delicious on franks, grilled chicken, or white fish.

Recipe provided by Price Chopper/Market 32. The kosher store has moved to the new Market 32 location at the former ShopRite, 1730 Central Ave. The Jewish World has a commercial relationship with Price Chopper.



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No more Times-Union

The Times-Union newspaper, which had been collaborating with The Jewish World to provide our subscribers with the Sunday T-U, has ended that program. Alas!

UN commission accuses Israel and also Hamas of war crimes

By MIKE WAGENHEIM

JNS

A United Nations panel previously knocked by a number of countries for anti-Israel bias issued a report Wednesday, June 12, on the opening months of the current Israel-Hamas war, repeatedly claiming equivalencies between the actions of the Jewish state and the Western-designated terrorist group.

The U.N. Human Rights Council's Commission of Inquiry on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict accused both sides of disregarding international law and committing war crimes. It takes Israel security forces to task for a delayed response on the day of Hamas' Oct. 7 massacre—a claim that would seem to fall well outside even the commission's expansive mandate.

Israel has refused to cooperate with any of the commission's investigations or activities, noting its members are three jurists who have long criticized Israel and at times delved into open anti-Semitism—Chairwoman Navi Pillay, Miloon Kothari and Chris Sidoti.

Hamas Massacre

The report describes Hamas's massacre as “unprecedented in scale in [Israel's] modern history” and “invoking painful trauma of past persecution not only for Israeli Jews but for Jewish people everywhere.” The commission substantiated some claims of sexual violence on Oct. 7, writing that it had “documented evidence

of sexual violence” committed by Palestinian armed groups in multiple locations in southern Israel that day.

Hamas terrorists, the report said, targeted women, whose bodies were “used as victory trophies by male perpetrators” and “put on public display, either on the streets of the Gaza Strip or online.” But, the commission said, it could not independently verify rape testimonies in the hands of journalists and police due to Israel's lack of cooperation.

The report, however, also accused Israeli forces of carrying out sexual violence in both Gaza and in territories in Judea and Samara, which the commission said intended to drive home “the subordination of an occupied people.” But, the commission cites as sexual violence incidents when terrorism suspects were allegedly interrogated or abused while naked or partially dressed, blindfolded or forced to kneel or keep their hands tied behind their backs, and accuses Israeli forces of particularly targeting men and boys, rather than women.

Explanation

In reaction to photos and videos of large numbers of Gazan men gathered together in their underwear surrounded by Israeli forces, Israeli officials have said on many occasions that such treatment of detained males is necessary to ensure they have no explosives or other hidden weapons.

Blaming The Victim

The commission's report blames Israel in part for the civilian casualty toll on Oct. 7, saying that “Israeli authorities failed to protect civilians in southern Israel on almost every front.” That includes, according to the commission, a delayed and inadequate response by security forces and the usage of the “Hannibal Directive,” which allegedly led to the deaths of 14 Israeli civilians. The murky, unpublished and often misunderstood directive was originally created to ensure enemy forces could not take Israeli military members as hostages, even if it meant putting the soldiers in harm's way. The directive was never intended to apply to Israeli civilians.

Meanwhile, despite overwhelming evidence, including from Hamas officials, that Gazan terrorist groups operate regularly in civilian areas and do so as a matter of policy, the commission only writes that it is “aware of reports” and Israeli “allegations” that Hamas and other groups operate in civilian areas. Israel and other countries have said Hamas and other Gazan terrorist groups use their own civilians as shields to protect terrorists and to inflate the casualty toll during times of conflict in order to drive public opinion against Israel.

Criticism Of Report

While the commission wrote that neither the Oct. 7 massacre nor Israel's military response should be viewed in isolation, the Israeli mission to the United Nations in Geneva noted in a statement that the report “makes no mention of [the] decades-long” terrorist campaign



PHOTO COURTESY OF JEAN-MARC FERRÉ/J.N. PHOTO.

Navi Pillay, chairwoman of the United Nations Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel, addresses a press conference.

by Hamas “or the continuous rocket fire across Israeli territory. The reports disregard the abhorrent use of human shields by Hamas, the deliberate Hamas strategy of placing civilians in the line of fire.”

“Regarding Israel however,” the statement adds, “the report has no problem placing blame for supposedly not defending its population on Oct. 7.”

Israel's U.N. envoy in Geneva, Meirav Eilon Shahar, said that the Commission of Inquiry “has once again proven that its actions are all in the service of a narrow-led political agenda against Israel.”

The statements from the Israeli mission and its envoy were based on an embargoed copy of the commission's report, which was perhaps knowingly released on the Jewish holiday of Shavuot, leading to a delayed reaction by other Israeli officials who, as a matter of policy, do not issue statements on Shabbat or Jewish holidays.

As anti-Semitism rises, a campaign heats up to discredit the term

By DAVID SUISSA

JNS

“The callousness, dehumanization and targeting of Jews on display at last night's protest outside the Nova Festival exhibit was atrocious anti-Semitism—plain and simple,” the Democratic congresswoman tweeted. “Antisemitism has no place in our city nor any broader movement that centers human dignity and liberation.” Those words came from Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, (AOC), a notorious critic of Israel and leading light in progressive circles.

Reaction

What was most noteworthy, though, was the response from her fellow progressives. They accused her of selling out, of providing a fig leaf to the Jewish establishment. Some accused her of “getting a visit from your AIPAC babysitter.”

What's going on?

“The blinding rage directed at AOC for daring to utter the word ‘anti-Semitism’ in relation to the pogromist mobs outside the Nova exhibit is something to behold,” tweeted Izabella Tabarovsky. These responses from

progressive-Islamist friends, she added, “tell us something important about this moment.”

One thing it tells us is that just as anti-Semitism is reaching alarming levels, an even more alarming movement is afoot to discredit the term.

“Over the last few years there's been a campaign going on to disarm, distort and discredit the very term anti-Semitism,” Tabarovsky writes. “One time-tested technique here is to create so much confusion and controversy around the term that people would feel too hesitant to condemn anti-Semitism or speak of it all.”

She lists a series of examples, as in 2021, when Bernie Sanders' national surrogate, Amer Zahr, called on activists to stop condemning anti-Semitism: “Don't condemn sh**, we have a cross-sectional, intersectional movement that is winning...Stop it. Stop it. Stay focused. Say free, free, Palestine and nothing else.”

Another instance was when Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) mobs forced Rutgers to withdraw a statement condemning anti-Semitism. Rutgers complied, promising to be more “sensi-

Continued on page 5

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A Filipino singer's journey to Judaism

By ETGAR LEFKOVITS

JNS

He had grown up in a swanky northern Tel Aviv home adopted by a secular Israeli family, alongside his Filipino single mother who is a foreign worker.

An Israeli Story

Fluent in Hebrew, he was a semi-finalist in a top Israeli reality-show competition when in high school with the future winner of the Eurovision contest, having started writing and composing songs as a lonely kid of 8.

He went on to serve in the Israel Defense Forces even before he even became an Israeli citizen.

But it was only when Howie Danao, 23, took part in a Jewish-identity program for Israeli soldiers who are disconnected from their heritage at the tail end of his military service that he started questioning life (“Why I am here? Why was I adopted?”), which led him on a spiritual journey to Judaism.

“The only answer that felt right to all the questions is that there is no reasonable answer,” he told JNS in an interview in Tel Aviv. “I was chosen into that reality, and the only thing for me to do was to choose that which chose me.”

Privileged But Lonely

It was anything but a normal childhood for the Filipino-Israeli national. His mother, a single parent, came to Israel to work as a caretaker nearly a quarter century ago. Danao recounted that she did not know that she was pregnant with him. (An estimated 30,000 Filipinos work in Israel, nearly all of them as caretakers for the elderly.)

Thinking that she would have to go back to the Philippines, his mother



Filipino-Israeli singer Howie Danao performing for those recovering from the Oct. 7 terrorist attacks in southern Israel

was surprisingly offered the possibility by the affluent Israeli family she was working for as a housekeeper to raise the child in their home. (The Israeli couple had three older children of their own who became his “siblings,” while his adoptive father, who worked as a lawyer, split his time between Israel and the United Kingdom.)

Despite his luxurious surroundings and upbringing, Danao said that for all his childhood years, he felt that he was different from everyone and not very Israeli even after reaching the semi-finals of the Israeli version of “A Star Is Born” (in Hebrew, “Kochav Nolad,” based on the British “Pop Idol” show) and then being drafted in the Israeli military. Nor did he feel at home during visits to the Philippines.

The Nativ course proved a cathartic moment in the young singer’s life. The program works to define and

strengthen Israeli-Jewish-Zionist identity through classroom study, individual instruction, weekly excursions throughout the country, group Shabbat experiences and community work in partnership with the quasi-governmental Jewish Agency for Israel.

He said participation in the program led him to his decision to undergo conversion to Judaism and adopt a religiously observant lifestyle. “Everything finally made sense,” he said. “There has to be a Creator in everybody’s story,” he said.

