

chuppah

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**THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO
JEWISH WEDDINGS**



Get It, Got It, Good!

MORE DASH, LESS CASH

BY ELYSE GLICKMAN

It's prime time to consider the clothing strategy before Rosh Hashanah, and putting together a new look for your kids is still possible if you're on a budget. Steve & Barry and Old Navy are packed with nicely made basics for the whole family, but other inventive style essentials are within reach to help you look cool in shul.

TOP THAT!

This year, your hip kids (and you) can coordinate those cool Crocs with your kippah! Finish off your look with Kroc Kippah (\$24, popjudaica.com), which comes with four sports charms interchangeable with those from your own collection. Women and girls, meanwhile, can top their outfits with stylish caps and berets from Goorin Brothers' Cassel Goorin and Sand Cassel Kids collections (\$22-\$100) available at the Goorin Hat Shop at 7627 Melrose Ave., Hollywood.



Photo courtesy popjudaica.com



Photos courtesy H&M



CLOTHING CONSCIOUS

When it comes to dressy and professional Euro-chic looks on a budget, nobody does it better than Swedish retailer H&M. This store's Westfield Topanga Plaza, Beverly Center, Pasadena and Hollywood & Highland locations have up-to-the-minute looks for the entire family — kids (\$50-\$90), mom or dad (\$100-\$200). www.hm.com/us/.

GROOVY GROOMING

Israeli-born/Australian-bred Ido Leffler designed Yes to Carrots! to enrich body and soul, and to be used by the whole family. The "guilt-free" labeling not only refers to its natural Israeli ingredients base, but also its price (\$3.69-\$20). In addition to carrots (for normal to dry skin), the company has added Yes to Tomatoes (oily/combo skin) and Yes to Cucumbers (normal to sensitive skin). <http://www.yes-to-carrots.com>. Available at Walgreens stores everywhere.



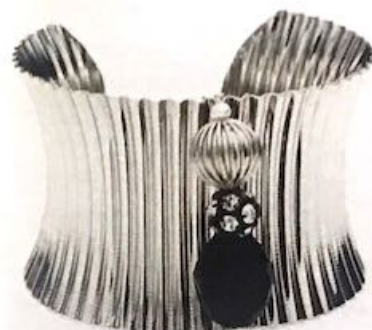
Photo courtesy Yes To Carrots!

Photos courtesy DSW

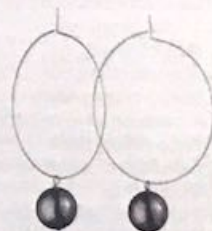


RIGHTEOUS JEWELRY

Teen and tween girls will dig Danielle Stevens (www.daniellestevens.com), Intuition (shopintuition.com) and Bettina Duncan at Fred Segal Santa Monica (www.bettinaduncan.com), especially as many of her hip sparklers are \$40 or less.



Photos courtesy Danielle Stevens



ABCS OF DSW

Thanks to DSW stores across the Southland, anybody can look like they've stepped off the runway, without kicking their budget aside. Hot looks for women and girls include peep-toe and Oxford bootie styles from Madden Girl, Miss Me and Jones New York (\$29.95-\$59.95). Guys will step out this season in dressy-casual hybrids from Sketchers and Cole-Haas (\$64.95-\$109.95). www.dsw.com.



Get It, Got It, Good!

HARVEST SWOON

by ELYSE GLICKMAN

Celebrating Sukkot's fall bounty outdoors? Warm up and freshen up your celebration, spirits and sukkah with these ripe picks.



The youngest celebrants will look just as neat in Mission Playground's conscientious togs, made from recycled fibers (\$25 and up at www.missionplayground.com).

WARM LOOKS FOR CHILLING OUT

Stay warm and look cool for your Sukkot guests with Scapegoat's lightweight cover-ups for style-conscious moms and teens (\$275, Adventure 16 and Sports Chalet).



prAna's comfortable-but-elegant sport separates for men, women and children can be dressed up for the occasion (\$50-\$150, Adventure 16, REI Northridge, Westlake Yoga Studio and prAna.com).



