Study finds Jewish teens flourish socially, emotionally and spiritually when connected to youth groups

BY DEBORAH FINEBLUM

Most of the teens (71 percent) report a strong or very strong connection to Israel, with the majority of those who have not yet traveled hoping to do so one day. Most crucially, the study found that teens active in a Jewish youth group (regardless of denominations) tend to flourish socially, emotionally and spiritually as compared with those who are not. They also report feeling more connected to being Jewish, have higher self-esteem and better relationships with family, friends and other adults, and feel empowered to make positive change in their world.

“The parental issue was the big surprise,” says Rabbi Michael Shire, dean of the Graduate School of Education at Boston’s Hebrew College and a member of the evaluation team. And, he says, together with the results of a few other studies, it makes “a pretty good case for religious education and youth groups specifically. It seems that, along with a strong family and the belief in a higher power, you’re connected to — this makes for someone who’s healthier in every way. It’s almost like these young people have a protective shell around them.”

Carl Shulman regularly sees these trends in action. “In our programming, we look at Jewish values, including how they were expressed in the civil rights movement and other social-justice causes,” says Shulman, the youth engagement adviser at Temple Etz Chaim, a Reform synagogue in Franklin, MA. “And we make sure it’s tied to Jewish tradition — something in the Torah or Talmud that speaks to them.”

Shulman says youth-group advisers play “a unique role” in a teen’s life. “We’re a cross between a teacher, a friend and a camp counselor,” he says. “So they feel they can be open about their thoughts and feelings and confide in us.”

One feature of the study, giving the participating youth movements feedback on how their teens stacked up in a variety of ways, provided much-appreciated input, says NCSY’s International Director Rabbi Micah Greenland: “This is a terrific opportunity to learn about what our teens are gaining from involvement with us. It’s a mixed blessing, saying it can both cause stress and help them deal with stress, as well as connect with friends and help change the world.

Most of the teens (75 percent) identify as Jewish (and 16 percent claim to be culturally Jewish), while many of those who say they have “no religion” also hope to engage with Judaism at some point in the future. Many (45 percent) rank antisemitism as a problem for today’s teens, though few feel personally threatened.

New survey compares Israeli, American, French Jewish opinions on Judaism, Israel

BY JNS STAFF

A set of surveys conducted by the American Jewish Committee of Israeli, American and French Jews has brought to light “significant differences” in outlook toward Israel — and toward each other — between the groups.

On the question of the importance of being Jewish to their lives, 51 percent of Israeli Jews said it was “most important,” 29 percent very important and just eight percent “not too” or “not at all” important. Among American Jews, the preference was 41 percent; 44 percent and 33 percent found it “very important,” respectively, 35 percent and 32 percent “somewhat important” and 24 percent and 32 percent “not too” or “not at all” important.

A significant contrast was also found in the three groups’ outlook on the Jewish nation. While 51 percent of Israeli Jews consider American Jews their siblings and 47 percent their cousins or extended family, just 13 percent of American Jews see Israeli Jews as their siblings, with 58 percent viewing them as cousins or extended family and 28 percent not seeing Israeli Jews as family at all. Thirty-one percent of French Jews said they consider Israeli Jews their siblings. While 62 percent of American Jews believe caring about Israel is a “very important part of my being a Jew,” 72 percent agreed that “a thriving state of Israel is vital for the long-term future of the Jewish people.”

Among Israelis, however, while 50 percent said “living in Israel is a very important part of my being a Jew,” 91 percent said the long-term future of the Jewish people was linked to the future of the state of Israel. Regarding a two-state solution to Israel’s conflict with the Palestinians, 51 percent of Israelis either “strongly oppose” or “somewhat oppose” a two-state solution, with 39 percent in favor of the idea. Among younger Israelis, 42.4 percent “strongly oppose,” along with 56.8 percent of ultra-Orthodox Israelis.

The study also showed that 50 percent of Israeli Jews say not a single Jewish community in the West Bank/Judea and Samaria should be dismantled for the sake of such a solution. Yet just 26 percent of American Jews oppose a two-state solution, with 64 percent supporting the creation of a Palestinian state on land in the West Bank/Judea and Samaria.

A majority of Israelis, 63.5 percent, said it is “not appropriate for American Jews to attempt to influence Israeli policy on issues as national security and peace negotiations with the Palestinians,” while 57 percent of American Jews felt they should have a say.

Study finds Jewish teens flourish socially, emotionally and spiritually when connected to youth groups

Jewish teens took part in United Synagogue Youth’s International Convention. (Photo courtesy of United Synagogue Youth via Facebook)

Schoenstadt Family Foundation, funded the study. The funders were especially interested in teens’ social and emotional development, “how these programs impact them in these ways,” says Chernier. One happy surprise: how many teens actually took the time to complete the survey.

The most common reasons surveyed teens gave for being involved with the youth groups were: “I feel like my true self.”

More than 17,000 Jewish teens like Berrol participated in an online survey, developed by the Jewish Education Project and Rosov Consulting. Most of the names came off lists from 14 youth groups representing Jews of all backgrounds, including Bnei Akiva, National Council of Synagogue Youth, Young Judaea, CTeen, including Bnei Akiva, National Council of Synagogue Youth and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

“We were basically interested in the lives of Jewish teens and understanding the impact of youth groups,” says Stacie Berrol, one of a handful of Jewish students who’s worked with an ambulance crew; at Camp Ramah in Ojai, CA; in Israel, where she rode with an ambulance crew; or at events where she had been involved in the past. “Being together is when I feel like my true self.”

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The Jewish Federation of Northeastern Pennsylvania

Backpack project

A Temple Hesed committee is gearing up for its annual back to school backpack project.