Although his secular Roman Catholic biological family didn’t take his conversion well, Danao is at peace with his decision; he said that his mother has come round to his decision seeing that it gives him happiness.

“I will always be a Filipino, but I chose to be part of the Jewish nation,” he said. “The fact that I was born here is Divine intervention.”

He has now shifted from pop music to his story of his spiritual journey to Judaism, and musical lectures of love and faith, with an eye out for diplomacy in the future. Of the Jewish people, he noted, “We always say, ‘A Light to the Nations. Well, I am the Nations.’”

Volunteerism

The Oct. 7 Hamas massacre in southern Israel, in which 1,200 people, mostly civilians, were killed, only served to heighten his sense of belonging in Israel.

If anything, the Filipino-Israeli said that he felt a renewed sense of shame that he was so disconnected from the rest of the country in his sheltered upbringing in upscale north Tel Aviv, despite his close connection with his adopted family, which he maintains from his current abode in Ramat Gan.

For the first three months of the war, as the country was awash in volunteerism, he set out to southern Israel with a group of drivers delivering supplies to residents and soldiers. While there, he performed for them.

“It was during the war that I fell in love with the country while seeing so much outside of Tel Aviv,” he said.

An inspirational point according to Danao was when a 9-year-old orphaned child from the hard-hit borderline agricultural community of Kibbutz Be’eri, hugged him and thanked him for coming. Danao later released a single called “Only Nine.”

Recently, he performed at a Tel Aviv tribute organized by the Hotline for Refugees and Migrants to foreign caretakers who were killed or saved in the Hamas-led attacks and spoke of the historic bond of friendship between the Filipino and Israeli nations.

“I didn’t just join the Jewish nation,” he said in the interview. “I feel that now I can fulfill my purpose.”

As anti-Semitism rises...

Continued from Page 4

“...and balanced” in the future. She also cites the case of April Powers, a black Jewish DEI professional who had to resign from her job after she put out a statement condemning anti-Semitism. Back in 2021, Tabarovsky writes, “this all seemed shocking. Today it’s become completely normalized. Constant claims that anti-Zionism is not anti-Semitism are playing a massive role in creating confusion and intimidation around the issue.”

That’s why any clear evidence that anti-Semitism is real, like the hatefest at the Nova exhibit that AOC condemned, must be attacked at once. The very notion of anti-Semitism must be delegitimized as a Zionist conspiracy, another nefarious Jewish attempt to shut down critics and control events.

Stealing Victim Status?

Continued on page 6



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Blinken: Hamas response to hostage proposal unworkable

By CHARLES BYBELEZER

JNS

Hamas's official response to Israel's hostages-for-ceasefire proposal included modifications that are not workable, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken said on Wednesday, June 12.

"Hamas has proposed numerous changes to the proposal that was on the table. ... Some of the changes are workable, some are not," Blinken said in a press conference alongside Qatari Prime Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani in Doha.

Suffering Continues

"A deal was on the table that was virtually identical to the proposal that Hamas made on May 6—a deal that the entire world is behind, a deal Israel has accepted. Hamas could have answered with a single word: 'Yes,'" the secretary said.

"Instead, Hamas waited nearly two weeks and then proposed more changes, a number of which go beyond positions that had previously taken and accepted," added the top American diplomat, who was in Israel for a two-day visit.

"As a result, the war Hamas started on October 7 with its barbaric attack on Israel and on Israeli civilians will go on. More people will suffer, more Palestinians will suffer, more Israelis will suffer."

Blinken nevertheless said that "in the days ahead, we are going to continue to push on an urgent basis with our partners, with Qatar with Egypt, to try to close this deal. Because we know it's in the interests of Israelis, Palestinians, the region, indeed the entire world."

On Tuesday night, June 11, Hamas submitted to Egyptian and Qatari intermediaries its formal response, including "amendments" to the proposal that Israel said were tantamount to a rejection. An anonymous Israeli official was widely cited panning the terrorist group, which had "changed all of the main and most meaningful parameters" of the deal.

Reuters has reported, citing two Egyptian security officials, that Hamas is seeking written guarantees from the Biden administration for a permanent

ceasefire and the withdrawal of IDF troops from the Gaza Strip as a condition for signing off on the proposal.

The report also said Hamas wants explicit guarantees over the transition from the first phase of the plan, which includes a six-week truce and the release of some hostages, to the second phase, which includes an end to the war and Israeli pullback.

Hamas also proposed a new timeline for the phases.

Biden's Proposal

On May 31, President Joe Biden laid out the terms of the proposal in an address from the State Dining Room at the White House.

"The first phase would last for six weeks," he said. "Here's what it would include: a full and complete ceasefire. The withdrawal of Israeli forces from all populated areas of Gaza. Release of a number of hostages, including women, the elderly, the wounded, in exchange for the release of hundreds of Palestinian prisoners."

That phase, which would also include the return of the remains of dead hostages and the daily delivery of 600 trucks of aid to Gazans, would lead to an indefinite period of negotiations between Israel and Hamas to end the war, Biden said.

"During the six weeks of phase one, Israel and Hamas would negotiate the necessary arrangements to get to phase two, which is a permanent end to hostilities," the president added. "The proposal says if the negotiations take longer than six weeks from phase one, the ceasefire will still continue as long as negotiations continue."

The United States, Egypt and Qatar "would work to ensure negotiations keep going until all the agreements are reached and phase two is able to begin," Biden added.

In the second phase, "Israeli forces will withdraw from Gaza" and "release additional Palestinian prisoners in exchange for the release of all remaining living hostages," the president said. Quoting the text of the proposal, he said that at that point, the ceasefire would become "the cessation of hostilities



PHOTO COURTESY OF CHUCK KENNEDY/U.S. STATE DEPARTMENT.

Secretary of State Antony Blinken talks to reporters in Tel Aviv, June 11, 2024.

permanently."

The third phase would include the reconstruction of Gaza and the return of any remaining dead hostages. During this stage, the international community would ensure that Hamas does not rearm.

Leaders of 16 countries, including many whose citizens were taken hostage by Hamas on Oct. 7, issued a statement backing the proposal. Noting that Jerusalem was "ready to move forward" with the terms, they called on the Gaza-based terrorist group to "close this agreement."

"There is no time to lose," read the statement signed by the leaders of Argentina, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, France, Germany, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Serbia, Spain, Thailand and the United Kingdom. The United States also signed the statement.

On Monday, the United Nations Security Council had adopted a U.S.-drafted resolution backing the three-phase plan to end the war. Noting that Israel had accepted it, the resolution calls for Hamas to do the same, and for both sides to "implement its terms without delay and without condition."

In an interview with *Time* magazine published earlier in June, Biden described the Israeli ceasefire offer as "very generous."

"The last offer Israel made was very generous in terms of who [Palestinian prisoners] they'd be willing to release, what they'd give in return, et cetera. Bibi [Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu] is under enormous pressure on the hostages ... and so he's prepared to do about anything to get the hostages back," said Biden.

Jordan Conference

While in the Middle East Blinken met with King Abdullah II of Jordan in Sweimeh, Jordan and spoke at the conference "Call for Action: Urgent Humanitarian Response for Gaza," during which he announced another \$404 million in U.S. aid to Palestinians. Blinken also criticized Israel for not doing enough to help struggling Palestinian civilians and took Arab states to task for not providing enough aid. He said that Washington has told the Israeli government directly "to speed up the inspection of trucks and reduce backlogs; to provide greater clarity on—and shorten the list of—prohibited goods; to increase visas for aid workers and to process them more quickly; to create clearer, more effective channels for humanitarian groups to de-conflict with IDF operations; to surge lifesaving medicine and equipment; to provide everything necessary to repair water and sanitation systems."

As anti-Semitism rises ...

Continued from Page 5

Why has the term become such a growing threat to progressives?

For starters, it disrupts the oppressor/oppressed narrative that is their ideological lifeblood. Jews are stereotyped as white, Western and powerful, the ultimate exemplars of oppressive white privilege. They must never be allowed to be victims.

We saw this at work dramatically right after Oct. 7, when progressives came down hard on Israel and the Jews even though 1,200 Israelis got massacred by Hamas. The mutilation, the beheadings, the rapes, the burning alive

of bodies were so staggering, it presented a nightmare scenario for those progressives that are used to bashing the Jewish state as a genocidal, imperialist and colonialist bad actor.

Suddenly, these powerful Jews looked like victims, victims of the most savage Jew haters imaginable. This victim status for Jews was unacceptable, even if it was so blatantly justified—especially since it was so justified. It had to be nipped in the bud.

The progressive campaign to delegitimize the term anti-Semitism, then, is just another way of telling Jews to stay in their oppressor lane. Bashing a

warring Israel is now the easiest way for to bash Jews.

