

What do 290,000 voices screaming “Bring them Home” sound like?

More than 40 people from the local community boarded a bus provided by the Jewish Federation of Northeastern Pennsylvania at 7 am on November 14 to go to Washington, DC, to join about 290,000 people from all over the country. The March was in support of Israel, to demand the freedom of the hostages and to decry the rise of antisemitism.

How does one describe the



Deborah Lipstadt, special government ambassador to fight antisemitism, addressed the crowd.

feeling of power that comes from standing with so many others for a common concern? One speaker after another, community leaders and elected officials from both parties, celebrities and relatives of the hostages, all shared their feelings and their reaction to the horrific attack of October 7 and its consequences, both in Israel as well as around the world – including America. What they call a “Global Intifada” is nothing more than a global hate fest.

Standing there, shoulder to shoulder with so many others – Orthodox Jews, Conservative Jews, Reform Jews, Jews with no denomination and secular Jews; young and old; Israeli and Americans and Canadians – all listening to the stories of the relatives of the hostages and demanding with one voice, “Bring them Home – Now!” How can one

See “March on page 3



Nathan Sharansky addressed the March for Israel on November 14.



Marchers noted that the fight is against Hamas – not the people of Gaza.



Members of our group in the middle of the crowd.



“Shevet achim gam yachad.” Members of our group, from different denominations, prayed together before getting on the bus to head home.



Above: Members of the local group at the March for Israel in Washington, DC.

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Reflections on the March for Israel rally

BY RABBI MIRIAM T. SPITZER

Until now, the biggest Jewish rally in Washington, DC, was on behalf of Soviet Jewry, on December 6, 1987. I am proud that I was there, demanding “Let Our People Go” with about a quarter of a million other people. I did not expect to be on the National Mall again shouting, “Let Our People Go,” this time about Israelis. Heartbreaking does not even begin to capture it.

You can read about the political speakers elsewhere. For me, among the most moving speakers were those from the families of hostages: Orna Neurta, the mother of Omer, who grew up on Long Island and was active in USY before joining the Israeli army after high-school; Alana Zeitchik, cousin of six hostages; Rachel Goldberg, mother of Hersh Goldberg-Polin, the hostage many of us saw in a Hamas video being loaded into the back of a truck after his arm was shot off. We have no idea how they are doing, what kind of care they are getting, even whether or not they are alive.

The crowd alternately cheered, chanted, shouted and sang. At one point, Jeffrey next to me began the chant, “Bring them home!” and people close to us joined in and

then people close to them, until the 290,000 people on the Mall were all chanting “Bring them Home.” That was one time of many, but that one Jeffrey began. One of my favorite moments was when we all sang “Aheinu,” the prayer we and so many others have been singing every day. It is an old prayer on behalf of those who are in captivity and are oppressed “whether in the sea or on land,” or, in our present circumstance, underground. There are 240 hostages being held by Hamas in Gaza. For them we pray.

Many people held signs about the kidnapped hostages. One group had capes made with the hostages on the back and they each wore the picture of a different person. Many people held Israeli flags, many also held American flags and some had flags that combined both. (Where can I get one of those?) Again, some people wore the flags as capes. I have mixed feelings about wearing flags as clothing. It seems somehow disrespectful to me. But at this rally, where flags were allowed, but flag poles were banned, it seemed less disrespectful and more practical.

The National Mall was packed. There were people from all over. Some 20 buses, maybe more, came from Toronto. There were buses from Montreal. Yeshiva University in New York City – with two col-

leges and two high schools – sent 40 buses. On the subway, I ran into friends from Greensboro, NC. The Conservative Movement was well represented, though I was unable to make it to the designated gathering place (and the T-shirt I had ordered for the rally arrived the day after the rally). The only city that was underrepresented was Detroit: 900 people who had come on chartered flights could not get to the rally because the bus drivers refused to take them, an act of calculated antisemitism that will have to be addressed.

The rally was spearheaded by JFNA and the Conference of Presidents, joined by... just about everybody. It was heartening to see so many kinds of Jews all together. Everyone was there, from the most secular to the most ultra-Orthodox, from the political right and the political left. It does not happen often, but this tragedy brought everyone out. Suddenly we are *Am Echad*, one nation. We care about each other. Standing next to us, there was a very big group of Beis Yaakov girls. I wondered to myself when Beis Yaakov became Zionist. It is possible that they didn't. They might have been there not in solidarity with *Medinat Yisrael*, the state of Israel, but with *Am Yisrael*, the people of Israel. (Though I did

see one group of Beis Yaakov girls holding Israeli flags, which is usually a sign of Zionism.) The Satmar Rebbe told his followers that, “It's a terrible desecration of God's name to support murderers in the name of the holy Torah and God's name” and that they should stop protesting against Israel. That is new.

