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GREATER BOSTON
Report clears Schechter teacher of alleged sexual misconduct

NORTH SHORE
Chabad of Beverly-Salem dedicates a new Torah

OPINION
Despite splashy announcement, AIPAC faces a nebulous future

Holy smokes! Scott Katzman brings his kosher brisket to Chelsea Jewish Lifecare

By **BRETT M. RHYNE**
JOURNAL STAFF

AT THEIR LUNCHEON on Monday, several Katzman Family Center for Living staffers could be heard exclaiming, "These kosher brisket burnt ends are fire!"

The brisket was served up by Scott "Smoking Papa" Katzman as a thank-you to 75 Chelsea Jewish Lifecare workers for their care and dedication, most recently to Scott and his brother Elliot's father Myer, a resident who passed away last year.

"My brother Elliot and I just wanted to give back to the staff," said Katzman, who grew up in Chelsea.

Barry Berman, CEO of Chelsea Jewish Lifecare, was "thrilled to have Scott Katzman share his delicious smoked brisket with our staff." The Oct. 26 luncheon, Berman said, "is one way we can show our appreciation for all they do."

The festivities also celebrated the longstanding relationship between Chelsea Jewish Lifecare and the Katzman family.

Katzman's grandmother and mother were residents of the facility. Myer was a longtime resident of Cohen Florence Levine Estates Assisted Living before moving to the Katzman Family Center for Living. Elliot and his wife Donna have donated copiously to the skilled nursing residence, which was renamed for the family in 2019.

"Our ties to the Katzman family go back many years," Berman said. "I have known the family for a long time, and their friendship and support mean the world to us."

"My brother and I decided that we wanted to do it at no charge in memory of our dad," Scott Katzman said. "My brother is covering the meat and ingredients, as well as someone to help me, and I'm covering the wood and charcoal and donating my time and labor.

"We thought this would be a meaningful way to honor our dad's memory while doing something special for the community."

NOW 65, KATZMAN'S own path to barbecue began after a career as a special education teacher in Boston and Everett. After 32 years, serious back problems and other health challenges – including strokes and multiple surgeries – eventually left him facing major mobility concerns.

While renovating his home in Malden to make it more accessible, Katzman bought a smoker. He turned to a friend and mentor who taught him how to use it through video calls and patient coaching. At first, smoking was something to occupy Katzman's time and help him manage pain. Then people began asking him to cook for them.

His wife Robin encouraged him to keep going, and his physical therapists helped him adapt the work to his abilities. Katzman began taking orders, initially charging less than his food cost. Word of mouth and social media helped the business grow. At a barbecue competition, he and his team won grand champion, with first-place finishes in brisket and turkey.

For Katzman, the opportunity to offer observant Jews kosher smoked brisket is a mitzvah.

"I was trying to make other people happy, trying to regain happiness throughout the world, especially the Jewish community, who can't have this kind of food

CONTINUED ON PAGE 8



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Scott Katzman with a sampling of his smoked meats.

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Report clears Schechter teacher of alleged sexual misconduct toward student; investigation ongoing

By **BRETT M. RHYNE**
JOURNAL STAFF

AN INDEPENDENT investigation has found no evidence to support allegations that a teacher at Newton's Solomon Schechter Day School of Greater Boston inappropriately touched any students or gave one student a sexually transmitted infection (STI) last year.

As first reported by The Boston Globe last February, Schechter administrators wrote in an email to parents that a student in Schechter's lower school, which serves students in pre-kindergarten through Grade 3, was inappropriately touched and subsequently diagnosed with gonorrhea in early October 2025.

After the teacher was removed from the classroom, two additional families told the school that their children reported the teacher had "tickled" their private body parts.

Neither the teacher nor the students involved have been identified.

Schechter hired Aleta Law, a boutique investigations and resolutions law firm, in November 2025 to investigate the teacher, who had worked in the school's Gan Shelanu day care program and is no longer employed at the school.

While the June 2026 report found insufficient evidence that the teacher had sexually abused children, it did conclude that they repeatedly violated appropriate physical boundaries with young students. It also said the school failed to address those concerns when they were first raised.

Among its findings were that the medical evidence did not support that the teacher had gonorrhea, although it did not categorically rule it out. No other child at the school, including those who made disclosures to their parents, tested positive for an STI.

The report noted the teacher denied the allegations of sexual abuse, and none of the 44 people interviewed – including school staff, security personnel and parents – ever saw the teacher tickle or touch children in intimate areas. It added that neither the child who tested positive nor any other child disclosed sexual abuse by the accused or any other teacher.

Investigators found no opportunity or time frame when the abuse could have occurred. School protocol required at least two adults to be present whenever the teacher supervised children, and the evidence indicated they were alone with children only briefly and in observable situations, such as walking a child to the gate. They also rarely helped children in the bathroom, the report noted, because it was not part of their job.

Investigators also raised concerns about the reliability of the children's statements to their parents. The children named other teachers and students as present during the alleged abuse, but those witnesses did not corroborate their testimonies.

The report did find that the teacher "continually" failed to maintain appropriate boundaries, especially around physical contact. The behavior included tickling children on their torsos and armpits; kissing them on the forehead; having them face the teacher while sitting on the teacher's lap; and the teacher telling students they "loved" them.



FILE PHOTO

Solomon Schechter Day School of Greater Boston

Much of this took place in view of other children, staff and parents, the report noted. Nearly all the staff and parents interviewed said the conduct seemed harmless at the time, although some found it concerning after the allegations surfaced. Many said hugging, lap-sitting and occasional light tickling under the arm or neck were not unusual in a toddler program, and staffers said some physical contact is appropriate for young children's development and was consistent with the school's policies at the time.

Nevertheless, the report found colleagues and a supervisor had spoken to the teacher about not tickling, kissing or seating children facing them on their lap. The teacher made some efforts to change, including telling a supervisor that a colleague had raised concerns, but the behaviors continued.

The report also faulted the school's handling of those earlier concerns of inappropriateness. During the 2024-25 school year, two employees raised concerns with the teacher's supervisor. The supervisor spoke to the teacher, but the issues were not reported to the head of school or to human resources as school policy required, nor were they documented consistent with state early education standards. Aleta Law concluded the school "did not take appropriate remedial action."

Once the abuse allegations arose in fall 2025, however, the investigators found the school acted appropriately. It immediately placed the teacher on leave and barred them from school grounds, filed mandatory reports with state authorities for each allegation, promptly hired outside investigators, and added staff to classrooms and created re-entry plans for affected students.

The school also hired a separate organization, Learning Courage, to review its sexual misconduct prevention policies, procedures and training against best practices and to make recommendations.

The state Department of Children and Families (DCF) and the Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC) have concluded their own investigations and found the abuse allegations unsupported, according to the report.

No criminal charges have been filed. The Newton Police Department's investigation into the case involving the child with the infection remains open. Police told investigators the teacher has not been ruled out, but that there are other persons of interest not affiliated with the school.

The report also noted the child's parents obtained a harassment prevention order in civil court, which requires the teacher to stay away from the child for one year.



Israel divestment measures face hurdles in Medford, Somerville, Cambridge

By **BRETT M. RHYNE**
JOURNAL STAFF





MAYOR BREANNA LUNGO-KOEHN/FACEBOOK, ZAC BEARS/FACEBOOK

Medford Mayor Breanna Lungo-Koehn, left, and City Council President Isaac "Zac" Bears.

DESPITE legal and financial challenges, three cities in Greater Boston are all considering measures to divest municipal funds from all companies that aid the Israeli war effort.

In Medford, Mayor Breanna Lungo-Koehn has proclaimed, via a statement from the municipal law firm KP Law, that the "City of Medford hereby stipulates and agrees that it will not enforce, implement, or [attempt] to enforce or implement the Values-Aligned Local Investments Ordinance."

The ordinance would cancel all investments in companies manufacturing weapons, producing fossil fuels, operating private prisons or contributing to regimes that commit severe human rights violations, including practicing apartheid or genocide.

Medford's city council originally passed the measure in August 2025; Lungo-Koehn vetoed it in October 2025; and the city council overrode her veto, 6-1, the following month. Two Jewish Medford residents, Zachary Chertok and Eliot Jokelson, then legally challenged the ordinance in federal court, where a preliminary injunction was issued against its enforcement.

Lungo-Koehn maintains the ordinance violates state and federal laws because no Massachusetts statute authorizes municipalities to mandate divestment based on political, moral, or ideological criteria.

She also believes defending the city against lawsuits – including those brought by well-financed pro-Israel organizations such as the Gevura Fund and the National Jewish Advocacy Center, who backed the current legal challenge – would make enforcing the ordinance prohibitively expensive. She said Medford has already spent $35,000 of a tight city budget addressing legal challenges to the ordinance, and that the city would have to allocate another $500,000 in attorney's fees to continue fighting.

Medford City Council President Isaac "Zac" Bears disputes Lungo-Koehn's account. At his urging at its Sept. 15 meeting, the council passed, 6-1, a formal declaration stating that the mayor had not given the council updates on litigation expenses prior to issuing her stipulation. Had the council been informed of the $35,000 in legal fees, it would have told the mayor that such expenditures were justified and to enforce the divestment ordinance, not support the preliminary injunction, the declaration said.