A PICTURE-PERFECT EVENING

Mom and Dad can capture happy faces and the holiday's autumn glow for those all-important Chanukah card photos, thanks to the snappy 10 megapixel Nikon COOLPIX S60 loaded with user-friendly touch-screen features and settings for effortless outdoor and night photos (\$349, Ritz Camera, CAI Camera, Canoga Camera and Bel Air Camera stores, as well as nikonusa.com).



Kids can get into the action, too, with the Disney Pix Jr. digital camera. Thanks to the durable, drop-tested camera's digital overlay technology and 32MB of storage capacity (150 photos), they can also invite their favorite Disney pals to the sukkah (\$49, Target, Toys R Us, Wal-Mart and disneyshopping.com).

STARRY, STARRY NIGHTS

Want a safe alternative to candles that will not only look gorgeous in your sukkah, but are also safe and windproof? Colorful strands of three-dimensional Star of David Paper Lanterns will show off your table in the best possible light. (\$11, moderntribe.com).



COUNT YOUR BLESSINGS

You don't have to pull out the leftover plates from your kid's birthday party just because you're eating outdoors. Serve up your Sukkot meals on colorful and fun Ben C. Morris melamine garden-themed plates (\$32 for set of four, moderntribe.com).



And be sure to let your young hostess share in the entertaining duties with her own monogrammed tea set (\$69, Pottery Barn Kids at Westfield Topanga, The Oaks in Thousand Oaks and Westfield Fashion Square in Sherman Oaks).



Fancy Footwork With Earthy Shoes

Danish shoe company Ecco melds fashion and Scandinavian function for men, women and kids, with styles that go from school and the office to the backyard (men's styles start at \$190, women's go from \$130 to \$250 and kids styles range from \$65 to \$120; available at Nordstrom, as well as eccousa.com).



GIFTS FOR THE BIG DAY ... AND HAPPILY EVER AFTER

by ELYSE GLICKMAN,
CONTRIBUTING WRITER



Building your wedding around a color scheme is a sophisticated way to express your individuality. Keep the theme going through modern, customizable tokens of appreciation for your bridal party that unite traditional elegance with a definitive edge and functionality.

One sound idea connecting fashion and function is Fanny Wang Headphones, boasting state-of-the-art noise reduction and sound quality. The range (1001 On Ear, \$169.95; 2001 Over Ear DJ, \$249.95; and 3001 Over Ears Active Noise Canceling, \$299.95) can be dressed for the occasion for an extra \$50 through fannywang.com. Snazzy, pre-made color combinations are available at amazon.com.

Keep the conversation going before and after the big day with the Gigaset C595 (\$69) phone, made with energy-saving, eco-friendly technology, as well as the added option of its ability to be "skinned" to match your mood with a picture of the wedding party or a favorite honeymoon destination. It is also tailor-made for growing families with features such as a room monitor. Its sister phone, the Gigaset SL785 (\$175) is described as the "Mercedes-Benz of phones" for its sleek design and high-tech appeal. Available at gigaset.com, Best Buy, amazon.com and Sears.

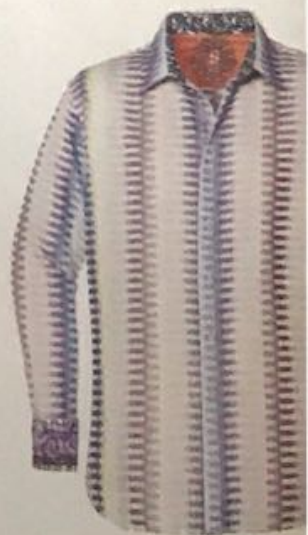
Strike the right balance of traditional and modern with Croton's Swiss-movement diamond and mother of pearl watches (\$750). While the watches' timeless, slightly glam designs mix with everything from tuxedos and formal gowns to casually elegant outdoor wedding attire, the water-resistant (to 50 meters) timepiece will appeal to everybody in the party, from the artist to the athlete to the up-and-coming executive. Available at crotonwatch.com.

