

Jlife

SGPV JEWISH LIFE

November 2026
Cheshvan - Kislev, 5787

MUSICAL SPY-GAMES
Merryl Goldberg and Notes of Deception

A TASTE OF ETHIOPIAN JEWISH CULTURE
Two Ways to Celebrate

JEWISH FEDERATION'S 28TH ANNUAL JEWISH BOOK FESTIVAL

Let the Stories Begin!

GOT KIDS?
Look Inside for
kiddish

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28TH ANNUAL

JEWISH BOOK FESTIVAL

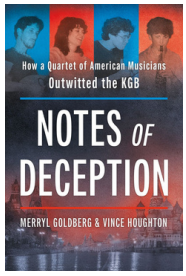
NOVEMBER 14, 7 PM

Temple Beth Israel of Pomona



MERRYL GOLDBERG

Notes of Deception





"...using music to establish human contact and fight oppression."
-Kirkus Reviews

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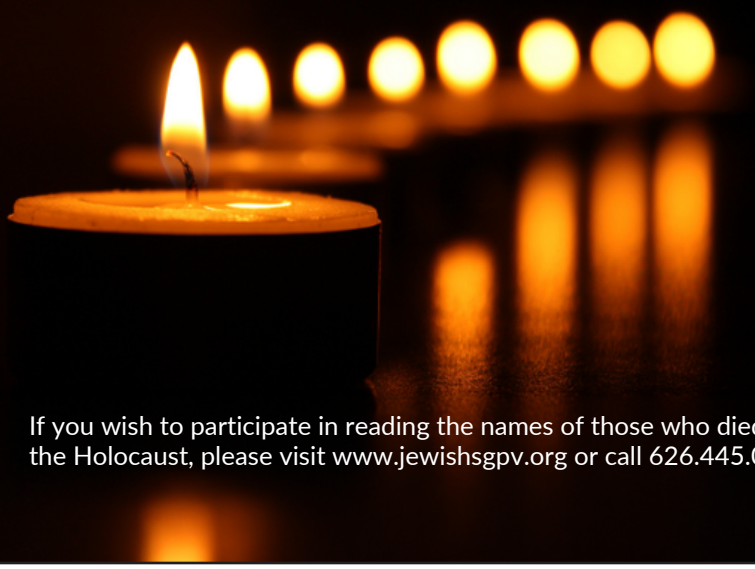
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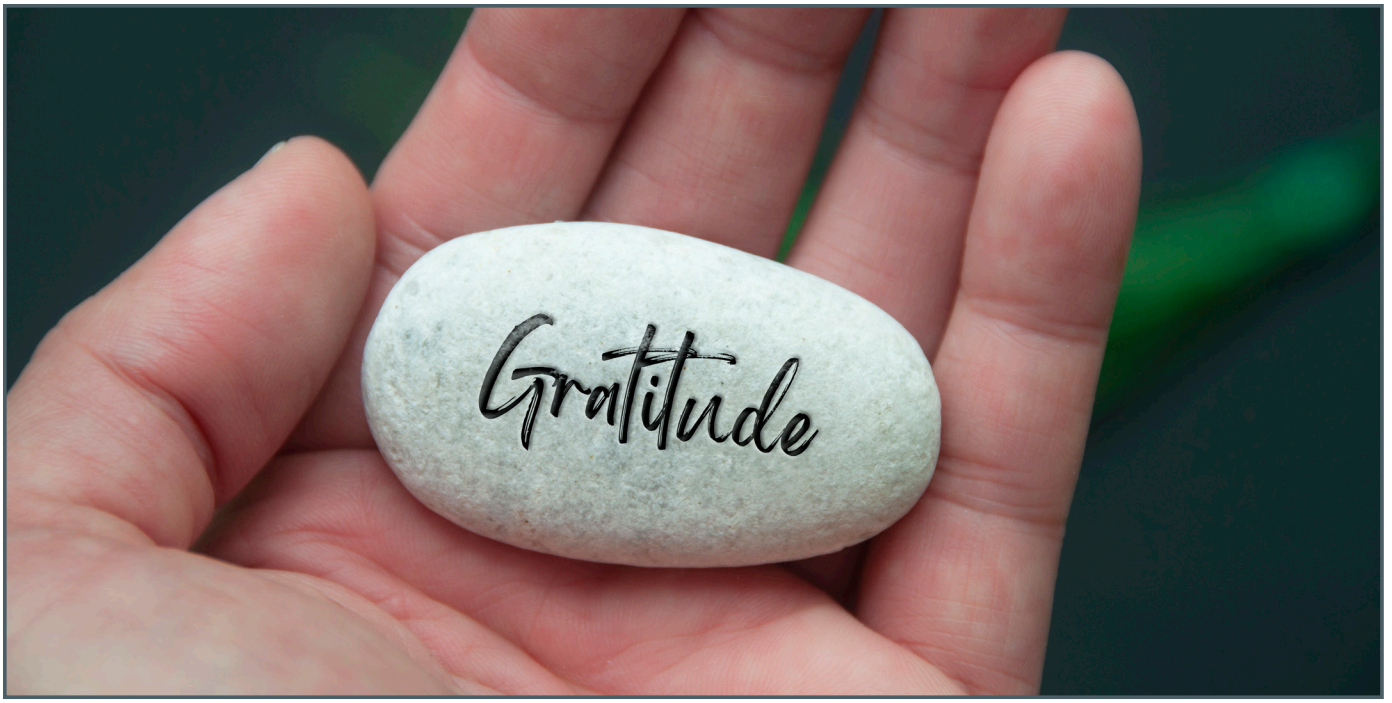
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WHAT ARE YOU THANKFUL FOR THIS YEAR?



In 1986, as the title character of *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, Matthew Broderick spoke some of my favorite words ever uttered on the silver screen: "Life moves pretty fast. If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it."

I love that this time of year, following our celebration of the Jewish High Holidays and as we move into our American holiday season, we are asked to shift our focus. The Jewish High Holidays ask us to reflect deeply and examine ourselves, our actions, and our relationships, and to do the work of repairing any rifts, divides, or conflicts. Then, as we turn a corner into November, the American holiday season challenges us to give abundant thanks and express our gratitude for our many blessings. We move from inward reflection to outward gratitude!

Of course, gratitude is a helpful frame of mind to maintain in all seasons of life, and Judaism has a built-in framework that can help us think about our season of thanksgiving. Every morning, in the *modeh ani* prayer we say thank you for having woken up and for the gift of our breath. Every week on Shabbat, we cease from work and focus on nurturing our relationships: with our self and with others in our lives. And, on holidays or at moments that are new or special, we say the *shehechiyanu*, a blessing that reminds us to express gratitude for this moment, acknowledging that it is unique, special, and will never come again.

Judaism also commands us to remember that even in times of joy and celebration, we must acknowledge the sadness, destruction, and brokenness in our world. At a Jewish wedding, we break a glass to remember the destruction our people have endured. At the Passover Seder, we dip our parsley in salt water to symbolize the tears of those who are suffering. And in this season of Thanksgiving and holiday cheer, we must also focus on the challenges facing so many people in our country and in our communities.

As we express our gratitude for the gifts we are blessed with, let's also remember an important teaching found in *Pirkei Avot* (Teachings of our Fathers) - *Kol yisrael arevim ze la zeh* – all of us are responsible for one another. Members of our extended community are still in need of our help, and I encourage us all to continue to give. Perhaps this November, volunteer your time with one of our many community organizations engaged in advocacy, organizing, and working to repair our world and help those in need.

As we move closer to Thanksgiving, I encourage all of us, in the immortal words of Ferris Bueller, to take the time to "stop and look around once in a while." Take a step out of our constant movement, running around from one errand or task to the next, and invite moments of gratitude. I personally am thankful to all of you who make this community so vibrant. What is it that you're thankful for? ✡



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



REFLECTIONS

BY DEBI KUPERBERG

I remember my father telling me once that as he became older, he found himself becoming "more Jewish". Interestingly enough, I had never seen my parents as "less Jewish". To give you some context: all four sets of my great-grandparents had raised their families in Orthodox households at the turn of the century; however, as Reform Judaism became more prevalent in the '30s and '40s when my parents were kids, my grandparents decided to embrace this new way of observing. So after my mom and dad met, married, and procreated, they brought us up Reform, and like so many other Jewish families, our roots in Orthodoxy were but a generation and a half back.

"... more Jewish" As we were growing up, Judaism was always an important facet of our family life. When my father, a lawyer in the Air Force, was stationed in Utah in the late 1950s, there were no Jewish houses of worship around. My mother contacted her rabbi in New York so he could send her some age-appropriate materials for implementing a Kuperberg-family Sunday School; this was prompted after my older brother, at age four, came home from nursery school one afternoon with a grubby handful of tracts from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. So she taught Judaica to my two brothers and me during the remainder of our 5-year stint in Utah, and for our first year stationed in Germany, when we lived in a German village an hour away from other Jewish families living on base.

"... more Jewish" My parents firmly believed in Jewish education, which included Jewish books and literature. I remember my mom reading Bible Stories for Jewish Children as we were growing up; to this day I can still see the beautiful illustrations that grace each page. When young, I heard bedtime tales of the villagers from the shtetls of Chelm and Anatevka, and when older, I mourned over the tragic passengers when reading Ship of Fools. In high school, I devoured Jewish novels, including The Chosen and My Name is Asher Lev; my father was there to help further explain some of the differences between Orthodoxy and Hasidism, while my mother and I talked late into the night, delving into what disturbed me so much about Asher's and his parents' conflicted relationships. They both helped me put together a book report on The Source for a 10th grade Humanities assignment, my mom perfectly copying the book's archeological drawings, and my dad thankfully assisting me in cutting my oration from roughly 100 minutes down to 45.

"... more Jewish" After my father moved into his senior retirement community, he participated in political affairs discussion groups, taught computer skills to residents, played in bridge tournaments, and belonged to a residents' book club. But one thing he particularly enjoyed was the K.J.L.S.-- the Kuperberg Jewish Literary Society. We three sisters had decided that this would be a way to engage him on both an intellectual level and a familial one, for us to see him once a month, without spouses or kids around, and to just spend several hours talking (which we three girls are particularly good at) with him. Our guidelines were simply that the books chosen had to be written by Jews, and had to deal with Jewish issues. For months on end, we had a blast, meeting for lunch first in the high-end dining room at the retirement center, and then going back to my dad's apartment; we really did discuss the book for about an hour before we began talking about our lives, reminiscing about the past and about our mom, and of course moving into family drama and gossip. It's been five years now since my dad passed away, and one of the things I truly miss is just sitting and chatting with him, talking about anything and everything … I really do miss that.

"...more Jewish" And yet, he and my mom were products of their time and generation. I was 13 when I received a gold Star of David necklace as a gift, and although I wanted to keep it on after wearing it to Temple that Friday night, my mother wouldn't let me. She told me that it wasn't a good idea to advertise the fact that I was Jewish, since you never knew how a stranger seeing the star would react; they might want to harm me. Wow… I was only 13. Who'd want to do that? Fortunately, I had never experienced any antisemitism at that point in my life. I had read a number of Holocaust books by then: of course Anne Frank's diary, many of Elie Wiesel's books, and the achingly powerful and beautiful poetry of I Never Saw Another Butterfly. I truly felt the despair, anguish, and pain in those writings– but I could not connect those events from the past in Europe to my ordinary life in 1968 Dayton, Ohio.

"... more Jewish" And yet… the more I thought about it, the more I realized that it made sense. I thought of the stories I'd heard growing up, the ones that tapped into that inherent fear in my collective unconscious … my dad talking about being chased and called antisemetic slurs as a kid… my mom sharing memories of girls in school mocking and belittling her Jewishness. I had heard my mother's story of not being able to rush any sorority at the University of Vermont because she was Jewish, and my father not being able to consider anything other than the Jewish frat when he was an undergrad at U.C.L.A. I know– those last two are such first-world problems, but they did say a lot about the way Jews were viewed and treated in the United States in the late 1940s. And I knew about the quotas that restricted so many Jews in so many areas of life, but in my youth and naïvité, I hadn't thought about how wearing my Jewish star could– or would– bring all of that hatred down upon me.

"... more Jewish" But some of that negativity towards Jews surfaced in my life in a very different way. If my family visited an area populated with Orthodox and Hasidic Jews, my parents would warn us to be aware that Chabad Jews are extremely warm, welcoming and personable, but their



ultimate goal was to have you become a part of their community. According to my folks, Chabadniks would continually have you to their home for Shabbat meals, for holiday celebrations, and then they would slowly wear you down in order to rope you in. Chabad's ultimate goal was to bring all of us "non-observant" Jews back into the fold, so to speak, and make us all more actively religious. As an adult, I discovered that many of my Reform friends had been brought up with that same negative outlook, which sort of makes sense, in that all of our folks were basically from the same generation.

