GREATER BOSTON
Brandes apologizes after ad offends Orthodox community

SENIORS
Planning a getaway with an elder loved one

OPINION
The Secure Community Network protects Jewish organizations

Not the norm: Innovative congregations offer options, opportunities for Boston Jews

ARA MARX, OF CAMBRIDGE, attends synagogue inside a Unitarian Universalist church.

The traditional egalitarian congregation that she attends and runs social media for, the Cambridge Minyan, doesn’t have its own building and rents space two to three times a month at the First Parish church in Harvard Square.

Members fully observe the Sabbath and holidays while allowing women and non-binary people to participate in services, Marx said in an interview. The congregation is led, so there isn’t a standing rabbi who leads services, and it encourages Sephardic traditions as well as Ashkenazi.

“We want to be more inclusive and we want to figure out where our own blinders are and where we can take down barriers toward other people’s participation,” Marx said.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8
Brandeis president apologizes after national ad campaign angers the school’s Orthodox community

By GAVI KLEIN JOURNAL STAFF

THE PRESIDENT OF Brandeis University has apologized for a recent ad in The New York Times Magazine that took aim at the school’s connection to Judaisms. The university came under fire for declaring in the title of the June 25 ad that Brandeis was “anything but Orthodox.” The ad angered observant students and Brandeis graduates, and brought international attention to the Waltham university.

The two-page spread appeared in The New York Times Magazine titled “Brandeis was founded by Jews. But, it’s anything but Orthodox.” The article contained the line “when one thinks of Jewish identity, anything but orthodox, we’re referring to its character.” The article went on to criticize the founding values of the university and its myriad accomplishments in the last 75 years. It ended with “needless to say, Brandeis is still unorthodox. And rest assured, we have no intention of converting.”

On June 30, Brandeis University President Ron Liebowitz sent out an email to current members of the Brandeis Orthodox Organization (BOO), formally apologizing for the ad.

Liebowitz wrote, “I am especially sorry that members of Brandeis’ Orthodox community, in particular, were hurt by the ad. You play a key role in our ongoing success. You bring energy, intelligence, and creativity to our Jewish community, to student life more broadly, and to the rigor of the academic experience that Brandeis offers. We are grateful to have such an engaged and thoughtful Orthodox Jewish community.”

The president’s email is a reversal from the initial statement released by the university’s communications department, which did not apologize, but pointed out that, “The ad was in no way intended to offend, but to underscore both the diversity of our community and our unusual origin story.”

Mosheh Ungar, a rising senior at Brandeis and president of BOO, told the Journal – before Liebowitz released his statement – that BOO was in communication with “senior administrators” and that conversations were going well. “I think it says a lot that they are willing to have this conversation,” he said. “I’m sure they’ll take steps to make sure this never happens again.”

Thus far in the ad campaign, print ads have only run in the New York Times. According to Julie Jette, interim senior vice president of communications at Brandeis, the campaign has also included digital ads on the websites of the New York Times, the Wall Street Journal, the Atlantic and Time magazine, and Facebook. The campaign will continue to run through the fall.

Jette could not offer further comment, but encouraged curious parties to look at the other ads in the campaign, which was launched in May 21. “They are very helpful content text for the focus of our campaign,” she told the Journal in an email.

“The ad went out of its way to say that Orthodox Jews helped build Brandeis,” said Dr. Jonathan Sarna, a University professor and the director of the Schuster Center for Israel Studies at Brandeis. “A lot of people only read the headline and never got to the text itself … we should use this as an opportunity to highlight what a great place for Orthodox Jews Brandeis actually is.”

This sentiment is shared by at least some of the Orthodox community at Brandeis, and bolstered by the reality that observant Jews at the university enjoy a few key perks that are not often found at other secular colleges in the country, including nearly all Jewish holidays off, multiple kosher dining options and daily minyanim.

Even before Liebowitz’s statement was released, Ungar told the Journal, “The school, in my opinion, is the best secular college in the United States to be a practicing Orthodox student … This ad just totally misrepresents what it means to be Jewish actually really do have it so good at Brandeis.”

From the variety of students and alumni the Journal connected with for this story, this seems to be the consensus; the ad was mis-conceived ("tone deaf", said Ungar), but not reflective of the Orthodox experience at the school.

“Everyone who went to Brandeis knows how much Brandeis loves and supports its Orthodox Jews,” said Lia Fischer, a 2020 alum. Fischer is not alone in her appreciation of the ad.

“For me, one honestly kind of resonate with what they’re saying, how we’re anything but Orthodox,” said Josue Miranda, a rising senior and the co-chair of the student organization of BOO. “People could describe me as Orthodox, but I wouldn’t really describe myself as Orthodox. I’m Sephardic. The version of Orthodox over here is so different from what I grew up knowing, and was raised by. I, for one, never really felt as if I fit the mold of what it means to be an Orthodox Jew. I was raised by a Kosher family.”

For Miranda, the ad actual- ly offered a powerful message. “What people feel is valid,” he said. “But there are other perspectives to consider. Not everyone is an Orthodox Jew. Those words carry a lot of meaning that not everyone resonates with.”

Note: The author is a graduate of Brandeis University, and was a member of BOO and the Chabad Student Board during her time there.

Fischer, who also served as a tour guide for the university, noted that admissions department is particular about how Brandeis is perceived as a Jewish school. “Admissions made it really clear that Jewishly, we wanted to emphasize that Brandeis is a non-sectarian university that was founded by Jews but for everyone on the basis of Jewish values,” Fischer said. “Reading through the article, I really understood that the point that Brandeis is trying to make is, you might think that we’re a Jewish university – we’re not … we definitely have Jewish values but we’re innovative, and doing new things, and we’re never going to have orthodox traditional values when it comes to education and learning; I honestly really like the article. That being said, I do understand how people took the title in a bad way.”

Fischer isn’t alone in her appre ciation of the ad.

“Jewish students, Jewish leaders, Jewish community members … we should use this as an opportunity to highlight what a great place for Orthodox Jews Brandeis actually is.”