But there's something even bigger at play: The war against Israel is also a war against everything progressives hate about the West. That's why the term anti-Semitism must be discredited. Bad guys can never be victims.

Enablers

The leftist media, which consistently downplay anti-Semitism from the left, have become the great enablers.

"The *New York Times* has published countless stories about the rhetoric of participants in the 2017 'Unite the Right' rally in Charlottesville, Virginia," Christine Rosen wrote

in *Commentary* in a piece titled, "Why the Media Ignore Anti-Semitism."

"Where are the big-think pieces and deeply reported stories about the organizations and funders behind the anti-Jewish groups staging protests outside synagogues and other Jewish institutions?"

As Rich Lowry writes in *National Review Online*, "every day is a Charlottesville now, but hardly anyone notices...The antisemitic rhetoric and menacing nature of that event—in a different, left-wing form—are being replicated all over the country in openly hateful pro-Hamas protests."

If white supremacists were showing up all over the country and agitating

Behaalotecha



By Rabbi SHLOMO RISKIN

And it came to pass, when the ark traveled forward, that Moses said, 'Rise up O God, and scatter Your enemies; and let them that hate You flee before You.' And when it rested he said, 'Return O God, unto the myriads [literally ten thousands] of the families of Israel.' (Numbers 10:35–36)

EFRAT, Israel—I would like to invite you to join me in a fascinating detective search, an intellectual journey whose destination is the understanding of a strange typographical biblical insertion in this portion of **Behaalotecha**, which gives rise to an even stranger rabbinical assertion. Tradition ordains that the two stirring verses quoted above be bracketed, as it were, by two inverted nuns, the 14th letter of the Hebrew alphabet. So strong is this scribal tradition that even the printed Bible texts set these verses off with the two inverted nuns.

The Talmud raises the issue of this curious typography, explaining—in the name of R. Judah the Prince, primary transmitter of the Mishnah—that “in the Torah parchment this section is preceded and followed by a reversed nun... because it ranks as a biblical book by itself” (Shabbat 116).

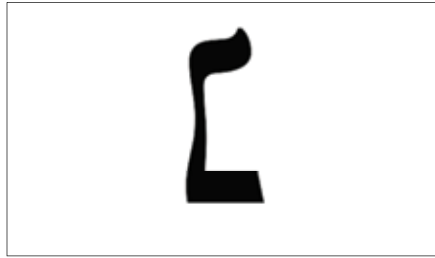
I would suggest that our sages are granting these verses the status of a separate book because they encapsulate the true potency of our Torah; indeed, these verses are teaching us that the true source of our strength, endurance, and eternity as a nation is our Torah, and our Torah alone!

A Lasting Torah

Lest we make the mistake that might makes right, and that physical prowess ensures survival, we must be mindful of the fact that the Egyptian pyramids, Babylonian ziggurats, Olympian idols, Roman coliseums, Nazi swastikas, and Bolshevik hammer and sickles have indeed been scattered by the winds of history, while the pages of our Torah parchment—which in reality can be overturned by a strong wind—have nevertheless enabled our beleaguered and seemingly powerless nation (at least for two thousand years of exile) to emerge strong and influential; indeed, it is because of that Torah that we have succeeded in rising from the ashes of Auschwitz, returning as a sovereign nation to our homeland, and effecting an ingathering of exiles from Ethiopia, India, Bosnia, and Russia.

But why utilize the Hebrew letter nun to express the truth of the power of our book? In Berakhot (4b) we are taught that the Ashrei prayer, comprised primarily of the 145th Psalm, which we are enjoined to say thrice daily, follows

Scribal anomaly in portion helps emphasize the inclusivity of the Torah



An inverted nun like the ones in the BEHAALOTECHA PORTION

the pattern of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet by having each of its verses begin with another letter of the alphabet in proper order from aleph to taf. However, one letter is conspicuous by its absence: “Why is there no nun in Ashrei? Because the fall of Israel begins with it, as it is written: ‘Fallen, [nifla], she shall not again rise, O virgin of Israel [Amos 5:2].’”

Inversion

This Talmudic passage states that nun is the last letter we would expect to find encompassing a “book” attesting to Israel’s eternity. However, we must remember that the nuns that surround our verses are inverted!

If we turn to Nahmanides’s explanation concerning the rainbow, which God placed in the sky as an expression of His covenant with Noah, we find that,

for this great sage, the symbolism of the rainbow is that of an inverted bow [as in bow and arrow]: He [God] has not made the rainbow with its feet bent upward because it might have appeared that arrows were being shot from heaven.... Instead He made it the opposite of this in order to show that they are not shooting at the earth from the heavens. It is indeed the way of warriors to invert the instruments of war, which they hold in their hands when calling for peace. (Nahmanides on **Genesis** 9:13)

Moving With The Ark

If the inverted bow, or rainbow, of the covenant with Noah symbolizes the very antithesis of war, the inversion expressing not war but peace, then it is logical to assert that the inverted nun of this portion symbolizes the ascent of Israel rather than her demise. Indeed, the Talmudic passage we cited previously goes on to reinterpret the verse from Psalms by merely changing the punctuation: “*The fallen [daughter of Israel], she shall never [fall] again; Rise, O Virgin of Israel*” (Amos 5:2). In effect, our two reversed nuns are a silent covenant between God and the Jewish people that the Torah, eternal source of strength of our nation, has the power to scatter all

our enemies as long as we, the people of Israel, always move together with the ark! In effect, ours is a portable Torah, which we must always take with us.

Keeping Us In Step

Permit me to develop this idea one step further—and attempt to elucidate the deepest meaning of the words of these verses. *When the ark traveled forward* alerts us to the significance of the necessity of the ark, and the Torah it encompasses, to travel together with the nation, albeit a little bit ahead—but never so far ahead that it leaves the people behind. Perhaps this is the real significance of Rashi’s comment: “Since the ark was three days ahead of where the Jews were when they were traveling, therefore Moses said, ‘Stand and wait for us; don’t go further away’” (Rashi on **Numbers** 10:35). Rashi is teaching us that Moses was scrupulous about making sure that the ark was never more than three days ahead. Remember the well-known adage of folk-wisdom: If you’re one step ahead of the generation, you’re a genius. If you’re two steps ahead, you’re a crackpot! Obviously we require the proper religious leadership to ensure that the people are in step with the

Continued on page 15

No more T-U

The **Times-Union** newspaper, which had been collaborating with **The Jewish World** to provide our subscribers with the Sunday T-U, has ended that program. Alas!

Friends have suggested that without the T-U to occupy Sunday hours, readers could profitably spend time reviewing Jewish texts like **Pirkey Avot!**

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Calendar of Events



THURSDAY, JUNE 20

The Jewish Federation Trivia Night – 6:30 p.m. The Century House, 997 New Loudon Rd. (Route 9), Latham. Hosted by Sharon Watkins-Fox and local Jeopardy! champion, Audrey Watkins-Fox, and sponsored by Women's Philanthropy. Free. Res. by 6/14.–783-7800, <https://jewishfedny.org/regfox.com/trivia-night>

S.J.C.C. Annual Meeting–6:30 p.m. Schenectady Center, 2565 Balltown Rd., Schenectady. Refreshments, reports. Info.–518-377-8803.

Beth Emeth Sisterhood Book Club – 6:30 -8:15 p.m. Peaches Café, 1475 Western Ave., Albany. Discussion of **Pineapple Street**, by Jenny Jackson. Reg. required– www.BethEmethAlbany.org. Info. – Shari Rosenblum, sbotpt@hotmail.com.

FRIDAY, JUNE 21

Beth Emeth Erev Shabbat Service, Membership Milestones Blessings –5:30 p.m. 100 Academy Rd., Albany, or via live-stream at www.BethEmethAlbany.org. Info. – 518-436-9761, ClergyAdmin@CBEAlbany.org.

SATURDAY, JUNE 22

Beth Emeth Memorial Brick Installa-

tion – 9:30 -10:30 a.m. 100 Academy Rd., Albany. Dedication of a memorial brick to honor the memory of Pat Snyder and to celebrate her contributions to Congregation Beth Emeth. Reg.–www.BethEmethAlbany.org. Info.– 518-436-9761, ClergyAdmin@CBEAlbany.org.

SUNDAY, JUNE 23

The JFNENY North Country Event: The Revolution Of Zionism–7 p.m. Saratoga City Music Hall, 474 Broadway, Saratoga Springs. Featuring talk by Rabbi Menachem Creditor. Wine, hors d'oeuvres. \$25 p.p. Info.–518-783-7800. Res. by 6/17–<https://jewishfedny.ticketspice.com/north-country-event-24>

"Nathan-ism"– 2-3:30 p.m. Yiddish Book Center, 1021 West St., Amherst, Mass. Film by Elan Golod. About Syrian immigrant artist and his compulsion to create a visual narrative of guarding Nazi war criminals at the end of WW 11. \$8. Info.– 413-256-4900. **Beth Emeth Garage Sale Drop-Off Begins** – 8:30 a.m.-3 p.m. 100 Academy Rd., Albany. Arrange drop-off. www.BethEmethAlbany.org. Info. – Margie Dorkin at mbdorkin@nycap.rr.com, or call 518-330-3411.