"... more Jewish" When I shared with my father that I had attended a women's function at the Chabad of the Inland Empire, his warnings resurfaced, and after Basil and I enjoyed a Shabbat dinner at the Rebbe's home, my dad's questions returned. (To be honest, it also felt like he was questioning my sanity.) I know he wondered how someone with such a strong history of women's lib activities would tolerate what can be seen by many as Chabad's sexist mentality. I wish I could tell him that there's a new Chabad in town, the Chabad of the Covinas, and that Base and I have gone to a number of their social and religious functions over the past year. I wish he could hear my responses to his warnings and my answers to his questions.

"... more Jewish" As I see it, the local Chabads in my part of Southern California are accepting of Jews at all levels of observance; there's no hard push to make anyone more religious in thought or action, or to convert non-Jewish partners or spouses. They want us to feel connected to our heritage, and they're consistently setting up opportunities for people to spend time with other Jews in the community. And as it turns out, my feminist sensibilities are neither threatened by nor morally offended when sitting separately from my husband during a Chabad service; we both can accept that it's the tradition in this particular house of worship. I'm also aware that it was my family's tradition of observance just a mere two generations back. During the Chabad service when Hebrew, and only Hebrew, is chanted and intoned, I actually find it rather soothing to allow my mind to flow without the distraction of hearing English; I don't necessarily pray to God during that time, but I do take the time to think and reflect. I'm realizing that what is most important to me is the sense of community I'm finding in meeting and socializing with Jews who are at all different levels of observance, and at different stages of Jewish identity. I find it fascinating to learn their stories, and to hear about their journeys regarding their Jewishness.

"... more Jewish". Quite often now on Friday nights, Base and I are watching and participating in Temple Beth Israel's streaming of their Shabbat services. Despite my parents' admonitions, it feels good when we go to holiday, religious, and social functions at Chabad. Isn't that an important part of Judaism, enjoying the time spent with fellow Jews? As I'm getting older, I'm finding I need to be around Judaism a bit more often in some way, shape, or form. Although I'm not sure if I'm becoming "more Jewish" in my old age, I do realize I'm beginning to understand what my father meant. ✡

DEBI KUPERBERG IS A RETIRED SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHER, A VOLUNTEER AT THE JEWISH FEDERATION AND A CONTRIBUTING WRITER OF JLIFE MAGAZINE

> “She can perk up and laugh when I tell her that my sister is going to make her a Bloody Mary on her next visit.”

GIBBERISH AND APPLE SAUCE

The Advent of Winter brings people closer.

BY ANDREA SIMANTOV

Tomorrow morning, I am returning to Israel after a week-long visit with my 97-year-old mother. I posted just one photo of the two of us on my Facebook page, simply to commemorate the visit and explain my absence from social media. The responses to this snapshot were truly heartwarming, with many childhood friends and relatives with whom I'd lost touch reaching out to send their regards, love, fond memories, and so on. Nice. More than a few exclaimed, “Wow! Your mom looks great!”

Gazing at the photo that elicited such reactions, I struggle to understand what people see. I don't get it. Don't these kindhearted folks realize that I cannot pass along their regards or share the memories that defined those relationships? My mother does not know who any of these people are. She does not know who I or my siblings are, nor does she know that she was married to my beloved father for nearly fifty years.

She kisses me a lot, freely and frequently saying, “I love you” - words I yearned to hear as a child but which were mostly withheld. This no longer matters to me as it once did. We hold hands, and I notice that hers are mottled and always cold.

The weather in southeastern Maryland has been uncharacteristically balmy. On days when it didn't rain, we sat on the veranda, soaking up the sun and breathing in the scents of freshly mown grass and late-autumn foliage. I miss these smells while living in the dusty, sand-swept Middle East, and I cherish these moments, among others. A staff member might bring us a dish of chilled applesauce and/or a cup of diluted cranberry juice.

While the words may not make much sense to my mother, she can perk up and laugh when I tell her that my sister is going to make her a Bloody Mary on her next visit, or when I remind her of the time we took a Jazzercise class together in the early 1980s. I tell and retell the story of how we were both asked to leave because of our stifled guffaws as we watched the other participants, squeezed into too-tight leotards, scream and woo-wooing to the theme from *Superman*.



Mom and I were not such woo-wooers, and when I retell the tale, she doesn't join in, but she hums the music with me. Yes, music is a great communication tool, and she particularly perks up to anything by the Four Seasons. The Village People singing “Y.M.C.A.” also gets a response.

Four years ago, when I departed after my annual visit, I sobbed all the way to the airport, thinking I would never see her again. Three years ago, I barely said goodbye, so anxious was I to return to Israel after the Nova massacre. I'm leaving tomorrow, and this time I feel numb.

Perhaps numbness is what happens when you have already done so much grieving, in increments, that you no longer know what remains to be grieved. So much of Mom has already “left.” The woman who raised me, who shared my childhood and my memories, who was my mother in all the ways I understood motherhood, is becoming increasingly difficult to find.

And yet . . .

Something far more unexpected has taken root in this otherwise disappearing landscape.

It is a new kind of language, largely devoid of words but rife with expression. It is most often gibberish, guttural and peppered with “oys.” But when I listen less and intuit more, I find myself transported to another level of comprehension.

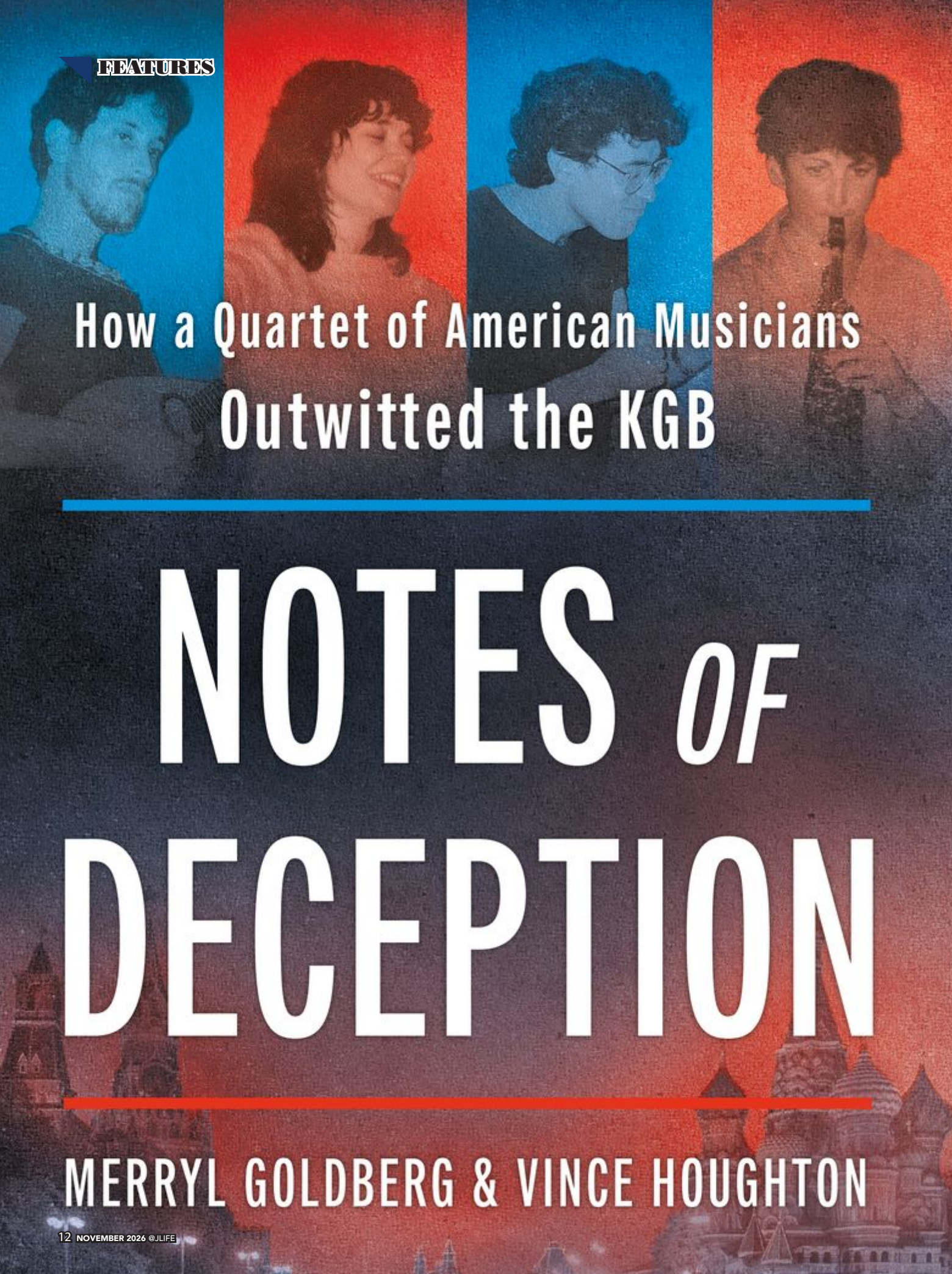
I am learning to understand what is no longer being said. A look, a touch, a kiss, a hum. The language is not one I ever expected to learn, and I am certainly not fluent. But I am getting there.

It has taken a long time to reach this point, and I'm humbled that G-d has granted Mom these additional years—not simply for the privilege of having her with us, but for the unexpected blessing of discovering a way to reach her when so much else has fallen away.

I'm still working out the what and whys of Mom's diminished state while, at the same time, basking in gratitude for still having her in our lives.

Having a mommy helps me forget, some days, that I am also an old woman. ✡

NEW YORK NATIVE **ANDREA SIMANTOV** HAS LIVED IN JERUSALEM SINCE 1995. SHE WRITES FOR SEVERAL PUBLICATIONS, APPEARS REGULARLY ON ISRAEL NATIONAL RADIO AND OWNS AN IMAGE CONSULTING FIRM FOR WOMEN.


How a Quartet of American Musicians Outwitted the KGB
NOTES OF DECEPTION
MERRYL GOLDBERG & VINCE HOUGHTON

MUSICAL SPY-GAMES

Let the Stories Begin!

BY SHELLEY KLEIN

In the movies "The Lady Vanishes" (1938), "International Lady" (1941) and "Alaska Patrol" (1949), coded messages are hidden in music. But these movies are fiction. On November 14th, as part of the Jewish Book Festival of the Jewish Federation of the Greater San Gabriel and Pomona Valleys, Merryl Goldberg will share her real-life experience of smuggling information encoded in sheet music out of the Soviet Union, under the constant surveillance of the KGB. Apparently, the KGB wasn't watching old movies.



Author Merryl Goldberg

The Soviet Union had signed the 1975 Helsinki agreement, which included the right to emigrate. However, any pretext was given to refuse permission. Those with a background in science or the military could be refused on the grounds of possessing state secrets. Those with a college degree could be told they needed to repay the cost of their education. And those who applied to leave immediately lost their jobs and places in school. With little means of support, they then could be imprisoned for "parasitism". Many were beaten and their homes and possessions vandalized. These applicants who were refused permission to emigrate were termed "*refuseniks*". Although most of the *refuseniks* were Jews, there were also members of other minority groups. The "Helsinki Watch" volunteers could be imprisoned for disloyalty to the Soviet Union and were also subject to beatings and vandalism.

An international movement was formed to publicize the plight of the *refuseniks* and keep pressure on the Soviet Union. Part of the effort was sending emissaries to the *refuseniks* to provide succor and bring information to the West. In 1985 Merryl Goldberg and three other young musicians, members of the Klezmer Conservatory Band, were sent to meet refuseniks and Helsinki Watch members. They developed a code to bring out details about these individuals by writing it into sheet music. It was a dangerous and frightening trip, but the musicians knew that what they faced was only a fraction of the lived experience of the *refuseniks* and dissidents they met.

One of the four, Meryl Goldberg, thought she had left any aspect of covert operations to her distant past. After her Bachelor's from the New England Conservatory of Music, and 13 years touring with the Klezmer Conservatory Band, she went on to receive a Master's and Doctorate in Education from Harvard University. She has been a Professor of Music at California State University, San Marcos for over 20 years, and a prominent scholar in the field of arts education.



