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August 2026
Av — Elul, 5786

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THE SHOFAR BLAST – JUDAISM’S ALARM CLOCK THAT REMIND US ITS TIME TO REFLECT

Playing capture the flag at a park near my house with friends from school. Playing catch in the backyard with my dad or brother. Riding my bike into town to get pizza and play video games. Or simply hanging out with my friends as we played pool and listened to music.

These are a few memories I have of growing up in a small town in the Bay Area. I know I dealt with challenges and stress back then, but looking back now...I don't really remember them. Could it be that although they felt significant in the moment, upon further reflection, they really were not that big of a deal? Could it be that time has provided a broader perspective to what I experienced? Have the memories of those challenges been replaced with more recent ones? Or is it that I repressed them because they were just too painful to remember and I did not yet understand how important it was for me to learn and grow from these experiences by reflecting on them as I got older?

Later this month, we will enter Elul, the final month of our Jewish calendar year 5786.

Traditionally, this is a time that we are instructed to take some time to reflect on the year that was and begin the process of seeking forgiveness from those we may have wronged. This is one of the many things I love about Judaism; we are commanded to allocate time for ourselves to think, consider, and recalibrate (if needed) before we enter the next year.

And to get us started in this process, our soul gets awoken from the stupor it has been in

for the last several months upon hearing the blast of the shofar, which is blown each morning during Elul, except on Shabbat.

Close your eyes and try to remember the last time you heard the shofar. Did you hear it recently, or do you remember feeling it as the sound entered through your ears and rattled around your entire body in a way that no other instrument's sound could?

I have always considered the shofar to be my Jewish alarm clock. While at times I have tried to hit "snooze", each time I hear it I am reminded that it is time to wake up, roll out of bed, and get started on the day's work.

How did we live? Did we achieve what we had hoped to? Is our world better because of the choices we made? Because of the actions we took? Did we stand strong for what is important, and just, and honorable, or did we sit on the sidelines and let others dictate the direction of our lives and our world? Did we achieve what we wanted to achieve? Did I? Did you?

Did my actions (or inactions) adversely affect someone else? Was I kind with my words? How could I have remained calmer or handled myself differently in a particular situation? Did I use my time effectively? In essence, how could I have been a better version of myself?

These are such hard questions



to answer. They require us to really look at who we are, examine our actions, and figure out what it all means.

This month, I challenge all of us to slow down, take back our time, and embrace Elul for what it was intended: a month of reflection. Be honest, figure out what is working and what is not, and let us launch our next year with renewed commitment to our goals. With renewed energy to achieve all that we hope to. And the focus to ensure that we appreciate the world around us, love our families and friends, relish in the time that we are given, take the actions needed to make our world what we want it to be, and not take our lives for granted. ☆



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



WHY IS GAGA EVERYWHERE AND WHERE DID IT COME FROM?

The sport, popular at Jewish summer camps and beyond, has mysterious origins.

BY EVELYN FRICK, MY JEWISH LEARNING



Kids playing gaga ball. Source:WikiMedia

Back in the days of my youth (read: the early 2010s), I had my first celebrity encounter. I was surfing Twitter, undoubtedly way late at night, on the laptop my parents got me as a bat mitzvah present, when Jewish comedian Iliza Shlesinger tweeted something to the effect of, “What’s the name of the game you play at summer camp in a pit? Does anyone know what I’m talking about?”

I knew what she was talking about. Despite my parents never actually sending me to Jewish summer camp, I had spent a few weekends at a Camp Harlam in the Poconos with my synagogue youth group. There, I’d learned how to play gaga (also known as gaga ball or ga-ga), the fast-paced, dodgeball-like sport where players gather in a walled court (better known in gaga

parlance as a pit) to try to eliminate others by striking them with a ball on the knee or lower legs.

I replied to Iliza almost immediately with just the word, “Gaga!!” Soon after, she responded to thank me and liked my response. I was starstruck. A comedian I had seen on Netflix and followed on Twitter actually responded to me! But more than anything, I felt deep satisfaction that a niche piece of cultural information that I was privy to came in handy.

Fast forward to today, I don’t think that interaction would’ve occurred in the same way, namely because gaga isn’t niche anymore. In fact, dare I say it: I think gaga has made its way into the mainstream.

Starting just around the time of my interaction with Iliza, gaga pits began popping up in not exclusively Jewish contexts all over the United States. “Young people

are playing gaga this summer with fervent devotion, from this sunny day camp in Silicon Valley to Lake Beauty Bible Camp in Long Prairie, Minn., to the 20,000-square-foot Ultimate Gaga arena in Syosset on Long Island,” a 2012 article in the New York Times proclaimed. The Forward added in 2013, “Elementary schools from Washington to New Jersey are replacing jungle gyms with Gaga pits.”

For more recent context, my colleague at *Kveller* Daci Platt told me she was aware of multiple school yard gaga pits in the Twin Cities, as well as at the schools of her friend’s kids across the southern United States. A testimony to how normal gaga has become in American culture? As of 2023 the Scouting America website has an entry about how to play it. And the sport has broken through into pop culture, appearing in the 2026 summer flick “The Floaters” as well as a season 8 episode of “Bob’s Burgers” called “Y Tu Ga-Ga Tambien.”

There doesn’t seem to have been one clear moment when gaga transformed from Jewish summer camp activity to secular sport. But it’s not really a mystery why non-Jews have gravitated towards it. “Gaga Ball is more than just a game—it’s a movement!” *LifelsBetterOutside.com* proclaims, and they’re not wrong. Gaga is accessible; the rules are fairly straightforward and you technically don’t even need a pit to play it. It’s high energy and physical, while still being safer than dodgeball. Ultimately, per top gaga pit manufacturer Sport Resource Group, “the matches promote physical activity, social and life skills, and acceptance in sport.”

But where did gaga come from? The answer to that question is less simple.

There are many theories about the origins of gaga. The most popular one seems to be that gaga, which means “hit hit” or “touch touch” in Hebrew, was created in Israel in the ‘50s or ‘60s. Then, when American Jewish summer camps hired Israelis as counselors, they brought the game with them. At some point in this cultural exchange, gaga also made it to Australia, perhaps also through Israeli camp counselors.

But there are also multiple theories that the sport was American-born.

“There was a man named John Crosley who owned a sleepaway camp in the Northeast U.S. and invented the game,” Caroline Fasulo of the Gaga Center in New York told *Tablet Magazine* in 2016. Former campers of Crosley’s Camp Idylwold, which closed in 1987, also back up this claim. Then, the game was called “Crosleyball” and by the account of former camper



<https://youtu.be/-qxFzAmkFG8>

Harley Spiller, it could’ve been played as early as the late ‘60s. “The story goes that John got tired of campers not burning off energy on rainy days and created this activity. In my day, the ‘sport’ was codified with rules that look remarkably like ga-ga,” former camper Josh Lisman explained.

However, a former camp counselor at the now-closed Baltimore JCC Camp Milldale by the name of Steve Steinberg claims that he invented gaga. According to Steve, like the invention of Crosleyball, it began to keep campers busy on rainy days. The year was 1975 and the then-17-year-old would take his group of young campers to a covered but wall-less outdoor structure at the camp to play a game a la dodgeball. Then, to avoid the ball rolling down a nearby hill, Steinberg and his charges would lay benches on their sides to create a surface for the ball to ricochet off of and back towards them.

He also claims that he coined the name—and it’s not even Hebrew. Per *Tablet*, “Steinberg says that during a moment of frustration, he told his campers that they ‘all look like a bunch of babies’—at which point some of the kids began chanting “goo-goo, ga-ga,” which soon became the name of the game. When Steinberg had to fit the name on a written activity schedule, it was shortened to ga-ga.”