Need something extra special for the maid of honor or best man? Laura Cowan's Havdallah sets (\$170 to \$1,760) exemplify lasting friendship with striking, cone-shaped pieces made from two contrasting materials that reflect opposites, which together make a whole: heaven and earth, light and darkness, day and night, the work week and Shabbat. moderntribe.com

For a modern take on personalized jewelry, turn to Denmark's Kranz & Ziegler, known for their innovative, unisex "Story" collection that uses charms and colored leather or beaded strands for a truly individualized look. Base bracelets start at \$45, and charms range from \$79 to \$175. lovelinksamerica.com

Robert Graham offers shirts sure to punch up a man's afternoon wedding look (Mark M, \$268; and Survivor, \$228), as well as blouses (Karlin, \$225) and day dresses (Alora, \$348) suitable for a bridal shower, rehearsal or afternoon tea. Classic haberdashery tailoring gets a twist with unexpected color combinations and ethnic-inspired patterns. Available at the Robert Graham store (Venice), Sy Devore (Studio City), Mel Fox Clothiers (Encino), Z Clothing (Los Angeles), The Vault (Hollywood) or robertgraham.us.

Lauren Harris transforms her grandmothers' time-tested mandelbrot and other cookie recipes into LuLu's Sweets, bringing it up to date with contemporary flavors and packaging that will please sophisticated palates and a couple's sense of personal style. "Party favors" start at \$3.50 per unit. lulusweets.com





Rehearsal Dinner Gets the Weekend Started in Style

by ELYSE GLICKMAN, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

As if you did not already have enough to think about — the dress, the bridesmaids' dresses, the synagogue, the availability of your rabbi of choice, the weather, and the flavors of the different layers within your cake — there's also the delicate matter of finding harmony among the voices playing in your head: specifically those belonging to your mom, your future mother-in-law and your BFFs.

On that score the rehearsal dinner is not just another part of the whole cosmic wedding plan, but also the ultimate opportunity for everybody to catch their breath before the nuptials. For this reason, selecting the right venue for the pre-party party will ensure the rest of the weekend will flow smoothly.

Several of the following restaurants offer contemporary, seasonal and fresh approaches to prepar-

ing gourmet dishes while adhering to kosher dietary laws. Other venues, while not kosher, offer a variety of dishes sure to satisfy everybody — from vegetarians to steak connoisseurs, to everyone in between. What all the restaurants have in common, besides professional event planners and ample space to accommodate groups, are environments that are lively, modern and inviting yet still put people at ease in a *haimish* way.

THE BISTRO GARDEN

The Bistro Garden's Fireside Room has been a go-to spot for San Fernando Valley Jewish wedding rehearsal meals as well as receptions for more than 20 years. The airy, verdant room, which accommodates 30 to 70 guests, charms with its parquet wood floors, crystal chandeliers,

Scottish marble fireplace (working gas flame) and French windows. There is a baby grand piano and bar in the room, in case the group really feels like getting festive. Besides these amenities, what sets the Bistro Garden apart is its warm, old-school staff (most have been with the restaurant since its opening) and timeless French and continental cuisine.

The Bistro Garden, 12950 Ventura Blvd., Studio City. (818) 501-0202. bistrogarden.com.

THE FOUR SEASONS LOS ANGELES AT BEVERLY HILLS

The Beverly Hills-adjacent Four Seasons Hotel is a landing spot for Hollywood stars and awards-show events, so it's the place to go when you want to make the members of your wedding party feel like A-listers.

Given the care put into the preparation process and the popularity of the Four Seasons, reservations must be made six months to a year in advance, and a minimum of 30 guests will be required for kosher events. A stellar selection of kosher wines is available, including Herzog Selection Blanc de Blanc (\$48), Barkan Chardonnay (\$40), Teal Lake Shiraz (\$40) and Bartenura Prosecco (\$55).

According to the hotel's event planners, the fee for kosher supervision (conducted by Rabbi Daniel Elkouby under Kehilla of Los Angeles) is \$1,000, while reserving the lush Wetherly Gardens runs around \$2,500. Although kosher kitchen services are not available at Culina, the hotel's acclaimed Italian restaurant, it is a fantastic spot for more intimate rehearsal dinners, with many vegetarian and poultry menu options.

The Four Seasons Los Angeles at Beverly Hills, 300 S. Doheny Drive, Los Angeles. (310) 273-2222. fourseasons.com/losangeles.