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Chelsea Jewish Lifecare, a leader in caring for seniors and the disabled, was the proud host of the 2023 Association of Jewish Aging Services Leadership Summit last month.

Over 40 chief executive officers and executive directors from across the nation came together at the Leonard Florence Center for Living. Affiliated with Chelsea Jewish Lifecare/Legacy Lifecare, the Leonard Florence Center is the country’s first urban model Green House® skilled nursing facility, and now cares for more individuals living with ALS than anywhere else in the world.

Chelsea Jewish Lifecare CEO Barry Berman, Legacy Lifecare president and CEO Adam Berman, and AJAS President and CEO Don Schulman welcomed the prominent group.

Berman also discussed designing and building the Leonard Florence Center as well as the Cohen Florence Levine Estates, which was the first assisted living facility in Massachusetts to offer a subsidized tax credit program. Attendees had the opportunity to meet the residents of the Leonard Florence Center and hear, firsthand, their inspiring stories.

“Barry Berman, who has been CEO of the nonprofit for the past 46 years, presented the first session, explaining the unique history and mission of the organization. From a small wood-frame house in Chelsea that took care of a few elders to the sprawling campuses now in Chelsea (two locations), Winthrop, and Peabody, Chelsea Jewish Lifecare has grown into a renowned health care entity.

The second session, entitled “Community Security in Relation to Racism and Antisemitism,” delved into the growing antisemitism in the country. Two of Legacy Lifecare’s communities have been the recipients of nationally publicized incidents of antisemitic acts of violence and attempted destruction. Speakers included Acting United States Attorney for the District of Massachusetts Joshua S. Levy, and Combined Jewish Philanthropies Vice President of Security and Operations Jeremy Yamin.

Additionally, Annette Cooke, president of ZDcoach for the executive recruiting agency ZurickDavis, discussed “C-Suite Executive Coaching: Early, Mid and Pre-Retirement Years,” providing learning approaches to promote self-awareness, change, and growth.

The summit concluded with a panel discussion, led by Schulman, which focused upon “Operating Strategies in Our Senior Living Communities … 2023 and Beyond.” Panelists included Mike King, Jewish Senior Life, Rochester, N.Y.; Kathy Callnan, The Cedars, Portland, Maine; Adam Berman, Legacy Lifecare, Chelsea; and Jeff Gopen, Jewish Home Life, Atlanta, Ga.

Our relationship with Barry and Adam Berman and Chelsea Jewish Lifecare/Legacy Lifecare dates back many years,” said AJAS’s Schulman. “I am excited to showcase these innovative homes to our members.”

Adam Berman noted that it was meaningful for the organization to host the two-day summit. “It was remarkable to have so many industry leaders together, exchanging ideas and brainstorming a wide range of topics. We are truly honored that AJAS chose our organization as the site for such an important event.”
TISHA B’AV, THE ninth day of the Hebrew month of Av, begins at sundown on Wednesday, July 26 and concludes at nightfall of July 27. Traditionally, Jews have fasted on this day that marks the destruction of both of Jerusalem’s holy temples in 423 BCE and 70 CE. The ninth of Av has long been a reminder of distressing moments in Jewish history. In 1942, Jews were deported from the Warsaw Ghetto, which began on July 23, 1942. Coincidences or not, this day looms large in Jewish history. Traditionally, Jews give charity and spend much of the day in deep contemplation.

According to the Talmud (Yoma 9B), the second temple was destroyed because baseless hatred prevailed among the Jewish nation. Over the last 2,000 years, Jews have endured endless tragedies and atrocities. While antisemitism is still raging in America and Europe, Jews have seemingly never enjoyed the freedoms and civil liberties of today. Still, over the past decade, Jews have become more vocal in their opinions about everything from the economy to politics to one’s religious observance. This is particularly true in America – where opinions about politics have ended friendships and caused great strain within families.

Israel is now facing perhaps its greatest internal challenge. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has surrounded himself with a rightwing, religious-dominated cabinet, intent on overruling the country’s judicial system – even as he is on trial for corruption charges. This has angered at least half of the country – from the secular to the religious – who fear that the country is veering away from a democracy. This has led to desperate pleas from top Israeli senior military officials, security heads, legal jurists, economists, high-tech leaders, and hundreds of thousands of working Israelis – who have protested against this proposal for 27 consecutive weeks. Israel has no other option than to reach a national consensus on any revision to its legal system. Its future depends on it. Israel’s economy and its security are largely dependent on these very same citizens that are protesting. While the current coalition has labeled them leftists, the opposite is true – most as center, or center-right. They understand the challenges Israel faces, and have spent their lives on the front lines for their country. They are IDF veterans who fought in wars. They work and pay taxes (the same cannot be said about a large segment of the ultra-religious) and grasp that the country’s future rests upon civil discourse that will strengthen – not weaken – a democracy.

Netanyahu needs to rein in his coalition, who now openly insult the US and dismiss American support of Israel. America is Israel’s best friend – and has proven it time after time through its diplomacy and foreign aid. It is time for Israel’s leading political and religious leaders to take stock of the chaos that has torn apart the country and to move to correct it. Israel needs Shalom Bayit, or peace in its house. The same can be said among some American Jews who insist that others follow their political agenda and insult them if they do not. Perhaps, with some reflection, we can come to understand that we have free will – and that there are not always answers to everything, and that the only thing we can control is our actions.

Brandeis is ‘anything but’ bad for observant Jews

There is a strong culture of communal Shabbat dinners at Brandeis, and significantly so. In 2018, Shabbat lunch students coordinate Orthodox services, extra-circular Torah learning, and plenty of social activities. We also offered Sephardic High Holiday services and cultural events this year for a steadily growing community. In a partnership between Hillel and the Orthodox Union, students have had the Torah guidance and home hospitality of Sephardic Learning Initiative on Campus educators for the last 23 years. Leading Orthodox educators from Israel and the U.S. often visit to teach Torah.

A popular Chabad House is just off campus, and many students move between all these opportunities comfortably. On most major Jewish holidays and for all of Passover, there are no classes. When the current university administration determined in 2021 that it could not allow travel off campus during the pandemic, it undertook – at great expense – to make sure Passover could be observed on campus for the entire week. It was a remarkable achievement of what can be done when students, professionals, professors and the administration work together.

