

Jlife

SGPV JEWISH LIFE

June 2026
Sivan — Tammuz, 5786



JUNETEENTH,
JEWISH IDENTITY,
AND THE POWER OF
SHARED COMMUNITY

PARTNER ISSUES?
Therapy Can
Improve
Communication

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PUBLISHERS

MODY GORSKY, LLM, MBA

MANAGING EDITOR

TRACEY ARMSTRONG GORSKY, MBA

FOOD EDITOR

JUDY BART KANCIGOR

CREATIVE DIRECTOR

JLIFE DESIGNS

PHOTO EDITOR

CHARLES WEINBERG

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS

JUDY BART KANCIGOR,

JON KRANZ,

JONATHAN MASENG, DEBORAH NOBLE,

ILENE SCHNEIDER,

DAVID SINGER, CANTOR JUDY SOFER,

TEDDY WEINBERGER

COPY EDITOR

MARILYN ITURRI

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS/ARTISTS

ALLEN BEREZOVSKY, PEPE FAINBERG, JANET LAWRENCE



ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES

DIANE BENAROYA (SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE)

MARTIN STEIN (SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE)

ILENE NELSON (ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE)

EDITORIAL

(949) 230-0581 (TRACEY ARMSTRONG GORSKY)

OR (949) 734-5074 EDITOR.JLIFE@GMAIL.COM

ADVERTISING

(949) 812-1891, MODY.GORSKY@GMAIL.COM

CIRCULATION & SUBSCRIPTIONS

MODY.GORSKY@GMAIL.COM, (949) 734-5074

ART

ARTSGPV@GMAIL.COM

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LIFE-CHANGING EXPERIENCES ARE ABOUT TO TAKE PLACE THIS SUMMER

What is your earliest recollection of trying or doing something for the first time? Was it in school? Did it happen by yourself or with others? Whatever it is, I bet it has an incredible story behind it. These experiences have a profound impact on our lives. This is because we connect the experience with the memory of “doing something.” And the research data proves it.

I know that there is a direct correlation between these learnings and what transpires at camps all across the world. The experiences children have at camp are unforgettable and remain with them for their entire lives.

Many of our community’s youth are about to have life-changing experiences this summer, and I am so excited, not only for them but also for their parents and extended families. And while they (and we) may not realize it, their experiences this summer will have a lasting impact not only on their lives but also on our community.

As a former director of Camp Gan Shalom, I have witnessed how summer camp can transform a child in ways no other experience can. Camp provides a chance for children to have fun while building and strengthening not only relationships with friends, but also with themselves.

Camp is a safe place. Campers are encouraged to try new things... experiences they would never try at home. Where else will a camper climb up a two-story



rope ladder and climb across a wire on a ropes course? And the encouragement they receive from their fellow campers, urging them along, leaves a lasting impression long after camp is over. It tells the camper that they have people who support and care for them in ways that they may not feel others do.

It is this shared experience at camp that unites kids. Now imagine it happening at a Jewish summer camp. The bonds and shared memories will connect these Jewish campers to one another and their religion. It is why, when people are asked about the experiences that connect them to the Jewish community, an overwhelming number mention summer camp or youth group. It is in these informal Jewish settings that not only are memories made, but also connections.

These shared experiences and connections provide people, even

the shyest among them, a place where they can be their truest selves. It is this freedom at camp that is unmatched anywhere else in the world. This is why campers have such a hard time with “re-entry.”

Lasting memories will soon be made as parents drop their children off at camp in the coming weeks. I am excited for all of them to happen, and a little bit jealous. Thank you to everyone who is helping make this possible – from parents who choose to invest in their child’s development, to grandparents who help fund these experiences, to community members who donate to ensure camps can offer the experiences youth are about to have. ✨



JASON MOSS IS EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE JEWISH FEDERATION OF THE GREATER SAN GABRIEL AND POMONA VALLEYS.



PARTNER ISSUES?

Therapy Can Improve Communication

BY JULIA BENDIS



Gone are the days of finding your life partner through friends, family, at work or through random meetings. These days we connect with each other virtually.

We rely on Facebook groups for events; we turn to Instagram and other social media for support and education. The invention of social media and the internet was groundbreaking; we all flocked to MySpace and Facebook to connect with long lost friends, but for some it has also taken over our lives and become an unhealthy habit.

Do you remember how nice the '80s and '90s were? No cellphones, no social media, no internet. Our faces weren't buried in smartphones or getting constant notifications that demanded our attention and response.

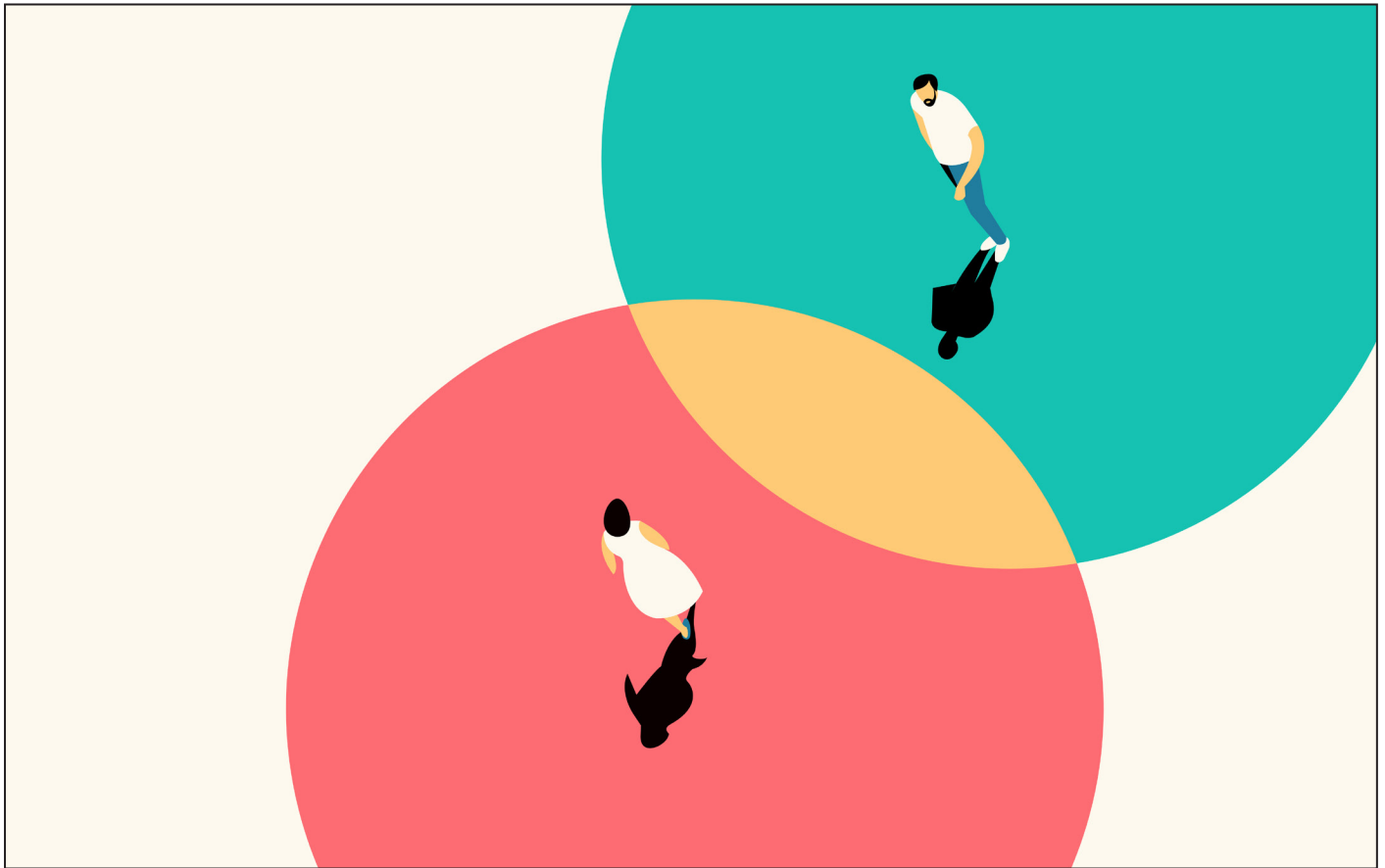
Back then, people forged friendships and romantic connections through a more natural means: socializing in person, school, work, parties or events, and often through mutual acquaintances. There was a sense of interdependence, where having a partner or a friend group was essential to our everyday life. How simple but

rich and more fulfilling life seemed back then.