TUESDAY, JUNE 25

S.J.C.F.: "Disobedience"– 7 p.m. Shaara Tfillle Synagogue, 84 Weibel Ave., Saratoga Springs. Romantic drama. Rated R. In celebration of LGBTQ+ National Pride Month. \$5. Info., Res. by 6/21–518-584- 2370 or baraoipitz47@gmail.com.

THURSDAY, JUNE 27

S.J.C.F.: Vignettes from I'd Like To

Say Sorry, But There's No One To Say Sorry To– 7 p.m. Temple Sinai, 509 Broadway, Saratoga Springs. First-person performances from Mikolaj Grynberg's book. \$10. Reg., Info.– <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/sl/uvvsN3r/SaySorry>, sjca.sjcf@gmail.com.

FRIDAY, JUNE 28

Beth Emeth Erev Pride Shabbat Service – 100 Academy Rd., Albany, or via live-stream at www.BethEmethAlbany.org. Info. – 518-436-9761, ClergyAdmin@CBEAlbany.org.

SATURDAY, JUNE 29

Beth Emeth Torah Study – 9:30-10:30 a.m. 100 Academy Rd., Albany. Discussion of the Torah portion **Shlach L'cha**, in-person and via Zoom. Reg. –www.BethEmethAlbany.org. Zoom link: <https://Us02Web.Zoom.us/j/89304372729>. Password: CBE. Info. – 518-436-9761, ClergyAdmin@CBEAlbany.org.

Beth Emeth Garage Sale–6:30-9 p.m. 100 Academy Rd., Albany. \$10. Cash only. Info. – www.BethEmethAlbany.org. (See 6/30)

SUNDAY, JUNE 30

Battle Of The Barbecues Competition –4-6 p.m. Albany Jewish Community Center, 340 Whitehall Rd., Albany. 8 teams compete as a fund-raiser for the Shalom Food Pantry. Samples! Attendees taste/judge. Kid activities. \$25 p.p. with a reservation, through June 25, after that date, \$30 and \$10 per child. Children –5 and under no cost. Info.–Chanie Simon, 518-439-3310.

Beth Emeth Garage Sale– 9 a.m.-2 p.m. 100 Academy Rd., Albany. Free. Bag sale begins at 2 p.m. \$5, \$10 and \$15 bags will be sold. Info.–518-436-9761, www.BethEmethAlbany.org. (See 6/29, 7/1)

MONDAY, JULY 1

Beth Emeth Bag Sale–4-7 p.m. 100 Academy Rd., Albany. Free. Bags \$1, \$3 and \$5. Info. – 518-436-9761, www.BethEmethAlbany.org. (See 6/29, 30)

FRIDAY, JULY 5

Beth Emeth Erev Shabbat Service – 100 Academy Rd., Albany, or via live-stream, www.BethEmethAlbany.org. Info. – 518-436-9761, ClergyAdmin@CBEAlbany.org.

SATURDAY, JULY 6

Beth Emeth Torah Study – 9:30 -10:30 a.m., 100 Academy Rd., Albany. Discussion of the Torah portion in-person and via Zoom. Reg. – www.BethEmethAlbany.org. Zoom link: <https://Us02Web.Zoom.us/j/89304372729>. Password: CBE. Info. – 518-436-9761, ClergyAdmin@CBEAlbany.org.

SUNDAY, JULY 7

S.J.C.F.: Fly Free With The Spirit Of The Lubavitch Rebbe and Melodies Of Freedom–5:30 p.m. Saratoga Chabad, 130 Circular St., Saratoga Springs. Music, meal, reflections. \$10. Res.–518-526-0773.

MONDAY, JULY 8

Berkshire Jewish Film Festival– 4, 8 p.m. Lenox Memorial and Middle High School, 197 East St., Lenox. 4 p.m. **"Vishniac,"** at 8 p.m. **"Seven Blessings."** \$15 at door. 14 films will be shown on six consecutive Mondays, ending 8/12.

FRIDAY, JULY 12

JTS In The Berkshires: "Nine Months Later: New Frameworks For Confronting Contemporary Antisemitism" –11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Shakespeare & Company, Elayne P. Bernstein Theater, 70 Kemble St., Lenox, Mass. Dr. Shuly Rubin Schwartz, chancellor and Irving Lehrman Research Professor of American Jewish History, Jewish Theological Seminary, to discuss. \$15. Info.–Alisa Braun, 212-678-8819 or sabraun@jtsa.edu. (See 8/9, 823)

SUNDAY, JULY 14

Israel-Palestine 2nd in Film Series: "The Settlers"–2 p.m. Beth Israel Synagogue, 53 Lois St., North Adams, Mass. Free. Dialogue. (See 8/11)

MONDAY, JULY 15

Berkshire Jewish Film Festival– 4, 8 p.m. Lenox Memorial and Middle High School, 197 East St., Lenox. 4 p.m. **"Caretaker,"** **"Children Of Peace,"** at 8 p.m. **"Supernova: The Music Festival Massacre."** \$15 at door. 14 films will be shown on six consecutive Mondays, ending 8/12.

TUESDAY, JULY 16

S.J.C.F. Klezmer And Kosher Fest– 5:30 p.m. Clifton Common Blvd., Clifton Park. Dinner, games, klezmer, other music. Info., Res.–www.cliftonparkchabad.com, 518-495-0772.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 17

S.J.C.F. "Las Dos Mariette"–7 p.m. Shaara Tfillle Synagogue, 84 Weibel Ave., Saratoga Springs. Spanish documentary with subtitles about a woman coming to terms with her past, specifically her Judaism and her escape from Nazi occupied France. \$5 Res. by 7/12, 518-584-2370.

THURSDAY, JULY 18

S.J.C.F. Panel Discussion: Albert Tapper's "Broadway Musicals: A Jewish Legacy"– 7 p.m. Zoom. 2013 documentary examines the role of Jewish composers and lyricists in the creation of the modern American musical. Info., Reg.–<https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/sl/abblvGy/BroadwayMusicals>, 518 584-8730.

SUNDAY, JULY 21

S.J.C.F. Klezmer And Foods That Begin With K– 7 p.m. Saratoga Chabad, 130 Circular St., Saratoga Springs. Music. \$5. Info.–518-526-0773.

MONDAY, JULY 22

Berkshire Jewish Film Festival– 4, 8 p.m. Lenox Memorial and Middle High School, 197 East St., Lenox. 4 p.m. **"The Anne Frank Gift Shop,"** at 8 p.m. **"Without Precedent: The Supreme Life of Rosalie Abella."** \$15 at door. 14 films will be shown on six consecutive Mondays, ending 8/12.

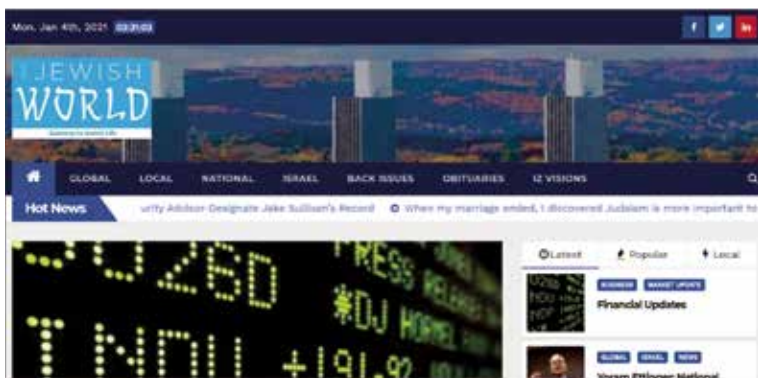
SUNDAY, JULY 28

Art Day At The S.J.C.C.–10 a.m. -3 p.m. 2565 Balltown Rd., Schenectady. Vendors, food, music, activities. Free. Info.–518-377-8803.

S.J.C.F.: Tradition Tradition: Jewish Storytelling–7 p.m. Beth Shalom Synagogue, 688 Clifton Park Center Rd., Clifton Park. Jewish stories and music featured. \$10. Info.– 518-584-8730, or sjca.sjcf@gmail.com.

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At White House, former Israeli captive recounts Hamas sexual abuse

Released Israeli hostage Amit Soussana recently recalled the sexual assault she experienced at the hands of Hamas terrorists in the Gaza Strip during a White House event marking International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict.

No Justifying Circumstances

“If someone had told me a few months ago while I was sitting in a dark room in Gaza tied up by my ankle and unable to move that I would be standing here today before you all, I would have thought that they were out of their mind,” she told attendees.

“The sexual assault I experienced should never happen to any human being under any circumstances. No one should ever be sexually violated, and there are no justifying circumstances for these crimes,” Soussana stated.

