

THE JEWISH REVIEW

THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST'S JEWISH NEWSWEEKLY | EST. 1959

May 21, 2026 | 5 Sivan, 5786 | Volume 61, Issue 11

Portland Kollel celebrates two decades of Torah

By ROCKNE ROLL
The Jewish Review

Luminaries past and present, from near and far, gathered to celebrate 20 years of the Portland Kollel Wednesday, May 13 at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. Two decades of learning and programming started with one meeting.

“In the summer of 2005, Rabbi [Nate] Segal convinced Esther and me to take a trip to the West Coast to consider moving there from *Yerushalayim*,” Rabbi Tzvi Fisher, one of the Kollel’s founders, explained. “Sura Rubinstein and her late husband, whose *yahrzeit* is today, the late Honorable Rick Haselton, opened their home to Esther and me and some community members who were passionate about starting a Kollel, a community outreach program that would be based in teaching and learning Torah and they made a good pitch. Adam Rosenberg, together with his father, Michael, picked us up and took us around, and showed us Multnomah Falls, and we were sold.”

Rabbi Segal, founder of the New Springville Jewish Center in Staten Island and Director of Community Outreach and Development



Rabbi Tzvi Fisher speaks at the Portland Kollel's 20th Anniversary celebration Wednesday, May 13, at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. Rabbi Fisher was one of the founding figures of Portland's Orthodox Torah learning hub. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

for the Haredi educational non-profit Torah Umesorah, was on hand for the festivities as well.

“You have honored the name of the Almighty,” Rabbi Segal told the capacity crowd in the MJCC’s ballroom. He called the evening “a celebration of going from the desert to a beautiful blooming garden. That’s what you have accomplished. You have built the most beautiful garden.”

His message was more than congratulatory; Rabbi Segal quickly pivoted to galvanize attendees to keep going.

“Let’s understand something: As great as Portland has become, there is still much more to do. There are thousands more Jews around here that you must inspire,” he said. “Kesser has done remarkable things. It has to be more. More children have to beat Maayan Torah. More people have to become in-

involved in this great NCSY. Most of all, more people have to come to learn from the Kollel.”

Portland’s current *Rosh Kollel*, Rabbi Chanan Spivak, conveyed a similar sentiment a different way.

“Human beings are works in progress that mistakenly always think that they’re finished, no matter what stage of life you’re in. A human

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'Choose your own adventure' at The Shuk

By **ROCKNE ROLL**

The Jewish Review

A *shuk* is a market. The Shuk, hosted by Art/Lab and the Jewish Federation of Greater Portland on Sunday, June 21 at the Eastside Jewish Commons, is a different type of market.

"The Shuk is a vision become a reality of a one-day gathering of Jewish life in its broadest sense, which includes learning, culture, arts, food and embodied spiritual life," Federation Director of Jewish Life and Learning Dr. Yosef Rosen, The Shuk's organizer, explained. "The idea was that we're a small community, but there is a lot of Jewish talent here. Can we get a lot of them into one room together to present, to share, and create a choose your own adventure kind of festival?"

Running from 10 am-6 pm, The Shuk has something for everyone. Interested in panel discussions on contemporary Jewish topics? Come hear from Jewish women authors, a panel on contemporary Jewish fatherhood or even "The Real Housewives of Chabad," a clever title for a session that explores the very serious leadership contributions of Chabad *rebbetzins* in Jewish life. Looking for smart lectures on deep topics? From the history of South Portland's Jewish Community to a Jewish look to

political polarization, Portland Jewish luminaries like Judy Margles, Steve Wasserstrom and Rabbis Emily Kapor-Mater and Dovid Gleizer have you covered. Want something more experiential? From Yoga with Shana Rose, to writing and art workshops with Rachel Attias and Leila Weiss, respectively, and Patrick Varon's exploration of Sephardic foods and wines – with tastings. Noon features a catered, kosher lunch from Kashrootz Catering. The day concludes with drinks and grooves from DJ Barak Kemeny. All in all, the literal and metaphorical menus are larger than the confines of a single news story.

Or a single room, hence four different sessions and the use of the entire EJC.

"The atrium of the EJC won't have any programming in it," Rosen explained. "There will be some food vendors, some art vendors, but really it's like a place where if you want to take a break, for some reason you're not interested in any of the things in a session, you can get a bagel, sit down, schmooze with someone, hop into something. We wanted to create that ambiance."

The Shuk is inspired by Limmud, a British non-profit which hosts a festival of Jewish thought and culture that draws thousands of attendees to the United Kingdom, with both presenters

and attendees coming from around the world for multiple days of cultural expression. The Shuk is smaller in scale but also focused on local culture-makers who have established expertise.