Example of Klezmer sheet music



Klezmer Consevatory Band Quartet playing

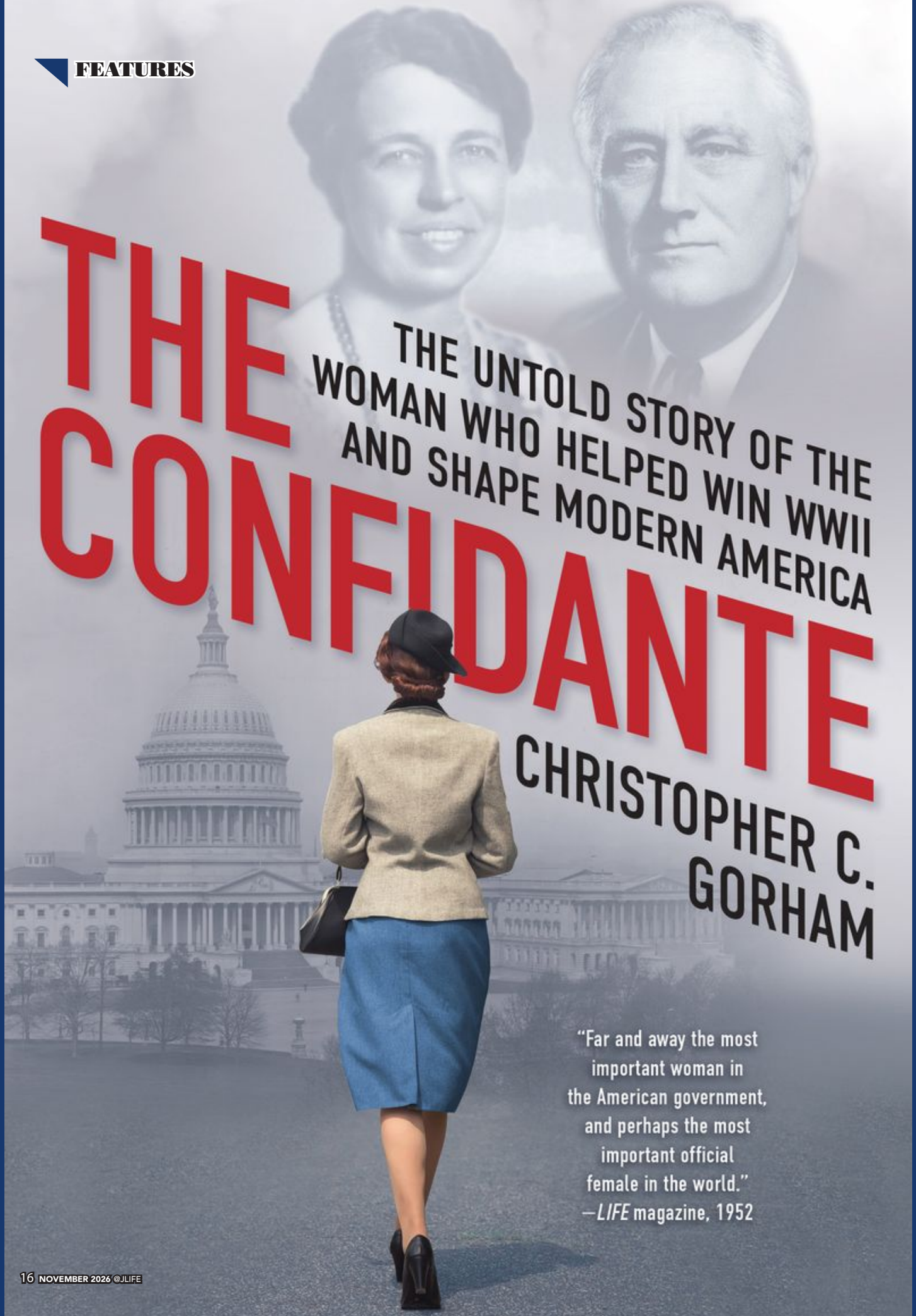
But then… at a backyard garden party in La Jolla she met a couple of cybersecurity experts and thought they might enjoy her story. They did more than that. Goldberg was soon the keynote speaker at a major cybersecurity conference. Her story was picked up by *WIRED*, and came to the attention of Neil Houghton, Director of the Cryptological Museum for the National Security Agency, and a former intelligence officer himself. Houghton co-authored Goldberg's new book: "Notes of Deception: How a Quartet of American Musicians Outwitted the KGB".

Merryl Goldberg will be the featured speaker at Temple Beth Israel of Pomona on Saturday, November 14 at 7 p.m. A Klezmer band will perform and refreshments will follow. Members of the Literary Circle, who make the Book Festival possible, are invited to a reception with the author preceding the program. ✡

WHAT IS KLEZMER?

From its inception in Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, *klezmer* was played at festivals and celebrations. While there are some Hasidic and liturgical Jewish elements in the music including emotionally charged "laughing" and "crying" ornamentation, it is mostly based on what was being played around Jewish communities in the Balkans, Rumania, Hungary and Poland. *Klezmer* music has many dances derived from Eastern European models as well as strictly instrumental pieces based on cantorial improvisation and influenced by Romanian and Moldovan folk tunes. Although brought with Eastern European Jewish immigrants to America in the late 19th and early 20th century, it had been mostly rejected by their more assimilated children until the folk music revival in the 1960's and 1970's. Much of the renewed interested in *klezmer* can be attributed to the Klezmer Conservatory Band.

SHELLEY KLEIN IS THE CHAIR OF THE JEWISH BOOK FESTIVAL COMMITTEE AND A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO JLIFE MAGAZINE.



THE CONFIDANTE

THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE WOMAN WHO HELPED WIN WWII AND SHAPE MODERN AMERICA

CHRISTOPHER C. GORHAM

"Far and away the most important woman in the American government, and perhaps the most important official female in the world."
—*LIFE* magazine, 1952

"THE CONFIDANTE"

Christopher C. Gorham reopens the archives on a forgotten American heroine

BY DEBORAH NOBLE

Anna Rosenberg worked very closely with both FDR and Truman. She ran New Deal programs, negotiated the hiring of Black people and women for defense production, and helped shape the GI Bill and the Marshall Plan. Truman appointed her Assistant Secretary of Defense, and she was headline news for decades. But in later years she faded from public awareness—and the history books.

Christopher C. Gorham, a lawyer and now history teacher in the Boston area, is the award-winning author of "Matisse at War" and ""The Confidante": The Untold Story of the Woman Who Helped Win WWII and Shape Modern America," which he will present for this year's Jewish Book Festival. Our conversation has been condensed slightly for clarity.



Author Christopher C. Gorham

How did you first become in interested in Anna Rosenberg?

I was launching the junior year research paper with my students back in 2019, and one of them wanted to write about the forgotten war, the Korean War. So I grabbed a book off the library shelf and she flipped it open and there was a picture of President Truman with a big smile on his face. Standing next to him was this very striking civilian woman wearing a Chanel suit and a mink stole. But the caption said, "Anna Rosenberg, Assistant Secretary of Defense," and the year was 1950.

So I said to my students, "We know about Frances Perkins. We've heard of Eleanor Roosevelt. But I know there's got to be more about this woman." And we found that her papers had been left at Harvard in 1987, and there had not been a book written about her. So my wife and I met a group of students down at Harvard's Schlesinger Library, and we opened up her archives. You know, the librarians bring in the boxes and give you the gloves. And one of my students found the commendation from President Truman making Anna Rosenberg the first American, man or woman, to be honored with the Medal of Freedom.

Five minutes after that, I was holding a business card that said "Mrs. Franklin D. Roosevelt" on one side, and on the back in blue ink it said, "Dear Anna, when you're next in New York, let's have lunch." And I thought, you know, this woman's story needs to be told.

I was very fortunate. If if her papers had been left at Austin, Texas, I wouldn't have been in a position to find them. But I'm literally on the bus line to Harvard. The other fortunate thing was that her grandson happens to live within a few miles of me. So I was able to talk to him at great length for the book. I still feel fortunate to be sharing her story around the country.

In both books, you overturn common assumptions about your characters. For example, how did you discover that Rosenberg spearheaded FDR's executive order requiring defense munition factories to hire Black workers during the war?



Source: Harry S. Truman Library & Museum, Accession Number 97-1860. Credit: Department of Defense
Anna M. Rosenberg being sworn in as Assistant Secretary of Defense on November 15, 1950. Doing the honors is Felix Larkin (left) General Counsel of the Department of Defense. Also participating are General George C. Marshall (second from right), and Robert A. Lovett, (right), Deputy Secretary of Defense.

I'm pretty certain that she was the driving force behind the wording of that executive order, which was essentially the first federal action on civil rights since Reconstruction. Anna Rosenberg was the only person in the summer of 1941 to be ordered to all these meetings by the president. Other people floated in and out of the meetings, but the only person in every single one was her. The only person with professional mediation experience was her. She had bona fides with the Black community that went all the way back to New York in the 1920s, and she knew the nuts and bolts of the watchdog provision in that executive order. I think I made the case that the executive order and the clauses within it really bear her fingerprints.

Your presentation at the National World War II Museum in New Orleans on Matisse's personal opposition to the Vichy government also focused on archival evidence, and even on his color and line choices in the Jazz series during that period.

In conjunction with the Jewish Museum of Milwaukee, the museum in New Orleans had a really great installation on "degenerate art" at the same time, so it made sense to come down and talk about Matisse. As for the notion that he was just "the painter of pretty things who is indifferent to history," I would leave it to readers to pick up "Matisse at War" and see if that changes their mind.

Is "The Confidante" being received differently by Jewish audiences than by secular, historian, or military audiences?

Jewish audiences want to know if, since she met with Roosevelt so many times, did she ever bring up what she knew about the Holocaust to him? I find that difficult to answer because we don't know the topic of a lot of those conversations. But I also say to audiences, it took Henry Morgenthau, who is not only a cabinet member, but a close personal friend to Franklin and

Eleanor, three years to bring up the issue.

One thing that continues to surprise me is the readership of Anna Rosenberg is not just women. The military aspect of the book connects with male readers. I've done a number of talks at the World War II Museum, the George C. Marshall Foundation, the World War II Memorial in DC, and it was always a surprise that these sort of buttoned-up military guys respond to her.

"The Confidante" has a lot of personal details about her physical appearance, nicknames, and other personality quirks. Why are they important and what evidence did you have?

I sent off an early draft of "The Confidante"" to an author here in the Boston area, and he said, "Why should I care about a bureaucrat? You have to do better. What's in her medicine cabinet? Does she drive? How does she get around? Describe where she lived in New York. You know, those buildings are probably still there," and he was right. So I went back to the drawing board. Our brains want stories, and we nonfiction writers really have to do the best we can to find evidence that allows us to humanize the characters.

With her, it was drinking out of the fire hose. She was famous from 1937 until basically 1960, so accounts of her overlap and corroborate each other in terms of what she wore, her personality, things she said, you know, the "pipe down, fellas, and give me the lowdown," or the "dollink" on the telephone.

Late in life, Anna Rosenberg was giving an interview, and the interviewer noticed she was having a cup of decaf and a 'Nilla wafer for breakfast. And Anna said something like, "Yeah, this has been my breakfast for decades," and I thought, how great! You know, she's waving the unlit cigarette, and she's got the decaf, and it's just very her.

The journalism of the time always covered what women wore as much as or more than what they'd achieved, and you really pick that up in "The Confidante".

She endured that for decades. She was giving a press conference as Assistant Secretary of Defense, and the cameras were rolling, and a woman reporter asked about her outfit or hat. She didn't bite her head off, but she did say, "If I were a man, you wouldn't be asking me that question." But at the same time, I think she was so adaptable and chameleon-like that I think she used that. There's a picture of her in Vogue in 1942. She had looks and she had the clothes, the haircut, the coiff, and everything.

But the substance of her interviews was never about her, which I find so refreshing. It was always credit. Credit belongs to these women defense workers. Credit belongs to the commander in chief. That was part of why she was erased or helped erase herself from history.

She influenced both Nelson and David Rockefeller. Did she have any women protegées?

The closest thing to a true protegée was a woman lawyer in New York and she was the executor of Anna Rosenberg's estate. I think from some of the last interviews that Anna gave, she was disappointed that more women hadn't been elevated to top positions in business, the military and government. Now, despite all of the terrible things that are happening to our country, there are women in positions of power. So in some ways, she'd be happier to look at where women are today.

Is there anything else you would like to have included?

There was a last chapter of the book, really her valedictory chapter, that sadly had to be cut for length. She has this wonderful ten years with her second husband and a lot of the evidence from that chapter came straight from her grandson, who spent a lot of that time with her. So it was very moving for me to write.

What did you take away from working on "The Confidante" and Matisse at War?

There was a consistency of ideals and behaviors for both of them. With Anna Rosenberg, I kept opening books or boxes of research or articles or primary sources, waiting for her to make an uncharitable remark, or waiting for her position on something important to maybe change, and it just never happened. She was for women's equality. She was for civil rights. The fidelity to her adopted country was always foremost in her mind. She could never say no when people asked her to help her country. She just did not deviate from those beliefs that she had probably had as a girl when she first arrived in New York. I found that in Matisse as well. He was a believer in liberty, fraternity, equality, the tenets of French republicanism. He wasn't a sloganeer or an overtly political man, but he was consistent in his support of those values.

Anna Rosenberg believed in the value of all Americans. Whether you were the president of the United States, a teamster, a truck driver, a longshoreman, or a sergeant on the battlefield, you had value to this country. You were a cog in what made this democracy dynamic, and that was her one of her bedrock beliefs.

What are you working on now?

