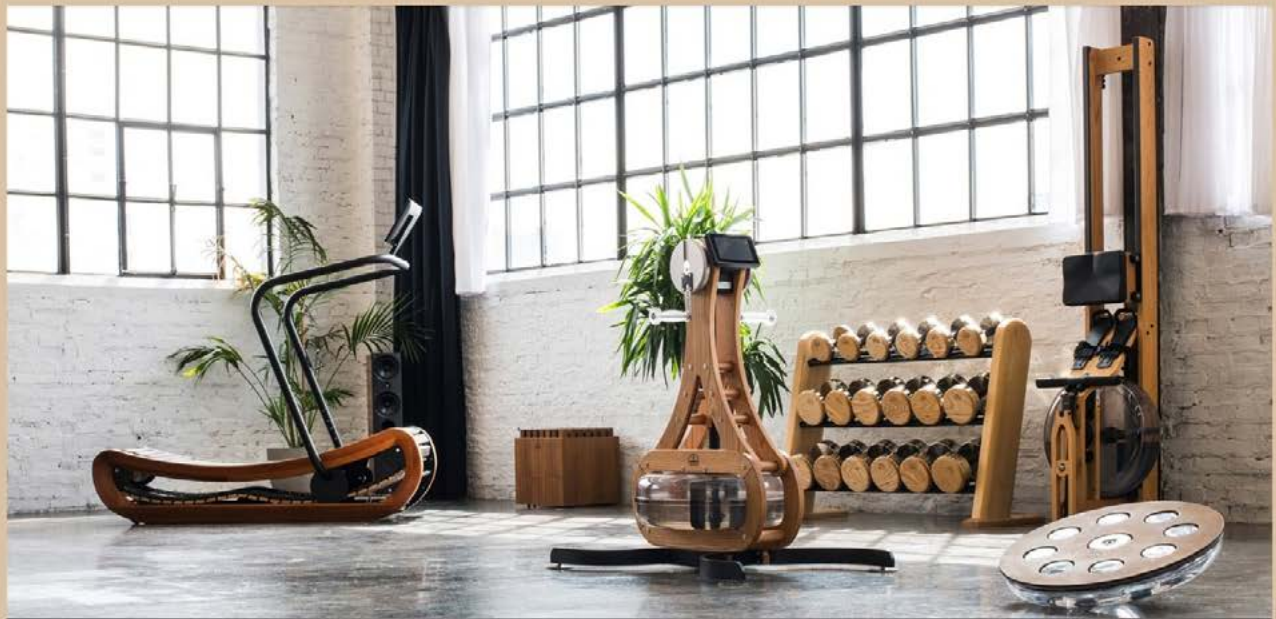


Our Circle of Community





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2025 President's Message

By Moira Berman

While 2025 is presenting turbulent challenges in the world around us, SAJAC remains a steady presence—offering reliability and, even in small ways, a sense of stability. Reflecting again on SAJAC's relevance, it becomes increasingly clear why our organization—rooted in service to the social good—remains vitally important.

Through 2024 and into 2025, SAJAC has indeed evolved beyond its original mission, taking meaningful steps to realign our purpose and address contemporary challenges and opportunities. For many, SAJAC offers a comforting sense of continuity; and this SAJAC Reporter is one of those familiar touchpoints, an opportunity to read articles about and for our members. In doing so we reaffirm SAJAC's essential role in meeting the evolving needs of our South African Jewish community and beyond.

What began in 2024 with a redefined mission statement, has expanded in 2025 as we reaffirmed our commitment to addressing antisemitism while fostering unity and belonging within our community. Our co-sponsorship of the 2024 educational webinar series, dedicated to raising awareness about antisemitism, generated tremendous community support, and spawned positive action from organizations on a wider scale. A highlight of the webinar series was a special message from the President of Israel, who praised the collaborative efforts of CAN (Combat Antisemitism Now) and SAJAC. Our

collaboration with CAN, continues into 2025, focused on recognizing and defusing antisemitism through meaningful dialogue and understanding.

Separately, members of our community were instrumental in creating The Finest Community Coalition—an independent initiative uniting Jewish and non-Jewish organizations to address antisemitism through coordinated strategies, shared best practices, and collective action. The coalition is dedicated to fostering a safe, inclusive environment where San Diego's Jewish community can thrive with pride and security.

In 2025, SAJAC deepened its outreach efforts across the broader community. We proudly partnered with AJC to co-host South African leader Wayne Sussman in San Diego, supported Amit Grinfeld's dynamic talk at Beth El, joined the House of Israel's lively Balboa Park celebration in May, and participated in Shalom Baby's Global Dinner in July. These diverse events reflect our commitment to cultural connection, dialogue, and community building. This year's Reporter articles share highlights and reflections from these and other programs—be sure to explore what you may have missed.

On the digital front, we continue to make improvements to the SAJAC website, while also responding to the need to make maintenance updates. We also remind readers that SAJAC provides complimentary Facebook advertising

and job opportunity listings, along with commercial service promotions to help amplify our members' businesses. Additionally, the SAJAC Village Genealogy Tree on Geni.com, is a platform where members can explore family histories or establish new connections, deepening our community bonds.

We are appreciative of the positive and supportive response to the 2025 fee adjustments. These strategic changes have strengthened our foundation and enabled us to serve our members more effectively and sustainably.

Looking ahead, we're excited by the fresh ideas and energy brought in by new board leadership. At the same time, we are grateful for Pamela Nathan's continued guidance during 2025. Her vast experience and knowledge have been crucial to ensuring seamless continuity and preservation of our strong community foundation.

Before you dive into the terrific articles that follow, I invite you to join me in thanking our volunteers, donors, and members who transform SAJAC's vision into reality. Without their energy and commitment, this would not be possible. I also encourage every SAJAC member to remain actively engaged in our community. Whether through event participation, ongoing support, or simply sharing our story; your involvement makes a meaningful difference and is deeply valued.

Have an idea to share?
sajacsandiego@gmail.com

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SAJAC
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SHANA TOVA
AND WELL OVER THE FAST



SAJAC Annual General Meeting

By Gail Loon Lustig

Presenting at the SAJAC AGM in January was a personal challenge for me. Israel had been at war since Oct 7th; our everyday reality was far from stable what with missiles being fired at us at the oddest of hours and tragic news inbetween. Preparing for the event certainly wasn't as relaxed as I might have wished for.

What helped was that over the years I have learned that connecting with South Africans wherever they be, is a pleasant experience overall. We know one another without even trying. The response following; 'where did you grow up?' says it all! So, in actual fact, talking about CHOL (Community History Online) with SAJC was quite easy even at the unearthly hour of 5.30 am!

And then there was the charming incident that unfolded a few days before the meeting. I checked my email and was surprised to see a message from an old friend, Colin Scher, from my 'medina' in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Towns. After receiving notification of the upcoming meeting, Colin, a well-known member of the community was asked by a close friend, Shleime (Solomon) Kaplan if I was perhaps related to Donny Loon, a classmate of his at Wiits Medical

School where they both graduated in 1948! He even dug up a photo of a few friends, including Colin's father-in-law and my aunt, Hazel, my father, Donny's sister out enjoying themselves! How amazing is that?! I had a fabulous chat to Shleime on the phone and felt how jealous Dad must have been watching us from up above. Not often have I had the chance of speaking to a friend of his from university days!

Pam Nathan and Joel Ehrlich were terrific contact people, warm and reassuring and helped make presenting at the forum of the AGM comfortable. Explaining about CHOL, its history being affiliated to the Kaplan Centre of UCT, the various sections of the website which includes all those listed below, went off well and raised several comments from those present at the session.

From the remarks of those attending, I was reminded that the history and rich legacy we wallowed in during our childhood, has definitely affected our Jewish souls in more ways than one. The mentioning of country hotels and sharing the personal history of a Jewish grandfather who married 'out' but never gave up his Jewish identity, were particularly touching.

There were several suggestions to work together, possibly posting stories that have been collected over the years by SAJAC on the CHOL website. The invitation to do this still stands as does the offer of 'driving' a community site on the website. And of course, my baby, the 'Share Your Stories' project is there for you all! All you need to do is send me your efforts and we'll continue together, organizing and uploading it on the page.

Warm wishes,

Gail

Class	Type	Nos
Stories	Mainly creative non-fiction	153
Memoirs	Personal/family	60
Communities	History	57
Presentations	Seminars, S.Y.S, Random	38
Resources	S.A Jewish history	25
Journals	Digitized journals	7
Newsletters	Monthly, annual report	13

Catagories taken from the CHOL website



Gemilut Chesed Update

By Eleanor Lazarow

We continue to support Jewish South Africans in need through our interest-free loan program—a quiet but meaningful expression of community care. These loans are designed to be repaid in manageable monthly installments, tailored to each individual's situation. We're proud to report a strong record of repayments, allowing us to keep helping others in turn.

We are especially grateful to all SAJAC members who contributed to the Gemilut Chesed Fund when renewing their membership. Your generosity helps sustain this important initiative.

"Gemilut Chesed" means Acts of Loving Kindness—a value at the heart of Jewish life, and one that defines our SAJAC community



The Circle of Community

By Lee Leibenson

SAJAC (South African Jewish American Community) is more than just a nonprofit. It is a dynamic, interconnected network supporting, celebrating and preserving our shared identity. Each circle in our Circle of Community diagram represents a vital facet of who we are and what we do.

1. Nationwide Membership and Connection with Experts in the USA

SAJAC unites South African Jews across the United States, providing opportunities to connect with experts in law, medicine, education and other key fields, fostering both personal and professional support.

2. Promotion of Expat Business Listings in the Community

We spotlight businesses owned by South African expats, offering a trusted network of services and encouraging economic collaboration within our community.

3. Gemilut Chesed (Acts of Loving Kindness)

At SAJAC's heart is the Jewish value of compassion. We assist members through illness, loss and life transitions ensuring no one in our community walks alone.

4. Publications: Directory and Reporter

Our annual Directory and Reporter keep members informed, celebrated and connected, featuring life events, reflections and community news.

5. Co-sponsor Events with Numerous Jewish Organizations

We collaborate with a wide range of Jewish groups locally and nationally to amplify impact and build bridges within the broader Jewish world.

6. Supports AJC, IAC, Shalom Baby, Hillel, and Shabbat San Diego

SAJAC strengthens Jewish continuity by supporting key organizations nurturing Jewish identity, from birth to college and beyond and fostering connection to Israel.

7. Genealogy and Preserving Our Shared Historical Heritage

Through genealogy projects, we honor the legacy of South African Jewry, ensuring our children and grandchildren know where they come from.

8. Age-Appropriate and Community-Wide Events

From youth activities to senior gatherings, SAJAC plans events that engage all ages building relationships and creating lasting memories.

9. Welcome Baskets for Newcomers

New to town? SAJAC ensures newcomers feel embraced with thoughtful welcome packages and introductions to community life.

10. Cuisine from South Africa - Private Group on Facebook

This group on Facebook group celebrates beloved South African flavors and recipes, keeping cultural traditions alive through shared culinary heritage.

11. CAN: Combat Antisemitism Now - 501(c)(3) Tax Deductible

SAJAC supports CAN's mission to confront and combat antisemitism through education, advocacy, and awareness -now with tax-deductible giving options.

12. Community Support: Meal Trains and Obituary Notices

We support each other in times of need, organizing meals during illness or loss and respectfully honoring those who've passed with community obituary notices.

Together, these twelve circles form the living heart of SAJAC - interconnected, resilient and always evolving. We are proud of what we've built and even prouder of the community we continue to grow.

New Comers To San Diego

Martin Mark

After matriculation from Herzlia in 1973, I went on to earn an MBChB (cum laude) from UCT. After several years spent doing a variety of internships and a year off to travel around the world, I moved to the US in 1984. I went on to do additional training at the University of Pittsburgh and Tufts University in Boston and subsequently was board certified in Internal Medicine and Gastroenterology and Hepatology.

I then joined Dr. Edward Adler in private practice in Louisville, KY in 1992 and enjoyed 30 years of practice. From a very small practice, it has now evolved into the largest GI practice in KY with 20 physicians and 50 employees.

I also sat on the Board of Governors of the American College of Gastroenterology and was part of a team that was instrumental in making colon cancer screening a Medicare benefit in 2002.

After retirement, I spent a few years in Florida, and following a recent divorce, moved to San Diego to be with my family—Suki and Doron Lurie and their family, and Jon and Aviva Mark.

Currently, I spend a lot of time at the Bay Club (spinning classes), and am very involved with the Osher Lifelong Learning Center and am working as a medical advocate with the Kindness Initiative. I also enjoy traveling to Atlanta and Austin to spend time with my precious grandchildren. I am also a devoted Pittsburgh Steeler fan and enjoyed watching college basketball in Louisville.

I have 2 children. Daniel, aged 33, played Division 1 soccer at Pitt and then did his MBA at Carnegie Mellon. He is married to Mallory (a PT), and they have 1 child, Sloane, who is 9 months old. He currently lives in Atlanta and directs the M&A division and sits on the Board of Directors of 3B Scientific, a multinational healthcare company.

Josh, aged 32, graduated from Indiana University and was valedictorian of his master's degree class in Data Science at Ohio State University. He currently works for Apple in Austin, Texas, and is married to Jessi. They have 2 children—Juliet (4) and Jaxson (2).



Jay Volek & Family

Our family includes myself, my wife Janick, and our two daughters, Francesca (17) and Casey (29). We're originally from Durban and later lived in River Club, Johannesburg, where we moved in 2002.

We chose San Diego because it reminds us so much of Durban and Cape Town—the coastal lifestyle, the relaxed vibe, and the beautiful surroundings all feel wonderfully familiar.

I'm an entrepreneur and businessperson by profession. In my free time, I enjoy writing, reading, playing tennis, and a good round of golf.

We're incredibly grateful to the South African Jewish community here for the warm welcome. It's made our transition so much easier and has truly made us feel at home.



A Taste of Jewish Insight

Twenty percent off is a bargain; fifty percent off is a mitzvah.

The High Holidays have absolutely nothing to do with marijuana.

If you don't eat, it will kill your mother and grandmother.

Anything worth saying is worth repeating a thousand times.

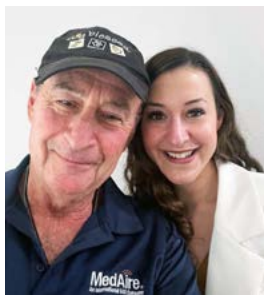
Never leave a restaurant empty-handed.

If you're going to whisper at the movies, make sure it's loud enough for everyone else to hear.

No meal is complete without leftovers.

Laugh now, but one day you'll be driving a big Cadillac and eating dinner at four in the afternoon.

Yes, virtually all Jewish wisdom is somehow related to food.



Alan Molk

Hi, I am Alan Molk 1975 graduate of Wits Medical School and originally from Heilbron OFS now living in Phoenix, Arizona since 1988. I have a strong affection for and connection to San Diego for several reasons (1) My beloved daughter Eliza Molk-Frankel and her husband Jonathan and their baby Zachary live in El Cajon and I so enjoy the 1 hour flight from Phoenix to visit regularly (2) Love to escape the brutal Arizona summer desert heat (3) Connections to South African expats in the San Diego area and playing Jewish geography! Love that! Already have connections to great people like Pam Jaffe, Pam Nathan, Franklin and Brendan Gaylis, Vanessa Jubiler-Lurie, Grant Neifeld and Melanie Greenberg! Looking forward to more!. My contact info Cell 602-908-1525, email dralanmolk@gmail.com for anyone who wants to make contact.

Eliza Frankel

I am an attorney for the County of San Diego, where I represent the Child and Family Wellbeing Department, commonly known as Child Protective Services. I have been practicing law for eight years, with a focus on serving and protecting the most vulnerable members of our community. I met my husband, Jonathan Frankel, in 2014 while we were both attending the University of San Diego School of Law. He is also an attorney, and his maternal grandparents were Holocaust survivors. We recently welcomed our son, Zachary Isaac Frankel, born on September 25, 2024. We live in the Mount Helix/Horizon Hills area of El Cajon.

Alan & Eliza Molk- Frankel my daughter next me and my granddaughter Sydney in Phoenix last me and my wife Laura son Asher daughter in law Lyndsay and granddaughter Sydney in Phoenix

Ariel Molk is the sister of Eliza Frankel-Molk and part of the triplet gang! Asher is the only boy and he lives in Phoenix. Ariel is a frequent visitor to San Diego. She has a law degree from Washington University and has a keen interest in non profit work and politics. Ariel currently resides in Phoenix and Flagstaff She is single and looking at new opportunities in her personal and professional life.



Delivering More Than Just Mail: How Action Mail and Shiparoo Are Revolutionizing Print, Direct Mail & Fulfillment

In today's fast-moving business world, speed, precision, and personal connection aren't just nice to have — they're essential. That's where Action Mail steps in. A powerhouse in direct mail and commercial printing, Action Mail has long set the standard for high-impact, data-driven communication. Now, with the addition of Shiparoo, their new fulfillment and warehousing division, they're offering a seamless, all-in-one solution for marketing and logistics.

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From sleek postcards and brochures to personalized letters and political mailers, Action Mail delivers professionally printed pieces that hit the mark. Their use of variable data printing (VDP) personalizes every item, boosting engagement and response. Whether you're running a nationwide campaign or hyper-local outreach, their tech-driven precision ensures every piece is printed, addressed, and delivered on time.

Action Mail Services:

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- Every Door Direct Mail (EDDM) for local saturation

Their expert team handles the entire process — from design to delivery — so clients can stay focused on growing their business while Action Mail gets the word out.

Enter Shiparoo: Smart Fulfillment That Scales

Recognizing the need for integrated logistics, Action Mail launched Shiparoo, a full-scale fulfillment and warehousing solution that brings next-level efficiency to e-commerce, product delivery, and promotional campaigns.

Housed in a secure, climate-controlled facility, Shiparoo handles everything from inventory to final delivery — with same-day order fulfillment, real-time tracking, and seamless integration with platforms like Shopify, WooCommerce, and Amazon.

Shiparoo Services:

- Inventory storage and tracking
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- Returns and reverse logistics
- Full e-commerce integration

What makes Shiparoo truly shine? It's fully integrated with Action Mail. That means your printed marketing, branded merchandise, and customer orders are all managed under one roof — reducing costs, speeding up delivery, and ensuring consistency across the board.

Print + Fulfillment = One Powerful Partnership

What truly sets Action Mail and Shiparoo apart is their commitment to custom solutions, unmatched reliability, and personal service. Whether you're mailing a few thousand brochures or launching a national e-commerce campaign, they've built a streamlined, stress-free experience that helps you communicate better and ship smarter.

As marketing, logistics, and customer expectations continue to converge, Action Mail and Shiparoo are proving that integrated solutions aren't just convenient — they're the future.

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The following West Coast OB/GYN Doctors have received the prestigious 2024 **"Top Doc"** award (top 10% as voted by their peers).