Story on page 3

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

“Unpacked”

The YouTube channel “Unpacked” aims to teach younger generations about Israel and Judaism.

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News in brief...

A U.S. drone is shot down by Iran; Egypt to pay fine for breaking gas deal with Israel; and more.

Stories on pages 11-12

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PLUS

Candle lighting

The Jewish Federation of Northeastern Pennsylvania now has a page on Facebook to let community members know about upcoming events and keep connected.

Change Service Requested

JUNE 27, 2019

8:22 pm

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BY VINNA KATZ AND ROMINA RUIZ-GORIENA

Wading into the world of philanthropic partnerships

BY JONATHAN S. TOBIN

Forget about the “Jewish home-run record”

BY VINNA KATZ AND ROMINA RUIZ-GORIENA

Wading into the world of philanthropic partnerships

BY JONATHAN S. TOBIN

Forget about the “Jewish home-run record”
Shavuot observed by Bais Yaakov students

In honor of Shavuot, the Bais Yaakov students baked kugels and created themed challahs in honor of the yom tov. They also learned how to make homemade kugels. The girls were taught the different laws of the holiday by their teachers, Rabbi Avrohom Turin and Rabbi Dovid Goldstein.

Students also went to the Jewish Home with their teacher, Esther Elefant, to give the residents information and insights about Shavuot. The girls presented different aspects of the yom tov to the residents. The residents at the Jewish Home say they “very much enjoy when the girls attend this weekly Torah class.”

Jewish Home expands programming – Parkinson Disease Management

The Jewish Home and Elan Gardens have recently added a comprehensive Parkinson’s program to the host of services already offered. The program addresses the understanding and management of the disease through the offering of education and support groups, exercise and dance programming, as well as clinical and medical management.

Goals of the program include:

- Person-centered support systems to the resident and family along with outreach services to the community.
- An exercise program through various modalities to meet individual needs of the resident at various stages of the disease through utilization of the expertise of the therapy staff and experts in the community.
- Medical related services through utilization of trained nursing staff, program professionals and medical doctors, as needed to manage the care of the resident.
- An ongoing education program to all staff providing education for the resident and family.
- Additional services such as creative arts, clergy services and modified activities to ensure quality of life is maintained at the highest possible level for residents on an individual basis.

A portion of the community program is being funded by a grant from the Parkinson’s Foundation. This grant is specifically targeting the underserved populations in Luzerne County. Educational support groups will be offered in Spanish by Patty Weiner, an expert in her field.

JFS is also partnering with Linn McDonald, who is a qualified dance instructor for “Dance for Parkinson’s.” These classes will start on Tuesday, July 9, at the Jewish Community Center in Kingston. They will be provided free to the public through the Parkinson’s Foundation Grant.

JFS will also be starting an exercise program with instructor Debbie Grossman. JFS is also working with the Scranton Jewish Community Center to offer dedicated cycling and exercise programming, again specifically for the Parkinson individual.

Watch the JFS social media platforms for more programs. Contact Nicole Lipinski, director of Healthy Aging, nlipinski@jhep.org for more details.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Back to school backpack project

The Temple Hesed Social Action Committee is gearing up for its annual back to school backpack project for 2019. Lackawanna County children in need, as identified by local social service agencies, will be provided with new clothing and a backpack filled with supplies for the first day of school. Supporters are needed for this project.

Those interested can be matched with a child (grades kindergarten to six) to provide all or some of the needed items, or you can make a cash donation and the committee will purchase the items for you. Full sponsorship for a child is $100, but any monetary donation will be appreciated.

Contact Temple Hesed at 570-344-7201 if you wish to sponsor a child, and provide an e-mail address where the child’s information can be dropped off at Temple Hesed or the JCC reception area during normal business hours through August 16.

“Your contribution will help ensure that children start the school year with the confidence and tools they need to succeed,” said organizers of the backpack project. “Thank you in advance for your participation. It takes a community to raise a child.”

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Check out the Federation’s new, updated website at www.jewishnepa.org or find it on Facebook.

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DEADLINES

The following are deadlines for all articles and photos for upcoming Reporter issues.

DEADLINE ISSUE
Thursday, July 11 ........................... July 25
Thursday, July 25 ........................... August 8
Thursday, August 8 ........................... August 22
Thursday, August 22 ........................... September 5

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Dr. Avi Willis arrived in Israel on May 30, with his wife and young son, to spend one week volunteering at the Trudi Birger Dental Clinic in Jerusalem through a program called Dental Volunteers for Israel. DVI provides free dental care and oral health education to thousands of needy children in Jerusalem every year, regardless of race and religion, thanks to support from donors and visiting volunteer dentists from around the world. Willis grew up in Scranton, where his parents still reside, and he practices in Philadelphia, having completed a pediatric dental residency at Temple University.

This was Willis’ first time volunteering at DVI. He said, “The DVI team made me feel like family and welcomed me.” Each of these patients has a story, a reason why they live under the poverty line, and their problems matter to DVI volunteer dentists.

The Vinet family, including five children, arrived in Israel from Ethiopia in 2006. Since then, an additional four children have been born — a total of two girls and seven boys ranging in age from 1.5-24 years of age. Uvayda, the oldest daughter, recalls how difficult it was upon their arrival. They were initially settled in Be’er Sheva in the south of the country even though their grandmother was in Jerusalem. It took a while, but they eventually got moved to Jerusalem so that the family could be reunited. The way Israel was presented to them in Ethiopia and what they actually found when they got here were two very different realities, which made the adjustment even more difficult. Uvayda said. They struggled economically, no one knew Hebrew, living conditions were uncomfortable — in short, life was a struggle. In total, the Vinet family spent two and a half years in absorption centers before finally moving out on their own.