"A lot of the Limmud model is that it's very lay-led. So, it's often people who aren't Jewish professionals, but are like, 'I've always been interested in early 20th century Jewish music, and so I'm going to give a talk about it,'" Rosen explained. "Whereas this is almost all people who are experts in their field. At least for this year, we wanted to kind of set the bar high, and then hopefully we will continue to do it in years to come where we'll open it up to anyone local who wants to share."

The goal is also to offer something for anyone – and everyone – who wants to experience their Judaism in a way that is meaningful to them.

"We really wanted to stress the diversity from Orthodox to Chabad to secular," Rosen said. "It's really, really highlighting the diversity of Jewish life in Portland and the diversity of ways of being Jewish and accessing Jewishness."

Tickets are \$36, which includes lunch and a drink ticket for the after party, or \$22 without. For more information or to register, visit theshukpdx.com.



Click the logo to download the latest episode of The Jewish Review Podcast

KOLLEL (continued from page 1)

being will think that they're finished despite the fact that we are a work in progress," he said. "A lot of change is really success. This person said to me, 'Our family's need for a strong Jewish community that offers everything is so advanced now, when we came there was so little; you should be proud,' and it's true."

EARLY DEADLINE NOTICE

Due to the Shavuot and Memorial Day holidays, submissions for the May 28 edition of *The Jewish Review* must be received by **TODAY - THURSDAY, MAY 21**

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Frankel, Herzig, Sellitto honored at Day for The J

By ROCKNE ROLL
The Jewish Review

Josh Frankel can still kick. That quality was demonstrated as this year's addition to the Oregon Jewish Sports Hall of Fame was inducted at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center's Day for The J celebration Sunday, May 17 at the center. Frankel, who played four seasons for the University of Oregon football program, was introduced by Steve Friedman with a video clip of his game-winning 27-yard field goal in the third overtime of the Ducks' Sept. 25, 1999 contest against the University of Southern California before being asked to re-enact the moment with a small foam football, two of his children as goalposts and Friedman as holder.

While the moment was a representation of what Frankel did on the field for the Ducks, he spoke to the relevance of sport off the field.

"What separates people is the work you're doing when no one else is watching," Frankel said, "not just in sports, not just in life, but also in our Jewish community. This is important to me because of the values that it represents, the perseverance, humility, the importance of giving back."

In addition to scoring 144 career points for the Ducks, going 66-for-69 on extra-point attempts and hitting a 47-yard kick against Washington State on Nov. 4, 2000, Frankel is the former board chair of the Oregon Jewish Community Foundation and was inducted into the foundation's Julie Diamond, z"l,



Former Oregon kicker and 2026 Oregon Jewish Sports Hall of Fame inductee Josh Frankel performs a reenactment of his game-winning field goal from the Ducks' 1999 victory over Southern California at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center's Day for The J celebrations Sunday, May 17. Frankel scored 144 points for Oregon across four seasons. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)

Legacy Society last year. He co-founded the Oregon Jewish Sports Hall of Fame and the Harry Glickman Scholar Athlete Awards with Friedman and fellow OJSHOF inductee Glen Coblens. While Frankel may not have the accuracy he did as a Duck – his reenactment kick, though hit well, missed wide left – he still retains much of what

he gained from his time in green and gold.

"Being in the Hall of Fame matters to me because it means I represented my family and community well, and that's ultimately all we're here to do," Frankel said. "What you remember are the lessons you learned and the impact that you had, and that is really what I'll

always remember about my days from the University of Oregon."

This year's pair of Gilckman award winners, Lucy Herzig and Sienna Sellitto, were also recognized at Sunday's ceremony. Herzig is a graduating senior at St. Mary's Academy in Portland and competes internationally in artistic swimming, a sport which is sometimes referred to as synchronized swimming. She most recently placed fourth in the Women's Free Solo event at the 2025 Pan-American Aquatics Championships in Medellin, Colombia. She also leads St. Mary's Jewish Student Union and the All Brains and Bodies Affinity Group at the school.

Sellitto is graduating from Sherwood High School, where she is co-captain of the Bowmen's volleyball team and earned second team All-Pacific Conference honors as Sherwood finished 12-10 and qualified for the state tournament. She has also earned Academic All-State honors from the Oregon School Activities Association twice. Sellitto picked up volleyball after 10 years in competitive gymnastics. She is also a member of Sherwood's chapter of the National Honor Society, Secretary of the Jewish Student Union and active with the YMCA Teen Advisory Committee. She is committed to playing volleyball for Endicott College in Beverly, Mass., this fall – the Endicott Gulls are members of the NCAA Division III Conference of New England.