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 Dr. Kim Goodwin
 Dr. Amy French
 Dr. Daniela Meshkat
 Dr. Kristin Engorn
 Dr. Madison Fish
 Dr. Ariel Shuckett
 Dr. Lisa Underwood
 Dr. Jennifer Kim
 Dr. Kimia Menhaji

Congratulations
 to Dr. Saffer and Dr. French who have both achieved accreditation as a **Surgeon of Excellence in Robotic Surgery.**



Craig Saffer,MD



Amy French,MD



Kim Goodwin,MD



Daniela Meshkat,MD



Lisa Underwood, DO



Kristine Engorn,MD



Ariel Shuckett,MD,MPH



Madison Fish,MD



Jennifer Kim, DO



Blaire Nasstrom, DO



Kimia Menhaji, MD



Ashlee Schlesier,MD



Roumta Odisho, MD



Sofia Klar, DO



Katherine Fundora,PA-C



Tania Zuniga, NP



Christine Moll-Garibay,NP



Aimee Levinson, PA-C



Brianna Greenly,NP



Jordan Mullen, NP

San Diego

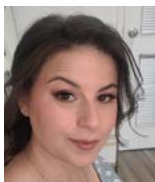
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Israel in a Changing World: A Talk by Dr. Mordechai Kedar

By Miriam Gershenson



LA JOLLA, California – On November 20th, 2024 over 200 attendees gathered at Congregation Beth El in La Jolla to hear a thought-provoking lecture by Dr. Mordechai Kedar, an expert in Middle Eastern affairs. Organized by Pamela Nathan, President of SAJAC (South African Jewish American Community) and CAN (Combat Antisemitism Now), the event highlighted Dr. Kedar's deep understanding of the region's complexities, drawn from his distinguished career in military intelligence and academia. Security was present to ensure the safety of attendees, and the lecture proceeded peacefully without any protests.

Dr. Kedar's presentation, titled "Israel in a Changing World," explored the cultural, religious, and political dynamics that shape the region. Drawing on his 25+ years of experience in IDF military intelligence and his extensive academic research, he provided attendees with a nuanced framework to analyze the Middle East. His insights bridged the historic and contemporary, offering an understanding of how factors such as tribalism, Islam, and modernism continuously influence the region's trajectory.

A key focus of the lecture was the contrasting cultural paradigms of the Middle East and the West. Dr. Kedar noted how individualism dominates Western culture, while the Middle East prioritizes family, clan, and tribal affiliations as the bedrock of society. This fundamental difference affects everything from social structures to political alliances. He also discussed the profound role of religion in the Middle East, often

serving as the primary determinant in personal and professional decisions—a stark contrast to the relatively secularized approach seen in many Western countries.

Dr. Kedar elaborated on how tribalism remains deeply entrenched in Middle Eastern society. The desert environment historically necessitated strong familial bonds for survival, fostering collective loyalty and often perpetuating cycles of revenge and honor killings. He explained how Islam sought to unify tribes under a single religious banner but ultimately failed to abolish clannishness. The three dominant cultural forces—tribalism, Islam, and modernism—continue to pull the region in different directions.

Modernism's influence, though limited, has brought some societal changes. Dr. Kedar shared fascinating historical anecdotes, such as the introduction of the printing press to Egypt in the 19th century and early efforts toward women's education and liberation. However, he noted that modern devices like cell phones, which grant individual autonomy, are viewed with suspicion by many in the Islamic world, as they challenge patriarchal control.

Turning to current events, Dr. Kedar addressed the ongoing conflicts between Israel and entities like Hamas and Hezbollah. He emphasized that in the Middle East, peace is extended only to those who demonstrate power and deterrence. He stressed the importance of Israel maintaining internal stability and a strong image to secure even temporary peace in a re-

gion fraught with deep-rooted cultural and religious divisions.

Dr. Kedar also shed light on the complex alliances and rivalries shaping the region. He highlighted the strained relationship between Iran and its proxies, such as Hamas and Hezbollah, which has been exacerbated by Israel's recent military successes. He predicted that the Middle East's geopolitical landscape could shift further after January 20, aligning with potential changes in U.S. administration policies.

Following the lecture, attendees actively participated in a dynamic Q&A session that touched on a wide range of topics. Dr. Kedar addressed questions with candor and depth, offering insights into both historical and contemporary issues:

Miriam Gershenson is a freelance writer who enjoys covering events and promoting others.

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OVER THE FAST



Combatting Antisemitism in San Diego

By Franklin Gaylis and Charlene Seidle

Since October 7th, 2023 we have all witnessed the tremendous rise in antisemitism throughout the Diaspora. When our people expected empathy and support, we were immediately faced with a tsunami of hate. However, this situation has led to a tremendous unity amongst the Jewish People throughout the world, support from numerous allies, coordination amongst the major Jewish professional organizations and many grassroots community efforts to combat antisemitism, like our own San Diego, Combat Antisemitism Now (CAN). Not only has CAN supported numerous efforts to combat antisemitism, some of its associates are also involved in leadership positions standing up to entities and programs promoting antisemitic vitriol.

For example, under the leadership of Heidi Gantwerk (Jewish Federation), Charlene Seidle (Leichtag Foundation) and Betzy Lynch (JCC), a new initiative was recently established. Embracing San Diego's moniker as America's Finest City, The Finest Community Coalition was developed as an independent initiative taking a community-wide approach to combat antisemitism together for a better San Diego.

The Coalition serves as a collaborative platform for Jewish and non-Jewish organizations and leaders to coordinate strategies, share best practices, map existing efforts and fill gaps, and respond collectively when appropriate to rising antisemitism. The Coalition is dedicated to ensuring that San Diego remains a place where its Jewish population can be safe, secure and proud to be Jewish.

Numerous local Jewish organizations, synagogues and other Jewish and non-Jewish organizations are partnering with the Coalition and coordinating efforts to combat antisemitism in our schools, university campuses and more. Several SAJAC members (Charlene Seidle, Jane Scher, Franklin Gaylis) serve on the Coalition's board.

Recently, The Coalition and its members have been heavily engaged in efforts to pressure San Diego Pride to reconsider their decision to platform the artist Kehlani, whose music is filled with hateful vitriol towards Jews and Israel, at this year's Pride Festival. The Coalition initially organized and published a statement signed by over 30 local Jewish organizations. This was followed up by a press release announcing the withdrawal of the major Jewish organizations and synagogues from Pride because of their decision to promote an artist who has spewed violent antisemitic rhetoric.

Both efforts have resulted in 255 earned media placements, which have helped to draw attention to this important issue. The Coalition has been extremely supportive of another local grassroots organization, the San Diego Chapter of the American Jewish Medical Association, formed 1 year ago.

Many local South African physicians have joined this organization to help combat antisemitism in healthcare, a major problem, and foster the important role that Jewish Physicians and other Jewish healthcare professionals (dentists, psychologists, pharmacists and others) play in healthcare in general. The SD chapter of the AJMA has played a prominent role in combating antisemitism at UCSD prompting the administration to establish a "working group" to evaluate and make recommendations on how to combat antisemitism on campus and make UCSD a more welcoming place for Jewish students, residents and faculty.

AJMA has nearly 2,000 members and has sent nearly 100 letters to institutions, associations, unions, and international entities regarding incidents and perpetrators of antisemitism in healthcare, including information submitted to Congressional committees and investigative counsel. AJMA has developed a curriculum on Jewish identity and antisemitism that can be incorporated into medical, nursing and other healthcare graduate school curricula.

AJMA has partnerships with most major Jewish organizations in combatting antisemitism but remains the only national organization solely dedicated to representing Jewish healthcare professionals across specialties and throughout the training trajectory. They launched its first mission to Israel this June, despite the recently escalated conflict.

Our SD chapter of the AJMA will soon be hosting a webinar with a speaker from Israel discussing the amazing response of the Israeli healthcare system during the ongoing war/s. All are welcome to join. In addition, we are hoping to have a mission that will go to Israel next year to meet with our Israeli colleagues, provide support and promote collaboration. SD AJMA will be hosting educational and social events to promote the network, and members of our local chapter are mentoring Jewish students interested in going into medicine and other healthcare disciplines. We welcome and are grateful for all SAJAC members' continued support.

We've become aware that members' businesses are being approached by external organizations with unsolicited emails including requests for participation, donations or purchases. Please remember that information from the SAJAC Directory should not be shared with outside parties without the members' consent.



AJC - American Jewish Committee's Global Impact Includes Africa: Spotlight on the AJC Africa Institute

By Sophia Muroff



American Jewish Committee (AJC) San Diego was delighted to introduce Wayne Sussman, Director of AJC's Africa Institute and leader in the South African Jewish community, to our vibrant community through events and meetings hosted in partnership with SAJAC.

The AJC Africa Institute connects the American Jewish community with African nations to foster diplomatic, cultural, and economic cooperation. It focuses on strengthening ties between African nations, the United States, Israel, and the global Jewish community through advocacy and building partnerships. The Africa Institute also actively participates in Africa-related advocacy within domestic and international policymaking forums.

In February, Wayne visited us in San Diego to share his work with our community. AJC San Diego co-sponsored an event with SAJAC: a special briefing about AJC's work in Africa. Wayne briefed a diverse audience about the Africa Institute's work across the continent, reaching 40 countries and growing. He spoke about AJC's promotion of Israeli agriculture, business and tech across Africa, and his upcoming trip to the Ivory Coast.

Wayne also discussed the state of the Jewish community in South Africa and the events surrounding South Africa's application to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). He provided an insider's analysis of the South African elections and their global implications, including what it means for its relations with the United States and Israel. We were happy to introduce Wayne to SAJAC leaders, AJC San Diego board members, and community stakeholders, highlighting the global

impact of AJC.

Since this event, the AJC Africa Institute undertook its first-ever mission to Côte d'Ivoire. Over three days in Abidjan, Wayne and Anne-Soophie Sebban, Director of AJC Paris, conducted 17 meetings with prominent figures, including Foreign Minister Kacou Houadja Léon Adom, Former Prime Minister Patrick Achi, and members of the Israel Parliamentary Friendship Group. Discussions focused on strengthening ties and fostering collaboration between Côte d'Ivoire, the U.S., Israel, and the Jewish community.

Their mission also included engagements with local Jewish communities, such as Breslov Hasidim and Chabad. Commitments were made for Côte d'Ivoire to host the 2026 Africa Summit, participate in the Jewish Africa Conference in April, and engage in future AJC events such as the AJC Global Forum and Diplomatic Marathon. This mission marked the third joint initiative between AJC Paris and the AJC Africa Institute focused on Francophone Africa. Through these efforts, AJC aims to deepen connections between Francophone African nations, the U.S., Israel, and the Jewish diaspora.

AJC is the global advocacy organization for the Jewish people. From world capitals to college campuses, AJC works with leaders across society to stand up for Israel; confront antisemitism, no matter the source; and uphold the democratic values that unite us. Connect with us at www.ajc.org/sandiego to sign up for our newsletter and learn more about our work in San Diego and around the globe.



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How a Face Painter, a Forgotten Email & 23+ Banana Boxes Became the Plot Twist of the Day

By Pamela Nathan



Craig, Carly, and Mila Blackstock & Pamela Nathan.



Banana Boxes



Carol Carlson

Yom Hatzmaut, April 30, 2025

Today's events somehow turned into a comedy of errors with a heart — and a happy ending worthy of its own page in The SAJAC Reporter!

Picture this: I'm knee-deep in chaos, taking a well-earned break from unpacking what felt like a 'Banana Republic's worth' of boxes — lovingly shipped in a "moving pod" from New Mexico by my darling daughter Carly. (Quick PSA ie Public Service Announcement: a "pod" is not a pea-related storage item. It's an entire portable container packed with household goods, furniture, and in our case, enough bubble wrap to float to Hawaii.)

Carly, her hubby Craig, and their adorable Mila were arriving the next day, and I was determined to turn their new South Park home from "box jungle" into "baby haven."

Meanwhile... back at the JCC, SAJAC had signed up to host a booth at the big Yom Ha'atzmaut celebration. Since I was on box duty, our trusty volunteers were handling the setup and Tanya Freedman had booked a face painter for the kids. What could possibly go wrong?

Enter: The Plot Twist

Volunteer #1 gets whisked away by a last-minute work crisis.

Volunteer #2 misses the confirmation email and can't make it.

And me? I'm elbow-deep in dish towels wondering: Who's going to greet the face painter?

In a moment of pure panic, I call in the big guns: the ever-reliable Carol Carlson. I beg her to drop everything and head to the JCC. (Bless her heart, she did.)

Carol arrives. But there's no face painter. No Booth #30. No one knows a thing.

She calls me. I drop a box marked "Carly's Cutlery" and frantically start digging through old emails. I find a layout map of the JCC grounds and send it to her.

Still no painter.

I text Tanya for the face painter's number and finally — finally — call her.

Cue the drumroll...

Face Painter forgot. Yep. Completely slipped her mind.

At the same time Carol is frantically pacing the JCC like a detective looking for a clown with glitter paint, and when she calls me back again, I'm on the phone, laughing with said absent artist and saying, "No worries at all!"

Carol, understandably, is flabbergasted that I'm not losing my marbles. Little did she know: her wild goose chase saved the day. If she'd found the booth and been sitting there like a good soldier waiting for someone who never showed up... well, she might still be there.

And so, in true SAJAC fashion, what could have been a mini-disaster became a lighthearted tale of teamwork, timing, and the occasional holy forgetfulness.

Because really... Hashem works in mysterious — and sometimes hilarious — ways.

PS here's the note from the Face Painter that accompanied instant deposit refund:

Again I just want to sincerely apologize for not showing up to today's event. I made a mistake and had the date marked down as tomorrow, and I only realized the error when you called. I'm truly sorry for the confusion and for missing such an important moment.

This has never happened before in all the time I've been doing face painting. I'm usually very organized and always arrive early to make sure everything is set up properly. I take a lot of pride in my work, and I feel very embarrassed and disappointed for letting you down and affecting the entertainment for the event.

Thank you so much for being kind and understanding on the phone—it truly meant a lot. I've already sent back the deposit along with an extra \$5 in case of any transaction fees. If you ever decide to work with me again in the future, I would be more than happy to offer you a generous discount to make up for this situation.

Again, I'm very sorry and I hope to have the chance to work with you in the future under better circumstances.

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Shabbat San Diego's Dinner brings Cultures Together

By Simone Abelsohn

On the evening of Friday, November 15th, the gym of the Lawrence Family JCC was transformed into a vibrant, joyful gathering place as Shabbat San Diego, in partnership with the Israeli-American Council (IAC), SAJAC (South African Jewish community), and KEN (San Diego's Mexican Jewish community), hosted a truly unforgettable Shabbat Dinner as part of the worldwide Shabbat Project. The event brought together Jewish traditions, flavors, and rhythms from around the world in a spirited celebration of unity and culture.

More than just a meal, the evening was a living, breathing display of what makes the San Diego Jewish community so special: its incredible diversity and the way it comes together to celebrate as one. Families, young adults, and elders from across the city arrived at the JCC to enjoy a shared Shabbat experience that was as meaningful as it was fun.

The venue buzzed with energy, beginning with an uplifting Kabbalat Shabbat and the lighting of candles as the sun set. A rich array of music, laughter, and conversation filled the air, setting the tone for the evening. From Israeli tunes and Latin rhythms to spontaneous drum circles that got everyone clapping and dancing, the sounds of the night reflected the fusion of cultures that makes San Diego's Jewish community unique.

Children delighted in the vibrant, colorful piñata that burst open with sweets and smiles, while adults gathered around picnic tables to enjoy home-cooked dishes brought by community members. From spicy shakshuka to flaky bourekas, savory empanadas, and biltong-inspired snacks, the potluck offerings created a culinary map of Jewish life around the world—one bite at a time. It was more than just food; it was a shared story of heritage, migration, and identity.

The success of this event lay not only in its logistics running smoothly—thanks to the hard work of volunteers and coordinators—but in the feeling of connection it fostered. Strangers became friends over shared dishes. Cultures were celebrated with respect and joy. And in true Shabbat spirit, the community paused together to reflect, connect, and celebrate.

Shabbat San Diego's Global Shabbat Dinner was more than a meal, it was a milestone! A reminder that when we bring our individual traditions to the table, the collective experience becomes that much richer. Events like these strengthen the bonds of our diverse Jewish family here in San Diego and build bridges that will last far beyond one Friday night.

Plans are already underway for next year, and we can't wait to see even more cultures, flavors, and families join the table. Until then—Shabbat Shalom!

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Bringing Purpose and Resilience to San Diego's Jewish Youth

By Rabbi Zevi New, Founder, Youth Action Movement



When I founded the Youth Action Movement (YAM) in 2012, it was with a simple but urgent vision: to help Jewish teens feel a deep sense of belonging. In a time when many young people struggle with identity, anxiety, and isolation, we wanted to create something powerful – a movement that would offer connection, meaning, and pride in being Jewish.

More than a decade later, I'm proud to say that YAM continues to bring purpose and resilience to San Diego's Jewish youth through innovative, intentionally designed programming that reaches the heart of what it means to be a young Jew in modern-day USA. Whether it's a leadership summit, a service project, a Shabbat dinner, or an educational trip to Israel, every YAM experience is built to do one thing: connect.

We connect teens to each other, creating a community where no one feels alone. We connect them to Jewish values, traditions, and holidays in ways that are relevant and real. And we connect

them to the state of Israel—not just as a place on a map, but as a living, breathing extension of their own story. That connection builds not only pride, but also resilience.

One of our most transformative new collaborations has been with Hagal Sheli, an Israeli nonprofit that uses surfing as a tool for healing and growth. Through its Lighthouse Program, several of our teens—including San Diego's own Lev Grezemkovsky—have experienced firsthand how surf instruction, water safety, and Jewish learning can fuse into a powerful journey of self-discovery. As Lev described, the ever-changing ocean became a metaphor for life—unpredictable, vast, and yet full of possibility. Teens return with strengthened Jewish identities, leadership skills, and a profound emotional connection to Israel. It's a shining example of how experiential learning can shape who our teens become.

We've seen firsthand how teens who feel

grounded in their Jewish identity are better equipped to face life's challenges. They walk taller. They think deeper. They care more. Especially during precarious times for our nation, our youth need a strong foundation. YAM helps build that foundation through programs that blend leadership development, wellness, and Jewish learning.

One of the most powerful things I hear from our participants is, "I feel seen." That's everything. Because when a Jewish teen feels seen, valued, and supported, their sense of purpose becomes unstoppable.

At YAM, we believe the future of the Jewish people depends on how deeply we invest in the next generation. We're proud to be doing that work here in San Diego—and we're just getting started.

With gratitude,

Zevi

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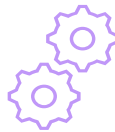
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A Year of Connection, Identity, and Celebration: Highlights from IAC San Diego

By Noy Nehardea, Israeli American Council Regional Director



Over the past year, IAC San Diego has proudly served as a vibrant home for anyone who loves Israel and seeks to stay connected—Israeli-Americans, Jewish-Americans, and friends of Israel alike. Through dozens of powerful events and impactful programs, we brought our community closer together, celebrated our shared values, and strengthened the bond with Israel.

We opened the year with a series of Shishi Israeli gatherings, filling local parks and community spaces with the joy of Shabbat. Families sang together, shared food, and experienced the warm, familiar Israeli Friday-night atmosphere right here in San Diego.