My next book is the true story of a rescue operation that emanated from the Museum of Modern Art in the early days of World War II, and it's going to be fun.

When the Museum of Modern Art was trying to bring over these artists, Marc Chagall and Mondrian and the like, some Jewish, some not, they still had to overcome opposition from their own State Department, and it came down to essentially one rogue actor. So I hope there's a little bit of history in there. I hope there's a little bit of art in there and a little bit of heroism because it was a humanitarian effort that, in some ways, succeeded against the odds.

Christopher C. Gorham will present "The Confidante": The Untold Story of the Woman who helped win WWII and shape modern America" on Zoom on Tuesday, November 17 at 7 PM as part of the 28th Annual Jewish Book Festival. For more information and to register for online access, go to www. jewishsgpv.org/jbf or contact the Jewish Federation office at 626-445-0810. ✡

DEBORAH NOBLE IS A MEMBER OF THE JEWISH BOOK FESTIVAL COMMITTEE AND A CONTRIBUTING WRITER FOR JLIFESGPV.



JEWISH SHOWS AND MOVIES THAT CELEBRATE THE ART OF JEWISH MATCHMAKING



It feels like ages since the first season of "Jewish Matchmaking" came out and brought us all a renewed appreciation for the art of the shidduch, or Jewish matchmaking. It's a tradition as old as the story of our people—some would argue G-d was the original "shadchan," or matchmaker in Hebrew. He did literally make a match for Adam, after all.

The art of the shidduch is approached differently in various Jewish communities, and the role was historically more common among Ashkenazi Jews than Sephardis. Yet, there's just something about the Jewish matchmaker that inspires the imagination. That's probably why there are plenty of wonderful onscreen stories about Jewish matchmakers that came well before and after the hit Netflix show. So today, let us celebrate the Jewish matchmaking on TV and film.

"Fiddler on the Roof"

"Matchmaker, matchmaker, make me a match!" Is there a song that has brought Jewish matchmaking to greater prominence? Yenta the matchmaker is just one of the iconic Jewish figures from the musical that takes place in the fictional old country town of Anatekva. Yes, the tale is about how the tradition (TRADITION!) of matchmaking can be oppressive and irrelevant to a younger generation that wants to find love in its own ways, but the wistfulness and hopefulness of Hodel and Chava in finding the perfect Jewish match is one that persists to this day of internet dating.

"Millionaire Matchmaker"

Before there was "Jewish Matchmaking" and "Indian Matchmaking," there was the 2008 "Millionaire Matchmaker," which aired for eight whole season on Bravo. At its helm was Patti Stanger, a third generation Jewish matchmaker from New Jersey. Both her grandmother and her mother, Rhoda, were yentas at their local temple, helping fellow congregants meet their bashert, or soulmate.

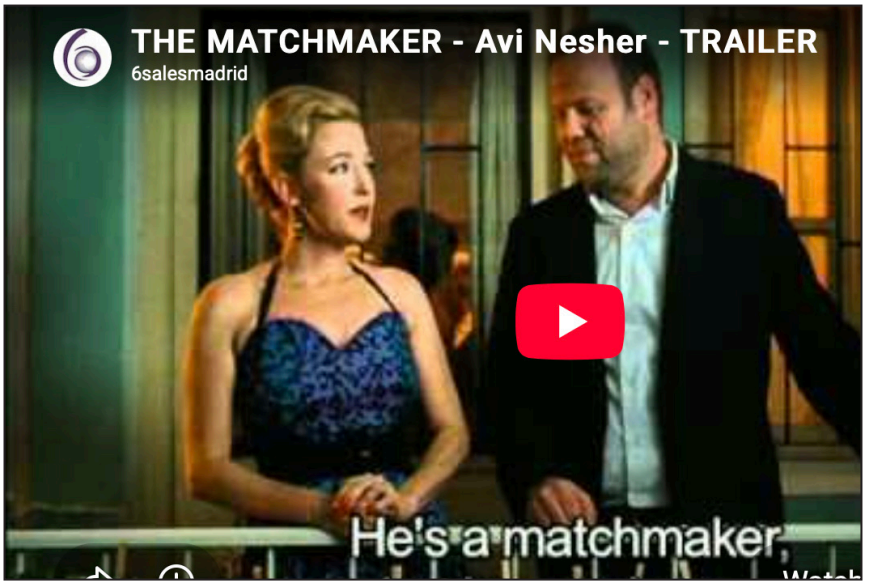
But Stanger saw the potential in making the art, passed down through generations, into a career. And she had the chutzpah to do it. In many ways, Stanger is the antithesis to Aleeza Ben Shalom of "Jewish Matchmaking"—she's brash, she tells it like it is and she isn't known for being gentle or all that inclusive. Yet

those qualities are what made people keep coming back to watch her take apart rich men and women, week after week.

The show is currently streaming on Netflix, and a new show about Stanger is meant to air sometime in 2024.

"Hello, Dolly!"

Dolly Levi, the matchmaker at the heart of "Hello, Dolly!" is not Jewish—she gets her last name from her late husband. But she is played by Barbra Streisand, and her love interest, also not Jewish, is played by Jewish actor Walter Mattheau. Some could argue that Dolly is the original "half-a-millionaire" matchmaker, and that the actual matchmaker in this movie is Dolly's Jewish late husband, who sends her a sign that changes her love life.



"Crossing Delancey"

Is there a matchmaker more iconic than the one played by Sylvia Myles in "Crossing Delancey?" Hannah Mandelbaum is a little cooky, a little edgy, is always donning some leopard print and somehow, through it all, really knows her stuff. Pairing an independent modern woman with a Lower East Side pickle man doesn't sound like a recipe for success, but it truly is. What a yenta.

"Hanukkah on Rye"

Mrs. Mizansky, the matchmaker in "Hanukkah on Rye," Hallmark's lovely 2022 Hanukkah movie, feels like the least Jewish matchmaker I've ever seen on film. She looks like an elderly Mary Poppins, and you don't hear her kvetch even once. And yet, she does make a perfect match through her old school, matchmaking penpal service, bringing together the progeny of two very good looking Jews—played by Yael Grobglas and Jeremy Jordan—who both come from families that run Jewish delis.

"The Matchmaker"

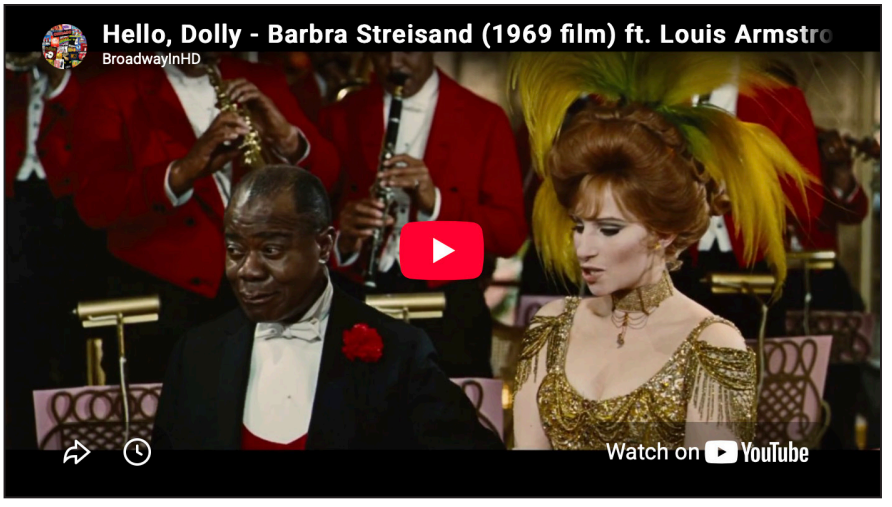
This 2010 film by Avi Nesher is based on a story from "When Heroes Fly," a novel by Amir Gutfreund turned into a TV series. It's about the friendship between a young boy and a local matchmaker, Holocaust survivor Yankel Braiyd, played by comedian Adir Miller, who hires him to help him with his business. It's a very non-traditional look at the business of matchmaking, but it still has a lot to say about love.

"Shtisel"

I am so obsessed with the portrayal of matchmakers in "Shtisel," with their long notebooks and their rotary phones. There's Kenigsberg, the veteran matchmaker played by the late Avraham Mor, and then amazing comedian Hana Lazlo who takes over for him as Kenigsberg's late widow, Menukha, who also becomes a potential love interest for Shulem. The Israeli series also shows where matchmaking dates in the Haredi community often take place: in public, well lit cafes and hotel lobbies.

"The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel"

"The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" is a show about incredible women finding their footing and their voice in life. And the way Rose Weissman, Midge Maisel's mom, finds her voice in the end is as a matchmaker—and not just a matchmaker, but one that takes on a local NYC matchmaking cabal and wins. It's a reminder of how generations of Jewish women found independence and meaning through helping others find love.



"Jewish Matchmaking"

Those looking for long-lasting marriages may not have found their satisfaction in the first season of this Netflix show, but those who were looking to fall in love with Jewish matchmaking itself found their match in the inclusive, kind and gracious Aleeza Ben Shalom, who saw beauty in every Jewish person and their personal connection to Judaism and worked hard to find matches for them who saw that beauty, too. ✡

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‘DIRTY DANCING: THE MUSICAL’ IS MAMBOING TO BROADWAY

We’re about to have the time of our lives.

BY EVELYN FRICK, THE JEWISH TELEGRAPHIC AGENCY, JTA



Photos by Matthew Murphy

Hello, loverboy! “Dirty Dancing: The Musical” is heading to Broadway!

The musical will open at the Lena Horne Theater on Feb. 12, 2027 and run until Sept. 5, 2027. Based upon the 1987 movie of the same name, the musical will follow the unlikely romance between Frances “Baby” Houseman and dance instructor Johnny Castle at the very Jewish Kellerman’s Resort in the Borscht Belt during the summer of 1963. The cast stars Broadway newcomers Annalese Starzec as Baby and Blake Zelesnikar as Johnny, and the track list features songs “(I’ve Had) The Time of My Life,” “Hungry Eyes” and “Do You Love Me?”

As if that weren’t exciting enough, the production has some sweet connections to the original movie. Lonny Price, who originally played Neil Kellerman, is slated to direct the show. Meanwhile, Jewish writer Eleanor Bergstein, who wrote the screenplay for the original movie, penned the musical’s script. Both the movie and the subsequent musical were inspired by Eleanor’s childhood trips to Grossinger’s Catskill Resort Hotel.

Additionally, the show is a deeply personal one for veteran Jewish actor Loren Lester, who is playing the role of Max Kellerman. (Full disclosure: Loren Lester is the father of 70 Faces Media audience engagement editor Lily Lester.) Lester recently shared in an interview that his mother and grandmother worked at The Concord Hotel, another centerpiece resort of the Jewish Catskills. (The Concord closed its doors in 1998.) “When the movie first came out, I watched it with my mom and it was very, very real for her,” Lester shared. “Being Jewish, this is such a great part of our culture and part of our history in the United States.”

So what is there left to say? February better hurry up and get here so we can go see this musical and have the time of our lives. ✡

EVELYN FLICK IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO JTA AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.