In neighboring Somerville, a proposed Ethical Procurement and Investment ordinance is still under consideration by the city council's Legislative Matters Committee. In November 2025, voters approved a ballot question that required Somerville to enact an ordinance prohibiting the awarding of contracts to companies that "engage in business that sustains Israel's apartheid, genocide, and illegal occupation of Palestine."

Several city councilors then introduced a measure that would prohibit Somerville from contracting with corporations that do business with countries that engage in "apartheid, genocide or unlawful military occupation," or engage in conduct that violates international humanitarian law, "including without limitation in Israel and Palestine."

Legislative Matters Committee members discussed the proposed ordinance at their meeting on June 30. They heard public comment on Sept. 8, when 38 residents spoke in favor of the measure and 23 opposed it. On Oct. 13, the committee passed, 4-1, an amendment to the proposed ordinance that, while maintaining the prohibition on spending city funds on companies with "direct, ongoing, and knowing involvement in specified objectionable conduct," carved out an exception for sole proprietors.

The committee met again on Oct. 27, but the divestment ordinance was not on the agenda.

Finally, on Oct. 19, neighboring Cambridge considered two policy orders that would have the city divest city workers' pension funds and cancel all city contracts with companies that are "complicit in the genocide, apartheid, and occupation of Palestinians." That determination would be made by the nonprofit American Friends Service Committee (AFSC).

Perhaps mindful of potential legal challenges, the councilors introducing the measures, Ayah A. Al-Zubi and Jivan G. Sobrinho-Wheeler, also asked the city solicitor to determine whether the city could legally boycott the companies on the same grounds.

More than 260 Cantabridgians spoke on the measure: about 165 in support and over 100 opposed. After six hours of public comment, the meeting was held over until the next morning.

The divestment order cites a report from Cambridge for Palestine, which identified nearly $24 million in city pension funds tied to companies named on the AFSC BDS shortlist for "having severe and consistent involvement directly contributing to genocide, apartheid, and occupation of Palestinians." The list includes companies with locations in Cambridge such as Boeing, Palantir and RTX (Raytheon).

Mayor Sumbal Siddiqui called a special meeting to address the two policy orders for Oct. 28. Siddiqui did not include a public comment period, citing the public's "ample opportunity to comment on these matters on Oct. 19, and [the public] still has the opportunity to submit written communication."

The outcome of the Oct. 28 meeting was not known before press time. Visit jewishjournal.org for updates to this developing story.

Contact reporter Brett M. Rhyne at brett@jewishjournal.org.

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Rashi family turns Halloween math problem into app

By **ETHAN M. FORMAN**
JOURNAL STAFF

LAST OCTOBER, Brynn Berkowitz's fifth grade extra-credit math assignment involved graphing her large Halloween candy haul.

The school math challenge spurred Brynn and her father, David – who has an interest in computer programming – to create an app called "Haullo," which adults and kids can download to turn trick-or-treating into an interactive game.

Brynn, now 11, lives in Needham and is a sixth grader at The Rashi School, a Reform Jewish school of about 240 students, pre-kindergarten through eighth grade, in Dedham.

Father and daughter are rolling out their new app just in time for Halloween. (It's available on the App Store and Google Play.)

Brynn's dad is a former clinical pharmacist and pharmacy administrator, who manages a medication information database for a healthcare company. About 15 years ago, while working in a large healthcare system, he taught himself programming and data science to help solve problems, consolidate data and save time to help improve patient outcomes.

He did so in the spirit of tikkun olam. "I want to leave the world a better place, so I'm really motivated to solve problems," he said.

Brynn, who dressed as Elmo last year and plans to go out as a starfish this year, said last year's math problem asked students to graph their candy, by how many and what type, among other things.

She showed her dad the problem. He asked her if she wanted to make an app out of it, and they came up with an early version.

"I just like to automate things," David said.

Brynn said the app's main feature lets users take a picture of their candy haul using their cellphone or smart tablet, and the app counts and sorts it.

The app also has an interactive map so users can tell which houses have candy.

The program also features challenges called "gauntlets," Brynn said.

> **"I had this vision that it would be a fun family project on the weekends."**
>
> **– DAVID BERKOWITZ**

"The gauntlet is a mini game where kids within a quarter mile from the person who activated it can race against each other to collect a certain amount of candy within 15 minutes," David said in an email. "The kid with the most candy after 15 minutes wins a special champion badge."

The app not only counts, sorts and scores candy, it ranks players against their school, grade, state and nation to answer the question about who is the world's best trick-or-treater.



COURTESY PHOTO

David and Brynn Berkowitz

The map allows adults to see where other adults are, but kids are not tracked on the map. It also has different tags, letting users know which house is offering, for example, full size candy bars.

There is even a feature to help kids find a way to donate their candy, and math problems to solve.

Brynn said she likes how the app "levels up Halloween."

Coming up with a name for the app proved challenging. The suggestion of calling it "Treat Street" turned up a candy company with the same name, so they could not use it. They eventually settled on Haullo, which is a play on the concept that trick-or-treat candy is a kid's haul.

It took David Berkowitz close to a year to build out the app, with help from AI tools. "I had this vision that it would be a fun family project on the weekends," he said. Since he likes to build things, he thought it would be good to teach his kids about building a business, he added.

The Berkowitz family includes Chase, 15, a student at Needham High who helped with the app's marketing; mom Kim Stone, who serves as director of development at The Rashi School; and their dog, Rosie.

"It's been a labor of love," Kim said about the app.

"At Rashi we don't celebrate Halloween," she added. "Purim is our Halloween." But many students do take part in Halloween in their respective cities and towns. Kim said she planned to highlight the app in the school's weekly digital newsletter as "a Rashi math story" since it grew out of a math problem and shows how Rashi teaches students to think critically.

"It's a good example of the Rashi curriculum," she said.

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Chabad of Beverly-Salem celebrates new Torah's arrival

By **ETHAN M. FORMAN**
JOURNAL STAFF



PHOTOS BY ETHAN M. FORMAN

Dancing with Chabad of Beverly-Salem's new Torah



Chabad of Beverly-Salem's Rabbi Mendel Barber.

BEVERLY – POLICE closed one lane of busy Elliott Street between Beckford Street and the Cummings Center on Sunday afternoon for a procession of 75 people dancing and celebrating with Chabad of Beverly-Salem's new refurbished Torah.

The lively Torah dedication ceremony on a warm fall afternoon saw Chabad rabbis and others rolling a huppah on wheels down the street and into the main entrance of the business center while attendees got a chance to carry the scroll along the way.

A large box truck with an electronic signboard blared joyful Jewish music to lead the parade.

"It's a highly auspicious occasion," said Cynthia Michaels of Beverly. "It's a very important, significant item to have a new Torah for the congregation."

With a police escort, the procession traveled about a half a mile from a parking lot on the corner of Beckford and Elliott streets to the side entrance of the sprawling 100 Cummings Center building where the Chabad house is located on the third floor.

Men, many clad in traditional Hasidic garb, gathered in a circle to dance the hora when they arrived.

Joining in the dancing was 6th District Republican congressional candidate Micah Jones, who is Jewish and lives in Essex, wearing a blue Chabad of Beverly-Salem ball cap. The celebration carried on inside with more festivities.

It's custom to have a public welcoming ceremony when a new Torah scroll rolls into town, Chabad of Beverly-Salem Rabbi Menachem "Mendel" Barber told the Journal.

The Chabad center has been using a borrowed Torah and Barber said they have been looking into acquiring a scroll of their own.

However, a new, handwritten Sefer Torah, containing the Five Books of Moses, starts at $50,000.

That proved cost-prohibitive. But then the opportunity to purchase a refurbished scroll came by way of Mendel's brother-in-law, David Morozow, who is also a rabbi. The scroll from Europe had been in a synagogue in New Jersey.

However, the scroll's parchment, lettering and wooden shafts needed to be refurbished. It took a scribe almost a year to do.

Nine community members stepped up to help make the new Torah possible, Barber said. Their family legacies are now listed on the scroll's velvet green mantle.

Some attendees spoke about the importance of being openly Jewish nowadays, given tensions after the attacks of Oct. 7, 2023, and the ensuing war in Gaza.

"In today's heated environment, to celebrate Jewishness and the blessing of their new Torah, is a very special and very important occasion," said Henry Barber of Boston, a cousin of Rabbi Barber.

"We are in a difficult time now," said Dr. Eli Davidyan of Beverly, a well-known local dentist and Israeli American. "We are being attacked from all over and we have to show that we are not afraid to be who we are. We are proud Jews and not the trembling-knees Jews."

"This gathering is everything we have been hoping and dreaming for since conceiving of this idea of a Chabad of Beverly and Salem," said Rabbi Sruli Baron of Tobin Bridge Chabad in Everett, an affiliate of Chabad of the North Shore in Swampscott, where Baron serves as the managing director. Chabad of Beverly-Salem is also one of its affiliates.

"Mendel and Fraidy (Barber's wife) have come into this community and built, brick by brick, person by person, and pulled together such a vibrant group of people, and it's alive," Baron said.

"This is Chabad of the North Shore's mission coming alive in every corner of the North Shore, that Judaism should be coming alive in every centimeter of the North Shore," said Chabad of the North Shore Executive Director Rabbi Yossi Lipsker.

