

The Jewish Journal

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Jewish Federation
of Ocean County
Celebrating 49 Years!

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November 2026 ✨ Cheshvan – Kislev 5787

Jewish Federation 732-363-0530 www.ocjf.org

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Sunday, October 25 Marquee Cinemas



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Sunday, November 1
Chabad of Toms River
Babka Baking



Ethan Bloom
starring Josh Malina



Thursday, November 5
Ocean County Library
PJ Library Game Show

This program is made possible in part by a grant administered by the Ocean County Cultural & Heritage Commission from funds granted by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.

Local News - see page 4

Jewish Cultural Festival - see pages 3,
15, 16 and 17

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Eyes on the Prize



By Keith Krivitzky, Managing Director
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732.363.0530

This is one of those occasions when I am not sure what to write about. There are many issues and events coming up that demand attention. And, as I am writing this, we are just learning more about the attempted hijacking of a plane full of Israelis, which is both fascinating and scary as we learn more.

I will start with that issue, raise a few others, and then try to connect them by the time you get to the end of this column. □

First...one of the most amazing vignettes from this flydubai incident was how calmly and matter-of-factly several Israelis on the plane stepped up. They saw a problem, knew they could help, and then just did what needed to be done to stop the hijacker, level off the plane, and address the situation. One of the most iconic heroes from this incident was a plumber

who learned how to level a plane from watching one of those "air crash" series. (BTW, the one on National Geographic is actually one of my go-to background TV shows while I am working. I can't wait to see when they come out with an episode about this!)

Many in Israel are both laughing at and appreciating the response of their fellow Israelis at the same time. While this was an extraordinary circumstance, I don't think most Israelis are particularly surprised by what happened...because this is how Israelis see themselves. They are ordinary people trying to live their lives in peace. When a challenge arises, they deal with it. All the labels, accusations, and verbal attacks on Zionism and Israel are ultimately just noise. The haters are going to hate regardless.

The reality is much simpler. Israelis are focused on surviving, looking after one another, and living normal lives. They have had to develop that mindset over decades of very real threats and very real enemies. You can debate politics, intersectionality, lived experience, and a hundred alternative narratives, but when something actually happens, Israelis tend to focus on some very simple questions: What needs to be done right now? How can we solve the problem? How (and when) can we get through this and get on with our lives?

There is an important lesson here about priorities and perspectives. Which brings me to another issue that has been in the

There is an important lesson here about priorities and perspectives.

news and on my mind of late: this whole brouhaha about whether we should use the word Zionism.

OK. The word is misunderstood. Studies and surveys have shown that many do not know what this word means or represents, especially within the Jewish community. These also show that there are ways to describe both Israel and Zionism that resonate more and register a lot more support.

I think there are a few takeaways here. One is that those of us actually within the Jewish community should probably learn more about our own history, struggles, and connection to the land and people of Israel. (One reason for our pop-up L'Chaim: Israel e-newsletter!) The second is that we should probably use other ways and descriptors to describe Israel and Zionism. Talking about the historic connection of Jews to Zion (i.e., Israel) and the right of the Jewish people to have a homeland conveys more substance, and engenders more support, than simply using the word Zionism.

Which brings me to point three. What I just described in point #2 is a tactic that we, in the Jewish community, should

probably use because it is more effective. However, it shouldn't be up to anyone else to define who we are or what words, labels, or framing we use to define ourselves. Zionism has a long, complex, and colorful history, which is amazing. And it is ours to continue exploring, wrestling with, and developing. Every other group gets to define themselves and "own" their labels. We damn well better have that right too.

And now, for the third related topic...we may be our own worst enemies. We have this legacy of values, traditions, stories, communities, dreams, dramas, and history, which many of us know so little about.

To defend the principle of using a word like Zionism is less relevant if we don't know what it means or if we don't do anything that connects to it. Like connecting with each other. Like doing Jewish things. Like learning more about Israel and Judaism. Like coming together as a community to commemorate, argue, make a difference, and celebrate. We don't do that enough.

I was struck by this recent piece from The Free Press TGIF column, which is excerpted below. It talks about a worrisome trend in American society, which of course applies to the Jewish community, BUT we also have a built-in fix for this. And that is coming together as a community to do the things we do.

Continued on page 7

Thanksgiving and Thankfulness



By Rabbi Michael S. Jay
Jewish Community Center of
Long Beach Island, Spray Beach
www.jccoflbi.org

We are about to celebrate Thanksgiving Day, the quintessential American holiday. On it we gather with family, with friends, and with loved ones, for the sole purpose of being together and enjoying one another's company. And, of course, to eat. But the eating is secondary. (Maybe)

As its name indicates, Thanksgiving is a day set aside for expressing appreciation and we should never lose sight of the importance of this part.

The idea of giving thanks is important on a national level, a community level, a family level, and a personal level. But to whom is thanks due? Certainly, our hosts deserve thanks for opening their homes. Our friends and family deserve thanks for always being there for us. Our country, our government, and our forefathers, all deserve thanks for creating and maintaining a nation that is, and has always been, a beacon to the rest of the world. We should be thanking the police officer, the firefighter, the soldier, the doctor, the farmer, the worker, the entrepreneur, and our loved ones.

While the list may be endless, we should

We should never forget that our tradition informs us that we must be thankful on a daily basis.

never lose sight of the fact that the One ultimately deserving of thanks is God, who created a world in which a country such as ours can exist. We should thank the Creator of all the wonders around us.

While we set this day aside for giving thanks, our tradition has us expressing gratitude every day. You don't believe me? Take a look below.

Every morning, as we get up, we say the "Modeh Ani" prayer. Therein we state:
I am grateful to You, living, enduring,

Sovereign,
for restoring my soul to me in
compassion.
You are Faithful beyond measure.

According to Rabbi Reuven Hammer, "To wake in the morning is to be reborn. Nothing is to be taken for granted, certainly not life itself. The first word of the prayer is perhaps the most important, Modeh, I am thankful. The essence of prayer is the grateful acknowledgement of the gifts we have been given." (Or Haddash)

In the Shabbat morning service, we say the Nishmat Kol Chai prayer which includes the following poetic illustration of our attempt to express gratitude toward God:

Could song fill our mouth as water
fills the sea

Continued on page 12



The Jewish Federation of Ocean County is partnering with Mainstages to bring a fun, interactive game show to our community on Thursday, November 5th! Get ready for lightning-fast trivia and physical challenges celebrating Jewish-American culture, all wrapped up in a show the whole family can enjoy together.



Thursday, Nov. 5 4:30 PM

**Mancini Hall
at the Toms River Branch of
the Ocean County Library**



PRE-REGISTRATION IS REQUIRED

www.jewishoceancounty.org/culturalfestival

Jewish Community Calendar – October-November 2026

Compiled by the Jewish Federation of Ocean County based on submissions from the event hosts – Events can be submitted at www.jewishoceancounty.org/calendar. Most of the Jewish Virtual University webinars are emergent with only a few days’ notice and are updated on the page www.jewishoceancounty.org/jvu and our facebook page facebook.com/jewishocean.

October 25 through November 5 – Jewish Cultural Festival – events on October 25, November 1 and November 5, Jewish Federation of Ocean County – see pages 16-17

Tuesday, October 27 – Israel Election Day

Wednesday, October 28, 2:00 PM – Israeli Elections webinar series, “24 Hours After the Results: What Do We Know?” with Haviv Rettig Gur, see www.jewishoceancounty.org/jvu and page 15 for details

Tuesday, November 3 – U.S. Election Day

Tuesday, November 3, 1:00 PM (and every Tuesday) – **Grief After Loss Group** led by Rita Sason, Jewish Family and Children’s Service, virtual online, 732-363-8010

Thursday, November 5, 12:15 PM (and every Thursday other than November 26) – **Torah with the Times: Timeless Torah, Timely Wisdom**; study and discussion of the weekly Torah portion with Rabbi Isaiah Rothstein, see www.jewishoceancounty.org/jvu for details

Thursday, November 5, 7:30 PM (and the first Thursday of every month) – **Caregivers Group** led by Rita Sason, Jewish Family and Children’s Service, virtual online, 732-363-8010

Monday-Tuesday, November 9-10 – Anniversary of Kristallnacht (1938)

Tuesday, November 10, 7:30 PM – Rescuing Jewish Children Before and After the November Pogrom, on Zoom with Dr. Amy Williams, presented by “chchange” (Center for Holocaust, Human Rights & Genocide Education), chchange.org

Wednesday, November 11 – Veterans Day

Thursday, November 26 – Thanksgiving

For information, contact the event host or see related publicity in this issue of The Jewish Journal.

Jewish Cultural Festival - see pages 3, 15, 16 and 17

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Call us at 732-458-4700 or email us at templebethorbrick@gmail.com.
Chaim Respes, Rabbi Dr. Sharon Monter, President

**Many congregations
are conducting prayer services
and classes online
which may be accessible
from a computer or a telephone.
Contact each congregation
for further information
to access these events.**

Jewish Federation of Ocean County Impact

Here is one example of how supporters of JDC, such as the Jewish Federation of Ocean County, helped bring care, connection, and holiday spirit to vulnerable older adults in Ukraine for the New Year.