The more we have become connected virtually, the more we find ourselves completely alone. Social media, internet and virtual meetings have replaced our need, desire and social skills to seek out in-person relationships and activities. Human beings need face-to-face interaction, and so many studies show that people are depressed now more than ever because we have become used to a virtual life.

It's not surprising, then, that a lot of people also get their advice from social media, which is often biased and coming from a place of click bait, sales pitches and random "experts" who have no business giving life advice. People want to talk about issues in their relationships, but they don't always know where to turn, so they turn to the one place we know well—social media, the internet and now artificial intelligence.

There's still a stigma around traditional therapy as if it's admitting you failed on your own and need a stranger to fix your relationship. It's a lot safer and less embarrassing to look up advice from an AI bot than to go see a real person. Think about what kind of advice you're actually getting and who is it coming from.



It is anything but failure to go to a professional or to confide in friends and family for support. Don't get me wrong, I am in no way saying that the moment you and your partner start having issues should you run to your friends or look for a mental health professional, not at all.

Working on a relationship and communicating properly is the first step in understanding why there are issues in the first place. Without proper communication, done at the right time (and not when you're both about to fall asleep or the kids need dinner and you're rushing around), there is no relationship.

This goes for any relationship, whether romantic, platonic or professional. Seeking a therapist is wise, but unfortunately most couples go way too late or to the wrong therapist. Over the years in my practice and in my own 28-year marriage, I learned that most issues are resolved by sticking to these four things:

1. Set time aside to speak about what's on your mind. Don't do it as you're about to leave for work and just can't hold it in so you unleash a fury and storm out. Your partner will be going over it in their head all day long, which I guarantee will not turn out too well for you.
2. Shut off phones, computers, televisions and any other distractions prior to having important conversations. No, don't just put your phone on do-not-disturb, turn it off!
3. Always start with: I want to understand (why you are upset with me, why we are not happy right now, etc.)
4. This is the most important part: Listen actively and allow your partner to finish their sentences and thought

process. We often do not fully listen before responding. That is where the breakdown happens.

Should you decide to seek the help of a professional, my advice is to interview multiple ones prior to committing. Not all therapists are created equal. You would be surprised to know that half of my matchmaking and coaching clients over the years have been psychologists.

This might be a controversial statement, but I found that most of them go into the field of mental health in order to understand their own issues and to fix whatever trauma they have dealt with in their childhood, past or present.

You might ask why is that a bad thing?

The idea of wanting to better yourself and learn skills in mediation, behavioral health and how to help others is invaluable. However, we are all human and as humans we bring our own biases, triggers and traumas to everything we do. Make sure your therapist has done a good job in healing themselves (although we are never fully healed), understanding boundaries and being able to be impartial. Unfortunately, the latter is an issue that a lot of therapists struggle with.

My advice when dealing with people in your life is to always put yourself in their shoes; we never truly know what people are going through and what it's doing to their mental health and clarity. Be patient and kind and it is only then you can start to work on your relationship. ✨

JULIA BENDIS IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO JLIFE MAGAZINE. SHE IS AN AUTHOR, RELATIONSHIP EDUCATOR, COMEDIAN AND SHOW PRODUCER. FOR ALL INFORMATION AND LINKS VISIT: [LINKTREE.COM/JULIABENDIS](https://linktree.com/juliabendis)

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JUNETEENTH, JEWISH IDENTITY, AND THE POWER OF SHARED COMMUNITY

BY REBECCA RUSSELL



JoCI CommUNITY Chats Presentation

Juneteenth is a celebration of freedom, resilience, and the ongoing pursuit of justice and takes place on June 19 every year. Commemorating June 19, 1865—the day enslaved African Americans in Galveston, Texas, finally learned they were free more than two years after the Emancipation Proclamation—Juneteenth has become both a

historical remembrance and a call to action. It reminds communities across the United States that freedom is not simply declared; it must be protected, expanded, and shared.

For individuals who identify as both Black and Jewish, Juneteenth carries a particularly meaningful resonance. The holiday represents not only liberation from oppression but also the importance of honoring



JoCI Black Power, Jewish Politics event at the Skirball Museum

every layer of identity. Black Jewish voices have long contributed to the richness of American Jewish life, bringing perspectives shaped by culture, faith, family history, and lived experience. Yet many Jews of Color have also faced challenges navigating spaces where parts of their identity are misunderstood, overlooked, or questioned.

Organizations like the Jewish Federation of the Greater San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys are helping to create a stronger and more inclusive future by elevating these important conversations. Through our education, community engagement, partnerships, the Jewish Federation is working to ensure that Jewish spaces reflect the diversity that already exists within the Jewish community.

One important collaboration is with the Jews of Color Initiative (JoCI), an organization dedicated to advancing and uplifting Jews of Color through leadership, education, and community-building efforts. Together, we are fostering greater awareness about the experiences of people who hold dual identities as both Jewish and people of color. This partnership is especially important at a time when conversations about representation and belonging are becoming increasingly necessary within faith communities. Educational programs, community discussions, and cultural initiatives create

opportunities for people to listen, learn, and better understand the complexity and beauty of intersecting identities. These efforts help combat isolation and strengthen communal bonds by affirming that there is no single way to “look Jewish.”

Juneteenth also offers an opportunity for solidarity between Black and Jewish communities rooted in shared histories of perseverance, advocacy, and social justice. Throughout American history, Black and Jewish leaders have often stood together in movements for civil rights, equality, and human dignity. Today, continuing that partnership means recognizing the diversity within both communities and ensuring that everyone feels seen and valued.

As Juneteenth is celebrated across the country, it serves as a reminder that freedom is deeply connected to belonging. True liberation means having the ability to live openly and proudly in every part of one’s identity. For Black Jews and Jews of Color, that recognition is essential. Organizations like the Jewish Federation of the Greater San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys and the Jews of Color Initiative are helping ensure that the future of Jewish communal life is one where every voice is welcomed and every story matters. ✨

REBECCA RUSSELL IS THE PROGRAM AND COMMUNITY OUTREACH DIRECTOR OF THE JEWISH FEDERATION OF THE GREATER SAN GABRIEL VALLEYS, AND A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO JLIFE MAGAZINE.

THE UNFASHIONABLE INHERITANCE OF BEING AMERICAN-ISRAELI

BY JACOB WIRTZER



There are two words I grew up believing were honorable: patriot and Zionist. Today, both often require explanation, and often, defense.

As a kid in America, patriotism meant admiration for the U.S. military and the belief that service and national purpose mattered. Zionism meant being the only Jewish kid in class trying to explain why a tiny country called Israel mattered to me before I even fully understood why myself.

As an adult, those instincts eventually became an identity I consciously embraced: American-Israeli. I inherited one half of that identity and chose the other. But the choice itself never felt entirely individual. It felt like a continuation of something older—a collective narrative, memory, and obligations that shaped me long before I understood it.

Today, however, identifying strongly with either America or Israel increasingly places you on the

wrong side of a cultural shift that views national identity itself with suspicion. October 7th did not create this tension. It exposed it.

Among younger generations, disillusionment with America is real. Gallup finds that only 41% of Gen Z adults say they are very proud to be American, compared with 75% of Baby Boomers; only 42% of those under 50 believe the American dream is achievable, compared to 68% of those over 65. Today, housing is unaffordable, student debt is crushing, and political polarization has turned basic facts into tribal loyalties. I understand why many people feel detached from national identity because, at times, I have felt it too.