Holiday spirit filled the air at our family festivals, including a creative and interactive Passover “Exodus from Egypt” experience and a lively Purim celebration with costumes, music, and activities. These events offered young families meaningful, joyful ways to connect to Jewish and Israeli traditions.

In partnership with the Jewish Federation of San Diego, the JCC, the Jewish Community Foundation, and the Shinshinim of San Diego, we hosted a moving Yom HaZikaron memorial ceremony, honoring Israel’s fallen soldiers and victims of terror. With song, personal stories, and collective remembrance, we stood together in unity and respect.

Shortly after, we came together again for one of our biggest events of the year: a festive Yom HaAtzmaut Music Festival celebrating Israel’s independence. In collaboration with over 35 local Jewish organizations, we created an evening of Israeli spirit—live performances by artists from Israel and the U.S., family-friendly activity booths, delicious Israeli food, and an atmosphere that was electric with pride, culture, and joy.

At the heart of our year were our signature educational programs.

Keshet, our unique Israeli-style early childhood experience, welcomed dozens of young children each week to explore Hebrew, Israeli holidays, music, and culture in a warm and nurturing environment. Registration for the upcoming year is now open—including a brand-new 2nd grade class!

Our teens thrived in Eitanim, a national leadership and entrepreneurship program that empowers youth to think critically, work in teams, and connect their

identity to innovation. This year, our San Diego team brought home first place in the national Eitanim competition for Middle school, and second place in High School, showcasing their creativity, problem-solving, and deep sense of purpose.

These are just a few highlights from a year filled with energy, meaning, and connection—alongside dozens of other events, workshops, volunteer initiatives, and cultural gatherings.

Now’s the time to get involved.

Registration is open for both Keshet and Eitanim—join us as we build the future together!

For more information about program registration or getting connected with IAC, please contact Osher Oz at: ooz@israeliamerican.org



Pioneering Grandparents –from Maputo (Lourenco Marques) Synagogue in Mozambique to San Diego...

By Sue Swersky



Shul today after renovations



Mona Solomon with her family

In 2003, my daughter Lauren began a Jewish Roots project at SDJA, uncovering the story of her pioneering great-grandparents through conversations and research with my parents. She discovered that her great-grandparents, Norman and Bella Wollman, helped build a shul in Lourenço Marques (now Maputo). During the project, Lauren connected online with Vivienne Pivo in Johannesburg, whose family had also moved to Maputo from London and who helped fill in the shul's history and current status.

Jewish life in Mozambique began in the 16th century with Sephardic and Ashkenazi merchants, later expanding as South African Jews exiled by President Kruger for their pro-British activities, settled in Lourenço Marques. In 1923, my grandfather Norman Wollman, an accountant, was transferred there by Ford Motor Company from London. On their first Friday night, my grandmother Bella lit Shabbat candles in the window, hoping to connect with other Jews—and was warmly welcomed by their new neighbors.

My grandparents discovered that LM had a diverse Jewish community—Ashkenazi and Sephardic—from Vilnius, Marrakech, London, Lisbon, and Durban. Though they had long held services in homes and often disagreed on liturgy, 16 families, including my grandparents, united to build the Honen Dalim congregation, which opened on August 29, 1926. The shul was never large enough to support a rabbi, so members led services themselves. (See renovated photo of the shul)

My grandparents left LM for London when my grandmother was pregnant with their first daughter, Helene. After her birth, they moved to New York to join my grandfather's brothers, where my mom, Mona, was born in Brooklyn in 1929 during the Great Depression.

After World War II, LM's Jewish community grew to about 500 but declined as Jews moved to South Africa and Zimbabwe. In 1975, a Marxist government took over, renaming the city Maputo. There was civil war. All religions were banned, the synagogue was confiscated and used by the Red Cross for storage, and Jewish life came to a halt.

In 1989, Alkis Macropolous, a non-Jewish businessman and honorary Greek Consul in Maputo, led a campaign to reopen the synagogue. Though few Jews remained and most had little connection to ritual, many began teaching themselves and studying again.

One visitor recalled entering the shul to hear 12 people singing Am Yisrael Chai, accompanied by a German Lutheran on a portable keyboard.

Restoration began with painting and repairs. A bima was donated by the Delmas congregation in South Africa, and chairs came from an East London congregation. The original Sefer Torah, thought lost after 1975, was found in the care of the South African Jewish Board of Deputies but was no longer kosher. Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris arranged for a new Torah from Schoender Street Shul in Cape Town, which he delivered and read from on Rosh Hodesh—the first Torah reading the younger generation had ever heard.

That same year, Rosh Hashanah 1993, the shofar was blown in Maputo for the first time in at least 18 years. In November, Mozambique and Israel officially established diplomatic relations.

Shabbat services are now held every Friday night, with no competition between Ashkenazi and Sephardic liturgical styles. Services accommodate those who speak only Portuguese (the first language of the community) and those who prefer English (the common language of visiting foreigners). The result is a mixture of the two, with lots of singing in Hebrew, the language with which everyone struggles equally.

Mozambicans are not the only ones who have returned to their Jewish roots. Some of the most active community members are non-Mozambican Jews who work at foreign aid and United Nations organizations, and some are from the Brazilian, Portuguese, Dutch and British embassies to name a few. Many of them were not synagogue-going Jews in their own countries but became Shabbat regulars in Maputo. One of the shul's projects that has made great headway is the restoration of the cemetery.

Remarkably some of the revival of the Jewish community of Mozambique has been helped along largely by non-Jews. When asked why, their replies relate to personal friendships with Jews and esteem for the principles of Judaism.

The government and the leadership of other religions have encouraged the revival of the community and despite its small size, the Jewish community has participated as a full equal in national ecumenical events involving Catholics,



Shul inauguration 1926



Bella and Norman Wollman (My grandparents)

Protestants, Muslims, and Hindus.

On May 19, 2013, after more than a century of Jewish life in Maputo, the Maputo Shul was re-dedicated in a moving ceremony. Rabbi Moshe Silberhaft carried the original Sefer Torah into the sanctuary, while Anne Harris, wife of the late Chief Rabbi Cyril Harris, presented the same Torah scrolls that had been returned to South Africa for safekeeping in 1976. Over 100 people from around the world gathered to witness this historic moment.

Following a generation marked by civil war, socialism, and recurring drought, it is both uplifting and fitting that today's Jewish community in Maputo—now numbering over 50—has resumed celebrating simchas. These include brisses, Bar Mitzvahs (the first since 1970 was Jordan Silvas in 2012), Bat Mitzvahs, weddings, and more.

We are deeply proud of this heritage and of the contributions my grandparents made to Jewish life in Mozambique.

It is truly remarkable that even when Jewish culture fades and religious knowledge wanes, Jewish identity endures—and even the tiniest spark can reignite vibrant Jewish life.

Today, the branches of this heritage continue to grow in San Diego, where my 96-year-old mother, Mona Solomon, now lives. Her story began in Brooklyn, where she was born in 1929. During the Great Depression, due to a lack of work in New York, my grandparents were forced to return to London, where my mom grew up during World War II. In 1951, she, along with her parents and sister Helene, moved from London to Cape Town, where she met and married my father, Jack.

During their honeymoon, the cruise ship they were on made a stop in Maputo. There, they reconnected with some of the same families my grandparents had helped build the shul with. My parents settled in Cape Town, where they raised our family over the next 40 years, before eventually moving to San Diego 33 years ago

to be closer to us.

In San Diego, my mom is surrounded by family—myself and Smitty, my brother Peter and his wife Mary, and her three grandchildren, along with their spouses and also blessed with six great-grandchildren. We all feel incredibly fortunate to have her in our lives. Her love spans four generations, and her positive energy, quick wit, wisdom, and humor continue to inspire us every day.

**Sources of info include family records, Vivienne Pivo, South African Jewish Report, Sam Levy, various internet sites. **

www.honendalim.org

Do you know that Geni.com is home to SAJAC's Genealogy Village. Consider linking your family tree here: <https://www.geni.com/projects/South-African-Jewish-American-Community-SAJAC/4500474>

If you need help creating a free tree, please email sajacsandiego@gmail.com



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Yiddishland: A Year of Global Outreach & Cultural Resonance

By Jana Mazurkiewicz Meisarosh



This past year marked a remarkable chapter of growth and outreach for Yiddishland, as our mission to celebrate and sustain Jewish culture resonated across continents. Through both in-person and online engagements, Yiddishland reaffirmed its role as a dynamic hub for Jewish arts, language, and heritage.

Global Engagements and Presentations

Yiddishland's presence extended internationally, with cultural presentations held in Spain, Poland, and Mexico. In the United States, we brought our programming to vibrant communities in Arizona, New Mexico, New York, and Colorado. These events fostered cross-cultural dialogue and underscored the ongoing relevance of Jewish traditions in today's interconnected world.

Highlight Event: The City Without Jews

A defining moment of the year was our screening of the 1924 silent film *The City Without Jews* (*Die Stadt ohne Juden*) in San

Diego, held in May 2024. Adapted from Hugo Bettauer's prophetic novel, the film offers a powerful and satirical portrayal of a society that expels its Jewish citizens—only to suffer the consequences. The event was elevated by a moving live score performed by world-renowned klezmer violinist Alicia Svigals and acclaimed pianist Donald Sosin. Their performance added a profound emotional layer to this cinematic landmark, creating an unforgettable evening for all in attendance.

Educational Initiatives: Language as a Cultural Foundation

Education remains central to Yiddishland's mission. Over the past year, we offered online classes in the three foundational languages of Jewish culture: Hebrew, Yiddish, and Ladino (Judeo-Spanish). These courses attracted learners from around the world and fostered a thriving virtual community dedicated to preserving and revitalizing Jewish linguistic heritage.

Looking Ahead

As we reflect on a year filled with meaningful connections and cultural milestones, we look ahead with great anticipation. Yiddishland is currently planning to open a new cultural center, further strengthening our ability to bring people together around Jewish heritage. We are also committed to expanding our reach through hybrid events, continued virtual programming, and new collaborative initiatives.

To stay informed about upcoming programs and projects, we invite you to visit our website at yiddishlandcalifornia.org.

For inquiries or collaborations, feel free to reach out to us at info@yiddishland.ca.

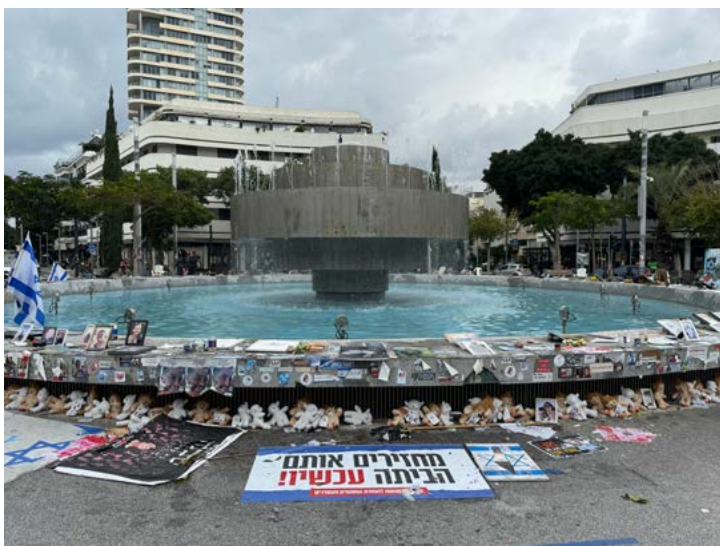
We warmly welcome you to join us on this journey—as we grow, build bridges, and keep the spirit of the Yiddish language and culture alive for generations to come.

Yiddishland California
info@yiddishland.ca
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From Wake-Up Call to Coming Home

By Danni Kaplan

Received May 12, 2025



Before October 7th, 2023 I always loved Israel—but more as a beloved holiday destination than anything deeper. I was a Jew at heart, proud of my heritage, but my relationship with Judaism lacked spiritual connection. That all changed on October 7th. The events of that day catapulted me into something far more profound — a reckoning with my identity, my faith, and my place in the Jewish story.

As I watched the horror unfold from afar, something in me shifted. I couldn't just observe. I needed to act. Within weeks, I joined one of the early volunteer missions and arrived in Israel in January 2024.

The country was still reeling—raw, heartbroken, searching for answers. I didn't come with answers; I came to help. We cleared debris from devastated kibbutzim, supported farmers, and did whatever was needed. Visiting the Nova site was a turning point. It was hard to grasp that such evil had taken place at a music festival — a space meant for celebration. And the atrocities committed in the Gaza envelope were beyond comprehension.

Coping wasn't easy. Some days were silent. Others were filled with hard work. But there were also powerful, unexpected moments of connection. An elderly woman on a kibbutz handed me a coffee and said, "You're not from here, but now you are." That moment stayed with me. We laughed through language gaps and bonded through shared purpose. There was grief—but also humor, resilience, and profound strength.

In January 2025, I returned, again — this time for six months—to live in Israel. I wanted to feel what it meant to choose this life, to understand how a nation under threat continues to rise, rebuild, and reach for hope. Living here during wartime has been transformative. I've woken to sirens and, like most Israelis, found myself muttering, "Stop being our alarm clock at 4 a.m." Yet even in those early hours, there is community, courage, and connection.

This journey has changed me forever. Somewhere between the fields, the memorials, and the morning alarms, I discovered what I didn't know I was missing: a spiritual home, a deeper sense of belonging, and the realization that Israel is not just a place I love —it's the home I've always longed for.

Now, my future lives in this dream: to return, to build, and to fully belong.

Am Yisrael Chai.



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Nicole Bernstein



Tamar Caspi

Ethnic Studies and the Future of Public Education: A Jewish Perspective

By Nicole Bernstein and Tamar Caspi

California's Ethnic Studies curriculum has become a focal point of national controversy—praised by some as a corrective to historical erasure, and condemned by others as an ideological weapon. For the Jewish community, this debate strikes at the heart of identity, safety, and the right to self-determination.

PeerK12, a Jewish educational advocacy organization, has been at the forefront of critiquing the Ethnic Studies framework. In recently published op-eds we warn that the state's unfunded mandate for Ethnic Studies has become a vehicle for political indoctrination, targeting Jews through anti-Zionist narratives that conflate Jewish identity with oppression. Far from being a neutral or inclusive academic discipline, Ethnic Studies has become an engine of division, radicalization, and antisemitism.

Ethnic Studies curricula are being promoted by activist networks and teacher unions that have embraced a neo-Marxist worldview. This framework trains students to view society through a binary of oppressor versus oppressed and encourages political activism over academic inquiry. Jewish students are frequently cast as part of the oppressor class—leading to isolation, harassment, and the normalization of antisemitism in the classroom.

The curriculum redefines Zionism through a hostile lens, stripping it of its historical and cultural significance to Jews. Zionism is not merely a political stance but a core component of Jewish identity, rooted in centuries of exile and longing for self-determination. When Ethnic Studies curricula frame Zionism as racist or colonialist, it doesn't just challenge Israeli policy—it undermines Jewish legitimacy.

Reports of antisemitic incidents tied to Ethnic Studies courses, combined with a broader climate of hostility toward pro-Israel perspectives, are creating an unsafe learning environment. Policymakers must intervene before public education becomes a tool of division rather than enlightenment. Schools have a duty to ensure curricula do not promote hostility toward any religious or ethnic group. The goal is to foster critical thinking, not conformity.

As California and other states debate the future of Ethnic Studies, PeerK12's advocacy underscores a crucial principle: education should unite students around shared civic values—not divide them based on race, ideology, or geopolitics, and promote understanding without turning identity into a battlefield. If public schools are to remain inclusive, they must ensure that no student feels erased or vilified for who they are—or for what they believe.

PeerK12 urges policymakers to abandon Ethnic Studies mandates entirely and refocus on inclusive, academically rigorous curricula that respect all identities without ideological coercion. Any model built on this ideological foundation is unfixable and inherently discriminatory. Allowing it to remain entrenched in state curricula only ensures continued harm to Jewish students and further polarization in already divided classrooms.

Nicole Bernstein and Tamar Caspi are the co-founders of PeerK12, a grassroots movement operating on the front lines of school districts by unapologetically defending Jewish civil rights, fighting extremist agendas, and protecting merit-based education in America's K-12 institutions.

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San Diego Hosts Momentous Legacy Delegation

By Tamara Klein



In June, the Friends of the Israeli Defense Force (FIDF) San Diego chapter hosted a unique "Legacy" delegation composed of both siblings of hostages and survivors of Hamas captivity who are currently serving in the IDF. They spent 8 days in San Diego.

The delegation included 15 IDF soldiers accompanied by 4 officers from the Prisoners of War and Missing in Action (POW/MIA) Branch of the IDF and Major (Res.) Michal Hershkovitz, FIDF's Director of Bereaved and Wounded Programs in the Israel office.

Throughout their time in San Diego, the soldiers participated in therapeutic workshops including art therapy, surfing, and equine therapy. They went to Sea World and also spent meaningful time with members of the local Jewish community. This delegation was warmly embraced and treated with outstanding care and sensitivity.

A special event was held for members of the local Jewish community. Lieutenant Colonel Ortal, Head of the POW/MIA Branch that is responsible for all communication between the IDF and hostage families, presented the

work that her Branch has done and continues to do during the ongoing war, followed by remarks from three soldiers whose siblings at the time were still being held hostage:

- Ronen - his brother Alon Ohel was abducted from the Nova music festival and is currently in captivity.
- Ya'ala - her brother Evyatar David was kidnapped from the Nova festival and is being held in captivity.
- Yair - his brother Yonatan Samrano was murdered on October 7th and his body was rescued in a special operation on June 22nd, 2025, after the delegation ended and he had returned to Israel.

Alongside the soldiers whose siblings are in captivity, the delegation included survivors of Hamas captivity. Despite their trauma, they chose to enlist and serve meaningfully in the IDF, contributing to the security of the State of Israel:

- Noga Weiss was abducted from her home in Kibbutz Be'eri together with her mother and released after 50 days. Her father was

murdered, and his body is still being held by Hamas.

- Mia Leimberg was kidnapped along with her family from their home in Kibbutz Nir Yitzhak. She remained with her beloved dog Bella throughout her captivity, until they were both released after 53 days.
- Agam Berger, a combat observer was abducted from the Nahal Oz outpost on October 7th. She was released in January as part of a hostage deal, after 482 days in captivity. Agam participated in the delegation alongside her twin sister, who serves as a career officer, and their younger sister, who enlisted in the IDF following Agam's abduction.

This remarkable delegation gave voice to courage, resilience, and the unwavering commitment of young Israelis who, despite personal loss and unimaginable trauma, continue to serve their nation with pride and purpose.

It was an honor and privilege for FIDF San Diego to be able to host this unique group. These memories will stay with all of us forever.

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SAJAC Joins House of Israel's Independence Day Celebration

By Karen Wolmer



The date was Sunday, May 18, 2025, and I was asked to help with volunteering at the House of Israel's Independence Day Unity celebration, located in the beautiful ambiance of Balboa Park.

The SAJAC banner, SAJAC board, copies of earlier SAJAC Reporter magazines, the bright South African flag, and pots for tomato plants—as well as markers—were ready for the big day.