A Sweet Reminder Before the New Year

Ahead of Rosh Hashanah, thanks to Federation partnership, JDC volunteers across Ukraine are turning summer fruit into something even sweeter: a reminder to vulnerable older adults that their Jewish community is there for them. Through the **Good Jam Day** campaign, volunteers in Rivne are transforming pears into jars of golden jam, while volunteers in Mykolaiv are preparing apricot, black currant, and cherry jams, and in Kremenchuk community members Sofia and Pavlo donated the apples from their garden to be turned into fragrant jam. Each jar will be delivered to elderly community members as a holiday gift—a small but meaningful expression of connection and Jewish tradition.

“During the preparation process, we combine modern technology with our grandmothers’ time-tested recipes. This is how our jam is made – preserving natural flavor, the comfort of home, and the best traditions. Every jar will be a symbol of care and will remind our elders that they are not alone,”



“Such simple acts remind us that kindness begins with the desire to share. Every apple and every jar of jam become a symbol of care, generosity, and unity among people ready to support one another. Thank you to all the volunteers who have joined Good Jam Day. Together, we’re giving the gift of warmth in a jar and making the world a little kinder.”



SCAM ALERT

Watch out! Scammers target everyone.



Recognize scammers. They may:

- **PRETEND** to be from an agency or organization you know.
- Say there's a **PROBLEM** or promise a prize.
- **PRESSURE** you to act immediately.
- Tell you to **PAY** in a specific way.



Do not give scammers money or personal information – Ignore them!

How to stay safe:

- **Remain calm.** Talk to someone you trust.
- **Hang up or ignore** the message. **DO NOT** click on links or attachments.
- **Protect your money.** Criminals will insist that you pay in a hard-to-trace manner, such as with a gift card, prepaid debit card, cryptocurrency, wire transfer, money transfer, gold bars, or by mailing cash.
- **Protect your personal information.** Be skeptical of any contact you didn't initiate.
- **Spread the word.** Share your knowledge of Social Security-related scams with your friends, family, and community. Post on social media using the hashtag #SlamtheScam to warn others. Visit **ssa.gov/scam** for more information.



SSA.gov/myaccount

SSA.gov



Social Security Administration

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SCAM ALERT

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Jewish War Veterans

By Sarah Rochel Hewitt, Jewish Treats by NJOP

In honor of Veterans’ Day, Jewish Treats presents a brief history of the Jewish War Veterans of the United States, which is more commonly referred to by its acronym JWV.

Originally formed in 1896 as the Hebrew Union Veterans Organization by Jewish veterans of the Civil War, it assumed its current name (after several variations) in 1929. In its early days, the headquarters of the JWV was located in New York City but moved to Washington, D.C. in 1954.

The JWV has two primary missions - to uphold the American values of democracy and to support Jewish life in America. Thus, the JWV’s national constitution states that the JWV seeks to “... uphold the fair name of the Jew and fight his or her battles wherever unjustly assailed ...”

To be an active member of the JWV, one

must be a U.S. citizen, of the Jewish faith, of “good character,” have seen active service in a military campaign and received an honorable discharge. An associate membership can be obtained by those who served in the military but not in wartime. The organization itself is made up of a hierarchy of national, regional and local posts. A national convention is held once a year.

JWV posts strive to advance religious freedom in the armed forces, promote community-oriented programs and to offer special benefits (insurance, discounts, etc.) to its member veterans.

One influential role of the JWV is maintaining and running the National Museum of American Jewish Military History located in Washington, D.C.

(For other “Jewish Treats: Juicy Bits of Judaism, Daily” and many other Jewish resources visit www.jewishtreats.org and www.njop.org.)

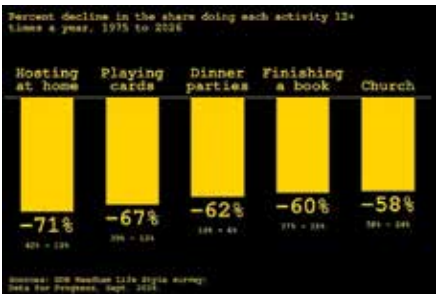
Eyes on the Prize

Continued from page 2

There is a really important message there, and it is one we should all take to heart.

P.S. Now is the time to nominate a Hero Against Hate. This is our way of standing up to antisemitism, hate, and bigotry in all its forms. Help us recognize upstanders in our community who can also encourage and influence others to say no to hate. Go to: www.jewishoceancounty.org/communitycaring/nominations.

No one is invited to dinner: Americans are not having dinner parties anymore. My favorite abundance nerd, Derek Thompson, wrote this incredible essay on how Americans are not only hosting fewer dinner parties but are also spending less time socializing in person in general. The number of Americans who say they host friends or family at home at least once a month fell from 42 percent in 1975 to 12 percent in 2026, which is roughly a 70 percent decline. And other forms of in-person socializing like bars, sports, volunteering, and church have also dropped.



“We’ve become solitary, lonely little animals. I think one of the secrets of Judaism’s survival is that it requires a minyan (10 people) to do a lot of Jewish stuff. And socializing (Shabbat dinner) is built into the culture. It’s endless dinner parties, and lunches, and I swear to you there’s a ritual where you throw bread into a river. You can’t really do Judaism alone on a mountain, or alone in your apartment staring at your phone. And you don’t have to overthink a dinner party or come up with a reason for it. Sure, my in-laws might be making up holidays to drag us out to Pittsburgh again and again (it’s YomTorahLech, they tell me, so come with the kids a few days early), but I accept this.”

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In Commemoration of the 88th Anniversary of Kristallnacht (1938-2026)

Kristallnacht

By Sarah Rochel Hewitt, Jewish Treats
by NJOP

Kristallnacht, literally the Night of Crystal but generally translated as the Night of Broken Glass, was a tragic turning point in the fate of Germany's Jewish community. The country-wide pogrom began on November 9, 1938, and lasted through the 10th. Over the course of Kristallnacht, close to 100 Jews were killed, 30,000 Jewish men were arrested, hundreds of synagogues were burned and desecrated and over 7,000 Jewish shops were vandalized and had their shop windows shattered.

The outbreak of violence was orchestrated by Nazi Propaganda Minister Joseph Goebbels. However, the Nazi leadership firmly maintained that the actions were a spontaneous uprising of the German people against the Jews. They also used fabricated Jewish crimes in order to enact further oppressive laws against Jews, including diverting insurance payments for property destroyed in the pogroms.

The excuse for the so-called "spontaneous" pogrom was the death, on November 9th, of German diplomat Ernst Vom Rath in

Paris. He was shot by a 17 year old Jewish youth, Herschel Grynszpan. Young, unemployed and an illegal resident trying to avoid deportation from Paris, Grynszpan shot the diplomat as a reaction to his parents' deportation to Poland. The Grynszpans had lived in Hanover, Germany, since 1911. In October 1938, the Germans expelled all Polish Jews from German soil just as Poland was about to implement a new law removing Polish citizenship from anyone residing outside of Poland for more than five years. But Poland refused to take the refugees, and 12,000 Jews were put in refugee camps at the border.

The involvement of German citizens in the pogroms, or at the very least the lack of protest from neighbors (and neighboring countries), affirmed the Nazi's belief that they could do as they pleased concerning the Jews. Previously oppressive measures had been non-violent, but Kristallnacht was the first step toward the horror of the "Final Solution."

(For other "Jewish Treats: Juicy Bits of Judaism, Daily" and many other Jewish resources visit www.jewishtreats.org and www.njop.org.)



Interior view of the destroyed Fasanenstrasse Synagogue, Berlin



Stores attacked and destroyed

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Ah Yes, We Remember it Well

Do you have historical recollections or reflections from fifty or more years ago about the Jewish Federation of Ocean County or the Jewish Community that you want to share as we approach JFOC's 50th anniversary? Send them to: jewishocean@gmail.com. Submissions will be reviewed for possible publication by the Jewish Journal Editorial Committee.

Dr. Irit Cohen L.Ac.

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FedBeat from JFNA – Jewish Federations of North America

jewishfederations.org

The Federation Model Isn't Static, and It Never Has Been



(Flashvector/Getty Images)

By Shira Hutt and Mimi Kravetz
September 18, 2026
ejewishphilanthropy.com

Steven Windmueller's recent article, "The remake: Bringing the federation model into the 21st century" (September 2), asks the important question of what should Jewish federations become in a changing Jewish community.

We agree that Jewish communities are changing: their needs are changing and the challenges facing them are changing, both at home and around the world. But what Windmueller doesn't recognize is that this constant evolution and adaptation to the needs of the Jewish community and the commitment to evolving as the world changes is exactly what the federation model was designed to do. Many of his suggestions and frameworks are useful and indeed are already core to how most federations approach their work. Adaptation is what federations have always done, from the generations that helped resettle the immigrants to America to the building of the State of Israel to the growth of formal and informal Jewish education to today's post-October 7 environment.

Across the 141 federations, the "model" calls on skilled professionals, lay leaders, donors and partners to support the realities of Jewish life today while building the capacity to meet whatever comes next. The past six years have provided perhaps the clearest demonstration yet of the relevance, adaptability and enduring value of the federation model.