Steve’s tale is backed up by a 1992 *Baltimore Jewish Times* article, but in 2018 he told *Tablet* that he didn’t doubt that others, like John Crosley, had similar ideas on their own. “It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to come up with a game like this,” he exclaimed. Nor does he doubt that Israeli camp staff had something to do with the sports’ migration across the globe, as Camp Milldale had Israeli counselors during the summer of 1975.

So where did gaga come from? Take your pick from these theories! Regardless, it doesn’t seem like this Jewish summer camp favorite is going away any time soon. ☆

EVELYN FRICK IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.

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JEWISH LANGUAGES: FROM ARAMAIC TO YIDDISH

Think Hebrew is the only Jewish language? Think again!

BY MY JEWISH LEARNING



Palmyra / Tadmor, Homs province, Syria: Aramaic script - stone slab with Aramaic inscription - Aramaic script was is ancestral to both the modern Arabic and Hebrew alphabets. Photo by M.Torres

For most of their history, Jews have been multilingual. Hebrew is the language of the Bible, the principal language of Jewish liturgy, and the language spoken in modern Israel—but it has been the primary language of only a small percentage of Jews who have ever lived.

The geographical diversity of the Jewish people accounts for its multilingualism. Jews have adopted the various languages of their homelands and also spoken numerous Jewish hybrid languages.

By the beginning of the Common Era, Aramaic had replaced Hebrew as the spoken language of Palestinian Jews. The causes of Hebrew's decline are not wholly

understood, but it was certainly hastened by the Babylonian exile in 587 B.C.E. and the continued foreign rule of Palestine during the Second Temple period. Aramaic, like Hebrew, is a Semitic language, and there are many similarities between the two.

Because of Aramaic's prominence during the rabbinic era, it is arguably the second most important Jewish language—though it was spoken by non-Jews as well. The Talmud is written in Aramaic, as is the Zohar, the great medieval mystical text. One of the best-known Jewish prayers, the Kaddish, also is written in Aramaic. During the talmudic era, Hebrew illiteracy was so high that the Shabbat Torah reading was recited along with a verse-by-verse translation into



Lake Bled in Slovenia. Today there are still some speakers of Judeo-Spanish in the Balkans, North Africa, and Israel.

Aramaic.

Jewish hybrid languages have existed for more than two millennia. Linguists have long puzzled with little resolution over whether these tongues should be considered dialects, unique languages, or Creole languages (languages that began as pidgins—simplified forms of speech, often mixtures of two languages—and are later adopted as primary languages).

During the Second Temple Period, Judeo-Greek, also known as Yevanic, was spoken by Jews in the Hellenistic world. Over the years many other such hybrid languages emerged. These languages tended to adopt structural and lexical elements of the local languages, mixing them with Hebrew and Aramaic words. They were usually written in Hebrew script.

The Jews of the Middle East and North Africa spoke Judeo-Arabic. As early as the eighth century, Jews of present-day Iran and Afghanistan spoke Judeo-Persian. Many Jews in Italy spoke Judeo-Italian, a language featuring early South Italian elements and Hebrew characters. Most of these languages, and many other Jewish hybrid languages, are extinct or almost extinct.

The two best-known Jewish hybrid languages are Judeo-Spanish—better known as Ladino—and Yiddish.

Judeo-Spanish was spoken by the Jews of medieval Spain, as well as their descendants. It received most of its linguistic characteristics from early medieval Spanish, but it was written in Hebrew characters. Though Ladino is its earliest documented name, the language is also known

as Judezmo (which is a linguistic equivalent of Yiddish) and Spanyol.

Today there are still some speakers of Judeo-Spanish in the Balkans, North Africa, and Israel. The Holocaust hastened the decline of the language; the Nazis decimated many Judeo-Spanish speaking communities—particularly in Greece and the Balkans.

In many ways, Yiddish is the German equivalent of Judeo-Spanish. Yiddish is almost wholly German in its linguistic structure and vocabulary, but it is written in Hebrew characters. Yiddish originated in the Rhineland cities of Germany in the early Middle Ages, though the first recognizable Yiddish texts date from the 14th century. Over the next few centuries, Yiddish spread all over Europe, from Eastern France to the Baltics.

More Jews have spoken Yiddish than any other language. Prior to the Holocaust, Yiddish speakers accounted for 75 percent of world Jewry, but during the Holocaust, about 75 percent of the world's Yiddish speakers were killed. Today, Yiddish is spoken by fewer and fewer people, though it is still the primary spoken language of many ultra-Orthodox Jews, and there are still probably tens of thousands of Yiddish speakers in the former Soviet states.

In addition, the study of Yiddish language and literature is enjoying something of a renaissance on some college campuses. And parts of the language live on in the many Yiddish words that have become part of English vernacular in America, such as *nosh* (which means to snack) and *mentsch* (a gentleman). ☆



Falafel Balls

GUIDE TO JEWISH FOOD TERMS

Commonly used words and phrases for “noshers” and “fressers.”

BY MY JEWISH LEARNING

Whether you're stepping into a Jewish deli for the first time, shopping at a kosher supermarket or going to a friend's house for a traditional Shabbat dinner, here are some useful words to know.

Words About Eating and Meals

Bentsching: (Yiddish) Reciting Grace after Meals, or Birkat Hamazon.

Bracha: (Hebrew) A blessing.

B'tayavon: (Hebrew) Literally “in appetite,” used to convey “bon appetit.”

Fress: (Yiddish) To eat copiously and without restraint. (Rhymes with dress.)

Hamotzi: (Hebrew) Blessing said over bread. On Shabbat, Hamotzi is usually said over challah.

Nosh: (Yiddish) To snack. (Rhymes with posh.)

Potchke: (Yiddish) To fuss, or mess around, as in “I was potchke-ing around in the kitchen, when I came up with this recipe.”

Schmear: (Yiddish) A generous spread, usually used to refer to an ample portion of cream cheese applied to a bagel.

Zemirot: (Hebrew) Songs sung at the Shabbat table.

Words Related to Jewish Dietary Laws (Kashrut)

Cholov Yisroel: (Hebrew, also spelled *Halav Yisrael*)

Dairy products produced by Jewish farmers. Some ultra-Orthodox Jews will only eat kosher dairy products that are also *cholov yisroel*, while others eat any dairy products that are certified kosher.

Fleishig: (Yiddish) Meaty, an adjective to identify foods containing meat or dishes/utensils that are used for meat. Jewish dietary laws prohibit combining meat and dairy foods.

Glatt: (Yiddish) A type of kosher meat, whereby the lungs of the animal were smooth, without any adhesions that could potentially prohibit the animal as unkosher, an issue only applicable to animals, not fowl or non-meat products. (Rhymes with pot.)

Hechsher: (Hebrew) Kosher certification for foods, and some other items, a label that identifies a product as complying with Jewish law.

Kasher: (Hebrew) To make something kosher, usually referring to dishes, cookware or a kitchen.

Kosher: (Hebrew) Adhering to *kashrut*, the traditional Jewish dietary laws.

Mashgiach: (Hebrew) A *kashrut* supervisor, someone who ensures that a product or restaurant can be certified as kosher.

Milchig: (Yiddish) Dairy, as an adjective to describe food containing dairy, or dishes used for foods containing dairy. Jewish dietary laws prohibit combining meat and dairy foods.



Sweet Homemade Cheese Blintzes

Pareve: (Hebrew) An adjective to describe food that is neither meat nor dairy and that can be served with either.

Pessadik or Pesachdik: (Yiddish) An adjective meaning kosher for Passover.

Treyf: (Yiddish) Not kosher.

Classic Jewish Dishes/Foods

Babka: A dense bread that's swirled with chocolate or cinnamon and often topped with nuggets of cinnamon-sugar streusel.

Bagel: On the off chance you've been living under a rock for the past 50 years and never saw a bagel, it's a delicious boiled-then-baked roll with a hole, perfect topped with cream cheese and lox.

Bamia: Libyan Jewish okra dish.

Bialy: A bagel-like roll, but with a matted finish, no hole and almost always stuffed with cooked onions. Try a low-carb bialy here.