At the start of the procession, Barber spoke about the reason the Torah was being carried under a huppah, the traditional structure under which a Jewish couple gets married.

"And the reason we dance into the synagogue, into the Chabad house under the huppah with the Torah is because the Torah is our document … it's the marriage certificate …" Barber said, searching for the word "ketubah."

"This is the marriage certificate between us and God," Barber said. "This is what kept us going for the three-thousand-plus years with every crazy person historically that had in mind to annihilate us. This was the marriage document."

"When you have that certificate," Barber added, "you always know, even in the rough times and the better times, no matter what, this is how we connect to God."

Barber said the starting point of the procession on Beckford Street held a special significance to the Chabad chapter. He said the vacant lot across the street was the location of a former Orthodox synagogue, Beth Medresh Ahav Shalom. The synagogue, which started in 1903, was located at 3 Beckford St. before it burned down in 1973.

Barber used the analogy that the former Orthodox synagogue had gone to sleep and waited 50 years until Chabad of Beverly-Salem opened in 2023. That's when Barber met Morris Leibovitz, whose father served as Ahav Shalom's president and his grandfather was the rabbi.

The property has been given over to Chabad of Beverly-Salem and is now called Congregation Ohev Shalom Chabad, Barber said. The Leibovitz family was fundamental in making the new Torah a reality, Barber said. Morris Leibovitz was given the honor of being the first to walk with the Torah during the procession.

"This is the beginning of the awakening of the Orthodox synagogue that took a 50-year nap," Barber said.

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Murky Israeli election results leave the major parties locked in a power struggle

By **RUTH ENGLASH AND SHARON USADIN**
JTA.ORG

JERUSALEM — AS ELECTION results from Israel's parliamentary vote on Tuesday continue to trickle in, what seems clearest is that no side in this political race will have enough votes to form a majority government, meaning the question of who Israel's next prime minister will be remains uncertain.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his centrist rival Gadi Eisenkot were locked in a battle that left no clear winner as exit polls were released.



JACK GUEZ/AFP

A road sign stands in front of a large billboard featuring Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (right) of the Likud party and former military chief and leader of the centrist Yashar party, Gadi Eisenkot, in Ramat Gan, Israel.

With over 86% of the votes counted, Netanyahu's Likud party is in first place and his bloc with the most seats even as they suffered a sharp drop in support from their current representation in the legislature, the Knesset. The Netanyahu bloc's projected 53 seats leaves it far short of the 61 votes needed to form a new governing coalition.

The biggest gains were made by the Arab parties, which nearly doubled their representation in the Knesset to 17 seats. That has complicated the path to a government for either major party because both have ruled out including Arab-led parties in their coalitions.

Yashar, the party led by Netanyahu's main rival, former Israeli army chief Gadi Eisenkot, looks set to be the second-largest party. Eisenkot, however, claimed to have won the election and early Wednesday morning said that the public had rejected Netanyahu. Eisenkot spoke while polls still showed his bloc leading Netanyahu's, only to fall down to 48 when real results were counted.

Eisenkot might have a more plausible path to creating a government than Netanyahu because his centrist coalition could have an easier time making a deal with an Arab party, even though several of the parties in his would-be coalition have ruled out the possibility.

Netanyahu, whose bloc includes ultra-Orthodox and far-right parties, stressed that the results were not final. "We are still waiting for the real results that we will receive within the next 48 hours," Netanyahu said. He noted, however, one early result that he believed was correct: "The Likud is the biggest party in the state of Israel."

However, Eisenkot said the results showed that the Netanyahu era was over and that "the public voted for change." Eisenkot's current bloc is collectively known as the "change bloc" and includes his own Yashar party, Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid's B'Yachad, Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu and Yair Golan's Democrats.

Eisenkot argued that given the high voter turnout – with 77.7% casting ballots, it was the highest rate since 1999 – it would be a mistake to head to another election, which would happen if no party gains enough support to form a government.

But Eisenkot made clear that he thought he could form a government. "I will work together with my partners for change in order to ensure that the will of the people is realized through the establishment of a Zionist and stable government."

Bennett, the head of the second-biggest party in the anti-Netanyahu bloc, confirmed on Tuesday that the different parties were already in contact with each other.

"We are all talking and we are all coordinating in this change bloc, like I promised time and time again, in order to promise a Zionist serving government," he said.

Bennett declared that "Netanyahu lost," adding that "the government of Oct. 7th will go home." Tuesday's elections were the first national elections since the Hamas invasion of southern Israel in 2023.

Mansour Abbas, head of Ra'am, one of the two Arab parties to win seats Tuesday, told Israel's Channel 12 that he was interested in joining Eisenkot's bloc while he disparaged Netanyahu. But he noted that he was talking with people in both blocs and said that a senior official from the right-wing bloc had contacted him to seek ways to cooperate.

Yousef Jabareen, chairman of the other Arab party, the Joint List, called the vote "historic."

"The public has made its voice heard and turned out in droves to the polling stations, giving us its unequivocal vote of confidence," he said. "Our message is clear and sharp: The bloodshed government must go!"

Netanyahu, for his part, slammed "the propaganda channels" trying to convince members of the public that the Likud was in decline, accusing detractors of the "engineering of people's consciousness."

"We must establish a national right-wing strong, strong government," Netanyahu said when he spoke to supporters early Wednesday morning. "It is simply forbidden that we should endanger Israel and establish a government that leans on Arab parties that are anti-Zionist."

Netanyahu described Israel as "stronger than it has ever been," describing Iran as "now weaker than it ever has been." He also credited his "wonderful friend Donald Trump" for deciding to tackle the Iranian threat in the region.

Analysts who spoke to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency said it was too early to say what would happen next, emphasizing that no side appeared to be victorious.

"Netanyahu did much better than anyone thought," said Professor Jonathan Rynhold, from the department of political studies at Bar-Ilan University, referring to polls taken ahead of Tuesday's vote.

"It's actually unbelievable how well he has done," he said, but added that "he has cannibalized his own bloc," meaning most of the voters shifted away from other right-wing parties that would have strengthened his coalition.

"Unless there is some massive change, Netanyahu does not have a government," Rynhold concluded.

But he noted that the opposition might not be able to form a government either, given that the opposition has ruled out including Arab parties in the government. "If the opposition sticks to what they've said, then I am sure Netanyahu will be happy to go to another election," Rynhold said.

So what are the possible scenarios if the final results leave the political arena so starkly divided? Here are the three most likely outcomes.

1. The change bloc plus the Arab parties

All the parties in the change bloc except for the Democrats, led by Yair Golan, stated throughout their campaigns that they would not form a government with either of the Arab parties, even though Mansour Abbas, the leader of Ra'am, an Islamist faction, joined a centrist coalition from 2021-2022, breaking what had once been a taboo. Abbas is again offering to join forces with the change bloc.

"Clearly this is emerging as an option mathematically and politically," Yohanan Plesner, president of the Israel Democracy Institute, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency on Wednesday. But he added, "It's obviously not only a violation of campaign promises, but I think the Israeli public opinion is deeply unprepared for such an option." Tolerance for working with an Islamist party has diminished since the deadly Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas-led raids.

Another variation on this option is for the change bloc – Eisenkot's Yashar party, B'Yachad, led by former prime ministers Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid, and Avigdor Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu party, as well as the Democrats – to form a minority government.

While 61 seats are needed to form a majority government, there is nothing to prevent a government with fewer than 61 seats from being formed if it can gain support on key legislative decisions.

This could happen if Arab factions support the change bloc on key votes but otherwise don't play a role in the government. This would give the change bloc up to 65 seats when Arab parties' support from the sidelines is added in.

Even this step has been rejected by Lieberman, yet Rynhold said it was possible that Eisenkot could put pressure on him to accept.

"Even though Lieberman has said no to such an option, he might say yes if he's the prime minister," Rynhold said.

On the other hand, the Arab parties, especially the Joint List, might demand concessions for such an agreement that Eisenkot himself finds hard to stomach.

2. Formation of a unity government

A quick look at the political map following Tuesday's vote shows that center-right parties ranging from Eisenkot's Yashar party to Lieberman's Yisrael Beiteinu, with Likud and B'Yachad in between, gained a substantial share of the seats. One possible scenario is that some of these parties, even though they are avowed political foes, could join forces.

"I think it is perhaps more likely that there will be serious negotiations around a unity government," Plesner said. "I would imagine that Netanyahu would prefer unity based on him forming a coalition with all of his bloc members, and then luring one of the change bloc parties to his government." That would mean including ultra-Orthodox parties Shas and United Torah Judaism and far-right parties led by Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich.

However, Plesner said the change bloc parties would most likely push for a "real unity government," whereby Netanyahu "gives up on one of the far-right parties that has caused a lot of challenges for Israel's international image, or perhaps an ultra-Orthodox party that has refused to pass a military draft bill." He was referring to a law that would force more haredi men to serve in the military, from which they've traditionally been exempted. This, he said, would create a "Zionist, more centrist-leaning option."

"I think this is something that Israeli public opinion would be able to live with and perhaps even prefer, but I can't say anything about the political viability of it," Plesner said.

The change bloc ran on replacing Netanyahu, and no doubt many of its voters would feel betrayed by such an outcome.