A TASTE OF ETHIOPIAN JEWISH CULTURE

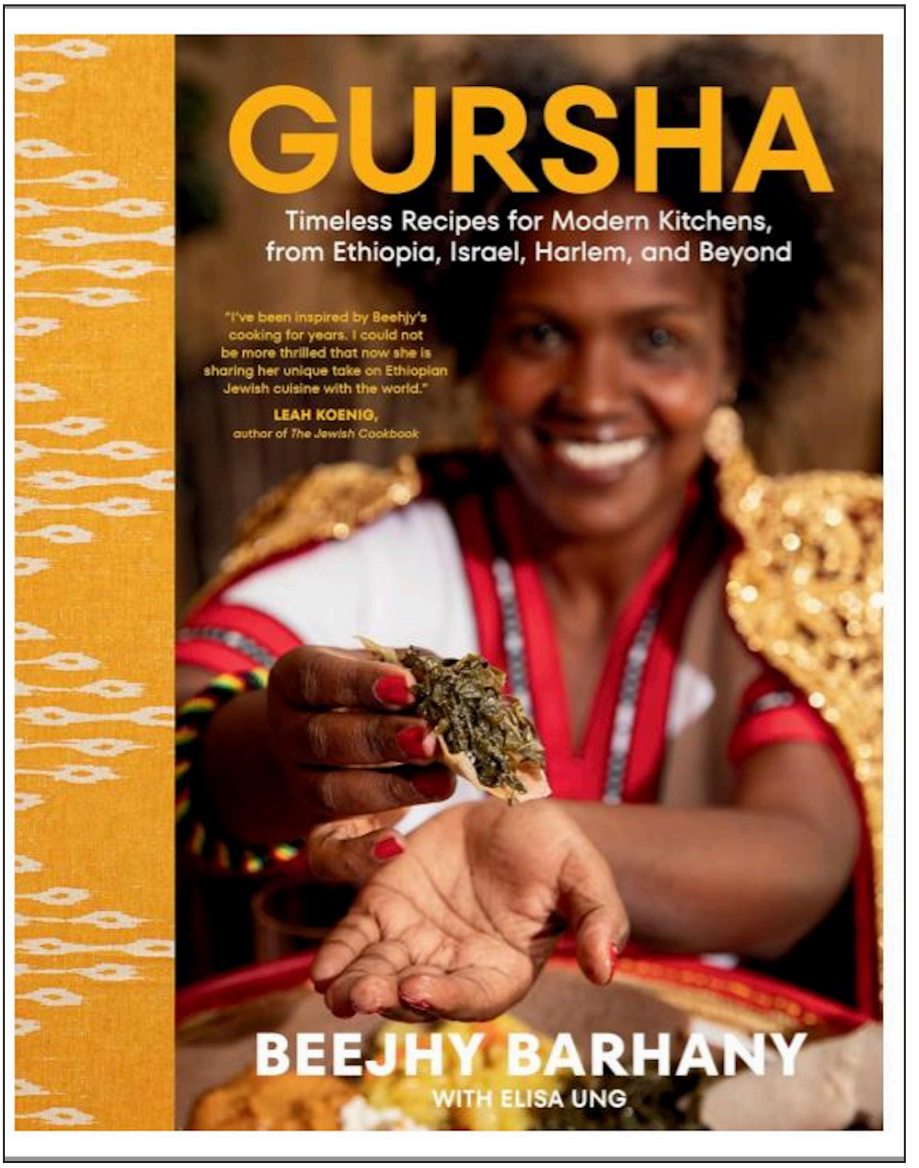
Chef Beejhy Barhany Brings Us All to the Table

BY DEBORAH NOBLE

The 28th Jewish Book Festival will host Ethiopian Jewish chef Beejhy Barhany on Monday, November 16th for a special presentation of her family's customs, culture, food and history from her award-winning cookbook "Gursha: Timeless Recipes for Modern Kitchens, from Ethiopia, Israel, Harlem, and Beyond." "Gursha" was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Awards and both the New York Times and the Boston Globe named it one of their best cookbooks of the year.

Rebecca Russell, the Jewish Federation's Program and Community Outreach Director, says the book festival committee has been eager to bring her to our region since last year, so this May she reached out to Barhany directly. Not long after, PJTC's Adult Education committee chair, Judy Callahan, got a call from Barhany's agent, asking if PJTC was interested in hosting her for an event. "I had read about her and her restaurant. She's a fascinating woman with an intriguing story, but I wasn't sure we could make it work just for us. Then I heard that the Jewish Book Festival was also looking into inviting her, so I got in touch with Rebecca."

Born in the Tigray region of Ethiopia, Beejhy Barhany was four years old when her family fled to Sudan on the way to Israel. She grew up not only with the Jewish traditions and foodways of Beta Israel, but with the foods of Yemenite neighbors, Ashkenazi schnitzel and borscht in kibbutz, and popular Israeli standbys like shakshuka.



Author & Chef Beejhy Barhany

Barhany served in the IDF, then left Israel to travel and study abroad and in 2001, she moved to New York. There she launched BINA Cultural Foundation, an organization supporting members of the Beta Israel community in North America, and opened Café Tsion in Harlem, where she lives with her husband and children. Her restaurant was a gathering place for Ethiopian and other African Jews living in New York, as well as for locals in Harlem. Eventually she made the menu vegan and kosher, and it became a destination for visitors from Los Angeles and other major cities around the country for more than a decade.

In the wake of the October 7 attacks, however, Café Tsion, like many other Jewish restaurants and businesses, suddenly became the target of antisemitic harassment from outside groups. In January this year, Barhany decided to close the restaurant to the public and has said she may turn it into a private supper club. Meanwhile, she has been touring extensively throughout the US, appearing on television and speaking with both Jewish and non-Jewish audiences about her story, Ethiopian Jewish food and culture, and above all the importance of an inclusive society.

"Gursha," named for the Ethiopian custom of handfeeding one another, celebrates not only the classic Ethiopian Jewish dishes and traditions of Barhany's family, but also favorite foods from her years in Israel



and some she discovered in the US, with her own twists. But "Gursha" is much more than a sparkling cookbook or a collection of Café Tsion's popular dishes. One of the reasons it won a National Jewish Book Award last year was its focus on the experience and stories of friends, family, and members of the Beta Israel community who made the perilous trek out of Ethiopia in the 1970s and '80s, learned to navigate life in Israel, and helped bring others along.

For decades, Ethiopian Jews have been presented to the larger American Jewish community mostly as the oppressed refugee group airlifted into Israel during the famine and government persecution of minorities that followed Haile Selassie's assassination. But the Beta Israel community was far from passive in its own rescue. Ferede Aklum, a cousin of Barhany's, was the community leader in Addis Ababa who planned Operation Moses with an undercover Mossad agent, and his story—plus the family's reaction to his portrayal in popular accounts—is just one of the moving portraits in "Gursha."

Beta Israel has very deep Jewish roots, dating back as far as 2600 years to pre-rabbinic times, and much of what drove them to emigrate was their long-held desire to return to Jerusalem, which is fundamental to Ethiopian Jewish tradition and in particular, to their holiday of Sigd.

Sigd, observed 50 days after Yom Kippur on 29 Heshvan, is a major holiday of reconsecration for Beta Israel, and its origins lie in a ritual described in the Book of Nehemiah. In Ethiopia, Jews launder their clothes, fast, and ascend a mountain together to read from the Torah, or Orit as it's known in the ancient Ge'ez language, and pray for a return to Zion. In Israel, Sigd has been officially recognized by the government since 2009, and members of Beta Israel there now gather to pray on one of the hills overlooking Jerusalem itself.

"I've heard so much about Sigd over the years



because I also teach at PJTC's religious school," says Russell. "I try to teach the kids that Judaism is celebrated differently around the world, and that Jewish isn't just Ashkenazi. So, I'm really excited to meet our author and learn more about Ethiopian Jewish traditions. Her cookbook is gorgeous, and I love that it's not just a cookbook, it's also discussing the culture, the heritage, the stories—I mean, we are the People of the Book, and I'm so glad she did that."

One of the customs in "Gursha" is a buna coffee ceremony, which Barhany will demonstrate as part of her presentation. Coffee roasting and brewing is a key part of all Ethiopian social life, but for Beta Israel in particular, Barhany writes, the ritual not only welcomes guests but is also used to mark the end of Shabbat and holidays.

Veronica Andersen, chair of PJTC's Jewish Tapestry Book Group, part of the JEDI (Jewish Equity, Diversity and Inclusion) committee, says the members of both groups were particularly excited to discover that Barhany would be PJTC's book festival author this year, and they immediately offered to sponsor the coffee ceremony.

Andersen says her own search for connection with other Jews of color had already led her to Barhany's online posts. "I actually had been following her on Instagram. As a huge fan of Ethiopian food alone, and then that she's Jewish as well—I was a big fan and was heartbroken when I heard that her restaurant closed." One of the things that impressed her most was the chef's outgoing nature. "That was part of the joy of following her."

Diane Burr, the chair of the JEDI committee, agrees. "It is hard to imagine that we can experience this kind of hospitality through the written word, and we are grateful that Ms. Barhany is sharing this rich tradition with us."

Beejhy Barhany will present "Gursha: Timeless Recipes for Modern Kitchens, from Ethiopia, Israel, Harlem, and Beyond" at PJTC on Monday, November 16 at 6:30 PM as part of the 28th Annual Jewish Book Festival. For more information and to register for this event, please visit www.jewishsgpv.org/jbf or call the Jewish Federation office at 626-445-0810. ✡

DEBORAH NOBLE IS A MEMBER OF THE JEWISH BOOK FESTIVAL COMMITTEE AND A CONTRIBUTING WRITER FOR JLIFESGPV.

BROADWAY STAR JULIE BENKO'S PARODY MEDLEY IS PACKED WITH YIDDISH JOY

The Jewish actor and singer performed an original medley called "A Little Bit of Lox" at this year's High Holiday concert.

BY DACI PLATT, MY JEWISH LEARNING



We adore Julie Benko, the Broadway legend in the making who dazzled as Fanny Brice in "Funny Girl," delights us with her renditions of Yiddish songs, brought a tear to our eyes with her mashup of "Tomorrow" and the Hanukkah blessings (alongside Cantor Azi Schwartz) and brought even more tears to my eyes with her cover of Brandi Carlile's instant tearjerker "The Mother."

Last month, at a High Holiday concert celebrating the Jewish Broadway community, Benko appeared alongside other Jewish Broadway performers like Tovah Feldshuh and Ari'el Stachel to mark the new year. Benko performed an original medley called "A Little Bit of Lox," and as lovers of a good Jewish parody, we had to share.

In the song, from her cabaret show "With a Little Bit of Lox: Broadway's Bashert," Benko tells a relatable story of Jewish parenting goals that clashed with her own ambitions: "Oy, my mom thought I should go to med school," she sings. "She thought I could be a successful MD, but instead I said 'I'll get a theater degree.'"

Then, she breaks into a series of familiar Broadway tunes: "Oy what a pain in my tuches," she belts to the tune of "Oh What a Beautiful Mornin'" from "Oklahoma." She goes on to parody "Annie" and "Guys and Dolls," throwing in a few Yiddish gems along the way, to appreciative applause—the oh-so-satisfying "if you know, you know" kind of applause.

The concert was put on by Jewish Artists Gathering, an organization that celebrates the intersection of the theater and Jewish communities. Previously, the group has hosted the annual Broadway Community Seder, where Broadway legends perform original songs like "Everything's Coming Up Moses." (Hey Broadway, if you ever want to enter our Passover Parody Contest in the spring, our inbox is open.)

Watch Julie Benko perform "A Little Bit of Lox" above. ✡

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

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Arts & Entertainment

NOVEMBER 2026

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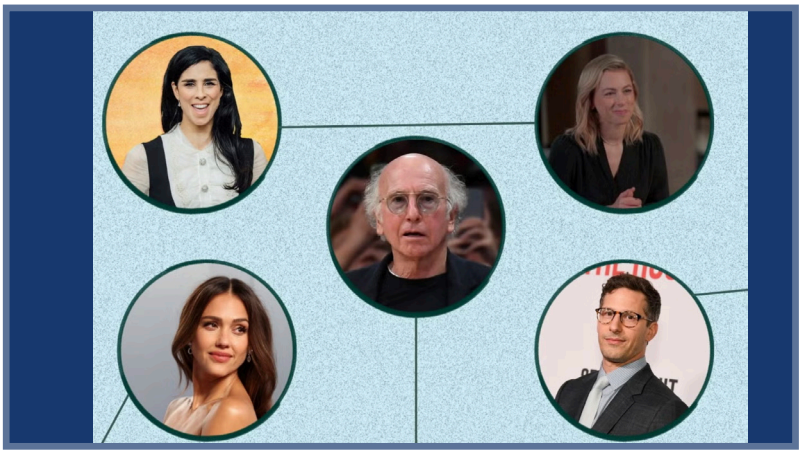
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6 Famous Jews You Didn't Know Are Related

And other celebrities who discovered some surprising Jewish roots.

BY JACOB FLEKIER, MY JEWISH LEARNING



Sarah Silverman photo by Emma McIntyre/Getty Images; Iliza Schlesinger photo via PBS; Andy Samberg photo by Kristina Bumphrey/Variety via Getty Images; Larry David photo by Kevork S. Djansezian/Getty Images; Jessica Alba photo by Amy Sussman/Getty Images for Vanity Fair

Stars—they're just like us!

Genealogy research and DNA tests have revealed that some very famous Jewish people are related (when they had no idea they were mispacha!), and that others have Jewish roots that they didn't know about hiding in their family trees.

Famous Jews Who Found Out They're Related

Larry David and Bernie Sanders

Life imitates art sometimes. Years after Larry David famously impersonated the Vermont senator on "Saturday Night Live," a DNA test on "Finding Your Roots" revealed that the two are actually related. David revealed that Sanders is "a third cousin or something" and "[he] was very happy about that." Turns out the resemblance wasn't just good casting.

Andy Samberg and Sen. Tammy Baldwin

The "Brooklyn Nine-Nine" star and the U.S. senator from Wisconsin are third cousins: Samberg's mother was adopted, and her adoptive father, psychologist Alfred J. Marrow, was first cousins with Baldwin's maternal grandfather, biochemist David E. Green. Next time Congress needs a comic relief witness, Baldwin knows who to call.

Sarah Silverman and Iliza Schlesinger

Two comedians, one family tree. On "Finding Your Roots," Schlesinger learned that she and Silverman share long identical stretches of DNA on four different chromosomes. Usually, a match on just one is enough to call someone a DNA cousin. (Fun fact: Because Ashkenazi Jews descend from a relatively small founding population, many share surprising amounts of DNA, which is part of why Jewish genealogy takes some extra detective work.)