Uvayda, who is 24, accompanies her siblings to dental appointments. Her mother is emotionally unstable and unable to assume responsibility for the children. As the oldest child, the responsibility falls on her. Upon completing high school, Uvayda wanted to study to become a dental hygienist, but dropped out of school because of the cost. She did a year of national service and the next child is currently serving in the IDF. She wanted to study to become a dental bygienist, but dropped out of school because of her familial responsibilities. Uvayda had to assume the role of main caretaker of the family, which she admits has taken a major toll on her emotional well-being. She tried working and found that she couldn’t focus enough to do anything, even caring for her siblings. The family was referred to DVI from the local welfare services and all of the children are now DVI patients. Their treatments include check-ups, x-rays, cleanings, fillings, extractions, root canals, crowns, sealants and more. They will also be taught to properly care for their teeth on an ongoing basis.

The dedication of the volunteer dentists to Jerusalem goes beyond routine Zionism. “It’s an amazing, eye-opening experience to come to Eretz Yisrael to volunteer and treat the poor, the needy, in the world’s holiest city, to not just donate, but actually do tzedakah at the crossroads of the world. I thought I would go to Jerusalem to volunteer, with the opportunity to work in my profession and see what it was like; now I realize that volunteering at DVI is going to be a part of my life,” Willis said.

DVI provides basic services to the poverty-stricken communities of Jerusalem, which has more than 200,000 people living under the poverty line. DVI’s Trudi Birger clinic treats disadvantaged children and at-risk youth (ages 4-26). Volunteer dentists from around the world, together with their Israeli colleagues, perform about 1,800 treatments each month. In 2018, 133 volunteer dentists from around the world performed 10,836 treatments, helping 2,709 children in crisis and at-risk youth in Jerusalem. During the past 39 years, more than 4,500 dentists have volunteered at DVI, treating thousands of patients for free every year, despite the fact that DVI receives no government funding. More information about Dental Volunteers for Israel can be found at www.dental-dvi.org.il.

At right: Dr. Avi Willis with Ma’ayam Vinet, one of the DVI patients.

BY ELIANA RUDEE
(JNS) — According to the most recent Pew Research Study on American Jewish life, American Millennial Jews (ages 18-34) are increasingly disconnecting from traditional Jewish institutions. Additionally, as age decreases, so does identification with Judaism. While 32 percent of Millennials identify as “Jews of no religion” (compared to 26 percent among Generation X, 19 percent among Baby Boomers, 14 percent among Silents and just 7 percent among the Greatest Generation), around 83 percent of them are proud to be Jewish.

To some, these statistics illustrate that Jewish identity is not as relevant for younger generations as it was for older ones. Others don’t see this as a given, and instead see a gap in supply and demand that can be corrected, if properly addressed.

Kids and teens spend an average of six hours daily online, and the nonprofit Jerusalem U says that the Jewish educational community is years behind in reaching them there and urgently needs to catch up. According to Jerusalem U’s newly named CEO, Dina Rabhan, “For decades, the Jewish community has struggled to reach and teach the growing number of Jews that do not have access or choose not to access traditional Jewish learning opportunities. YouTube, the world’s largest global classroom and the No. 2 search engine, can change that.”

This is why, she told JNS, Jerusalem U has launched a new YouTube channel called “Unpacked,” featuring bite-sized videos that also tell “complex, nuanced” stories about Israel and Judaism in what Rabhan calls “non-prescriptive education.” It aims to bring “compelling content” to social media and digital channels that reach younger Jews (primarily those ages 13 to 34) where they live, starting on YouTube — a landscape that Jerusalem U believes the organized Jewish community has largely left unexplored.

“People are curious about Judaism and Israel, but are not ready to commit to walking into a Hillel house or synagogue, or going to a Jewish event. But ‘Googleing’ or learning about something from their dorm room is something they will do,” explained Rabhan, who posited that YouTube is more often than not their preferred platform.

“YouTube has billions of hours of educational videos being uploaded and viewed every month, and it’s where kids are choosing to do most of their learning outside of traditional institutions. It’s where they socialize, connect and understand the world around them,” said Rabhan, who has worked as an educational consultant supporting more than 200 Jewish day schools worldwide.

See “Channel” on page 12
Thanks to everyone who helped make the Federation’s Annual Meeting on June 13th a big success!
Lodz, Poland, hosts its first-ever Jewish festival

BY JNS STAFF

(JNS) – The Polish city of Lodz hosted its first-ever Jewish celebratory event, “The Festival of Tranquility,” over the Jewish holiday of Shavuot. Organized by the Foundation for the Preservation of Jewish Heritage in Poland, in collaboration with Shavei Israel emissary to Lodz Rabbi David Szychowski, it was called a singular event connecting art and spirituality. The festival featured films, Torah study, workshops in calligraphy and cooking, a concert and more.

“In order to listen to yourself and reflect on the reality around us, you need time and space,” said Szychowski. “The residents of Lodz joined us to take pause, open up to one another and learn about the contemporary life of the Polish Jewish community.”

“The Festival of Tranquility” began on June 8 with a night of Torah study in honor of Shavuot, when Jews traditionally gather to learn. The following day featured a tour of Lodz and its historical landmarks. “The Festival of Jewish Culture” in Warsaw has taken place annually since 2004, and includes Jewish (both Hebrew and Yiddish) theater, music, films, exhibits and expositions, even kosher food. Its purpose is to recall Jewish culture in Poland, which was decimated by the Holocaust.