Consider what Jewish communities have experienced over the past decade. The COVID-19 pandemic forced communities to rapidly coordinate resources, support vulnerable populations and rethink how Jewish life could function. Rising

antisemitism and the attacks on Jewish institutions, from Tree of Life and since, have made security and community safety an increasingly urgent communal responsibility. The war in Ukraine and other global challenges have required federations to mobilize for global Jewish needs. And October 7, 2023, fundamentally changed the reality for Jewish communities in Israel and around the world, calling on federations to show up with extraordinary levels of funding, advocacy, partnership and support.

In each of these moments, federations have both drawn on our rich experience and adapted to answer the call. They are entrusted with the responsibility and the resources to find communal solutions to challenges that individual institutions could not solve alone.

From fundraisers to builders of flourishing Jewish communities

The purpose of a federation is to help build flourishing Jewish communities. We define this as communities that are healthy, safe, caring, welcoming and inclusive, educated and engaged, active in the broader community and connected to Israel and Jewish communities around the world. Achieving this vision requires much more than raising money and allocating it.

Federations are community planners, investors, conveners, relationship builders, infrastructure builders and mobilizers of people and resources. They are focused not simply on existing programs or institutions, but on whether the community as a whole has the conditions necessary for Jewish life to flourish. That begins with understanding the community.

Federations draw on community studies, pulse surveys, participation data, national research, information from local organizations and, perhaps most importantly, what they hear from the people who live in their communities. They seek to understand where people are thriving, where they are not being reached, what needs are emerging, which organizations are strong and where there are gaps. This process is not episodic, it is ongoing and relies on regular data and information, which Federations today have as a result of new systems and technologies.

Then federations bring people and or-

ganizations together around what they are learning. Their role is to help the community understand what is needed and determine who is best positioned to respond. To support and reinforce these efforts, Jewish Federations of North America convenes and partners with national organizations.

That is community planning in its fullest sense. It is not simply deciding which organizations receive funding, but helping a community understand itself, establish priorities and translate those priorities into collective action.

Building the infrastructure Jewish life requires

Perhaps nowhere is the evolution of the federation role more visible than in community infrastructure. Security provides a clear recent example. The rise in antisemitism has fundamentally changed what it means to operate a Jewish institution safely. Across North America, federations have built community-wide security infrastructure, including assessments, training, coordination, crisis response, relationships with law enforcement and intelligence agencies, and the philanthropic resources necessary to sustain this work.

The same is true of community relations, which has been a function of federations for many decades. Federations today are building relationships with elected officials, law enforcement, school leaders, business leaders, interfaith partners and others in the broader community. Those relationships matter every day and become especially important when antisemitism or another crisis emerges. This enables the community to respond to crises, but more importantly, it makes it possible for Jewish life to continue and thrive.

Mobilizing resources at scale

Fundraising remains a core part of the federation model, and for good reason. Federations have a unique ability to mobilize philanthropic resources around shared community priorities. The response to October 7 demonstrated this on an unprecedented scale, with the federation system raising over \$900 million for Israel.

But perhaps the more important lesson is that this was not simply a one-time response to a crisis. Many new donors sta-

yed engaged, while existing donors increased their investment as they saw the continued needs facing Israel and Jewish communities.

As Windmueller highlights, that trust contributed to more than 15% growth in federation annual campaigns in FY2025. Annual campaigns remain the most important source of philanthropic support in the federation system, while federation philanthropy today is increasingly diverse and encompasses endowments, donor advised funds, directed giving, emergency campaigns, major gifts and other forms of investment. These resources allow communities to respond to immediate needs, strengthen institutions, build infrastructure, support Jewish engagement and education, and connect local communities to Israel and Jewish communities around the world.

The Jewish community does not need federations to be everything to everyone – it needs federations to do what few other institutions can do.

But the growth of Federation philanthropy tells us something larger than the story of fundraising: People continue to see value in coming together to solve problems that are bigger than any one institution. To be clear, it is a process. The only way federations can be agile and adaptable is to continue learning from our communities, from our peers, from professionals and lay leaders, and from thought leaders.

But as federations demonstrate value, in the many ways discussed in this article and beyond, they engage donors and lay leaders in new ways. Stronger relationships and more visible impact create greater philanthropic and leadership capacity, which in turn gives communities greater ability to address the challenges and opportunities before them. It is a virtuous cycle.

Measuring what matters

Perhaps one of the most important aspects of Federations' work today is how they define and measure success. Dollars

Continued on page 12

Jewish Students' Bill of Rights Helps Communities Fight K-12 Antisemitism



From JFNA
September 9, 2026

Following almost three years of growing antisemitism in K-12 schools, which have included bullying and, in many cases, ostracization, Jewish students across North America are returning to potentially tense classroom environments.

To help students, parents, and communities better advocate for themselves, Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA), the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), American Jewish Committee (AJC), Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations (COP), StandWithUs (SWU), and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) have released a Jewish Students' Bill of Rights, calling on schools and districts to take six concrete steps to ensure that every Jewish student can attend school without fear of harassment, bias, or shame. The document arrives as new data identifies K-12 schools as one of the few settings where antisemitic incidents have not declined, and as the High Holidays fall within the first weeks of the school year in most districts.

"No child should have to choose between their education and their identity," said Eric Fingerhut, Jewish Federations of North America President and CEO. "We are not asking schools for special treatment. We are asking them to give Jewish students the same seriousness and the same protection that every other student in that building already receives. The Jewish Students' Bill of Rights is a crucial roadmap of how to do that."

The most recent Audit of Antisemitic Incidents from the Anti-Defamation League found that antisemitic incidents nationwide declined by roughly a third last year, but that incidents at non-Jewish K-12 schools remained essentially unchanged (825 in 2025, compared with 860 in 2024). The persistence of that pattern is what the Bill of Rights is designed to address.

"When a school does not know how to identify or respond to antisemitism, the lesson for every Jewish student in that building is that they do not belong," said Jonathan Greenblatt, ADL CEO and National Director. "Not one child should be taught that lesson in the classroom. These six standards will set the textbook for what to do, and ADL is ready to help any school that wants to learn how to get this right."

The Bill of Rights lays out six standards that students and families can hold their schools to:

1. Ensuring that administrators and staff are equipped to identify antisemitism and the ways it manifests in modern

educational environments.

2. Maintaining a clear, transparent process for reporting and responding to antisemitic incidents following all applicable laws and with the same gravity afforded to all other hate and bias incidents, with assurance of accountability and follow-through.
3. Ensuring that all teaching about Jewish culture, diversity, history, the Holocaust, antisemitism, and Israel is accurate and representative.
4. Treating religious observances as excused absences and avoiding scheduling school events on widely celebrated holidays.
5. Protecting Jewish students' right to express their identity and fully participate in all aspects of school life without religious coercion, bullying, or pressure to distance themselves from any aspects of that identity, including their connection to Israel.
6. Assuring that educators and curricula present contested issues in a balanced way rather than using the classroom to advance specific political or ideological viewpoints.

"Our schools should be places where students are able to learn not only academics, but also how to be good citizens and good neighbors – key among that is creating an environment where no student has to fear harassment and exclusion because of who they are," said Ted Deutch, CEO of American Jewish Committee. "This Bill of Rights outlines common-sense principles that will help ensure that Jewish students, like all students, are able to safely, fully, and proudly participate in school life."

"For most students and parents, the start of a new school year is a time of excitement and possibility. But for too many Jewish students, recent years have brought something very different: harassment, bullying, and anxiety in the classroom. This Bill of Rights makes clear that Jewish students deserve what every student deserves: to learn openly, proudly, and safely, and it gives schools the tools to make that promise a reality," said William C. Daroff, CEO of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations.

"Far too many Jewish students carry the weight of educating others and defending their community against bias and bigotry in K-12 schools," said Roz Rothstein, Co-Founder and CEO of StandWithUs. "This Bill of Rights sends a vital message: that responsibility should not fall on students alone. It is time for the adults in the room, educators and administrators, to meet this moment with courage and moral clarity."

Jewish Federations, ADL, AJC, COP, and SWU work to provide guidance and strategic support to school leaders, policymakers, families, and the public on addressing antisemitism and promoting the full inclusion of Jews and Jewish life in K-12 schools.

You can read the full Jewish Students' Bill of Rights in the accompanying graphic. Also, contact your local Jewish Federation and utilize resources from the AJC, ADL, StandWithUs, and CIJA.

Jewish Federations Statement on Yom Kippur Belleville Synagogue Shooting

From JFNA
September 21, 2026

Jewish Federations of North America are horrified by the shooting outside the Sons of Jacob Synagogue in Belleville, Ontario, as members of the Jewish community gathered to observe Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the Jewish calendar.

Jews must be able to gather in prayer and community without fear, and we urge

authorities to fully investigate this attack and hold those responsible accountable.

As we learn more details, we pray for the full and speedy recovery of those injured and thank the heroic law enforcement officer who engaged the shooter and sustained injuries.

We stand in solidarity with the Belleville Jewish community at this deeply painful moment and will never back down on our fulfilling community's security needs.



FedBeat from JFNA – Jewish Federations of North America
jewishfederations.org



Jewish Students’ Bill of Rights

Antisemitic incidents in K-12 schools have increased by over 400% since 2020, with survey data indicating 71% of Jewish teens in the US and Canada have experienced antisemitism since 2023.