Our bus was exceedingly diverse. We had a Reform rabbi, a Conservative rabbi (me), at least two Orthodox rabbis and at least one Chabad rabbi. We had people of all of the above and more, including two Gentiles. All of us were there to support Israel. The new kosher bagel bar in Kingston sent a bagel for every person on the bus, including the driver. I want to give a shout out to the Jewish Federation of Northeastern Pennsylvania for providing the bus – free of charge for the protesters – and for providing water and snacks – and making the whole thing possible. I encourage all of us to write notes of appreciation to the Federation for doing that, even if you could not come.

Before October 7, I did not expect again to be chanting “Let Our People Go” or “Bring them Home.” Nor did I expect to join with so many people on behalf of Israel. May the promises that were made and the words that were spoken come to pass. *Am Yisrael chai*. Amen.

The Reporter

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Temple Israel Sisterhood raises funds for Magen David Adom

Temple Israel Sisterhood President Marian Beckhorn is pleased to announce that all proceeds from Sisterhood's annual soup sale will be donated to Magen David Adom, in Israel.

“All costs were covered by the

Sisterhood, allowing us to donate whatever was realized by the sale of the soup. At a time when we are all feeling so helpless, it was an easy decision to make. A total of \$1,150.00 was raised,” she said.



Fern Hart tested the Minestrone soup.



Paulette Okun and Susan Connors were of great help in the kitchen.

NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

Gantz: This isn't the time to replace Netanyahu

Benny Gantz, currently serving as part of Israel's War Cabinet, has said in private conversations that the idea of replacing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in the middle of the war is “nothing less than hallucinatory.” The former IDF chief of staff and head of the opposition National Unity Party said that there will come a time to have such conversations and investigate who bears responsibility for the security failure on Oct. 7, Kan Reshet Bet radio reported on Nov. 13. Netanyahu has ignored demands that he take responsibility for the disaster, most recently, skirting a question from CNN's Dana Bash on Nov. 12 as to whether he would do so, only indicating that such questions need to be asked, but at a future date. “Right now, I think what we have to do is unite the country for one purpose: to achieve victory,” he said. Netanyahu has repeatedly said questions of responsibility are “going to be resolved after the war.” He has said Israel will maintain security control over Gaza after defeating Hamas.

COMMUNITY NEWS

Fake news and the future

We have all been reading about these groups that have undertaken the role of bringing down any flier or poster that reflects positively on Israel and/or protesting any comment by anybody that looks sympathetic to Israel or the hostages, or raises the question of antisemitism. This also translated in many media outlets, to their minimizing in their coverage the size or impact of the March for Israel in Washington and to also exaggerate of size and impact of the pro-Hamas demonstration in front of the White House. One could genuinely be puzzled by this and ask what is going on? Did I fall through the Rabbit Hole?



FROM THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

DANIEL CHEJFEC, PH.D.

I remember many years ago hearing the expression, "Never let pesky facts get in the way of your opinion," and, with some variants, I kept hearing it over the years. I recently watched a video (of course, on the Internet) showing this person who saw somebody bringing down a poster of an Israeli hostage. He approached the person and asked her why she did that. After several attempts at getting an answer, the woman being questioned exploded and said, "It is all fake news, and anyway, there is nothing more antisemitic than Zionism." While such an answer was shocking, in a way it did not surprise me.

Hannah Arendt said it best in her book "The banality of Evil," written in the 1950s: "The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the con-

vinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction (i.e. the reality of experience) and the distinction between true and false (i.e. the standards of thought) no longer exist."

This describes much of the world in which we live today. We hear it in many situations

coming from the Right and coming from the Left and coming from those who don't even know what they are talking about. Any fact that questions what they came to see as "The Truth" is simply denied or explained away; any fact that contradicts their convictions is labeled as "fake news."

While the Internet has been a very positive force in expanding communications on a global scale, one of the unintended consequences has been the development of a generation in which many individuals have a knowledge of the world a mile wide and an inch deep, becoming easy prey to snake oil salesmen who peddle information. In today's world, any confrontation between groups is as much a fight to control the narrative, as it is about prevailing in the battlefield. Unfortunately, one of the casualties of this approach is often the objectivity of the facts and the blurring of the distinction between fact and fantasy.

I believe our job, as an integral part of our Jewish obligation to work for *tikkun olam*, is to help restore the balance and the rational thinking that can help humanity get past the current mess toward an ever-brighter future.

DEADLINES

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

DEADLINE	ISSUE
Monday, December 11	January
Monday, January 15	February
Monday, February 12	March
Monday, March 11	April

May the lights of Chanukah shine in your hearts forever



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Dassy.ganz@jewishnepa.org



March..... Continued from page 1

describe that power? That feeling of "mischpochah?" That feeling of unity?