Students have access to one of the world’s most distinguished Jewish studies departments, and professors in various fields who are personally observant. Many faculty at Brandeis are committed to the Jewish community and care deeply about students. For all of these reasons, we should not let the ad be the last word or leave us with a false impression.

Of course, the university does not conform to or require anyone to follow Jewish practices. Professor Marvin Fox, who taught at Brandeis from 1974 to 1993, once wrote in CrossCurrents, the academic journal about religion, that “At Brandeis you know you are in a secular university, that ‘At Brandeis you know you are in a Buddhist university which is a distinguished member of the larger academic world.”

Brandeis is, in fact, not Orthodox or Reform or Conservative – it is religiously neutral. And it is a place where observant Jews (not only religious) and grasp that the country’s future rests upon civil discourse that will strengthen – not weaken – a democracy.

Rabbi Seth Winberg is executive director of Brandeis Hillel and the university’s senior chaplain.
They want us to wonder whether it is safe to live openly as Jews

By DAVID M. SHRIBMAN
JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT

PITTSBURGH – The way Michael Masters tells it, the epiphany occurred on the way to dinner. He was in New York City, walking down 57th Street near Broadway, when he saw a swastika on the wall of a building. Amazing timing, it turned out; at that moment he was contemplating taking a job with a nonprofit called the Secure Community Network, a kind of security agency created by the Jewish Federations of North America to harden synagogues and other places – community centers, summer camps – at a time when antisemitism was on the march and in the wake of the 2018 shooting of 11 Jews at prayer at Pittsburgh’s Tree of Life synagogue.

“The sight of that swastika so infuriated me – it so struck me – because there I was in midtown Manhattan and I was looking at that swastika,” he told me. “I thought that if that could happen in midtown Manhattan, then we have a problem.”

He took the job, and now, as national director and CEO of the Chicago-based network, he has traveled to Pittsburgh, a few miles from Tree of Life and, in the other direction, a few miles from where Robert Bowers, convicted of the murders, is on trial for his life.

So his story – born in Chicago; educated at the University of Michigan, Cambridge University and Harvard Law School; worked for nonprofits in Washington; a stint on the judge advocate staff of the Marines, some time as chief of staff of the Chicago Police – is really a New York story, and a Pittsburgh story, too.

A Pittsburgh story because, as he related to me the other morning, “I was thinking about what Jewish life looked like in this city, and about what Jewish life was going to look like in this city, and I realized that we as Jews need to be prepared.”

He went on: “As this city knows better than anyone else, our enemies are well-armed, highly motivated and not just interested in taking Jewish lives but in destroying Jewish life. They want to stop us from showing up to synagogues, they want us to question whether it’s safe to send our children to Jewish day school or to Jewish camp, they want us to wonder whether it is safe to live openly as Jews.”

This moment, he built a team of security professionals – some former military, some from law enforcement, still others with a national security background – who are dedicated to the mission of assuring the safety and security of the Jewish community. More than three-quarters of the staff are non-Jews, representing an understanding beyond the Jewish community that more than the safety of one group of people is at stake in this battle, that the safety of Jews is a proxy for a broader American challenge: the very principle of religious freedom in freedom’s home country.

The efforts are nationwide. For nonprofits in Washington; a branch here and relied on a national leadership. It has, to be sure, a large, active, prominent Jewish community in Pittsburgh and beyond with which the Secure Community Network is tied to, or involves, what prominent Jewish community leaders are working “to empower the community in Pittsburgh and beyond with training and physical security.”

Over the course of the Tree of Life trial, which began in early spring, the group has maintained a command post staffed in Pittsburgh with an intelligence analyst and a security director. The group has forged a close relationship with federal law-enforcement personnel here and relied on a national technology effort that actually was developed with philanthropists from Pittsburgh, all of whom once had an affiliation with Tree of Life.

“Our enemies are well-armed, highly motivated and not just interested in taking Jewish lives but in destroying Jewish life.”

– MICHAEL MASTERS

Pittsburgh didn’t expect to be Ground Zero for this sort of effort. It has, to be sure, a large, active, and prominent Jewish community, centered in the Squirrel Hill neighborhood, but until October 27, 2018, it was happy to be a quiet backwater of Jewish life, its residents sending their children to Community Day School or to the Yeshiva School or, for the more secular, Taylor Allderdice High School. Rabbinically-sanctioned Kosher restaurants sat on Murray Avenue and Forbes Avenue. You could tell the exact minute that Shabbat began and ended by looking in the window of the Murray Avenue Kosher store. You could have a falafel at the Milky Way, which boasts that “our vegetarian pies … are above standard in taste and quality.” And you could go to services Saturday morning at Tree of Life, or at about a dozen other venues.

So much remains the same, and yet so much has changed.

Michael Masters provides witness testimony at a Committee on Homeland Security hearing.

Secure Community Network National Director Michael Masters stands in SCN’s Jewish Security Operations Command Center in Chicago.

The Milky Way – where a dozen rabbis from around North America had dinner after one of the funerals for the victims of the Tree of Life massacre – still serves a mean spinach and feta pizza (with the caveat that “one would be insane to compare us to our competitors or take us for a ‘normal’ pizzeria”). But the serenity of this neighborhood has been shattered. Masters knows he cannot fully restore that. But he and his staff are on the lookout “for the people who pose a threat,” and working “to empower the community in Pittsburgh and beyond with training and physical security.”

A community says thank you, because he and his network are welcome.
Former ambassador calls for compromise to secure Israel’s future

By RICH TENORIO JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT

BOSTON – Although Israel’s 75th anniversary has dominated news headlines this year, Michael Oren is thinking about a different milestone. The former Israeli ambassador to the United States has published a book envisioning the Jewish state on its centenary: “2048: The Rejuvenated State.”

“I made two vows,” Oren told the Journal over Zoom during a recent visit to Boston. “I would not shy away from any issue, no matter how controversial.” And, he added, “I wanted my readers to engage with the whole idea, animate and facilitate a conversation. If that happens, I will succeed in reaching my goal.”