3. Another round of elections

In his election night speech, Eisenkot declared that "after an election with such high voter turnout, it would be a mistake to hold another election." Some 77.7% of voters cast ballots, the highest since 1999, according to election officials.

However, with no bloc reaching a majority and serious ideological disagreements among the parties, another round of elections might be the most likely possibility. For Netanyahu in particular, allowing the process to play out while he retains his position as interim prime minister until another election is held could well be the most favorable outcome for the long-serving leader, according to Plesner.

A similar scenario played out beginning in 2019, when Netanyahu's bloc of supporters failed to achieve a majority. Israel then held a series of elections, culminating in the March 2021 vote, when Netanyahu's bloc was ousted by a center-left alliance led by Bennett and Lapid. The November 2022 election returned Netanyahu to power.

"I don't really know what the path forward is now," said Gideon Rahat, a political scientist at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

"If we were talking 10 years ago, I would say that something else might happen – a unity government or a different solution perhaps," he said. But given the entrenched political camps at this point, another round of elections might be where the country is headed.

On the other hand, given the unpredictable nature of Israel's political scene, Plesner noted that it could be a "time for politicians to get creative."

"I wouldn't be surprised if all sorts of ideas that we haven't thought of before come up in the upcoming few weeks," he said, adding that he believed that, with so much uncertainty, it could "take weeks and perhaps months" before the next prime minister is determined.

Despite splashy announcement, AIPAC faces a nebulous future

By **DAVID M. SHRIBMAN**
JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT

IT'S FAR TOO EARLY to determine who are the winners in the midterm congressional election. But it's incontrovertible who one of the losers is: the American Israel Public Affairs Committee.

The group, known as AIPAC, was for many years one of the most formidable players in Washington politics. Its defense of Israeli politics, and its opposition to major arms sales to Israel's opponents, was powerful, often leading to policy victories. Its lobbyists were not only influential, they also were greatly respected and, in some cases, they were so much a part of the capital establishment that the term "beloved" was not a stretch.

But the shimmer began to recede once the group veered from providing information to providing endorsements and financial assistance.

AIPAC's leaders had been known for having a genius for illuminating issues, or at least for casting a positive light on Israeli policy. But more recently, it made a dangerous, and ultimately injurious, transition. It became an issue itself.

And so, last week, the group made a strategic retreat, getting out of specific congressional races and urging its supporters to make those decisions, and those contributions, on their own. "Endorsements, direct PAC contributions, and earmarking," the group's leadership wrote in a letter to supporters, "will no longer be part of our approach so we can expand individual giving and utilize new tools to help our friends win."

The episode brought to mind the warning from Winston Churchill amid the World War II cheers over the success of the withdrawal of British troops from Dunkirk. "Wars," he said soberly, "are not won by evacuations."

This particular evacuation came after large numbers of Democrats – until recently the principal beneficiaries of AIPAC support – refused to accept the group's contributions. Locally, Rep. Seth Moulton of Salem made that decision in his unsuccessful bid to win the Democratic Senate nomination. But he was not alone.

Three prominent Democratic figures, Sens. Cory Booker of New Jersey and Ruben Gallego of Arizona and California Gov. Gavin Newsom, did the same. And in Michigan, where AIPAC was unsuccessful in defeating Abdul El-Sayed for the Democratic Senate nomination, his eventual general-election rival, GOP Rep. Mike Rogers, thought long and hard before accepting AIPAC money.

That decision, made quietly, came just as AIPAC was stepping away from making contributions – and when Rogers was in serious peril. But it didn't stay quiet, or unanswered, for long. Sen. Bernie Sanders called AIPAC's move "outrageous," rushed $1 million to the El-Sayed camp in direct response to AIPAC, and recruited a dozen other prominent Democrats to chip in an additional $300,000. AIPAC responded by attacking what it called Sanders' "obsessive scapegoating."

One sentence alone in the Times of Israel speaks volumes about the circumstances the group's leaders faced: "AIPAC's brand has become so toxic in Democratic circles that candidates in primaries have routinely accused one another of being tied to the lobby."

In readjusting its role and commitments, the group said it had "helped 290 pro-Israel candidates win their elections and helped defeat 29 detractors," adding, "We achieved important victories, suffered hard-fought losses, and demonstrated the conviction of our community in one of the most challenging environments in recent memory."

The vital question that lingers: Was this a tactical retreat shrouded in the fog of war – a PR move more than a substantive one – because the Super PAC endures?

There are many questions yet unanswered, principally what the group means when saying that it intended to maintain its so-called Super PAC known as the United Democracy Project, which accounted for more than $110 million in contributions in this set of contests. In the wake of the dramatic AIPAC announcement, Jeremy Ben-Ami, president of J Street, the group's rival in Washington, said in a social-media posting that by preserving its Super PAC "while abandoning its own PAC only doubles down on the dark money politics that helped create its problem in the first place."

The vital question that lingers: Was this a tactical retreat shrouded in the fog of war – a PR move more than a substantive one – because the Super PAC endures? (Tentative answer: Probably.)



GPO/HAIM ZACH

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addresses an AIPAC conference.

Nor is it clear what the nature of Jewish lobbying will be now that AIPAC has stepped back, perhaps more symbolically than actually, from its most visible contemporary role. (Tentative answer: No one knows.)

AIPAC has been engaged in an armed truce with J Street, the more progressive entity in this category. But the truce broke into a full-scale range war this fall, when J Street began contributing to candidates who opposed AIPAC-backed contenders.

These tensions at the summit of Jewish influence in Washington led two prominent Massachusetts figures, Alan Solomont (onetime head of J Street) and Steven Grossman (onetime head of AIPAC) to write an op-ed in The Boston Globe pleading for a ceasefire. "Beneath the noise and polarization," wrote the two, both still members of the boards of the warring groups, "there remains a broad center of shared values and shared aspirations about Israel, Judaism, and the future relationship between the two."

Historically, AIPAC's impact largely grew out of keeping score on lawmakers' views, publicizing those records, and sowing goodwill for Israel on Capitol Hill – activities in which the group was unusually successful, prompting envy and admiration from other special interests.

Those practices were fundamentally different from writing checks to candidates and its financial activism. The change came at a time when the country's relationship with Israel was being re-evaluated in the wake of the response to the Hamas invasion, and the organization slowly became controversial.

When AIPAC started making financial contributions to election deniers – those who argued that Donald Trump was robbed of the 2020 election – the Democrats and progressives who once were a substantial portion of the group's natural allies recoiled in horror.

Those contributions represented a break from one of the fundamental assumptions of Jewish life in the United States: that American democratic practices and values were essential elements of the comfort that Jews enjoyed here in an otherwise dangerous world.

The result was a fusillade of negative press at a time when antisemitism was on the rise.

One flashpoint came in a Democratic primary in Illinois, when AIPAC poured millions into an effort to defeat Daniel Biss for the 9th District nomination. Biss, who had spoken of his "Israeli mother, grandparents who survived the Holocaust, and great-grandparents who did not survive," made AIPAC's effort to defeat him part of his successful campaign.

The last straw may have come this summer, when AIPAC removed donation links for some of the House Democrats who voted to cut off aid to Israel.

The ultimate result, issued two weeks before the election, was the statement that the group now will "prioritize increasing direct, organized contributions from individual Americans to candidates – expanding upon our current efforts – and maximizing the emerging political fundraising tools." In its letter, the AIPAC leaders said that group members gave $90 million in direct contributions to candidates in this election cycle.

Ultimately, the group's challenge came when its name – AIPAC – seemed to suggest its emphasis was on its PAC, or political action committee, when in fact the historic name clearly spoke of its role as a public affairs committee. This month AIPAC took steps to reduce the confusion, but it took a reduction in its activities to do so.

David M. Shribman, who won a Pulitzer Prize as Washington bureau chief of The Boston Globe, is executive editor emeritus of the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and teaches at Carnegie Mellon University and McGill University.

Holy smokes!

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1



SMOKINGPAPA.COM

Grand Champion Scott Katzman, with one of his smokers.

because they never had it before," he said.

Your bubbe's brisket is a whole cut of beef, often the lean "flat" section, slow-cooked and sliced into strips. Burnt ends are typically bite-sized cubes made specifically from the fattier, heavily marbled "point" section, smoked, tossed in barbecue sauce and brown sugar, and smoked again until caramelized.



CHELSEA JEWISH LIFECARE

Scott Katzman, Meghann Celona, Betsy Mullen, Barry Berman and Elliot Katzman at the Katzman Family Center for Living in Chelsea.

"People in the Jewish community never had burnt ends before," Katzman said. "When they think of brisket, they think of sliced brisket. They don't think of burnt ends. It's not a kosher thing. So they started having it. They said, 'Oh my God, this is like beef candy or like beef M&M's.' You just can't stop having one. It melts in your mouth, not in your hands."

Those adoring customers were the first to call Katzman what he goes by now. "That's how I got the name, Smoking Papa, and it just started growing and growing," he said.

THE LEGACY OF Katzman's father looms large over Smoking Papa. Myer Katzman worked as a fish cutter at Sea-Lect Foods in Chelsea, and then for over a decade behind the deli counter at The Butcherie in Brookline.