On September 8, 1939, German forces entered Lodz and immediately began targeting Jews, who constituted 34 percent, or 223,000 people, of the city’s pre-war population of 665,000. In early 1940, the Nazis forced more than 164,000 Jews to live within the confines of the Lodz ghetto, which was surrounded by barbed-wire and a fence, and had no running water or electricity. It was the second-largest ghetto after Warsaw’s, established by the Germans during the Holocaust. Residents of the ghetto came primarily from Lodz and surrounding areas, but also from as far as Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany and Luxembourg. In January 1942, the Germans began deporting Jews from the Lodz ghetto to Nazi concentration camps. The Nazis liquidated the ghetto between August 9-28, 1944, in the process deporting more than 60,000 residents, mostly Jews, to Auschwitz and Birkenau. By the war’s end, only about 900 of the Jews of the Lodz ghetto had survived.

Despite the fact that thousands of young Poles have parents, grandparents or even great-grandparents who had to hide their Jewish identity for decades, Judaism has witnessed a revival in Poland since the downfall of communism, and we are happy that we can celebrate it,” said Michael Freund, Shavei Israel’s founder and chairman. Prior to World War II, Poland was home to more than three million Jews. Today, approximately 4,000 Jews are officially registered as living in Poland, but according to experts, there are tens of thousands of people throughout the country whose forbears chose to hide their Jewish identity due to the persecution they suffered under Nazism and communism.

In recent years, a growing number of such people, popularly known as the “Hidden Jews of Poland,” have begun to explore their connections to Judaism and the Jewish people, with many returning to Judaism, supported by Chief Rabbi of Poland Michael Schudrich.

Rabbi David Szychowski gave a press conference during “The Festival of Tranquility” in early June. (Photo by Natalia Soral)
BY JUDY LASH BALINT  

(JNS) – Jerusalem and Caesarea are 85 miles apart – one inland and one on the coast – but both cities bear the unmistakable imprint of Herod, the master builder of ancient times. In Jerusalem, Herod refurbished the Second Temple, and in Caesarea he conceived and planned a massive port city replete with a harbor, palace, temple, amphitheater and hippodrome. 

Today, both cities receive masses of tourists from all over the world. Caesar- ea, however, has recently undergone a massive preservation and restoration project in an effort to boost the number of tourists to rival the millions who visit Jerusalem every year.

The Israel Antiquities Authority and the Edmond de Rothschild Authority, the Israel Nature and Parks Authority and the Edmond de Rothschild Foundation, which provided NIS 150 million, announce the opening of the new Visitor Center at Caesarea on May 30. (Photo by Jaly Lash Balint)

Israeli President Reuven Rivlin (center, left) and and Baroness Ariane de Rothschild inaugurated the new Visitor Center at a ribbon-cutting ceremony on May 30, President Reuven Rivlin and Baroness Ariane de Rothschild inaugu-rated the renewal project that includes a state-of-the-art Visitor Center housed in the restored harbor vaults that formed the base for Herod’s temple, which was the main public building of ancient Caesarea. The vaults, which look out over the harbor, are adjacent to a monumental staircase still being restored that led those arriving from the harbor to the temple itself.

The Visitor Center combines artifacts representing the many cultures in Caesar-ea’s long history with innovative displays, as well as a 10-minute film telling the story of Herod and the building of Cae-sarea projected vertically onto one of the vault walls.

Karsenti explains that the renewal proj-ect took more than five years of “intensive, collaborative” work by archaeologists, engineers and preservation architects, and the cooperation of the Israel Antiquities Authority, the Israel Nature and Parks Authority and the Edmond de Rothschild Foundation, which provided 150 million NIS ($41.2 million) in funding.

Baroness Ariane de Rothschild repre-sented the foundation at the opening, noting that “Caesarea is an inspiration for our call to co-create the future.” Alluding to the Muslims, Christians and Jews who had been sovereign in Caesarea during different periods in her history, she added: “We go beyond just acknowledging human diversity. We engage in building a society that is strengthened by all its members, beliefs and traditions.”

Before cutting the ribbon together with the baroness, Rivlin told guests that “his-tory is not about dry facts or statistics. It is about the lives people lived, the places they loved and their stories. The Caesarea Vaults restoration project ensures that the story of this place and of its connection to the Jewish people will be told for many, many years to come. And I believe that one day soon, Caesarea will take its rightful place as one of the world’s most impressive windows to the ancient past.”

As part of the restoration project, Is-rael Antiquities Authority archaeologists uncovered three “significant finds” from different eras near the vaults. The first was a mosaic floor from the Roman pe-riod (second or early third century C.E.) discovered in a bathhouse next to the temple podium – a replica is on display in the entrance area to the Visitor Center. A cache of some 500 bronze coins from the Byzantine period (sixth to fourth centu-ries C.E.) was also unearthed when one of the initial restoration projects began.

JUNE 27, 2019 ■ THE REPORTER

Friends of The Reporter make big news!

The Federation is asking members of its communities to support its “Friends of The Reporter” Campaign which seeks to raise $5,000 to assist in funding the newspaper.

The newspaper is delivered twice of month (except for December and July which are single issue months) to each and every identifiable Jewish home in Northeastern Pennsylvania.

The Reporter is the primary intercommunal newspaper of the Jewish communities of Lackawanna, Monroe, Pike and Wayne counties. Supplementing synagogue newsletters, bulletins and e-mails, The Reporter is issued to hundreds of Jewish households throughout our region. Over the past several years, the publishing cost of the newspaper has increased dramatically although the newspaper continues to be provided at no charge to members of our Jewish communities in northeastern Pennsylvania. The Federation has assumed the financial responsibility of funding the newspaper at a cost of $23,990 per year and asks only that its readers assist it in raising $5,000 as part of its “Friends of The Reporter” Campaign to offset a small share of these expenses.

Your gift to fund our regional Jewish newspaper matters a great deal to our readers and we would be very grateful for your financial support.