We are a very diverse people, but October 7 reminded us all that above all our differences, we are *one*. We belong together; we belong publicly presenting our case. This March for Israel has been characterized as the largest mobilization in American Jewish history, larger even than the Free Soviet Jewry March in the 1970s. It represents a wake-up call, a painful reminder that for too long we took our freedoms as Jews for granted, that for too long we became complacent about the attacks against us.

We are Americans. We are Jews. We are part of two of the greatest covenants in the history

of humanity: The Divine Covenant, represented in the moral and ethical code of the Bible, and the Covenant of Democracy, which has made the United States a beacon of freedom.

I remember the last few lines of Shir L'Shalom (Song for Peace): "Don't just say the day will come, bring it about." Let us remember that lesson and stay mobilized to protect our right to live our Jewish lives openly, to protect democracy and to express our support for the state of Israel. *Am Israel chai!*

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Temple Israel of Scranton dedicates chair to kidnapped Israeli family

During Shabbat services on Saturday, November 4, at Temple Israel of Scranton, Rabbi Miriam Spitzer directed the congregation's attention to an empty chair next to the bima where the flag of Israel stands. Rabbi Spitzer draped the chair with a tallit and placed on it a siddur. Also placed on the chair were the photos of the multi-generational Munder family, who were kidnapped together by Hamas on October 7 and taken to Gaza, where they remain captive.

The Munders appear to be a family like any other. Grandparents Abraham and Ruth (both age 78), their daughter Keren Munder-Zachri (age 54) and Keren's son Ohad (age 8 at the time) were together on Shabbat in Kibbutz Nir Oz when Hamas terrorists perpetrated the deadliest day of genocide against Jews since the Holocaust. Social media shows videos of Ohad as he was being abducted, and concern continues that the young boy still has his glasses, without which he cannot see. Last week, while captive, Ohad reached his 9th birthday. His school, where his mother Keren is a teacher, held a virtual birthday party for him and wrote in a post, "With cake, balloons, and tears, we celebrate our teacher Keren and her son Ohad's 9th birthday during the time they are held as hostages by Hamas."

"This seat in our synagogue is dedicated to the Munder family of Israel," Rabbi Spitzer explained, "with the hope that they will be returned home healthy and safe and able to stand together again with all free Jews." This symbolic act by Temple Israel of Scranton is not unique. Throughout the world, individuals,



Children from Temple Israel of Scranton's Reba and Art Douglass Religious School stand with Rabbi Spitzer (right), Cantor Vladimir Aronzon and Education Director Barbara Dershowitz to surround the Munder family and all the hostages with love and prayers for their speedy release and peace in Eretz Yisrael.

celebrities, Jewish congregations and other groups have symbolically "adopted" one or more of the estimated 240 hostages, demanding their immediate release. "We chose the Munder family to represent all those taken by Hamas,"

says Rabbi Spitzer, "because they reflect the population of our own temple, which counts many multi-generational families among our members. Our hearts are broken."

Temple Israel of Scranton is an egalitarian Conservative congregation serving the Jewish community since 1921. For information, call the temple office at 570-342-0350.

Jewish online resources

BY REPORTER STAFF

◆ The American Jewish University will hold "The Money Kings: Jewish Immigrants to Financial Dynasties" on Thursday, December 7, from 3-4 pm. Author Daniel Schulman and UC Riverside's Michael Alexander explore the narrative of German-Jewish immigrants who transformed modern finance and the stock market in America. For more information or to register, visit <https://open.aju.edu/event/the-money-kings-jewish-immigrants-to-financial-dynasties/>.

◆ The Jewish Grandparents Network will hold the virtual program "At a Distance: Practical and Meaningful Ways to Build Relationships with Your Grandchildren Who Live Far Away" on Tuesday, December 5, from 7-8 pm. Kerry Byrne, Ph.D., the founder of The Long Distance Grandparent, will share "practical, yet meaningful, ways to move toward more intentional, consistent and engaging moments with your grandchildren." For more information or to register, visit https://secure.lglforms.com/form_engine/s/hL-kNdrzIJNk1hYxv_hgCg.

◆ The American Jewish University will hold the virtual discussion "Gangsters vs. Nazis: How Jewish Mobsters Battled Nazis in WWII America" on Thursday, December 21, from 3-4 pm. Author Michael Benson will be in conversation with AJU's Samuel Rosenbaum to discuss the untold saga of Jewish mobsters combating the rise of Nazism in 1930s and 1940s America. For more information or to register, visit <https://open.aju.edu/event/gangsters-vs-nazis-how-jewish-mobsters-battled-nazis-in-wwii-america/>.