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'Catch Me,' Walder's latest, centers those in need

By ROCKNE ROLL

The Jewish Review

As a playwright, Portland's Jodi Walder appreciates a good story, especially one in the vein of social justice. So, when she encountered a theater producer and volunteer board member from Forest Grove non-profit GG's House, which serves homeless people in Western Washington County, the seed was planted.

"Our clients are always saying, 'Hey, you do plays. Why don't you do a play about us?'" Walder recalls being told. "She said, 'You should come out there and check it out and see if you think that would be like a project you'd be interested in.'"

Walder was interested. The result is "Catch Me When I Fall," premiering Friday, May 29 in Hillsboro with performances throughout Washington County during June.

Walder wrote and is directing the production, with music and lyrics by Noel Katz, but there are many more people who did work to put the play together. Walder started by speaking with staff and volunteers at GG's House, a resource center providing clothing, food, medical supplies and so much more to those in need. From there, she assembled a team which interviewed 50 people who had received support from the facility.

"I trained a group of college kids and retirees to conduct the interviews, Walder said. "We had four hours of training and practice sessions beforehand and then we showed up and we were there over the course of three weeks, and we audio recorded the interviews."

Each interview was tran-



The cast of "Catch Me When I Fall" rehearse in this undated courtesy photo. Written and Directed by Jodi Walder, the play spotlights Forest Grove homelessness resources non-profit GG's House and the community it serves. (Courtesy Jodi Walder)

scribed and written into a first-person monologue. The monologues and some of the songs from Katz, who got involved at around this point in the process, were workshopped by volunteers through PDX Backstage, a listserv for Portland's theater community. Hearing that the project needed cohesive narrative, another draft came together. Shortly thereafter, real-life events influenced that narrative as GG's House lost their lease.

"That became the sort of crisis of the play and the mobilizing thing that brought lots of different characters together," Walder said. "The play has a few monologues at the beginning, but it is mostly about the interactions between the various charac-

ters as they gather at GG's house, form some loose community and then form a much tighter community as they try and help GG's House find a way to successfully continue."

"Catch Me" is produced by Stages Performing Arts Youth Academy and is sponsored by Washington County, the Regional Arts and Culture Council, the Oregon Cultural Trust and the Cultural Coalition of Washington County. While neither GG's House or the people it serves are notably Jewish, Walder looks at theater built around social justice advocacy as a classic expression of *tikkun olam*, the Hebrew-language ideal of "repairing the world" that was part of the core Jewish

values that have guided her life.

"I think theater is absolutely, positively one of the ways that we can repair the world," she said, "because we think about the three steps of awareness, acceptance and action, which is how I think things change. We have to be aware that there's a problem. We have to accept that this problem exists, even if we think it's really crappy, and that it shouldn't be like that, and then we get to choose how we want to take action about that."

Awareness is the step that theater has incredible power to create. Walder is hopeful that there are some particular areas of awareness that can come out of "Catch Me."

"There are absolutely people on the street struggling with drugs and alcohol. There are people on the street with mental health issues," she said. "But there's also a lot of people on the street who have a full-time job or two or three part-time jobs, but they don't make enough at minimum wage to afford rent. Many people are one medical problem or broken-down car or whatever away from disaster and eviction. The realm of people on the street is so much broader than most of us imagine."

Acceptance and action come next and are largely up to the viewer. Walder always carries socks in her car for those in need she encounters out in the world – in situations where all the essentials of daily living are hard to come by, socks are important enough that the phrase "Socks save lives" is affixed to a wall at GG's House.

"I know that me writing a play that maybe if I'm lucky,

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WALDER

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500 people will come see, isn't going to change the world," Walder said, "but one of my cast members said something to me the second week that made me cry and made me feel like very validated in this project."

The actor explained that the show finale puts the question to its own characters of what they want people to know; a verse explains that people in need are often ignored or looked away from, and that a simple interaction goes a long way. Taking the verse to heart, they struck up a conversation with a homeless person they encountered, which ended in a hug and thank you.

"Sometimes people need that as much as they need a dollar bill or an orange," Walder said. "This actor said to me, 'I don't know how many people are going to be changed by your play, but you know that you already changed one person.'"

Performances of "Catch Me When I Fall" are scheduled for Friday Through Sunday, May 29-31 and June 5-7 at the Masonic Lodge in Hillsboro, with 7:30 pm performances on Fridays and Saturdays at 2 pm performances on Saturdays and Sundays. Outdoor performances are also scheduled for Saturday, June 13 in the parking lot of GG's House in Forest Grove and Sunday, June 14 at the Hillsboro Civic Plaza. These shows begin at 2 pm, are weather-dependent, and do not require tickets.