Blintz: A thin, crepe-like pancake usually rolled up around fruit or sweet cheese. Traditionally served on Shavuot.

Bourekka: A savory serving-sized Middle Eastern pastry wrapped in filo dough.

Borscht: An Eastern European soup containing beets and other vegetables. There are hot and cold versions.

Challah: A braided bread traditionally served on Shabbat.

Cholent: A slow-cooked stew, traditionally served for Shabbat lunch.

Chrain: A spicy horseradish sauce used for topping gefilte fish.

Egg Cream: A sweet drink made with seltzer, chocolate syrup and milk.

Falafel: Fried chickpea fritters served throughout the Middle East and considered Israel's national dish.

Gefilte Fish: Ground fish mixed with matzah meal and other ingredients and rolled into balls or cylinders, which are then poached or boiled. Traditionally served on Passover and Shabbat.

Halvah: A Middle Eastern candy made from tahini (sesame paste).



Rugelach crescent dough with chocolate filling

Hamantaschen: Triangle-shaped cookies traditionally served on Purim.

Hummus: Middle Eastern dip made of pureed chickpeas, tahini, garlic and lemon juice.

Gefilte Fish: Ground, deboned fish (usually whitefish, carp, pike and/or mullet), mixed with eggs, matzah meal, and other seasoning, which is then boiled or poached (but can also be baked). Traditionally served on Passover.

Kasha: Buckwheat or groats, prepared in a pilaf and often served with bow tie noodles.

Kichels: Bow tie pastries that are fried and often sprinkled with sugar.

Kishke: A sausage-like dish, traditionally packed inside beef intestine.

Kneidlach: Yiddish for matzah ball, a dumpling made of matzah meal, eggs and oil, usually served in chicken

soup.

Knish: A savory serving-sized Eastern European pie frequently stuffed with potato filling.

Kreplach: A triangle-shaped dumpling, usually filled with meat and served in chicken soup.

Kubbeh: An Iraqi Jewish dumpling soup.

Kugel: A sweet or savory baked casserole usually made with some type of starch (often noodles or potatoes), eggs and a fat.

Labne: A thick yogurt-based cheese, often served with breakfast in Israel.

Latke: A potato pancake, traditionally served on Hanukkah.

Lox: Smoked salmon, traditionally served on a bagel with cream cheese.

Mandelbrot or Mandel Bread: Biscotti-like cookies.

Matzah: Unleavened bread traditionally eaten on Passover.

Matzah Ball: See *kneidlach* (above)

Matzah Brei: A classic Passover breakfast dish of matzah and scrambled eggs, which can be served sweet or savory.

Rugelach: Cookie usually made with a cream-cheese dough and twisted with cinnamon or chocolate.

Sabich: An Iraqi Jewish sandwich containing fried eggplant, a hard-boiled egg, hummus and Israeli salad.

Schav: A cold sorrel soup.

Schmaltz: Rendered chicken (or other poultry) fat.

Shakshuka: North African egg-and-tomato dish.

Shawarma (also spelled shwarma): Spiced meat grilled on a vertical spit, usually served in a pita. This is popular throughout the Middle East, often made with lamb and served with yogurt sauce; in Israel (and in kosher restaurants elsewhere), it is often made with turkey and served with tahini sauce.

Tzimmes: A sweet carrot dish traditionally served on Rosh Hashanah, it often includes meat, sweet potatoes, onions and dried fruit. ☆



Traditional dish of Israeli cuisine - chicken kreplach with tomato salsa and green onions

THE POST OFFICE IS RELEASING A NEW HANUKKAH STAMP THIS YEAR

The story behind its creation has us *kvelling*.

BY DACI PLATT, MY JEWISH LEARNING



Stamp via the US Postal Service, design assets via Canva

The design for the U.S. Postal Service 2026 Hanukkah stamp was revealed last month—and the story behind it has us *kvelling*.

The first Hanukkah stamp was released in 1996. (It's worth noting that the first Christmas stamp was released in 1962.) That design—a colorful, collaged menorah that was jointly issued with Israel—served as the de facto Hanukkah Stamp until 2004, when the USPS changed to a roughly bi annual design update. This year's stamp is a delightful illustrated dreidel on a turquoise background, created by freelance illustrator and illustration professor Lisa Perrin, whose rabbi commented “KVELLING KVELLING KVELLING” when Lisa posted the stamp on Instagram.

Perrin submitted six different illustrations of menorahs and dreidels, and arrived at the final design with help from USPS Art Director Antonio Alcalá, who created the 2024 Hanukkah stamp and whose mother escaped from Nazi Germany on the Kindertransport.

In their official announcement, the USPS notes that the folk art style of the dreidel reflects Perrin's Jewish heritage. “Jewish folk art has long been a source of inspiration for me,” said Perrin. “My Master's Illustration thesis was inspired by Ashkenazi folk tales, symbolism and language. I love looking at historical

ketubah designs, and traditional Jewish paper cutting and woodcarving. For my thesis I hand lettered my favorite Yiddish expressions and created illustrations inspired by life on the *shtetl*. Any time I can connect my creative work to my personal culture and heritage it means a lot.”

This particular work had an even more personal connection: Perrin's father, Michael Perrin, is a lifelong stamp collector. “[He] has been urging me to pursue illustrating a stamp for my entire creative career — and not subtly,” Lisa said. “After years of nudging, I reached out to some art directors for the United States Postal Service, introduced myself and work, and explained that a stamp would mean a lot to my father. Remarkably, that worked!” Lisa told her USPS contacts that something Jewish would be especially meaningful. “Thus, the Hanukkah stamp was born.”

Naturally, Lisa's father was *verklemt*. “A U.S. federal stamp honoring Hanukkah drawn by my Lisa!” he *kvelled*. “Eight days is not enough!”

This year's Hanukkah stamp will be available Sept. 29. Lisa's work can be found on her website at <https://www.madebyperrin.com>, where you can also contact her and beg her to bring back her beautiful Jewish food packaging calendar. ☆

DACI PLATT IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.



ARE HUMAN TEACHERS PASSÉ?

AI and the Future of Education

BY SUE KLEINBERG

Artificial intelligence (AI) has been around since the middle of the last century. Really! It is also about to revolutionize our lives in ways we cannot now conceive. If this sounds like something it is hard to wrap your mind around, you ain't seen nothin' yet.

AI allows machines to do things that would, until now, require a human intellect to perform, such as problem-solving, decision-making, reasoning, conversing, and creating intellectual property in the areas of science, literature, art, and music. In its most basic sense, it works by analyzing data to discover patterns. This is accomplished through "machine learning," which is the application of algorithms that permit the programs to improve their ability to simulate human intelligence—in other words, to improve with practice!

AI as developed today dates back at least to 1948 when Alan Turing developed a program called Turochamp that could play an entire game of chess, although at nowhere near the level of a grand master. Even so, the program never went into production because the relatively rudimentary computers of that time were incapable of running a program of that complexity. It took merely another 68 years for DeepMind to devise the AlphaGo program, which was able to defeat Lee Sedol, an 18-time world champion player of Go, a far more complex game than chess: there are more possible board positions than there are atoms in the observable universe.

In May of this year, just 10 years later, four large language models, i.e., programs that are meant to simulate language, were able to pass the Turing test (yes, that Turing)—they imitated human speech so well that the human subjects in the experiment could not tell whether they were conversing with a human or a machine. Not only are machines getting much closer to replacing humans, but they are getting better at it faster than ever before. Can it keep up?

Maybe. But there are obstacles that could just as easily cause the progress in AI to pause. Indeed, the operative term is "artificial." Until what is thought of as "common sense" can be reduced to a data point and fed into a database, a computer will not recognize it. Humans do not learn by digitizing information. As long as that body of knowledge-based intellectual functions cannot be defined more precisely than as common sense, AI will remain just that—artificial. While computers are already better than humans at reading X-rays and MRI scans, your PC will still tell you it is more efficient to walk to a nearby gas station to fuel your vehicle than to drive there.