Jewish students – like all students – deserve to attend school without fear of bullying, harassment, bias, or exclusion. The undersigned Jewish organizations call on schools and districts to ensure that that every Jewish student can attend school safely and without discrimination by:

1

Ensuring that administrators and staff are equipped to **identify** antisemitism and the ways it manifests in modern educational environments.

2

Maintaining a clear, transparent **process** for reporting and responding to antisemitic incidents following all applicable laws and with the same gravity afforded to all other hate and bias incidents, with assurance of accountability and follow-through.

3

Ensuring that all **teaching** about Jewish culture, diversity, history, the Holocaust, antisemitism, and Israel is accurate and representative.

4

Treating religious **observances** as excused absences and avoiding scheduling school events on widely celebrated holidays.

5

Protecting Jewish students’ right to express their identity, and fully participate in all aspects of school life without religious coercion, bullying, or pressure to distance themselves from any aspects of that identity, including their connection to Israel.

6

Assuring that educators and curricula present contested issues in a balanced way rather than using the classroom to advance specific political or ideological viewpoints.

Jewish organizations are able to assist in implementation of these policies.

Your local Jewish Federation can assist in crafting policies to ensure Jewish students are protected, including through our [Student to Student](#) program, guidance around observances, accommodations and cultural classroom resources, and connections to other resources including from the signatories here.

American Jewish Committee’s Center for Education Advocacy provides guidance and training for school leaders, policymakers, and families on creating educational environments that fully include Jews and Jewish life and are resilient against antisemitism. Please access AJC’s resources [here](#).

The Anti-Defamation League’s many educational resources for educators, administrators, and families can be found [here](#).

The [StandWithUs K-12 Fairness Center](#) and [StandWithUs High School](#) provide resources and programs for students, families, teachers, administrators, and education leaders, empowering them to educate about Israel and fight antisemitism in K-12 schools.

[Unlearn It](#) is a resource hub for Canadian educators and parents to learn about, identify, and take action to address antisemitism.

Federation Model

Continued from page 9

raised matter. They are key to accomplishing our mission, and the ability to mobilize philanthropic resources remains one of the Federation system’s defining strengths. But dollars raised are the means to the end, not the end itself.

Federations also measure impact. Every Federation now has access to regular reports that look holistically at financial resource development, community allocations, organizational capacity, community infrastructure, participation, engagement and other indicators of organizational and community health. Federations also have more options than ever for understanding the attitudes and needs of their communities. Rather than relying solely on an every-ten-year community study, they can use community pulse surveys to understand how people are experiencing local Jewish life. Together, these tools allow Federations to look more holistically at whether their communities

are healthy and thriving – a shift from measuring dollars raised and allocated to measuring community impact.

The question is no longer only whether we have grown the resources to do the work. It is whether those resources, together with strong local institutions, effective leaders and shared infrastructure, are helping create the kind of Jewish community people participate in, feel safe in and show up for.

Positioned for today and tomorrow

The last six years have shown us that Jewish communities need institutions capable of building the community’s infrastructure to prepare for both good times and bad, moving quickly in a crisis, mobilizing resources at extraordinary scale, strengthening the organizations that make Jewish life possible, and creating new pathways for people to find connection and belonging. Federations have done all of that, and they are continuing to evolve.

The Jewish community does not need federations to be everything to everyone. It needs federations to do what few other institutions can do: to see the whole community, bring its disparate parts together, understand where the greatest opportunities and needs lie, and help translate collective priorities into collective action.

The crises of the past six years have shown us that this capacity is not a relic

of the past. This is what federations do today – and it is precisely why federations are so well positioned to help build the Jewish communities of tomorrow.

Shira Hutt is the executive vice president of Jewish Federations of North America. Mimi Kravetz is the chief impact and growth officer of Jewish Federations of North America.

Thanksgiving

Continued from page 2

And could joy flood our tongue like
countless waves –
Could our lips utter praise as limitless
as the sky
And could our eyes match the splendor
of the sun –
Could we soar with arms like an eagle’s
wings
And run with gentle grace as the swiftest
deer –
Never could we fully state our gratitude
to You
Our God and God of our ancestors.
It seems that the Rabbis recognized that
we can never be too grateful to God.

In the Birkat Hamazon, the intricate series of blessings that we say after meals, we sing joyously:
We thank You, Lord our God, for the pleasing and good and spacious land which you gave to our ancestors and for liberating us from Egyptian bondage. We thank You for the covenant sealed in our flesh, for teaching us Your Torah and Your precepts, for the gift of life and compassion graciously granted us, for the food we have eaten, for the nourishment You provide us all of our days, whatever the season, whatever the time.
We thank God for Israel, freedom, covenant, Torah, life, food, and more.

The Talmud frames the need to thank in a slightly different way. At Brakhot 35b it says:

Anyone who enjoys anything from this world without a blessing, it is as if they have stolen from God....
Having a day set aside on the secular calendar for giving thanks is important and we must take advantage of it with family, friends, and community. At the same time, we should never forget that our tradition informs us that we must be thankful on a daily basis.
With so much uncertainty in the world around us it becomes more important than ever to highlight the good things that surround us. This year as you are, God willing, surrounded by loved ones at a Thanksgiving table, make certain to elicit from each person what he or she is thankful for. Then request each person to make a promise to take some time every day in the coming year to express gratitude for something.

May your Thanksgiving be full and joyful.
Hodu L’Adonai Ki Tov – Give Thanks to God for God is Good

The Jewish Journal is pleased to host a monthly Rabbi Column, rotating among our community’s pulpit rabbis. The views and opinions expressed are those of the writer, and do not necessarily reflect those of The Jewish Journal, the Jewish Federation of Ocean County or the author’s Congregation.

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Securing Our Community

Secure Community Network Update – August Report

By Michael G. Masters
SCN National Director & CEO
September 10, 2026
securecommunitynetwork.org

Our community comes together and gathers for us to celebrate our new year. We do so at a congruence of two moments: a time for hope, renewal, and prayers for a better year ahead that falls, auspiciously, on the 25th anniversary of the September 11 attacks.

The beginning of 5787 can afford us the opportunity to reflect on all that has changed in the 25 years since that fateful September morning, whose successful attacks were attributed, in the 9/11 Commission Report, to a “failure of imagination.”

In the current environment – more complex and dynamic than even those surrounding 9/11 – we must guard against

suffering a failure of imagination, either as a country or as a community. We will do this through proactive engagement, an investment in preparedness, and collaboration, all grounded in the commitment that we will not allow our enemies to write our future. We will stand strong and steady.

In my Fox News op-ed, I wrote about a threat landscape where radicalization can now move to action in weeks or days. Through our National Unified Threat Management Network, inclusive of local, regional, and national collaboration that is working across our entire community, SCN is leading the next generation of threat management to meet that speed. We are proactively working to stop bad actors at their doorsteps before they get to ours.

At the same time, we recognize the uniquely local nature of security, and our

commitment to ensuring the sanctity of our facilities. This year, more than 5,300 community members registered to participate in our High Holidays Safety and Security Webinar Series. I encourage you to explore these resources this season and year-round.

We see this commitment in communities nationwide. In Nashville, our partnership with the Jewish Federation brought community leaders and law enforcement together with SCN for training and tabletop exercises. We also welcomed the Milwaukee Jewish Federation into our network and expanded access to Community Awareness Program 2.0 through a new pilot with The Counterterrorism Education Learning Lab (The CELL). Through a professional, connected, and standards-based approach rooted in collaboration across Federations and partners, we are making a more secure future for our community.

The work – and our impact – extends beyond the Jewish community. Last month, after several Catholic churches were vandalized in Fairfield, Connecticut, and Bridgeport, Connecticut, our Duty Desk linked the suspect to online activity showing concerning interest in the Jewish community. We shared that with local law enforcement, contributing to an arrest.

As we gather for our Holidays, we may do so with confidence, resilience, and a shared commitment to preparedness. May the year ahead bring peace, strength, security, and connection. On behalf of the entire SCN team, I wish you and your loved ones a Shana Tova U'Metuka, a happy and sweet new year.

Stay safe.

Secure Community Network Update – September Report

By Michael G. Masters
SCN National Director & CEO
October 5, 2026
securecommunitynetwork.org

Every lesson in preparedness begins with a story.

This month, we launched ***Standing with Strength: Stories of Survival***, an oral history project created in partnership with Emmy- and Golden Globe-nominated producer Craig Turk, to showcase the life-saving importance of proactivity.

The project features 10 survivors, witnesses, and family members affected by attacks and tragedies in Overland Park, Pittsburgh, Poway, Surfside, and Colleyville. Bringing their stories and experiences to life, the series carries their testimonies L'dor V'dor, from generation to

generation, preserving the lessons of those who have lived through tragedy and empowering our communities to prepare for tomorrow.

Reflecting on the Surfside building collapse, Ofi Osin-Cohen noted, “Little did I ever think that training for what's happening in the Jewish world would come in handy for me in my personal world.” Experiences like hers have informed SCN's drive for training that has reached more than 91,000 community members across North America since 2024.

Their voices remind us what is at stake.

Over the past month, the Duty Desk and our security professionals supported efforts that triggered active investigations and resulted in multiple arrests. From Canada to Florida, they worked

with community leaders and law enforcement to assess credible threats and share information in real time. This work involved the FBI, the SCN-American Jewish Committee (AJC) security program, and the South Florida Regional Threat Center, a cooperative effort between SCN and four Federations.