POURTAL



INN OF THE SEVENTH RAY



THE FOUR SEASONS LOS ANGELES
AT BEVERLY HILLS



LA SEINE



TIERRA SUR

INN OF THE SEVENTH RAY

While the Garden of Eden is a folkloric ideal that burns bright in Jewish culture, the Inn of the Seventh Ray built its cachet transmuting that mythology into an accessible reality from both a visual and culinary standpoint. Executive chef Bradley Miller tends to the food aspects of the "garden," using tools he picked up during his stint at the Arizona Biltmore and as a competitor on Gordon Ramsay's U.S. show, "Hell's Kitchen." What grows from his vision is food that is equal parts elegant and earthy.

The intimate garden setting ensures privacy and great ambience during a rehearsal celebration, while coordinators Kirsten Halbert and Angelica Weihs will work closely with the couple to pinpoint the best menu choices, wine selection, linens and seating arrangements. Rehearsal

event costs vary, depending on size and season. Large parties should book at least two weeks in advance.

Inn of the Seventh Ray, 128 Old Topanga Canyon Road, Topanga. (310) 455-1311. innoftheseventhray.com.

POURTAL

If a small, intimate and socially interactive rehearsal "happy hour" is more your style, Stephen Abronson's Pourtal ensures it will be fun, lighthearted and effortless. Combining the traditional wine bar concept with a state-of-the-art self-service tasting room, Pourtal offers an exceptional wine experience that allows guests to explore at their own pace. The venue, which can accommodate groups of 25 to 70, also offers such amenities as multiple large flat screens

for film montages of the couple, an ocean-view patio, proximity to Santa Monica-area hotels and a varied menu of small and shared plates with local and mostly organic ingredients via the Santa Monica Farmers Market and local purveyors like Andrew's Cheese Shop on Montana Avenue.

Buyout for a rehearsal dinner event can run anywhere from \$1,000 to \$6,000 and can be done even on short notice (24 hours!). However, if you wish to have kosher wines poured at your tasting rehearsal event, seven days' notice is required. Also, if you buy out the space for the rehearsal and some guests maintain dietary laws, you can bring in your own kosher food.

Portal, 104 Santa Monica Blvd., Santa Monica. (310) 393-7693. pourtal.com.

Rehearsal Dinner

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THE RAYMOND RESTAURANT

THE RAYMOND RESTAURANT

For weddings in Los Angeles County's eastern reaches, the graceful Raymond Restaurant in the heart of Old Town Pasadena offers an idyllic setting for either a rehearsal dinner or a lavish brunch. While it does not have a kosher kitchen, its customizable food and innovative cocktail menus enable the bride and groom to work closely with the chef and lead mixologist to create the perfect collection of appetizers, main courses and desserts for their diverse assemblage of relatives, bridesmaids and ushers. The venue accommodates groups of 10 to 200 guests, and it is recommended that the party books the space months in advance.

The Raymond Restaurant, 1250 S. Fair Oaks Ave., Pasadena. (626) 441-3136. theraymond.com.

LA SEINE


The centrally located and sleekly appointed restaurant La Seine, certified by Kehillah of Los Angeles, surprises on many levels, especially for wedding rehearsal dinners where traditionalists and foodies mix. Rather than gutting the former Lodge Steakhouse, the management opened up the existing structure so it flows into a charming outdoor area framing one of the most unusual and innovative kosher restaurant concepts anywhere — an amalgam of steakhouse and sushi bar. Helmed by executive chef Alex Reznik (who came to national attention on "Top Chef") and Paris-born restaurateur Laurent Masliah, the restaurant is an unforgettable dining experience, with appetizers, main dishes, desserts and cocktails that will have everybody rethinking their definition of kosher (and dairy-free) fare.

La Seine, 14 N. La Cienega Blvd., Beverly Hills. (310) 358-0922. laseinebg.com.

TIERRA SUR

Tierra Sur, Baron Herzog's signature OU-certified kosher restaurant, epitomizes everything that makes Southern California the epicenter of the farm-to-table dining trend. Chef Todd Aaron is known to get quite adventurous, and is noted for his crowd-pleasing kosher lamb bacon and ever-rotating preparations of grilled salmon, hanger steak and vegetarian fare. All dishes provide a showcase for some of Baron Herzog's recent award-winning wines and higher-end reserve selections, such as Herzog Special Reserve, Eagles Landing and Weinstock Cellar Select.