As always, your comments, opinions & suggestions are always welcome.

With best wishes,
Mark Silverberg, Executive Director
Jewish Federation of NE Pennsylvania
601 Jefferson Avenue
Scranton, PA 18510

I will support continuation of our expanded Federation Reporter by contributing:

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Shelach: agents of the exile

D’VAR TORAH

BY RABBI BARUCH BINYAMIN HAKOHEN MELMAN, TEMPLE ISRAEL OF THE POCONOS


Exile can be a state of mind. But it can also be very real. The Nation of Israel was on track to be united with the Land of Israel, yet the Land was lost and the Temple destroyed. The loss of the Temple was the seed of all the destruction that was to come, thus delaying the realization until the passing of the generation that was accustomed to a negative slave life. We read in the Torah, "All of us shall go to exile" (Numbers 15:33). How can this be?

The Torah identifies two agents of the exile. One agent leading us to sin was the organ of vision, the eyes. Whereas in Eden man saw himself as larger than God, and thus his eyes caused him to disobey, leading to the first exile, the exile from Eden, this new exile was clearly caused by the eyes. This time the sin was that man saw himself as being too small, just the opposite of Eden!

..."We were in our eyes like tiny grasshoppers, that’s all that we were in our eyes (vahavenu yakev hagvoh) - Numbers 13:33).

This smallness of vision was a universal pathology. The fixing or corrective for the sin of Eden was that man should think of himself as being small, God forbid, but rather that he should see his own greatness and become a partner with God to fix the world. Obliging God in an essential partnership with the world.

The sin of anger is the other root cause of our exile, in fact of all forms of exile – physical, spiritual, national and moral.

The corrective for the sin of anger and angry action are the phylacteries that are worn during morning prayers. As they are tied as a sign upon the hand, they have the power to lift up so that we engage in behaviors that sanctify the world and bring humanity closer to its Divine Source. There is anger, but there is also the acting out of the anger. They are not the same, not identical. God became angry at times with Israel, but Moshe was able to assuage that anger. The tefillin on the arm in a sense symbolize that binding, that sense of restraint, that can save us from irreversible action we may later regret. The yad, or the hand, but also symbolizes the 10 spies who spoke negatively about the Land. By gazing at the yad we can recall and fix through our speech that which had impacted us so negatively. We can put out our hand and say dai, enough, by just switching the letters, and be conscious of how our words can impact others.

At the end of our parasha, Shelach (Numbers 13:38), we have the mitzvah of wearing fringes on the corners of our garments – ve’asu lahem tzitzit al kanfei bigdeyhem (Numbers 15:38). The missing letter yud (numerical value of 10) reminds us of the 10 spies who caused Israel to sin. More importantly, it reminds us that just as the kohen gadol, the high priest, had the words Kodesh Lamech, Holy to God, engraved on his tizit, his golden diadem, so too is all of Israel, as represented by the yad, the community of 10, enjoined to strive to be holy before God, for all generations.

Phylacteries are essentially that, a spiritual prophylactic to prevent and ward off the potential for spiritual exile that inheres within each of us, both as individuals and as a nation.

The tefillin shel rosh, the head tefillin, which rest above and between the eyes, serve as the symbolic spiritual prophylactic for the nation – in the realm of thought and vision. While the tefillin shel yad, the arm tefillin, serve as a spiritual prophylactic for their actions in the realm of deed. The tzitzit, the fringed garment, points to a truth between the hand and its spiritual leadership, in that one day all of Israel will come to take on its designated priestly role to serve God and to serve the nations, bringing them closer to recognizing the One God. The tzitzit are a fixing for the sin of the eyes.

For more information, visit https://thejewishmuseum.org or contact the museum at 212-923-3811.

The National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia will hold the exhibit “Sara Berman’s Closet: a small and monumental story by Maira Kalman and Alex Kalman” until September 2. An installation of one immigrant woman’s belongings as re-created by Sara’s daughter and grandson – the artist and writer Maira Kalman, and designer and curator Alex Kalman – the project will feature the museum’s first-ever public art installation. An accompanying art exhibition will continue in the museum’s special exhibition gallery, featuring new paintings by Maira Kalman and new sculptures by Alex Kalman. The exhibit will include interventions throughout the core exhibition. For more information, visit NMAJH.org or contact the museum at 215-923-3811.

Shelach Lecha, Numbers 13:38:

Lehashem, ve’tzahavu hamayim, naso be’er te’omim, v’zei me’at ha’adam kol hamayim, v’khazeh chazeh to’ehu ve’kisnehu. (Leviticus 16:29-30)"

May it come quickly and soon in our day. Shelah Shalom! Great Shabbos!

Rabbi Shemtov
invites us to better understand and reflect on where we are relative to the field and where we have room to grow.

Over at URJ, staff are also evaluating the results. "We knew it anecdotally," says Miriam Chilton, URJ’s vice president for youth. "But now we have the data that demonstrates that participation in Jewish groups goes a long way toward achieving our goals of seeking meaning and seeing themselves as connected to both Jewish tradition and the world."

Not surprisingly, adds Chilton, most NFTY/URJ teens ranked higher on social justice than on the realistic aspects of Judaism. "It’s not so good or bad, but it is reflective of Reform values," she says.

Another take-away for Chilton: multiple points of contact result in maximum impact. "Those involved in youth group, their temple, Israel, and a Jewish camp, for instance, had the most positive impact," she says. "And given the number of our families who have just one Jewish parent, whose connection may not be as strong.