"The Butcherie treated him very, very nicely. He left off in his life being very happy, very satisfied, knowing that he was very, very useful. That he was important," Katzman said. "My father, he would be absolutely ecstatic, and very proud of me right now with what I'm doing.

"Those kinds of people – real deli people – no longer exist."

Around the time his father died in August 2025 at age 94, Katzman was at an event in New Hampshire, demonstrating how he prepared his food and telling his story. Rabbi Asher Bronstein of the Chabad of the Merrimack Valley invited him to smoke his brisket in Andover. The rabbi was a very close friend of Myer's for more than 20 years.

"Why don't you bring your smokers to my Chabad, and I can watch over you, certify you as kosher, and then you can get to more people," Katzman recalled Bronstein saying.

In the year since, Smoking Papa has caught fire. Katzman has kept his old clients, gotten new clients and smokes for Chabad. He'll soon be launching smokingpapa.com. He's gotten so busy, Katzman said, that Bronstein convinced him to hire an assistant. "This thing's just blowing up. It's just incredible," he said.

More than anything, though, Katzman appreciates the opportunities presented to him.

"I'm just very grateful that I'm here doing what I'm able to do," he said. "Here I am, not in a wheelchair, doing this thing to make myself happy, making the world happy."



SMOKINGPAPA.COM

Scott Katzman admires his latest Smoking Papa creations.

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Temples bless pets in the spirit of Noah

STORY AND PHOTOS
BY **ETHAN M. FORMAN**
JOURNAL STAFF

PEABODY – WITH THE STORY of Noah, Parashat Noach, falling on Saturday, Oct. 17, some local synagogues held pet blessing ceremonies that Sunday, including Temple Emanu-El in Marblehead and Temple Ner Tamid in Peabody. Temple B'nai Abraham of Beverly has a pet blessing scheduled for Nov. 1.

About 24 people and their pooches arrived for Ner Tamid's pet blessing service, which was new to the temple this year. The blessing of the pets was the brainchild of the synagogue's new rabbi, Matan Peled.

During the ceremony, the rabbi gave a short blessing and then the pet parents said a blessing for their dogs while patting them on their heads. "May we bless this animal with Noah-like protection from all that might harm him/her," read a portion of the blessing.

"This was a neat idea by our rabbi," said Sharon Bergman of Danvers, who attended the short ceremony at 12:45 p.m. in the temple's outdoor sukkah with her husband, Marty, and their dog, Benji.

"I love it," said the temple's immediate past President Loretta Band, who attended with her husband, Rich, and their English bulldog, Chloe. The ceremony allowed temple members to meet each other's pets in person.

Band, who lives in Peabody, said she got Chloe during the coronavirus pandemic, and her dog was introduced to the congregation on Zoom.

In Israel, Peled worked as a therapeutic zoo manager at the Children's Village of Karmiel in northern Israel, and he drew a connection to the therapy provided by working with animals and the pet blessing at the synagogue.

"It's connected to that and my mission in a way that we just read yesterday about the story of Noach," Peled said, "and the ark of Noach and how God is telling Noach to save the animals and that is why today we are doing the blessing for the animals because they are much more than pets, they are really our family."



Finn with Alyse Barbash of Middleton at Temple Ner Tamid.

Peled's Aussiedoodle, an Australian shepherd and poodle mix named Ollie, could not be with the rabbi during the pet blessing ceremony. Peled's family has three pets at home, including his pooch, a bull python snake and a leopard gecko called "Afi," named for the afikomen matzo, he said.

Temple B'nai Abraham Beverly is scheduled to hold its annual pet service on Sunday, Nov. 1 at 11:30 a.m. Those who would like to attend can email Emma Mair, director of learning and engagement, at learning@tbabeverly.org.

The service will be led by Mair and the fourth and fifth grade Hebrew school class as the students study the Jewish relationship to land and animals. The temple will also be collecting donations for Northeast Animal Shelter.





Left, Sharon Bergman of Danvers holds Benji at Temple Ner Tamid. Right, Allie, 4, is held by Eva Barish, 14, of Burlington.



Blessing of the pets at Temple Ner Tamid on Oct. 18.

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BU holds conference on Elie Wiesel

By **RICH TENORIO**
JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT

BOSTON — IN A poignant tribute to Elie Wiesel, video clips of the late Holocaust survivor and Nobel laureate were shown during a recent conference about his life and legacy.

"Prophets do not seek to be understood or admired," Wiesel said in one clip. "All they want is to be obeyed." Invoking three prophets of the Hebrew bible – Elisha, Isaiah and Jeremiah – he added, "Each time I am drawn to a prophet, whether for the majesty of his language or the intensity of his voice, he becomes the melodious center of my inner landscape."

The conference, "Darsheni: Exploring the Thought of Elie Wiesel," took place last Sunday and Monday at Boston University, where Wiesel taught for 35-plus years. ("Darsheni" means "Interpret me!" in Hebrew, according to the conference website.) The conference was held just over 10 years after Wiesel's death at age 87 in 2016. His wife, Marion Wiesel, died last year at age 94.

On the fourth floor of the BU Hillel House, with views of the Charles River and Kenmore Square, attendees listened to various speakers discuss Wiesel's impact.

"For me, Elie was first and foremost a survivor," said BU Professor Abigail Gillman, who compiled the collection of Wiesel videos that was screened during lunch.

The clips came from public lectures that Wiesel delivered as a professor at BU. Gillman called these lectures "the best-attended talks of the year," attracting "the [wider] community as well as BU."



RICH TENORIO

Nancy Harrowitz, director of the Elie Wiesel Center, speaks at the conference.

By all accounts, Wiesel lived an incredible life. It began in his Eastern European birthplace of Sighet, Romania. In the camps during World War II, young Eliezer Wiesel lost his mother, his sister Tsipora and his grandparents. (Older sisters Beatrice and Hilda survived.) He was protected by his father Shlomo until Shlomo died just 10 weeks before liberation by the Allies. Relocating to France after the war, Wiesel first worked as a journalist, then wrote a memoir about surviving the Holocaust. Initially published in Yiddish and titled "And the World Remained Silent," it was republished in English in 1960 as "Night" and became a bestseller. By then, Wiesel had moved to the U.S. He went on to write around 60 books – works of fiction, nonfiction, even a cantata – on such subjects as the Holocaust and Hasidism. He became a public figure who interacted with world leaders.

Wiesel also had a significant presence on Commonwealth Avenue. Day two of the conference included a midmorning panel titled "The Legacies of Elie Wiesel at Boston University." There were administrators from the Elie Wiesel Center for Jewish Studies – center director Nancy Harrowitz, and associate director/lecturer Matthew Creighton; Ryan Hendrickson, a research and instruction archivist who discussed the university's Elie Wiesel collection; and BU student Isabel Rao, who is minoring in Holocaust and Genocide studies and interning at the Wiesel collection. LizAnn Eisen, the new executive director of the New York-based Elie Wiesel Foundation, was also on the panel.

"I took Professor Wiesel's class in 1997," Hendrickson recalled during the panel. "It was his policy, if you were his student, he wanted to meet with you personally. I chickened out – what was I going to say to this giant of a person?"

Luckily, there was a second chance years later, in 2011, when Wiesel made his last visit to the BU archives, where Hendrickson was now working.

"I said I was so sorry I never met with you all those years ago," Hendrickson said. "He was very gracious."

This semester, BU is offering a new course on Wiesel. Creighton is teaching it, and Rao is taking the class. She has previously taken courses on the Holocaust and fascism in Italy; Islamophobia and antisemitism; and the history of the Holocaust.

Rao referenced a quote from "Night:" "To forget would be not only dangerous but offensive; to forget the dead would be akin to killing them a second time." And she spoke of how "keeping the memory alive, being a voice for people who are not here, is really important."

During the Q&A, several audience members asked questions relating to the Israel-Hamas conflict in the wake of the deadly Oct. 7, 2023 Hamas attacks on Israel and Israel's subsequent, devastating war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

"One of the things I remember Professor Wiesel saying is, he would never condemn or criticize Israel's policies or practices in public," said questioner Janet Slovin, a former student of Wiesel's. "It's not that he would approve of everything Israel was doing. He would get on a plane, meet with the prime minister, make his views known. It was not his place to criticize in public."

Slovin claimed that in the current moment, Wiesel Center affiliates have been criticizing the State of Israel – which the center's executive director Harrowitz denied.

"Maybe there's criticism of the right-wing government of Israel," Harrowitz said. "A lot of us are critical of the right-wing government. That's very different than attempting to delegitimize the right of Israel to exist – very, very different."

In a follow-up conversation with the Jewish Journal, Harrowitz said that she and the center support the State of Israel, and that any criticism of Israel from them is done "to help Israel improve."

Another issue addressed at the conference is the increasing loss of Holocaust survivors. This arose during the concluding panel, "Where Do We Go From Here? Reflections on the Future of Elie Wiesel Scholarship and Teaching."

"This is a critical moment," said panelist Colin Davis of the University of London. "The youngest Holocaust survivors are in their 80s … Soon, there will be nobody left who has a primary memory of the Holocaust."

"The next generation of scholars will not have known Wiesel directly," Davis added. "He will be available as a written text, a video archive."