Another one of Tierra Sur's assets is that its wedding packages are as individual as the couple, with both indoor and outdoor areas that can accommodate 30 to 200 guests. Although there are no set prices for packages, fees include the services of the in-house wedding coordinator for the day of the event; staff for set-up, clean-up and all service throughout the event; and all the table accouterments required for the rehearsal meal. Reservations must be made one month in advance.

Tierra Sur, 3201 Camino Del Sol, Oxnard. (805) 983-1560. tierrasur-atherzog.com. 

FIT TO BE THAI

by ELYSE GLICKMAN,
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

While Thailand is best-known for bustling Bangkok and splashy resort areas like Phuket, the country offers alternatives for newlyweds who want to kick off their marriage in quiet, low-key and even life-enhancing ways. Thailand's roads less traveled lead to historic Hua Hin and its wellness-driven resort Chiva Som.

Along the Gulf of Thailand, approximately 100 miles south of Bangkok, the village of Hua Hin offers a glimpse into Thailand's early days of destination tourism. Thanks to the efforts of King Rama VII during the 1920s, the resort community took shape in a way that contrasts with the rapid

development of Phuket, Chiang Mai and similar spots. Under the king's direction, the area was planned to respect the natural landscape and local customs rather than make way for progress.

Besides being a best-kept secret for a peaceful getaway among Bangkok locals, Jewish expats and in-the-know Israeli backpackers, Hua Hin has authenticity in its favor—a sense that real people live and make their living there beyond tourism. At the end of its main beachfront, one will find Monkey Island, a popular hiking destination alive with playful populations of the namesake creatures making good use of the large Buddha and temple. Elsewhere, you'll find Hua Hin's down-

town, which bustles after-hours with a night market that carpets several downtown blocks with street-food indulgences, inexpensive souvenirs and rolling cocktail bars.

A half-hour's drive outside central Hua Hin, the delightful Cicada Market (cicadamarket.net) provides a chic, clean and civilized alternative to the sometimes-congested night market scene. Staged only on weekends, this fresh, green space is anchored by an open-air band shell that stages live jazz and folk music performances. Food stand lines are replaced with sidewalk café seating and spotless counters where one can purchase dif-

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CHIVA SOM: HEAVENLY POOL AREA BY DAY, CULINARY PARADISE BY NIGHT.
PHOTOS COURTESY OF CHIVA SOM, HUA HIN, THAILAND

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ferent Thai and Asian specialties. A tidy maze of open-air boutiques offers a myriad of handcrafted sterling silver jewelry, shoes, home textiles, clothing and other *objets d'art*.

By the same token, Chiva Som (chivasom.com) is a destination that fits in beautifully with Hua Hin's unpretentious, honest vibe. However, it also happens to be one of Southeast Asia's most respected spa and wellness retreats, and a favorite with celebrities such as Elizabeth Hurley and Australian designer Collette Dinnigan. While there is no question that Chiva Som is a luxury resort (as evidenced by the nicely stocked Mercedes-Benz limo that collects guests from the airport or their Bangkok hotel), its pragmatic approach to a guest-focused escape is surprising yet ultimately calming. Though the resort seems a little compact at first inspection, especially when compared to glitzy Phuket spreads, it expands like a lotus into an alluring sensory experience ... albeit with additional health and wellness benefits.

CHIVA SOM'S SPA CUISINE OFFERS A SOPHISTICATED CULINARY EXPERIENCE. OPPOSITE: DAILY MEDITATIONS ARE TAILORED TO GUESTS' HEALTH AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS.



With Chiva Som's mission to send guests home in better health than when they arrived, personalization takes priority over pretension. For example, the hotel's acclaimed kitchen caters not only to vegans and vegetarians, but it can also accommodate kosher, diabetic and other specialized diets. Although the sparely elegant design of the rooms, public areas and landscaping are inspired by a Thai-Buddhist aesthetic (and indulgent comfort), the holistic approach of the programs is free of any kind of religious influence, according to resort business development director Sharon Menzies.