BOOK REVIEW

Historical oddities

BY RABBI RACHEL ESSLERMAN

The historical records are filled with tales of eccentrics, crackspots and misfits. Their stories rarely make it into grade-school history books, even though they could teach us something about the boundaries of societal behavior. Two recent works look at these historical oddities: “Mavericks, Mystics and Messiahs: Episodes from the Margins of Jewish History” by Puni Dunner (The Toby Press) explores the lives of several religious eccentrics, while “The Strange Case of Dr. Couney: How a Mysterious European Showman Saved Thousands of American Babies” by Dawn Raffel (Blue Rider Press) tells the story of one unusual individual.

Dunner, who is the senior rabbi at Beverly Hills Synagogue, is interested in a specific type of historical character: “It’s the marginal characters that have always fascinated me. I believe their influence on events as they unfolded, during the period in which they lived and on the future, was far stronger than may seem years later.”

The author sees these individuals’ lives as having a ripple effect on history, particularly in relation to Jewish law and community standards.

Perhaps the best known person under discussion is the false messiah Shabbetai Tzvi, who lived in the 1600s. Dunner explains how the expulsion from Spain, the mystical traditions of kabbalah and a European, Jewish community ready for salvation made it possible for so many people to anticipate of messianic times. Even after Tzvi converted to Islam, some of his followers still believed that he was the messiah and that his conversion was a necessary step on the road to redemption. Rabbincic authorities tried to stamp out all traces of his movement and ideas, although it actually took a century or more for this to be accomplished.

Tzvi plays a minor role in one of my two favorite sections. The first is “The Emden-Eybeschutz mahloket” (dispute). The second is “The Meitar-MD Mahloket,” a dispute which raged on at the Meitar MD station outside of Beersheva. (Photo courtesy of Yael Berrol)

we can look to offer a wide variety of programming. It gives us a pretty compelling case for the best ways of working with the next generation.”

For David Bryfman, The Jewish Education Project’s incoming CEO, this study’s biggest gift is “giving organizers of Jewish youth organizations a good look at the outcomes they’re having in outreach today. Basically, the study shows the more kids doing Jewish activities the more engaged they are.”

The study was also designed to go well beyond the previous emphasis on youth groups as nurturers of Jewish continuity, he adds. “Here we’re looking at how their engagement makes them not just more Jewish, but a better person, a better member of the community, more effective in the world and just more human. Some people might argue that this isn’t the traditional use of youth group, but if we don’t help them thrive, none of the rest of it really matters. Besides,” he notes, “when you can get the Reform, Conservative, Orthodox and even the unaffiliated to sign onto the same study, you’re already doing something right.”

The No. 1 finding, he says, is “even though we knew that youth groups have a huge impact on teens, right up there with day schools, Jewish summer camps and trips to Israel, this study actually shows the power of that involvement.”

“We got confirmation that generally speaking, we’re doing a really good job in Israel engagement with our teens, with Jewish tradition, and how much Shabbat and the holidays matter to them, and even the extent to which they attribute these values to their NCYS involvement,” says NCYS’s Greenland. “But we can also see that we’re below average in the realm of taking responsibility for making a difference in the world at large. And, in addition to everything else we do, that’s something we’ve been talking about a lot since the results came out; it’s pushed us to look at ways to enhance that quality, too.”

“If we design programming that reflects the way young people see the world, we’ll be able to maximize personal development and Jewish identity and commitment,” says URJ’s Chilton. “This study also gives us a benchmark so if we adjust something now, we can look back in a few years and see how we’re doing.”

“The study sends a clear message that Jewish engagement doesn’t have to end at bar or bat mitzvah if you provide young people with programming they see as meaningful,” says Bryfman. “If the Jewish youth organizations can provide that, the times will be there.”

“What we’ve learned from these teens is that they are very Jewishly identified, though their ways of expressing it may not be the same,” says Jim Joseph Foundation’s Stacie Cherner. “It’s confirming to us that we’re on the right path – that our investments are having a positive impact.”

As California teen Berrol puts it: “We don’t have many Jews near us, but my parents have made it easy for me to connect. Our family friends are mostly Jewish, Camp Ramah is like my home, and my synagogue is where I go when I’m missing being with other Jews, when I need that grounding, in community and in my authentic self.”

To see the entire study, visit www.jewishedproject.org/jgznnow.

Quick Reference Guide to Planned Giving

Use this planned giving quick reference guide to help determine the best strategy for achieving your philanthropic and financial goals.

For more information or to discuss these planned giving options, please contact Mark Silverberg, Executive Director, Jewish Federation of NEPA, (570) 961-2300 (x10) or mark.silverberg@jewishnepa.org.

If Your Goal is to: Then You Can: Your Benefits May Include:

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Avoid tax on capital gains

Contribute long-term appreciated stock or other securities

Exemption from federal estate tax on donations

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Put a bequest in your will

Create a charitable gift annuity

Current & future savings on income taxes, plus fixed, stable payments

Receive guaranteed fixed income that is partially tax-free

Donate the real estate or sell it to a charity at a bargain price

An income tax reduction plus reduction or elimination of capital gains tax

Avoid capital gains tax on the sale of a home or other real estate

Name a charity as the beneficiary of the remainder of the retirement assets after your lifetime

Tax relief to your family on inherited assets

Avoid the two-fold taxation on IRA or other employee benefit plans

Give your personal residence or farm, but retain use

Create a charitable gift of future interest, called a retained lifetime estate

Tax advantages plus use of the property

Make a large gift with little cost to you

Create a gift of future income property, subject to the use of property

Current & possible future income tax deductions

Receive secured, fixed income for life while avoiding market risks

Purchafe a charitable gift annuity or create a charitable remainder annuity trust

Tax advantages & possible increased rate of return

Give income from an asset for a period of years but retain the asset for yourself or your heirs

Create a charitable lead trust

Federal estate tax savings on asset & immediate tax deductions for donations for donated income

Create a hedge against inflation over the long term

Create a charitable remainder unitrust

Variable payments for life plus tax advantages

Make a revocable gift during your lifetime

Name a charity as the beneficiary of assets in a living trust

Full control of the trust terms during your lifetime
Feature Films

A Tale of Love and Darkness - Academy Award-winning actress Natalie Portman directs and stars in the emotional and thought-provoking story about Fania, a young wife and mother in war-torn Jerusalem, during the early years of the State of Israel. Stifled in her relationship and weary from the treadmill of her new life, Fania creates fantastical stories for Amos, her 10-year-old son, amazign him with tales of adventure and beauty— stories that would influence the boy to become a writer himself. Based on the international best-selling memoir by Amos Oz.