At the same time, the threat environment is evolving at warp speed, requiring us to adapt how we understand and respond to emerging trends.

A recent Anthropic report detailed how Iran-affiliated groups used AI to profile individuals in Israel and the Jewish diaspora and attempt to develop sophisticated weapons. For several months, an SCN task force of subject matter experts has been identifying emerging vulnerabilities and tracking how these tools are

being misused.

Looking ahead also means strengthening communities before a threat ever reaches their doors. In Georgia, our Grants Management team helped Jewish organizations secure more than \$1.5 million in state security funding, while teams across the country conducted physical assessments and training to build readiness.

The threat environment will keep changing, and so will we.

By staying connected, sharing what we learn, and giving communities the tools to prepare and respond, we create the conditions for Jewish life to be lived openly, proudly, and without compromise.

Stay safe.

The Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) established the Secure Community Network (SCN) in 2004. The SCN is a nonprofit organization that works to ensure the safety and security of the Jewish community in North America. The SCN's mission is to help individuals and organizations develop a culture of awareness, preparedness, and resilience through training, consultation, and information sharing. The SCN works with over 300 independent communities, 146 federations, and 50 partner organizations, as well as with partners in the public, private, academic, and non-profit sectors.





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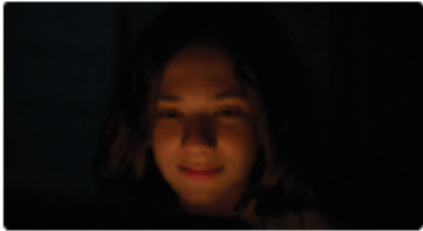


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Israeli Elections Webinar Series

Before the webinars – Primer Video available now at www.jewishoceancounty.org/jvu



Wednesday, September 9 at 2:00 p.m. ET
Israeli Elections 2026: What Can We Expect?
with Haviv Rettig Gur

Get an early look at Israel's political landscape, the major issues driving the election, and the parties, personalities, and trends to watch in the weeks ahead.



Monday, October 19 at 2:00 p.m. ET
One Week Until Israel's Elections
with Miri Eisin

With Election Day just one week away, take stock of where the race stands, what has changed during the campaign, and the key developments that could shape the final outcome.



Wednesday, October 28 at 2:00 p.m. ET
24 Hours After the Results: What Do We Know?
with Haviv Rettig Gur

One day after Israelis vote, we'll unpack the results, what they tell us about the Israeli electorate, and what comes next as the process of forming a government begins.

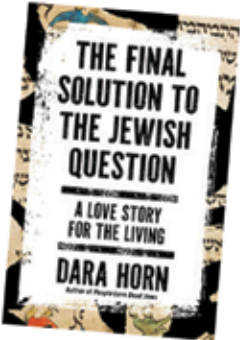
Recordings of these webinars will be available.

Register for these sessions at www.jewishoceancounty.org/jvu/programs

We are offering our community the opportunity to receive one of these two books for free:

When We See You Again, by Rachel Goldberg Polin
and **The Final Solution to the Jewish Question: A Love Story for the Living**, by Dara Horn

You can join a book club on one of these two books



and receive the book for free. Sign up here for more information or to join a group.
www.jewishoceancounty.org/israelbooks Or you can make a new contribution of \$72 or more to our Israel Resilience Fund, which is continuing to assist those in need in Israel especially after October 7.
www.jewishoceancounty.org/israel2026

About the two books . . .

In **When We See You Again**, Rachel Goldberg-Polin pours her pain, love, and longing onto paper, giving voice to the broken among us, and reminding us that even when the world feels choked with darkness, light exists in a different way. How do we find it? Her own experience has been extreme, but at its essence, this is a universal story of trying to live with grief. It is a story of how we remember and how we persevere, of how we suffer and how we love.

Combining deep historical research, investigative reporting, and storytelling bravado, **The Final Solution to the Jewish Question: A Love Story for the Living** is both diagnosis and prescription. Dara Horn explores and exposes the failures of Holocaust education, the long history of the antizionist movement, the compromises of the American Jewish "Golden Age," and the organized plot to poison artificial intelligence with anti-Jewish propaganda, and weaves it all into an erudite, audacious, and convincing series of arguments that invites readers of every background and inclination to become curious about their blind spots and to absorb new and uncomfortable truths. From there, she proposes a dramatic solution rooted in a new understanding of freedom and responsibility and clears a path toward a shared future.

See above about obtaining these books.



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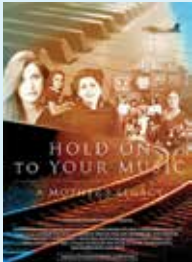
◀ Thursday, October 15
Beth Am Shalom
Fantasy Life
starring *Amanda Peet*
After losing his job as a paralegal, Sam Stein suffers a panic attack and stumbles into a job babysitting his psychiatrist’s three granddaughters. The girls’ mother, Dianne, is an actor

whose once-promising career has stalled; she’s in a difficult marriage to David, a rock bassist. When David goes abroad on tour, Dianne and Sam discover an easy rapport.

Sunday, October 18 ▶
JCC of LBI

**Hold On To Your Music:
A Mother’s Legacy**
with guest speaker *Manny Lindenbaum*

A young pianist escapes Nazi occupied Vienna on the Kindertransport, carrying nothing but her music and her mother’s final words. That act of love creates an artistic legacy that resonates across generations.



◀ Sunday, October 25
Marquee Cinemas, Toms River
The Everything Pot
starring *Lisa Edelstein*

A comedy of errors ensues when empty nester Rachel hastily sends a gift to Charlie, a former colleague, upon receiving his wedding invitation. The young couple’s wedding gets Rachel out of her perpetual state of ennui in her own marriage and brings unexpected excitement, which inadvertently causes chaos in both unions.

Sunday, October 25 ▶
Marquee Cinemas, Toms River

Ethan Bloom starring *Josh Malina*

Thirteen-year-old Ethan is supposed to be preparing for his bar mitzvah – but despite his Jewish family, Ethan is convinced his spiritual calling is with the Catholic church, where he secretly finds solace under the guidance of Father Diaz.



Jewish
Cultural
Festival
events
coming
this
fall!



This program is made possible in part by a grant administered by the Ocean County Cultural & Heritage Commission from funds granted by the New Jersey State Council on the Arts.



Sunday, November 1 ▲
Chabad of Toms River

Babka Baking

Join a hands-on, social workshop where participants learn to mix, fill, twist, and bake traditional sweet yeast breads together. Connecting neighbors through shared culinary traditions and the joy of creating fresh pastry. \$5 to register.



Thursday, November 5 ▲
Ocean County Library

PJ Library Game Show

Participants and the audience will get to test their Jewish cultural knowledge. Pre-registration is required, include adults in number attending.
See page 3.

More information on these events is available at:
WWW.JEWISHOCEANCOUNTY.ORG/CULTURALFESTIVAL
Become a sponsor and don’t miss out on any of the fun!

2026 Sponsorship & Registration



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[WWW.JEWISHOCEANCOUNTY.ORG/SPONSORSHIPS](http://www.jewishoceancounty.org/sponsorships)

----- The deadline to be in the next issue of the Jewish Journal is the first Thursday of each month -----

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Single Event – Fill in (Gold, Silver and Bronze Sponsors, please email camera-ready logo to sharron@ocjf.org)

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☐ **Oct. 15 – Fantasy Life** ☐ **Oct. 18 – Hold On To Your Music** ☐ **Oct. 25 – The Everything Pot** ☐ **Oct. 25 – Ethan Bloom**
#Tickets _____ x \$10 per film/ \$36 for all four films = _____

☐ **November 1 – Babka Baking**
Attending _____ x \$5/person = _____

☐ **November 5 – Game Show by Mainstages**
Attending (including parents) _____

Send form to: Jewish Federation of Ocean County · 1235A Route 70 · Lakewood, NJ 08701 · 732-363-0530



1. To begin, mix warm water and honey. When honey has dissolved, crush the yeast in your hands and add it to the mixture. Don't mix the yeast and water with a spoon.
2. Let your yeast rise. One way to do this is to heat an oven to 120 degrees, and place the covered bowl on top of it. For an eco-friendly option, cover the bowl with a cloth and place it near a constant heat source, whether that's your cat, your kid, or your partner. After about 10 minutes, the yeast should start to activate and rise.
3. Once the yeast has risen, add the olive oil and knead the dough until it's smooth and flexible. Put the bowl back in your warm place an hour or two to let it rise.
4. Braid two challahs and let them rise for 30 minutes. In the meantime, mix the remaining egg with a tbsp. of water.
5. Glaze the challahs, top with any desired spices or seasonings, and bake them in a 350-degree oven for about 20 minutes, until golden-brown.