More information is available online at catchme-whenifall.com.

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Review: 'Labors of Love' mixes emotions and history

By LEAH ABRAHAMSSON

For *The Jewish Review*

"A woman who was more motivated than anybody that I know of...she was all about tikkun olam," is how award-winning filmmaker Abby Ginzberg described Henrietta Szold, her distant relative, at a screening of "Labors of Love: The Life and Legacy of Henrietta Szold" on Monday, May 18, at Cinema 21 in Northwest Portland. Szold's tremendous spirit was felt deeply in Ginzberg's thoughtful, in-depth answers during the post-screening Q-and-A with Rockne Roll of *The Jewish Review*, displaying Ginzberg's dedication to reminding the world about "the greatest Jewish feminist icon you've never heard of."

"Labors of Love" shares an intimate picture of Henrietta Szold, the founder of Hadassah and Youth Aliyah, through personal stories, diary entries and reenactments. However, the most powerful moments of the film are ones that aren't as produced or polished. "Labors of Love" tries to tie in multiple events that are pertinent to Szold's life, but with the tight run time of 78 minutes, no section of Henrietta's life gets fully fleshed out. The film covers her childhood, unrequited love life and travels to Palestine, along with the Holocaust, and the different political opinions within the early Zionist movement. Ultimately, moments that authentically highlight who Henrietta was, rather than oversimplifying complex historical situations, are what elevates the film.

The documentary opens poetically with an Arab grave tender caring for Henrietta's gravestone. The striking part of this scene is the casual-



Abby Ginzberg, right, discusses her film, "Labors of Love: The Life and Legacy of Henrietta Szold" with *Jewish Review* Editor Rockne Roll following a screening of the film at Cinema 21 in Northwest Portland Monday, May 18. (Isaac Babus for *The Jewish Review*)

ness of stating that Henrietta, a Jewish Zionist, is buried in East Jerusalem, a place of territorial conflict. Even in death, Henrietta strives for coexistence. Transcending the conflict, the scene evokes pure appreciation: the caretaker towards Henrietta and the audience towards the caretaker.

Later, there is the scene where a pair of doctors, one Jewish and the other Palestinian, discuss their work at Hadassah-University Hospital Mount Scopus, the institution Henrietta helped create. The two work as a team, stating the importance of treating people as people; this was a core tenet of Henrietta's beliefs. These moments emphasize Henrietta's desire to create unity by increasing the standard of living with the ultimate goal of binationalism.

While the film can feel disjointed between an emotional biopic and a history lesson with missing pieces, these smaller moments succeeded in showing the audience who Henrietta Szold was. She wanted Arabs and Jews to live together and

forewarned that maximalism on either side would create continuous conflict. Henrietta strove for coexistence by treating every person as a human. All the places she built serve as monuments for people to come together. While she never had biological children, the thousands of children she saved from the Holocaust, the countless lives she improved with medicine, and her connection to people made her a mother to many.

"Labors of Love" may be uneven tonally, switching between personal and historical without clear transitions, but it fully envelopes the audience into Szold's strong beliefs and incredible intelligence. Ginzberg makes sure that Szold will no longer be the icon we've never heard of.

A recent summa cum laude graduate from the University of Colorado, Boulder Film School, Leah Abrahamsson is passionate about all things Jewish, film and animals. Her first published piece, "Punching Nazis" is available on the CU honors website.



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Segev highlights heroes at MJCC

Gilad Segev performs as part of the Project Heroes concert held Thursday, May 14 at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center. The graphic behind Segev, as well as the song he's shown performing, are in memory of Ben Shimoni, z"l, who saved 13 lives during the Oct. 7 attacks on the Nova Festival site. (Rockne Roll/The Jewish Review)



Levine headlines 'Steak & Stand-up'

The Jewish Review staff

A good kosher steak, a good laugh and a good cause – Tamim Academy of Portland is offering all three.

The Northeast Portland school, previously known as Maimonides Jewish Day School, is hosting their Steak & Stand-Up fundraiser Sunday, May 31 at 5 pm at the school.

The steak portion of the evening is an elevated culinary experience with multiple cuts carved to order, while the laughs will be provided by Eitan Levine, a comedian who has appeared on “Late Night with Stephen Colbert,” “Jimmy Kimmel Live!” and “The Daily Show,” in addition to hosting the web interview series “Jewish or antisemitic?” and the online gameshow “That’s So Jewish!”

“Great food, great entertainment, and great vibes all in one,” Rabbi Shimey Wilhelm said of the evening’s offerings. “Just a nice way to spend the night out.”

The good cause is the school itself – Tamim Academy is part of a national network of schools using a Montessori-derived holistic curriculum.