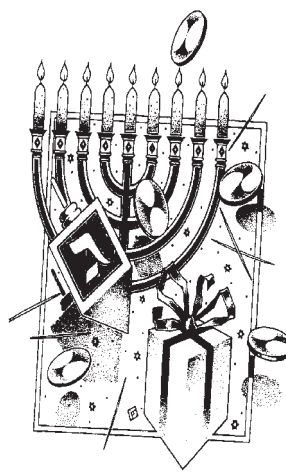
◆ The Milken Archive is offering an eight-part e-mail newsletter "A Journey Through American Jewish Music." The educational series highlights Jewish compositions at all ends of American history, from the Colonial era to the 20th century. For more information or to register for the e-mails, visit www.milkenarchive.org/news/news-items/view/milken-archive-newsletter-journeys/.

◆ Aleph, Alliance for Jewish Renewal, will hold the virtual "A Jewish Renewal New Year's Eve," hosted by Rabbi Geela Rayzel Raphael. See "Online" on page 11

SCRANTON JCC PROJECT JOY 2023

Dear Friends,

I would like to once again thank you for your generous response to past years' Project Joy. During the Christmas/Chanukah holiday time, Project Joy gives toys, clothing, socks, books and stuffed animals to many needy children in our area. Many agencies submit their wish lists to me which are accommodated to the best of our ability. Last year, over 150 children from the Catherine McAuley Center, St. Josephs Center, Jewish Family Services, Children's Advocacy and Lackawanna Children & Youth had better holidays because of your generosity.



We will be wrapping the gifts in the JCC auditorium with our incredible team of devoted volunteers on Thursday, December 7th, starting at 9:00 am. The more the merrier, and friends are more than welcome.



I ask that you continue to help out by sending your generous contributions to the JCC with your donation made out to JCC Project Joy. As in the past, we will also accept all unwrapped new toys. This year's deadline will be December 1st since the agencies require the gifts well before Christmas and Chanukah.

Thank you for your continued support for this extremely worthwhile project. These agencies count on us every year and it is very much appreciated by all.

Sincerely,

Carol Leventhal, Chairperson

Phone 570-587-2931/ or email jeff@graphicsart.net

Make checks out to JCC Project Joy. Mail to Scranton JCC, 601 Jefferson Ave., Scranton, PA 18505



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The Jewish Community in Northeastern Pennsylvania

Mourns the deaths of

PAUL KESSLER (Z"l)

An active member for many years of the Scranton Jewish Community
 Killed by a pro-Hamas demonstrator on
 November 5, 2023
 In California, USA

MAJOR (Res) MOSHE YEDIDYAH LEITER (Z"l)

Medic in the IDF and part of the Leiter family from Scranton
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 In the Gaza Strip

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Hamas gravely miscalculated how Israel would react

BY YOSSI KUPERWASSER

(Israel Hayom via JNS) – While the IDF is engaged in Gaza, in what is becoming a protracted war, aiming to weaken Hamas and secure the release of captives, the main effort by Hamas and its backers has been focused on reaching as prolonged a ceasefire as possible.

Such a ceasefire has operational and tactical importance for Hamas. However, its main significance lies in the strategic arena. Hamas hopes a ceasefire will compel Israel to change its war objectives and revert to the softer approach that the Islamist group initially believed Israel would follow right after the October 7 massacre.

I believe that Hamas leaders, despite the severe blow inflicted on Israel, were convinced that the Israeli response would focus on targeted airstrikes that would extract a significant price from the Palestinians and perhaps even a limited ground maneuver. However, they never anticipated that Israel would launch an all-out undertaking to eliminate the terrorist organization and deprive it of its military-terrorist capabilities along with retaking the Gaza Strip.

Hamas likely believed that had Israel subscribed to a small-scale approach, they could build



Materiel found by Israeli forces in Gaza, next to an Israeli flag. (Photo courtesy of the IDF Spokesperson's Unit)

on the success of October 7 and effect a change that would result in a new “equation” between the organization and the Jewish state. Meaning, the release of the terrorists imprisoned in Israel, lifting the blockade, and stopping the normalization process between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

Hamas assessed that Israel’s weakness and its problematic relations with the U.S., coupled with its inherent reluctance to pay the high price involved in a broad military operation to remove Hamas from Gaza, would ultimately prevent it from completely defeating Hamas, just like in previous flare-ups.

In previous rounds, whenever the fighting ended, both sides licked their wounds, but Hamas then quickly recovered and again posed a threat to the area near Gaza and to Israel as a whole.

This time Israel adopted, to the surprise of Hamas, a different approach that could strategically weaken the organization to an unprecedented extent, thereby also affecting both radical factions associated with the organization; the radical axis led by Iran on the one hand, and the Muslim Brotherhood axis, which includes Qatar and Turkey, on the other.