But disillusionment and rejection are not the same thing.

America has endured periods of profound national disillusionment before. After Vietnam, Watergate, and the crises of the 1970s, public trust collapsed. Yet the response was not to abandon the American project



Tiny Israeli flag clinging to a stone wall in Jerusalem

entirely, but to reform and rebuild it. History shows the danger comes when cynicism evolves into total rejection, and when people stop believing their society is even worth repairing.

That distinction matters because the failure of a country to live up to its ideals is not proof that the ideals themselves are worthless. The same dynamic now surrounds Israel. Being Israeli once carried a certain admiration: a resilient, embattled, misunderstood perhaps people, but legitimate. Today, Israeli identity increasingly arrives with pre-judgment attached. In many spaces, Israelis are assumed guilty before they've spoken a word. Israel is not above criticism. But much of today's debate is no longer about policy or accountability. It is about legitimacy itself.

What is often lost is the founding story of Zionism. Theodor Herzl did not arrive at Zionism through religious mysticism or supremacist ideology. He arrived at it as a liberal European journalist who concluded, after witnessing the antisemitism of the Dreyfus Affair, that even enlightened societies could ultimately fail to protect Jews. Zionism was not conceived as a rejection of liberalism, but as a response to its limitations. Its core argument was simple: the Jewish people should possess the same right to sovereignty and self-determination afforded to every other nation.

I did not inherit Israeli identity the way I inherited American identity. I chose it when I made Aliyah at 22, knowing full well the obligations that choice carried: IDF service, sacrifice, and a more complicated life between two worlds. But chosen

identity demands more from you than inherited identity. It forces clarity.

There is a cautionary parallel worth holding onto. Before 1933, German-Jewish intellectuals argued that their two identities were not just compatible but mutually enriching. The tragedy is not only what happened to them, but that the identities they held with such pride were ultimately declared incompatible by forces they could not stop. The answer to pressure on a hyphenated identity is not to simplify it. It is to defend it more precisely.

America taught me that people can build lives beyond the limits of circumstance. Israel taught me that history is not abstract. It has borders, funerals, sirens, and feelings.

The deeper issue beneath both American disillusionment and anti-Zionism is that much of the West has lost confidence in the legitimacy of its own national projects. And when societies lose confidence in their own legitimacy, they also lose the ability to defend their values, their allies, and eventually themselves.

Patriotism is not blind loyalty. It is the belief that a nation's failures are partly your responsibility to repair, not merely condemn. Zionism is not supremacy or colonialism. It is the belief that Jews possess the same right to security, sovereignty, and self-determination as any other people.

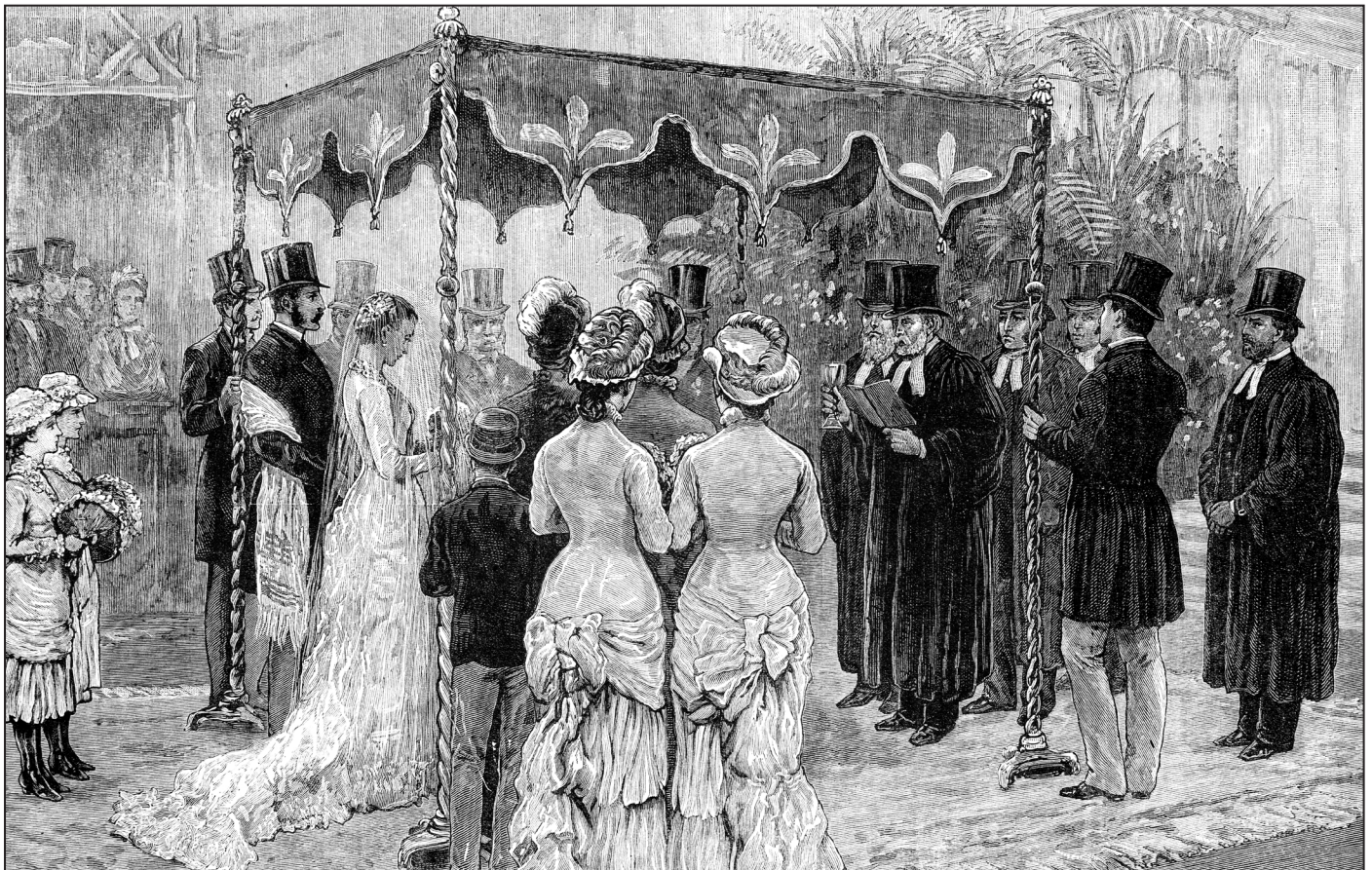
Both beliefs are deeply unfashionable right now. That is precisely why I believe they are still worth defending. ☆

JACOB WIRTZER IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO JLIFE MAGAZINE.

BEING A GUEST AT A JEWISH WEDDING: A GUIDE

From chuppah to glass-breaking, here's what to expect at Jewish nuptials.

BY RACHEL LERNER, MY JEWISH LEARNING



Vintage engraving showing a Jewish Wedding, marriage of Leopold De Rothschild

So you've been invited to a Jewish wedding but don't know exactly what to expect? Here is a quick guide about what to do and how to act at the joyous occasion.

Keep in mind that every Jewish wedding differs slightly from the next, depending on the religious and cultural background of the couple — and of course their personalities. The particulars of the guidelines below will vary depending on the celebration you attend.

What to Wear to a Jewish Wedding

Like most weddings, the dress code for a Jewish wedding can be influenced by location and time of day. At many Jewish weddings, men wear *kippot* (skullcaps), and they will most likely be provided at the wedding. In some circles, you may see women wearing *kippot* too. Women at more traditional Jewish weddings wear skirts or dresses that fall below the knee and cover their shoulders—or elbows, in even more traditional circles.

Sometimes women wear wraps or jackets that cover their shoulders just for the ceremony, and then they uncover for the party.