The House of Israel (HOI) has a new dynamic president. Per Stephanie Nisan, "The House of Israel is not just a house, we are Israel's voice in the heart of San Diego." The HOI allows visitors to learn about Jewish culture and history. It has most recently revised its mission to focus more on dialogue, truth, and advo-

cating for Israel at the grassroots level every weekend.

With the help of other volunteers, Tanya Freedman and Lauren Morris, we were able to advocate for SAJAC's presence in San Diego and the impact we have made over the years for the Jewish community.

Children of various cultures who visited had an opportunity to color the pots and then plant tomato seedlings in them. Growth and opportunity in the land of Israel are foremost in our hearts and minds.

Visitors from all walks of life asked about South Africa's role in suing Israel at the ICC, inquired about the new Afrikaans farmers recently granted asylum status in the USA, and

one person asked about organizing trips to South Africa that would include Jewish history and Jewish cultural/culinary offerings.

Overall, it was a day of dance, celebration, and contributions from multiple Jewish organizations serving San Diego. There were many visitors, and the San Diego Jewish community had an opportunity to feel heard, to learn, and to be recognized.

As we stand today, SAJAC has been—and remains—a visible part of the San Diego Jewish tapestry, and we will continue to flourish.

The HOI needs volunteers and funding to support their mission. If you are interested, please visit <http://www.houseofIsraelSD.org> today.



A PERSONAL CALL TO EVERY S.A. JEW

"STAND UP AND BE COUNTED"

From Tragedy to Triumph Leibela's Labor of Love



Hilton Sachs



Sachs Family



Middle row, 2nd from the left Louis with Cantor Kaminer & Choir

Louis Sach's legacy began in 1902 when his parents, the Sachses, left Eastern Europe and migrated to South Africa, settling in Pretoria on Skinner Street. Times were hard—hard enough for his father to make the difficult decision to leave his family behind and head north in search of work. And I don't mean just to Warmbaths—I mean Matabeleland, Southern Rhodesia—leaving behind a wife, five children, and another on the way.

In Matabeleland, he sought opportunities in the cattle industry, only to be met with disappointment. The sector was still reeling from the devastation of the Rinderpest—something akin to one of the biblical plagues. But he was undeterred. Driven by necessity or perhaps something more elusive, he kept pushing northward, past the Copperbelt, through Ndola and Kitwe. Still, he found nothing.

At this point, I wonder—was he searching, or was he running? Maybe he didn't even know his wife was pregnant. Regardless, he continued, until he reached the banks of the Congo River in a town then called Leopoldville—today's Kinshasa.

Sadly, his journey ended there. In Leopoldville, he contracted Blackwater Fever and died—far from home, leaving behind a widow in Pretoria with five children and one more on the way.

But even in Leopoldville, there was a Chevra Kaddisha, which ensured he received a dignified burial. His journey may not have yielded the livelihood he sought, but it left behind a legacy that continues through the generations.

Louis was the first in the family to pursue higher education. Each

morning, he took what he called "The Milk Train" from Pretoria to Johannesburg to study pharmacy, earning his diploma in 1933. His first job was at Sacks Pharmacy in Fordsburg—a coincidence in name, not a family connection.

Gifted with a strong voice, he found his way onto the stage at The Jewish Guild, where his love of performance met his growing ambitions. He met Gertie Schneider there and they married in 1937 and set off to Europe for a working honeymoon, singing on radio in London while completing his ophthalmic exams. With war on the horizon, he made the wise decision to return home, catching a ship from Genoa amid the distant sounds of cannon fire.

Back in Johannesburg, Louis returned to The Guild and began a long and devoted career in pharmacy. For 37 years, he wore his white lab coat like a badge of honor, running his chemist shop with a craftsman's pride.

In 1941, with Gertie pregnant, Louis bought a large home in Linksfield on Club Street. Brenda-Lee z"l was born there in 1942, followed by Lynnette and then me, Hilton. My adventurous spirit and nearby Club Street traffic prompted him to sell it for safety's sake. We sold it to the Burland's, and our family moved to 96 Tregoning Street, where Geoffrey z"l was born.

Years later, once the children had grown and left home, Louis subdivided the property and built a final home for himself and Gertie on the lower lawn, near the pool—quiet, dignified, and well earned.

Louis was involved in politics. He was one of a group of twelve



Louis with Gideon Hausner, Former Israel Attorney General who led the prosecution in the Eichmann Trial



Louis in his first job as a Chemist



Portrait photo



Bottom: Shimon Peres, Eric Muller, Louis & others. Right: Headmaster Norman Sandler, Mr. Ben Gurion and Louis Sachs, Chairman S.A. Board of Jewish Education



members who left the United party and formed the Progressive Party to canvas and lobby on behalf of Helen Suzman, and then helped her maintain her seat in Houghton, the one and only progressive seat in the general elections of 1961.

He was also a property developer. He had a conceptual vision for commercial real estate redevelopment. His first commercial venture was on the corner of Pretoria Street and Catherine Avenue. They demolished a two-story old building and put in the first upscale type hamburger and grill house with a themed design, featuring colored-fluorescents on flying saucer shaped smoke-catchers with an open kitchen, aptly called "The Flying Saucer". Many more followed. His final development razed the very first old building to the ground, and optimized his initial investment with the successful high-rise called the Bedford Center.

Above all, Leibela's labor of love was the establishment of King David High School, Jewish education and the Board. Understandably his commitment kept him extremely busy - attending meetings, soliciting money from donors and philanthropists, and wrestling clenched-fists out of rich people's deep pockets, for this fund, that trust, and other foundations. Louis had friends everywhere and they all believed in and trusted him.

What set Louis apart were his idealism, eloquence, devotion, and unwavering commitment to advancing Jewish education and the King David Schools. He was intent on raising academic standards—both secular and Jewish. To Louis, Jewish education meant instilling pride in being part of the Jewish heritage. He wanted to empower students to thrive and engage confidently in

their community while remaining committed to being proud Jews. His vision is what King David Schools continue to offer the South African Jewish community today.

Louis passed away in London, in July of 2000. His wish was to be flown home to Joburg. And so it was. He was afforded a special place in a small section devoted to those who, in some cases, had given their all in war and others who had given tremendously in communal life. His funeral was attended by masses of people who had come to pay their respects and bid farewell to my father.

To me, though, it was more than just a sea of humanity—it was a sea of total strangers with whom, in that moment, I shared a piece of my dad. I looked down at the coffin and was overcome. Overcome not with grief, not with sorrow, but overcome with pride. I believe that in the affirmation of strangers, there lies a quiet triumph.

Dad's legacy will endure—it deserves to live on forever. Perhaps not always in name; that part belongs to history books. But in action and influence, it lives on — clearly reflected in our families and the generations that follow. In a way, his impact has gone viral, quietly spreading across the world through the lives he touched.

Sale gashle*

Hilton Sachs

* "Sala gashle" in Zulu translates to "stay well" or "farewell (to the one staying)". It's a common parting expression used when someone is staying behind while another person is leaving.

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How Restorative Justice Policies Harm Minority Students — Including Jewish, Black, and Disabled Students: A View From the Inside

By Sam Litvin



Before I became a teacher, I was an engineer and entrepreneur. I entered the San Diego Unified School District first as a substitute while also coaching CEOs focused on climate change. Later, I taught part-time engineering through a unique program called Career Technical Education (CTE). This program allows professionals with industry experience — in fields like filmmaking, engineering, culinary arts, or emergency response — to become teachers without the usual two years of additional education coursework.

This pathway allowed me to become a teacher at Lewis Middle School. Lewis was in the news after its principal reportedly pressured Jewish students to perform a Sieg Heil salute. That principal is still at the school, and to this day, no formal apology has ever been made to the students. Meanwhile, two Jewish faculty members — one of them being me — have been forced out.

This article, however, is not about that specific incident or my personal experience. It's about a larger issue affecting not just Jewish students and staff, but many marginalized groups. It concerns a program meant to reduce the disproportionate impact of school discipline on minority students. Unfortunately, in practice, it has ended up marginalizing those same students — while enabling white supremacy and bigotry.

The program is called Restorative Justice. It outlines a multi-step process for disciplinary action, designed to reduce expulsions and suspensions, which were seen as dispro-

tionately affecting students of color. While well-intentioned, the district implemented it hastily, with untested methods and largely untrained staff. The person assigned to run the program at Lewis admitted she had no prior experience or training and had been appointed by the now-disgraced Superintendent Lamont Jackson. These are well-paid positions meant to reduce hate and improve disciplinary outcomes — but in my time at Lewis, I witnessed the opposite.

What I saw was consistent bullying, racism, homophobia, and antisemitism. And I wasn't alone — many experienced staff and students echoed these concerns. The school held weekly "Community Circles," including sessions where students were encouraged to speak about anti-racism. What emerged was a troubling picture: students consistently reported that racism was a part of their daily experience, with slurs spoken openly in hallways and classrooms. Worse, they felt helpless and guilty — believing there was no one they could report these incidents to, and even if they did, nothing would be done.

The incident involving the Sieg Heil gesture happened during the Jewish High Holidays. A group of Jewish boys, visibly dressed for the occasion, were targeted by another student. When they confided in their Jewish Club advisor, he advised them to report it to the principal. When they tried, they were yelled at, demeaned, and then pressured to demonstrate the offensive gesture they had seen. I can't fully explain to non-Jews how deeply hateful and demeaning it is to ask Jewish boys to replicate a gesture that symbolizes the murder of one million Jewish children — but it is the epitome of trauma and hate.

Even when the principal was informed of the emotional harm caused, he denied the gesture was hateful and claimed that, because he himself was not antisemitic, it couldn't be so. The teacher who initially advised the students to report the incident attempted to find a resolution but was instead subjected to increasing hostility from the administration and

Restorative Justice personnel. Eventually, he left the school for mental health reasons. He was not the only one — another engineering teacher quit for similar reasons, and many other teachers confided in me that they required anti-anxiety medication just to cope with daily stress.

After I became the new Jewish Club advisor, students confided in me as well. When I approached the principal to discuss their emotional trauma, I was reprimanded. Eventually, I was "non-reelected" for my position. When I asked if there was a path for returning, I was told no — in part due to an inquiry I made to the district regarding antisemitism.

So how does this connect to Restorative Justice?

Restorative Justice relies on a multi-page document that outlines various offenses and prescribes a step-by-step resolution process. It shifts much of the burden of discipline from administrators to teachers, who must now both teach and administer disciplinary interventions. Most non-violent offenses must be addressed through dialogue. If there is a victim and an offender, the teacher is expected to speak to each one and then mediate a conversation between the two.

On paper, this sounds reasonable. But in practice — especially to anyone who has ever managed multiple children or taught large classes — it's deeply flawed. Imagine trying to mediate a conflict between two students in a classroom of 35 others, across seven class periods, each lasting only 50 minutes. Add the demands of curriculum, standards, and classroom management, and it becomes clear: this is not feasible.

As a result, many offenses go unreported. Bullying and hate speech are allowed to fester because any attempt to report is met with, "Did you use the Restorative Action Template?" This response effectively shuts down genuine cries for help.

Teachers are desperate for support. They

want to stop the hate: the constant use of the N-word, attacks on Asian students, and the bullying of students with disabilities — many of whom are now in general education classrooms due to misguided efforts at inclusion following cuts to moderate-to-severe special education programs. They are tired of erasing swastikas from textbooks, erasing hate-filled graffiti from bathrooms, and hearing nonstop homophobic and racist remarks in the classroom and halls.

At Lewis, faculty made multiple requests for help in addressing antisemitism, homophobia, and racism. The response? Teachers were placed into more Community Circles and sent an email with tips on how to talk to students using racist slurs. There was no mention of consequences, no meaningful action to stop the behavior.

During my final week at Lewis, a distressed sixth grader came to my desk. A white student had just called him the N-word. I instinctively wrote a referral and brought it to the Vice Principal. I assumed the offending student would be taken to the office and held accountable. Instead, I was reprimanded, and the student was merely told that such

language was “wrong” before being sent back to class.

What did that student learn? That hate has no consequences.

What did the victim learn? To keep quiet — because the abuser will return unpunished.

What did I learn? That speaking up accomplishes nothing and may get me removed.

What is the effect on the school? A culture of hate persists.

In the wake of George Floyd’s murder, schools across California rushed to prove they were anti-racist. But racism doesn’t disappear by pretending it doesn’t exist. Ignoring it only empowers it. And as a result, we are now seeing unrestrained hate — toward Black students, disabled students, Jewish students, Asian students, Latino students, LGBTQ+ students, and the faculty who dare to advocate for them.

Restorative Justice was designed as a solution to a real problem. And by some metrics, it appears to “work” — suspensions and expulsions are down. But the truth is, disciplinary incidents have not decreased. Fights are up. Vaping is up. Hate is up. One-third

of students across the district report that they do not feel safe at school — the very place where safety should be guaranteed.

Ideological frameworks should not drive how we ensure student safety and effective learning. When they do, they can produce the opposite of justice — especially for those the system claims to protect.

I am no longer employed at Lewis Middle School. Because principals typically rely on each other’s recommendations when hiring, I may not teach again, simply because I worked under a principal who resented my support for Jewish students. My report to the district led to no meaningful consequences for him, only retaliation toward me. As a non-tenured, probationary teacher, I lost my position.

Yes, I’m upset at how the system works — but I’ll be okay. I can return to engineering or consulting, where I can earn more. What saddens me most is that I won’t be able to share my engineering knowledge with students. What troubles me most is that the system remains unchanged, rewarding silence and allowing hate to flourish — making our schools unsafe for all.



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Lawfare Against Terror: The Relentless Mission of Or Hikry

By Debra Dock Trestman

On April 22nd, in Rancho Bernardo, the Howard and Lori Kaye Memorial Lecture Series welcomed an extraordinary speaker—Israeli attorney Or Hikry, whose life's work sits at the powerful intersection of justice, courage, and survival. With quiet conviction, Hikry stood before a full house at Chabad of Rancho Bernardo, recounting his journey from the front lines of the Israel Defense Forces to the courtrooms where he now fights a different kind of war—one waged with legal briefs instead of bullets.

This was no ordinary lecture. It was a raw, eye-opening account of how terror isn't just fought on the battlefield—it's also fought in court.

From Soldier to Legal Advocate

Like many young Israelis, Hikry, the son of immigrants from Yemen, entered military service at 18. He was assigned as a special assistant to a high-ranking general, an experience that exposed him to the high-stakes world of security and strategy. After four transformative years, he turned to law, seeking a new way to defend his people. A degree in human rights law from Italy added a global perspective to his already resolute mission.

But it wasn't until he met Nitsana Darshan-Leitner, founder of Shurat HaDin – Israel Law Center, that he found his calling. "I realized the courtroom could be just as powerful as the battlefield," Hikry said.

The Economics of Terror: Exposing "Pay-for-Slay"

At the core of Hikry's work is one uncomfortable truth: terrorism often pays. Literally. In his lecture, Hikry detailed the Palestinian Authority's "Pay-for-Slay" program—a controversial policy in which Palestinians who commit acts of terror receive monthly salaries from the PA, even while imprisoned. The larger the attack's impact, the higher the payout.

"These payments range from \$500 to \$3,000 a month," Hikry explained. "That's more than most Palestinian families earn from honest work." And it doesn't stop there. The families of deceased terrorists, injured attackers, and even released prisoners are all eligible for PA stipends, regardless of their terror affiliation—Fatah, Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and others. The International Red Cross

aids the terrorists in receiving these stipends by bringing them the necessary paperwork needed to file for these stipends.

Even more disturbing, much of the money flowing into these payments comes from international aid—funds from the U.S., EU, and other Western democracies with no idea how their money is being used. Hikry explained how this international aid and contributions to the PA, while well intended, perpetuate violence providing incentives to committing terrorism and causing a deepening of the cycle of hatred and violence.

Turning the Tables in Court

Shurat HaDin, the nonprofit where Hikry serves as an attorney, uses a strategy known as "lawfare"—applying legal tools to strike back at terrorists and their sponsors. And their victories are impressive.

One of the most notable was the 1997 Ben Yehuda Street bombing in Jerusalem, in which American citizen Stuart Hersh was severely injured. Shurat HaDin filed a lawsuit against Iran, Hamas' sponsor, and won a \$423.5 million judgment. The team tracked down Iranian assets in the U.S., including a Texas property, which was sold to help compensate the victims.

Shurat HaDin has also taken on global corporations that attempt to discriminate against Israelis. When Ben & Jerry's announced it would stop selling ice cream in Judea and Samaria, Hikry's team invoked U.S. trademark law and registered "Judea and Samaria's Ben & Jerry's" in Israel. The legal maneuver worked—the boycott was reversed.

In another case, Airbnb faced legal backlash for delisting Jewish-owned properties in the West Bank. The law center sued under the U.S. Fair Housing Act, arguing discrimination. Airbnb settled, keeping the listings live. "These aren't just legal cases," said Hikry. "They're battles for combating the global effort by Israel's enemies to delegitimize, boycott and wage 'lawfare' against the Jewish State."

October 7 and the New War at Home

On October 7, 2023, Israel endured one of the most horrific terror attacks in its history. Hikry was

immediately called into reserve duty, tasked with locating 3,000 missing Israelis—many dead, kidnapped, or hospitalized.

After the attack, Gazan Civilians stole the credit cards of the victims on October 7. His unit worked tirelessly to notify credit card companies about the mass thefts prohibiting the perpetrators from using the credit cards.

He also coordinated the delivery of vital medications for hostages via the International Red Cross. Tragically the International Red Cross never delivered these medications. Outraged, Shurat HaDin has since launched legal action against the Red Cross for their role in failing by refusing to support victims of the October 7th terror attack.

A New Generation of Defense

Terrorism has evolved and so has Hikry's response. In recent years, Palestinian militants have launched incendiary kites and balloons into Israeli farmland, destroying crops, and irrigation systems. In addition, these incendiary devices have exploded and caused fires near school, endangering the lives of children. Legal battles are underway to secure compensation for affected families.

In 2023, a troubling trend emerged: terrorists began targeting Israeli drivers with gunfire, firebombs, and roadside ambushes. Shurat HaDin responded by launching the Operational Driving Course (ODC)—a free survival training program for Israeli civilians. Led by Hikry himself, it teaches emergency driving tactics, first aid, and live-fire simulations. "This is about giving people the tools to survive," Hikry said. "Because terror doesn't wait."

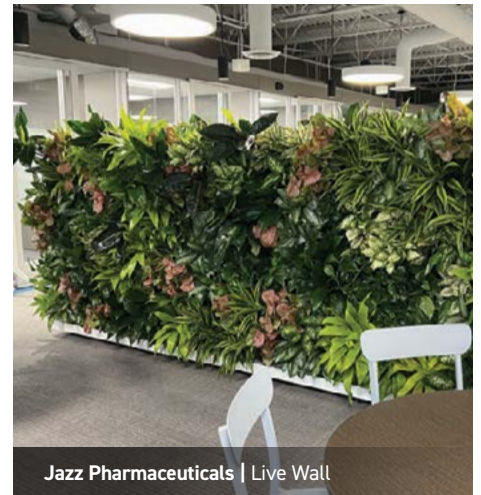
A Voice of Justice in a Noisy World

Through his tireless efforts, Mr. Or Hikry has become more than just a lawyer—he's a warrior in the courtroom, a voice for victims, and a reminder that justice can still be pursued even in the face of unimaginable violence.