3. While the yeast is rising, sift your flour into a large bowl. Mix in sugar, then salt. Next, crack two eggs into a separate bowl and beat together.
4. Using your fist, make a hole in the middle of your dry-ingredients bowl. Mix the eggs in slowly. Once the dough has absorbed the eggs, make another hole in the center and mix in the yeast mixture, slowly. Remember: Yeast doesn't like drafty weather or sudden decisions.
5. Once you've mixed all that together, leave the bowl in your warm place for about 10 minutes. Then, add in the olive oil and knead the dough until it's smooth and flexible. Put the bowl back in your warm place an hour or two to let it rise.
6. Braid two challahs and let them rise for 30 minutes. In the meantime, mix the remaining egg with a tbsp. of water.
7. Glaze the challahs, top with any desired spices or seasonings, and bake them in a 350-degree oven for about 20 minutes, until golden-brown.



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Carrying the Legacy: Preserving the Voices of the Second Generation

As the number of living Holocaust Survivors continues to diminish, the responsibility of preserving their stories becomes increasingly urgent.

2GNJ: Advancing Holocaust Awareness has created a new initiative, Carrying the Legacy, dedicated to recording and preserving the voices of the children of Holocaust Survivors – the second generation, often referred to as 2Gs.

For many members of the second generation, their parents’ experiences during the Holocaust shaped the homes in which they were raised. Some grew up hearing detailed stories of life before the war, persecution, loss, survival, and rebuilding. Others lived in homes where very little was spoken about the past, yet the effects of trauma, loss, resilience, and survival were still deeply felt. Carrying the Legacy gives these children of Survivors an opportunity to preserve both parts of that history.

Interviewees are invited to share what

they know about their parents’ lives before the Holocaust, what happened to them during the war, and how they rebuilt their lives afterward. They are also encouraged to reflect on their own experiences growing up in a survivor household and on the ways their parents’ experiences affected their families, values, identities, and future generations. For families whose Survivor parents never recorded formal testimony, these interviews can also preserve important pieces of history that might otherwise be lost.

2GNJ is partnering with the Rutgers University Oral History Archives to help ensure that these interviews are professionally recorded and preserved for future generations. Rutgers will assist with participant consent, scheduling, interviews, transcription, and archival preservation.

The goal of Carrying the Legacy goes beyond creating an archive. These testimonies can also become powerful educational resources for students and tea-

chers. When students hear personal and family stories, history becomes human. They begin to understand the Holocaust not simply as dates, statistics, and events, but as something that happened to real people, families, and communities.

The project also recognizes the importance of intergenerational memory. The Holocaust did not end for families in 1945. Its impact continued through the lives of Survivors, their children, and their grandchildren. By preserving the voices of the second generation, Carrying the Legacy seeks to ensure that these family histories, lessons, and memories will remain accessible long after the survivor generation is gone.

Anyone who is a child of a Holocaust Survivor and may be interested in participating in the Carrying the Legacy project is encouraged to contact 2GNJ: Advancing Holocaust Awareness for additional information at info@2GNJ.org.



Let's Build the Jewish Future

As One

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We stand strong against rising hate.
We help Israel rebuild and restore hope.

Jewish Federation of Ocean County

Scan the QR code or visit jewishoceancounty.org to learn more



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"For the Lord thy God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and grapevines, figs and pomegranates; a land of oil olives and date honey."

Deuteronomy/Devarim 8:7-8

The Jewish Federation helped to build Israel. Today, we help keep it strong.

Am Yisrael Chai - The people of Israel lives!

In Israel, an Arab-Jewish Youth Orchestra Builds a New “East-West” Sound Together

The Jerusalem Orchestra East & West, which arranged the program for young musicians, blends Western orchestral music with Middle Eastern traditions.



Tom Cohen conducts the youth program of The Jerusalem Orchestra East & West in Tel Aviv, May 2026. (Yaakov Buta)

By Debra Danan
May 27, 2026
forward.com

(JTA) – TEL AVIV – A raucous crowd of football fans filled the narrow strip of grass between Tel Aviv’s music center and Bloomfield Stadium, home to the Maccabi and Hapoel Tel Aviv soccer teams. Threading their way through them toward the concert hall was an incongruous procession of young musicians in eveningwear, lugging cases of every shape and size for contrabasses, violins, ouds, cellos and darbukas.

Inside the concert hall, a small audience of friends, siblings, parents and music lovers let out a swell of whoops and claps more in keeping with a soccer game than the polite demeanor usually reserved for orchestras.

The concert was the public culmination of a youth project composed of Jewish and Arab performers run by the Jerusalem Orchestra East & West, known as TJO, the Israeli orchestra led by conductor Tom Cohen that blends Western orchestral music with Middle Eastern, North African and Andalusian traditions. TJO has shared the stage with major Israeli artists including Matti Caspi, Danny Sanderson and Ehud Banai, and is due to perform at the Concordia Summit in New York in September.

The program brings youth orchestras from across the country under TJO’s guidance, training young musicians to carry forward the musical language Cohen has spent years developing. He describes that language as part of an evolving “Israeli sound,” made up of “everything that began with our grandparents in the various diasporas around the world and arrived with them here in waves of immigration.”

It grew out of his own journey from Western classical music into the music of the Maghreb and the Middle East,

and “brings together elements from East and West without losing the identity and distinctiveness of either one,” he said. “We’re creating something new that is greater than the sum of its parts,” Cohen said. Still, he was careful to add that the sound was not his orchestra’s invention, but part of “an evolution, not a revolution that erases what came before it.”

The recent concert brought together 80 musicians, ages 9 to 20, from half a dozen youth orchestras around the country, with some ensembles numbering in the dozens and others only a handful. Cohen said the project is meant to train a next generation of musicians who could one day join TJO, named the country’s leading orchestra by the Culture Ministry in 2022, while also sending them out as “ambassadors of its language” in their own work. “Throughout the process, we placed special emphasis on artistic excellence, direct professional encounters and a connection to the adult orchestra as a mentoring body that sets the path,” he said of the youth project.

Ensemble Sdot, a nine-member group from the Sdot Negev Regional Council in southern Israel whose players mostly wore kippot, took the stage first to perform a reworked song by the late Israeli singer-songwriter Meir Banai. In the audience, waiting for his own performance, Youssef Sarhan, a 9-year-old violinist from Majd al-Krum, an Arab town in northern Israel, bobbed his head along from his seat. He had begun studying a year and a half earlier with Fadel Maana, a veteran violinist in the Arabic tradition from the same town and one of TJO’s senior musicians, who later brought him into the youth orchestra.

Addressing the young musicians from the stage, Cohen said he usually resists the familiar exercise of identifying who came from which community. “This nonsense of saying who’s from where, it’s so unnecessary,” he said. But the mix was part of what made the music work, he told them, with Jewish, Muslim, Christian and Druze youth “backstage trading information about Umm Kulthum,” the revered Egyptian singer; maqams, the melodic modes used in Arabic and other Middle Eastern music; and other musical references. “Even if you’ve never spoken to each other in your lives, when two children sit together on stage, catch each other’s eyes while they’re playing and creating something together, the connection that’s forged there is as deep

as family,” Cohen told them.

Cohen, who lives with his family in Brussels, said the years of war had changed his relationship with his work, which had always been his greatest source of joy. “It’s a feeling I can’t describe, a feeling of being outside of time,” he said by telephone after the concert. “But the last three years took that away from me.”

As an Israeli conductor who plays Arabic music, Cohen said, his international career went quiet amid growing hostility toward Israel abroad, while in Israel it became harder to enjoy performing when, as he put it, “half an hour away, the world is falling apart.”

The youth project offered a way back. Cohen said he found comfort in the connection between musicians “who come from completely different religions, backgrounds and places,” and came to see the orchestra as “a symbol of real hope, not just a professional artistic institution.”

Malak Aboufdaly, a teenage bassoon player from Acre, said that after years of war, she felt a responsibility to give the audience a measure of relief. “It’s my job to make you feel how I play. Sad or happy,” she said. “But I think it’s really important that we can make people happy after two or three years of war.”

Outside the concert hall, 17-year-old Shoval Hayak, wearing a black evening gown, was being scolded to go back inside. She was excitable and effusive, not long removed from being a regular high school student in Moshav Hosen, near Israel’s northern border. After October 7, her family was evacuated to Tel Aviv, where she threw herself into singing. She joined the youth orchestra framework and later performed with the Israeli hip-hop and funk band Hadag Nash. At the concert, she was preparing to sing “Hallelujah” with Nihaya Safadi, a singer and viola player also from Acre, in an arrangement Cohen wrote during the orchestra’s first summer seminar. “I didn’t believe I could ever be a singer,” she said.

Some of her peers, she said, tried to escape the reality of war and displacement through recreational drugs. Hayak found her escape in music. “I gave my heart and soul to this project. I got sucked into it more and more,” she said. “I truly believe that if I give my whole heart, all the

small details that make everything shine come to the surface. Each time I go on, there are tiny improvements that I’m not even aware of at the time.”

She spoke quickly and warmly about the people around her: her mother, who she called “my support system”; Cohen, who she said had become like a father to her; and her boyfriend Yair, who could not attend because he was observing the Omer, the traditional mourning period between Passover and Shavuot when many observant Jews avoid live music. “Bless his soul, I adore him,” she said. The same affection extended to the other young musicians she performed with. “They’re the best family I could ever ask for,” she said.

Cohen said watching young musicians like Hayak “become professional and be captivated by the magic of music” is part of what kept him invested in the project, which he took on as a volunteer effort. The next step, he said, is to give the program a larger stage and bring in more students.