VP Vows Protest

U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris vowed not to remain silent after hearing Soussana’s story, saying the Israeli survivor, an attorney, “has bravely come forward with her account of sexual violence while she was held captive by Hamas” for 54 days. “These

testimonies, I fear, will only increase as more hostages are released,” said the vice president. “We cannot look away. And we will not be silent.”

Harris said that after Hamas’s Oct. 7 massacre in Israel’s northwestern Negev, she witnessed “images of bloody Israeli women abducted.”

“Then it came to light that Hamas committed rape and gang rape at the Nova music festival,” she said. “And women’s bodies were found naked from the waist down, hands tied behind their back and shot in the head.”

The vice president said her “heart breaks for all these survivors and their families, and for all the pain and suffering over the last eight months in Israel and in Gaza.”

Abuse Referenced

In an interview in March, Soussana revealed that she was sexually assaulted in Gaza. While several female hostages freed in the November ceasefire have alluded to being sexually abused, the interview marked the first time that a former captive publicly detailed Hamas sex crimes.

Soussana told *The New York Times* that she was held in a children’s

bedroom, chained by her ankle. On multiple occasions, a guard would enter, sit next to her on the bed, lift her shirt and touch her. Some two weeks into her captivity, he attacked her after briefly freeing her from the shackles to use the bathroom. The guard forced her to “commit a sexual act on him” at gunpoint, she said.

At least 10 of the hostages released during the temporary truce were sexually assaulted or abused, a doctor who treated some of the 110 persons released from captivity told the Associated Press late last year. In addition, Israel is investigating many accounts of sex crimes that occurred during the Oct. 7 terrorist infiltration, when thousands of heavily armed Hamas gunmen stormed the border, killing 1,200 people, wounding thousands and taking 253 hostages.

Glaring Omission

Ahead of the International Day for the Elimination of Sexual Violence in Conflict, the White House was blasted online for omitting Hamas’s crimes in a “fact sheet” put out in support of Harris’s speech.

“The Biden Administration put this



PHOTO COURTESY OF PAULINA PATIMER.

Released hostage Amit Soussana in front of her destroyed home in Kibbutz Kfar Aza, southern Israel, Jan. 29, 2024.

out today—a ‘fact sheet’ [in] support of Kamala Harris’s speech condemning conflict-related sexual violence. It mentions Ukraine, Congo, Sudan, Iraq and other locations, except one: Israel,” former U.S. Ambassador to Israel David Friedman said. “I am just sickened by this,” he tweeted, later acknowledging that Harris did mention Hamas in her address.

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Attempts by ancient rabbis to curb theater; Book purports to show theater influences on Judaism

By MENACHEM WECKER

JNS

All the rabbinic world was not a stage, and all the *halachic* scholars were merely players in it telling obedient Jews to avoid the theater at all costs.

Idolatrous Practices Therein?

In the sixth-century Midrashic text, **Ruth Rabah**, Naomi tells her daughter-in-law, who is destined to become a matriarch in the Davidic line: “My daughter, it is not the way of Jewish women to go to theaters and circuses of Gentiles.” Other Midrashic texts contrast theaters and circuses (idling away) and synagogues and study halls, and the Talmud forbids going to theaters and circuses due to idolatrous practices therein. But in all of those anti-drama admonitions, Courtney Friesen, associate professor and director of graduate studies for classics at the University of Arizona, sees both evidence that Jews were attending theaters—thus requiring rabbis to rail against it—and irony.

Just as rabbis and church leaders in the early Common Era issued bitter reproach after the fire-and-brimstone tongue-lashing of Greek drama, classical theater actually shaped ancient Judaism and Christianity in several important ways, according to Friesen, who is the author of the new book **Playing Gods, Acting Heroes, and the Interaction between Judaism, Christianity, and Greek Drama in the Early Common Era**.

Few Records

“One of the suppositions driving my work has been that the vehemence of Jewish and Christian leaders against theater attendance points to the strong appeal that it held for many folks in their communities,” Friesen told JNS. Evidence in literature and inscriptions of Jewish and Christian involvement in the theater can corroborate those observations, according to Friesen. Still, scholars are left to speculate about whether the dearth of records of Jewish productions of biblical dramas indicates that Jews didn’t write and act in plays or whether they have been lost to ravages of time, including exiles and persecution.

Friesen notes that a Jewish dramatist named Ezekiel who lived in Alexandria, perhaps 100 years before the Common Era, created a tragedy about the exodus story. “We can’t be certain whether it was intended for actual performance, and if so in what venue,” Friesen said.

One of the scholar’s arguments in the book is that even as rabbis and church leaders scolded their flocks for going to the theater, Jewish and Christian practices were shaped by the theater. For example, synagogue and church layouts mirrored designs of



PHOTO COURTESY OF MENACHEM WECKER.

The Theatre of Dionysus on the south side of the Acropolis in Athens, Greece, which was used until the fourth century before the Common Era.

Greek theaters, with the “audience” or worshippers surrounding the central “stage” where clergy delivered sermon-ic “performances.”

“It is always difficult for us to know what worshippers in synagogues or churches might have perceived they were doing, and in particular whether many of them were aware of similarities to what occurred in a theater,” Friesen told JNS.

“The venues were of course very different, and their respective religious leaders were often very explicit in their rejection of ‘pagan’ modes of entertainment,” he said. “But given the ideological resistance to theater by some Jewish and Christian authorities, it is all the more striking when they appropriate its forms, themes or language.”

The latter was done “explicitly” at times; on other occasions, it was “more subtle and indirect,” according to Friesen. (In one instance in the book, even as ecclesiastical leaders shuttered an Athens theater, they moved seats for dignitaries up to the Acropolis for use as ecclesiastical chairs in a church.)

Friesen’s book addresses Christianity more than Judaism, in part because there is much more historical record of the former. “Ancient responses to Greek drama are best attested in Greek and Roman sources, and Christian texts are more substantial and continuous in Greek and Latin,” Friesen said.

But Ezekiel’s exodus play—modeled particularly on Euripides—is both by a Jewish author and the “most complete Greek tragedy to survive from any Hellenistic playwright,” beyond the fifth century BCE, it was noted. Friesen’s book also addresses the Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria, who was born 10 or 15 years before the Common Era and died in the year 45 or 50, extensively. “He was well-read in Greek plays and even claims to have attended them,” Friesen said. “In many ways,

however, his cultural and intellectual influences were stronger in Christianity than they were in later periods of Judaism.”

Heretical Images

Josephus, the Jewish military leader and historian who lived from 37 or 38 to the year 100, recorded that Jerusalem

Jews “opposed the theater complex under Herod because of the religious images that surrounded it, among other things,” Friesen told JNS.

“Theaters were themselves normally situated within sacred precincts, and plays were staged amidst religious ceremonies in honor of Greek and Roman deities,” he said. “So, there was an immediate barrier to participation.”

‘A Common Humanity’

Central to Friesen’s scholarship and teaching “is to explore cultural interactions across the religious traditions and ethnicities that have divided people through history,” he said.

“Greek tragedy is a unique expression of a particular place and time, delimited by the languages and religions of the people who produced it. Nevertheless, it has been appropriated across history and now even around the globe for adaptation in new contexts,” he told JNS. “One takeaway from my book is that while individuals have often engaged in rhetoric that constructs division and otherness, a common humanity can emerge despite such posturing,” he added. “One simply needs to pay attention and watch for it.”

Continued on page 15

JTS chancellor to begin JTS Berkshires summer lecture series with talk on anti-Semitism

NEW YORK CITY—The Jewish Theological Seminary (JTS), in partnership with Congregation Kneset Israel of Pittsfield, Mass., has announced the schedule for its annual summer lecture series in the Berkshires. This year, JTS celebrates its 10th summer of bringing scholars to the region to explore contemporary issues through the lens of Jewish sources. Lectures will take place on three Fridays in July and August from 11 a.m.–12:30 p.m. in the centrally located facilities of Shakespeare and Company, 70 Kemble Ave., Lenox, Mass.

Rabbi David Weiner, spiritual leader of Kneset Israel, notes, “JTS in the Berkshires is an unparalleled opportunity for residents and visitors to enjoy intense, relevant, compelling Jewish learning with extraordinary scholars.”

On Friday, July 12, **Dr. Shuly Rubin Schwartz**, chancellor of JTS, will reflect on the spike in anti-Semitism



DR. SHULY RUBIN SCHWARTZ

following October 7th. Earlier this spring, JTS held a meeting with a diverse group of experts to explore the benefits and challenges of working across boundaries to tackle anti-Semitism. Schwartz will draw from those conversations and share how one of American Jewry’s institutions is addressing the topic. Schwartz, the Irving Lehrman Research Professor of American Jewish History, is a scholar of American Jewish history, and as the eighth chancellor of JTS, the first woman to serve in this role since JTS was founded in 1886.