His message was clear: We can fight terror in the courtroom by stopping the funds that allow it to continue. To learn more about Shurat HaDin or support their mission, visit www.shurat-hadin.org.



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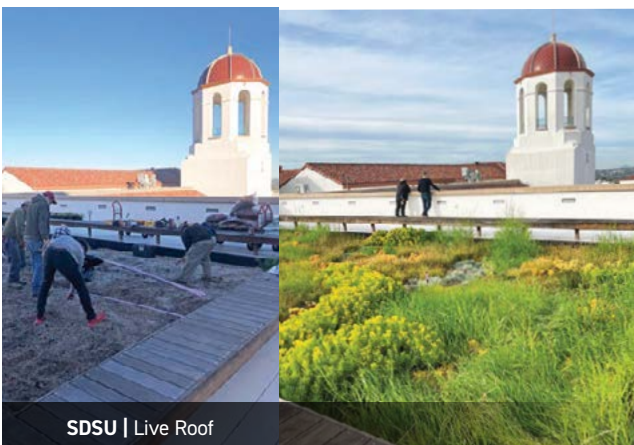
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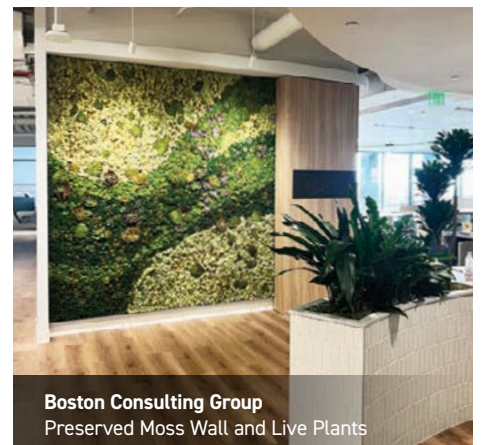
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Celebrating 25 Years of Welcoming Jewish Families: Shalom Baby at the Lawrence Family JCC



Jean & Franklin Gaylis and grandchildren.



Tanya Freedman, her mom, her daughter and her grandchild.

In September 2025, Shalom Baby, a beloved program of the Lawrence Family Jewish Community Center in La Jolla, proudly marks its 25th anniversary. For a quarter-century, Shalom Baby has been a vital embrace for Jewish families welcoming newborns—connecting them to a nurturing San Diego Jewish community through meaningful programs, resources, and lasting relationships.

Born from a vision to support families raising Jewish children, Shalom Baby begins with a simple yet profound gesture: a welcome gift bag filled with Jewish-themed treasures, parenting tools, and local resource guides. But it's much more than a gift. It's an invitation to join a thriving community—a network of playgroups, parenting classes, holiday celebrations, and social events that nurture friendships and deepen Jewish identity.

Shalom Baby's impact resonates far beyond individual families. It weaves a stronger communal fabric by creating spaces where parents can share joys, challenges, and traditions. This collective spirit sparks lifelong connections and strengthens Jewish life in San Diego.

Over the years, the program has blossomed to include infant massage classes, "Shalom Baby Together – You & Me" music and movement sessions, Tot N Company, Little Mensches, and Leadership & Blessings (LAB). Each initiative is thoughtfully designed to nourish both the emotional well-being and spiritual growth of families as they embark on their Jewish parenting journey.

A cornerstone of this success is Shalom Baby's collaboration with PJ Library, an international initiative from the Harold Grinspoon Foundation delivering free, high-quality Jewish children's books monthly. Here

in San Diego, PJ Library thrives thanks to the generous support of the Viterbi Family Foundation, the Jewish Federation of San Diego County, and the Lisa & Douglas Goldman Fund. Together, these programs enrich young lives with stories steeped in Jewish values, identity, and joy.

To honor this milestone, Shalom Baby is launching a special fundraising campaign to secure its future growth. We will update you with this exciting fundraising campaign as soon as it launches!

As part of this celebration, we invite you to participate in an inaugural Shalom Baby Brunch during the JCC's annual Hanukkah Happening on Sunday, December 14th. More details to come!

We extend heartfelt gratitude to Jean (affectionately known as "Savta of Shalom Baby") and Franklin Gaylis, whose unwavering support since the program's inception has been invaluable. Their commitment inspires all of us dedicated to nurturing the next generation of San Diego's Jewish community.

The program's remarkable success also owes much to the passion and leadership of Judy Nemzer and Vivien Dean. Their tireless efforts ensure every new family is welcomed with open arms and the gift of connection.

As Shalom Baby celebrates 25 years, it remains a beacon of tradition, community, and belonging—guiding San Diego's Jewish families today and for generations to come.

For more information, contact Judy and Vivien at shalombaby@lfjcc.org.

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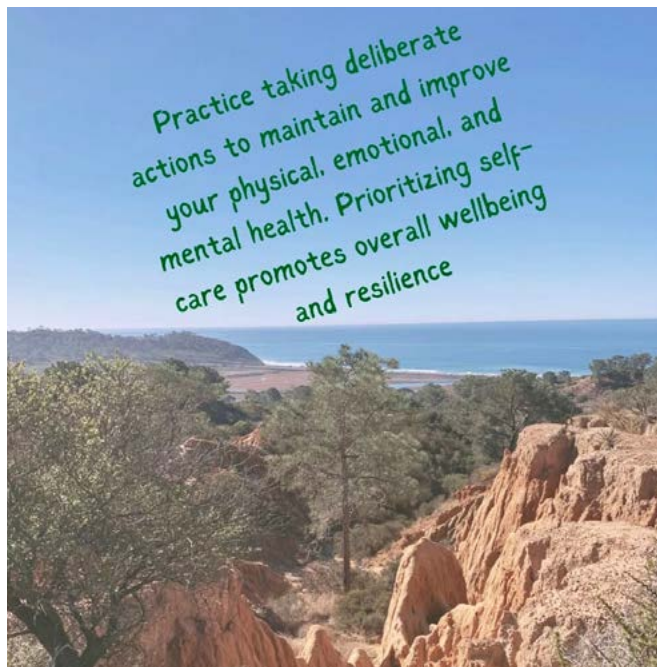
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Vitamin N- Healing through Nature

By Debra Jedeikin



The therapeutic benefits of nature are well-documented across research on our physical, mental, and emotional health. These benefits can be further enhanced by incorporating vagal nerve exercises which help regulate the autonomic nervous system taking us from an anxious fight/flight state into the parasympathetic nervous system where we feel tranquil and at peace.

How lucky we are to be here! The natural beauty in San Diego offers us so many perfect opportunities to improve our physical and mental health.

Facts:

We feel happier in natural environments because our stress is chemically reduced through an increase in serotonin and dopamine in our brains.

Being outdoors walking, picnicking or gardening reduces depression and anxiety and assists recovery from cognitive fatigue.

Both blood pressure and heart rate reduce while we enjoy the beauty around us and exposure to plant compounds (phytoncides) boosts our immune function while natural light

exposure resets our circadian rhythms for better sleep.

And engaging with the natural world enhances present-moment awareness. It's easy to be mindful on a beach walk!

Incorporate some vagal nerve stimulation:

- Deep diaphragmatic breathing. Sit on the beach or under a tree and inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4 and exhale slowly through the mouth for 6 seconds

- Cold exposure. Swim in the ocean or simply splash your face and upper body.

- Humming or Singing on your walk stimulates our vagus nerve through the vibration. Try it - instantly calming!

- Yoga on the beach or in a park combines movement, breath, and mindfulness in fresh air under the sky.

- Grounding, being barefoot on soil, grass, or sand is believed to reduce inflammation through contact with Earth's electrons. Who knows but we do know that it feels good.

In Judaism Nature is a Sacred Expression of G-d. Nature reflects divine wisdom and presence. We have daily prayers of gratitude for the experience of awe and for the majesty of creation. Our liturgy is filled with environmental imagery, an appreciation of the beauty and consistency of the cycles and a recognition of our dependence on natural resources.

Observing, preserving, and interacting with the natural world fosters healing. By acknowledging the sacredness in nature, we cultivate humility and promote environmental stewardship through our practice of Tikkun Olam, repairing our world and in this case our planet.

The Jewish new year celebration of trees Tu B'shvat has become known as a time to reflect upon our natural environment, caring for the earth and sustainability.

I came across a wonderful project called GrowTorah which I highly recommend:

<https://www.growtorah.org/18core>

So! Get out there and make peace with your body and soul in this beautiful place we call home!



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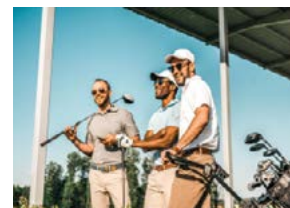
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Empowering Dreams, Building Stability: HFLSD's Year of Impact and Future Vision

By Mindi Frankel

Hebrew Free Loan of San Diego (HFLSD) has concluded another remarkable year upholding the timeless Jewish value of Gemilut Chesed – acts of loving-kindness. By providing cost-free, interest-free loans, HFLSD remains a vital lifeline for San Diego's Jewish community, fostering self-sufficiency and creating pathways to financial stability.

The past year brought significant growth and deepened impact. We've seen a surge in demand for our diverse loan programs, reflecting ongoing community financial challenges. HFLSD has now allocated over \$1.5 million in loans to date, maintaining a 0% loan loss. Our commitment to holistic support offers a compassionate hand up, helping recipients navigate crises with dignity through financial resources and personalized one-on-one financial guidance for every borrower.

Education loans have provided more students the opportunity to pursue higher education and vocational training without the burden of interest, paving the way for brighter professional futures. Personal Needs loans support families facing urgent home repairs or on the verge of losing affordable housing, a critical need in today's market. Additionally, Recently Unemployed loans assist individuals in paying bills during temporary job loss.

This year, we also launched the HFLSD Small Business Committee. This initiative provides not only interest-free loans but also crucial mentorship and guidance for aspiring entrepreneurs. HFLSD offers the capital needed to launch and expand businesses, supporting their development and ultimately seeing them contribute to local job creation and economic vitality.

A current education loan recipient shared, "HFLSD's loan wasn't just money; it was the belief that I could finish my degree without overwhelming debt. It lifted a huge weight and let me focus on

my future career path. I truly feel supported by my community."

As we move forward, HFLSD's goal is to meet evolving community needs, ensuring our unique interest-free model remains a perpetual source of support through:

Expanded Outreach: Intensifying efforts across San Diego's diverse communities to ensure everyone who can benefit from our loans is aware of HFLSD.

Enhanced Financial Literacy: Offering more robust workshops and resources, providing tools and knowledge that empower borrowers beyond immediate financial needs.

Growing the Loan Fund: To meet a 25% year-over-year increase in demand, a key focus will be growing our revolving loan fund. We've also successfully launched the HFLSD Legacy Circle, for donors who want to ensure their impact lives on, continuously recycling funds to serve generations.

Leveraging Technology: Thanks to a generous donor, we launched our new online application portal, streamlining the application process and making it easier for those in need to apply.

As we enter our fifth year, HFLSD remains steadfast in its mission to aid and empower the San Diego Jewish community. We are excited for another year of fostering financial stability, realizing dreams, and upholding the enduring tradition of helping one another.

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Israel on the Front Line – and Why We Need You to Walk With Us

By Lt. Col. (res.) Amit Grinfeld, CEO of We Walk Together

Amit Grinfeld, a retired IDF lieutenant colonel and founder of We Walk Together, spoke to the San Diego Jewish community including SAJAC member at Congregation Beth El following the events of October 7th.

Below is his latest message from the front lines on June 23rd, 2025:

At 2 a.m. last Tuesday, my phone rang.
"Iranian missiles inbound. This is it."

Within minutes, I was in uniform, hugging my wife and four sleepy children in our tiny bomb shelter. Then I headed south to rejoin the same reserve unit I've led for years. Only this time, the threat is 1,500 kilometers east—and nuclear.

For decades, Iran fought Israel by proxy: Hezbollah rockets from Lebanon, Hamas tunnels from Gaza, Houthi drones from Yemen. But when Tehran neared the bomb, Israel had to act. The opening salvo shocked the world. Israeli agents sabotaged key systems, and F-35s struck deep into Iran. It was the most complex operation in our history. And yes—the U.S. stood with us in planning and defense.

The nights feel like the Gulf War or October 7—sirens, families in stairwells, anxious texts. But this threat reaches far beyond our borders. Iran's Shahab and Kheibar missiles can hit Europe. Israel is, truly, the front line of the free world. That's why I am disheartened by France, Spain, and others in the EU who now turn their backs.

Situation Report – Day 6, 23:00

Israel and allies control much of Iran's skies.

A quarter of Iran's 2,000 missiles have been fired or destroyed—but most remain.

Hamas holds 53 hostages and continues attacks from Gaza's tunnels.

Another large IDF force is on standby at the Lebanese border.

The war costs Israel nearly \$1 billion per day.

In Tel Aviv, cafés are empty. My kids learn via Zoom from a house in the Negev. Israelis abroad risk everything to return, sign waivers, and deploy. And yet—we are not alone. Messages from Jews and allies worldwide give us strength. Your prayers echo in our shelters.

Why We Walk Together Exists

After October 7, I founded We Walk Together to connect Jews and Christian allies with the real Israel—on campus, online, and on the ground. We've hosted pastors, students, and influencers from around

the world. Many are now our fiercest digital defenders.

Since this new war began, we've gained 1,500 new online allies in six days. But passion alone can't stop propaganda. We need professional content creators, editors, and ad specialists who speak both TikTok and truth.

How You Can Help Raise Your Voice

Post, tweet, speak—in English, Afrikaans, Xhosa, Zulu. Call out the double standards. Tag us @wewalktogether.il so we can amplify you.

Support Our Digital Iron Dome

A single reel costs \$200. A campaign reaching 100,000 young Americans is \$750. Donations at www.wwtworld.com fund real impact.

Plan to Visit

When skies clear, come walk this land. Stand on a kindergarten roof in Sderot, hear the 15-second dash to safety, break bread with those who live it.

San Diego, I'm Coming

I'll be there in September for a lecture tour. I hope to see you.

Keep walking with us. Keep speaking the truth. One day, Iranian children will learn about nuclear weapons only in history class—alongside their Israeli friends. And my grandchildren will learn about bomb shelters only in museums.

May the Guardian of Israel neither slumber nor sleep.

We've got this.

Shalom from the Homefront Command,

Amit Lt. Col. (res.) | CEO, We Walk Together | www.wwtworld.com

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Inside the Market – July 2025 Real Estate Trends

By Marc Lotzof



Mortgage Rates and Affordability: Mortgage rates have stabilized around 6.94% for a 30-year fixed mortgage. This has made affordability a challenge, with typical monthly payments for a median-priced home at about \$2,200, accounting for 30% of median household income (smartworldinvestmentsstrategies.com).

National Home Prices and Inventory: Home prices are projected to grow by 3.5% annually through 2027, the slowest since 2011. The median home-sale price reached \$414,000 in April 2025, marking continued year-over-year increases. Inventory has improved, with a 4.4-month supply, slightly favoring sellers (bankrate.com).

National Construction and Developments: Construction has contracted, with about 675,000 units under construction, and an estimated 430,500 units expected to be delivered in 2025, aiding particularly the Class A and luxury segments (mmgrea.com).

Economic Influences: The economy saw a slight contraction of 0.3% in Q1 2025, largely due to a trade deficit. Still, the labor market remains robust with a 4.2% unemployment rate (ubs.com).

San Diego County Market, this week the median list price is \$1,289,000 with the market action index hovering around 40. This is less than last month's market action index of 43. Inventory has held steady at or around 3,625 (Altos). If you would like information on how this affects the market, and if you would like information specifically about your neighborhood, please contact me.

Overall, while the market faces affordability challenges, moderate growth and economic stability are expected to drive a gradual recovery in real estate investment through 2025.

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A Wild Night of Art, Family & an Unexpected Discovery

By Pamela Nathan



Louis z"l, their sister z"l & Barney Zetisky z"l



Hyman Goldman z"l & Isaac Zetisky z"l



2010 | Back L to R Jenna & Leica Zetisky
Front L to R Roy Zetisky, Seckie Gladstone z"l,
Pamela Nathan



2010 | Seckie Gladstone z"l, Pamela Nathan,
Linda, Leica & Jenna Zetisky



2010 | Back L to R Barry Hynum, Alan Nathan, Linda
Zetisky, Jenna Zetisky Hoffman, Barbara & Selwyn
Klein
Front L to R Romy Frank, Carly Nathan Blackstock,
Seckie Gladstone z"l, Pamela Nathan

Saturday night, July 14, was truly unforgettable! My incredibly talented cousin, Roy Zetisky, showcased his breathtaking wildlife photography at a gallery in Escondido—and wow, what a night! This was the first time I'd seen Roy in years, even though he visits San Diego often to see his daughters, son-in-law, and two adorable grandkids. Somehow, we just kept missing each other... until now!

The exhibit was fantastic—beautifully curated and buzzing with people. There was a real sense of excitement in the air, and it was so special to be there with family. Despite being swept up in hosting duties, Roy and I managed to sneak in some one-on-one time, and that's when he dropped a jaw-dropping family surprise.

While researching his family's genealogy, Roy discovered something no one had ever mentioned before: his dad and uncle had a sister—a sister who tragically passed away at the young age of 25. No one in the family had ever spoken of her. I was stunned! Roy's dad, Barney, and his brother, Louis, were regulars at our house back in South Africa. The cousins were inseparable. And yet, no one ever said a word.

Roy pulled out his phone and showed me a photo from Lithuania: Barney and Louis standing proudly next to a beautiful young woman—their sister. It sent chills down my spine. Moments like this remind you just how powerful and important genealogy can be. You can bet this story will be included in our SAJAC Village Genealogy Project on Geni.com!

We also had a laugh when I asked Roy what he tells people when they

ask how we're related. Turns out, we both tell the exact same story—word for word!

Our grandfathers—my maternal grandfather Hyman Goldman and Roy's paternal grandfather Isaac Zetisky—left Lithuania together and came to South Africa on their own, searching for a better future for their families. They worked for years in the hides and skins trade, saved enough money, and eventually brought their families over. The Goldmans and Zetiskys even lived together in the same house in Pretoria! Later, Barney moved to Brits, and Seckie (my mom) moved to Johannesburg. Barney married Sylvia (Roy's mom), and Sylvia and Seckie became best friends.

Another highlight of the evening? Seeing Carly, Craig, and baby Mila reconnect with Roy, his wife Linda, and their daughter Jenna and her husband Andrew. The last time they were all together was back in 2010 during a visit to my mom, Seckie. What a beautiful full-circle moment!


And now, Roy is spending more time in the U.S.—lucky us! His photography is not just stunning, it's soulful. No wonder he was named South African Photographer of the Year—People's Choice! One of his most moving pieces, "Motherly Love," featuring a rhino mama kissing her baby, was recently donated to the San Diego Zoo's charity auction for wildlife conservation.