Published in English, Hebrew, and Arabic versions within the same volume, the book’s chapters address such challenging topics as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the ultra-Orthodox, and the US-Israel relationship. There’s even a chapter dealing with judicial reform, an issue pursued by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

To write the book, Oren drew upon his experience as ambassador to the US from 2009 to 2013, during Netanyahu’s second administration as prime minister. As envoy to Washing- ton, Oren met with then-US president Barack Obama, visited American military service academies such as West Point, and addressed student groups on college campuses.

Although he grew up in New Jersey, he noted the Massachusetts roots of his parents – Chelsea for his father, Malden for his mother – along with North Shore connections to other family members in Swampscott and Marblehead. While back in the area, he took time to assist two organizations: United Hatzalah and the Secure Community Network. He made Aliyah in 1979 and served in several conflicts with the Israel Defense Forces.

The book arose out of a conversation between Oren and Netanyahu about a half-decade ago.

“We were lamenting that in Israel, we’re so bogged down by the day-to-day crisis that we can’t imagine what Israel should look like on its 100th birth-day in 2048,” Oren said.

That conversation sparked an idea for a state commission on the subject, but after Netanyahu’s government fell in 2021, the Shalom Hartman Institute of North America at Columbia University took over the project. Today, “Israel 2048: The Second Century” is an Israeli NGO, or non-governmental organization.

“The book is designed to be part of the NGO, so to get people to think about our future, particularly young people, both in Israel and the US, the diaspora,” Oren said. “These [are] the young people who are going to inherit the state in 25 years. What form of the state do you want to see?”

Some of Oren’s proposals challenge conventional wisdoms – including questioning the extensive military aid Israel receives from the US. He notes that in 2016, he was the only member of Netanyahu’s administration to oppose the $38 billion military aid package from the Obama White House.

“There were a lot of strings to the aid that I opposed,” Oren said. “Also, the opportunity cost. We can’t sell [arms] to who we want to sell. Thirty-eight billion dollars is giving up many more billions in sales.”

He mentioned broader issues within the relationship between the two countries, including an American desire to pull back from the Middle East, and some American politicians calling for less foreign aid.

Regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Oren made statements that contradicted international positions on the occupied territories. Instead of the widely used term “the West Bank,” he referred to the biblical name of the region, Judea and Samaria.

“I say in the book that the land of Israel belongs to the people and the State of Israel,” he said. “The same right I have to live in Jaffa, the same right another Israeli might have to live in Hebron, Belz El, or El’A, a reference to three locations in the West Bank. A historic city with a current Palestinian majority and two Jewish settlements. El’A is located near the site of a June 20 terror attack that killed four Israelis.

However, Oren’s position on Israel’s borders comes with caveats.

“The fact we have the right does not mean we have to realize that right under every condition,” he said. “It’s not a statement that we should do this in Jenin or do this in Ramallah. There’s another people there.”

In his view, while it is impossible to occupy one’s own land, it is possible to occupy another people. To avoid this second situation, he said, “We should do our best to reach some type of accommodation” with the Palestinians.

Oren highlights the importance of reaching accommodations with other groups as well, including Israeli Arabs and the ultra-Orthodox. He proposed a “new deal” between the Israeli government and Israeli Arabs, in which the former would ramp up efforts to fight discrimination in society and the latter would declare loyalty. He also recommended finding ways to integrate the ultra-Orthodox into wider Israeli society, and to accommodate other denominations of Judaism in the country’s religious fabric.

Although the book addresses numerous pressing issues, the author seeks to maintain a sense of hope for 2048.

“I want what happens, I will succeed in reaching my goal,” Oren replied, “Our ability to overcome just about everything. We’ve faced bigger challenges in the past and overcome them.”

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Precious moments don’t have to be missed – they just take a little planning

BUBBE TALK

By CAROLYN EGGERT
JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT

PLANNING A GETAWAY with an elder loved one, whether it is for a day at the beach or a longer trip, requires planning, flexibility, creativity and a sense of humor. If your destination is the ocean, take a walk with Bubbe before you go anywhere. Get a sense of her balance and gait. If you have any concerns, adjust your plans. Even if mobility hasn’t been an issue for her, walking on sand (with its uneven terrain, rocks and other fall hazards) may need to change to a stroll on the boardwalk. Take walking and water breaks and enjoy sitting on a bench by the beach, soaking up the sun and salt air (bring sunscreen and hat). If lunch is part of your itinerary, know where your options are located, make a reservation if possible. (Avoid sitting in line on a hot day. Inside seating could be more comfortable.)

The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) provides wheelchairs specifically designed for beaches, parks and pools. Keep in mind that you are responsible for transferring your loved one to and from the chair and pushing it. Look at DCR’s website to see what beaches throughout the Commonwealth can offer. You will find information on wheelchairs, accessible bathrooms, shade shelters, and more: mass.gov/info-details/beach-wheelchairs#boston-area-beach-wheelchair-locations.

I just read an article about two teens from Manchester-by-the-Sea who use a golf cart to transport people to Singing Beach from the commuter rail or parking lot. Hopefully, their entrepreneurial spirit will catch on at other beaches. Don’t forget water, sunscreen and hats!

Family Simchas

Precious moments don’t have to be missed. They just have to be rethought. My Dad just became a great-grandfather for the second time. We drove from Boston to New York to attend the Simchat Torah. Creativity and a sense of humor. A request to those who are planning events

Most of your favorite elders want to join in the celebration. But please take a few things into consideration when planning.

Is the wedding venue easily accessible? If you are getting married on top of a mountain, send the invitation but understand that bubbe and zayde may not attend.

Alternatives: Rethink the venue, inquire about services for people with limited mobility, then share this information with them. Or, don’t put pressure on them to attend. Make a special visit to them where you can have your own personal celebration. If zayde and bubbe are coming to the event, suggest that they bring a companion to help them navigate. You could assign a friend or family member to them to make sure they don’t feel rushed.

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Not the norm: Innovative congregations offer...
options, opportunities for Boston Jews

saying so, which could point to a lack of interest or accessibility. 