Denial - Based on the acclaimed book Denial: Holocaust History on Trial, Denial recounts Deborah E. Lipstadt's legal battle for historical truth against David Irving (BAFTA nominee Timothy Spall), who accused her of libel when she declared him a Holocaust denier. In the English legal system, in cases of libel, the burden of proof is on the defendant, therefore it was up to Lipstadt and her legal team, led by Richard Rampton, to prove the essential truth that the Holocaust occurred.

Fanny's Journey - In 1943, 13-year old Fanny and her younger sisters were sent from their home in France to an Italian foster home for Jewish children. When Nazis occupied France, the family was separated, and Fanny was forced to travel alone to Switzerland. Based on a true story.

Hidden in Silence - During the Nazi occupation of Poland, Catholic teenage Stefania Podgorska chooses the role of a savior and sneaks 13 Jewish children into her attic.

Loving Leah: A Hallmark Hall of Fame Classic - A handsome Washington, D.C. doctor and a young New York woman fall in love at an unusual time...after they get married. Leah Lever is married to an Orthodox rabbi, Benjamin Lever, whose brother, Jake, is a successful cardiologist and a non-practicing Jew. Jake is stunned when Benjamin dies suddenly, but not as stunned as when he is told that, under an ancient Jewish Law, he is expected to marry the childless Leah to carry on Benjamin's name. The only alternative is to go through a ceremony where Jake must deny his brother's existence. For Jake, that's unthinkable, so impulsively he suggests to Leah that they get married and maintain a secretly platonic relationship. Eager to pursue her own dreams, Leah gladly accepts. Their oversimplified plan to live separate lives under the same roof proves challenging when Leah's suspicious mouth shows up unexpectedly. The harder they try to disguise their "pretend" marriage, the more their appreciation for each other's worlds grows - and out of understanding, a real love develops. Loving Leah is a heart-warming story.

Munich - Inspired by real events, Munich reveal the intense story of the secret Israeli squad assign to track down and assassinate the 121 Palestinians believed to have planned the 1972 Munich massacre of 11 Israeli athletes. (The Jewish Film Library also owns the movie "Twenty One Hours in Munich" about the massacre at the Olympics).

Above and Beyond - In 1948, just three years after the liberation of Nazi death camps, a group of Jewish-American pilots answered a call for help. As members of Macalh “volunteers from abroad”- this ragtag band of brothers not only turned the tide of the war; they also embarked on personal journeys of discovery and renewed Jewish pride.

A Yiddish World Remembered is a PBS presentation and winner of the 2002 NY-NATAS Emmy Award. It is the story of Jewish life in Eastern Europe brought to life aain by some of the last remaining eyewitnesses. Narrated by Elliott Gould and accompanied by never-before-seen archival films, photographs and music, the documentary takes a realistic and enlightening look at his all-but-vanished way of life.

Body and Soul: The State of the Jewish Nation - A powerful documentary sets the stage with a historical look at the annihilation of the Jewish people and the Land of Israel, but also succeeds in debunking propaganda, myths and misinformation that have become accepted as truth by many people.

The Devil's Arithmetic - During the Nazi occupation of Poland an emotional journey of life, death and survival.

Itzhak: a film by Alison Chernick looks beyond the sublime musician, to see the polio survivor whose parents emigrated from Poland to Israel ultimately brought to life aain by some of the last remaining eyewitnesses. Narrated by Elliot Gould and accompanied by never-before-seen archival films, photographs and music, the documentary takes a realistic and enlightening look at his all-but-vanished way of life.

The Last Butterfly - Based on a true story.

The Prime Ministers: The Pioneers and Soldiers and Peacemakers - A two disc-set based on the international best-seller by Ambassador Yehuda Avner

Non-Feature Films

Munich - Summer 2019

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U.S. confirms Iran shot down American spy drone over the Strait of Hormuz

A U.S. official, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed on June 20 that an American drone had been shot down by an Iranian surface-to-air missile. According to the anonymous official, who spoke to Reuters news agency, the aircraft, a RQ-4 Global Hawk, was on a routine mission over the southern coast of Iran when it was shot down. The statement followed a claim by Iran earlier on June 20 that its Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps had downed an American drone in Iranian airspace near the strategic Persian Gulf waterway. The U.S. Central Command spokesman Capt. Bill Urban disputed the Iranian claim, telling the Associated Press that “no U.S. aircraft were operating in Iranian airspace today,” though he declined to comment when asked if an American aircraft had been shot down last week. Last week, the United States alleged that Iran had fired a missile at an American drone responding to an attack on two oil tankers near the Gulf of Oman, an attack which the United States has blamed on Iran. By Saturday, the United States had announced its intention to leave the Iran nuclear agreement, a deal signed by former U.S. President Barack Obama, and the resolution would have been focused on trade issues, including the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement.