All actions by Hamas, Iran and its proxies (Hezbollah, the Houthis and Shi’ite militias in Iraq), as well as Qatar and Turkey, should be seen in the context of the attempt to persuade U.S. President Joe Biden to pressure Israel to stop the fighting and eventually adopt an alternative approach.

This effort motivates them to create the impression that there is a severe humanitarian crisis in Gaza. It is what made Hamas play a cynical game with the captives, and this is also what has prompted the Shi’ite militias in Iraq to step up their attacks on U.S. forces. Likewise, this explains the gradual escalation by Hezbollah in the north and the missile launches from the Houthis in Yemen, and the potential expansion of the conflict by Iran and its allies.

This is also the context through which we must treat the numerous protests in Western capitals calling for a ceasefire. Even Jordan and Egypt are joining the chorus for various reasons, primarily due to the concern about a flow of Palestinian refugees into their territories. The Palestinian Authority calls for a ceasefire, but it is unclear if it is genuinely interested in one.

So far, Hamas and its allies’ efforts have been unsuccessful. Biden is under pressure, along with most Western leaders. They understand the importance of Israel’s success in undermining Hamas and the moral justification for it. Israel’s recent moves, such as advancing on the ground, exposing the illicit Hamas activity at the Rantisi and Shifa hospitals, and continued close coordination with the U.S. regarding the management of the conflict against Hezbollah, contribute to Biden’s ability to withstand pressure.

As the fighting continues, Israel will need to remind Western leaders, led by Biden, that letting Hamas stay in power is beyond the pale and that Israel can bring about the organization’s demise within a reasonable time without causing a humanitarian disaster in Gaza or leading to

See “React” on page 10



WHAT CAN I DO TO STAND IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE HOSTAGES?

1. [Wear](#) a blue ribbon.
2. [Plan](#) an Empty Shabbat Table event.
3. [Save](#) an empty seat at your own Shabbat table.
4. [Call](#) your representatives and urge them to demand the release of hostages.

WHAT CAN I DO TO SUPPORT ISRAEL?

5. [Tell](#) your members of Congress that the majority of Americans remain pro-Israel.
6. [Send](#) a message of love and support to Israel.
7. Donate to a charity of your choice that is supporting the war effort, displaced families, survivors, etc.

WHAT CAN I DO TO COMBAT ANTISEMITISM?

8. [Report](#) on-campus antisemitic incidents to the Campus Antisemitism Legal Line.
9. [Contact](#) your alma mater and urge them to protect Jewish students.
10. [Support](#) Jewish employees in your workplace.





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 570-420-8655 • website: www.chabadpoconos.com
 Please contact us for schedules and locations.

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Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
 Rabbi Elliott Kleinman
 President: Liza Roos Lucy
 Contact person: Cheryl Badner, Congregation Administrator
 615 Court St., Honesdale, PA 18431
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CONGREGATION B'NAI HARIM

Affiliation: Union for Reform Judaism
 Rabbi Peg Kershenbaum
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The “fur”ever bond between humans and animals:

Reaping the benefits of pet ownership

BY ELAN SKILLED NURSING AND REHAB

October was Adopt a Shelter Dog Month, but it’s still the perfect time to consider bringing a four-legged friend into your home. Most of us agree that animals bring smiles to our faces.

How many of us have spent hours watching adorable animal antics on YouTube or gone out of our way to greet a dog being walked

on the opposite side of the street? Of course, watching animal videos or greeting every pet you meet doesn’t necessarily indicate a desire to own one of your own, but what if a pet could improve your quality of life? Aside from just being cute, did you know that pets can improve the lives of their owners, both physically and emotionally? If you are on the fence about whether owning a pet is the right move for you, consider some of the benefits! While this list is not exhaustive, it might help make the decision a bit easier.

BENEFITS OF PET OWNERSHIP

◆ Less stress and more activity

When we are stressed, our bodies respond by increasing the production of cortisol, a hormone that helps us respond to perceived threats in our environment. Long-term activation of this stress hormone can cause a multitude of health

problems, but spending time with our furry friends can lower our cortisol levels. In a study conducted by Washington State University, students who physically interacted with cats and dogs for just 10 minutes experienced a significant reduction in cortisol levels. Similar studies were conducted looking at the effects on veterans with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and produced the same findings.

Many people who experience stress will list exercise near the top of their lists of healthy coping mechanisms. Pet owners have been shown to get more physical activity than their non-owner counterparts, particularly those who own dogs. According to research published in the Journal of Physical Activity and Health, dog owners walk one hour more per week compared to individuals who do not own dogs, with dog owners more likely to meet the CDC guidelines for moderate physical activity. Although many of the studies looking into the activity levels of people with pets vs. those without pets focus on dogs, most pets require some level of exercise that expands beyond the level of activity required in solo activities.