There is also the matter of infrastructure. As ephemeral and intangible as all this cloud and web talk may seem, AI demands a great deal of computing

power, which in turn demands a great deal of electricity, an amount that the grid in its current configuration will not be able to supply.

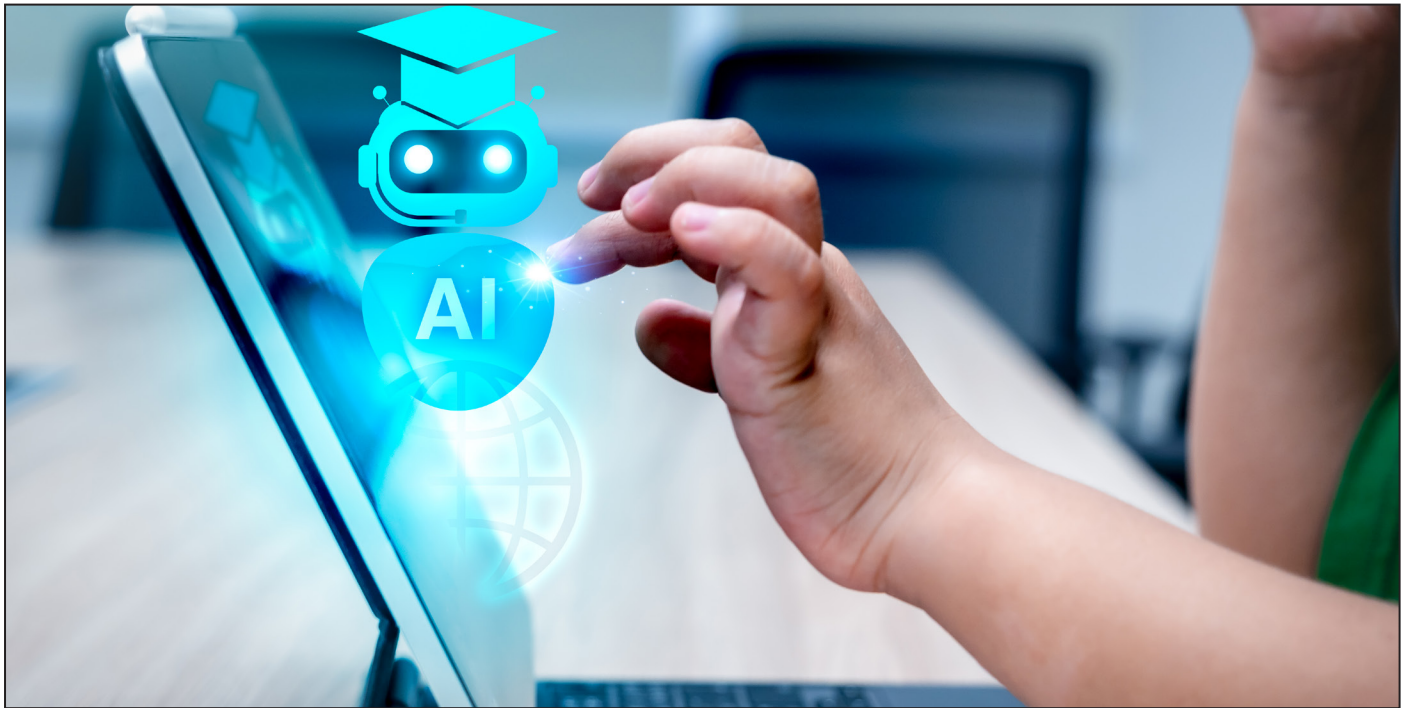
Five big companies known as hyperscalers—Oracle, Alphabet, Microsoft, Amazon and Meta—have been borrowing heavily to invest in data centers. Their combined projected investment for 2027 is \$1.2 trillion, which would exceed the current United States military budget by \$50 billion. Profits that turn out to be lower than predicted and unanticipated borrowing costs could serve to curtail some of these investments and slow the progress in this field.

Moreover, data centers and electric utilities have been receiving some unexpected pushback. In 2025, electric utilities received data center power connection development requests for over 700 gigawatts, almost double the amount of all electricity consumed in the United States only two years previously. As a result, utilities have asked for a combined increase of over \$29 billion for the first half of 2025. Over 30 states have introduced bills concerning data centers in an attempt to address both cost and environmental concerns. New Jersey bills S.4143 and A.5564 introduced in 2025 would require that all electricity be derived from clean energy sources.

Another check on the advance of AI may be the very human tendency to procrastinate. Electricity was far more efficient than steam power, yet it took more than 30 years for the technology available by the late 19th century to be widely adopted in manufacturing.

And yet, whatever we may feel about data centers, and there seem to be no voices other than the technology companies themselves that display anything other than abhorrence for them, are we ready to give up Google? What about those summaries that Google now supplies before directing you to a website with the answer to your query? In *Penske Media Corp. v. Google and Alphabet*, the publisher of *Rolling Stone*, *Variety* and *Billboard* has brought suit in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia in which it accused Google of eroding traffic to its websites (theretofore directed thither by Google's algorithm) by adding AI summaries to search results. The search itself, of course, is performed by AI that is so ubiquitous as to be simply a part of the landscape. It is unlikely to take another 30 years to adopt AI wholesale.

How then does it fit into a 17-year education career (not including preschool)? In order to answer that, we need to dig down deeper into a question that we have not had to consider since we last wrote an essay for a college application: What is education for? Is it to prepare students for particular jobs? Sadly, for many graduating seniors, the computer coding jobs for which they opted to prepare themselves when entering college have now, over the period of those four years,



become obsolete. Computer coding is now done by AI. What will an AI-saturated employment outlook be in another four years, or even eight or 12 or 17?

If the needs for a human work force can change so quickly, perhaps any vocational training is short sighted. What, then, do we need in order to engage with whatever world the next cohort of graduates will face when their initial formal education comes to an end? Data center protests, lawsuits, and infrastructure costs notwithstanding, AI is here to stay and all students will need to deal with it.

At the very least, they will need to learn to read and to think critically and to evaluate their interactions with AI. They will need to be thoroughly computer literate and to be able to handle volumes of information orders of magnitude larger than anything we have seen thus far. Graft all of this onto a standard 20th-century curriculum and the problem becomes obvious: what to trim.

There has been a faint whiff of complaint wafting through the zeitgeist that cursive is no longer taught.

In light of the fact that there is an opportunity cost to everything, should it be? Should writing be taught at all? What about grammar, foreign languages, chemistry? All of these as well as other subjects once thought to be necessary to the development of an educated citizen may well find themselves on the chopping block as time goes on.

Once the content of education has been decided, how then will it be imparted? An approach set forth as recently as February 2025 in *Frontiers in Psychology* reads almost as quaint. It speaks of increased efficiency, time-saving, and access to more resources on the one hand and digital fatigue, loss of interpersonal skills and isolation on the other, as though Google and Facebook comprised the AI universe, when they are barely comparable to the invention of movable type in the development of universal literacy.

Much of schoolwork that is now done by students, such as writing essays, written homework, performing literary research, can now be done entirely by AI and even more can be done as they progress up the academic ladder. And will there be a need for a professor to hold office hours when an accommodating AI bot can be reached at any time? Or a need for a professor to be there at all? A return to *chavrusa* learning where partners read a text aloud and then discuss—and argue—its meaning might at first blush seem to obviate the difficulties posed by AI, but even here AI could be used to substitute for a partner or even a teacher.

To the question, “Are human teachers passé?” the answer is “Perhaps soon, but not yet.” In our current real world, common sense still counts for something. The internet, for all its breadth of knowledge, has still not cottoned to the fact that I do not own a dog. ☆

SUE KLEINBERG IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO JLIFE MAGAZINE.