On Aug. 9, **Dr. Sarah Wolf**, assis-



DR. SARAH WOLF

tant professor of Talmud Rabbinics, will discuss how rabbinic literature can help us make sense of one of the most urgent issues we face today: determining the line between truth and falsehood. Wolf’s current research explores the use of emotions as legal categories in rabbinic literature. Her work puts classical Jewish legal thought into conversation with contemporary Anglo-American legal theory.

On Aug. 23, **Dr. Yitz Landes**, assistant professor of Rabbinic Literatures and Cultures, will explore how the Talmudic sages understood Torah, and the concept of legacy, and how Jews



DR. YITZ LANDES

determine what is passed down to the next generation. Landes’ research focuses on the premodern transmission of Jewish knowledge and the history of the Jewish book. Additionally, Landes works on the development of Jewish ritual and liturgy, topics he addressed in his first book, **Studies in the Development of Birkat ha-Avodah**. At JTS, he teaches courses on Jewish liturgy, ancient Jewish history, and on Hebrew manuscripts.

Information about the program and ticket purchase may be obtained at [visit jtsa.edu/event/jts-berkshires-summer-2024/](https://jtsa.edu/event/jts-berkshires-summer-2024/).

‘Disobedience’ film set by Congregation Shaara Tfilla for June 25

SARATOGA SPRINGS—Congregation Shaara Tfilla and The Jewish Community Center of Saratoga Springs will show the film, “**Disobedience**” at 7 p.m. on Tuesday June 25, at Shaara Tfilla, 84 Weibel Ave., as part of the 2024 Saratoga Jewish Cultural Festival (S.J.C.F.). The presentation is in celebration of LGBTQ+ National Pride Month.

“**Disobedience**” is a 2017 romantic drama directed by Sebastian Lelio and written by Lelia and Rebecca Lenkiewicz based on the novel of the same name by Naomi Alderman. According to organizers, “It’s a film that seems at first to be about one thing, but it transforms into something quite different and the journey is a compel-

ling one.” The film stars Rachel Weisz, Rachel McAdams and Alessandro Nivola. Set in North London, it tells the story of a woman who returns to the Orthodox Jewish community for her father’s funeral after living in New York for many years. She has been estranged from her father and ostracized by the community. The film is R rated and contains explicit adult content and children under 17 will not be permitted entry without a parent or guardian.

There is a \$5 admission charge.

Reservations are required by Friday, June 21, and may be obtained by phoning Congregation Shaara Tfilla at 518-584-2370 or by e-mail to barbaraopitz47@gmail.com.

Jewish college fraternity starts “virtual” chapter

INDIANAPOLIS, IN—Alpha Epsilon Pi International, the world’s largest and Jewish college fraternity, has launched new virtual fraternity chapter – AEPi’s “Chapter Without Walls” – for men looking for the specific brand of Jewish leadership development and advocacy training that AEPi provides but attend colleges at which there is not an active AEPi chapter.

The AEPi Chapter Without Walls has members from schools such as Clemson University, The New School, Savannah College of Art and Design, Furman University and Fordham University. The group meets virtually on a regular basis and receives guidance and support from the AEPi Headquarters staff. Members are able to avail themselves of AEPi International’s regular leadership and advocacy training

programs such as the Leven Leadership Academy and the AEPi International Convention along with a proprietary online leadership training program which is provided to all AEPi members.

“I was very involved in BBYO in high school and when I chose where I went to college (Savannah College of Art & Design), I knew that there wasn’t going to be a big Jewish community or the brotherhood of a fraternity. I thought that would be ok, but I was wrong,” said Andrew Biller, president of the AEPi Chapter Without Walls. “I met some people from AEPi International at the JNF-USA conference, and they have worked hard with me to get this started. It feels great to be a part of AEPi.”

Those interested in more information about AEPi’s Chapter Without Walls may e-mail aneiberg@aepi.org.

Four new Market 32 stores open in the region

SCHENECTADY—Price Chopper/Market 32 opened on Friday June 14 four new Market 32 stores in the Capital Region: in the City of Albany (709 Central Ave.) and the Towns of Colonie (1730 Central Ave.), Niskayuna (2333 Nott St. East), and North Greenbush (102 Van Rensselaer Square). The four new stores bring the number of contemporary, food-focused Market 32 stores to 46 throughout the chain’s six state area.

The Colonie Price Chopper/Market 32 will continue to feature the kosher store within it. The official grand opening of The Kosher Store will be on Friday, June 21. The only kosher market between Orange County and Montreal will be enhanced and feature an expanded food service/deli counter with authentic NYC-style bagel sandwiches, more “grab & go” meals, kosher sushi, a kosher bakery and kosher take and bake pizza. It will continue to operate under the supervision of the Vaad HaKashruth of the Capital District.

“This is a momentous day for the company,” said Blaine Bringham, Price Chopper/Market 32 president. “In the

more than 90 years we’ve been serving our customers and communities, we’ve never opened four stores simultaneously. Doing it here—right where we started in the Capital Region—makes it even more special. We couldn’t be more excited to celebrate with our customers in our hometown region.”

She reported that Price Chopper/Market 32 will donate 5% of its sales on the 14th and 15th from the new locations to the Regional Food Bank of Northeastern NY, and the following youth sports programs in each of the stores’ neighboring communities: Westland Hills Baseball and Softball, Colonie Little League, Niskayuna Baseball League, and Southern Rensselaer County Baseball Association at East Greenbush, Inc.

Based in Schenectady, Price Chopper/Market 32 operates 130 Price Chopper and Market 32 supermarkets and one Market Bistro, employ 16,000 teammates in New York, Vermont, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, and New Hampshire. The American-owned company was founded by the Golub family in 1932.

Performances based on Jewish experiences in Poland slated for Saratoga festival

SARATOGA SPRINGS—The Saratoga Jewish Cultural Festival (SJCF) will present performances on Thursday, June 27, at 7 p.m. of vignettes from the recently published translation of **I’d Like To Say Sorry, But There’s No One To Say Sorry To** by Mikolaj Grynberg. The program, open to the community, will be held at Temple Sinai, 509 Broadway, Saratoga Springs and may be viewed on Zoom.

Grynberg, a contemporary writer, is a psychologist and photographer, has spent years collecting and publishing oral histories of Polish Jews. This is his first work of fiction, and it has won critical praise.

He reworks the histories into fictionalized short stories.

Through first-person vignettes, Grynberg explores the daily lives and tensions within Poland between Jews and non-Jews haunted by the Holocaust. Each of the 31 stories is a mini monologue that highlights facets of modern Poland’s complex and difficult relationship with its past.

The book was a finalist for the Jewish National Book Award.

Those planning to attend may register at <https://lp.constantcontactpages.com/sl/uvvsN3r/SaySorry>

Suggested admission is \$10.

Share Your Simchas With Us!

Saratoga Jewish Cultural Festival offers concerts, plays, lectures, films, discussions, family events

SARATOGA SPRINGS—Launching its 12th season, the Saratoga Jewish Cultural Festival (S.J.C.F.), a series of programs open to the public will run from June through September. Offerings

include concerts, plays, lectures, films, discussions, and outdoor family events.

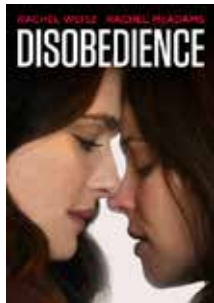
“We are very excited to bring you a new season of our popular summer programming,” said Phyllis Wang, coordinator of SJC.F. “This season’s 14 programs have a diverse array of topics and experiences both live and on Zoom.”

The programming commenced on June 9 with the annual Jewish Women’s

Gala of the Clifton Park Chabad. Held in Malta the women’s program featured a kosher brunch, raffle auction, prayers for Israel and song concert with Amalia Rubin.

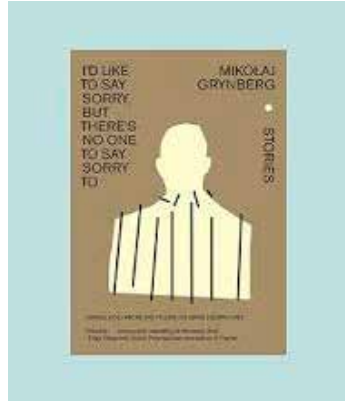
Programs And Calendar:

June 25 – “*Disobedience*,” a film, will be screened at Shaara Tfille Synagogue, at 7 p.m. The movie, starring Rachel Weisz, Rachel McAdams and Alessandro Nivola, is set in North London. It tells of a woman who returns to her strict Orthodox Jewish community for her father’s funeral after living in New York for many years. She had been estranged from her father and ostracized by the community. It is “R” rated with explicit scenes. Admission is \$5 per



person. Reservations are required by Friday, June 21, at 518-584-2370.