Other Celebrities Who Discovered Jewish Roots

George R.R. Martin

The "Game of Thrones" author grew up believing his paternal grandfather was Italian. But when he took a DNA test on "Finding Your Roots," he found no Italian ancestry at all. Instead, he turned out to be 22.4% Ashkenazi Jewish on his father's side, meaning one of his grandparents was Jewish. A plot twist worthy of Westeros.

Jessica Alba

While exploring her paternal Mexican lineage on "Finding Your Roots," the actress discovered a rich mosaic of heritage, including Sephardic Jewish lineage. Her story is surprisingly widespread: A multitude of families throughout Mexico and the American Southwest trace their lineage back to Sephardic ancestors who concealed their identity or converted during the Spanish Inquisition.

Helena Bonham Carter

Sometimes genealogy uncovers heroes. Bonham Carter's maternal grandfather, Eduardo Propper de Callejón, was a Spanish diplomat in France during World War II who issued visas to thousands of Jewish refugees fleeing the Nazis. Yad Vashem has recognized him as Righteous Among the Nations.

Start Your Own Search

You don't need a TV crew to make discoveries like these. In Intro to Jewish Genealogy, Nolan Altman, director of data at JewishGen, one of the largest Jewish genealogy databases in the world, will show you how to get started. Over four live sessions, you'll learn how to gather information from vital records, census records, oral histories and naming patterns; how to read headstone inscriptions, even if you can't read Hebrew; and how to find records of relatives lost in the Holocaust, which are often more available than you may think. ✡

JACOB FLEKIER IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND KIDDISH MAGAZINE.

I'm Turning Into a Bubbe With My 'Granny Hobbies.' I Couldn't Be Happier About It.

BY RABBI SARI LAUFER, MY JEWISH LEARNING

As age 50 looms closer on the horizon, I've come to a somewhat alarming realization: I am apparently becoming my grandmother. Well, not actually my grandmother—but the stereotypical bubbe, straight outta Brooklyn (or in my case, the Upper East Side via Los Angeles).

I play mah jongg. I teach mah jongg. I have strong opinions about mah jongg tiles. I've also become an avid needlepointer, with an ever-growing collection of canvases, an alarming investment in colorful threads and more than a few opinions about both. Somewhere along the way, my free time became devoted to what the internet has affectionately dubbed "granny hobbies."

And I couldn't be happier about it.

As a rabbi and a mother of two, I spend much of my life thinking about other people's needs, schedules and experiences. My job—which I love—is to build community and connections, and like so many women, I also manage the endless logistics and mental load of family life. What I hadn't anticipated was that these so-called granny hobbies would bring something I didn't necessarily know I was looking for in my late 40s: new friendships, creative fulfillment and spaces where I can simply show up and enjoy myself.

I've begun to wonder whether our grandmothers—and the generations of women who came before — knew something we've been too busy to appreciate. There's something special about gathering around a mah jongg table, something different from even a Shabbat or seder table. For generations, women have been the ones making sure those other tables are set, the meals are prepared, the traditions are passed down. But at the mah jongg table, we're there for ourselves. The tiles give us a reason to come together, but the conversations, the laughter and the friendships are what keep us coming back.

I've discovered much the same thing through needlepoint. What might seem like a solitary hobby has introduced me to stitch nights, needlepoint shops, online communities and an entirely new circle of friends. Both pursuits come with their own rituals, vocabulary, traditions and learning curves... and people delighted to welcome you into their slightly obsessive worlds.

On a sunny Monday morning, at a random mah jongg meetup, I met a woman who has since become a treasured friend, confidante and my unofficial needlepoint sherpa. Thanks to stitch nights, I've found myself in group chats with women I might never otherwise have met, swapping ideas, sharing projects and talking about far more than needlepoint. We've shared our oys and our joys and found the very kind of belonging that I spend so much of my professional life trying to cultivate, which is to say, we've built genuine friendships.



In the book of Exodus, as the Israelites prepare to build the Mishkan, the portable sanctuary that will accompany them through the wilderness, the Torah tells us about the women who spun the fabrics for its construction. Exodus 35:25 reads: "And all the skilled women spun with their own hands, and brought what they had spun, in blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and in fine linen."

As a feminist scholar of Torah, I have always been taken by this moment. But as I enter my "crone era," I find myself wondering less about what they made and more about what happened while they were making it.

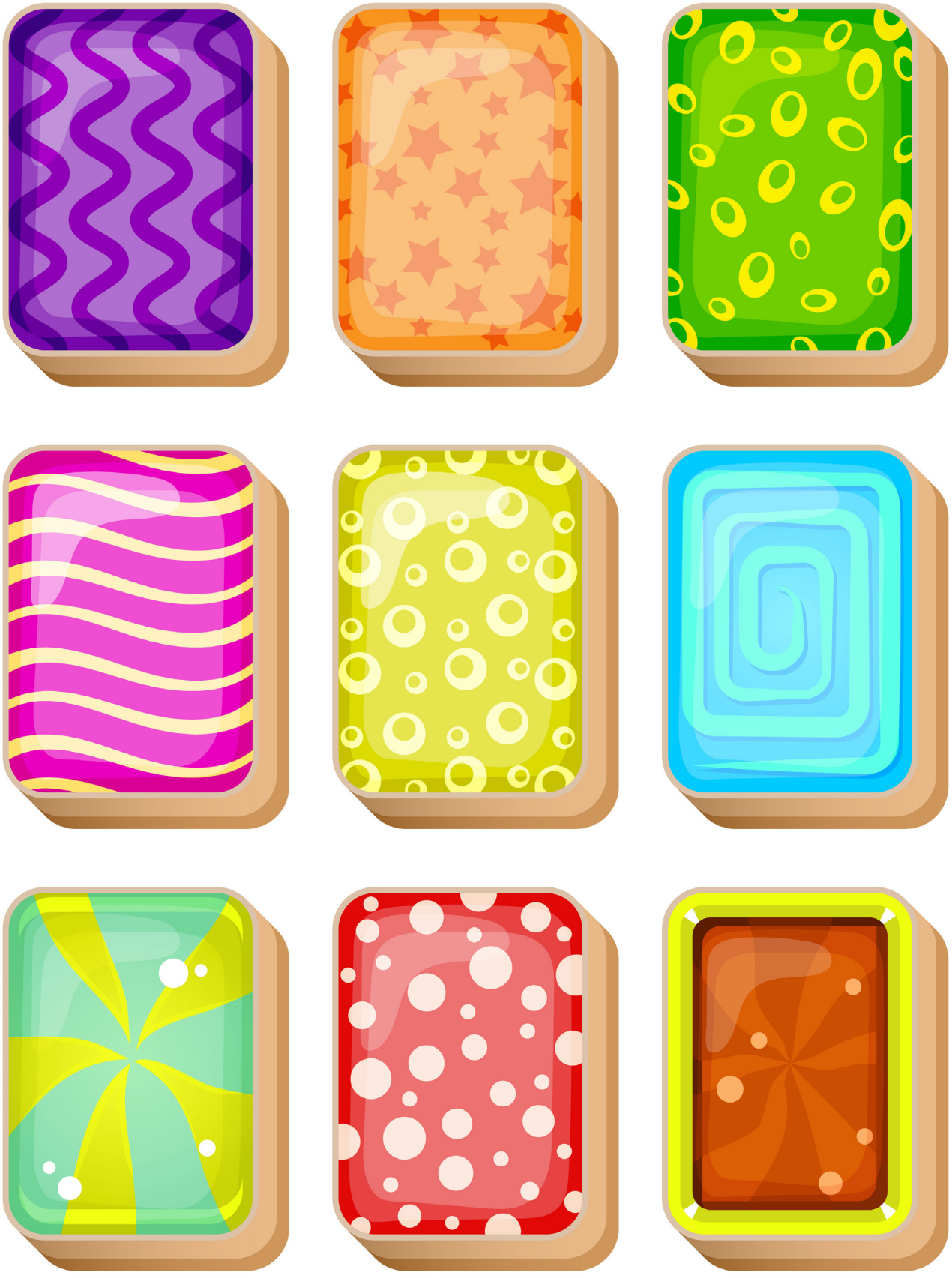
I imagine women gathered around their looms, talking about their children, their relationships, their worries, their lives. Laughing, complaining, offering advice, listening. I guess I imagine my friends and me at a stitch night or our weekly mah jongg game — only with fewer Trader Joe's snacks.

Of course, the women of the Mishkan weren't making things to pass the time. Their handiwork would become part of the sacred space where the Israelites gathered as a community. But I've spent enough time at mah jongg tables and stitch nights to say with confidence that we're also making more than needlepoint canvases or winning mah jongg hands. We're making friendships, connections and communities through the time we spend together.

So perhaps becoming a stereotypical bubbe isn't quite the alarming development I initially thought. As it turns out, there's a pretty long tradition of women making things — and making time for ourselves and one another.

Though I suspect the women of the Mishkan had fewer options for threads. ✡

RABBI SARI LAUFER IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND KIDDISH MAGAZINE.



8 Cozy Jewish TV Shows for Fall

Cuddle up on the couch with a cup of tea or bowl of soup and get to watching!

BY EVELYN FRICK, MY JEWISH LEARNING



Photos (L-R): Courtesy of Amazon Prime; Courtesy of CBC; Ron Tom/Getty Images

With the arrival of fall comes plenty of built-in activities. There's apple-picking, raking crunchy leaves into piles to jump on, hay rides and Halloween festivities galore. And once one heads home, sun setting earlier and earlier, another beloved pastime takes hold: cozy TV watching season.

But what makes a TV show cozy? Everyone's definition seems to be slightly different. For some, TV is cozy when the show itself is set in the fall or winter with heavy flannels, spiced cider, colorful leaves and roaring fires. For others, cozy TV can just simply be a comfort watch (or likely re-watch) that evokes plenty of nostalgia. Romance and comedy are typically a part of the formula, but they don't have to be. Even spooky shows can count as cozy TV if that's you're thing!

So if you're craving a relaxing autumn watch filled with Jewish actors and storylines, look no further. Read on for eight cozy Jewish TV shows you should absolutely make time for this fall.



1. "Schitt's Creek"

While the interfaith and

recently bankrupt Rose family is having a tough time adjusting to their new down-sized lives in the tiny town of Schitt's Creek, you'll be enjoying the impeccable comedy stylings of Catherine O'Hara, Eugene Levy, Dan Levy and Annie Murphy. "Schitt's Creek" is perfect for a binge watch, whether you're new to the show or its your comfort rewatch.

"Schitt's Creek" is streaming on Hulu and HBO Max.

2. "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel"



When Jewish housewife Midge Maisel's husband walks out on her, she turns to an unlikely place to take ownership of her life: stand-up comedy. This Amy Sherman-Palladino comedy is deeply nostalgic for New York Jewish life in the '50s and '60s with its vivid, highly curated set and costume design. And, lest we forget, the pilot begins on Yom Kippur!

"The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" is streaming on Amazon Prime.

3. "New Girl"

This sitcom about quirky teacher Jess who finds herself living in an L.A. loft with three goofy men is peak twee and just plain (forgive me) adorkable. Turn it on and you'll transport yourself solidly back to the 2010s. The ensemble cast of Zoey Deschanel, Jake Johnson, Max Greenfield and Lamorne Morris is an absolute delight and thanks to Greenfield's Schmidt, the comedy is often explicitly Jewish. As Schmidt himself says: Judaism, son!



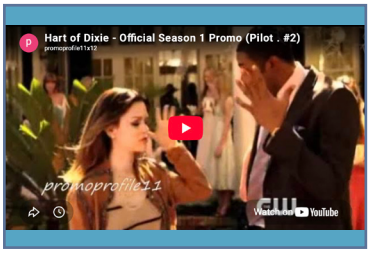
"New Girl" is streaming on Hulu and Peacock.

4. "The Golden Girls"

Before there was "New Girl," there were "The Golden Girls." This comedy from the '80s follows four older, single women living under one roof in Miami and navigating their golden years together. It's heartwarming, full of Betty White, Rue McClanahan, Bea Arthur and Estelle Getty star-power and deeply comforting. "The Golden Girls" is streaming on Hulu.



5. "Hart of Dixie"



"Hart of Dixie" is the phrase "Well bless her heart" incarnate. When Dr. Zoe Hart is forced to leave New York City to practice medicine in rural Bluebell, Alabama, hilarity and drama ensues. With just four seasons, "Hart of Dixie" is a quick and fun watch.

"Hart of Dixie" is streaming on Pluto TV.

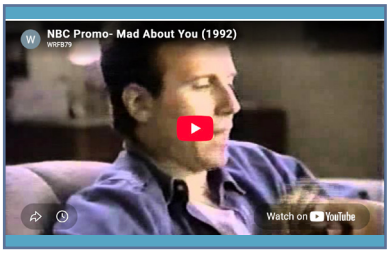
6. "The O.C."