Before the Jewish Wedding Ceremony

You might have received an invitation with two different start times. The first time listed refers to the start of the *kabbalat panim*—the time for greeting the couple before the ceremony—and the second time refers to the actual start time of the ceremony. Though it is nice for close friends and family to arrive at the beginning of the *kabbalat panim*, you can consider all of the *kabbalat panim* as an appropriate window for showing up. If there is only one start time listed, that is probably when the ceremony is scheduled to begin, so be on time.

The *kabbalat panim* prepares the couple for the wedding, and a lot of different things might take place there. At a more traditional *kabbalat panim*, the bride and groom sit in different rooms or areas, and guests greet them and often enjoy some light—or not so light—refreshments.

Some brides and grooms fast on their wedding day until after the ceremony. It's completely fine to eat in front of them at the *kabbalat panim*, but you may want to think twice before offering them refreshments.

At a traditional *kabbalat panim*, the bride often sits on a special seat, and guests approach her to give good wishes. She may offer a special blessing in return. The groom might have a *tisch*, where he sits around a table with his family and friends singing songs. He may also share words of Torah. The guests often heckle him by shouting and singing to interrupt him, and you can join in the fun. The bride may have her own *tisch* as well.

During the *kabbalat panim*, some couples read a document called *tenaim*, which outlines the conditions of the marriage and declares the couple's intention to wed. This is followed by the breaking of a plate, usually by the mothers of the bride and groom. Symbolically it reflects that a broken engagement cannot be mended.

The *ketubah*—the Jewish marriage document—is normally signed at this time. In more traditional circles, it is signed at the groom's *tisch*. In more liberal circles, the *ketubah* signing may be the main event of the *kabbalat panim*, with the couple, witnesses, and all the guests present.

After all the legalities are taken care of, the groom is escorted by his friends and family, usually with dancing and singing, to meet the bride and veil her in a ceremony known as the *bedeken*. This is often a particularly moving moment of the wedding, so if you're planning to come late and skip the *kabbalat panim*, try to come at least 15 minutes before the ceremony is scheduled.

In a wedding with only one start time, the *ketubah* signing and veiling are usually taken care of with the rabbi in private, before the ceremony begins.

The Jewish Wedding Ceremony

Jewish weddings do not usually follow the custom of having the bride's and groom's guests sit separately, but at some Orthodox weddings, men and women sit on opposite sides of the aisle. As you enter the room for the ceremony, look out for a program that explains what's going on. Not all weddings have these, but they are becoming increasingly popular.

A rabbi or cantor usually conducts the ceremony, standing under the *chuppah* (marriage canopy) with the bride, groom, and sometimes their families and friends. In the middle of the ceremony, the *ketubah* may be read by a rabbi or friend. The *ketubah* is often a beautiful piece of art, and after the ceremony you may be able to admire it if it is on display.

Near the end of the ceremony, the *sheva berachot*—seven blessings—are recited over a cup of wine. These may be recited by one person, often the rabbi, or by several people. The bride and groom wish to honor. The guests in the crowd may sing along during the *sheva berachot*. Feel free to hum along even if you do not know the words.

The wedding ceremony ends with the breaking of the glass, which symbolizes that even in times of great joy, we remember that there is still pain in the world (which



Jewish tradition relates to the destruction of the Jewish Temple). In most weddings, after the glass is broken it is time to jump up and yell, "Mazel Tov!"

After the conclusion of the ceremony, at more traditional weddings, the couple heads directly to a private room to spend their first few minutes of marriage alone. In this case, there will not be a typical receiving line. If the cocktail hour didn't already happen during the *kabbalat panim*, guests are invited for cocktails and hors d'oeuvres. Be careful not to fill up. Even at the most elaborate spreads, there will most likely be a full meal served during the reception.

Jewish Wedding Celebration

Lively circle dancing—popularly known as the *hora*—usually starts immediately when the bride and groom enter the party room. At more traditional weddings there are separate circles for men and women—sometimes split by a *mehitzah* (divider). In more liberal crowds, men and women dance together. Get ready for some raucous dancing, and feel free to take your turn dancing with the wedding couple.

As part of the *hora*, the couple will be seated on chairs and lifted in the air—if you're strong, you can lend a hand. While they're hoisted up, the bride and groom might hold onto a kerchief or napkin. You might recognize this part from the movies.

The couple may take a break from dancing themselves, sit down on chairs on the dance floor, and let the guests entertain them. You can dance for them or show off your back-flipping, juggling, or fire-blowing talents.

Be creative—it's all about making the newlyweds happy! After the meal, more traditional weddings end with the recitation of a special grace after meals, which includes a recitation of the same *sheva brachot* recited during the ceremony. Guests are seated and join together for this. Many couples produce *benschers* (grace after meals booklets) with their names and the date of the wedding printed on them. You can take one of these home as a party favor.

Of course, there is great variation in Jewish weddings, so it is always good to check with your hosts prior to the wedding if you have any questions. ☆

RACHEL LERNER IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.



WHY PRIDE STILL MATTERS MORE THAN EVER

BY ASHER GELLIS

For many people, Pride Month is a celebration. But for LGBTQ+ Jews across the country, Pride is also something deeper: a lifeline, a reminder that they are not alone, and an opportunity to experience joy, belonging, and safety in a world that increasingly feels uncertain.

After more than 20 years of serving the LGBTQ+ Jewish community, JQ International has witnessed firsthand how urgently these spaces are needed. In recent years, LGBTQ+ people and Jewish communities alike have experienced rising hostility, isolation, and fear. For LGBTQ+ Jews living at the intersection of both identities, the emotional toll can be especially profound.

At JQ, that reality is showing up in tangible ways. Calls to the JQ Helpline have increased dramatically as more individuals and families seek affirming support, mental health resources, referrals, and guidance. Participation in JQ's virtual support groups has also reached record numbers, reflecting both the growing need for connection and the importance of accessible community spaces.

Pride Month offers something powerful in response to that heaviness: queer joy, queer Jewish visibility, and moments of celebration that remind people they belong exactly as they are.

Throughout Pride Month, JQ creates opportunities for LGBTQ+ Jews and their loved ones to gather in community, celebrate identity, and experience meaningful connection. From support groups and wellness programming to Pride celebrations and community events, these spaces are designed to help people feel seen, affirmed, and supported.

For some participants, attending a JQ event is the first time they have ever experienced being fully embraced as both Jewish and LGBTQ+. For others, it is a chance to reconnect with hope, friendship, and pride during a particularly difficult moment in the world.

If you are LGBTQ+ or have an LGBTQ+ person in your family, JQ encourages you to explore its support services, attend a Pride event, or connect with community this month. Sometimes simply knowing there is a place where you are welcomed without conditions can make all the difference.

And for those who may not attend an event directly,



JQ Community Pride Shabbat with IKAR and NuRoots

there is still a meaningful way to help.

JQ's programs and support services are made possible through community support and philanthropy, allowing the organization to keep many of its offerings affordable and accessible to those who need them most. As demand for services continues to grow nationally, community investment is more critical than ever.

A donation to JQ helps sustain:

- LGBTQ+ Jewish support groups
- Mental health and wellness programming
- The JQ Helpline
- Educational and inclusion initiatives
- Pride celebrations and community-building events
- Resources for LGBTQ+ Jews and their families

Most importantly, it helps ensure that LGBTQ+ Jews know they are not alone.

To support JQ's work, help expand affirming care and community for LGBTQ+ Jews nationwide and to learn more about JQ and its 2026 Pride events, please visit www.jqinternational.org.