The adult orchestra returned to the same East-West language in a recent concert about mixed identity at the Israeli Opera in Tel Aviv, with additional performances scheduled elsewhere. The program centered on “matrouz,” Arabic for “interweaving,” a Judeo-Arabic tradition of placing Hebrew lyrics over Arabic melodies billed by the orchestra as the “original Jewish mash-up.”

Its pre-recorded guests included Dana International, the Israeli pop star who became the first transgender singer to win Eurovision in 1998, and Yusef Sweid, the Arab Israeli actor – performers who mirror the orchestra’s interest in what it calls “both/and” identities that can be Arab and Jewish, left-wing and right-wing, religious and secular.

The youth evening ended with all the young musicians together playing “Fataouma,” a Lebanese piece arranged and led by Cohen, who bounced on the balls of his feet, twirled on stage and flashed theatrical expressions at the players as he conducted. “I was looking for a way back to my happiness and I found it in this world of children,” he said. “When I’m with them and making music, I go back to real, deep joy. Like a child.”



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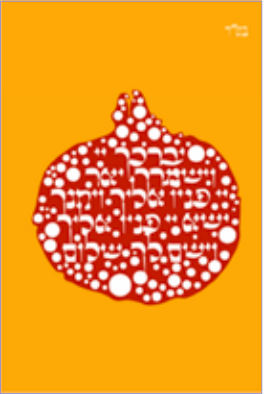
You may include everyone's name or just your family's name or without any names at all.

All submissions are subject to our editorial review, and we do not promise that all submitted photos will be published.

Email your submission to jewishocean@gmail.com.

We invite our community members to submit original poetry or short essays (500 words or less) to the Jewish Journal. All submissions are subject to our editorial review, and we do not promise that all will be published.

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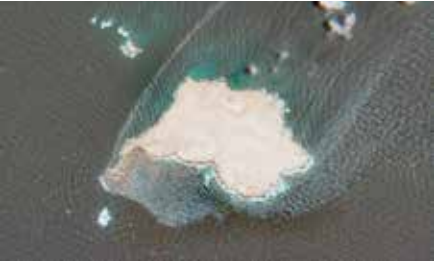
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Holocaust Survivors Alert

If you are a Holocaust Survivor who has never applied for compensation, or was turned down previously, there are new funds and guidelines. For more information, you may call the Claims Conference in NY at 646-536-9100 or go to their website: www.claimscon.org. Click on survivor resources, then click on compensation programs. They have a FAQ (frequently asked questions) section which should be read prior to applying.

Israeli Scientists Develop Huge Sponge to Mop Up and “Eat” Oil Spills

Ben-Gurion University scientists say plant material, enriched with nutrients to attract oil-guzzling bacteria, can absorb 100 times its own mass in crude oil or fuel in just seconds



This satellite image released by the European Space Agency shows oil leaking from a grounded UK-sanctioned tanker near Qilibiyah Island off the coast of Oman, July 28, 2026. (European Space Agency via AP)

By Sue Surkes
September 6, 2026
timesofisrael.com

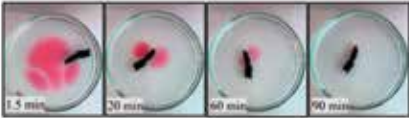
Scientists at southern Israel’s Ben-Gurion University have engineered a high-tech sponge made from plant fibers that can both mop up an oil spill and feed the bacteria that feast on oil and break it down, the university said.

The usual methods for tackling oil spills are to skim and soak up the black mess

or wait for nature’s microscopic cleaners to digest it. But oil-eating bacteria operate slowly in open water because they lack essential nutrients such as nitrogen and phosphorus.

In the past, scientists tried dumping liquid fertilizers into oil-slicked waters to feed the bacteria. While it helped accelerate cleanup, the liquid fertilizer quickly diluted into ocean currents, lost its effectiveness, and sometimes caused unintended environmental consequences, such as triggering massive algae blooms. The new research, led by Prof. Ariel Kushmaro and headed by Dr. Danit Lisa Karsagi Biron in the Environmental Biotechnology Laboratory, combines physical strength with sped-up biology.

The scientists created a spongy material made from cellulose fibers enriched with nutrients, then freeze-dried and baked at high heat (pyrolysis) to create a porous aerogel that acts like an ultra-light sponge. It repels water while locking onto petroleum compounds and can absorb roughly 100 times its own mass in crude oil or fuel in just seconds.



The time it takes for the aerogel sponge (in black) to consume the oil (in red) (Danit Lisa Karsagi Biron, Environmental Biotechnology Laboratory, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev)

Once the oil is trapped, the aerogel transforms into a micro-ecosystem. The baked-in nutrients give local oil-degrading bacteria a comfortable platform from which to guzzle their favorite food source. Instead of floating away or washing out, the nutrients remain on the sponge. Bacteria swarm the fibers, form dense colonies, and rapidly break down the trapped pollutants, then devour the sponge itself.

“These findings demonstrate the potential of the method we developed as a versatile and sustainable platform for treating oil spills in aquatic and marine environments,” a university statement quoted Kushmaro as saying. “By combi-

ning physical adsorption with biodegradation, the technology offers a promising and innovative alternative to conventional approaches, addressing both immediate containment and long-term environmental recovery.”

The research team also included Hanna Barak, Barak Halpern, Esti Kramarski-Winter, Lee Sheli, Noa Azri, Prof. Shmuel Hayoun, and the late Prof. Alex Sivan, all from Ben-Gurion University. The research is published in August in Chemical Engineering Journal Advances and the product is currently undergoing patent protection through BGN Technologies, the university’s technology commercialization company.



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JEWISH FAMILY AND *changing lives...*

Practicing Self-Reflection Compassionately During Teshuvah

By Avery Kannatt, MSW Intern
 Jewish Family & Children's Service

As the leaves begin to change, the weather gets a bit cooler, and the days grow shorter, fall has a way of making us slow down and take stock of our lives. It is usually a time to get back into the swing of regular activities outside of fun summer ones. This can include heading back to school for a new year of education or heading back to work with new goals.

For the Jewish community, this season carries an even deeper invitation. The High Holy Days encourage us to reflect on the past year and consider where we may have fallen short. It also includes taking time to think about the person we hope to become.

Self-reflection can sometimes become self-criticism. Teshuvah, meaning returning, repairing, and making changes, can at times feel less like an opportunity for growth and more like a list of everything someone has done wrong. It refers to the process of recognizing wrongdoing, sincerely regretting it, making amends where possible, and changing one's behavior. Mental health professionals emphasize that meaningful self-reflection does not have to involve harsh judgment on ourselves.

Psychologist Kristin Neff is a leading researcher on self-compassion. She describes self-compassion as treating ourselves with the same kindness and understanding we would offer someone we care about. Her research focuses on three central ideas. These include self-kindness rather than self-judgment, recognizing that imperfection is part of being human, and maintaining mindful awareness of difficult emotions without becoming overwhelmed by them. These ideas can offer a helpful perspective during the High Holy Day season.

Teshuvah asks us to acknowledge our mistakes. That does not mean we need to define ourselves by them. There is an important difference between saying, "I made a mistake," and "I am a failure." Thinking about our mistakes leaves

room for responsibility and change and thinking of ourselves as failures can leave us feeling stuck.

Self-compassion also does not mean avoiding accountability. Being compassionate toward ourselves can make it easier to face uncomfortable truths. When we are not consumed by shame, we may have more emotional energy to apologize, repair relationships and make different choices. This can be very important during a season when expectations are high. Family gatherings, synagogue services, memories of loved ones, and the pressure to have a meaningful holiday experience can bring complicated emotions to the surface. Someone may feel grateful and sad, connected and lonely, and hopeful and anxious, all at the same time.

Perhaps this fall, instead of asking only, "What did I do wrong this year?" we can also ask, "What did I learn?" "Where did I grow?" and "What do I want to do differently?" Teshuvah is ultimately about movement and turning toward a better path.

As we enter a new year, perhaps one of the most meaningful things we can give ourselves is permission to be a work in progress. We can take responsibility for our actions without withholding kindness from ourselves. Sometimes returning to who we want to be begins with learning how to speak to ourselves with a little more compassion.



CHILDREN'S SERVICE

...making a difference

GoGo Grandparent

We are thrilled to share some exciting news that we believe will make a real difference for our eligible Holocaust survivors. **The Jewish Federation and Jewish Family and Children's Service of Ocean County** is partnering with GoGo Grandparent, a national transportation service designed especially with seniors and those with limited mobility in mind.

We are offering this program to our eligible community Holocaust Survivors.

The Federation and JFCS are making available up to eight one-way trips per month for each Survivor to travel within the local Lakewood area at no cost to the Survivor. (A trip to the doctor's office and then home is counted as two trips). The 8 trips per month is the maximum number of trips allowed and is not carried over to the following month. If a Survivor needs or wants to use the service to travel beyond the local area, or more than the allotted eight trips, they may, at their own expense.

We understand that getting from place to place can sometimes be challenging. Whether it's arranging a ride to a doctor's appointment, visiting friends and family, attending a community event, or simply enjoying a trip to the grocery store, transportation should be safe, simple, and stress-free. That's exactly what GoGo Grandparent offers.