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SGPV'S JEWISH YOUTH & PARENTS

kiddish

*Back to
School*

AUGUST 2026

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kiddish

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What Do the Hebrew Words 'Ben' and 'Bat' Mean?

The Hebrew words for son and daughter are used in many ways.

BY MY JEWISH LEARNING

The Hebrew words *ben* and *bat* are usually translated as “son” and “daughter.” They mean this in the literal sense, but they are also frequently used to mean simply boy and girl.

The terms *ben* and *bat* are always used as part of a person's Hebrew name. This ritual name is used when a person is called up to the Torah for an *aliyah*, when prayers are said for their recovery from illness, when they are married (it is written in the *ketubah*) or divorced (in the *get*), when they convert to Judaism and when they are recalled in the memorial *Yizkor* prayer. A ritual name consists of a person's Hebrew name plus either the word *ben* or *bat* followed by either their father's Hebrew name or their mother's Hebrew name or both.

The word *bat* also appears in the term *bat mitzvah*, meaning “daughter of the commandment.” A girl becomes a *bat mitzvah* when she is of an age to be responsible for following the *mitzvot*, 12 or 13 depending on the Jewish community. When a boy reaches the age of responsibility—13 in all Jewish communities—he is a *bar mitzvah*, a son of the commandment. The term “*bar*” is the Aramaic equivalent of *ben*.

The terms *ben* and *bat* also appear in other descriptive contexts in Jewish tradition. For example, in traditional morning blessings, Jews thank G-d for making them either *ben chorin* or *bat chorin*, both of which means free person. The term *ben adam*, literally meaning



“son of a person,” is used in the Hebrew Bible to simply mean “human” but in later rabbinic and modern usage came to mean someone who was particularly righteous.

The words *ben* and *bat* are also used in modern Hebrew to describe someone's age. A woman who is 30 years old is called *bat sheloshim*, literally “daughter of 30.” Boys and men are similarly described — for instance, *ben sheva* is used for a boy who is seven years old. Another modern Hebrew use of the term is *ben zug* (“*zug*” means partner) and *bat zug*, referring to one's spouse.

A particularly interesting use of the word *bat* is in the rabbinic term *bat kol*, literally meaning “daughter of a voice.” This refers to a disembodied, heavenly voice recognized to belong to G-d. The *bat kol* appears in many rabbinic stories to relate G-d's message. ☆



What Do the Words Abba and Ima (Ema) Mean?

The Hebrew words for son and daughter are used in many ways.

BY MY JEWISH LEARNING

The words *abba* and *ima* are used commonly by Hebrew speakers to mean father and mother. They are not, however, originally Hebrew. The Hebrew terms for male and female parents are *av* and *em*. *Abba* and *ima* are Aramaic in origin. However, they entered the Hebrew lexicon in ancient times.

In the talmudic period, *abba* and *ema* were not only titles, they were frequently used as names. For example, the rabbinic sage Rav was named *Abba Arikha* and the wife of Rabbi Eliezer was named *Ima Shalom*. *Abba* was also used as an honorific for some esteemed rabbis.

The Importance of Parents

Jewish tradition requires children to honor their parents. This is, in fact, one of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:12 and Deuteronomy 5:16), and the only one which has a reward attached to it: living long and well.

Parents also have obligations toward their offspring. The Torah requires fathers to circumcise their sons (Genesis 17:10-14), and obligates parents to educate their children (Deuteronomy 11:19). The Talmud elaborates on these obligations in several places, including the following:

A father is obligated with regard to his son to circumcise him, and to redeem him (if he is a firstborn), and to teach him Torah, and to marry him to a woman, and to teach him a trade. And some say: A father is also obligated to teach his son to swim. (Kiddushin 29a)

G-d as a Parent

In Jewish tradition, G-d is figured in many ways: a mighty creator, a fearsome warrior, a majestic ruler, a jealous spouse and a loving parent. Rabbinic literature explores this idea through an interpretation of the passage above, found in Numbers Rabbah 17:

Our rabbis taught: A person is obligated to do five things for his son. G-d can be compared to a father and the Jewish people to G-d's



son ... Just as a father is obligated to teach his child Torah, G-d taught the Jews Torah as it says (Deuteronomy 11:19): "Teach them to your children." And it is written: "I am G-d your teacher." Just as a father is obligated to teach his children *mitzvot*, G-d taught the *mitzvot* to the Jews. Just as a father is obligated to marry his son to a woman, so too G-d told mankind: "Be fruitful and multiply." A father is obligated to his son in the following ways: to give him food and drink, to bathe him, to give him ointments, and to clothe him, and thus did G-d for the Jews, as it is written (Ezekiel 16:9): "And I washed you in water, and I washed away your blood ... and I clothed you with embroidered clothing ... and My bread which I gave you..."

Jewish prayers build on the parental metaphor, perhaps most notably in the prayer *Avinu Malkein*, which translates to "Our Father, Our King."

In modern times, *abba* and *ema* have remained the everyday Hebrew terms for mom and dad, used by children who speak Hebrew as their first language. ☆

The Wisdom of the Crow

In Jewish stories and in nature, there's a lot to learn from this humble bird.

BY RABBI DR. JILL HAMMER, MY JEWISH LEARNING

Lately, crows have been cawing outside my window and in the park when I go for a walk. They're special to me because, years ago, a flock of crows attended my father's funeral. Ever since then, when I see a crow, I imagine my father is visiting me—or, if there's a whole flock, the ancestors in general.

My connection to crows goes back to childhood. When I walked to school early in the morning, a line of crows waited on a telephone wire to greet me. They'd caw as I passed underneath. Back then, my father complained that they watched him working in the garden. He thought they were laughing at him. Maybe they were. Crows are highly intelligent. They can recognize human faces, make and use tools such as hooked twigs, and even pass knowledge down to their descendants. Their cries, at the very least, have elements of language.

Biblical tradition speaks of the *orev*, the raven or crow (the term *orev* or, in English, *corvid*, covers them both, as Rabbi Laura Duhan-Kaplan points out in her book *Mouth of the Donkey: Re-envisioning Biblical Animals*). This word *orev* comes from a root that means "mixing," as in *erev*, Hebrew for evening: the time when light and darkness mix. The *orev* is associated with liminal moments and transitions.

We see this in a variety of stories. The *orev* is the first bird Noah sends out of the ark to look



for land, the first creature to see the new world after the flood. The raven never returns, maybe because it finds a new home (Genesis 8:7). According to midrash, the raven blames Noah for risking a raven despite there being just one pair of ravens and seven pairs of doves. In anger, the raven doesn't go back to the ark (Sanhedrin 108b). Knowing the importance of ecological diversity and valuing the survival of its own species, this raven stages the first ecological protest.

But in Jewish legend, the *orev*'s journey with humans begins before Noah's Ark. When Cain kills Abel, Abel's parents, Eve and Adam, do not know what to do with the body, as they have never seen a funeral. So they sit by Abel's body and weep. Finally, a raven comes and, by

pushing earth over another raven who has died, demonstrates how to perform a burial. Adam and Eve do likewise and bury their son (Pirkei DeRabbi Eliezer 21). This story associates the orev with death but also with wisdom around grief, ritual and culture.

The orev takes on an angelic dimension in the Book of Kings in the story of Elijah (1 Kings 17). Frustrated by the waywardness of the Israelites, Elijah walks into the wilderness. He spends the night in a cave and discovers that ravens have brought him food. There's also a well of water. After eating that one meal, Elijah is strong enough to walk for 40 days into the wilderness until he reaches Mount Sinai. Here, the orev is the messenger of the Holy One, nourisher of prophets, guardian of the wilderness journey.