June 27 – Performances from the book *I’d Like to Say Sorry, But There’s No One to Say Sorry To*, are set for Temple Sinai at 7 p.m. Mikolag Grynberg’s book chronicles the Jewish experience in postwar Poland and expresses the anger, defiance, and sadness of those who lived through those times. Registration is required and a \$10 admission will be requested at the door.



July 7 – Focus of a Saratoga Chabad program will be on the late Lubavitch rebbe with the presentation of *Lubavitch Rebbe & Melodies of Freedom* at 5:30 p.m. A festive meal is also planned. A \$10 admission will be requested.



July 16 – *Klezmer & Kosher Festival*, of Clifton Park Chabad begins at 5:30 p.m. with a kosher dinner, crafts, games and a live klezmer concert at the Clifton Common (outside the Clifton Park Senior Center). Musicians will play traditional klezmer, Chasidic and Israeli melodies. A \$15 per person all-inclusive fee will be charged. Reservations may be obtained at 518-495-0779, or at www.clifton-parkchabad.com.



July 17 – “*Las Dos Mariette*,” will be screened at Shaara Tfille Synagogue, at 7 p.m. “*Las Dos Mariette*” “*The Two Mariettes*” (in Spanish with English subtitles) is the story of Mariette Diamant—who escaped with her parents from Nazi-occupied France during WWII. She would hide the Jewish origins of her family for fear of retaliation. But at 90, she decided to shed light on her past and reveal her true identity. \$5 per person.



July 18 – Temple Sinai panelists will discuss the Albert Tapper’s documentary *Broadway Musicals, A Jewish Legacy*, at 7 p.m. an entertaining examination of the unique role of Jewish composers and lyricists in the creation of the modern American musical. The film blends cultural history with perspectives on the origins and meanings of many Broadway songs, stories and shows. The 2013 film showcases the work of legends such as Irving Berlin, Jerome Kern, George and Ira Gershwin, Lorenz Hart, Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II, Leonard Bernstein, and Stephen Sondheim alongside performances and archival footage.



July 21 – *Klezmer & Foods With A K* will be featured by Saratoga Chabad at 7 p.m. Attendees will be offered foods that start with K including knishe, kugel, kreplach, kneidel and kasha. A \$5 admission will be requested.



July 28 – Storytellers, musicians, and singers will present an array of age-old Jewish themes in *Tradition, Tradition: Song and Story* at Beth Shalom Synagogue in Clifton Park at 7 p.m. Pre-registration is required. A \$10 admission will be requested at the door.



Aug. 15 – *The Land & The Spirit* will be the focus of Clifton Park Chabad at the Clifton Park-Halfmoon Public Library at 6 p.m. The free program will celebrate Israel, and the spirit of its people. Pre-registration required at www.cliftonparkchabad.com.



Aug. 18 – *Shalom Festival*, sponsored by the Saratoga Chabad, begins at 3 p.m. in Congress Park. It will feature crafts for kids, music, clowns, and barbecue. A \$5 admission is requested.



Aug. 22 – “*Life is Beautiful*” will be discussed in a Temple Sinai virtual film discussion at 7 p.m. According to organizers, the award-winning Holocaust film by Roberto Benigni, elicits humor, poignancy, evil, and controversy. The film is not primarily about Nazis and Fascists. It is about the human spirit, about rescuing whatever is good and hopeful from wreckage. It is about hope for the future and the human conviction (or delusion) that things will be better than they are today.



Aug. 25 – A staged reading of *The God of Isaac*, has been announced for Shaara Tfille Synagogue. This comedy, in two acts, is by Chicago playwright and actor James Sherman. The semi-autobiographical piece centers around a young American Jew searching for his Jewish identity following the threatened 1977 neo-Nazi march in Skokie. A \$5 per person fee will be charged.



Sept. 8 – “*The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*” will be discussed in a Temple Sinai virtual film discussion at 7 p.m. “*The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman*,” an award winning, acclaimed film drama relates the story of the American experience from the Civil War to the civil rights movement, as told from the memories of a fictional, 110-year-old former slave. Registration for the discussion is required. Registration, where applicable, and details may be obtained at www.saratogajewishculturalfestival.org or by contacting sjca.sjcf@gmail.com.





Obituaries

NAOMI BRISTOL

97, of Niskayuna, June 11, 2024; widow of William Bristol; survived by daughter Joan Bristol; grandchildren Naomi, Marta, and Ben Scully-Bristol; and sister Roslyn Holtz

MARTIN LEWIS

83, of Albany; June 11, 2024; survived by wife Marsha Kayser; daughter Tracy (Claude) Spanswick III; sister, Eileen (the late Larry) Lewis-Lurin; and grandchildren Annalinda Spanswick and Claude Spanswick IV.

LAWRENCE TOPPALL

78, of NYC and Ft. Lauderdale, Fla., formerly of Albany, June 14, 2024; survived by brother Harold (Marcia) Toppall of Pikesville, Md.

STEVEN SLUTSKY

82, of Niskayuna, June 4 2024; widower of Linda (Frenzel) Slutsky; survived by wife, Cindy (Campisi) Slutsky; son, Jason (Cynthia) Slutsky; daughter Megan (Eric) Padelford; brother Robert (Fern) Slutsky; sister Debbie Slutsky; and grandchildren Caden, Rylan, and Sawyer Padelford, Jonah and Reid Slutsky, and Adam Boucher.

The Jewish World publishes obituaries containing age, date of death, spouse and immediate family survivors at no cost. For other options, contact Jim@JewishWorldnews.org

Our Special Connection

Rabbi Leible Morrison and his wife Elisheva of Beth Tephilah in Troy, create a weekly family bulletin that has as a focus the Torah portion of the week and each week includes a "special connection" section highlighting an individual who has died during the week featuring that portion. Shown here is Naso, which was read in the synagogue on June 15.

FAINA ADA GROSS

Faina Ada Gross Z'l passed away in the second portion of parshat Naso. In this portion the responsibilities of the Levite family, called Merari, are enumerated in moving the Mishkan (the portable Temple that was taken with the Jewish people in the desert). G-d commanded each working member of that family to be appointed with a specific task so that everyone was recognized individually for doing their fair share of moving the Mishkan (according to Rambam). Was this the only reason for giving each person a particular task?

Another question to ponder is that all the Levite families were counted according to their family. They were counted according to the total sum of all the Levites. Why did G-d want the Levites counted in different ways?

To understand the underlying theme in G-d's actions in this portion, let us see how Faina Ada Gross Z'l (most people knew her as Ada) conducted her life.

Ada was born in Gomel, Belarus. Her parents and their families had a strong love for Judaism in spite of many obstacles and sacrifices. Her parents were pillars of strength holding the family together. Ada grew up to be strong and focused with a sense of priorities that made her a source of support not just to her family but also to all around her. Ada did everything in a caring, kind and

nurturing way. She would give money to those she knew who were poor or help to enable a person to have their own business. She loved her family and set a valuable example for others who took her priorities to heart.

Her family and friends developed a conviction to help each other and always stay bonded. Ada would look at each member of her family as someone very special with great qualities.

Everyone was equally important and meant so much to her. She was so proud of her family.

The Torah was given to the Jewish people to be a guidebook, to make the world we live in full of G-dly goodness. Each of the five books of the Torah gives us a training manual in how to view the world.

The fourth book of the Torah is called Numbers, but its Hebrew meaning is desert. In this book we are trained to generate G-dliness even when surrounded by a hostile environment like a desert. G-d invested so much into us and is so proud of us. He wants to give each of us credit for our work as individuals bound to each other as His people. G-d also wants to count us in several ways, giving us special attention to bring us close to Him because G-d cherishes us.

"Our Special Connections" is a project that takes the life experiences of loved ones that have passed and uses them as a commentary on each using a portion of the Torah. The "Special Connection" is that your loved one's "commentary" provides an insight for people learning Torah and provides an everlasting legacy and elevation for the soul of that special person in your life!

We are trying to make a website that has these memories. Please share some memories with us of your loved ones. Please call Leible at 518-894-3490.

As anti-Semitism rises ...

Continued from Page 6

against Jews and vandalizing property, he asks, "Can you imagine the headlines and nightly news reports?"

We're left with this bizarre landscape where, on one side, Jewish activist groups are exposing the spooky rise of anti-Semitism from the left, while on the other side, progressive groups are undermining the very idea of antisemitism, encouraging people to disregard the whole thing as a Jewish-Zionist con.

Meanwhile, Jewish progressives must be disillusioned to see how so much of the Jew hatred these days is coming from inside their own house. Will they walk on eggshells so as not to alienate their progressive comrades, or will they have the courage to tell it like it is, even if it hurts their team?

When even AOC rings the alarm, you know we've entered new territory. Originally published by **The Jewish Journal**.

Jewish journalism counts — Israel is at war.

The Jewish World relies for much of our news content on JNS, Jewish News Syndicate.

JNS is combating the stream of misinformation on Israel with real, honest and factual reporting. In order to deliver this in-depth, unbiased coverage of Israel and the Jewish world, JNS and we rely on readers like you.