See “Pets” on page 11



P A C E

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Using appreciated property, such as securities or real estate, affords you the opportunity to eliminate the income tax on the long-term capital gain, will in some instances generate a full income tax charitable deduction and will remove those assets from your estate for estate tax purposes.

For more information contact Daniel Chejfec at Daniel.Chejfec@jewishnepa.org or call 570-961-2300, ext. 1.)

Hanukkah online resources

BY REPORTER STAFF

◆ The Noshers will hold “Indian Sweets for Hanukkah with Joanna Nissim” on Sunday, December 3, from 7:30-9 pm. The cost to attend is \$25. For more information or to register, visit www.eventbrite.com/e/indian-sweets-for-hanukkah-with-joanna-nissim-tickets-751803493487?aff=oddtcreator.

◆ The Noshers will hold the virtual class “Hanukkah Doughnut Masterclass with Pastry Chef Fany Gerson” on Wednesday, December 6, from 7:30-9 pm. The cost to attend is \$25. For more information or to register, visit www.eventbrite.com/e/hanukkah-doughnut-masterclass-with-pastry-chef-fany-gerson-tickets-749363334907.

◆ The Mordecai Kaplan Center for Jewish Peoplehood will hold the virtual discussion “The Hanukkah Gift to the Jewish People and World that Keeps on Giving” with Drs. Elias Sacks and Deborah Waxman on the significance of Kaplan’s work “Judaism as a Civilization” as it approaches the 90th anniversary of its publication in 1934. The event will take place on Sunday, December 10, at 3 pm. For more information or to register, visit <https://kaplancenter.org/3181-2/>.

◆ The Blue Dove Foundation, which helps those with mental health issues and their families, has resources for Hanukkah, which can be found at https://thebluedovefoundation.org/resource_category/hanukkah/.

Four secrets for making great homemade latkes for Hanukkah

BY BETH HARPAZ

This story originally appeared in the Forward. To get the Forward’s free e-mail newsletters delivered to your inbox, go to forward.com/newsletter-signup.

(Forward)—I’m always surprised when friends say they can’t be bothered to make homemade latkes for Hanukkah. Takeout latkes or latkes from the frozen foods section or a mix never taste as good as latkes made from scratch. There’s nothing like a golden potato pancake served hot and crispy right out of the frying pan.

Besides, what’s so complicated? You shred 2½ pounds of potatoes (Idaho russet potatoes are ideal) and a yellow onion or two; combine with three eggs, a teaspoon or more of salt, pepper and ¼ cup of matzo meal or flour, then form the patties and fry.

But the prep and frying are time-consuming, and there are many pitfalls on the path to latke perfection. I should know: I learned the hard way — by screwing up. My mistakes also led me to discover four secrets to making great latkes. Here they are.

- ◆ The worst latke mistake of all time
- ◆ Pro tip No. 1: Don’t peel or shred those potatoes until you are ready to cook them.

Once when the first night of Hanukkah fell on a weeknight, I did my latke prep in advance. I figured that would make it faster to get dinner on the table for my hungry family when I got

home from work. So I grated the potatoes the night before and refrigerated them overnight.

Unfortunately, once you peel, shred and expose a potato to air, it oxidizes and turns a sickly gray. My prepped potatoes were completely discolored! But I didn’t have time to start over, so I cooked what I had. Then I turned out the lights and we ate by the dim light of two menorah candles so nobody could see what the latkes looked like.

By the way, if you alternate grating the potatoes with grating the onions, mixing together as you go along, the onions slow down the oxidation of the potatoes.

- ◆ Preventing a common latke problem

Pro tip No. 2: Squeeze the moisture out of your potatoes and onions to keep them from falling apart.

The first time or two I made latkes, it was hard to keep them in one piece in the frying pan. But there’s an easy solution. Just wring the potatoes and onions out.

That’s right—after shredding them, but before adding other ingredients, take the potatoes and onions a handful at a time and squeeze them over the sink, as if you were wringing out a wet sponge. You won’t believe how much liquid comes out. Some recipes say you need cheesecloth or a fancy bag or gadget to do this. You don’t. Just use your hands. Put a colander

See “Latkes” on page 10



Happy Hanukkah

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Latkes Continued from page 9

in the sink to catch any bits of potato that pop out as you squeeze.

The eggs and matzo meal also help keep the latkes from falling apart. So after you've squeezed out the liquid and added the other ingredients, give the mixture a couple of minutes to bind.

By the way, there's no secret to peeling and grating; not much room for blunder there. Most people use a peeler, but I'm faster with a small, sharp paring knife. (Some cooks don't peel at all, but I don't like dirty potato skins.)

As for shredding: box grater or food processor? If the potatoes are hand-grated, the shreds are coarser and the latkes will be lacier. (Perhaps you've heard it said that latkes aren't authentic unless the cook nicks a knuckle or grates a fingernail along with the potatoes. OK, gross! But it happens.)