“We are in a time that we need to invest in Jewish education. If we want less antisem-



Levine (Courtesy Tamim Academy of Portland)

itism, the only way to do it is by having more Jewish pride, by having more Jews with a good backbone,” Rabbi Shmulik Greenberg said. “To create this, you need to give them Jewish education.”

Tickets are \$120 per person (\$200 for couples), and sponsorship opportunities are available. For more information or to register, visit tamimportland.org.

'Plastic Detox' is June 7 at Havurah

Havurah Shalom

Join Havurah Shalom’s Climate Action Team and community partners as we continue the Earth Justice Film Series with the showing of “The Plastic Detox” Sunday, June 7 from 3-5pm. Doors open at 2:30 pm for people to connect with tabling community organizations. A discussion will follow the showing of the film.

“The Plastic Detox” is an affecting new documentary that follows six couples struggling with fertility as they reduce their exposure to plastics to see if it helps. The results are startling. We learn how microplastics affect our bodies, the changes we should all make, and the alternatives to petroleum-based plastics.

Popcorn will be served. The event is Free. Register online at havurahshalom.org/event/ip-heat-film-series-4.html

For details about the film series, including a flier, go to linktr.ee/earthjusticefilms.

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RFJE announces new grant programs, deadlines

Robison Foundation for Jewish Elders

The Robison Foundation for Jewish Elders is offering a new round of grant opportunities designed to strengthen organizations serving elders through professional development, innovation, collaboration and capacity-building initiatives. These funding opportunities are designed to help organizations better meet the evolving needs of elders and the people who care for them. From addressing urgent community challenges to supporting long-term collaboration and innovation, the grants will invest in the staff, programs and partnerships that make compassionate, effective elder care possible.

The foundation will award funds for programs that address priorities recently identified by a survey of Jewish community stakeholders. Over the past year, the foundation conducted a comprehensive needs study and engaged in deep listening with community members, service providers, caregivers and stakeholders to gather insights that are shaping a new framework for grantmaking priorities and guiding investments in the future of our community.

As a result of this learning process, the foundation's funding priorities now center around four key pillars:

- **Navigation & Access:** We support approaches that assess the needs of older adults and connect them with trusted partners who can ease navigation and improve access to care.
- **Social, Emotional & Spiritual Connection:** Investing in programs that foster meaningful relationships, reduce isolation and strengthen trusted connections within the community.
- **Financial Support:** Providing funds to organizations that address the ongoing and urgent financial needs of elders – in alignment with our mission, board priorities and donor intent.
- **Early Outreach & Education:** Advancing proactive outreach and educational efforts to build awareness, confidence and support for older adults, caregivers and providers before needs become urgent.

Professional Development Grants

Up to \$1,000 in matching funds will be available for new Professional Development Grants. These reimbursement-based grants support individual staff members as well as teams seeking professional growth opportunities directly related to their work with elders.

“This funding is intended to strengthen organizational capacity by investing in people — enhancing their knowledge, leadership abilities and effectiveness in their roles,” said Sonia Marie Leikam, Executive Director of the Robison Foundation.

Eligible uses include conferences, workshops, trainings,

certification programs, courses and other skill-building opportunities that strengthen organizational capacity and leadership development. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, with applications reviewed Jan. 15, Apr. 15, June 15 and Sept. 15. Priority will be given to employees of grantee organizations, and applicants should expect a reply within a month of applications being reviewed.

Track 1: ChikChok (“Fast Track”) Grants

ChikChok Grants of up to \$3,000 each provide rapid-response funding for time-sensitive opportunities and emerging community needs benefiting elders. These grants are designed to minimize administrative burden while supporting short-term programs, pilot projects, and urgent initiatives. Applications will be accepted on a rolling basis, with applications reviewed Jan. 15, Apr. 15, June 15 and Sept. 15.

Track 2: Nitzan (“Blossom”) Grants

The new Nitzan Grants of \$5,000–\$20,000 will support early-stage ideas and modest program expansions. Funding is intended to help organizations pilot innovative concepts, strengthen existing programs, and bridge the gap between small-scale and larger strategic investments. Grant cycles will run biannually. The next grant cycle is open now and will close on July 1.

Track 3: Kadimah (“Moving Forward”) Grants

Kadimah Grants support organizational growth, innovation and long-term, capacity-building efforts. Funding may be used to launch new programs, expand services, address identified community needs or service gaps, and invest in strategic planning, infrastructure and organizational capacity. Annual grants of \$20,000–\$50,000 will be awarded, with potential multi-year commitments. Grant cycles will run biannually. The next grant cycle is open now and will close on July 1.