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For more information, call the Jewish Federation of Ocean County at 732-363-0530 or the Jewish Family and Children's Service at 732-363-8010.



PJ Library Photos with Children

Do you have a photo of your child reading or holding a PJ Library book? We would like to publish some of them. We omit the names of children. The names of any adults in the photos could be included or omitted based on the guidance of the adult submitting the photo(s).

Email them to jewishocean@gmail.com.

Together with the **Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference)** and a grant from the State of New Jersey, the Jewish Family and Children's Service of the Jewish Federation of Ocean County has been providing the sacred obligation of pikuach nefesh (saving a life in jeopardy) to Holocaust Survivors for many years. We realize that unless you are impacted directly, you may not fully appreciate how important this work is. **Every dollar you contribute will be matched 25 times!**



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ENGAGING ADULT COMMUNITIES

The goal here is to find ways to engage the Jewish populations in adult communities/Shalom Clubs with the Jewish Federation and to connect them to other Jewish activities/opportunities.

- Identify contacts and key “network nodes” in these communities to serve as influencers, networkers, and communicators
- Manage and follow through on ongoing communications and sharing opportunities with these networks
- Help identify/explore/shape opportunities that can be offered/delivered to these communities to help strengthen ties with the Federation/Jewish community
 - Films
 - Speakers
 - Topics
 - Sponsorships of programs

PLANNING EVENTS

We organize approximately 3 in-person events a year, to enable our community to come together, connect, and celebrate (hopefully) with each other.

- We are looking for people to help spearhead the framing and organizing of these events
- While this can include logistics and actual set-up, prep...this ideally includes positioning, promotion, and framing of these events
- This also can include volunteering on-site and engaging with guests/others at these events... ideally to help build affinity and connection to the Federation and Jewish community

HEROES AGAINST HATE

The opportunity for this program goes beyond just event promotion and set-up. This can be a platform for expanding reach in the broader community and engaging other groups/individuals in the mechanism of countering hate, spearheaded by the Federation.

- Sticking with the framework for Heroes awards discussed thus far...help identify other groups, organizations, places to look for and nominate Heroes
- Explore ways to expand awareness of the awards and the event
- Expand recruitment of participants and sponsors for the event/program

IDENTIFYING/EVALUATING GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

Identify and vet possible grant opportunities for the Federation.

- Explore opportunities for Israel, overseas grantmaking that fall within the Federation’s priority/focus areas
- Help evaluate effectiveness and impact of grants through these possible partners
- Can also include identifying opportunities locally for the Federation to have an impact...beyond our current partners/grantees – what would enable us to maximize impact?

HELPING PROMOTE FEDERATION ACTIVITIES/EVENTS

We can always do a better job promoting our activities and impact, through media, email/other engagement, and delivery of promotional materials.

- Identification of new places to deliver materials
- Ongoing updates/communications to local papers and adult community newsletters
- Ongoing updates/communications/promotions through local synagogues/Chabads

PJ PARENT AMBASSADOR

We now have over 1700 kids participating in our PJ Library program. We’re looking for some parents who can commit to:

- Identify the needs of families, and develop engagement opportunities that meet their needs
- Develop, plan and organize intimate small-scale engagement opportunities at family friendly destinations or home-based gatherings
- Encourage parents to be involved in planning and organizing programs and gatherings

Contact Avi at kotleram@gmail.com for more information and to get started!

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"I understood that Hashem was testing us."

A Father Forgives the Friend who Accidentally Killed his Daughter, Inspiring Others to Reconcile

After embracing the driver who struck his 8-year-old, a New York dad launches a campaign ahead of Tisha B'Av asking others to let go of anger.



Eight-year-old Charlotte Herzberg before she was killed in a car accident in June 2026 (Courtesy/Yudi Herzberg)

By Zev Stub
July 21, 2026
timesofisrael.com

Yudi Herzberg recalled the horror he felt on June 2, when his wife called him, hysterical, saying that Charlotte had been hit by a car while she was out riding her bike near the family's home in Monsey, New York. He said he arrived several minutes later, somewhat relieved to see two close friends from the neighborhood, both volunteers with the Hatzolah Jewish emergency medical service, on the scene.

But as Herzberg approached, one of them, his study partner of seven years, looked away in shame. "Suddenly everything clicked," Herzberg told The Times of Israel. "He was the driver who had hit her."

The juxtaposition floored him. "I was completely lost at that point. It didn't make any sense to me," Herzberg recalled. "How could it be that this great person and incredible friend was responsible for this? I couldn't fathom what was happening, but I understood that, for whatever reason, this was a challenge sent from Hashem," a Hebrew name for God.

But rather than allowing the tragedy to destroy their friendship, Herzberg embraced his grieving friend. That decision has since inspired thousands around the world to reconcile broken relationships.

In memory of Charlotte, remembered for her infectious smile and boundless energy, more than 2,600 people have now committed to letting go of grudges and reconciling arguments, according to the website Herzberg created, shalomforcharlotte.com. Herzberg is making a new push to commemorate his daughter's legacy through unity ahead of the Tisha B'Av holiday, which marks the downfalls of the First and Second Temples, which some root in communal strife. "I understood that Hashem was testing us to see if we could withstand the temptation to succumb to fighting and conflict," Herzberg told The Times of Israel in a phone conversation. "I felt that if we can embrace shalom [peace] in the face of this tragedy, we can pass this test."



Yudi and Chumi Herzberg with some of their children, including eight-year-old Charlotte, bottom right (Courtesy/Yudi Herzberg)

In the wake of the tragedy and even before leaving for the hospital, Herzberg walked over to his friend and embraced him warmly. "I wanted to let him know that this wasn't going to destroy the close bond we had built over the years," he said. The friend was speechless.

The incident was later ruled accidental. At the hospital, doctors told him they wouldn't be able to save Charlotte. He left crushed, but on the way home, he insisted on visiting his friend again. "I knew he was beating himself up, and I wanted him to know that I don't blame him for anything," Herzberg said. "So, I stopped by his house, went into his room, and gave him a hug. He couldn't look at me. He was completely distraught, a total wreck. Later, I found out he wouldn't be able to sleep for days."



Charlotte Herzberg prays at the Western Wall in an undated photo. (Courtesy/Yudi Herzberg)

At a widely attended funeral the next day, Herzberg described Charlotte's smile and happiness before turning to what everyone expected him to address. "I had to address the elephant in the room," he said. "So, I spoke about the test that God was giving us, tempting us to fight, and I said that, if we could use this to bring more unity and peace, we would pass the test."

His speech went viral, with videos shared widely through Orthodox Jewish communities. During the seven-day shi-

va mourning period, people started to share stories about how it inspired them to forgive others. "Someone told me that a person he had gotten into a fight with 40 years ago reached out to make peace," Herzberg said. "Another person told me about a woman who hadn't spoken with her parents in years, and after she heard about this, she went over to them and let her mother hold her baby for the first time."

After the shiva, Herzberg created the Shalom for Charlotte website, encouraging people to resolve their petty arguments. As of July 21, more than 2,630 people have shared stories of how they've forgiven family members, business partners, and old friends.

"After nearly seven years without speaking, I finally called my brother," one submission said. "We talked for over an hour." Another person wrote that he finally forgave a "selfish parent" who had him removed from his high school 30 years ago. "I'm writing this with shaking hands... [but] This popped up on my phone again tonight... and I said ok I'm ready to bury the hatchet of hatred."



Yudi Herzberg speaks at a ceremony following the death of his daughter, Charlotte, on July 9, 2026. (YouTube screenshot)

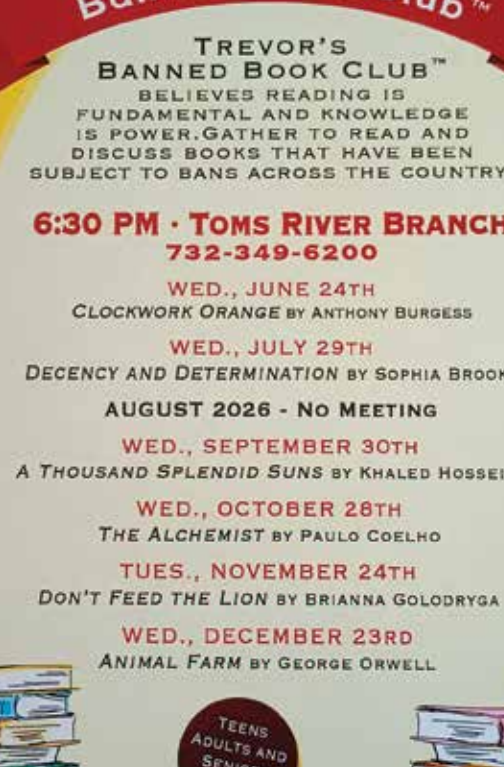
Since then, the 37-year-old Herzberg, who has five remaining children between the ages of 12 and three months, has been working on spreading the word of his newfound crusade. And he continues to study Torah every day with his friend, he said.

Charlotte's story has been broadly disseminated in ultra-Orthodox Jewish media in the US, Herzberg says, and he is now working on getting similar exposure in Israeli media. "I know Israel is a complicated place," he said, "but all of the issues we have, on the personal and national levels, I think they are all because we haven't made the peace we need to make with others. This is the legacy that Charlotte has left behind."

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