Using a food processor takes less time than grating by hand. I often use my Cuisinart (with the shredding disk), especially if I'm making a double batch of latkes for a party. If you have folks offering to help, slicing the potatoes and putting them in the machine is an easily delegated chore. Food-processed latkes turn out denser than hand-shredded, but I like them just as much.

◆ **Frying the perfect latke**

Pro tip No. 3: Getting the oil and the heat

right matters – a lot.

I can't say that I ever fried latkes in olive oil, but that's because I'd already made that mistake frying chicken cutlets, so I knew it was a bad idea. Olive oil smokes and burns food at a lower temperature than other oils, and you don't want to trigger the smoke alarm. (Been there.) So, use canola, corn or some other vegetable oil, and turn the heat up to moderately high. The oil must be hot enough to crisp and brown the latke exterior while at the same time cooking the inside through.

Once you get going and you've got all the latkes in the pan, that oil should be so hot that it bubbles.

You'll also have better, faster results in a stainless steel or coated fry pan than a heavy cast-iron pan. Again, I know this from experience: I often have one batch going in my cast-iron pan and another in my trusty old Farberware pan. The results taste the same to me; it's just trickier with cast iron because the pan is heavier and takes longer to heat up.

Heat the pan on high for a few seconds (count to 10) before you pour the oil. And don't just coat the pan. Put in enough oil – maybe a quarter-inch deep – so that your latkes are about halfway immersed. The oil is hot enough when a droplet of water flicked into the pan sizzles.

If the oil isn't hot enough, the latkes will take too long to cook, becoming greasy instead of crispy. (Yup, I've done that, too.)

Don't flip until they're golden brown on the bottom. If you can't see the edges browning, they're probably not ready; take a peek before you turn them over. Flip them too soon, and they could fall apart. And don't crowd them. You might also have to notch the heat up a tad once the pan is full. Give yourself room to slide the spatula

under each pancake without disturbing the others.

To shape the latkes and get them in the pan in one piece, I use a big serving spoon to scoop the mixture from the bowl. Sometimes I pat them with my hands before carefully sliding them into the hot oil.

◆ **From stove to table: Every minute counts**

Pro tip No. 4: Degrease and serve those latkes as fast as you can.

Set up a degreasing station in advance. Spread newspaper or a brown paper bag out on a counter, then cover with a layer of paper towels. As each hot, cooked latke comes out of the pan, lay it carefully on the paper towels. Press another paper towel on the top of each latke to sop up grease from that side, too.

Set the table (or have someone else do it) before you start cooking so you can serve the latkes immediately. You don't want to be running back and forth for drinks, plates, applesauce and sour cream at this point. Trust me: Latkes taste better piping hot than when they've been sitting around for 15 minutes.

But there have been times when I couldn't serve the latkes right away; guests were running late or some other problem needed tending. So I always preheat the oven to 375 and have a cookie sheet ready in case I need to keep them warm.

If I'm making more than one batch, I try to serve the first batch and make the second batch while the first batch is being eaten, rather than waiting until both batches are done. I usually have enough time to enjoy one latke myself at the table before that second round needs flipping.

By the way, I love latkes so much that I make them year-round, often with recipes that use sweet potatoes or other vegetables. There are vegan (eggless) versions as well. Putting latkes into your regular meal rotation is also a great way to practice your technique. That way, when Hanukkah rolls around, you'll have mastered all the secrets to potato pancake perfection.

Beth Harpaz is the Forward's senior copy editor. She's a licensed New York City tour guide, a Big Apple Greeter and former AP Travel editor. Follow her @literarydj or email harpaz@forward.com.

React Continued from page 6

actions that would escalate the conflict into a regional war.

This is how Israel would be able to ensure room to act and the time needed to achieve its strategic goals, even if it agrees to short cease-fires/pauses to free the captives.

This was originally published by Israel Hayom.



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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 monthly 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,
 Daniel Chejfec, Executive Director
 Jewish Federation of NE Pennsylvania
 601 Jefferson Avenue
 Scranton, PA 18510

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NEWS IN BRIEF

From JNS.org

Israel to invest \$51.8m in fortifying hospitals

The Israeli Health Ministry is allocating an additional 200 million shekels (\$51.8 million) for the fortification of hospitals against rocket and missile attacks. The additional funds come on top of 75 million shekels (\$19.5 million) transferred since Hamas launched its multi-pronged attack on Israel on Oct. 7. Fewer than half of the operating rooms in Israeli hospitals are "protected spaces," Kan News reported.

Warm Chanukah Wishes
 from



Pets.....

◆ Lower blood pressure and risk of heart attack

Since stress is a known risk factor of hypertension, decreased stress can also help decrease blood pressure. Research confirms this, as many additional studies have found that individuals with hypertension experienced a reduction in blood pressure within minutes of interacting with cats and dogs.