“If you’re coming from college and you’re like, ‘I know that I have a Jewish community, it’s super helpful for me, but I don’t know where I fit,’ Moishe House is great for you because you can literally build the community you want to see,” Walker said. “And eventually, if you want, and you’re in the age range of 21 to 32, you can become a resident and fulfill that, as long as there’s an opening or we’re looking to open a new house.”

Besides outposts to Lehrhaus, events at various Moishe Houses in Boston have been Israeli movie nights, painting flower pots, a Shavuot holiday potluck, and a body positivity Jewish learning discussion. The programming is akin to Hebrew school or Jewish summer camp for adults, with more engaging activities rather than traditional Torah study.

Another Boston-based Jewish program specifically curated for young adults is a subsidiary of a much larger Reform synagogue, Temple Israel of Boston. The congregation within it is called the Riverway Project, and unlike the aforementioned innovative groups, it has its very own rabbi.

“It’s a really good way for people to meet people,” Nalani Hauster, engagement associate and Riverway project coordinator, said in an interview. “We also do ‘Neighborhood Shabbats.’ They’re hosted in people’s homes — sometimes in Cambridge or Somerville, our last one was in Jamaica Plain, sometimes in Mission Hill. It really depends on who is willing to host.”

The Riverway Project has monthly Shabbat dinners and services, where Rabbi Andreas Oberstein encourages attendees to do whatever feels most comfortable and meaningful for them. He explains to participants that if the “God language” in prayers and Torah creates an obstacle for them, they can reflect on themselves or meditate instead of praying to a higher power.

A musical theater BFA graduate of Emerson College, Oberstein takes his stage presence to the pulpit and brings upbeat music to the congregation. He is dedicated to a “life of pursuing justice and radical inclusion in Jewish spaces across America,” according to his website. At Shabbat services, he’s facilitated guest speakers such as Rotem Sorek, a leader within the Israeli transgender community.

Hauster said that the inclusivity welcomes young Jewish adults who might not know where they fall on the religious observance spectrum. Recently, staff at the Riverway Project have focused on how to reach out to newly-graduated students staying in Boston for work, she said.

“When I was a Hillel professional, one of my favorite things I did with my students was talking with my seniors about ‘Where can you go next?’ and I’ve been thinking about it in those terms,” Hauster said. “We’ve really been thinking about, ‘What can Riverway do for those folks?’

One of their new programs marketed to graduates is a 10-week class through IYUN, where participants discuss life issues through a Jewish lens, using texts to supplement learning, Hauster said. IYUN classes include “Sex, Intimacy, and Relationships: Toward a Postmodern Jewish Sexual Ethic” and “Jewish Wisdom for Life’s Great Questions.”

With no shortage of Jewish learning opportunities and synagogues for almost everyone, Marx appreciates the Boston area for its flexibility, she said. Although independent synagogues and congregations aren’t “this new thing” they evolve over time, Marx said.

“As participants go into different life stages, their needs are different, and it’s great to have these omnious ways of practicing,” Marx said. “I find that really personally meaningful.”

Bailey Allen is a journalist based in Boston.
Shabbat Candle Lighting
July 14, 8:02 p.m.

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Israel Fish, 7:30 – 9:30 p.m. Presented by Jewish Climate Action Network. Together for Tisha B’Av Gathering to Pause in observation of the tragic days of destruction. As the sun sets, Rabbi Kitty Allen and Rabbi Allison Adler will lead the reading of the description of the utter catastrophic disaster that befell the city of Jerusalem, its women, children, animals, its buildings, its gates and walls. Today when climate change creates havoc and war destroys lives and resources, JCAN-MA wishes to gather together, pause, and begin to mind the fearful destruction all over the world today. Preston Beach, 454 Atlantic Ave., Marblehead.

Thursday, July 27

Meet and Greet at Congregation Ahavat Olam. 6 – 8 p.m. Rabbi Idan and the entire Congregation Ahavat Olam Board invite the community to learn more about Congregation Ahavat Olam. We will share our plans for what promises to be an exciting and inspiring 2324 season. Meet and Greet sessions will take place at various locations and online on July 7, Aug. 12, Aug. 16, and Aug. 22. For members and prospective members, go to our website, www.ahavatolamboston.org to register for a date and location that works best for you. Locations will be provided upon reservation. For information, call 781-526-4854.

Monday, August 7

Dudu Fisher in Live Concert for Israel’s 75th. 7:30 – 9:30 p.m. Performing in English, Hebrew and Yiddish, internationally renowned Dudu Fisher will perform songs and musical numbers, including “Adon Olam,” “Yiddishka Mammka,” “Jerusalem of Gold” and more. Fisher is an artist of film, television, stage and song whose career spans over five decades. For tickets ($36 – $126) go to: https://www.eventbrite.com/e/dudu-fisher-in-live-concert-for-israels-75th-tickets-65038992977. Temple Israel, 477 Longwood Ave., Boston.

Wednesday, July 26

Tisha B’Av Gathering To Pause Together. 8 – 10 p.m. Presented by Jewish Climate Action Network, communities are invited to gather in observation of the tragic days of destruction. As the sun sets, Rabbi Kitty Allen and Rabbi Alison Adler will lead the reading of the description of the utter catastrophic disaster that befell the city of Jerusalem, its women, children, animals, its buildings, its gates and walls. Today when climate change creates havoc and war destroys lives and resources, JCAN-MA wishes to gather together, pause, and begin to mind the fearful destruction all over the world today. Preston Beach, 454 Atlantic Ave., Marblehead.

Ongoing

Israel Dance Group At Temple Ner Tamid. In Peabody. Tuesday nights at 8 p.m. $2 donation. For more information, email grigerman@aox.com. Temple Ner Tamid, 368 Lowell St., Peabody.

Keitling for Fun and a Cause. Tuesdays, 10 a.m. – 12 p.m. Contact Susan at templepsina@gmail.com for more information. Temple Sinai, 1 Community Road, Marblehead.