"Nobody Wants This" who? "The O.C." will always be the most compelling tale of an interfaith family on television. Fall in love with Adam Brody's nerdy and cute Seth Cohen and his love for Chrismukkah all over again and let yourself indulge in the melodrama of this Y2K teen series. You won't regret it. "The O.C." is streaming on Hulu and HBO Max.



7. "Mad About You"

"Mad About You" has a "Friends" feel and a whole lot of heart. It follows the daily lives of newlyweds Paul Buchman (Paul Reiser) and Jamie Stemple Buchman (Helen Hunt) in '90s Greenwich Village, addressing interfaith relationships with tenderness and humor. Basically, it's way ahead of its time.



"Mad About You" is streaming on Hulu.

8. "Buffy the Vampire Slayer"

"Buffy the Vampire Slayer" might be full of demons and supernatural baddies, but when you're watching Buffy—played by Jewish actress Sarah Michelle Geller—get the job done while snug under a blanket? Few things in life are cozier.



"Buffy the Vampire Slayer" is streaming on Hulu. ✡

LIOR ZALTZMAN IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND KIDDISH MAGAZINE.

THE HARVEST HOLIDAYS

Two ways to celebrate.

BY JUDY BART KANCIGOR



Pumpkin Tarts

Leave it to the Jewish people to find two ways to celebrate the same event. No sooner is Sukkot behind us, then we look forward to Thanksgiving, the other harvest holiday! Some say the Pilgrims had Sukkot in mind at the first Thanksgiving. We'll never really know, but no doubt those religious settlers were familiar with the ancient texts and commandments, and no wonder a joyful meal of thanks would coincide with the fall harvest.

When that nip in the air means winter is on its way (I'm using my imagination now – it's 99 degrees as I write this), we long for soup: nourishment and comfort in a bowl. Just saying the word brings images of that tummy-warmer from childhood to mind. I yearn for a soul-warming first course to introduce the Thanksgiving feast to follow.

For inspiration I turn to "The Unofficial Disney Parks Holidays Cookbook" by Ashley Craft (Adams Media, $22.99), featuring 100 recipes inspired by Disney's celebration of our beloved holidays (Hanukkah included). Craft grew up in Anaheim within earshot of the Disneyland fireworks and was an early devotee. After two internships at Walt Disney World and many, many more visits to the Disney Parks, Craft is now one of the leading experts on Disneyland and Walt Disney World. Her recipes recreate those served at Disney properties around the country, arranged in her cookbook by location. She includes a helpful index of recipes by holiday for inspiration as well as a description of how Disney celebrates each holiday, allowing you to recreate a little theme-park magic without leaving your kitchen.

This boozy Butternut Squash Bisque is a specialty of Disney's Grand Floridian Resort and Spa. When I need information about fruits and vegetables, I call the experts at Melissa's/World Variety Produce. "Butternut squash is the most popular winter squash variety," noted Robert Schueller, Melissa's director of public relations. "It is available year-round and is just one of two winter squash varieties that can be peeled with a vegetable peeler, although we now carry peeled and steamed butternut squash, which eliminates those steps. It is the second most popular variety in what goes into canned pumpkin."

Wait a minute. "They put squash in canned pumpkin?" I asked.

"Yes," said Schueller. "Canned pumpkin can contain any variety of winter squash. Pumpkin and squash are the same general thing, only in the U.S. we refer to the round orange gourd, the one we carve into a jack-o-lantern, as pumpkin." Who knew?

Butternut squash is a Native American gourd which is a great source of fiber, vitamins A, C and E as well as manganese, magnesium and potassium. It is believed that wild squash was eaten in the Americas 10,000 years ago. Native Americans would bury it with the dead to provide nutrition, and the seeds were thought to enhance fertility.

Charles A. Leggett is credited with creating the butternut squash and coining the name. In the mid 1940's Leggett crossed the gooseneck squash, which was difficult to transport because of its long, gangly shape, with the giant-sized Hubbard squash. He was looking for a regularly formed squash that was compact and easier to prepare. He thought the hybrid was "smooth as butter and sweet as a nut," and the name stuck. Precut, cubed butternut squash, available in supermarkets, makes short work of some recipes.

Related to cucumbers and squash, pumpkins are really a fruit, not a vegetable, and are grown on every continent except Antarctica. Although they originated in Central America, seeds from related plants have been discovered in Mexico dating back to 5500 BC. Long before the Pilgrims arrived here, Native American Indians were eating pumpkin as a staple. Europeans brought the seeds back to Europe, and the rest, as they say, is history.

For carving, the bigger the better, but for eating, smaller is sweeter. Carving pumpkins are bland and watery when cooked. After all, they are bred for size and shape, not flavor.

"Pumpkin pie at Thanksgiving is almost as iconic as turkey," writes Craft. "But unlike how turkey has many possible preparations (baked, smoked, deep fried, sous vide, etc.), pumpkin pie usually looks about the same wherever you see it. Disney Resort Hotels wanted to maintain the classic taste of pumpkin pie while giving it a fresh and personalized feel. Enter the pumpkin tart: adorable little pies that you can eat all by yourself!"

To some (me included) the best part of Thanksgiving is the leftovers. Continue the celebration next day with Turkey Poutine, a riff on the typical poutine (French fries, gravy, and cheese curds), using Thanksgiving leftovers, from La Putinerie in the Canada Pavilion at Epcot. For an informal gathering after the big day, "place all the fixings in separate bowls on a serving table for guests to assemble," suggests Craft. ✡

> **"Some say the Pilgrims had Sukkot in mind at the first Thanksgiving."**

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.



Pumpkin Tarts

Yield. 4 servings

1 (2-pack) refrigerated pie crust, at room temperature
3/4 cup granulated sugar
2 1/2 teaspoons pumpkin pie spice
2 large eggs
1 (15 ounce) can pumpkin purée (not pumpkin pie mix)
1 (12 ounce) can evaporated milk
1 cup canned whipped cream

1. Preheat oven to 425°F. Gather four 4-inch tart pans.
2. Gently roll out pie crusts with a rolling pin. Cut 4 circles from dough using a 4-inch tart pan bottom as a guide. Place 1 dough circle in bottom of each of four 4-inch tart pans. Cut a 1-inch strip of dough to fit around circumference of each tart pan. Pinch strips to bottom circles in pans. Set aside.
3. In a large bowl, mixed sugar, pumpkin pie spice, eggs, and pumpkin purée. Slowly add evaporated milk in a stream while continuing to stir. Stir until combined and wet. Carefully pour into prepared tart shells. Excess pie filling can be discarded or refrigerated in an airtight container up to 6 days.
4. Place tart pans on a half-sized baking sheet and bake 10 to 15 minutes until a knife inserted in center comes out clean. Remove from oven and allow to cool completely at room temperature, about 45 minutes; then refrigerate tarts 1 hour.
5. Once cooled, top each tart with a dollop of whipped cream and serve.
Source: The Unofficial Disney Parks Holidays Cookbook" by Ashley Craft

Turkey Poutine

Yield: 6 servings

For Cranberry Relish
12 ounces fresh cranberries
1 medium orange, peeled and sliced
1 cup granulated sugar

For Assembly
6 cups cooked frozen French fries
1 1/2 cups turkey gravy
1 1/2 cups shredded cooked turkey
1 1/2 cups crispy fried onions
1. Cranberry relish: Place cranberries, orange slices, and sugar in bowl of food processor and blend until smooth. Pour into medium bowl, cover, and refrigerate at least 1 hour up to overnight.
2. Assembly: Place 1 cup hot French fries on each of 6 serving plates and drizzle with turkey gravy, then pile on cranberry relish, shredded turkey and crispy fried onions. Serve immediately.

Butternut Squash Bisque

Yield: 4 servings

1 (12-ounce) bag frozen butternut squash chunks
3 tablespoons olive oil, divided
1/2 teaspoon chili powder
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon paprika
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
1 medium yellow onion, peeled and diced
4 teaspoons minced garlic
1/4 cup bourbon
2 cups vegetable stock
1 teaspoon vegetable bouillon paste
2 tablespoons pure maple syrup
1/4 cup half-and-half
1/4 cup toasted pepitas

MAKE ME! EASY TO FOLLOW RECIPE

1. Preheat oven to 450°F. Line a half-sized baking sheet with foil and set aside.
2. In a large bowl, toss butternut squash, 2 tablespoons olive oil, chili powder, garlic powder, paprika, salt, and pepper together. Pour onto baking sheet and spread into a single layer. Bake 18 to 20 minutes until fork-tender. Remove from oven and set aside.
3. In a large pot or Dutch oven, warm remaining 1 tablespoon olive oil over medium heat. Add onion and garlic and stir until onion is translucent and soft, about 4 minutes. Add bourbon to pan and stir. Add roasted butternut squash, vegetable stock, and bouillon paste. Stir until combined and allow to simmer 10 minutes.
4. Use an immersion blender or a stand blender in batches to blend and smooth soup into a purée.
5. Pour soup into 4 serving bowls. In a small bowl, combine maple syrup and half-and-half. Drizzle into soup and sprinkle with toasted pepitas. Serve immediately.

HIT NETFLIX SHOW 'THE DIPLOMAT' HONORS HERSH GOLDBERG-POLIN

The reference to a heroic fictional American soldier named Hershel Polin is brief but meaningful.

BY LEAH GRISHAM, MY JEWISH LEARNING

Fans of Netflix's hit show "The Diplomat," which recently dropped its fourth season, are kvelling over a touching reference that the show apparently made to the late Hersh Goldberg-Polin and his friend Aner Shapira. Both young men were killed by Hamas: Shapira during the attack on the Nova music festival, and Goldberg-Polin later in captivity.

"The Diplomat," which stars Kerri Russel, Rufus Sewell, Allison Janney and Bradley Whitford, is a political thriller that has kept viewers on the edge of their seats over the last four seasons. Season four episode six, titled "les morts" (French for "the dead"), features a scene that takes place between Frances, a housekeeper at the American Ambassador's residence in London, and Stuart, one of the ambassador's top aides. Frances—who is British—tells Stuart that she has always had a soft spot for Americans, thanks to an American soldier who saved her father's life during World War II.



Photo by Clifton Prescod/Netflix © 2026

The American soldier's name?

Hershel Polin.

The story, according to Frances, goes like this: Her father and Hershel Polin were working on a joint mission in Belgium when they came under attack, and a grenade landed at her father's feet. Without missing a beat, Polin grabbed the grenade and redirected it, but not before it exploded and he lost the lower part of his arm.

It is a quick moment in the episode, but the name "Hershel Polin," the missing arm and the fictional character's hometown—Richmond, Virginia, where the Goldberg-Polins lived before moving to Israel—quickly clued viewers into the connection. Many surmise that the use of grenades in Frances' story is also a nod to Aner Shapira, Goldberg-Polin's friend who famously defended the shelter where Goldberg-Polin and many others fled during the attack. He reportedly stood at the front of the shelter and deflected grenades that were being thrown at the festival-goers. Witnesses said that he did that seven times before he was killed by the eighth grenade.

Goldberg-Polin's mother, Rachel, shared that many people have reached out to her family about the reference, but they don't watch TV so they have not seen it themselves. "It's striking to know there are many people around the world trying to ensure the stories of the hostages are not whitewashed or erased," she said.

It is theorized that this tribute was written into the episode by Debora Cahn, the show's creator, executive producer and showrunner. Cahn, who also produced and wrote high-profile shows like "Homeland" and "The West Wing," has spoken about the ways in which growing up with grandparents who survived the Holocaust has had a lasting impact on her life, including her professional life. She remembers grandfather as an amazing storyteller who, in her words, "never shut up" about what he and his family went through.

While at the time of this writing, Cahn hasn't commented about the reference, it makes sense that a writer whose life was so impacted by hearing stories of Jewish persecution and Jewish endurance would feel compelled to memorialize Goldberg-Polin and Shapira. Though just a brief moment not necessarily connected to the bigger plot, it's the kind of thing that adds richness to the show, both on screen and off. ✡

LEAH GRISHAM IS A CONTRIBUTING WRITER TO MY JEWISH LEARNING AND JLIFE MAGAZINE.