"We are not a honeymoon destination in the traditional sense, but newlyweds really respond to a honeymoon that delivers better personal habits as well as happy memories," Menzies said. "There is no (hard) liquor on the premise. Treatments are less about pampering and more about clients finding balance and learning practices they can carry over into their marriage and everyday life. With couples wanting a more thoughtful honeymoon or renewing their vows, this is an ideal place to gain a more intimate view of their own and their loved one's health issues, dietary needs and fitness goals so they can better care for one another in body and spirit. We also have fertility experts on hand for couples planning families."

Shortly after your arrival, a counselor at the spa will have you fill out a simple assessment form and then promptly set your personal wellness plan into motion. She or he will probably steer you away from what treatments you may select if left to your own devices with a spa menu. For example, you may want a body scrub and a line-erasing facial, but the counselor may feel reiki, Thai massage and a digestion-focused massage are more appropriate for your long-term well-being.

Fitness classes — including yoga and stretching, Thai boxing, mountain biking, hiking, aqua fitness, Pilates, tai chi, Shaolin wushu and a golf clinic launched in early 2010 — are modifiable to a variety of fitness levels, and made more enticing through both the lush jungle greenery and laid-back fitness instructors.

Food served on the premises is gorgeously and informatively presented, with cards that spell out nutritional benefits in detail. While Thai menu selections are not as hot and spicy as street food, they are definitely flavorful, satisfying and sophisticated, and you can, of course, add more peppers as desired.

As honeymooners and other visitors have expressed an interest in keeping their experience going at home, Chiva Som management has responded with a hotel newsletter and Web site that offers "try this at home" recipes. For an additional fee, visitors can sign up for programs that include a visit with the resort chef to Hua Hin's wet and dry food markets, where they get pointers on shopping for organic produce. The actual cooking lessons, meanwhile, empower and motivate visitors to make changes in their diets without sacrificing flavor.

Although the close-knit, family-style approach of the staff combined with the plush, romantic ambience of the common areas makes Chiva Som seem like the ideal spot for a bridesmaids' getaway (especially with the resort's proximity to golf and shopping), Menzies notes a visit to this paradise is best-suited for solo or couples travelers to ensure individuals get



"WE ARE NOT A HONEYMOON DESTINATION IN THE TRADITIONAL SENSE, BUT NEWLYWEDS REALLY RESPOND TO A HONEYMOON THAT DELIVERS BETTER PERSONAL HABITS AS WELL AS HAPPY MEMORIES." — SHARON MENZIES

maximum benefit from the hands-on health guidance, hand-selected spa treatments and intimate environment. She also says that while the resort does offer shuttles to the night markets, the staff encourages visitors to spend as much of their time on site as possible.

"We want everybody to have an experience that will have great personal meaning to them when they leave," Menzies said. "We respect the wishes of guests who want to remain solitary during the course of what can be a highly personal and introspective time of healing or bonding. However, for more social solitaires or couples, we offer a variety of activities, a Wednesday night 'mocktail' party, guest speaker sessions and 'talk' tables in our dining areas, where they can meet people from all over the world." ■

Curacao's Sea Change

The island's rich history and Jewish roots elevate its allure as a Caribbean honeymoon destination

by ELYSE GLICKMAN, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Although most islands in the Caribbean have been an easy sell for honeymooners, Curaçao for years was a diamond in the rough, lost in the destination shuffle. However, in recent years, that diamond has been polished to such a brilliant shine that it has become as much of a paradise for foodie and culture-couples as it is for beachcombers.

Besides scenic waterfronts and a variety of resorts that suit every definition of romance, from traditional tropical luxury to sleek boutique, Curaçao offers Willemstad—the candy-colored capital whose package of Dutch-flavored architecture holds all sorts of surprises for travelers, and Jewish travelers in particular.

While any Caribbean island qualifies as paradise, what broadens the appeal of Curaçao is its special regard for the Jewish people who shaped its life and times.

A popular cruise-ship stop, Curaçao was once a literal port in a storm for successful Jewish entrepreneurs and Amsterdam's poorer Jewish populations. Between 1730 and 1820, Curaçao was 58 percent Jewish, and this legacy is treated with love and respect. This year marks the 360th anniversary of the Jewish presence on the island.