Israel Folk Dancing at the JCCNS. Sundays 8:30 – 9:30 a.m. and Thursdays 7:30 – 9 p.m. Thursday classes (6:30 p.m.) are beginner dance lessons for June and July only. Email RSVP or questions to israeli.folk.dance@gmail.com or visit www.jccns.org for more info. 4 Community Road, Marblehead.

Shabbat by the Pool. Fridays through Aug. 25; 5 p.m. At the JCCNS Ousdoor Pool. Hosted by different organizations and programs. For more information visit www.jccns.org. 4 Community Road, Marblehead.

CJE Challah Bake. 10 – 11:30 a.m. Presented by Congregation Shirat Hayam. For children entering 1st through 5th grade (siblings are welcome): Come learn about our CJE curriculum, get to know future classmates, and walk away with a delicious challah. Free and open to all. RSVP at: bch@jchallahbake.55 Atlantic Ave., Swampscott.

July 14, 8:02 p.m.

Shabbat Candle Lighting

July 21, 7:37 p.m.

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The dark side of the American Dream in three acts

By JULES BECKER
JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT

The ‘Lehman Trilogy’ in three acts – Jewish and non-Jewish – is the American Dream? Has playwright Stefano Massini (a Jew who speaks Hebrew) turned the recurring entry of the Kaddish into a metaphor for mourning the Lehman family’s increasing assimilation over generations? No matter where audience members stand – and this critic sees both elements in this far-ranging 2020 Tony Award winner – the riveting Huntington staging (the first American production since its Broadway run) should have all the augeors giving timely attention not only to the rise and fall of the Lehmans but also to the nature and responsibilities of financial success.

‘The Lehman Trilogy’ is a three-act, nearly three-and-one-half hour play (adapted by Ben Powers from Massini’s original five-hour work, which debuted in Italy in 2015). The story stretches from Montgomery, Alabama, in 1844 to New York City in 2008. It begins with the migration of Ashkenazic German Jew Henry (Heyum) Lehman from Bavaria to Montgomery, where he establishes a dry goods business. Emanuel and Mayer sit Shiva for the traditional mourning period for Philip (1897). During the tenure of Philip’s son Robert (Billie), comic books and Hollywood become an additional focus. A mourning period for Philip lasts all of three minutes (1947). Continued on Page 16.

After plantation fires and the end of the Civil War, the family’s business interests and investments gradually expand to include oil and coal – and later, to electricity, railroads and even planes. Generation by generation, the Lehmans become more assimilated. Philip observes, “Our flour is money.” Shiva is shortened to three days for the passing of Mayer (1897). During the tenure of Philip’s son Robert (Billie), comic books and Hollywood become an additional focus. A mourning period for Philip lasts all of three minutes (1947).

Continued on Page 16.

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Faith Lerner, 68, of Peabody, formerly of Marblehead

Faith Lerner, of Peabody, entered into rest on June 28, 2023, at the age of 68.

Beloved wife of the late Mark Lerner. Devoted mother of Samantha Lerner and her husband Cody Ross. Cherished grandmother of Abigail and Daniel Lerner, and Jonathan and Loretta Band and Stephanie and Brian Kaplan, Josh and Catherine Band, and Jonathan Band and Luz Salinas. Beloved Auntie Gigi to Ezra and Mali Kaplan, and Miles and Archie Band.

Faith grew up in Marblehead, graduated from Marblehead High School, and raised her family in Peabody. She cherished her time spent with family, friends, and her fur babies.

A funeral service for Faith was held on June 30 at Temple Ner Tamid, 368 Lowell St., Peabody, with internment at Congregation Shirat Hayam-Temple Israel, 506 Lowell St., Peabody.

In lieu of flowers, expressions of sympathy may be made in Faith’s memory to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, P.O. Box 849168, Boston, MA 02284, or to Gift of Life, 5901 Broken Sound Pkwy NW, Suite 600, Boca Raton, FL 33487.

Arrangements were handled by Stanetsky-Hymanson Memorial Chapel, Salem. For more information or to register in the online guest-book, visit www.stanetskyhymanson.com.

Karen (Borstein) Gouse, 69, of Peabody

It is with a heavy heart we announce the passing of Karen (Borstein) Gouse of Peabody at 69 years of age.


Arrangements were handled by Stanetsky-Hymanson Memorial Chapel, Salem. For more information or to register in the online guest-book, visit www.stanetskyhymanson.com.

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Marilyn Drebenn, 88, of Marblehead and Bay Harbor Islands, Fla., formerly of Everett

Marilyn Drebenn, of Marblehead, entered into rest on June 29, 2023, at the age of 88.


She crossed paths with Frank Sinatra, Shakira, and Adam Sandler. She was featured in the Jewish Journal in August 2019 (“Casting call for a local woman in Adam Sandler film”). But she is best remembered most for her endless smile and contagious enthusiasm.

A private funeral was held at Shi-rat Hayam Cemetery in Peabody on July 2. A Celebration of Life for friends and family will be held in the future.

In lieu of flowers, expressions of sympathy may be made in Marilyn’s memory to Dana-Farber Cancer Institute, P.O. Box 849168, Boston, MA 02284, or to Gift of Life, 5901 Broken Sound Pkwy NW, Suite 600, Boca Raton, FL 33487.

Arrangements were handled by Stanetsky-Hymanson Memorial Chapel, Salem. For more information or to register in the online guest-book, visit www.stanetskyhymanson.com.

Karen (Borstein) Gouse, 69, of Peabody

Karen was predeceased by her parents Henri Borstein and Joan (Wolf) Borstein of Florida. Loving wife to Neil Gouse, Dear sister to Sherry Fritz and her late husband Kenny, Laurie Marks and her husband Bruce, and Amy Pohl and her husband Jay. Proud mother to Courtney and Mitch. Karen was the glue of the family, often arranging family dinners and holidays. She enjoyed her work as a travel consultant for over 40 years.

We kindly invite you to a Celebration of Life, which will be held on September 30 at the Ledgewood Club House, 1 Ledgewood Way, Peabody. Donations may be made to the Liver Foundation of New England.