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October 30, 5:22 p.m.
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ONGOING

Continuing Ed at Temple Emmanuel of Wakefield, Thursdays on Zoom at 7:30 p.m. Temple Emmanuel of Wakefield invites the community to a new series of workshops with Rabbi Micah Becker-Klein. The first is on Nov. 18 with a discussion on the Creation Midrash – Adam, Eve, and Lilith. Future workshops: Dec. 17: Ghosts, Dybbuks, and Demons – medieval Jewish history; Jan. 21: Kabbalah/ Jewish Mysticism – meditation, basic history; Feb. 18: Jewish Mysticism in Liturgy and theology; March 18: Jewish Mysticism - Meditation Practices – older forms and contemporary practice; May 20: Herbology, Flora, and the Biblical Edible Landscape. To register, email info@WakefieldTemple.org or call 781-245-1886.

Israeli Folk Dancing, Thursdays at 7:30 p.m., Sundays at 8:30 a.m. Classes are held at the JCCNS. Free, RSVP to ns.israeli.folk.dance@gmail.com. JCCNS, 4 Community Road, Marblehead.

Israeli Folk Dancing at Temple Ner Tamid, Tuesdays at 8 p.m. $2 donation is appreciated. No experience necessary. For more information, email algrnewman@aol.com. Temple Ner Tamid, 368 Lowell St., Peabody.

Knitting Knights, first and third Wednesdays of every month at 7 p.m. Join for fun evenings of knitting and chat. All ability levels welcome. JCCNS Women's Health Center, 4 Community Road, Marblehead.

Open Play Canasta and Mah-Jongg, Wednesdays, 3-5 p.m. at the JCCNS in Marblehead. The community is invited for weekly canasta and mah-jongg games. Bring your own playing cards and canasta card holder and your own mah-jongg set. Members, free; community, $5. RSVP to Sara Ewing at sewing@jccns.com. JCCNS, 4 Community Road, Marblehead.

BalaGan! Third Friday of every month, 5:30 p.m. PJ Library and Rabbi Evan, Cantor Rubenstein, and Miss Bari of Temple Tiferet Shalom in Peabody connect families with young children with each other and build strong connections over a shared Jewish identity. BalaGan is designed for families with children ages 2-6, siblings and grandparents are welcome, too. Followed by a family dinner. Register by emailing Beth at office@templetiferetshalom.org. Temple Tiferet Shalom, 489 Lowell St., Peabody.

THROUGH NOVEMBER 19

Annual Jewish Book Month Speaker Series, presented by the JCCNS in Marblehead. The community is invited to hear an outstanding lineup of speakers that highlight Jewish literature and culture. The 2026 series features a wide array of subjects and features seven thought-provoking and entertaining books. For tickets and more information, visit jccns.org/jewish-book-month. JCCNS, 4 Community Road, Marblehead.

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 2

Jewish Art Around the World: Henna Traditions in Sephardi and Mizrahi Communities, 7:30 p.m. on Zoom. Presented by Lappin Foundation. The community is invited to celebrate Mizrahi Jewish Heritage Month, and join a special program with Noam Sienna, Ph.D., Deinard Memorial Chair in Jewish History at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities. This talk offers a window into the history and culture of henna art in Jewish communities from North Africa and the Middle East. Free. Register at lappinfoundation.org/2026/09/23/jewish-art-around-the-world-henna-traditions-in-sephardi-and-mizrahi-communities. For more information, contact Sharon Wyner at 978-565-4450.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 4

Song Circle with Rachel and Eli, 7 p.m. Presented by Congregation Shirat Hayam in Swampscott. The community is invited to join Rachel Miller and Eli Sontz for an informal, participatory gathering centered around music, singing, and community. All voices are welcome. The Song Circle meets on the first Wednesday of each month. RSVP appreciated; walk-ins welcome. For more information, contact Rachel Miller at Rachel@shirathayam.org. Congregation Shirat Hayam, 55 Atlantic Ave., Swampscott.

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 8

Adult Education Program, American Jewish Humor: The Television Years, 11 a.m. Presented by Temple Ner Tamid in Peabody. Hosted by Hal Slifer, MC of Chagigah Radio, a Jewish music show on WERS. The community is invited to a nostalgic and entertaining multimedia journey through the history of American Jewish humor and its impact on television. Through rare video clips, classic television moments, music, and storytelling, audiences will revisit the comedians, writers, performers, and television personalities who helped shape American entertainment. $20 per person. Minyan at 9 a.m.; program starts at 11 a.m. Visit Templenertamid.org to RSVP. Temple Ner Tamid, 368 Lowell St., Peabody.

Singing and Repairing the World, 2:30 p.m. Presented by Temple Sinai in Marblehead. The community is invited to a presentation by Dr. Cheryl C. Boots and Rabbi Michael Schwartz titled "Singing and Repairing the World in the Southern Freedom Movement and the volunteers inspired by the teachings of Torah, the Hebrew Bible." Refreshments will be served. Cheryl C. Boots, Ph.D., is a retired professor of humanities and American studies at Boston University, singer/songwriter, and researcher of the songs that influence American racial justice movements. The program is free; registration is required at templesinaiweb.org/event/singing-and-repairing-the-world-in-the-southern-freedom-movement. Temple Sinai, 1 Community Road, Marblehead.

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 11

Scotch & Schmooze, Israel After the Election: A New Government and a Changing America, 7 p.m. Presented by Congregation Shirat Hayam in Swampscott. The community is invited to a conversation with Barak Sella, a senior research fellow at Harvard Kennedy School's Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. Israelis have voted, and Americans have just gone to the polls in the midterms. What do the results mean for Israel and its relationship with the United States? Barak Sella will look at who will govern Israel and what a new coalition means for its direction and the region. The evening will include a short presentation followed by an open Q&A. RSVP: bit.ly/scotchandschmoozeNOV11. Congregation Shirat Hayam, 55 Atlantic Ave., Swampscott.

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12

Where Did That Saying Come From? 11:30 a.m. Presented by the JCCNS in Marblehead. The community is invited to a monthly midday Speakers Series, in partnership with Explorers Lifelong Learning. Ever wonder where familiar expressions like "once in a blue moon" or "it's raining cats and dogs" originated? Join Explorers lecturer Noel DeFelippo to explore the fascinating stories behind common idioms, discover their original meanings, and learn how these colorful phrases have evolved to become part of our everyday language. Coffee and bagels will be served. RSVP at JCCNS.org. JCCNS, 4 Community Road, Marblehead.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 13

Shabbat in the Groove! 7:30 p.m. Presented by Temple Emmanuel of Wakefield. Rabbi Micah Becker-Klein announces the return of Shabbat in the Groove! Shabbat evening services will host monthly special musical Friday nights. Joining Rabbi Micah are guest musicians from Berkeley College of Music. Each month's theme will feature different inspired songs. November's will begin with original and traditional songs. Later in winter, there will be songs influenced by the Grateful Dead, Bob Marley, Neil Young, the Beatles, and Dolly Parton. All are welcome. For more information go to WakefieldTemple.org. Temple Emmanuel, 120 Chestnut St., Wakefield.

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Sandra L. "Sandy" (Leventhal) Hoffman, 76, of Swampscott, formerly of Peabody



Sandra L. "Sandy" (Leventhal) Hoffman, age 76, of Swampscott, formerly of Peabody, beloved wife, adored mother, dedicated Bubbe, cherished family member, and treasured friend entered eternal rest on Oct. 18, 2026 after a brief illness. She also fought multiple myeloma with strength and grace for 13 years.

Sandy was born in Boston and raised in Chelsea, the loving daughter of the late Louis and Evelyn Leventhal. Her love of people and education was present throughout her entire professional career, which included as teacher and director of early childhood education at the North Suburban JCC and later the JCC of the North Shore. Following those educational experiences, she became an activities coordinator, bringing joy and comfort to seniors at the Leonard Florence Center for Living and the Brudnick Center for Living. She put a smile on everyone's face. Regardless of who she was with, Sandy's smile lit up a room and she brought out the best in all who were fortunate enough to know her and made everyone feel so special.

Sandy was the devoted wife of Harold Hoffman; beloved mother of Jeff and his wife Jules Hoffman and Carrie and her husband Ariel Berger; loving grandmother of Eliana and Jackson Berger and Olivia Hoffman; dear sister of the late Norman and his surviving wife Fran Leventhal and the late Gerald and Judy Leventhal; and also survived by many nieces, nephews, and cousins.

Services were held at Temple Ner Tamid, Peabody on Oct. 20. Interment followed at Ohel Jacob Cemetery, Woburn. In lieu of flowers, expressions of sympathy may be made in Sandy's memory to the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation (themmrf.org), or to Temple Ner Tamid (templenertamid.org).

And, in honor of Sandy, please be kind to your neighbor, smile at a stranger, and call and hug your loved ones. For online condolences, go to goldmanfc.com. Arrangements by Goldman Funeral Chapel, Malden.

Barry C. Richmond, 82, of Peabody



Barry C. Richmond, age 82, of Peabody, entered eternal rest on Oct. 21, 2026.

Barry was born in Boston and raised in Chelsea, the loving son of the late Milton and Lessie (Cotton) Richmond. He served honorably in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. Later, Barry worked for many years as a financial planner until his retirement.