Track 4: Kulanu (“All of Us”) Grants

Kulanu Grants are designed to support collaborative, cross-organizational initiatives that address systemic challenges impacting elders. These investments focus on sustainable, community-wide solutions and significant organizational and programmatic growth. These grants of \$50,000+ annually may include multi-year commitments and are by invitation only. LOIs will be accepted biannually with a deadline of July 1 and Dec. 1.

Organizations interested in applying are encouraged to review eligibility requirements and application guidelines at <https://rfje.org/prospective-grantees>. An information session for prospective applicants will be held virtually on May 28 at 10 am. Registration is required. Sign up online at rfje.org/prospective-grantees.

For additional information, contact info@rfje.org.



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THE JEWISH REVIEW

THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST'S
JEWISH NEWSWEEKLY
EST. 1959

Published weekly by the
Jewish Federation of
Greater Portland
9900 SW Greenburg
Road, Suite 220
Tigard, OR 97223
503-245-6219

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NEXT ISSUE

Issue date Deadline

MAY 28

MAY 21

The View from Mount Scopus

Differences fade between the lines

By EZRA COHEN

The Sheikh Jarrah Park is sprawling, a haphazard mix of fenced-in mini soccer fields, a playground area, an outdoor gym with bars and body-weight machines and a basketball court stuffed into one city block. The surroundings are no less strange: a row of embassies—Spanish, Belgian, and British—are strewn throughout the primarily Arab neighborhood to the west, and a major thoroughfare directly abuts it to the north. To the east, two daunting buildings house the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Science and Technology, and a 10-minute walk past them leads up to the Jewish neighborhood of French Hill, where I live.

The first time I walked to the park, it was fall. I was with a Jewish friend from Hebrew University. The turf soccer courts were brimming with people. On one, a coach was blasting a whistle and running kids through drills; next door, a pickup game, composed seemingly of men from all over the world, but primarily Arabs, was in full swing. Mothers wrapped in hijabs watched the happenings from benches, behind which Yeshiva boys wearing kippahs worked out at the outdoor gym. My friend and I were surprised to see that the basketball court was empty. We shot around a bit and played one-on-one. As the weather warmed, we took off our shirts and then were told to put them back on; going shirtless in public, we learned, is considered disrespectful in the Muslim culture. Once or twice, little kids eyed us curiously, and one kid came up and asked if we were professional athletes. Overall, though, there seemed to be an unspoken rule in this park: Arabs stayed with Arabs, and Jews stayed with Jews.

The next time we went to the park, there were some Arab guys chucking up shots on one of the hoops. My friend and I looked at each other—these guys weren't too good at ball. We warmed up on the other hoop and started playing some games. Eventually, though, we got tired of each other's competition. Seeing the other guys looking sort of aimless as well, we asked if they wanted to play a game together. Soon, we were sprinting up and down the court, passing, shooting, and attempting to communicate—often in vain—by wild hand gestures and simple words. It was strange, but it was fun. Afterwards, my friend started a groupchat, to which we added the first few members:

Fouad, Omar, Yousef, Majd. “JLM BALLERS” was born.

Recently, with spring in full swing, my friend and I walked to the park and found guys already warming up. By now, JLM BALLERS had grown to 44 people who encompassed at least three religions and probably 10 different countries of origin. Saif, a middle-aged Sudanese guy who played professionally in Norway for a time, was jogging around with a weight belt on; Netanel, a former MMA-trained athlete and fellow Jewish student from London was lacing up his shoes. On this day, 13 guys showed up, and we played for two hours.

Despite the easy nature of the game, religious tensions persisted off the court. During one of the breaks in the game, a round-faced little boy was using two hands to dribble a ball and underhandedly heaving up shots. I watched him dribble and gesticulated some moves he could work on. All of a sudden, it seemed, he asked me: “Are you Muslim?” I told him I was Jewish but was taken aback by the question. When I was that young, I thought, I didn't remember really knowing the differences between Jews and Muslims.

I asked Saif about this. He is Muslim and speaks fluent Arabic. “They're over 1948,” he said. “They're over 1967. But after that, they're not over anything.” Omar, who had overheard this conversation, explained that Palestinians are very aware of religious and cultural differences from a young age. “We don't hate Jews like you,” he said. “But we do not like Israelis. We see this as an occupation.” He gestured around him. “What about the Israelis who oppose the settlement movements in the West Bank?” I asked him. “Yes, we don't mind them. But you can't tell what someone thinks just by looking at them. So, we don't like any of them.”