Arrangements were handled by Stanetsky-Hymanson Memorial Chapel, Salem. For more information or to register in the online guest-book, visit www.stanetskyhymanson.com.
Theodore J. Rimer, 86, of Beverly, formerly of Danvers and Peabody

Born in Beverly, he was the son of the late Benjamin and Helen E. (Greenfield) Rimer. He was raised in Danvers and Peabody and attended the Peabody school system. Ted continued his education earning a bachelor’s degree from Boston University.

Ted had been employed for many years as an executive for Wolverine Worldwide, where he had built many long-term relationships throughout the world.

As a young man in the United States Army, he served as an attaché to the first president of South Korea, Syngman Rhee, during the Korean Conflict.

For the past three years, Mr. Rimer resided at the Ledgewood Rehabilitation and Skilled Nursing Center in Beverly, where he took the time to get involved in daily activities, not only with the residents but with the staff as well. His presence, care and compassion toward Ted during his time there.

In addition to his parents, he was predeceased by his sister Bennett McCartney, as well as his aunts and uncles. He is survived by his cousin Samuel Robert and his wife Paula Rimer of Stuart, Fla., as well as extended family and friends whom he loved and appreciated most dearly.

Ted will be interred privately, next to his beloved parents at the Sons of Jacob Cemetery in Danvers. A memorial service will be held at a later date. Arrangements were handled by the Conway Cahill Brodeur Funeral Home, 32 Lynn St., Peabody.

For online condolences, visit www.cbfuneral.com.

Leah “Lakie” “Lillian” (Karlsberg) Shrago

Leah “Lakie” “Lillian” (Karlsberg) Shrago, of Milton, formerly of Dorchester


A service was held at Levine-Chaiken-Brody Chapel on June 10, interment followed in Beth El Cemetery, Baker St., West Roxbury. Contributions in Leah’s memory may be made to the charity of your choice.

OBITUARY POLICY

The Jewish Journal prints obituaries up to 200 words for $150; longer submissions will be charged accordingly. Paid obituaries will also be posted online at jewishjournal.org. Photographs are $36 each; emailed photos will be printed at 50%. Submissions are subject to editing for style and space limitations. For further information, contact your local funeral home.
и сказал, что в этот раз евреи пустыне... Тогда Бог разгневался привел их в эту страну из злобы, чтобы они не могли войти в нее. Народ поверил, обетованная земля прекрасна, и что колен утверждали, что земля недоступна для них, против разведчиков сообщили, что колен на разведку. Вернувшиеся вернулись, описали страну и упросили Моисея отправить Земли Обетованной, они привел евреев к границам разведчиков — когда Моисей умер, народ стал несчастливым. Но 9 ава 68 годов в Иерусалиме произошло великое событие, случались самые страшные события в истории человечества.

В субботу, 26 августа, в Бостоне в рамках Фестиваля «Независимости и свободы» пройдет Форпенинг концерт. Билеты ($30-$35) можно приобрести на сайте www.obmemorials.com.

Форпенинг концерт

Украинский Фестиваль

В четверг, 27 июля, в 17 вече- ра в Топсфилде, в рамках Фестиваля «Независимости и свободы» пройдет Форпенинг концерт.

Алексей Левандовский в Бостоне

В среду, 8 августа, в 7.30 вечера в Бостоне будет выступать Алексей Левандовский с музыкальной группой T.A.M. Это будет душевный вечер музыки в эстрадном стиле и инструментального вальса. Стиль группы — смесь ретро, артистичности, украинской щедрости и музыки из советских кинофильмов. Часть выручаемых денег пойдет на благотворительный фонд Zelen van Vrejheid на нужды украинской диаспоры.

Концерт состоится по адресу: Temple Kehillath Israel 384 Harvard Street Brookline.

English Summary

In this week’s issue of the Journal’s Russian Chronicle, we explain to our readers the significance and meaning of the saddest day in the Jewish calendar, the 9th day of the month of Av. Also included is information about a piano concert by renowned pianist Victoria Schwartzman. Boston’s Annual Ukrainian Festival and Independence Day celebration; and an evening with a Russian-speaking actor and musician.
Penina Batya Goldberg to wed Menashe Perez

Ellen and Shalom Shachne Goldberg of Ramat Beit Shemesh, Israel (formerly of Malden), joyfully announce the engagement of their daughter, Penina Batya, to Menashe Perez of San Jose, Costa Rica and Jerusalem.

The bride, who attended New England Hebrew Academy in Brookline before making aliyah in 2015, is a graduate of Ulpanat Aha-vut Yisrael and is in law school at the College of Law and Business in Ramat Gan, Israel. The bride is the granddaughter of Rhoda Zagosky of Peabody (formerly Winthrop and Medford) and the late Norman Zagosky.

The groom attended Ner Yisroel Meshina in Baltimore and recently completed his fourth year at Yeshivat Yisrael and is in law school at Excelsior College and is completing his MBA at Bar Ilan University in Israel. The wedding will take place in September in Jerusalem.

Chelsea Jewish Lifecare and Congregation Sons of Israel celebrate baby naming

From left: Cantor Seth Landau, Akiko Otsubo Soreff, Aya Otsubo Soreff and Cory Soreff.

In a heartwarming Shabbat service on the Chelsea Jewish Lifecare Peabody campus, assisted living residents and congregants participated in the touching ceremony.

Family members in attendance included great grandmother Cynthia Mortlock and her husband Ray, Cynthia’s daughter Michelle Soreff LeFrancois, Cynthia’s son Adam Soreff, Adam’s wife and son Marla and Asher Soreff, Cynthia’s granddaughter Kayley Francois and proud parents Akiko Otsubo Soreff and Cory Soreff. Cynthia’s grandson. A festive kiddush luncheon followed the service. Akiko, Cory, and baby Aya reside in Japan and were visiting the family for a three week period.

Chelsea Jewish Lifecare, which operates the Harriet and Ralph Kaplan Assisted Living and the Jeffrey and Evelyn Kaplan Assisted Living, is in law school at Excelsior College and is completing his MBA at Bar Ilan University in Israel. The wedding will take place in September in Jerusalem.