Barry was the devoted husband of Tamara "Tammy" (Dennis); the beloved father of Michelle and her husband Robert St. Pierre and the late Chad M. Richmond; adored grandfather of Lilah and Landon St. Pierre; and was cherished by many nieces, nephews, grandnieces and grandnephews.

Barry will be remembered for his quick wit and his devotion to his family.

Services were held at the Chabad of Peabody Center on Oct. 25,with interment at Shirat Hayam (Temple Israel) Cemetery in Peabody.

Shiva was held at his late residence on Oct. 26 and Oct. 27. In lieu of flowers, expressions of sympathy in his memory may be made to Chabad of Peabody (jewishpeabody.com) or the Torigian Family YMCA in Peabody (ymcametronorth.org/locations/torigian-family-ymca-peabody). For online condolences, go to goldmanfc.com. Arrangements by Goldman Funeral Chapel, Malden.

Yvette (Carmona) Namias, 104, of Peabody, formerly of Pembroke Pines, Florida and Waltham



Yvette (Carmona) Namias, age 104, of Peabody, formerly of Pembroke Pines, Florida and Waltham, entered eternal rest on Oct. 26, 2026.

Yvette was a Holocaust survivor, born in Thessaloniki, Greece. She was the loving daughter of the late Albert and Marguerite Carmona.

She was the devoted wife of the late Dr. Jack Namias; beloved mother of Dr. Albert and Gila Namias and the late Charles Namias and his surviving life partner Debbie Namias; adored grandmother of Dr. Joshua Namias and Dr. Ellen Bubrick, Sarah and Agaton Strom, Jennifer and Greg Bienemann, and Jeffrey Namias; and cherished great-grandmother of Maddie, Brooke, Lea, Isaac, Annie, Robbie, and Nora.

Services were held at the Beth Israel Cemetery, North Reading on Oct. 29. In lieu of flowers, expressions of sympathy in her memory may be made to Dana Farber Cancer Institute (dana-farber.org), Congregation Shirat Hayam (shirathayam.org), or Kaplan Hospice House (caredimensions.org). For online condolence calls, go to goldmanfc.com. Arrangements by Goldman Funeral Chapel, Malden.

Walter Koenig, original Chekov on 'Star Trek,' dead at 90



GEORGEHTAKEI/INSTAGRAM

George Takei, left, and Walter Koenig

Walter Koenig was an actor and writer who became a pop culture icon thanks to his portrayal of Chekov, the Russian navigator on "Star Trek: The Original Series" and its six follow-up movies. He died Oct. 25, 2026, at the age of 90.

Born Sept. 14, 1936, in Chicago, Koenig moved to Manhattan with his Russian Jewish immigrant parents as a child. He studied at the Neighborhood Playhouse School of the Theatre alongside other future stars like James Caan, Dabney Coleman and Christopher Lloyd.

Koenig had a smattering of television roles before landing the part that would make him famous, including a recurring role in the first show by "Star Trek" creator Gene Roddenberry, "The Lieutenant."

The part that changed his life came in 1966, when he was cast as Ensign Pavel Chekov in "Star Trek." Chekov was a Russian navigator on the international crew of the USS Enterprise, and the character became a core part of the show's diverse supporting cast. Koenig played Chekov throughout the entire run of the original series, as well as in six sequel movies, among other Trek-related appearances.

Koenig continued to act after "Star Trek," appearing in the Trek-influenced science fiction series "Babylon 5," "Columbo," and others. He wrote for television for a time, including episodes of "Land of the Lost" and "Star Trek: The Animated Series," and authored several books, including "Warped Factors: A Neurotic's Guide to the Universe," "Buck Alice and the Actor-Robot," and "Walter Koenig's Things to Come."

He received Saturn Award nominations for his work in "Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan" and "Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home," and earned an Inkpot Award in 1982.

In 2007, he was involved in assisting the human rights group U.S. Campaign for Burma.

George Takei, who played Enterprise helmsman Hikaru Sulu alongside Koenig's navigator Chekhov, remembered him in an Instagram post:

"Walter and I met on the bridge of the Enterprise in the 1960s, and we stayed friends for nearly six decades. When Brad and I married in 2008, Walter stood beside us as our best man. Just last month, on Sept. 14, he turned 90, on the same day Brad and I celebrated our 18th wedding anniversary. I will always treasure that he and I shared that date.

"Walter was more than Chekov. He was a writer, a teacher, a thoughtful man, and a loyal friend. To the fans who loved him for so many years, thank you. He loved you too.

"Rest well, my dear friend. Keep navigating a steady course."

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The Jewish Journal of Greater Boston prints obituaries up to 200 words for $200; longer submissions will be charged accordingly. Paid obituaries will also be posted online at **jewishjournal.org**. Photographs cost $40 each; emailed photos should be sent as jpeg or tiff files. Submissions are subject to editing for style. For further information, contact your local funeral home, or email **andrew@jewishjournal.org**.

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Jewish hoopsters Yael Maayan, Alex Zakheim join BU's Division I women, men on the court



Alex Zakheim



PHOTOS FROM BU ATHLETICS

Yael Maayan

By **MICHAEL MURRA**
JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT

TWO JEWISH student-athletes took a leap of faith when they joined their respective Boston University basketball programs.

Alex Zakheim, a 21-year-old guard from Bergenfield, New Jersey, joined the BU men's basketball team after a breakout season at Brandeis University last winter. Yael Maayan, a 20-year-old forward from Yehuda, Israel, transferred to join the BU women's basketball team after playing at Samford University in Homewood, Alabama for the past two years.

Zakheim is modern Orthodox and attended Yeshivat Frisch for 13 years in Paramus, New Jersey before a post-graduate year in Pennsylvania.

"Judaism is an important part of my life, and God is the reason why I'm in the position I am today," Zakheim said. "I keep kosher, celebrate Shabbat and try to represent Israel in the best way I can. I've traveled to Israel many times, including when I competed in the 3-on-3 tournament in the Maccabiah Games."

An economics major, Zakheim has three years of eligibility remaining and would love to play professionally in Israel after college.

Zakheim didn't receive any Division I offers at prep school. He averaged 18.2 points and 4.8 assists for the Judges, including a career-high 30 points against Clark University last November in Waltham.

He knows that making the transition from Division III to Division I will be a challenging one.

"In Division III, you have the ball in your hands a lot and you're playing 35 minutes a game," Zakheim said. "In Division I, you have to figure out what you can use and what you have to pull back on. The adjustment has been tough, but it's been great to learn."

Zakheim hopes to help BU reach the NCAA Tournament for the ninth time and the first since 2011. The Terriers won the 2020 Patriot League Tournament to qualify for the NCAA Tournament, but March Madness was canceled due to coronavirus.

Maayan, a forward, comes to Boston after playing two seasons in the Southern Conference. From a basketball perspective, the level of play is similar as both schools are Division I, mid-major programs. Culturally, there's a big difference between Boston and Homewood.

A junior with three years of eligibility remaining, Maayan faced several Power 4 opponents last season, including Nebraska, Florida, Alabama and Mississippi State. She had two rebounds in a loss at Minnesota last December.

"I was looking for a new and challenging opportunity," Maayan said. "Academics is very important to me, and BU was the perfect decision. Boston is beautiful, and I feel very welcomed and loved here."

Maayan, a psychology major, said she was able to connect with the Jewish and Israeli communities in Alabama, but she's grateful that Boston has a larger community for both.

"I'm very proud of who I am," Maayan said. "I'm proud to represent my community. Being an Israeli in America isn't always easy, but the greatest thing about being an Israeli is knowing that you're always going to have your support."

One perk for Maayan is that she'll be much closer to her best friend, Shira Elkis, who plays basketball for Stonehill College in South Easton – 29 miles away.

Maayan grew up playing basketball in Israel and has competed for the national team as well as the Maccabiah Games.

"I started playing basketball when I was 12 years old, and a friend encouraged me to go to basketball practice," Maayan said. "I fell in love with it. It's amazing putting the Israeli jersey on and representing my country."

She attended the Wingate Academy of Sports Excellence in Netanya for five years. That experience opened the door to NCAA Division I basketball programs in the United States.

Maayan chose Samford, a private, Christian university, and enjoyed her experience in the Deep South. She described attending a University of Alabama football game last fall as "the most American experience I've ever had."

She also was a part of the Bulldogs' run to the NCAA Tournament last fall. It was their third-ever NCAA appearance and first in 14 years. Maayan hopes to help BU reach the NCAAs for the second time ever and the first since 2003.

"We had a lot of fun," Maayan said. "Reaching the NCAA Tournament was a unique experience, and I'm so glad I experienced it. Now, I wanted to help BU's team experience it. The most important part is to play hard and stay together."

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Holocaust Museum Boston announces $2 million gift from Davis Family Charitable Foundation

HOLOCAUST MUSEUM BOSTON will receive a $2 million gift from the Boston-based Davis Family Charitable Foundation. This represents one of the largest philanthropic commitments to the Museum and the largest gift from the Davis Family Foundation to date. The Davis Foundation gift brings total fundraising to date to $81 million against a $110 million total goal.

Currently under construction on Tremont Street, overlooking Boston's historic Freedom Trail, Holocaust Museum Boston will be New England's first museum solely dedicated to Holocaust education. Scheduled to open in the summer of 2027, the museum will preserve the memory and lessons of the Holocaust while inspiring visitors to confront antisemitism, challenge all forms of hatred and marginalization, and recognize their own capacity to make a difference.