Galleries in Laguna Beach and La Jolla are already featuring his work. Roy, we're so happy to have you here. Welcome Roy! — can't wait to see more of you!

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wildlife exhibition
 south african photographer of the year
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Susie Lotzof, Pamela Nathan



Roy Zetisky, Andrew Hoffman & Jenna Zetisky Hoffman, Linda Zetisky



Lorian & Joel Jacks, Roy Zetisky



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With over 30 years of experience in real estate and is a local expert in San Diego, La Jolla, Del Mar and Carmel Valley, Craig Lotzof is fueled by endless enthusiasm, honesty, and market knowledge.

All of which he puts to use to deliver consistently positive results for his clients. Recognized in the top 1% of agents in America's Top 100 Real Estate Agents® in 2018-2024 as well as one of San Diego Business Journal's Top 10 real estate teams — Craig has cultivated success by keeping his client's best interests at the forefront of his mind. Impeccably skilled in negotiation, Craig leverages confidence and effervescent demeanor to seal the best deal for buyers and sellers. Needless to say, he has all of the tools to ensure your success in his arsenal.

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We the People

By Rabbi Zalman Carlebach

No person can be an island to themselves. The gifts each person has are not meant to stay isolated in our proverbial forests (or on our proverbial islands), but to emerge with a newfound desire to make a difference in the lives of others. Being part of an active and interactive community is thus of paramount importance.

When you're part of a community, when you contribute to a community, when you're involved with a community, the merits of that entire community are allocated to you. By investing your part, you reap the blessings of the whole.

In the words of the renowned neurologist, psychiatrist and Holocaust survivor Victor Frankl: "The door to true happiness opens outward".

A wise man once said: "Although no one can go back and make a brand-new start, anyone can start from now and make a brand-new ending!"

So, let's indeed talk about how our new self-awareness can lead to tangible self-improvement. Perhaps we can give a little more thought to the way we treat others; how we speak to strangers and family members.

Let's learn how to better appreciate the daily moments of joy that come our way. Perhaps we can divert just a little more attention from our devices toward the people in our lives who need us the most.

Let's try to pay more compliments to

our spouses and others; exercise a little more patience, tolerance, forgiveness and forbearance. Let's not rush our kids along for the sake of some peace and quiet, when in the process we're probably missing out on life's sweetest moments.

Let's try to perform one new act of kindness a day, issue one less hurtful response, put on one more pleasant smile - even when we're exhausted and feel depleted, get involved in more worthwhile project that stretches our hearts and souls.

Let's try to step out from behind our own problems to give of our time, energy or resources to others. Volunteer to visit the sick or provide companionship to the elderly. Be a mentor to a younger person. Share your skills with someone who can benefit from them.

Play an active role in the community, because at the end of the day, it's all about connecting. People need people.

I am fortunate to be in San Diego for the last 22 years and feel blessed to be part of the SAJAC community, the lessons learned from a South African Jewish upbringing, and now sharing with the San Diego community as Rabbi in Downtown I'd like to share a prayer;

Lord, our G-d, we beseech you - in Your abundant mercy - to bestow Your blessings upon all those who have come together in these United States in a common quest of deepening and

broadening their understanding of Your ways, and intensifying their commitment to the mission you intended for each of them as Your humble servants in this glorious world You created with love.

We ask that You grant all the where-withal with which to implement Your will with the fullest measures of peace of mind and tranquility of spirit. Grant them - and all those near and dear to them - bodily health, lengthy years and quality days, virtuous children who stand as a proud tribute to the parents who bore and raised them, ample sustenance, prosperity, grace, kindness, compassion and all things that enable them to cherish each new day with love and passion, gratitude and equanimity.

Please bestow your blessings upon this "land of the free and the home of the brave" - the United States of America - that has given each and every one of us so much. And while we are tempted to invoke the common refrain, "G-d Bless America", as we offer up this prayer, we turn our hearts to the soul of this blessed country and pray: "America Bless G-d!"

May we merit to swiftly behold an end to all strife and division, conflict and hate, among all Your children to Whom you entrusted the glory of Your creation, ushering in a new era of love, peace, harmony.

Volunteer Assistance in Israel

By David Roth

Volunteer Assistance in Israel

Since the horrific events of October 7, Sylvia and I have undertaken multiple volunteer trips to Israel to assist wherever we could. These efforts have included visits to hospitals to meet injured soldiers, delivering supplies, serving meals, and supporting key organizations working on the ground.

During our time there, we've come to know several outstanding organizations that are making a tangible impact every day. We continue to stay in contact with them, and we've included their names and contact details below in the hope that others—especially visitors to Israel—may be inspired to lend a hand.

If you are planning a trip to Israel, we highly recommend reaching out to these groups in advance to coordinate dates and times for volunteer assistance. Your time and presence can make a real difference.

Leket Israel

Overview:

Leket Israel is the country's national food bank and the leading food rescue organization. Founded in 2003 by Joseph Gitler, Leket is dedicated to rescuing surplus, nutritious food—both fresh agricultural produce and cooked meals—that would otherwise go to waste, and redistributing it to people in need throughout Israel via a network of nonprofit partners.

Volunteer Opportunities:

- **Field Gleaning in Rishon LeZion:** Volunteers participate in harvesting fruits and vegetables left in the fields by farmers. These gleaning sessions are available Sunday through Thursday and are an excellent hands-on way to help.
- **Logistics Facility in Gan Haim:** Volunteers assist in sorting and packing rescued food at Leket's central warehouse, which features advanced refrigeration and distribution systems. This hub plays a crucial role in delivering food to tens of thousands of Israeli families.

Contact: Michelle Mayer – Michelle@leket.org

Website: www.leket.org



Shuva Junction

Overview:

Shuva Junction, near the Gaza border, gained national prominence following the October 7 terror attack. It became an impromptu triage center where injured civilians and soldiers were initially treated before being airlifted to hospitals. The junction remains a critical logistics and distribution site for the IDF due to its strategic location.

Volunteer Opportunities:

- **Feeding Soldiers:** Volunteers prepare and distribute thousands of hot meals daily.
- **Snack Stations:** Help set up and manage refreshment stations offering drinks, fruit, snacks, and fresh produce to soldiers passing through or stationed nearby.
- **Moral Support:** Even a smile and a few words of encouragement mean the world to soldiers under immense pressure.

Contact: Dror Trabelski – +972 54 9400118



Chamal Ben Yehuda 86

Overview:

Located in Tel Aviv, Chamal Ben Yehuda 86 is a fast-moving, grass-roots humanitarian command center. It is 100% volunteer-driven and works around the clock to collect, sort, and distribute emergency supplies—including tactical gear, hygiene items, thermal clothing, food, and medical supplies to soldiers.

The center has become a model of efficient grassroots logistics and has received international support. Pamela Lazarus has been instrumental in overseeing international donations, volunteer coordination, and connecting Jewish communities abroad with soldiers in urgent need of gear and essentials.

Volunteer Opportunities:

- **Sorting & Packing Donations:** Help manage inventory and prepare shipments.
- **Local & Global Coordination:** Skilled volunteers can assist in donor communication, database entry, or shipping coordination.
- **Ongoing Needs:** The center is always looking for backpacks, tactical flashlights, gloves, socks, energy bars, and thermal layers.

Contact: Pamela Lazarus – +972 52 8219945

Instagram (for updates & needs): @benyehuda86chamal



Sheba Medical Center (Tel HaShomer)

Overview:

Sheba Medical Center, located in Tel HaShomer, is the largest and most advanced hospital in Israel and is consistently ranked among the top 10 hospitals in the world. Since the start of the conflict, Sheba has been at the forefront of treating hundreds of injured soldiers and civilians.

In addition to emergency care, Sheba provides long-term rehabilitation and psychological services to trauma victims. It is a beacon of innovation, care, and hope.

Volunteer Opportunities:

- **Patient Support Visits:** Volunteers may spend time with wounded soldiers and patients in recovery, offering companionship and encouragement.
- **Logistical Support:** Depending on needs and qualifications, volunteers may help with administration or patient coordination.

Contact: Marina Gorin – Marina.Gorin@Sheba.Health.gov.il

Website: www.shebaonline.org



Jeff Seidel's Barbecue for IDF Soldiers

Overview:

Led by Jeff Seidel, the well-known founder of Jewish Student Information Centers, this initiative organizes morale-boosting BBQ events for IDF soldiers across Israel. Held on army bases, these events provide an atmosphere of gratitude, comfort, and community through delicious food, music, and heartfelt support.

Volunteer Opportunities:

- **Event Setup & Serving:** Volunteers help with preparing and serving food, setting up tables, and engaging with soldiers.
- **Musicians & Performers:** If you sing, play music, or can help lift spirits in any way, you're welcome to join.
- **Donation of Supplies:** Many of the BBQs are made possible through donated food and resources.

Contact: Jeff Seidel – jeffseidel@gmail.com

Instagram: @jeffseidel

+972 54 7753982

Closing Thoughts

Volunteering in Israel, especially during this time, is deeply moving and meaningful. Whether you have an hour, a day, or a week, your help will be welcomed, appreciated, and impactful. These experiences have connected us with remarkable people and have shown us firsthand how resilient and strong the Israeli people are.

If you're heading to Israel—or even if you're already there—consider lending a hand. These organizations would love to hear from you.





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Silver Jubilee
2000-2025

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"It was not easy to leave our homes and community" says **Claire Ellman**, one of the Founders of ChaiSouthAfrica (CSA). Along with **David and Felicia Mandelbaum**, and **Charles Jaffe**, Claire saw a deep need in their homeland and CSA was born. After decades of emigration, the South Africa they once knew was experiencing a philanthropic drain, and the needs of the community were growing. *"Our family and friends needed the Jewish infrastructure to be maintained even in our absence,"* says Charles Jaffe.

For generations, Jews had thrived in South Africa, building a vibrant community filled with day schools, synagogues, community centers, and homes for the aging and disabled. However, political instability and civil unrest forced tens of thousands to leave, more than half of the Jewish population had left, leaving vital institutions in disrepair. Many people chose to settle in San Diego, where they rebuilt their lives and planted new roots. Despite the distance, they never forgot the loved ones and community members still in South Africa.

"As immigrants, we always feel a deep connection to our birthplace" says David Mandelbaum. *"No matter where we go, we remain linked to the community we left behind."*

"My family and many others had helped build these institutions" recalls Claire. *"We couldn't stand by and let them fall apart."* Determined to help, the founders came together to form CSA, ensuring that these Jewish institutions could continue to support those most in need.



CSA Founders David and Felicia Mandelbaum, Claire Ellman, and Charles Jaffe

Today, CSA has raised almost \$9M and supports over 1,000 individuals in 11 institutions across South Africa. This includes the most vulnerable of the population, the elderly, mentally and physically challenged, and children in need. *"It's a great success story,"* says Felicia Mandelbaum. *"When we started, we never imagined how many lives we would touch. It's incredibly rewarding to give back to our birthplace in such a meaningful way."*

As CSA celebrates their **Silver Jubilee year**, they want to honor and appreciate the thousands of donors who have made this success possible. But the work is not over. They are setting **a goal of an additional \$250,000** to ensure the future of these vital institutions. Every contribution counts -- they are hopeful that you will consider supporting CSA in honor of this milestone! Please join many others by giving back in a way that makes a lasting impact.

With everyone's support, ChaiSouthAfrica and the 11 homes in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Durban, and Pretoria can continue to provide essential services for the Jewish community in South Africa, for today, tomorrow, and the future.

To make a tax-deductible donation please visit www.chaisouthafrica.com or call Mandy Katz at 858.279.2740



kindness INITIATIVE

By Keren-Dee Hamui



The Mitzvah That's Been Waiting for You All Along

There's something extraordinary happening at 9372 Cabot Drive, and chances are, you've never heard of it. Not because it's hidden away, but because the most meaningful work often happens quietly, one family at a time.

Welcome to Kindness Initiative and our kindnessG'MACH—where every act of giving becomes a mitzvah that fills hearts and changes lives in ways you never imagined possible.

When Community Becomes Family

We're the only Jewish nonprofit solely dedicated to helping San Diego's 15,000 Jewish residents through our customized concierge case management approach. Think of us as the place where compassion meets action—where a phone call can prevent an eviction, where donated interview clothes can launch a career, and where making sure every child has a toothbrush becomes not a luxury but a necessity to provide dignity and belonging.

We see each family's unique story and create pathways from crisis to stability to independence. It's deeply personal work that touches the soul.

The Mitzvah Hiding in Your Closet

Here's something that might surprise you: while San Diegans generously donate to large thrift chains, families right here in our Jewish community are struggling without basic necessities. Your gently used items—gathering dust at home—could be the answer to someone's heartfelt prayers. That professional outfit you haven't worn in years? It could be someone's confidence boost for a job interview that changes their family's future.

Those books your children outgrew? They might spark joy in a child who's had very little to smile about lately.

When you donate to kindnessG'MACH instead of dropping items at a big-box store, you're participating in a mitzvah that connects you directly to your community. We're open Mondays and Thursdays from 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at 9372 Cabot Drive.

Your Heart Is Calling You Home

For Donors: Your generous financial donations help Kindness Initiative support more than 900 families each year. We need gift cards, monetary contributions, and major investments to expand our reach. Create lasting impact by sponsoring a family, dedicating a section of our G'MACH, or naming part of our building—your investment becomes part of hundreds of success stories each year and will build legacy in our community.

For Volunteers: Join our kindnessCARES committees (men and women committees) to help shape our mission, assist in the kindnessG'MACH, or help organize drives and mitzvah projects.

For Members: If you need help, support, or can refer a family or community member, please call us at (858) 216-1666 or apply online at www.kindnesssd.org.

The Ripple Effect of One Mitzvah

When you donate to Kindness Initiative, you're not just helping one family—you're changing lives in ways you may never fully realize. Your act of kindness creates ripples that spread far beyond what you can see. The mother who keeps her apartment becomes stable enough to help her friend. The father who gets that job interview starts mentoring other job seekers. The child who receives what they need learns that their community cares, and grows up to care for others.

You may never know how many lives your generosity touches, but every dollar, every donated item, every moment of your time transforms a Jewish member of our community. Because when we do good, kindness truly changes everything—one mitzvah at a time, one family at a time, one future at a time.

The Time Is Now

If you've been searching for that meaningful way to give back, if your heart has been nudging you toward something deeper, this is your personal invite. Because at Kindness Initiative, kindness isn't just what we do—it's who we become, together.

Hidden in Plain Sight: The Alhambra in Granada, Spain

Story and photographs by Lena S. Keslin



New Mexico Jewish Journal

30 Apr 2025 — 5 min read



The Alhambra

There are times in our lives when an opportunity appears. We were invited to visit Spain on a Jewish Tour with Rabbi Howard Berman, a dear, lifelong friend, and some of his Boston congregation. I was excited because this trip would be a special opportunity to see the remnants of the Jewish life that had thrived in Spain for 1500 years and then ended with the expulsion in 1492. Spain is a beautiful country, but the Jewish history was painful to learn about. The Alhambra in Granada is a place that still continues to haunt me.

The majestic Alhambra Palace or Red Fortress as it is also known, is nestled on a hill in the Sierra Nevada mountain range. There are magnificent gardens and fountains and spectacular examples of Moorish architecture. The

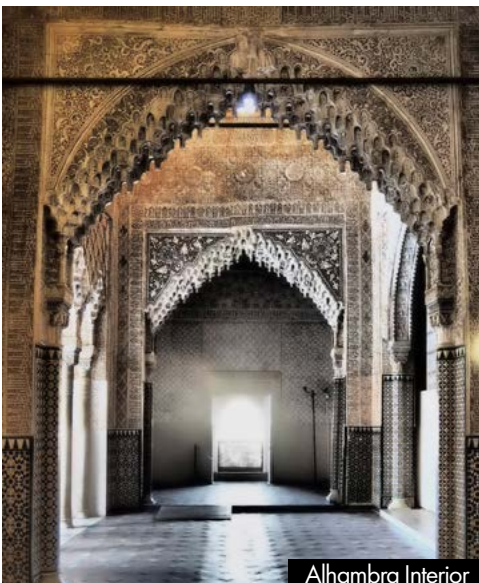
pher, Solomon Ibn Gabirol wrote about. The beautiful fountain of the lions had graced the garden of the Vizier's palatial home. The fountain is still the centerpiece of the Alhambra. It has twelve sculpted white marble lions that are reportedly 300 years older than the Alhambra itself. Some Jewish historians think that the lions represent the twelve tribes of Israel and two of the lions have a triangle on their forehead that may represent the priestly tribes. The lions are a scientific marvel ingeniously harnessing the water from the fountain to sequentially spout out of each lion's mouth every hour so that by noon each lion would be spouting water at the same time. The Fountain of the Lions is the only relic that I found dating back to the time of the Vizier.

Walking through the Alhambra gave me the feeling of being a time traveler. The first rooms were simple, but decorated with Moorish designs. I fol-



Fountain of the Lions

I followed along the narrow hallways and corridors marveling at the strikingly contemporary graphic black and white designs from the mid 13th century. I was shocked by the contrast of the various rooms, some were rather monastic and in others I could imagine their former opulence.



Alhambra Interior

palace was originally built in 1238, over the ruins of an 11th century palace that had been the home of the Vizier, Samuel Ibn Nagrillah, the most important and influential Jew in Islamic Spain. Of particular importance is the Fountain of the Lions, which the 11th century Jewish poet and philoso-



Moorish Designs

Everywhere were the remnants of the beautiful Islamic Moorish artistry such as the high arched and decorated ceilings and fountains with their bubbling



Alhambra Gardens



Traveling Through the Corridors

Suddenly, there was a deafening silence as I entered the Hall of the Ambassadors. The large room was impressive but all that I could think about was that this was the place where Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand issued their devastating Alhambra Decree on March 31st 1492. Nothing eased my discomfort, not even the immense wooden ceiling decorated with stars to represent the universe or the walls decorated with tiles set into geometric patterns, or stucco inscribed with poems and inscriptions from the Quran. It was uncomfortable, as if a part of me had been there before.



Self-Portrait

The Hall of the Ambassadors is the same room where Christopher Columbus received the support and funding for his first voyage of discovery. The deadline for Jews to leave Spain was August 2nd and the following day Columbus set sail. The expulsion date also corresponds with the 9th of Av, which commemorates the destruction of both the first and second temples in Jerusalem. This date was not a coincidence and further added to the cruelty of the expulsion. There is a certain irony in that what began as the home of a highly ranked Jewish vizier, was later the same place where the expulsion of the Jews was carried out almost 500 years later.



Rabbi Howard Berman

I dedicate this article to the memory of Rabbi Howard Berman, who died unexpectedly at the end of October 2024. I had been fortunate to know Howard and his twin brother all of my life. We were connected throughout the years by the mutual love of our parents and our families. When Howard and I were quite young he shared his already burgeoning interest in religion with me, and especially his thoughts about reincarnation. May his memory live on in the hearts of all who knew him and loved him.

Help Us Tell Our Story
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Community Project on GENI.COM!