As I stood there on the court, it occurred to me that this way of thinking goes both ways here. I'd heard countless times from Israelis about the danger that was the Palestinian person. There is a huge gulf in trust; and it's easier to see things as black and white rather than try to see the nuance that clearly is hiding in plain sight. No wonder the little kid asked me about my religion, I thought.

But as I looked at the array of guys sharing the court, I realized: if more people hooped

See COHEN, page 11

Shavuot a reminder of a singular, divine reality

By SIMI MISHULOVIN

This week, 3,338 years ago, your soul was at Sinai. Every Jewish soul was there. Not as a metaphor, as reality. We heard *HaShem's* voice directly.

There was no echo. No resistance from the world itself. Because creation wasn't opposing Gdliness; it was revealing it. It was a moment of true harmony that lies beneath the surface.

There are not two realities — physical and spiritual. There is only one reality: HaShem. The essence of Gd that transcends heaven and earth alike.

The modern world teaches us to see conflict everywhere: Body versus soul, material versus holy, human versus Divine. Torah reveals the underlying harmony of existence. What appears separate is, in truth, one. Like marriage; two people revealing a deeper unity.

Shavuot marks the giving of the Torah — a profoundly spiritual event. Yet we are commanded to eat, drink, and celebrate with physical pleasure, because Torah isn't about escaping the

world — it's about bringing the world to its essence.

Engage with the physical. Elevate it. Reveal its true purpose. There are 613 ways to do so.

When a Jew learns Torah and begins seeing through "Divine glasses," the world changes. What once looked like an obstacle to holiness becomes a tool for holiness. The finite becomes a vessel for the Infinite. Even now, in a world that feels morally confused and spiritually fragmented, the truth remains unchanged since that day at Sinai: This is Hashem's world. A Torah world. A moral world. A good world.

At Shavuot, we experience that Sinai moment again — the Torah remains unchanged, and He still believes in us to carry it. This Shavuot, show up at Sinai. Learn the Torah. Make it yours.

Simi Mishulovin is Co-Director of The Jewish Oasis in Portland.

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COHEN (continued from page 10)

at the Sheikh Jarrah courts, we'd have a lot more trust and a lot fewer problems.

Eventually, soaked in sweat and hungry, we went our separate ways. For a week, at least, we'd all be back in our homes, both physically and mentally. We'd fall back into our ways of thinking; we'd have familiar and agreeable conversations with others who saw the world the way we did. Next week, though, we'd emerge at the courts from wherever we'd been, and for a few hours we'd all be together. The court would again become this rare harmonious conglomeration of cultures and beliefs. It was bound to be messy, stressful, fun, confusing, and exhilarating.

There were bound to be some disagreements off the court. But on the court, there would be simple competition.

A ball and a hoop are all it takes.

Portland native Ezra Lev Cohen is currently studying at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and reports for The Press Service of Israel as an intern. He's a junior at Macalester College, in St. Paul, Minn, majoring in journalism and geography. He will remain in Israel this summer as an intern with the Maccabi Media Team. Find him on Instagram at @ezzy_reports and connect with him on LinkedIn or by email at ezzycohen@icloud.com.



SHAVUOT EVENTS

Upcoming Shavuot opportunities gathered by Jewish Federation

jewishportland.org/shavuot



May 21: Communal Discussions: Jewish Identity Loss Post October 7

Grief discussion at the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education at 9:30 am. More information at ojmche.org/events/inthissand/#rsvp

May 21: Habitat for Humanity Build with the Jewish Volunteer Corps

Volunteer construction project in Southwest Portland at 8:30 am. More information at jewishportland.org/habitat-for-humanity

May 21: JFCS Community Connection

Virtual support group at 2 pm via Zoom. More information at jfcs-portland.org/community-connection.

May 21: Standing Together at Sinai

Shavuot learning event at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center at 5:30 pm. More information at members.nevehshalom.org/form/shavuot26.

May 21: Sephardi Shavuoth and Velada

Sephardic Shavuot observance at Congregation Ahavath Achim at 6:45 pm. More information at ahavathachimpdx.weebly.com/

vathachimpdx.weebly.com/shavuoth.html.

May 22: Shavuoth Morning Services

Service at Congregation Ahavath Achim at 9 am. More information at ahavathachimpdx.weebly.com/shavuoth.html

May 22: Shavuot 10 Commandments and Dairy Buffet

Shavuot experience at Chabad SW Portland at 11:30 am. More information at jportland.com/tools/events/register_cdo/eventid/22851.

May 22: Seaside Shabbat

Pre-Shabbat Oneg at the Bob Chisholm Community Center in Seaside at 6:45 pm, sponsored by BB360. More information at bb-360.org/events/

May 23: Shavuoth Morning Services

Service at Congregation Ahavath Achim at 9 am. More information at ahavathachimpdx.weebly.com/shavuoth.html

May 23: Intro to Biblical Hebrew

Weekly class at Congregation Ahavath Achim at 9:30 am. More information at ahavathachimpdx.weebly.com/

com/adult-learning.html.