These three stories suggest that the orev's gift, according to Jewish lore, is to know the way where there are no maps. So we might think of this bird, in ancestral memory, as a guide on journeys beyond the edges of what we know. When I hear a crow call, I'm reminded that even in the most familiar places, there is an aspect of the unknown. A poem I wrote several years ago called "Ne'ilah with Crows" includes the lines:

*They come to me and say: This is the world,
hard as it is, you must make your way in it with a
mostly open heart.*

*Mostly open, because no attribute in the world
is perfect.*

*Everything is a balance, like a crow on a
telephone wire or on the dark, dark church
steeple half a mile away...*

*The crows are crying, voices, not of ease, but of
flight.*

The Talmud holds a few sinister tales about the orev, just as popular culture does. For example, the Talmud claims that if an orev calls to you, it is a bad sign (Sanhedrin 65b) and that Haman's grandmother was named Orevati, or "my she-raven" (Bava Batra 91). When Rav Illish is in captivity in Babylon, a raven calls to him to escape, and he believes it is lying, but when a dove calls with the same message, he believes the dove. This is a typical privileging of light over dark, but we don't have to go along with that. The orev is a wise bird, and we would do well to pay attention to the wisdom we're offered.

Rabbi Julia Watts Belser, Ph.D., who teaches

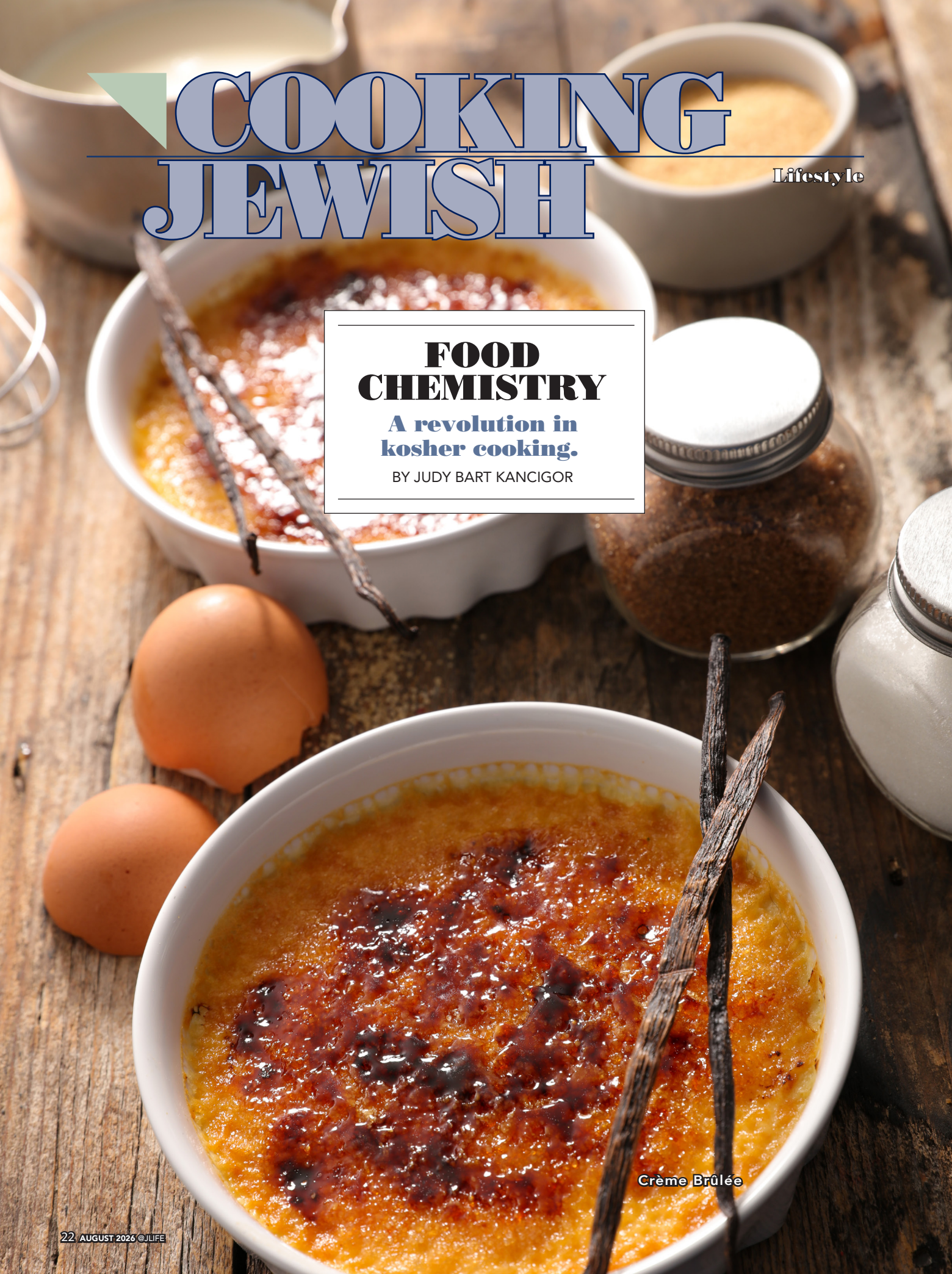


on the Torah of crows, observes that "crows know how to hack a world that wasn't made for them—about adaptation as alchemy, about the fierce work of survival in unpredictable terrain." She sees crows as exemplars of "a spiritual ecology ... fierce and feral and tenacious as a weed." Maybe we could learn from the crow and the raven how to honor the moments when we go off the map. Maybe what we need sometimes are crows' feet (their actual feet, not their namesake wrinkles, though those aren't bad either).

In fact, Rabbi Laura Duhan-Kaplan reports that once, when she was dizzy and oxygen-deprived on a high-altitude trail, crows led her back to safety. "Crow really does talk," she says. "Raven really does rescue. And many birds see humans as part of their flock." That's how I've experienced them, too. I'm convinced that those birds on the wire at the edge of my childhood lawn knew I was going beyond my home borders and out into the world, and they were watching over me.

So when we meet crows or ravens, in stories or in nature, may we greet them as friends. anyway? ☆

RABBI DR. JILL HAMMER IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND KIDDISH MAGAZINE.



COOKING JEWISH

Lifestyle

FOOD CHEMISTRY

**A revolution in
kosher cooking.**

BY JUDY BART KANCIGOR

Crème Brûlée

Geila Hocherman majored in revolutionary history in college. Then she spawned a revolution in kosher cooking. Coincidence? Maybe.

"I'm a kosher cook with a mission to make kosher cooking indistinguishable from any other kind," she writes, and in her cookbook, *"Kosher Revolution"* (Kyle Books, \$29.95), written with acclaimed food writer Arthur Boehm, she gives even experienced kosher cooks a welcome education.

"Crab" cakes, "prosciutto," "shrimp" dumplings—not exactly fare you'd expect to see in a kosher cookbook. But Hocherman, a former prep cook for the Food Network and renowned kosher caterer, proves that any sophisticated dish you see on fine non-kosher menus can be duplicated in the kosher kitchen.

"I remember years ago begging manufacturers, why can't there be kosher coconut milk? Why can't there be kosher miso?" she said by phone from her New York City home. "By their nature they are kosher; the only thing missing is the rabbi. But today there has been an explosion in the availability of kosher ingredients, and my 'tool box' system will change the way you think about cooking. I see this book as a manual for substitutions so you can make any recipe kosher."

Here's how it works. "Instead of thinking I need butter, cream or milk, think food chemistry," she explained. "Think, I need something salty or creamy or spicy, whatever. Then look at the list of substitutions. It's a lateral way to think about cooking."

Unlike many kosher cookbooks, *"Kosher Revolution"* does not rely on ersatz products that mimic the taste of bacon or shrimp, for example, or cream in a dessert destined for a meat meal. With artisanal kosher cheese make Roasted Portobellos with Goat Cheese. Kosher konnyaku and surimi

add seafood flavor and texture to Revolution Dumplings and "Crab" Cakes.

"Ham was a big one," said Hocherman, who is duly proud of her ingenious Duck Prosciutto made by curing kosher duck breast. "It's truly a gift that keeps on giving," she writes, as it can be used in so many dishes: paired with grilled figs, julienned in soups and salads, sautéed into sauces. "You get all the flavor of fine ham but without harm."