Deborah Leah Chulsky is born

Deborah Leah Chulsky

Triporah and Leib (Jonathan) Chulsky of Paris, France welcomed their big brother Deborah Leah – who was born on June 24 (5 Tamuz). The girl is also welcomed by her big brothers and sisters. Irina and Mark Chulsky of Swampscott are the proud grandparents. Janina Zajovsky is the delighted great-grandmother.

Penina Batya Goldberg and Menashe Perez.

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JEWISH JOURNAL.ORG
JULY 13, 2023
New director of Peabody religious school follows in her father’s footsteps

In 2018, Pessoff Kischel was working down the street from Ner Tamid, at Temple Tiferet Shalom Hebrew school, alongside Rabbi Jeffrey Perlman, the current rabbi of Ner Tamid.

“This young lady effused ranch,” he recalled. “It was exactly what we wanted for our kids.”

At the time, Perlman was reinventing Ner Tamid’s religious school, trying to develop the program to center on “the identity of our synagogue and our conservative movement.” He enlisted a former colleague, Susan Sugarman, to help him craft a curriculum and get the school up and running. Sugarman, who is retiring this year, was not planning on retiring on or director. They needed someone for the long run.

Perlman met Pessoff Kischel and knew it was a fit.

“It was a perfect situation,” he said. “She understands the philosophy, she brings some of her own ideas and techniques in education, which are fantastic — the kids love her, by the way, they just adore her — and she now has a master’s degree, her credentials!” (Pessoff Kischel received her master’s in Jewish education from Newton’s Hebrew College in June.)

Perlman approached Pessoff Kischel with a proposal. He said they engaged her to where she grew up, taking on a leadership role in education, would be an honor to her father and would make her mother (who is a good friend of the rabbi) unbearably happy.

“I could feel my father kicking me in the nuts saying, ‘do this, you have to do this,'” Pessoff Kischel said. “The way he needed the community, the way the community respected him — my father was a big deal in [me] pursuing this role.”

So she took the job, first as the assistant director, working and training with Sugarman, until the board of trustees officially appointed her as director in May. “I truly feel honored to be with Sugarman,” Pessoff Kischel said. “But when she told me it was time, I said to her, ‘I’m ready.’”

A member of the community see the beauty in the continuation between father and daughter. Said Paula Dillin, corresponding secretary for the temple and a friend of the family. “Nur Sam was a wonderful guy. Everybody loved him. And that’s how she is; Alyssa is the kindest, most generous person with children. She loves her little kids. She’s a lot like Cantor Sam was.”

Pessoff Kischel’s journey to this point was not an easy one. After her father’s death, she distanced herself from the synagogue, finding it too hard to return to the place she associated with her father. They haven’t done davening. “His voice was just beautiful,” she said. “I remember the time on the cake, and he would crack a grin.”

In May, Pessoff Kischel accepted a role as director of Ner Tamid’s religious school, carrying on the 90-year legacy of Cantor Sam, who passed away in 2008.

Pessoff Kischel’s journey to this point was not an easy one. After her father’s death, she distanced herself from the synagogue, finding it too hard to return to the building that, in her mind, still echoed with the sound of her father davening. “His voice was just beautiful,” she said. “It was simple. He captivated everyone. To this day, congregants still come up to me and say ‘I can hear his voice. I can see, I can feel’.”

She worked as a nanny, and took jobs at the JCC, and even at another Hebrew school — but for a long time, she didn’t want to work at the shul where her father’s memory still remained.

Precious moments

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

Whenever Pessoff Kischel’s family needed some extra support in planning a funeral or making arrangements for a loved one, they would call on Rabbi Jeffrey Perlman.

He said that re-engaging with the shul where she grew up was easier than his own difficult journey. After the ceremony (the bar mitzvah boy turned out to be very proud), the icing on the cake was hearing Fran, who had aphasia, sing along to some of the prayers.

Carolyn Schultz Egert writes from Newton. Previously, she was a reporter for People magazine. Questions? Please email her at Carolynogygg@ymail.com.

The dark side of The American Dream

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

We would love to see you! For members and prospective members!

Rabbi Idan and the entire Congregation Ahavat Olam Board invite you to an upcoming “MEET AND GREET” to learn more about Congregation Ahavat Olam, as well as our plans for what promises to be an exciting and inspiring 2023/24 season.

The Lehman Trilogy

July 23 at the Huntington Theatre.

“Complimenting the Kaddish motif is Jeannette O’Hara West’s inspired projection of the entire text of the Kaddish in the early going and later on its side when the family’s assimilation is more pronounced.”

“Thanks to Carey Perloff’s smart pacing and taut direction, the growing assimilation and financial rise and fall of the family are sharply dramatized. Three actors — gifted most of her ideas and planning on staying on as director. They needed someone for the long run. Everyone loved the idea (although the bar mitzvah boy wasn’t thrilled with the prospect of doing a repeat performance).”

A week after the New York event, the community room at Ner Tamid’s residence was transformed into a minyan to pray for Frans. After the ceremony (the bar mitzvah boy turned out to be very proud), the icing on the cake was hearing Fran, who had aphasia, sing along to some of the prayers.

Alyssa Pessoff Kischel with a student at Ner Tamid religious school.

By GAVI KLEIN

JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT

PEABODY — As a child, armed with dolls and chutzpah, Alyssa Pessoff Kischel would try to make her father laugh. As the cantor at Temple Ner Tamid in Peabody, Cantor Sam would do his best to ignore his youngest child and stay focused on his work. But every once in a while, to her great delight, she would catch his eye while she was dawdling on the bima, and he would crack a grin.

In May, Pessoff Kischel accepted a role as director of Ner Tamid’s religious school, carrying on the 90-year legacy of Cantor Sam, who passed away in 2008.

Pessoff Kischel’s journey to this point was not an easy one. After her father’s death, she distanced herself from the synagogue, finding it too hard to return to the building that, in her mind, still echoed with the sound of her father davening. “His voice was just beautiful,” she said. “It was simple. He captivated everyone. To this day, congregants still come up to me and say ‘I can hear his voice. I can see, I can feel’.”

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