May 23: Women's Torah Study

Weekly class at Congregation Ahavath Achim at 10:30 am. More information at ahavathachimpdx.weebly.com/adult-learning.html.

May 23: Playing in the Sand with OK YOU

Greif program at the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education at 11 am. More information at ojmche.org/events/inthissand/#rsvp.

May 23: Sephardic Foundations

Weekly class at Congregation Ahavath Achim at 12:30 pm. Learn more at ahavathachimpdx.weebly.com/sephardic-foundations.html.

May 24: Krav Maga Introductory Course

Weekly self-defense course at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center at 10 am. More information at oregon-jcc.org/culture.

May 24: Without End Closing Ceremony with The Lantern

Musical ceremony at the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education at 2 pm. More information at ojmche.org/events/inthissand/#rsvp

May 27: JFGP Annual Meeting

Federation public meeting at the Mittleman Jewish Community Center at 4 pm. More information at jewishportland.org/annual26.

May 27: Israeli Folk Dancing for Beginners

Weekly class at the Multnomah Arts Center in Southwest Portland at 7 pm. More information at sites.google.com/site/pifdnews.

May 28: Dignity Grows Packing Party

Feminine hygiene tote packing event at Chabad of Northeast Portland at 6 pm. More information at jewishportland.org/dignity-grows-may-2026.

May 28: Zohar and Zhug

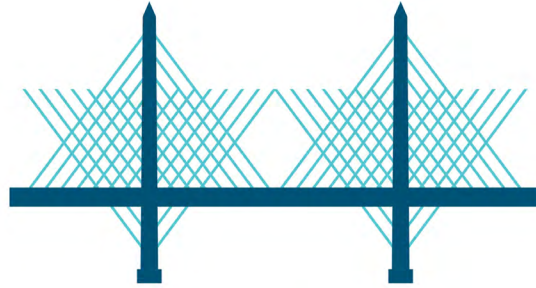
Monthly kabbalah class at Congregation Ahavath Achim at 8 pm. More information at ahavathachimpdx.weebly.com/zohar-and-zhug.html.

May 31: Bagels for Good

Informational event at Henry Higgins Boiled Bagels in Northwest Portland at pm. More information at jewishportland.org/bagels-for-good.

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TICKETS:



Jewish Federation
of Greater Portland

MARVIN WOLFSON

Congregation Neveh Shalom is saddened to share the passing of Marvin Wolfson, z"l, who died on Monday, May 11. Marvin is survived and lovingly remembered by his partner of 24 years, Katherine Snook. He also leaves behind his cherished children, Natalie (Adi) Nakar and Derek (Lauren) Wolfson, stepchildren Josh Kowalski & Kasea Amodt, grandchildren Sarah, Nava, Ezra, Shira, Michal, Sawyer, Eliya & Quinn, sister Bev (Jeff Kissel), and his former wife Kathy Wolfson.

The funeral was held Thursday, May 14, at Ahavai Shalom Cemetery.

GAY LOBEL

It is with deep sadness that Congregation Shaarie Torah announces the passing of Gay Patricia Lobel, z"l, beloved wife of Stephen Lobel. Gay died on Thursday, May 14, 2026 at the age of 80.

She is survived by Stephen, her husband of 33 years; daughters Venita Stone and Cheryl Richardson; 5 grandchildren and 6 great-grandchildren.

The funeral was held on Monday, May 18 at Shaarie Torah Cemetery.

RUTH STECKEL

It is with deep sadness that Congregations Shaarie Torah and Kesser Israel announce the passing of Ruth Steckel, z"l. Ruth passed away recently at the age of 62.

She is survived by her children, Anna (Adie) Steckel and Remy Steckel, and by her brothers, Simon and Mark Wigglesworth of the United Kingdom. She was predeceased by her parents, George and Margaret Wigglesworth, z"l.

The funeral was held on Tuesday, May 19 at Shaarie Torah Cemetery.

STEVE BLUMSTEIN

Congregation Neveh Shalom is saddened to share the passing of Steven Blumstein, z"l, who died in Fort Lauderdale, Fla. on Monday, May 18. Steven is survived and lovingly remembered by his partner of 25 years, Arlene Postal. He also leaves behind his cherished children, Liza (Beth) Milliner, Melissa Bloom (Oren Abu), Corie Levy, Marc (Ashley) Blumstein, and his grandchildren: Dylan and Blake Levy and Jake Blumstein.

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