Lower blood pressure in itself is beneficial to heart health, but even pet owners with normal blood pressure can take comfort in knowing that their pets are still protecting their hearts.

A study conducted by the University of Minnesota found that individuals who had never owned cats were 40 percent more likely to die of a heart attack than those who had owned cats at least once in their lives. This finding was not specific to cats, however. A similar study conducted by Swedish researchers found that the risk of dying from heart disease was 15 percent lower in dog owners than in people who did not own dogs. While it is not yet known exactly how playing with our pets can have such a profound impact on us physically, it is clear that our furry friends can calm us just by being near, and there is no doubt that we could all use a little less stress in our lives.

◆ Alleviation of depression and loneliness

The use of animals to diffuse feelings of stress, anxiety, and depression in humans is becoming increasingly prevalent. In fact, the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) recognizes animal-assisted therapy as a valid treatment for depression and other mood disorders. Researchers studying the bond between humans and animals found that when human subjects stared into the eyes of their beloved pets, their bodies elicited the same hormonal response that allows us to bond with human infants – so it looks like we have every right to refer to them as our fur babies!

Not only do our interactions with pets directly affect our moods,

but they can also do so indirectly by helping us form connections with others. Social connectedness is incredibly important to our overall health and wellbeing, and this is especially true as we age. Older adults are especially prone to social isolation for a variety of reasons, with many adults over the age of 65 living alone. However, in a study published in Aging and Mental Health, older pet owners who lived alone were 36 percent less likely to report feeling lonely than older adults who did not own pets. Pets alleviate feelings of loneliness and isolation in older adults by not only keeping them company but also by helping them interact with other humans and develop meaningful relationships. Having a furry friend by your side is an almost fail-proof conversation starter, because pets invite socialization and open the door for communication. It is extremely difficult for many people to pass up a chance to engage with an adorable pet.

◆ Improved cognitive function

There doesn't seem to be a single area of our lives that pets don't change for the better. In addition to the benefits already discussed, regularly interacting with pets is also shown to improve brain health. Research focusing on the effects of pet therapy on elderly inpatients with cognitive impairment found that interacting with pets sparked positive memories. Further studies reported older individuals who were less responsive due to stroke or dementia smiling and, in some cases, even talking after interacting with pets. Whether it is by taking us back to the past by evoking happy memories or by helping us stay in the present and focus on the here and now, our pets might just be improving our brain power, one cuddle at a time.

Owning a pet is a huge responsibility, but considering the positive impact pets have in nearly every aspect of our lives, the pros of pet ownership far outweigh the cons. Regardless of your species preference, you can find your

perfect pet and reap the many benefits they provide.

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Online.....

and friends, on Sunday, December 31, at 8 pm. There is a variable cost to attend. To register, visit <https://aleph.org/civicrm/event/register/?reset=1&id=529>.

◆ Hadassah will hold “One Book, One Hadassah Live With Meryl Frank” on Thursday, December 21, at 7 pm. Meryl Frank will discuss her memoir “Unearthed: A Lost Actress, a Forbidden Book, and a Search for Life in the Shadow of the Holocaust.” For more information or to register, visit <https://events.blackthorn.io/en/8c4sgS87/g/tws-32mT8YD/one-book-one-hadassah-live-with-meryl-frank-4a3d-8cm7Vm/overview>.

◆ The Center for Women’s Justice

has launched “Voices of Women at Wartime” an Israeli podcast that examines how women affect war and how war affects women. For more information, visit <https://pod.link/1715496443>.

◆ The Center for Jewish History will hold “Fascism in America: Past and Present” live on YouTube on Tuesday, December 12, at 6:30 pm. The cost is “pay what you please.” Gavriel Rosenfeld and Janet Ward will lead a panel discussion with writers for the book they edited “Fascism in America: Past and Present.” For more information or to register, visit <https://programs.cjh.org/stream-tickets/fascism-in-america-2023-12-12>.



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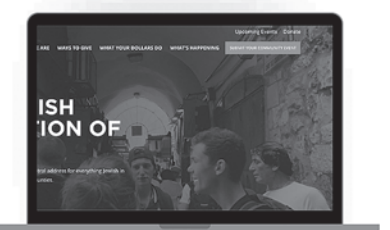


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Step 4

Include your event details and submit the form. Events will be published once approved.

We reserve the right to edit the content of the event submissions and approve or deny publication of events.

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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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And share it with those who need it most. You have the capacity. Just like the candles you add to the menorah, you can bring light, warmth and comfort to those who are struggling without them. * Your gift to Jewish Federation delivers relief and brightens the lives of thousands of people at home, in Israel and in more than 70 countries worldwide. * Find your light. Federation will help it shine.