San Diego Jewish Academy's New Innovative Programs Target Students' Academic Success and Personal Growth



SDJA's Unique "Scholars Program" and Unprecedented Student-Teacher Ratio Redefine Independent School Education

San Diego Jewish Academy (SDJA), a leader in preschool to 12th grade education for over 40 years, is redefining independent school education with new programs and opportunities focused on students' academic success and personal growth. The school recently announced a new initiative to improve student-teacher ratio in some of its Middle and Upper School classes, unmatched by other area schools. These groundbreaking opportunities provide students with even more options to learn, grow, and realize their full, individual learning potential.

"We empower students to excel academically and become good humans," adds SDJA Head of School Zvi Weiss. "By helping students grow in both of these areas, we shape leaders who contribute to our community and beyond."

At SDJA, students enjoy robust learning experiences beyond the daily class meeting times with a tireless faculty who have intentionally designed weekly academic support sessions to ensure all students are fully supported in their academic trajectory. They also are imbued with Jewish values to care for others and to do acts of Chesed, kindness to make the world a better place.

SDJA students benefit from multiple new programs that will both support and challenge students, while inspiring creative thinking and empowering learning. These new offerings, combined with SDJA's curriculum that fosters innovation and entrepreneurial thinking, will further help

SDJA students succeed throughout their educational journey. The new offers include:

Academic Coaching – Unprecedented Student-Teacher Ratio

The new Academic Coaching model places more teachers in select core middle and upper school classes, offering additional academic enrichment and support through a more personalized learning experience. This program will allow a maximum of 12 students per teacher—in some cases even a 4:1 ratio for select core classes—unmatched by other local schools.

Upper School Scholars Program – Internships and Advanced Learning

This new program provides a diploma and transcript designation to help highlight the exceptional achievements of SDJA students in the following areas: Humanities Scholars; Innovation and Entrepreneurial Scholars; Medical Science Scholars; Sports Medicine Scholars; Jewish Studies Scholars. Students in the Scholars program may participate in internships that may include The Young Leaders in Health Care program at Scripps Health and other advanced learning experiences.

Advanced Academic Pathways – Accelerated Learning

Available for 2nd-12th graders, Advanced Academic Pathways offer accelerated learning opportunities, from student groupings for math and language arts in the Lower School to Honors and Advanced Placement Courses in the Upper School. Focused on serving or meeting the

needs of students who are dedicated, curious, and motivated starting in 2nd grade, this program fosters high academic achievement and meets students where they are while providing opportunities for advanced academic study.

With multiple pathways of coursework and a structured yet flexible approach to academic excellence, this program helps SDJA meet the needs of students who consistently perform above grade level expectation and are motivated for an advanced academic program of studies.

For SDJA's Upper School, this means an expanded honors program in addition to the current 31 Advance Placement and Honors courses currently offered, as well as a new honors humanities course available in 8th grade.

New Course Offerings

SDJA also announced several new offerings to help support students and their academic goals, including ACT test prep courses on campus, AP Macroeconomics, English 10 Honors and the newest AP course to be offered nationally, AP Pre-Calculus.

In conclusion, SDJA proudly focuses on the individual student, instead of a 'one size fits all' mentality—and these new programs and offerings reflect its commitment to helping every student feel inspired and supported as they learn and grow. In today's competitive world, every additional opportunity students have to reach their full potential and hone their strengths is crucial in preparing SDJA graduates to flourish in life.



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RECIPES



Mom's Shortbread by Midge Kellen

These cookies are easy, crunchy and delicious.

Ingredients:

- 1 ½ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 ½ cups powdered sugar
- 1 lb butter, softened

Directions:

1. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit.
2. Sift flour and sugar.
3. Place butter in mixmaster and beat very well until white, at least 20 minutes. The longer you beat the butter, the better the shortbread will be.
4. Add sifted flour and sugar to the butter one tablespoon at a time, beating all the time, until all the flour and sugar are finished.



Mixture should be very soft and very white.

5. Press the dough into a jelly-roll pan and an 8"x8" pan. Punch the dough down until smooth. Dough should be ¼" high.
6. Prick the dough with a fork all over.
7. Bake both pans in the middle rack of the oven for 15-20 minutes, until golden.
8. Cut while still warm into squares.
9. Dust with powdered sugar.

Store the cookies in an airtight container.

The cookies freeze well.

Taste of Heritage: South African Jewish Cuisine Lives On



To Join: Scan this QR code using your phone camera.



SAJAC-Cuisine from South Africa, a Facebook group is a place to post your favorite South African Recipes as well as the stories behind these recipes from the "old country". Our culinary heritage is preserved this way. We are preserving the flavors of our South African legacy. Let's savor the past and help keep South African Jewish Cuisine alive.

Please note that this is a PRIVATE group, exclusively for SAJAC members.

SIGN UP HERE

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/818959738139446>

If you need help uploading the recipe you wish to share, simply contact us at sajacsandiego@gmail.com and we will help you.

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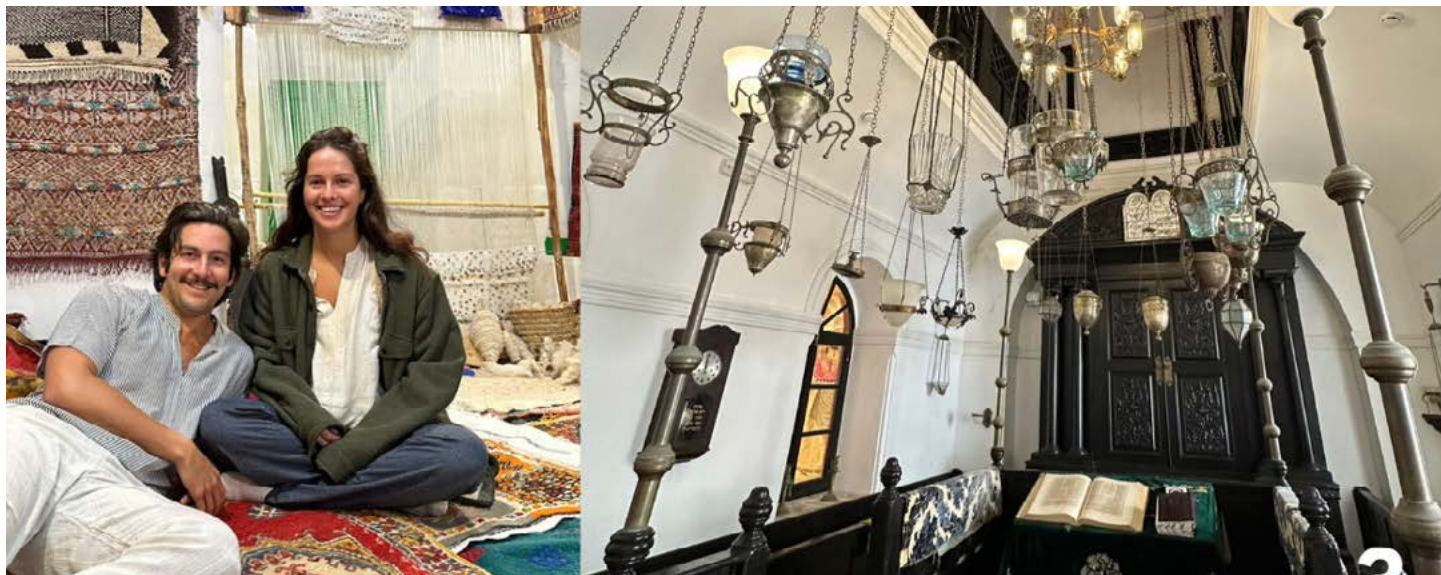
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Searching for Diaspora I Morocco

By Gabriel Bloch



The dry, dusty air of Marrakech's old medina—equal parts saffron, mint, and motorcycle exhaust—offered something Bree and I had yet to encounter in our three months of travel: true culture shock. Until then, we'd wandered the misty green landscapes of Ireland and Scotland, biked and boated across Croatia's Mediterranean isles, and hiked, spelunked, and rock climbed through Sardinia and Mallorca. But this was different. We had left the West behind and entered the kingdom of Mohammed VI—Morocco.

Would it be difficult, we wondered, to pursue a goal of tracing Jewish culture and tradition in a country where only 2,500 Jews remain.

After soaking in Marrakech's mosaic of sights and sounds, we joined a street food tour led by Abdul, a warm and eager local. Our first stop was none other than the historic Mellah, or Jewish Quarter, where we tasted a fried donut not unlike the *sufganiyot* eaten during Hanukkah. Before the food arrived, Abdul explained that Mellahs—named from the Arabic word for salt—once housed Morocco's 265,000 Jews before 1948. Found in all major Moroccan cities, Jewish quarters were typically situated near royal palaces or government centers and featured open balconies overlooking the streets, in contrast to the enclosed courtyards of Muslim homes.

With the streets of Marrakech in our rearview, we journeyed to the Sahara Desert by way of Ait Benhaddou, a fortified trading post along the ancient trans-Saharan caravan route. This UNESCO World Heritage site boasts a significant Jewish history evidenced by the Jewish cemetery, synagogue, and the Semitic-Berber name meaning "sons of Haddou." While we wandered the ancient Ksar, or fortified village, we even spotted several menorahs and Stars of David. When asked about this history, our proud Berber guide was happy to share that Jews, Berbers, and Muslims had traded peacefully here for centuries.

Continuing like goods on the old caravan route, we reached the ancient port city of Essaouira. Here, Jews once served as the "Sultan's Merchants," an elite Jewish class who brokered commerce between the Sultan and Europe. Trusted for their trading expertise, accounting skills, and connections with Jewish partners abroad, they held exclu-



sive trading rights and privileges. The warmth of that coexistence lingers in Essaouira's lovingly preserved synagogues—some of the finest in Morocco—standing as quiet monuments to an era of tolerance.

When we asked locals about this heritage, we were met not with indifference but with smiles, pride, and even gratitude. Stories of prosperity, harmony, and shared life tumbled out freely. It's little wonder that Sultan Mohammed V refused to surrender Morocco's Jews during WWII, declaring that there were no Jews in Morocco—only subjects, all under his protection.

Looking Back: Selwyn Lurie's Memories of DHS, Class of 1939

By Selwyn Lurie ז"ל *



Selwyn Lurie grew up in Durban, South Africa, attending Durban High School where he graduated (matriculated) in the Class of 1939. In those years, a Jewish day school did not yet exist in Durban. Selwyn was one of the first DHS students to graduate with Hebrew as a subject.

Selwyn's three children subsequently attended Carmel College, the Jewish day school in Durban. All of Selwyn's eight grandchildren attended the San Diego Jewish Academy, continuing the tradition he started of a Jewish education.

On May 30, 2025, Durban High School celebrated its 159th year of existence at a Founders Day event in Durban – a reunion of DHS graduates from around the world. Andrew Shedlock, CEO of the DHS Foundation, requested Selwyn send a video message for those gathered at this Founder's Day event.

At 102 years old, Selwyn is currently the oldest living "old boy" (alum) of DHS.

Selwyn's video message was broadcast to 240 "old boys" (alumni) of Durban High School (DHS) at their Founders Day weekend event on May 30, 2025, and subsequently went viral on social media, attracting over 10,000 viewers on Facebook alone. His video included good wishes for all at the Founders Day event, and fond memories of playing rugby for DHS and a humorous anecdote from the oldest "old boy" who graduated DHS Class of 1939.

This is an excerpt of that fond memory from Selwyn's memoirs which demonstrates his feisty and mischievous nature during his school days:

"I was quite a ring leader in my earlier years at DHS. Walking past our classroom, the headmaster, Jimmy Black, noticed me drawing on the blackboard a caricature of our Latin teacher, who was out of the classroom for a short while and who had a pronounced upper lip. Jimmy Black immediately summoned me to his office, made me bend over and with his cane gave me six of the best! There were two other occasions which warranted this treatment, the last one being on the stage in the school hall in front of the morning assembly of the whole school. I was sent to the Headmaster on one more occasion for some other misdemeanor and instead of caning me, he made me promise to toe the line in future and this approach seems to have worked as from then on, I managed to conform with the rules and regulations of the school."

*Selwyn submitted article before passing.

A Magical Afternoon with Susie Lotzof & Friends

By Rahleen Bloch

What an unforgettable afternoon we had! On Saturday, June 21st, friends gathered in Carlsbad for a lively and joy-filled event.

The amazing Susie Lotzof performed with special guest guitarist John Pappas, and the crowd absolutely loved it! Her voice just keeps getting more beautiful and resonant with each performance. Guests relaxed in beach chairs, sipped wine, and many couldn't resist getting up to dance—it was a truly joyful event.

If you'd like to bring that same energy to one of your own gatherings, Susie is always happy to perform. You can reach her at 858-449-2212 or lotzofheart@gmail.com.



SAJAC Did Not Start with a Pitch to Raise Funds in 1987

By Leah Levin



Mervyn Kodesh, Ilana Silverman, Merle Datnow, Ronnie Diamond, Leah Levin (president), Norman Sarkin z"l, Neville Berman, Leon Snaid, Les Kacev, Barry Broomberg z"l

People have to feel they belong to a community.

Everyone needs to find his place when changing lifestyles, homes and schools.

To do this we needed to establish an organization to help one another, to reach out to newcomers and, ultimately, become part of the

larger Jewish community.

No one person is responsible for SAJAC's formation or success and so, as you see in the picture, we formed this vibrant committee to meet this challenge.

We reached out to as many South Africans as we could and 300 South African families were

represented at our inaugural meeting at the Larry Lawrence JCC and 30 new families were welcomed.

We were supported by the United Jewish Federation then headed by Cecile Jordan. Our liaison officer was Nadja Kauder, who gave much time and assistance to us.



The SAJAC Hanukkah Party

By Marc & Tal Lotzof

Last year, my son and I had the pleasure of hosting a powerful gathering with the SAJAC and Pacific Regent communities, where we brought together residents, families, and friends for a meaningful and memorable experience.

We celebrated Hanukkah as a community, while also addressing the all-too-relevant and important topic of antisemitism.

At the event, we shared an impactful video from Dr. Mordechai Kedar that addressed the rise of antisemitism globally and its impact on our community. It served as a somber but crucial reminder of the challenges we have faced—and continue to face—across generations. But rather than stop there, we chose to respond not with fear, but with light: by preserving stories, celebrating identity, and building deeper connections within our community.

We were also joined by Joel Ehrlich, who showcased his Legacy Videos. These interview-style videos serve as a time capsule, capturing personal stories and reflections to be passed on to their families. They ensure their voices and stories of resilience, family, and love will live on for generations to come.

This was more than just an event—it was a celebration of strength, resilience, and the spirit of the community.





Inaugural Cardiff-By-The-Sea Music and Arts Salon

By Hillel Katzeff



After my wife, Jeanie Katzeff z"l, passed away, I began to think about ways to honor her life and legacy. At the same time, I felt that the state of the world was calling me to create a space for peace, harmony, and joy. My love of music—and a friend's home-based concert series—inspired me to build community around music and the arts at my home in Cardiff-By-The-Sea.

I set a date: July 13, 2025 (close to Jeanie's birthday on July 9), and began inviting local musicians and performers I had seen and befriended over the prior years. I created a website, CardiffByTheSea.salon, and began inviting friends and family. As the curator, I selected a diverse group of performers whose work I appreciated and hoped would resonate with the audience. I teamed up with Encinitas Friends of the Arts, a nonprofit with a mission to elevate arts and culture in Encinitas and North County San Diego.

An audience of about 70 guests was warmly welcomed. Opening the evening's seven 15-minute performances was Andrea Clear-

field, a Jewish American, Philadelphia-based classical music composer who has written 175 works, primarily for opera, chorus, orchestra, and chamber ensemble. She holds a doctorate in Music Composition. Andrea is the founder, curator, and host of the Philadelphia Szalon Concert Series—now celebrating its 39th year—and was my inspiration for creating a similar music salon. I met Andrea when we both attended Muhlenberg College in Allentown, Pennsylvania, where we performed in a trio called Prana with violist Mark Golin.

There was a definite South African and Jewish flavor to the event. Sharon Katz performed—she is a musician, music therapist, and humanitarian who formed South Africa's first 500-member multicultural choir and band, known as The Peace Train. Sharon's musical roots are in South African music. She plays guitar, writes, arranges, and performs across North America with her band Sharon Katz and The Peace Train. A documentary was made about The Peace Train.

Also performing was Big Boss Bubeleh, a

North County San Diego duo led by French-born Yael Gmach and Russian émigré Vlady Yarovinsky. They presented a vibrant mix of musical styles, from contemporary to klezmer.

Other performers included Cinballera Entertainment, an independent fine arts production company based in Southern California. The name reflects its three areas of focus: Cinema, Ballet, and Opera. The company is comprised of soprano Tiffany Brannan and her sister Rebecka Brannan, a ballet dancer. They performed a piece from Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*.

The ballet company Pointeworks, founded by Sophie Williams, featured an original pas de deux choreographed by Reka Gyulai and performed with Lester Gonzalez. It was mesmerizing for the audience to witness the dancers performing at such close range.

Fred Benedetti delighted the audience with his classical guitar and ukulele virtuosity. Fred began studying classical guitar at age 16 and, by 26, was one of only 12 guitarists world-



wide to participate in one of the last master-classes with Maestro Andrés Segovia. He plays all genres of music—from klezmer with Yale Strom's Hot Pstromi, to Beatles medleys performed with his daughters as part of the Benedetti Trio, which recently celebrated its 20th anniversary.

Closing the show were Sue Palmer and Liz Ajuzie. They've been performing together for nearly five years, both as part of Sue's larger ensemble Sue Palmer & Her Motel Swing Orchestra, and in smaller groups. Sue is known

worldwide as the Queen of Boogie Woogie and has been a beloved presence on San Diego's live music scene for over 30 years. Liz Ajuzie, a jazz and blues singer, has been singing her whole life. As a first-generation Nigerian American, she is the second child of Nigerian parents. Together, Sue and Liz perform as a duo, with a repertoire ranging from Irving Berlin to an original song written by Sue in honor of her friend, the late great blues singer Candye Kane.

Although I served as curator and host, pro-

ducing the salon was a team effort. Many people volunteered their technical, video, and computer expertise, including my daughter Lily Katzeff. The food was self-catered with the help of close family friend Yolanda Roth, Lydia Roth Laube, and other volunteers with catering skills. A large debt of gratitude and appreciation goes to all the volunteers.

For more information about future music salons, visit www.cardiffbythesea.salons

Photo Credit: Joel Dorfman &/or Patricia Frischer-San Diego Visual Arts





Since Moving to Portugal, This Trip Climbed to the Top of My Bucket List

By Moira Berman



As a South African Jew recently relocated to Portugal, I never expected this country to become a gateway to exploring my heritage. Yet, tucked away in Portugal's interior are traces of Jewish life that span centuries — hidden stories of survival, faith, and quiet resilience that make up the Rede das Judiarias, or **Jewish Heritage Route**.

One of the most poignant stops is **Belmonte**, a hilltop town where Jewish families secretly preserved their identity for over 400 years after Judaism was outlawed during the Portuguese Inquisition. Today, Belmonte proudly honors its past — with a modern synagogue, a Jewish museum, and a community that, while still private, openly welcomes respectful visitors.