Donate to JQ International at https://jqinternational.org/donate/?utm_source=chatgpt.com. ✨

ASHER GELLIS IS THE FOUNDER AND CEO OF JQ INTERNATIONAL

JQ PRIDE 2026

2 COMMON GROUND DINNER: PRIDE
June 6:30 PM | Skirball Cultural Center | \$90

7 JQ PRIDE PARADE MARCH
June 10 AM | West Hollywood Pride Parade | FREE

7 JQ PRIDE BRUNCH
June 12 PM | West Hollywood | Open bar & bagels | \$45

13 JQ x KESHET x IKAR PRIDE HAVDALAH
June 7 PM | Mid City | Conversation with CEOs | Free

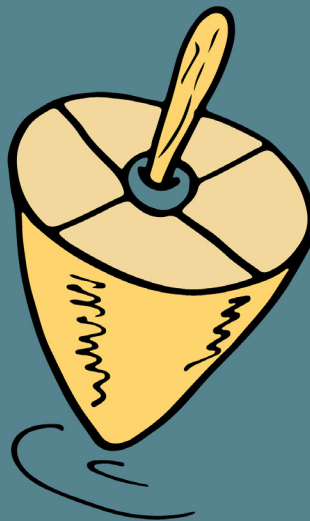
19 COMMUNITY PRIDE SHABBAT
June 6:30 PM | Miracle Mile | Dinner | Drinks | \$25

26 YOUNG ADULT PRIDE SHABBAT
June 7 PM | West Hollywood | Sushi | Drinks | Dancing | \$36



kiddish

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Tov



Ma

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kiddish

PUBLISHERS
MOTAN, LLC

EDITOR IN CHIEF
TRACEY ARMSTRONG GORSKY, MBA

CREATIVE DIRECTOR
JLIFE DESIGNS

COPY EDITOR
MARILYN ITURRI

CONTRIBUTING WRITERS
SUE PENN, M. ED.,
AVIV PILIPSKY, YARDEN PILIPSKY,
DIANA SHABTAI, PSY.D., ATR-BC



ADVERTISING REPRESENTATIVES
MARTIN STEIN (SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE)

EDITORIAL
(949) 230-0581 | EDITORJLIFE@GMAIL.COM

ADVERTISING
(949) 812-1891 | MODY.GORSKY@GMAIL.COM

ART
ARTOC@GMAIL.COM
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21 PASTO RICO, RANCHO SANTA MARGARITA, CA 92688

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Tisha B'Av 101

Tisha B'Av, the ninth day of the month of Av, is the major day of communal mourning in the Jewish calendar.

BY MY JEWISH LEARNING

Tisha B'Av, the ninth day of the month of Av (which month coincides with July and/or August), is the major day of communal mourning in the Jewish calendar. Although a large number of disasters are said to have befallen the Jews on this day, the major commemoration is of the destruction of the First and Second Temples in Jerusalem in 586 B.C.E. and 70 C.E., respectively. Central to the observance of this day is fasting.

Tisha B'Av Ideas & Beliefs

Although the exact date of the destruction of each of the Temples—the ancient centers of Jewish life and practice—are unknown, tradition dates the events to Tisha B'Av. Indeed, the rabbis of the Talmudic age made the claim that G-d ordained this day as a day of disaster as punishment for the lack of faith evidenced by the Israelites during their desert wanderings after the exodus from Egypt. During the course of the centuries, a number of tragedies have clustered around this day, from the expulsions of the Jews from England and Spain to more localized disasters. Tisha B'Av is therefore observed as a day of communal mourning, which is expressed through fasting and the abstention from pleasurable activities and extraneous diversions. A whole literature of dirges appropriate to this day of mourning, beginning with the biblical Book of Lamentations on the destruction of the First Temple, has been created to serve the needs of the Jewish community at this time.

Tisha B'Av Rituals & Practices

A three week period of low-level mourning leads up to the holiday of Tisha B'Av; the three weeks commemorate the final siege of Jerusalem that led to the Second Temple's destruction in 70 C.E. During this period it is traditional to refrain from public celebrations, such as weddings, and many traditional men refrain



from shaving, reflecting their practice during personal mourning periods. The last nine days of these three weeks culminating in Tisha B'Av are an even deeper period of mourning, during which traditional Jews avoid eating meat; some who did not previously take on certain aspects of mourning, such as refraining from shaving, will assume these signs of mourning during these nine days.

Tisha B'Av itself is a day of intense mourning, whose practice mirrors that of Yom Kippur in many respects. It is a day of fasting, on which one also is to refrain from washing, using perfume and other such ointments, and wearing leather. The Book of Lamentations (*Megillat Eicha*) and other dirges (*kinot*) are read in the synagogue.

Visits to cemeteries reflect the mood of the day, which continues even at the break fast meal at the conclusion of Tisha B'Av, when neither meat nor wines are traditionally consumed. ✪



Supporting Israel Causes for Your Bar/Bat Mitzvah

Decades after its establishment, support for Israel remains a powerful expression of Jewish solidarity and peoplehood.

BY MY JEWISH LEARNING

The Jewish connection to the land of Israel goes back millennia. The establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948 was the result of a political movement that sought to protect Jews from anti-Semitism and persecution, an effort that elicited support from Jews around the world. Today, Israel is a wealthy and powerful country, but Jews around the world continue to lend it financial and other kinds of support as an expression of solidarity and Jewish peoplehood.

Yemin Orde

Yemin Orde offers a range of services to at-risk youth in Israel. The group operates a 77-acre youth village near Haifa that provides a home to 430 at-risk and immigrant youth, including education, therapeutic care and other support services. In 2006, Yemin Orde launched a new program to bring the village's educational methodology to thousands of at-risk youth across the country.

Jewish Agency for Israel

Founded a century ago, the Jewish Agency is best-known for its effort to support immigration to Israel. Today, the organization offers a range of programs aimed at inspiring Jews to connect to Israel and addressing various social problems in the country, from at-risk youth to housing for the elderly. JAFI also dispatches emissaries to Jewish communities around the world and runs educational programs in Israel for Diaspora youth.

ZAKA

Founded in 1995, ZAKA initially came to prominence for its work recovering human remains after terrorist attacks and ensuring they were given a proper Jewish burial. The organization's activities have since expanded dramatically. Today, the organization oversees a network of volunteers throughout Israel and around the world that offer a range of life-saving services, including rapid-response motorcycle medics and search-and-rescue teams.

Leket Israel

Leket Israel is Israel's largest food rescue organization. Each year, the group saves thousands of tons of fruit and vegetables and millions of cooked meals that would otherwise have gone to waste and redirects it to needy Israelis. With a fleet of refrigerated trucks and a network of staff and volunteers, the organization brings rescued foodstuffs to one of two logistical centers and then distributes it through one of over 200 nonprofit partners.

Yad Sarah

Yad Sarah began in the 1970s as an informal lending service for medical equipment. Today, the group operates a network of more than 6,000 volunteers providing a range of services aimed at assisting the sick and homebound and enabling them to live dignified lives as independently as possible. More than 1,250,000 in Israel have been helped by the organization with anything from home visits to the short-term lending of more than 150 kinds of medical equipment. ☆



Bar/Bat Mitzvahs Today

Different Approaches Through Time

BY REBECCA SIRBU, MY JEWISH LEARNING



The simple answer, of course, is no. Bar/Bat Mitzvah is one of the most popular Jewish rituals in the United States Today. There is something deeply human about wanting to mark the end of childhood, which a bar/bat mitzvah effectively does. Marking at twelve, for a girl, and thirteen for a boy that they now have new responsibilities as they enter adolescence is a profoundly moving experience for both the emerging teenager and his or her family.

And yet the bar/bat mitzvah ritual has experienced periods of disruption. Rabbis are recognizing a growing need to tailor the bar/bat mitzvah experience to a particular child or family. The one size fits all “bar mitzvah factories” of old no longer apply. Three examples heralding this change have come to my attention.

Congregation B’nai Israel in Milburn NJ led by Rabbi Steven Bayar has changed the focus of the bar/bat mitzvah ritual from the emphasis of

the child having to chant the *haftorah* portion to leading a larger segment of the service itself. He argues that understanding the service and having the skill to lead it will better prepare teens to engage in Jewish life as they grow older than learning a *haftorah* portion which is only recited once a year.