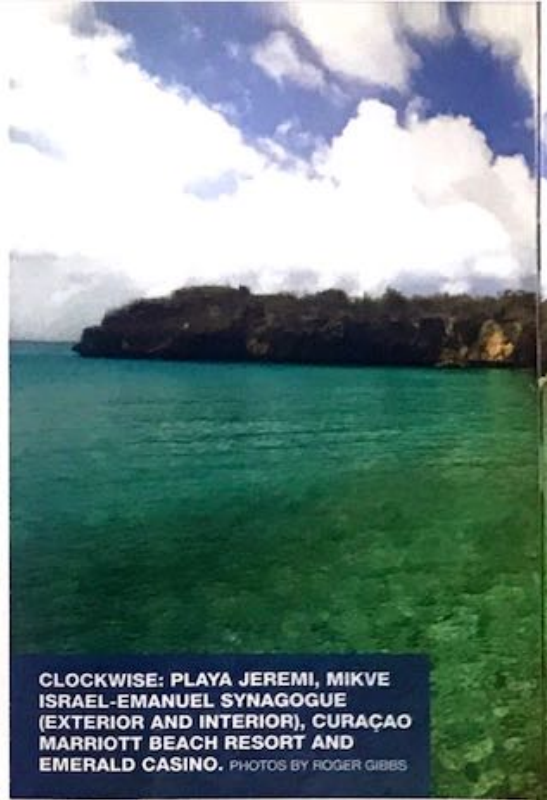
The oldest operational congregation in the Western hemisphere is said to have taken root in 1651 when the Dutch West India Co. made an appeal on behalf of Jan de Illan (Joao d'Yllan), a successful Jewish Portuguese businessman, to set up a trade post on the remote Caribbean island. Although he recruited only 12 families, they steadfastly sailed to Curaçao in the summer of 1651 and put down roots for the first incarnation of Mikvé Israel (Hope of Israel). However, new immigra-

tion from Holland, Portugal, France and even other Caribbean islands expanded the community and led to the necessity for a larger temple.

The inviting yellow Dutch colonial building, erected in 1732, houses the present-day Mikvé Israel-Emanuel Synagogue, a Reconstructionist congregation referred to locally as The Snoa, which is now widely touted as one of the island's "must do" attractions and, naturally, is ideal for a destination wedding ceremony. The main sanctuary is held up by four pillars named for the four matriarchs of the Jewish people: Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel and Leah. The spare but elegant room is also outfitted with carved mahogany pews, bimah and ark; copper chandeliers; and white sand, which covers the floor for symbolic reasons: a reminder of the great Exodus as well as a means to muffle footsteps of those who practiced their Jewish faith in secret during the Inquisition.

The adjacent Jewish Cultural Historical Museum reinforces its enduring beauty and significance with items from Jewish island life and priceless artifacts from Europe. Among the museum's Torah scrolls is one brought by the first Jewish settlers to Curaçao, believed to be from the time of their expulsion from Spain in 1492.

Curaçao's Jewish community was exclusively Sephardi prior to the 1920s. Since then there has been a steady influx of Orthodox Ashkenazi Jews to the island. Their synagogue, in contrast to Mikvé Israel-Emanuel, is modern and soaring. Built in 2006, Shaarei Tzedek Synagogue, which is an hour's walk from Willemstad in suburban Mahaai, was brought to fruition under the leadership of Rabbi Ariel Yeshurun. Since then, the



CLOCKWISE: PLAYA JEREMI, MIKVE ISRAEL-EMANUEL SYNAGOGUE (EXTERIOR AND INTERIOR), CURAÇAO MARRIOTT BEACH RESORT AND EMERALD CASINO. PHOTOS BY ROGER GIBBS



34-year-old rabbi has redoubled his efforts to bring Jewish couples to the island for honeymoons and destination weddings, which are at once achingly romantic and profoundly meaningful.

The plush Curaçao Marriott Beach Resort and Emerald Casino has established itself as the first resort on the island with a dedicated kosher kitchen. The kitchen staff trained with Yeshurun for three months, and the hotel invested \$100,000 in new equipment and a variety of fine china, glasses and silverware. The hotel can host glatt kosher events for 20 to 200 guests.