Traveling this route isn't just about sightseeing. It's about stepping into the emotional footprints of those who practiced in silence and passed down rituals by candlelight. From Trancoso, where a modern interpretive center now stands beside ancient granite buildings etched

with faint Hebrew inscriptions, to the village of **Castelo Rodrigo**, where an old spring may once have served as a mikvah, each place holds echoes of faith — mingled with sorrow, strength, and surprising beauty.

For those planning a visit, logistics take a bit of effort. Trains and buses can get you to the major towns, but a rental car or private guide is best for reaching more remote enclaves. Along the way, you'll find warm hospitality, from boutique hotels to cozy Airbnbs, and perhaps even a shared Shabbat meal with fellow travelers — as one writer did at the **Sinai Hotel** in Belmonte.

As someone who's now made Portugal home, this journey holds personal meaning — a quiet tribute to my roots, and a reminder of the resilience that has always defined Jewish identity, wherever in the world we land.

The Year of Courage: How Hillel of San Diego is Building a Joyful, Resilient Jewish Future

By Karen Parry



This year at Hillel of San Diego has been one of extraordinary growth, resilience, and radical joy. In the face of adversity—rising antisemitism, emotional burnout, and fear—our students, staff, and community have responded not with retreat, but with courage, creativity, and deeper connection.

Jewish joy itself became an act of rebellion. Hillel nearly tripled its reach since 2020, with Shabbat dinners averaging over 100 students—once considered unthinkable. One of the most powerful moments this year was Peace in Israel Week, which served over 1,000 students and brought diverse students together through laughter and cultural exchange.

Innovation was a hallmark of our response to adversity. One standout is the launch of our Jewish Networking Hub, the only local professional network tailored for Jewish students, alumni, and professionals. Over 300 participants have already connected through Hillel for job opportunities, mentorships, and professional growth. It's not only helping our students launch their futures—it's uniting the San Diego Jewish community in new and meaningful ways.

At the same time, antisemitism surged. Seventy-four incidents were reported across our campuses this year, 17 of which involved faculty members. Rather than be silenced, Hillel responded by creating the Campus Impact Initiative, ensuring that every incident is tracked, case-managed, and responded to with appropriate action. This year, Jewish students were not left to navigate hate alone; they were empowered to speak up, advocate, and

seek justice—with our staff by their side.

One courageous example came from Mesa College, where a student stood as the lone Jewish voice against a BDS resolution. With Hillel's support, she not only spoke truth to power but helped overturn an unjust and policy-breaking decision. This is what it means to build student leaders who are resilient and prepared.

We also prioritized student well-being in bold ways. In partnership with Jewish Family Service, Hillel hired its first-ever full-time Jewish wellness counselor—a dream years in the making. This critical role is helping students build emotional resilience and mental strength in a post-pandemic world.

None of this would be possible without the generous support of our Jewish community who believe in the value of investing in the next generation. Thank you to those who helped support Hillel through CAN as well! We can't do it without you!

This year has proven that when Jewish students are supported, they don't just survive—they thrive. We are growing. We are innovating. And we are leading a new generation with strength, spirit, and relentless hope. The future is bright because we are building it together.

To support the next generation, you can donate at www.hillel.org/donate



Bridging Perspectives: Bringing SDSU Student Leaders to Israel

By Roni Feldman



My name is Roni Feldman, a rising senior at San Diego State University studying business and statistics. I am passionate about strengthening Jewish identity, fighting antisemitism on campus, and creating space for open, meaningful conversations about Israel. This past spring, I had the opportunity to return to Israel with the SDSU Fact Finder delegation, a program that brings non-Jewish student leaders to explore the country through firsthand experiences.

Our group included eighteen students, most of them non-Jewish campus leaders. I was one of only three Jewish participants on the trip, which gave me a unique perspective and sense of responsibility. After going on the trip last year, I knew how impactful it could be. This time, I took a more active role by helping recruit and support students who were curious, thoughtful, and open to learning. Over ten days, we visited Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, the Golan Heights, and other key areas. We heard from a wide range of voices, including Israeli and Palestinian journalists, activists, community leaders, and officials. The goal was not to present one side of the story, but to give students the opportunity to ask hard questions and engage with the complexity of the region.

One moment that stood out happened during a visit to the northern border near Lebanon. As we listened to a local resident explain what it's like to live under constant threat from Hezbollah, I looked around and saw the group completely silent, taking in every word. Later that day, a student told me, "I've never heard this perspective before. I had no idea people lived like this." It was a powerful reminder of how important it is to go beyond the headlines and hear from the people who are living the reality.

Another student reflected at the end of the trip, saying, "I thought this would be political, but it ended up being human." That simple comment captured the heart of the experience.

Being part of this delegation for a second year, and helping others begin their own journey of understanding, was incredibly meaningful. These student leaders left Israel with new perspectives, deeper questions, and a greater appreciation for what it means to listen. I am proud to have been part of that process, and hopeful about the ripple effects it will create back on campus and beyond.



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... a Year Later

By Loren Gaddie

On 7 July 2024, I became an Israeli citizen, the fulfilment of a lifelong dream. Many encouraged me to remove my rose-tinted glasses and get real. "Aliyah is not likely to be what you expected," they warned, and they were right. It was different ... it was better.

How can that be, you ask, in a country that continues to rise from the ashes trying to rebuild itself as it waits impatiently for the return of all the hostages taken on that fateful October day? This, together with a war with Iran during which this tiny, wondrous country is fighting for its existence against existential threats and bad public relations around the world.

So here are some of the things I've experienced during this past year ...

I discovered copious opportunities to develop professionally as an English teacher at the Charles Smith School of the Arts in Jerusalem.

We live in a tiny, quaint apartment (previously owned by a poet) amongst a multicultural mix

of secular and religious Jews, native Israelis and French, American and British immigrants, Arabs and foreign workers - most of whom are carers for the elderly in the community.

I continued to volunteer as an English teacher with students who were evacuated from their homes in October 2023. Their parents are happy the children can learn online with me but I'm not sure who benefits more, they or I.

I have lived through a war. I have heard a myriad of alerts and sirens which are sounded to inform people to find shelter in a bunker. On one occasion, we found ourselves in the secure space in someone's apartment. We had never met this family (husband, wife and 9-week-old baby) before and are not likely to ever see them again.

I have gotten to know my neighbours in their pyjamas, bleary-eyed and exhausted, as we all troop down to the shelter in our building for the umpteenth time. There have been times where

we sit it out mostly in silence whilst on other occasions, we banter, joke, play backgammon and wait patiently until we get the all-clear on our various phone apps.

I am in awe of the ability of the people here to laugh at themselves, at each other, and at the dire situations in which they find themselves. A good sense of humour is not just a quality; it's a survival tool. When used properly, it can dissipate the most tense and anxiety-provoking situations.

Without a doubt, the most impressive trait I have noticed amongst the Israeli people is their incredible resilience. People are exhausted – physically, emotionally, and mentally. But they wake up, put one foot in front of the other, and get on with the daily business of living.

I am proud to be part of history in the making in these extraordinary times, and the rose-tinted glasses have been replaced with a strong hue of blue and white.

Words from Bubbe You'll Never Forget

Vay iz meer:

An expression which closely resembles "Woe is Me", and is cried out by Jewish mothers every 15 minutes. An anthem of true suffering.

Tattalah:

An endearing term of love which means "littzzle man." An emasculating term for women to call men, if you think about it. Bu† who has time to think?

Gefilte Fish:

A tasty mix of congealed fish parts and transparent slime jelly. The only food that is permissible for Jewish children to refuse.

Kugel:

A yummy blend of overcooked noodles,

raisins, and curds of ripe cheese. Not fun to look at. When slathered with sour cream makes an excellent artery hardener.

Borscht:

A purple soup made from beets and ammonia. Often eaten by elderly Ashkenazic Jews who slur noisily and have protruding nose hair. Which is helpful, because it stinks to high heaven!

Kneidlach:

Also referred to as matzoh balls. Made with Styrofoam and sponges. There isn't a laxative in the world strong enough to counteract them.

Schmendrick:

A man who messes things up, always loses and feels miserable. Every Jewish family has at least one, often named Irving.

Schlemiel:

A jerk who can't do anything right. In simple terms, someone who's always spilling his soup.

Tsuris:

A word referring to all problems, trouble, grief, aggravation and heartache. Examples: daughter pregnant with child of an unemployed Catholic bartender, adult son loses job and moves back home.

Major Tsuris:

Daughter and baby "Bridget" move back home too.

Kin-n-hora:

A gleeful rejoice used when Jewish parents find out their daughter is going to marry the Jewish surgeon rather than that poor, unemployed goyische bartender.



The Art of Emotion

By Jenifer Broomberg



The Art of Emotion: The Creative Journey of Jenifer Broomberg

Jenifer Broomberg has been drawing and painting since the age of five. Born and raised in South Africa, her first teacher was her aunt—an accomplished oil painter—who taught her the fundamentals of painting and inspired her early passion for art.

At 22, Jenifer moved to the United States, where she began formal training in the arts. She studied at the University of Houston and the Glassell School of Art, and took watercolor classes with renowned artist Marge Brichler. Deeply influenced by the spontaneity and freshness of the watercolor

medium, she began producing and selling vibrant pieces that often featured African people and wildlife.

After relocating to California, Jenifer shifted her focus to oil painting and also studied sculpture under the celebrated Egyptian artist Maher Morcus in La Jolla. His romantic and expressive style left a lasting mark on her work. She was represented by three galleries in La Jolla and downtown San Diego, held exhibitions, and sold many of her works.

Jenifer also taught at the Athenaeum School of the Arts in La Jolla, as well as in her private studio, where she offered art instruction to adults and teens, regularly showcasing her



students' work in group exhibitions.

Fascinated by the emerging world of digital art, she taught herself Photoshop and joined a digital artists' group in La Jolla, participating in exhibitions and selling several framed digital prints.

Though experienced in many mediums, Jenifer's preferred medium is oil. She is drawn to its sculptural quality and its ability to portray light and shadow with emotional intensity. Her figurative work focuses on the human form, often conveying deep, expressive emotion.

In addition to her visual art, Jenifer studied opera and per-

formed with the Small Opera of San Diego. She even opened an art gallery within the opera company's building, curating popular annual exhibitions that combined live opera and fine art, drawing crowds of up to 800 guests.

Jenifer continues to paint and is currently creating custom portraiture for local clients—capturing individuals, mother-daughter pairs, and families with a blend of classical technique and emotional depth. If you're interested please contact her at 858 945-7297

Jennifer is now teaching art to adults and teens in small groups at home.

Linda Bernstein



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In Loving Memory of...



Jacqueline "Jackie" Woolf z"l

June 24, 1950 – August 26, 2024

A Beloved Mother, Grandmother, Philanthropist, Business Leader, and Guiding Light

Jackie Woolf, a cherished figure in the San Diego community and a woman of extraordinary warmth, resilience, and generosity, passed away on August 26, 2024. Her life was a profound example of love in action, compassion in leadership, and strength lived quietly—but powerfully.

Born in Johannesburg, South Africa, on June 24, 1950, Jackie was the youngest daughter of Michael and Zeta Susman, and the beloved sister of Cecil, Andy, and Helen (z"l). From her youth, she exuded confidence and spirit—excelling in netball, dreaming of becoming a tennis star, and deeply valuing family. Her bond with her siblings was lifelong and unbreakable—a source of joy and strength.

At 21, she met Bertie Woolf (z"l) on a blind date and immediately knew he was the one. The two quickly married, had two children, Lara and Anton, and built a rich life rooted in family and tradition. In their Johannesburg home, Shabbat dinners became a weekly celebration of togetherness, often with over 30 family members gathered around the table.

In 1987, Jackie and Bertie made the bold decision to move their young family to San Diego—a choice that would define the second half of her life. Together, they worked tirelessly to build their business. Jackie became its quiet architect: hiring every employee, developing infrastructure, and managing operations with insight, empathy, and determination.

Despite her many responsibilities, Jackie poured herself into community service with unmatched devotion. She served on the boards of the San Diego Jewish Federation and other Jewish organizations, chaired major philanthropic events, and was honored with the Ann Ratner Award for Distinguished Service and Extraordinary Leadership.

Her connection to the global Jewish community ran deep. Through decades of work with the American Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), Jackie helped shape and fund programs for vulnerable communities—including at-risk children and abused women in Israel. She was a consistent force for good—tirelessly giving her time, energy, and resources to those in need. She continued to serve on the JDC board into her final months.

What made Jackie truly exceptional, however, wasn't only what she

did—but how she did it. She changed lives not by standing in the spotlight, but in the quiet corners of conversation. She had a way of connecting deeply with people, seeing them for who they were and who they could become. With a kind word or an encouraging insight, she left lasting impressions on those fortunate enough to cross her path—often in the smallest of moments, and always with genuine care.

She is survived by her children: Lara, Brandon, Anton, and Julie; her beloved grandchildren: Rachel, Asher, Alexa, Hannah, Samantha, Ava, and Auren; her sisters and extended family; and a wide circle of friends and colleagues whose lives she touched.

Jackie's memory will live on in every life she lifted, every tradition she nurtured, and every quiet act of kindness she performed. She was a true *Eshet Chayil—a Woman of Valor*.

May her memory forever be a blessing.



Denise Hyde z"l

Beloved wife, devoted mother, adoring grandmother, and cherished friend. She radiated warmth, compassion, and unwavering love. Forever missed and lovingly remembered.

In Loving Memory of...



Linda Grishman z"l

In Loving Memory of Linda Grishman (December 1949 – 2024)

Brenda Lurie

It is with deep sadness that we share the passing of our dear friend, Linda Grishman on September 27th 2024

Linda was a remarkable woman, a talented writer, and a lifelong friend.

Linda and I met when we were just six years old. We grew up together, attended Johannesburg High School for Girls, and shared countless memories along the way. Our paths later took us in different directions—she moved to Vermont, where she built a beautiful life and started a wonderful chocolate business, while I settled in San Diego, working in the clothing industry. Despite the distance, our friendship remained unbreakable, spanning decades of love, laughter, and shared experiences.

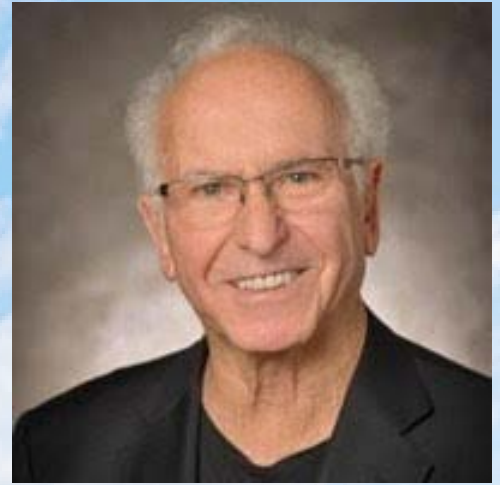
A few years ago, Linda bravely faced the challenge of early-onset Alzheimer's. Even as her mind began to betray her, her spirit remained strong, and her love for words never faded. She passed away September 2024 leaving behind a legacy of warmth, creativity, and kindness.

She was fortunate enough to have a wonderful friend who took care of her in her last years. She was her caregiver, her friend and she was always there for her.

Rest in peace, my dear friend. Your words, your laughter, and your heart will always be with us.

All my Love

Brenda Lurie (Kruger)



Martin Roy First z"l

Martin Roy First beloved husband, brother, father, grandfather, physician, and friend, passed away peacefully on July 18, 2025, at the age of 82. Born in Johannesburg, South Africa, to Pearl and Solomon First, Martin's life was shaped by compassion, integrity, wit, and a deep sense of justice.

In 1971, he made the brave decision to leave apartheid-era South Africa, arriving in the U.S. with his wife, two young children, two suitcases, and \$1,000. He never looked back, dedicating his life to healing, family, and justice.

Roy was a larger-than-life personality—funny, unfiltered, and unforgettable. A legendary prankster, he once stole his parents' car before he had a license. Yet beneath the mischief was an empathetic, loyal man you called in a crisis—not just because he was a doctor, but because he truly cared.

He was a devoted husband and father, once receiving a red card at a soccer game for defending a player being unfairly targeted, only to continue to watch defiantly from a hill above the field. He doted on family pets, especially his grand dog Fenway.

Professionally, Roy was a pioneer in transplant nephrology. A graduate of the University of the Witwatersrand in 1966, he had a distinguished career at the University of Cincinnati and held senior roles at Astellas Pharma and Transplant Genomics. He authored over 400 publications, served as President of the American Society of Transplantation, and earned its Lifetime Achievement Award.

Roy treated patients like family, worked tirelessly, and consulted globally—even for royalty. He met presidents, world leaders, and the pope, always advocating for others.

He is survived by his wife, Barbara (Bobbie) First, his brothers Brian and Howard, his children and their spouses, grandchildren, and many who considered him 'chosen' family. He will be deeply missed and forever remembered.

His funeral service was held on Wednesday, July 23, 2025, in Providence, Rhode Island

In Loving Memory of...



Selwyn Lurie z"l

We are heartbroken to share the loss of our beloved father, Selwyn Lurie, this morning July 17, the 21st of Tammuz. Our amazing Pa is now at peace with his beloved wife and our mom Barbara, and their son and our brother Alon.

Pa died peacefully in his sleep at home at the age of 102, three weeks before his 103rd birthday. He spent his last few months in hospice care at home still fully alert and engaged, surrounded by love, with family and friends talking and being with him for hours every day.

Pa lived an amazing life, and was a legend to all who knew him. Whether as a fighter pilot in WW2, builder of Ashkelon in the early days of the state of Israel, CEO of the leading textile manufacturer in South Africa, co-founder of Kehillat Ahavat Yisrael in San Diego, or

as our family's patriarch, Pa brought huge energy, thoughtfulness, care and impact to everything he did.

Most of all, Pa was the driving force of our family, the best father, grandfather and great-grandfather in the world. Family meant everything to him, and of all his incredible accomplishments, the one he was most proud of was the family he and Ma built.

We are honored and grateful beyond measure to have had such incredible parents, for the endless love they brought to all of us, and for the countless ways in which they helped, guided, supported and adored each of us, our children and our grandchildren.

Funeral took place in Ra'anana, Israel. Shiva services were held in Ra'anana and San Diego.

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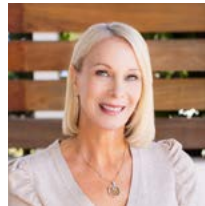
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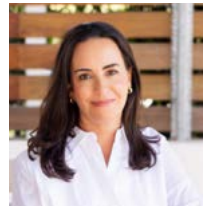
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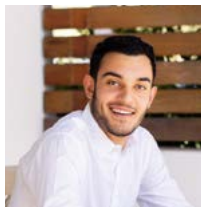
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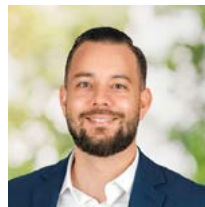
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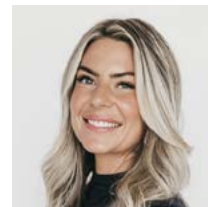
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