COMMUNITY CALENDAR

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 6
6:30 - 9:30 PM
Kinder Shabbat
and Main Service
Temple Beth David
of the San Gabriel Valley, TBD

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7
10:00AM
EVERY MONTH ON THE 1ST SATURDAY UNTIL DECEMBER 5, 2026
Sing-Along Shabbat - PJTC
Pasadena Jewish Temple and Center (Temporary Location)
500 E Colorado Blvd.
Pasadena, CA 91101, PJTC

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 7
10:00 AM - NOON
Shabbat Mevarchim
Chabad of the Inland Empire, CIE

SUNDAYS, NOVEMBER 8, 15, 22 & 29
8:45 - 9:15 AM
Men's Club
Weekly Zoom Chat
Breakfast Get-Togethers
Selected Dates at Nearby Restaurants
Temple Beth David, TBD

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8
2:00 - 3:30 PM
EVERY WEEK UNTIL JANUARY 24, 2027
Jewish Music Youth Orchestra
Pasadena Conservatory of Music100 N Hill Ave.
Pasadena, CA 91106
Contact Cantor Judy Sofer
jsofer@jewishsgpv.org
Cost: $325.00, JFSGPV

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8
4:00 - 6:00 PM
Jewish Book Festival-
Janet Bond Brill's
Little Edna's War
University of La Verne
Ludwick Spiritual Center
1928 Bonita Ave
La Verne, CA 91750
Contact Rebecca Russell
rrussell@jewishsgpv.org,
JFSGPV

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 10
7:30 - 9:00 PM
Women's Circle Kugel
Chabad of the Inland Empire, CIE

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12
11:00 - NOON
ON ZOOM
(Second Thursday of the month)
Caffeine for the Soul
Chabad of the Inland Empire, CIE

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13
7:30 - 9:30 PM
Shabbat Service with Cantor Beth and Rabbi Ira
Temple Beth David
of the San Gabriel Valley, TBD

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 14
7:00 - 9:00 PM
Jewish Book Festival-
Merryl Goldberg's
Notes of Deception
Temple Beth Israel of Pomona
3033 North Towne Avenue
Pomona, CA
Contact Rebecca Russell
rrussell@jewishsgpv.org,
JFSGPV

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15
10:15 - 12:15 PM
Mazel Tots - PJTC
Victory Park
Contact Melissa Levy
melissa@pjtc.net, PJTC

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 15
4:00 - 6:00 PM
Jewish Book Festival-
MZ Dascal's
The Teacher of Lost Orphans

Temple Ami Shalom
3508 East Temple Way
West Covina, CA
Contact Rebecca Russell
rrussell@jewishsgpv.org,
JFSGPV

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 16
7:00 - 9:00 PM
Jewish Book Festival-
Beejhy Barhany's Gursha
Pasadena Jewish
Temple and Center
(Temporary Location)
500 E Colorado Blvd.
Pasadena, CA 91101
Contact Rebecca Russell
rrussell@jewishsgpv.org,
JFSGPV

TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 17
7:00 - 9:00 PM
VIA ZOOM
Jewish Book Festival-
Christopher Gorham's
The Confidante
Contact Rebecca Russell
rrussell@jewishsgpv.org,
JFSGPV

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 20
6:00 - 9:00 PM
New Member
Recognition Dinner
Temple Beth David
of the San Gabriel Valley,TBD

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29
6:30 - 8:30 PM
VIA ZOOM
Jewish Book Festival-
Michael Kimmel's Playmakers
Contact Rebecca Russell
rrussell@jewishsgpv.org,
JFSGPV

Beth Shalom of Whittier (BSW)
www.bethshalomofwhittier.net

B'nai Simcha Community Preschool
www.bnaisimcha.org

Chabad Jewish Center of South Pasadena
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

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

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

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

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

Temple Beth David of the San Gabriel Valley (TBD)
www.templebethdavidsgv.org

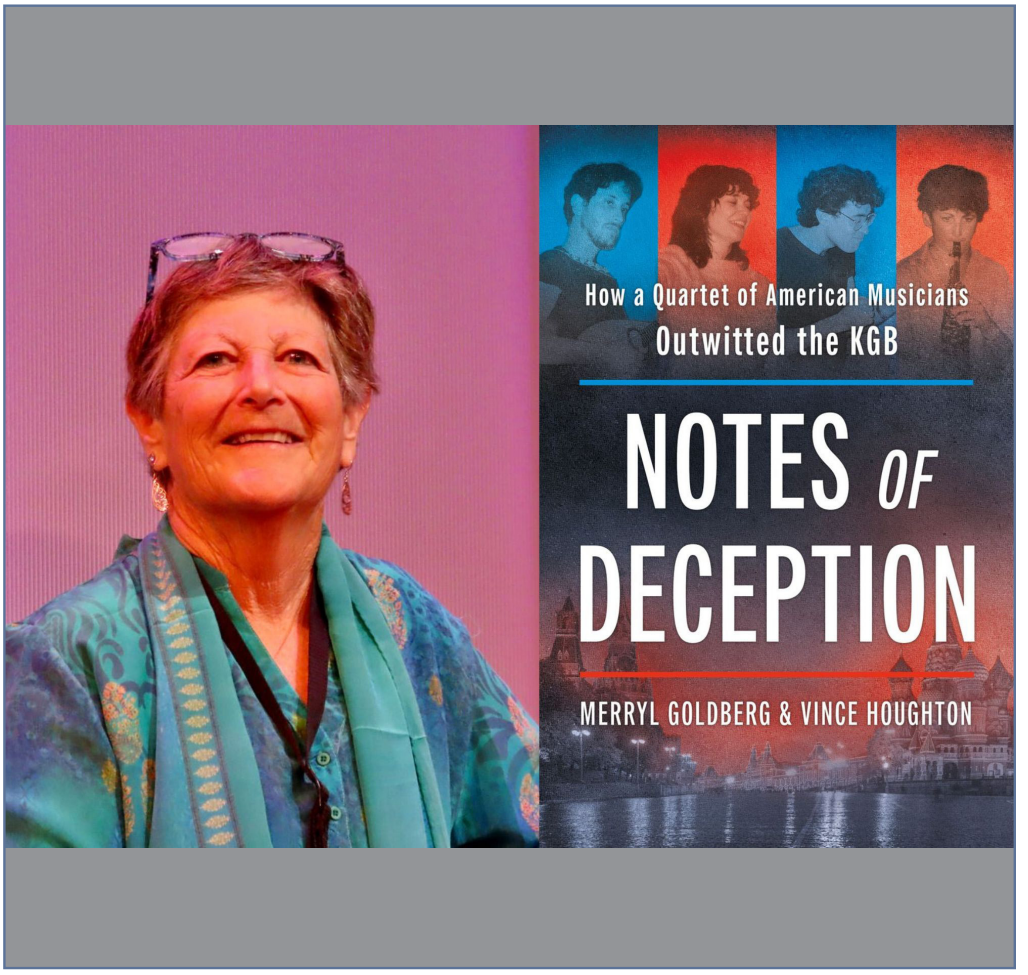
Temple Beth Israel of Highland Park and Eagle Rock (TBILA)
www.tbila.org

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

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

Temple Sholom of Ontario (TSO)
www.templesholomofontario.org

Tree of Life Preschool (formerly TBI Preschool) (ToL)
https://tbipomona.org ✡



28th Annual Jewish Book Festival presents: Merryl Goldberg — Notes of Deception

Join author and music professor Merryl Goldberg for an engaging presentation about Notes of Deception: How a Quartet of American Musicians Outwitted the KGB. The book recounts the remarkable 1985 journey of a New England Klezmer band to Moscow, where the musicians secretly helped smuggle messages and information to Jewish refuseniks and dissidents in the Soviet Union.
Saturday, November 14 | 7:00 p.m.
Temple Beth Israel of Pomona • Dessert Reception
RSVP at www.jewishsgpv.org/jbf

NEWS & JEWS

Noah Wyle, TV's nice Jewish doctor, is People's Sexiest Man Alive

"That sounded like a prank," the 55-year-old star of "The Pitt" told the magazine.

By Andrew Silow-Carroll, the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, JTA

Noah Wyle, the Jewish actor who both mends and steals hearts as a doctor on the hit HBO Max medical drama "The Pitt," has been named People magazine's Sexiest Man Alive. The recent announcement described the actor's "smoldering intensity" and "leading-man looks," while noting that "he loves to do the dishes."

Wyle, 55, told People he initially thought the news was "a classic set-up for a prank." His wife, Sara Wells, helped persuade him to accept the honor, he said, because she believes his qualities as a husband and father are worth celebrating.

The actor, who starred in the '90s medical drama "ER," is enjoying a career resurgence as Dr. Michael "Robby" Robinavitch, the brilliant, troubled emergency-room physician at the center of "The Pitt." The role has earned Wyle two consecutive Emmy Awards for outstanding lead actor in a drama series, along with renewed attention to his own Jewish heritage.

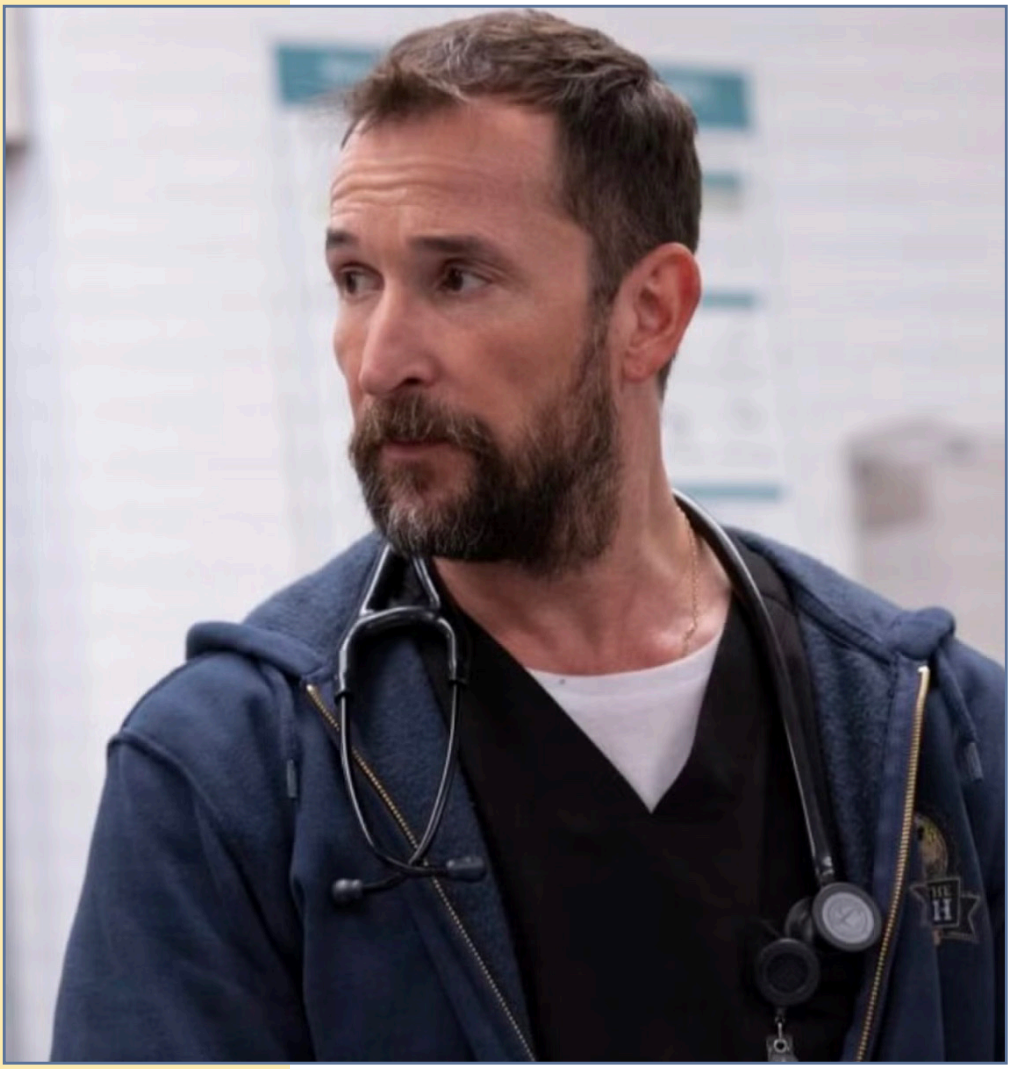
As JTA reported last year, Wyle drew on his father's Russian-Jewish background in helping create Robby, his first Jewish character. The doctor wears a Star of David necklace and, in a pivotal scene in the show's first season, clutches it while reciting the Shema, a central Jewish prayer, during an emotional crisis.

Wyle, whose father is Jewish and mother is Episcopalian, did not grow up in a religious household. But in an interview with the *Jewish Chronicle* this year, he said Judaism had become more relevant to his life through the show and that his daughter, then 10, has expressed the most interest to "pick up the mantle of Judaism." She helped him with the pronunciation of the Shema, he said, and her bat mitzvah has been scheduled.

Wyle has also brought Jewish history into "The Pitt." In an episode he wrote for the show's second season, a patient with ties to the 2018 Tree of Life synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh struggles with post-traumatic stress disorder.

Wyle said portraying a Jewish character offered an opportunity to present a humanist and healer at a time of heightened antisemitism. "I have come to learn that the world's knowledge of Jews comes through depictions of them in the media," he told the *Jewish Chronicle*.

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Noah Wyle in HBO's "The Pitt." (Warrick Page/MAX)

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