Rabbi Michael Knopf of Temple Beth El in Richmond, VA has overhauled the bar/bat mitzvah experience for the teens in his congregation. His approach is to strive for an individualized experience for the teen and their families so that they can study together, identify what is most important to them, and develop a Jewish ritual to mark the occasion which may or may not take place in on Shabbat. It is an individualized approach focusing on the needs of a particular student and tailoring their Jewish learning to meet their needs.

Rabbi Andrew Jacobs of Ramat Shalom synagogue in Plantation, FL has taken it one step further by integrating technology into the experience. He has developed a strong online curriculum of learning whereby a student can learn remotely with a tutor and study at times that fit their schedule. His program is called Chai Tech "With an internet connection and a computer, tablet or smartphone, bar/bat mitzvah students can prepare for their big day wherever they are, whenever they can. No more schlepping to the synagogue or the tutor. Once you go Chai Tech, bar/bat mitzvah preparation works easily into your busy schedule. Everything is online - including a teacher who monitors your child's progress and keeps you informed using an advanced, online learning management system."

These are only three examples of how preparing for and experiencing the ritual of bar/bat mitzvah has been challenged and changed across the country.

Rabbis Bayar's focus of the bar/bat mitzvah ceremony from *haftorah* to prayer stirred up a lot of commentary online among Jewish professionals. Comments ranged from, "There is nothing innovative here. My synagogue has done this for a long time." To "Why would you do this? Kids should learn how to chant *haftorah* and lead services." Many of the comments have, I think missed the larger message here which is that we have adapted our approach to the bar/bat mitzvah ritual. We know that the ritual itself is important and sacred. We want to keep marking this transition in a young person's life. However, how this ritual is prepared for and celebrated requires, at times, a different



approach.

Though changing ancient rituals is always scary, I think this is a good thing. There is actually no Jewish law surrounding the bar mitzvah ceremony. A child simply becomes bar/bat mitzvah on her twelfth birthday for a girl, or thirteenth birthday for a boy. This entry into Jewish adulthood was often marked, for a boy, by having him honored by being called up to the Torah, receiving an *aliyah*. Chanting the Torah, *haftorah* or leading services are all modern-day inventions added to mark this moment of transformation. They are not required.

I do not know where the experimentations will end. I too agree that Jewish literacy is important. Children and families should have to learn and prepare to mark a bar/bat mitzvah. But Jewish wisdom is expansive and deep. There are many options on what we can do here. I am hopeful that rabbis, cantors and Jewish educators across this country who work with teens and families to prepare to mark their bar/bat mitzvah will be able to identify what their current spiritual needs are and craft the appropriate course of study and celebratory ritual to honor them.

Hazak, hazak v'nitchazek - may we go from strength to strength as we explore the boundless potential of Judaism to add meaning to our lives.



COOKING JEWISH

Lifestyle

THE SABBATH

A reason to celebrate
every week.

BY JUDY BART KANCIGOR



Chocolate Cookies &
Cream Cake (pareve)

Jews like to celebrate, and, lucky us, we have a joyous celebration each and every week of the year: the Sabbath. "It is often said that as much as the Jewish people keep the Sabbath, in truth it is the Sabbath that keeps the Jews," says Elizabeth Kurtz in "Celebrate: Food, Family, Shabbos" (Feldheim, \$34.99), "and at the very heart of our celebration of Shabbos is family gathered around the table enjoying a delicious Shabbos meal."

Take food away from any celebration, and it's just a day on the calendar. With food we nurture, hold together a family and build a community. With food we honor our traditions as we create new ones. With food we show our love.

"It starts and ends with love," says Kurtz. "My entire relationship with food, reading and writing recipes, cooking and eating, is all about love. I do many things for my family, but no carpool, camp application or help with a complicated homework assignment brings anywhere near the smile that a delicious meal, especially on Shabbos or Yom Tov, brings. Absolutely nothing."

Kurtz grew up cooking with her mother, her happiest times, she says. "There were no expectations of excellence and achievement like there was for my school work, clubs or gymnastics. There was just love. We would pick a favorite recipe or maybe try something new, and then on went the apron and off we went into a magical place of creativity, happiness and love. As I think of it now, it was the most wonderful time."

"Celebrate" offers over 200 recipes to help you do just that, recipes that are easy enough for every day, but special enough for celebrations. Kurtz also includes tips for planning ahead, freezing, rewarming and instructions for converting almost every dish for Passover. You'll find nine challah recipes alone (including Apple-Date Swirled Challah, Sweet

Challah with Streusel Topping and even a Gluten-Free Challah), must-have recipes for stocking your pantry as well as tips for keeping a healthy kosher kitchen by dietician Kimberly Rothstein, whose "secret" is what she calls the four R's of healthy cooking: "Replace, reduce, relish and relax. Keep these in mind and you'll be in great shape (pun intended)."

The Sabbath is special, and a special day deserves a special menu with dishes that we might not "potchke" (fuss) with during the week, like this showstopper gratin from "Live Life Deliciously: Recipes for Busy Weekdays and Leisurely Weekends" (Shadow Mountain, \$32.99) by Tara Bench, who demonstrated it for a group of food writers and bloggers hosted by Melissa's Produce, the largest distributor of specialty produce in the U.S.

"For much of my career I was a food stylist," she told us as she peeled potatoes for her luscious Cheese and Herb Potato Gratin, "so I'm used to thinking about what a recipe is going to look like as I cook it and when I serve it. We eat with our eyes. You want it to look good as well as taste good. It's all about the presentation. I like to take a simple classic dish and make it beautiful."

Bench, known to fans of her popular blog as Tara Teaspoon (tarateaspoon.com), was formerly food editor at Martha Stewart Living and food director of Ladies Home Journal and has more than 25 years' experience creating recipes and styling food, so she knows a thing or two about presentation. Rounds of alternating sweet and white potatoes tossed with herbs and spices are baked up with cheese in a gratin worthy of a *simcha* table, yet simple enough to knock out for a casual family dinner. "You could layer the cheese and potato slices flat in a baking dish as a classic gratin, but this presentation is all about the wow," she noted. "Standing up the slices, whether in rows or a circle, creates

an impressive look and is worth the extra minutes to arrange them before cooking."

Mixing different colored potatoes gives the dish "extra pop," she said. For this dish she used sweet potatoes plus Yukon Golds, but suggested using Melissa's Gemstone Potatoes, a mix of red, yellow and purple varieties, for even more pizzazz. "I love adding color to a dish that might ordinarily be brown. Yukon Golds are buttery and smooth. I don't do russets for this – I like a buttery texture. Russets are better for mashed potatoes or a baked potato. For a casserole dish I am happy with a waxy potato."

She urged viewers to get a mandolin for slicing and to use it with a metal glove or guard for safety. "If you use the slicing blade of your food processor, the slices are a little thicker, so you'll need to bake it covered a little longer. Every oven is different."

While the recipe calls for dried herbs, Bench used fresh herbs from Melissa's for the demonstration. "I use fresh herbs in the spring and summer when they are plentiful and cheap. I'll use my spice cupboard in the winter months. Double the amount of fresh as you would dry." ✨

“**Jews like to celebrate, and, lucky us, we have a joyous celebration each and every week of the year: the Sabbath.**”

JLIFE FOOD EDITOR JUDY BART KANCIGOR IS THE AUTHOR OF "COOKING JEWISH" (WORKMAN) AND "THE PERFECT PASSOVER COOKBOOK" (AN E-BOOK SHORT FROM WORKMAN), A COLUMNIST AND FEATURE WRITER FOR THE ORANGE COUNTY REGISTER AND OTHER PUBLICATIONS AND CAN BE FOUND ON THE WEB AT WWW.COOKINGJEWISH.COM.