Kelly Craft, 57, served as a U.S. alternate delegate to the United Nations under U.S. President Donald Trump. She has also tried to spit on him. An Orthodox rabbi was targeted on June 17 in Dusseldorf, Germany, by people who hurled antisemitic insults at him before he escaped into a community center, reported The Times of Israel. In the Jerusalem region, the number of antisemitic incidents reported in recent months to police is about 14 percent higher than last year. One in five reported incidents has occurred in the nation’s capital, where 2018 saw a total of 1,083 cases,” according to The Times of Israel.

“Anne Frank: The Collected Works” to be published in U.S.

“Anne Frank: The Collected Works” comprises three versions of her diary and several letters she wrote to her paternal grandmother before the 15-year-old perished in a Nazi concentration camp in 1945. The letters to her paternal grandmother before the 15-year-old perished in a Nazi concentration camp in 1945. The letters to her paternal grandmother before the 15-year-old perished in a Nazi concentration camp in 1945.

The Times of Israel

Anne Frank, 50, emphasized U.S. President Donald Trump’s commitment to fighting antisemitism. “Any synagogue, every JCC should have guards. God willing, may they never be needed, but they should be there.”

“Any synagogue, every JCC should have guards. God willing, may they never be needed, but they should be there.”

Carr also remarked that the president has clearly said that “if you go after the Jews, we’re coming after you.” However, the special envoy said that the fight against Jew-hatred must be “a joint bipartisan fight.”

The interior of the brand-new Visitor Center in Caesarea. (Photo courtesy of the Visitors Center)

Caesarea

The vaults was exposed. Israel Antiquities Authority experts found them under the floor of a Byzantine church that was built on top of the temple podium and its vaults. During the excavation, archaeologists confirmed that Herod’s original vaults and the temple had been reconstructed in the Byzantine period.

The third recent discovery was a moat below the fifth of the Ptolemaic city of Caesarea Maritima, a Greek inscription: “He who knows all is Hosea and he is blessed.” The inscription was deciphered by Leah Di Segni of the Hebrew University.

The National Park site between Haifa and Tel Aviv spans more than 120 acres, with archaeologists spending a couple of hours traversing the different areas via several routes to take in the various sites. Park officials estimate that it would take almost 28 hours to see all the major sites at the park, which includes the oldest theater found in Israel, the remains of Roman and Byzantine streets; an ancient port city; a theater; and a bathhouse complex; and a fortified medieval city.

The hundreds of cruise ships that dock in nearby Haifa are considered a prime source of tourists that Caesarea hopes to attract with its updated facilities, says Goldstein.
International Atomic Energy Agency recognizes “Palestine”

The International Atomic Energy Agency signed an agreement recognizing “Palestine” as a country, as it joined the nuclear watchdog on June 18 as an observer. Although it isn’t a member, it is allowed to attend meetings, said an IAEA spokesperson. “The agreement,” which was signed by the agency's director general, Yukiya Amano and the Palestinian Ambassador in Vienna Sabah Abu Shanab, gives the IAEA inspectors the ability to check the safety of radioactive materials and fissile nuclear materials, such as uranium,” reported The Jerusalem Post. Although the Palestinian Authority has no nuclear facilities in the country, the agency has asked hospitals and universities, which have medical equipment containing components of nuclear materials,” according to the Post. Israeli Foreign Ministry spokesman Emmanuel Nahshon labeled the agreement as a “violation of international conventions.” He said “Israel does not recognize the attempts of the P.A. to join such organizations and such institutions as a state, and Israel views this as a violation of international agreements.”

Egypt to pay $500 million fine for breaking gas deal with Israel

Egypt reached a settlement with Israel on June 16 to pay the Israel Electric Corporation $500 million over the next eight-and-a-half years after breaking an agreement to deliver natural gas to the Jewish state in 2012. The gas supply deal was announced under Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak in 2005, and the opening of the pipeline between the countries took place in 2008, but was unpopular with the Egyptian public. Moreover, the gas line became a target for terrorists, being blown up three times in 2011—the same year of the Arab Spring and the year that Mubarak was deposed. The delivery process subsequently broke down. According to Egypt’s Petroleum Ministry, the state-owned gas company's market share of the Israeli gas supply has fallen from 16 million cubic meters in 2011, to 2 million cubic meters in 2013. In return, the Israeli corporation will drop its other claims from a 2015 arbitration decision by the International Chamber of Commerce. Last year, U.S.-Israeli gas consortium Noble Energy, together with its Israeli partner Delek and Egyptian East Gas Company, announced a gas deal in which Israel will export natural gas to Egypt via pipeline from its coast in the Tamar and Leviathan deep-water reservoirs to Egypt. This marks the first time Egypt has imported gas from Israel.

New Zealand government site omits from map

A New Zealand government website published a map that omitted Israel and instead showed “Palestine.” The Fact Sheet page on the Immigration New Zealand site was updated on June 10, it included the 1947 partition plan, which divided Palestine into two parts—Israel and the West Bank—with the Jordan River as its border. Instead showed “Palestine.” The Fact Sheet page on the Immigration New Zealand website was updated on January 16, it included the 1947 partition plan, which divided Palestine into two parts—Israel and the West Bank—with the Jordan River as its border. The website was updated on January 16, it included the 1947 partition plan, which divided Palestine into two parts—Israel and the West Bank—with the Jordan River as its border. The website was updated on January 16, it included the 1947 partition plan, which divided Palestine into two parts—Israel and the West Bank—with the Jordan River as its border. The website was updated on January 16, it included the 1947 partition plan, which divided Palestine into two parts—Israel and the West Bank—with the Jordan River as its border. The website was updated on January 16, it included the 1947 partition plan, which divided Palestine into two parts—Israel and the West Bank—with the Jordan River as its border.

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