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Can we count on you?

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crm.jns.org/become-premium

Friday, June 21, 15, Sivan. Shabbat candle lighting at 8:19 p.m.
Saturday, June 22, 16, Sivan. Sedrah: Behaalotecha. Shabbat ends at 9:30 p.m.

Friday, June 28, 22, Sivan Shabbat candle lighting at 8:19 p.m.
Saturday, June 29, 23 Sivan. Sedrah: Shelach. Shabbat ends at 9:30 p.m.

CANDLELIGHTING TIMES

How to answer Hillel's paradox

- *If I'm not for myself, who will be?*
- *If I'm only for myself, what am I?*
- *And if not now, when?*

In three pithy lines, Hillel presents us with a paradox central to being Jewish: my individuality is sacred; so is trying to help others. I must attend to myself and focus on my needs – and – if I don't serve others, am I truly human?

And Hillel says, Solve this puzzle—now!

The prophets told us the creator wants us to take care of other people, and most of us believe this is our duty.

If you want to do good, you have to be alive.

If we're thrown into cattle cars, smashed with rockets, raped and disfigured, abducted, and murdered, we can't do good for anybody!

Our first duty is self-preservation, survival.

Become stronger, more aware, and potent!

Join with the Jewish people, your bulwark for 4000 years, your shield for the future.

See page 2

Attempts by ancient rabbis ...

Continued from Page 11

Lawrence Schiffman, the Judge Abraham Lieberman professor in Hebrew and Judaic studies at New York University, has not read Friesen's book but is an expert on many of the areas upon which the book touches. "There is no question that somewhat Hellenized Jews, in the diaspora and even in the land of Israel, went to the theater," he told JNS.

The late classical historian and Yeshiva University professor Louis Feldman documented the Hellenistic influences on Philo and Josephus extensively, "and this influence is certainly real," Schiffman said. "There are also earlier studies of Hellenistic influence on Philo."

Little Influence

But Schiffman urged "considerable caution" when approaching the question of the extent to which, if at

all, those influences would have subsequently impacted the development of Judaism and the formation of the Mishnah and Talmud.

"This is because the Hellenistic authors, most prominently Philo, seem to have had almost no influence on later Judaism and seem not even to have been known in terms of their existence, except perhaps an occasional Karaite reference to Yehudah, the Alexandrian, and we do not even know if this is Philo," Schiffman told JNS.

"Josephus did somewhat better, but was not known, apparently, in the Talmudic period, only much later in the medieval period in the form of the Hebrew translation and adaptation of Yosippon," he said. "But here the real Hellenistic stuff was omitted by the editor." (Yosippon, often rendered Josippon, is a Hebrew text generally dated to the 10th century that purports to be authored by Josephus, who died



Bar Mitzvah

ISAIAH KETZER, son of Heather Cohen and Bill Ketzler of Delmar will be bar mitzvah on Saturday, June 22, 2024 at Beth Emeth in Albany.

Maternal grandmother is Mary Lee Cohen of Glenmont. Maternal grandfather was late Ira J. Cohen of Monticello.

Paternal grandparents were the late Joseph Ketzler of Colonie and the late E. Joan Schroll of Glenmont.

Ike enjoys sports, hiking, traveling, all types of music, watching "Modern Family" episodes and playing video games. He is active in modified track and field, football and with the Bethlehem Basketball Club. He sings in the middle school chorus. For his Mitzvah Project, he will coordinate a fund-raiser for food, bedding and supplies to benefit the Mohawk Hudson Humane Society in Menands.

in the year 100.)

"Put another way, Hellenistic Judaism had very little influence on the subsequent development of Judaism until it re-entered in the form of philosophy in the Middle Ages," Schiffman

told JNS. He also told JNS that what it was like on the ground in Jewish sacred spaces of the time represents a historical blind spot. "We have insufficient knowledge of what went on in Hellenistic synagogues," he said.

Scribal anomaly in portion helps ...

Continued from Page 7

Torah, but the Torah must be in step with the people as well. Hence our sages are forbidden from legislating a decree that the majority of committed Israel cannot abide by.

Inclusiveness

Furthermore, the latter portion reads: "And when it rested, he said 'Return O God unto the myriads [literally ten thousands] of the families of Israel.'" The root of the word "when it rested," nuho, derives from the same root as sweetness, gentleness (noah in Hebrew), expressing the idea that our Torah must be sweet and gently accepting and inclusive. Seen in this light, the verse enjoins us not only to endeavor to make Torah relevant, but also to see to it that it be an embracing and accepting Torah, a Torah of love and inclusiveness.

After all, does not the Talmud teach: For three years the schools of Hillel and Shammai debated the law, until a heavenly voice declared... "These and those are the words of the living God, and the law is like Beit Hillel." If so [if both views emanate from God], then why is the law decided in accord with the school of Hillel? Because they are pleasant and accepting [nohin], always teaching their view together with the view of the school of Shammai and even citing the position of Shammai before citing their own position. (Eruvin 13b)

If our Torah is a law of accepting love and not of fanatic hatred, of warming light rather than of destructive fire, then the myriads of families of Israel shall truly return to the welcoming words of God. **Shabbat Shalom.**

Rabbi Shlomo Riskin is chancellor emeritus of Ohr Torah Stone and chief rabbi of Efrat, Israel.

BATTLE OF THE BBQS

A COMMUNITY DAY SUPPORTING THE SHALOM FOOD PANTRY

SUNDAY, JUNE 30
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TEAMS COMPETE FOR ULTIMATE KOSHER BBQ CHAMPION!

SHALOM FOOD PANTRY IS UNDER THE AUSPICES OF CAPITAL CHABAD

Bangladeshi Coke sales fizzle after ad controversy

By EREZ LINN

JNS

Coca-Cola has found itself embroiled in a controversy in Bangladesh after airing an advertisement that aimed to distance the brand from Israel. The 60-second video, which aired on Bangladeshi TV and YouTube on June 9, depicted a shopkeeper convincing a reluctant buyer to purchase Coca-Cola by stating that the beverage “is not at all from that place,” referring to Israel, and that the company “also has a factory in Palestine.”

While the advertisement did not explicitly mention Israel, it became evident that the reference was directed towards the country.

Misinformation?

Social media accounts of Coca-Cola Bangladesh were soon inundated with comments from Bangladeshis criticizing the claims made in the ad. According to *Arab News*, Sohel Rahman, a businessman from Dhaka, described the advertisement as “an attempt to fool the audience” by distorting the facts. “Coca-Cola Co. has maintained close ties with Israel since the 1960s and was honored by the Israeli government in 1997 for ‘refusing to abide by the Arab League economic boycott of Israel,’” he claimed.

Sadia Ahmed, an executive from Dhaka’s Gulshan area, viewed the

campaign as a “mockery” and misinformation. “The campaign hid this information deliberately to play with the sentiments of the Bangladeshi people. The advertisers thought it would help boost its sales. But the result was the opposite,” she told *Arab News*. “Now, our boycotting campaign is even stronger, as Coke directly supports Israeli aggression on Palestine.”

While Coca-Cola removed the advertisement from its social media channels and ceased airing it on local TV, the video continued to circulate on social media, drawing comments such as “This feels desperate,” “This advertisement is trying to fool innocent people” and “Boycott the actors too.”

Declining Sales

Saraf Ahmed Zibon, the actor portraying the main character in the ad, took to Facebook recently to clarify that he “had never been in favor of Israel” and had presented information and data provided by Coca-Cola.

The Palestinian issue in Bangladesh, where many people empathize with the struggle against Israel, and advocacy for “Palestine” is part of the country’s foreign policy. According to Dr. Rasheda Rawnak Khan, an associate professor at the Department of Anthropology of Dhaka University, “It’s very much clear that this new Coke advertisement is political propaganda. This propaganda



can’t be accepted in any case. It hurts the sentiment.”

Coca-Cola’s attempt to win back Bangladeshis appears to have backfired.

“Coke failed to internalize the sentiment of 180 million people of Bangladesh ... and made this socially and culturally [insensitive] advertisement to re-brand in the local market,” Professor A.S.M. Amanullah, a sociologist from Dhaka University, told *Arab News*. “The attempt has backfired. ... I believe, in a couple of weeks, Coke’s sales could be reduced to 50%.”

A drop in demand for Coca-Cola has already been observed since October and has plunged further, with local soft drink brands gaining prominence.

“...A significant part of Coke’s annual sales used to happen during the Eid Al-Adha festival. But this year, it seems that the total sales of Coke will fall drastically,” said Arifur Rahman, a grocery store owner at Dhanmondi, Dhaka, as reported by *Arab News*.

Originally published by Israel Hayom.

*Maybe you'll get everything you wished for ...
Maybe you'll get more than you ever could have imagined ...
Who knows where life will take you ...*

*What we do know is you
Will always get more at the ...*

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