Cheese And Herb Potato Gratin

Chocolate Cookies & Cream Cake (pareve)

Decorating option: Sprinkle cake crumbs along the bottom of the cake, drip chocolate ganache down the sides, and cover top with meringue cookies, as in the photo. Freeze the cake layers for at least two hours before frosting to keep crumbs to a minimum.

Yield: 10 servings

Cake:

- 2 cups all-purpose flour
- 3/4 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
- 1 1/2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking soda
- 3 large eggs
- 1 egg yolk
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup (two sticks) margarine, melted
- 1 cup non-dairy creamer
- 2 tablespoons distilled white vinegar
- 1 1/2 cups finely crumbled chocolate sandwich cookies

Frosting:

- 2 (8-ounce) packages Tofutti cream cheese
- 3/4 cup (1 1/2 sticks) margarine, at room temperature
- 3 3/4 cups confectioners' sugar
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 cups crumbled chocolate sandwich cookies, divided

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Grease two 9-inch cake pans.
2. Cake: Combine flour, cocoa, baking powder, salt, and baking soda in large mixing bowl.
3. With electric mixer, beat eggs, egg yolk, sugar, and melted margarine in separate large bowl until fluffy.
4. Whisk together creamer and vinegar in small bowl. Add to egg mixture alternately with flour, beginning and ending with dry ingredients. Fold in crumbled cookies until incorporated. Pour batter evenly into prepared pans. Bake about 25-30 minutes or until tester inserted in center comes out with moist crumbs. Let rest in pans 5 minutes. Turn cakes out onto rack; cool completely.
5. Frosting: With electric mixer, cream together cream

Cheese & Herb Potato Gratin

Yield: 8 to 10 servings

- 3 medium sweet potatoes
- 6 small Yukon gold potatoes
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt
- 1/4teaspoon ground black pepper
- 3/4 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 1/2teaspoons dried parsley
- 1/2 teaspoon dried thyme
- 1/2 teaspoon ground sage
- 1/2 teaspoon dried rosemary
- 8 ounces Gruyère or sharp white cheddar, grated (2 cups)
- 1/2 cup thinly sliced yellow onion, chopped
- 1/2 cup whole milk or half-and-half
- 1/2 cup low-sodium chicken broth



1. Preheat oven to 375°F. Peel potatoes, and, using a mandolin or vegetable slicer, cut into very thin slices. In large bowl, gently toss potatoes with salt, pepper, garlic powder, parsley, thyme, sage, rosemary, cheese, and onion, until evenly mixed. Be careful not to break the thin potato slices.
 2. Working with a small handful of potatoes at a time, gently line up coated slices in 10-inch cast-iron skillet or 2-quart baking dish. Pour milk and broth over potatoes. Cover pan with foil and seal around edges.
 3. Bake 50 minutes and remove foil. Continue to bake until potatoes are tender and top is golden, 15 to 20 minutes more. Test potatoes with a knife to see if they are tender throughout. Cool slightly and serve hot.
- Source: "Live Life Deliciously" by Tara Bench

- cheese and margarine in large bowl. Beat in confectioners' sugar and vanilla until smooth.
 - 6. Assembly: Place 1 cake layer, dome-side down, on cake platter. Cover flat surface with frosting. Sprinkle with 1/2 cup crumbled cookies. Top with second cake layer, right-side up. Spread frosting over top and sides. Sprinkle sides or top of cake with remaining 1 cup crumbled cookies, pressing into frosting. Refrigerate, lightly covered, until serving.
- Source: "Celebrate" by Elizabeth Kurtz ✨

HENNA AT JEWISH WEDDINGS

A vibrant Sephardi tradition.

BY MY JEWISH LEARNING



Henna is a vegetable-based dye used to temporarily color skin and more permanently dye hair. Jews from the Middle East and South Asia—places like Morocco, Algeria, Iran, Iraq and Yemen—have long incorporated it into wedding celebrations, just like many of their non-Jewish neighbors. Jews have given the widely popular henna ceremony their own twist, incorporating it into other Jewish marriage rituals.

A traditional henna ceremony is held a few days before a wedding. Accompanied by close family and friends, the bride's hands are decorated with dye. Since henna darkens for the first few days, timing the application in this way ensures that the design is at its most visible during the wedding. Often, close female family and friends also apply henna to their hands and, in modern times, the groom and other male friends can also participate.

In the Jewish community, henna is thought to ward off the evil eye and increase fertility. One of

the Hebrew words for henna is *chinah*, which some interpret as an acronym that alludes to the three *mitzvot* incumbent on women:

1. *Challah* — Separating a portion of baked bread
2. *Niddah* — The laws of family purity
3. *Hadlekat Nerot* — Lighting Shabbat and festival candles

Henna ceremonies can be lavish affairs, with embroidered clothes, singing and dancing. They are often part and parcel of the bride's first visit to the *mikvah* in preparation for married life and keeping the laws of family purity.

When large Jewish populations lived throughout the Middle East, henna ceremonies were a regular part of Jewish marriages. When these communities emigrated, they brought the memory of these traditions with them to Israel, America and elsewhere. By and large, however, the first generations of Jews in these heavily Ashkenazi countries did not practice the henna ceremony. In more recent generations, more Jews with roots in the Middle East are incorporating them into their nuptials. ✨

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

FRIDAY, JUNE 5

6:30 - 9:30 PM

Kinder Shabbat
and Main Service
Temple Beth David, TBD

FRIDAY, JUNE 12

7:30 - 9:30 PM

Rabbi Ira and Cantor Beth
Temple Beth David, TBD

SUNDAYS, JUNE 6, 13, 20 & 27

8:45 - 9:15 AM

Men's Club
Weekly Zoom Chat
Breakfast Get-Togethers
Selected Dates at Nearby
Restaurants
Other events include annual
Sukkah building, Super
Bowl Party, Museum and
other places of interests,
The Quakes minor league
baseball games, BBQs, and
more.
Temple Beth David, TBD

SUNDAYS, JUNE 7, 14, 21 & 28

9:30 - 10:30 AM

Adult Hebrew Intermediate
Temple Beth David, TBD

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(WEEKS 1-6)

PASADENA

JULY 27 - AUGUST 7

(WEEKS 7-8)

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Manheegim (6th - 8th)
Cit* (9th - 10th)
*Must complete application
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EVERY WEEKDAY UNTIL

JULY 3, 2026

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Rancho Cucamonga, CA
Contact Rabbi Sholom
Harlig
info@ChabadInlandEmpire.
com, CIE

FRIDAY, JUNE 19

7:00 - 9:00 PM

L'Dor VaDor
Temple Beth David, TBD

Beth Shalom of Whittier (BSW)

[www.
bethshalomofwhittier.net](http://www.bethshalomofwhittier.net)

B'nai Simcha Community Preschool www.bnaisimcha.org

Chabad Jewish Center of South Pasadena

[www.
jewishsouthpasadena.com](http://www.jewishsouthpasadena.com)

Chabad of Arcadia (CoA) www.jewisharcadia.com

Chabad of Pasadena (CoP) www.chabadpasadena.com

Chabad of the Inland Empire (CIE) [www.chabadinlandempire. com](http://www.chabadinlandempire.com)

Congregation Hugat Haverim (CHH) www.hugathaverim.com

Congregation Emanu El (CEE) <https://emanuelsb.org/>

Jewish Federation of the Greater San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys (JFGSGPV) www.jewishsgpv.org

Pasadena Jewish Academy (PJA) [www. pasadenajewishacademy. com](http://www.pasadenajewishacademy.com)

Pasadena Jewish Temple & Center (PJTC) www.pjtc.net

Temple Ami Shalom (TAS) [https://templeamishalom. org/](https://templeamishalom.org/)

Temple Beth Israel of Pomona (TBI) www.tbipomona.org

Temple Beth David of the San Gabriel Valley (TBD) [www.templebethdavidsgv. org](http://www.templebethdavidsgv.org)

Temple Beth Israel of Highland Park and Eagle Rock (TBILA) www.tbila.org

Temple B'nai Emet (TBE) [https://templebnaiemet. org](https://templebnaiemet.org)

Temple Sinai of Glendale (TSG) <http://temple-sinai.net>

Temple Sholom of Ontario (TSO) [www. templesholomofontario. org](http://www.templesholomofontario.org)

Tree of Life Preschool (formerly TBI Preschool) (ToL) <https://tbipomona.org> ☆



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NEWS & JEWS

Mamdani Becomes the First NYC Mayor in Decades to Skip the Israel Day Parade

By The Jewish Telegraphic Agency (JTA)

New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani did not attend the city's annual Israel Day Parade, becoming the first sitting NYC mayor in more than six decades to skip the event since it began in 1964. The parade has traditionally been viewed as a symbolic expression of solidarity with Israel and New York's large Jewish community, and attendance by city leaders has long been considered customary.