"We are deeply grateful to the Davis Family Charitable Foundation for this extraordinary commitment to Holocaust Museum Boston," said Jody Kipnis, co-founder, president, and CEO of the Holocaust Legacy Foundation. "At a time when not only antisemitism but all forms of hatred are rising, the importance of Holocaust education has never been more urgent. This generous gift is an investment not only in preserving history, but in educating future generations, inspiring moral courage, and empowering individuals to recognize the difference they can make in the world."

Once complete, Holocaust Museum Boston will feature immersive exhibitions, historical artifacts, survivor testimony, and educational programs designed to engage visitors intellectually, emotionally, and ethically. Visitors will be invited to examine the past, connect to the present, and create the future. Through firsthand testimony and historical accounts of persecution, resistance, and moral courage, the museum will encourage visitors to reflect on the lessons of the Holocaust and recognize how their own choices and actions can help shape a more compassionate and just future.

"We were inspired by the vision of the founders of Holocaust Museum Boston to preserve the memory of the Holocaust's atrocities and to draw on those lessons to recognize and confront antisemitism and hatred of others wherever they arise, now and in the future," said Molly Davis Macleod, Executive Director of the Davis Family Charitable Foundation. "The Museum's location on the Freedom Trail, near Park Street Station, the Massachusetts State House and Boston City Hall, will help bring this history to a wide audience. Its staff is already working closely with schools across Massachusetts to incorporate Holocaust education into their curricula. Together, these efforts gave us confidence that Holocaust Museum Boston will help people understand and confront antisemitism and hatred in general while keeping the memory of the Holocaust alive."

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Shirat Hayam commemorates October 7 through music and connection



Katrina Spiegel, Michal Beck and Olga Cornev perform.

APPROXIMATELY 200 people from across the North Shore and beyond gathered on Oct. 13 for "An Evening of Music, Remembrance & Support for Israel" at Congregation Shirat Hayam in Swampscott.

Rabbi Michael Ragozin warmly welcomed Israel's Deputy Consul General to New England, Liron Finklestein; Yuval Seri, Northeast Regional Director of the Jewish Agency for Israel; and Israel Symphony Orchestra tour manager and emcee Doron Alperin.

Orchestra musicians Katrina Spiegel, Michal Beck and Olga Cornev delivered a moving performance spanning classical favorites, "Fiddler on the Roof," opera and "Hatikva," raising support for Israeli musicians facing funding cuts and limited performance opportunities.

Twenty-eight young Israeli emissaries, or Shinshinim, who serve Jewish Communities throughout the Northeast also attended – joining local emissaries Neta Attias and Bar Hanien. Their enthusiasm, singing and dancing filled the sanctuary with warmth, joy and hope. Together, the community created an evening of remembrance, solidarity and hope, reaffirming the bonds connecting the North Shore to Israel and one another.

Partner agencies included the Consulate General of Israel to New England, CJP, JNF and the Jewish Agency for Israel. Community partners included Congregation Shirat Hayam, JCCNS, Temple Emanu-El and Temple Sinai of Marblehead, Ahavat Achim of Gloucester, Ahavat Olam of North Andover, Temple B'nai Abraham of Beverly and Chabad of the North Shore.

The organizing committee included Deborah Schutzman, Izzy Abrams, Sara Ewing and Cynthia Ittelman. Generous sponsors included David and Karen Rosenberg, Mathew and Alison Swartz, and Larry and Lori Groipen.

Andy Buckley, aka David Wallace, visits the JCCNS



Andy Buckley meets with the JCC's Karen Robinson and Marty Schneer.

MARBLEHEAD native Andy Buckley, who played the role of David Wallace on the TV show "The Office," returned to the area to visit family last weekend and stopped by the Jewish Community Center of the North Shore in Marblehead. Buckley is staunch advocate for Israel, and his wife and children are Jewish.

Ariana Malcolm weds Shawn Vetere

MRS. ANDREA SAMILJAN is delighted to announce the marriage of her daughter Ariana Malcolm to Shawn Vetere, son of Diane Vetere of Lynnfield and the late Kenneth Vetere of Revere. The wedding took place Aug. 22, 2026 at Davio's Northern Italian Steakhouse in Boston's Seaport District.

The bride is also the daughter of Thomas Malcolm Jr. of Salem and the granddaughter of Carolyn Pivnick of Revere, Joel Pivnick of Marblehead, and the late Robert Silverman of Revere. She is a graduate of Swampscott High School and Suffolk University Sawyer Business School. Ariana is the owner of Mulberry Property Management in Boston.

The groom is a graduate of Revere High School and is vice president of marketing and business development for Knollmeyer Building Corp. and Greylock Roofing of Andover. The couple resides in Revere.



Ariana and Shawn

Aly Halpert to perform in Newburyport



Aly Halpert

RENOWNED Jewish musician, educator and activist Aly Halpert will bring her unique repertoire of ritual, liturgical and celebratory tunes to a solo concert on Sunday, Nov. 8, at 4 p.m. at Congregation Ahavas Achim of Newburyport.

Alpert, a pianist, drummer and guitar player who sings and plays her own compositions and musical interpretations, has been an artist-in-residence at synagogues across the country and performed to great acclaim at national gatherings and at quiet moments of prayer for small song circles.

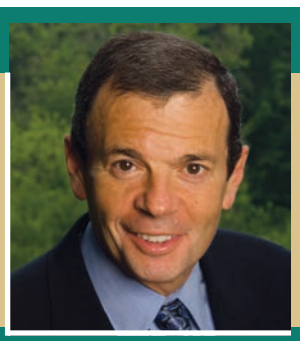
She describes her music as running the range of being folky to raw and spiritual to sometimes even "pop-y," and both serious and silly about healing and building a better world.

Tickets for the concert are available for $25 if ordered in advance at tinyurl.com/alyhalpertcaa or $30 at the door on the day of the concert at CAA at 53 1/2 Washington St., Newburyport.

For more information, text or call the synagogue at 978-255-3144 and leave a message.







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EHS students and educators are passionate about learning

By **AMY GOLD**

IN 1975, MCDONALD'S put out a series of commercials to entice customers to buy their Big Mac. The promo listed all the ingredients, including its "special sauce." Of course, the buzz around the special sauce gave them a competitive advantage against Burger King's Whopper. Now, you may be thinking to yourself, "This is an awfully strange opening from a Jewish day school head," but stick with me. There's a connection.

What makes teaching and learning at Epstein Hillel School different from a public school down the road? The first answer is obvious – we are a Jewish day school. The more nuanced difference is how we foster a love of learning that can be seen across all subject areas and grades. It's why EHS students always look forward to coming to school each day. And it is how they are such confident public speakers from such a young age. It is our special sauce. It has two main ingredients: EHS teachers and small class sizes, which are the best recipe for student engagement and achievement.

How important are teachers now that Claude and Chat GPT can create lessons with a few detailed sentences and one click? Very important. No matter how great the lesson may be, AI cannot create a classroom community where students are motivated, independent, and caring. This only happens when a teacher knows each student so well that they are working on individualized assignments. This only happens when a teacher has created a classroom culture that encourages and reinforces inquiry and appreciation for others and their interests. This only happens when students and teachers have a strong bond of trust and admiration. Walk the hallways and visit classrooms at EHS and you will hear and see all of this through the questions students ask, the answers they give, and the gleam in their eyes as they participate.



EPSTEIN HILLEL SCHOOL
Third grade student Mia Golub-Sass with third grade teacher Danielle Harrington.

EHS teachers are passionate about the subjects they teach and their students. They teach with creativity, spark, and intentionality. They are supported, respected, and encouraged to be learners and collaborators. EHS teachers are connected to one another and to the leadership team who are there to listen and brainstorm. Did you know that teachers meet with Sarah Boland (EHS director of curriculum and instruction) twice a month to review curricular goals and discuss individual student growth? They meet with Natalie Maryansky (EHS director of student services and school counselor) twice a month to support students' social growth and build a strong classroom community. And teachers meet with me once a month to talk about classroom culture and their own professional development. Our faculty and staff turnover rate is low because no other school can offer this type of environment for teaching and learning. This is not what you find down the street in your local public school.

What else do you find down the street? Much larger classes. When it comes to learning, our small classes provide more opportunities for students to come up to the Smartboard to show their work and answer questions; they have more opportunities to share their opinions and insights in a class discussion; they have more opportunities to practice classroom jobs like greeter, chazan (prayer leader), and calendar helper. Our students have more opportunities to take risks and try new things in the safety of the classroom community which feels like a family. For teachers, it means more time to individualize assignments and projects, and more time to focus on each student's potential. Small classrooms equal more academic attention. And when it comes time for socialization, EHS students interact with children from other classes when it's time to play – recess, lunch, PE, buddy activities, and Jewish holiday celebrations. There are plenty of opportunities each day to be part of a larger social cohort.

So the next time you meet someone who asks you about EHS, tell them about our "special sauce" and invite them to attend one of our events, take a tour, join our afterschool program, and check out the EHS difference.

Amy Gold is the head of school at Epstein Hillel School.

CONNECTING OUR COMMUNITY

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