Chopped liver—that trusty hors d'oeuvre of old—gets an Italian-style makeover by adding herbs and capers, then spreading it on crostini. "And unlike the Cel-Ray accompaniment Bubbie's chopped liver got," writes Hocherman, "this one demands a hearty red wine."

About famed Chef Nobu Matsuhisa's miso-glazed black cod: "Me on first taste: Wow! I longed to make a kosher version of this great dish, but had to bide my time until kosher miso and sake became available," she writes on onjamiegeller.com. "All you do is marinate black cod in a simple miso-sugar mixture, then broil or grill it. The caramelized skin is delightfully crispy and really compliments the sweet, moist flesh. Served with Baby Bok Choy with Garlic—or by itself with any bitter green—this is stellar dining."

Her Classic Challah produces a golden, moist loaf with a beautifully layered crumb, but why not a chocolate version which can be dairy or pareve, depending on the kind of chocolate you use?

Kosher coconut milk, a sadly underused pareve ingredient in the kosher kitchen, enhances dishes like Chicken Satay with Peanut Sauce and Crème Brûlée, and the widespread availability of kosher nut milks greatly expands the kosher cook's repertoire. Whether you're cooking a meat, dairy or pareve meal, just consult her ingredient-exchange chart for kosher substitutions, as well as her handy list of

sources.

"When I tested the recipes, I did not give them to kosher people to eat; I gave them to nonkosher people," she noted. "They knew what it was supposed to taste like."

Raised in a kosher home "off and on," Hocherman went "off the wagon" at several points in her life. "We moved to Mississippi in the '60's, and there was no way to get kosher meat," she recalled, "but when we moved to New Jersey a year later, I told my mother, 'I don't want you to make Bubbe's dishes treif.'"

In college Hocherman kept kosher, cooking Shabbos dinner for her friends. "No one else knew how to cook. The minute the food hit the table that raucous group would fall silent and you'd hear the clinking of cutlery on plates and the occasional groan of pleasure. It's another way to show people you care about them."

The holidays are where she really shines. "It takes me a week to do all the shopping and cooking. Every year I have to go out and buy more dishes because there are more people coming. Cooking has been my passion since I could stand on a stepstool next to my grandmother making kreplach. The only time I decamped from the kitchen was when she was making pitcha. It's a way to be close to my mother and grandmother. Being able to please so many people at one time gives me a lot of pleasure."

☆

**“
Instead of
thinking I need
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milk, think food
chemistry.”**

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.



Cinnamon Chicken Tagine with Prunes and Apricots

Yield: 10 to 12 servings

1/2 cup sliced almonds
 2 chickens, about 3 1/2 pounds each, each cut into 8 pieces, or 16 breasts, thighs and legs, any combination, rinsed and dried well
 Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
 1/4 cup grapeseed or canola oil
 2 large onions (about 2 pounds), cut into 1/2-inch dice
 1/2 teaspoon saffron threads, ground, powdered or crushed
 2 cups chicken stock
 2 cinnamon sticks, each about 3 inches long
 2 cups pitted prunes
 1 cup dried apricots
 1/4 cup honey

1. Heat a large skillet or roasting pan, set over two burners, over medium-high heat. Add the almonds and toast, stirring, until lightly colored, about 3 minutes. Transfer to a small bowl and set aside.
2. Sprinkle the chicken with salt and pepper. Heat half the oil in a pan over medium heat. Working in batches, add the chicken and sauté until brown, turning once, about 12 minutes per batch. Transfer to a platter and set aside. If the oil or browned bits in the pan have burned, wipe out the pan.
3. Add the remaining oil to the pan. Add the onions and sauté, stirring, until translucent, about 10 minutes. Return the chicken to the pan. Add the saffron to the stock, and pour over the chicken. Add the cinnamon, bring to a boil, reduce the heat, cover, and simmer 30 minutes. Transfer the white meat to a platter. Add the prunes and apricots to the pan and simmer until the remaining chicken is done, about 15 minutes. Transfer the chicken to the platter. Discard the cinnamon sticks.
4. Add the honey to the pan and cook over medium-high heat until the liquid is syrupy and coats a spoon, 15 to 20 minutes. Return the chicken to the pan, baste with sauce, cover and warm. Transfer all to a warmed platter, sprinkle with almonds, and serve.



Cinnamon Chicken Tagine with Prunes and Apricots

Crème Brûlée

Yield: 4 servings

1 can (14 ounces) full-fat coconut milk
 1 vanilla bean, split and scraped, or 1 tablespoon pure vanilla extract
 1/3 cup sugar, plus more for glaze
 5 large egg yolks

1. Heat coconut milk in small saucepan over medium-low heat until almost boiling. Set aside.
2. Place four 8-ounce ramekins in small baking dish. Preheat oven to 350°F.
3. Place sugar and eggs in double boiler top and whisk—over but not touching—simmering water until yolks begin to lighten and mixture is no longer gritty. Remove pods, if using, from milk and start adding milk drop by drop to yolk mixture, stirring constantly until heated, about 2 minutes. Pour mixture into ramekins, transfer to oven, and pour enough hot water into baking dish to come halfway up sides. Bake until set but still jiggly, 40 to 50 minutes. Remove ramekins from baking dish, allow to cool on counter 1 hour, then chill at least 3 hours.
4. Sprinkle surface of creams with sugar, and with kitchen blowtorch, caramelize sugar by moving flame circularly over surfaces. Alternatively preheat broiler, place creams on cookie sheet and broil 1 inch from heat until caramelized. Watch carefully to ensure sugar doesn't burn. Allow creams to cool, then chill in refrigerator at least 15 minutes before serving.

Source: "Kosher Revolution" by Geila Hocherman and Arthur Boehm ☆

WHY IS HEBREW WRITTEN FROM RIGHT TO LEFT?

Most languages are written from left to right. Hebrew is one of the exceptions.

BY MY JEWISH LEARNING



Most languages are, like English, written from left to right. Hebrew, like some other languages from the Middle East (most notably Arabic) is written in the opposite direction.

No one knows for sure why this is, but scholars theorize that it has to do with the medium in which the language was originally written. Left to right languages are convenient for right-handed people writing in ink. By writing from left to right, the scribe avoids smearing what they've written.

Find out why Hebrew is of central importance in Judaism at

By contrast, scholars believe Hebrew was initially inscribed in stone. For a right-handed person chiseling a tablet, it is most convenient to hold an awl in the left hand and strike it with a mallet held in the right, naturally progressing from right to left across a stone surface. The large blocky letters are also conducive to being rendered in simple,

straight marks. By the time parchment and papyrus became the preferred media for writing, Hebrew script was already fixed.

Writing from right to left makes writing Hebrew by hand a little more awkward than some other languages. As any right-handed *sofer* (Torah scribe) will likely tell you, inking Hebrew scrolls can be a messy business. Nevertheless, since ancient times Hebrew scribes have developed many beautiful versions of it for sacred Jewish texts, like the *sefer Torah* and *mezuzah* scroll. Because these traditional styles are not conducive to writing quickly by hand, Hebrew also has a script just for handwriting.

Incidentally, the contemporary Hebrew letters—which have remained largely unchanged over the last 2,000 years—are not the original script of the language. An older Hebrew script called paleo-Hebrew was used up until the Babylonian exile in the 6th century BCE (and in some contexts afterward). That script was also written from right to left. ☆

NEWS & JEWS

Amid Fears of Scientific Isolation, Israel's Largest Health Organization Clalit Wins Key Role in Landmark EU, WHO and Oxford

A groundbreaking international research project that combines artificial intelligence with pandemic forecasting and management has been awarded approximately €8 million in funding by Horizon Europe, the European Union's flagship research and innovation program. The project brings together leading global health, research, and industry organizations, including Clalit Health Services, the World Health Organization (WHO), the University of Oxford, and other prominent partners from Europe and beyond.