Mamdani's decision has generated strong reactions from both supporters and critics. Supporters say the move reflects his criticism of Israeli government policies and the war in Gaza, while opponents argue it breaks with an important civic tradition during a period of rising antisemitism. Mamdani has stated that his absence should not be interpreted as



Mayor Zohran Mamdani at the White House
Source: Wikimedia

opposition to Jewish New Yorkers and said the city will continue to provide security and permits for the parade. ✡



Celebrating Israel Parade, NYC Source: Wikimedia

AMERICA 250- New Theatre Production Celebrates Wide Ranging, Rarely Heard Jewish Stories That Are Integral to the Story of America

With L'Chaim America!, The Braid, recognized as the nation's leading Jewish storytelling theatre, invites audiences into the vibrant, complicated, and often overlooked contemporary experiences of American Jews in ways not seen before.

Opening May 12 in Los Angeles, the show brings together true stories from a community far more racially, culturally, and geographically diverse than many people realize. Supported by the National Endowment for the Arts, L'Chaim America! will tour nationally, with performances in Los Angeles, Orange County, the San Francisco Bay Area, New York City, and beyond, alongside global livestreams.

Foregoing sets, props, or costumes to focus on the pure art of storytelling, a handful of actors take on multiple roles, using the audience's imagination to transport them from an Iranian family's Thanksgiving table to the windswept great plains, from a naturalization ceremony of hundreds to a quiet American suburb. Performers and stories deftly move between storytelling narration and dialogue scenes in a style that's ever-present and deeply immersive.

The production features a wide range of voices, including:

- Los Angeles Black Jewish writer and performer Joshua Silverstein, who traces how his activist Ashkenazi grandparents built alliances with the Black community to help elect their city's first Black mayor
- Screenwriter Robert Uriel Russin (On Deadly Ground), reflecting on Jewish identity in Wyoming
- Emily Bowen Cohen, a New York Times-featured author (Two Tribes), exploring America through the lens of her Native American and Jewish heritages
- Solomon Dueñas, an immigrant from El Salvador, who escapes civil war to arrive in the U.S. determined to reclaim his family's suppressed Jewish roots and opens one of the first Jewish bakeries in his new home in Orange County

Additional stories and songs are performed by a versatile ensemble cast, with actors shifting roles to bring a wide spectrum of lived experiences to life.

"In divisive times, this show is a respite from the rhetoric and a reminder of who we are as Jews and as Americans, says The Braid founder and artistic director Ronda Spinak. "The Jewish people are a vibrant part of the American story. But I didn't want to depict only the narrow version people think they know. Our community includes immigrants from across the globe, Native Americans whose presence here goes back millennia, people from 'cowboy country' and new citizens from Zhanjiang, China."

A special performance of the show will be held on June 7 in Los Angeles at the Skirball Cultural Center, one of the nation's leading Jewish cultural institutions. It will be part of a special community wide celebration in partnership with the Jewish Federation of Los Angeles, the Jews of Color Initiative, the American Jewish Committee, Challah and Soul (an organization connecting Black and Jewish communities), the Iranian American Jewish Federation, the Iranian Jewish Women's Organization, Jewtina y Co (a national organization devoted to the Latin Jewish Community), JIMENA (Jews Indigenous to the Middle East and North Africa), and The LUNAR Collective (a national organization by and for Asian American Jews).

Directed by producing director Susan Morgenstern, the cast features:

- Kimberly Green (Lucifer)
- Zoë Hall (La La Land)
- Rhiannon Lewis (Traveler's Prayer)
- Lillian Mimi McKenzie (What Do I Do with All This Heritage?)
- Joshua Silverstein (The Late Late Show with James Corden)
- Marcelo Tubert (Star Trek: Picard)

The show also features writing and music by a wide range of

contributors, including noted Iranian Jewish author Esther Amini (Concealed), Latin Jewish LA Times and New York Times journalist Sonia Nazario, celebrated composer Mike Himelstein (The Tonight Show), acclaimed essayist Susan Baskin (writer of the Academy Award-winning film Violet), Vanessa Bloom and David Chiu (producers of The Braid's nationwide smash hit about Asian American Jews What Do I Do with All This Heritage?), child psychology writer and Soviet Jewish immigrant Natalya Bogopolskaya, The Braid's executive director and Israeli American Sharon Landau, Iraqi-Israeli American Aharon Zagayer, and cast member and songwriter Rhiannon Lewis.

Multiple stories from multiple writers allows an uplifting and nuanced portrait to emerge of the experiences of Jews in America.

- Dueñas is filled with gratitude: "I feel so blessed. I love the United States. I'm a proud citizen. I think America is still a land of opportunity."
- For Bowen Cohen, her connection stretches far deeper than 250 years: "It's the land... the trees. Native people have cultivated it for thousands of years... I'm rooted here."
- Himelstein hopes that America's past failures can become opportunities for growth: "Can we build a future that learns from our past?"
- For Bogopolskaya, identity itself is the point: she hopes her Black, Russian, Ukrainian, Jewish son will "embrace all parts of who he is... that's at the heart of what America is all about."

A stunning and timely production, L'Chaim America! shows that any celebration of America's 250th is incomplete without including the American Jewish story too. In an era when people are deeply divided over identity and belonging, L'Chaim America! compels audiences to think differently about identity and belonging by shining a powerful storytelling light on individual lives, specific places, and the complicated, deeply human ways people come to call this country home.

PERFORMANCE SCHEDULE & TICKETS

World Premiere

Tues, May 12, 7:30 PM

The Braid Theatre, Santa Monica, CA

Los Angeles County Run

May 12 – June 17

San Francisco Bay Area

May 29–31

Global Livestream

Thurs, June 4, 4:00 PM PT

Sun, June 7, 11:00 AM PT

Orange County

Sun, June 28, 1:00 PM

Merage JCC, Irvine, CA

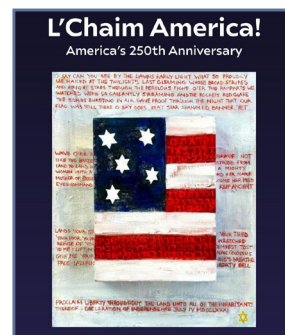
New York City


Sun, July 12, 2:30 PM

Museum of Jewish Heritage

Tickets: the-braid.org/america

Pricing: \$45 Regular | \$60 Angel | \$20 Students ☆



A romantic scene featuring a couple in silhouette against a vibrant night sky filled with stars and the Milky Way galaxy. The couple is positioned in the foreground, with their hands raised to form a heart shape. The woman is on the left, and the man is on the right. The background is a deep blue and purple sky with a bright, colorful band of stars and nebulae stretching across it.

*"Only love gives us the
taste of eternity."
— Jewish Proverb*

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They like car rides and drooling on the window.

They are three-legged race champions and curtain ninjas.

They are tail-waggers and sloppy kissers.

They are close talkers and belly rub collectors.

They are blanket hogs and entire bed hogs.

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