At a time when concerns are growing in Israel about potential reductions in scientific collaboration with Israeli institutions, Israel's largest health organization Clalit Health Services has achieved a significant international milestone. Horizon Europe selected Clalit, which provides medical services to approximately five million Israelis (over 50% of Israel's population), as a key partner in the initiative.

The project, known as PANDAI (European Pandemics AI Observatory), will establish Europe's first AI based platform for the early detection, prediction, and management of pandemics. The international consortium includes the University of Oxford, the WHO, Clalit, and leading research and industry organizations from the United Kingdom, Denmark, Spain, Luxembourg, and Bangladesh.

Clalit's selection represents an exceptional achievement for Israel's healthcare system, particularly during a period when concerns have been raised about the exclusion of Israeli organizations from international research frameworks. It highlights Clalit's standing as a global leader in community healthcare, medical research, and the use of Real-World Data to advance public health.

According to Prof. Eytan Wirtheim, CEO of Clalit Health Services:



Prof. Eytan Wirtheim, CEO of Clalit Health Services.
Credit: Elad Malka.

"Being selected to participate in this groundbreaking international initiative alongside the World Health Organization, the University of Oxford, and other leading partners is an extraordinary vote of confidence in the scientific, medical, and technological capabilities that have been built here over many years. In the post COVID era, we must be prepared for the possibility of another major global health event. At a time when international collaboration faces increasing challenges, this achievement demonstrates that the knowledge, research, and innovation developed by Clalit and the Israeli healthcare system continue to play an important role in the global effort to shape the future of medicine. We are proud to contribute to the development of tools that will not only help respond to health crises, but also identify them in advance and save lives on a global scale."

Prof. Doron Netzer, Head of Medicine at Clalit's Community Division, said:

"This is both a great honor and a major responsibility. One of the world's leading research frameworks has recognized Clalit's research capabilities, expertise, and experience in operating a healthcare system during periods of uncertainty and global pandemics. The COVID 19 pandemic demonstrated that Israel's community healthcare system, with Clalit at its forefront, serves as a critical first line of defense against emerging health threats. The combination of operational experience, groundbreaking research, and artificial intelligence is exactly what is needed to better prepare for future healthcare challenges, and we are proud to be at the center of this European effort."

Clalit was selected due to its unique position as an integrated healthcare provider operating both community clinics and hospitals while insuring approximately five million citizens. In addition, Clalit maintains comprehensive and highly structured electronic medical records spanning decades. Its expertise, data resources, and operational experience will contribute to the development of one of the world's most comprehensive and continuous healthcare data infrastructures, encompassing longitudinal medical information from millions of patients.



Israel's Clalit during Covid-19 global pandemic. Credit: Clalit Health

The platform developed through PANDAI will be connected to healthcare systems across Europe, enabling epidemiologists, policymakers, and public health authorities to identify early warning signs of outbreaks and respond more rapidly and effectively.

Prof. Netzer was one of the central figures in Israel's response to the COVID 19 pandemic, helping lead the national vaccination campaign, patient monitoring efforts, and community based medical management during the crisis. This model received international recognition and played a key role in preventing the collapse of Israel's hospital system.

Prof. Ronen Arbel, one of the three principal investigators leading the grant, who is responsible for the scientific partnership within the project and serves as a health outcomes researcher at Clalit's Community Division and at Sapir College, added:

"This award recognizes that Clalit's community healthcare model and the research generated from it are not only a national asset but also a global one. Especially during this complex period, the decision to place Clalit and Israeli researchers in a central role within a strategic European project reflects international confidence in the scientific and medical capabilities of Clalit's researchers."

Over the past several years, research conducted by Clalit using Real World Data has influenced health and vaccination policies adopted by the WHO, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), the U.S. National Institutes of Health (NIH), and other leading health authorities worldwide.

Clalit's studies on the effectiveness and safety of COVID 19 vaccines were among the first large-scale real-world analyses published globally. During the pandemic and subsequent public health events, these studies contributed to international policy changes regarding vaccination strategies and antiviral treatments.

In addition, Clalit was the first organization worldwide to publish research on the effectiveness of the Mpox vaccine and among the first to publish research demonstrating the effectiveness of high dose influenza vaccines in preventing hospitalizations. These findings have since been incorporated into health policies in the United States, the United Kingdom, Israel, and the European Union.

Alongside its research leadership, Clalit will also contribute unique operational expertise gained during emergency situations and public health crises.

About the Project

PANDAI – European Pandemics AI Observatory is a 36-month project funded under the HORIZON-HLTH-2025-01 call of the European Union's Horizon Europe programme.

The consortium is led by the University of Oxford and includes the World Health Organization (WHO), Clalit Health Services, and additional partners from the United Kingdom, Denmark, Spain, Luxembourg, and Bangladesh. The project's total budget is approximately \$8 million. ☆

NEWS & JEWS

Thousands to Unite in San Diego This Fall for the Global Conference for Israel

As Jewish National Fund-USA marks 125 years, the nation's largest annual gathering of Zionists will look ahead to the next century of impact in Israel's North and South.

Thousands of supporters of the land and people of Israel will gather at the Gaylord Pacific Resort & Convention Center in San Diego from November 12–15, 2026, for the Global Conference for Israel, which has grown from several hundred attendees to the largest annual gathering of Zionists in the United States. Now drawing nearly 3,000 participants, the conference will bring together influential voices, philanthropists, and supporters from around the world to hear directly from innovators, community leaders, and changemakers working to strengthen communities across Israel's North and South.

As Jewish National Fund-USA marks 125 years of impact, the conference will commemorate this milestone while focusing on the work that lies ahead to secure Israel's future.

"This anniversary isn't just about celebrating our history; it's about learning from it to better serve the changing needs of Israel's border communities in the years ahead," said Jewish National Fund-USA Chairman Dr. Sol Lizerbram. "Attendees will hear firsthand stories from Israelis whose lives have been positively impacted by our work, helping them truly understand our mission and how their own time, leadership, and generosity can make a real difference. That sense of connection and purpose is what has helped this conference grow so much over the years."

The four-day event will feature dozens of keynote presentations, panel discussions, and breakout



sessions featuring internationally recognized speakers. Attendees will also enjoy networking opportunities, live entertainment, and the opportunity to shop for Israeli goods at the World's Largest Zionist EXPO.

Confirmed speakers announced to date include:

- Co-creator and star of the internationally acclaimed Netflix television series Fauda Lior Raz
- Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist and New York Times bestselling author Ronen Bergman
- Award-winning author and Tell Institute founder Dara Horn
- New York Post columnist, Commentary Magazine editor, and bestselling author John Podhoretz
- Israeli actress and star of The Beauty Queen of Jerusalem and the upcoming film Tankistas Swell Ariel Or
- Former Miss Israel and IDF combat medic Noa Cochva
- Middle East expert and former Member of Knesset Ruth Wasserman Lande
- Comedian and content creator Yechiel Jacobs

"There are very few places where you'll find bestselling authors, military leaders, journalists, entrepreneurs, philanthropists, and Israelis whose personal stories bring this work to life sharing the same stage," said Jewish National Fund-USA Global Conference for Israel National Chair Sheryl Buchholtz. "Bringing those diverse perspectives together gives attendees a more complete understanding of Israel and the role they can play in shaping its future."

Reflecting Jewish National Fund-USA's commitment to developing the next generation of Zionist leaders, the conference offers discounted registration, exclusive networking opportunities, and dedicated programming for young professionals, as well as discounted rates for Jewish communal professionals.

For more information, including additional speakers and programming as they are announced, sponsorship opportunities, or to register for the Global Conference for Israel, visit jnf.org/global. ✨

"What we need, more than anything else, isn't textbooks but rather text people. It is the personality of the teacher which is the text that students read – the text that they'll never forget."

— Abraham Joshua Heschel

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