The Hotel Kura Hulanda Spa & Casino, conceived by global entrepreneur Jacob Gelt Dekker, balances five-star luxury with the preservation of Curaçao's history. At first glance, this boutique village complex on the Otrabanda side of Willemstad looks almost like a set from a 1950s Cary Grant movie. The grounds constitute a maze yielding surprises at every turn: impeccably cultivated courtyards, a waterfall, gorgeously situated sculptures and hidden galleries with



meticulously arranged historic artifacts and paintings. Dekker's visionary village is also home to the Astrolabe and Jaipur restaurants, each with its own distinct flavor capturing the island's essence as a world crossroads. The Kura Hulanda Museum, anchoring the hotel, is an enormously moving look at the Caribbean slave trade and African culture.


In Curaçao's southeast, the newly opened **Hyatt Regency Curaçao** has everything one needs for a destination wedding or stand-alone honeymoon — unusual terrain, golf, hiking, biking, tennis, a marina and chic room décor. Clement Huguot's cocktail creations for the open-air kitchen Medi are among the best on the island, while the American seafood grill Shor features the Caribbean as your backdrop. Its Atabei Spa is inspired, thanks to its innovative use of space. Instead of common waiting rooms that give way to treatment areas, each guest or couple gets a customized suite complete with multi-jet shower, treatment area and dressing area.

Couples preferring their honeymoon to be a sensual jaunt into paradise, meanwhile, will not be disappointed. **Christoffel Park**, Curaçao's largest national park, has an abundance of hiking trails, featuring a rich variety of local flora and fauna. The island's southern coast features numerous beaches, from the intimate Playa Jeremi and Playa Lagun to full-service beaches like Cas Abao and Kontiki. The more adventurous might consider diving with dolphins at either the **Curaçao Sea Aquarium** or the **Dolphin Academy**, and popular dive spots include the tugboat wreck in Caracas Bay or the Blue Room sea cave in Westpunt.

If you don't swim but want to embrace your inner Jacques Cousteau, **Substation Curaçao** takes guests nearly 1,000 feet below sea level to experience the wonders of the deep in its Curasub.

Speaking of the sea, local fish are served in interesting ways and unusual environments. Though there are dockside grills similar to those found in every tropical port from Oahu to Bali, local Curaçao eateries have

gotten creative in ways that not only transform local ingredients but neighborhoods as well. **Mundo Bizarro** is the culinary and cultural hub of **Pietermaai Smal**, now in the midst of a Latin Quarter-style renaissance. The area is also home to **MOON**, a trendy beach club, lounge and restaurant. In the northwest of the island, **Jaanchies** delights with its playful Amsterdam café-meets-Caribbean hideaway décor and hearty stews.

Like other spots in the Caribbean, Willemstad is a shopper's paradise. The Floating Market is a great place to shoot photos and get souvenirs on the fly. You will find landmark store **Penha**, **Little Switzerland** and **Freeport Jewelers** stocking most every major international brand of fine jewelry as well as a handful of Caribbean-produced lines. However, if you want truly one-of-a-kind wedding jewelry, seek out **Different Design Jewelry**, **Jolanta Pawlak** and **Ffolio** in Punda. 

For more information, visit this article at jewish-journal.com

Green Day

Eco-friendly aspects of the simcha can elevate a young person's conscience

by Elyse Glickman

Given that many high-profile celebrities expound on the virtues of their environmental involvements (among them, Natalie Portman and Alicia Silverstone), it is inevitable that eco-friendly activities, foods and fashion — along with a side of social justice — will appeal to a wide range of teens ... and that this will get some of them seeing green for their bar or bat mitzvah.

The Web site Green Mitzvot (greenbarmitzvahs.com) is testament to the green movement's impact on teens nationwide. It provides comprehensive information on various essentials, ranging from party favors, to reception supplies, food, formal clothing and details on planning a green bar or bat mitzvah in Israel. There's information on organic beauty products, recycled cuff links, fair-trade kippot and more.

With green being this year's black, the operative question for parents is how the investment of going green can reinforce the lessons and values of Hebrew school rather than be a potentially expensive fashion statement. Planners who do a significant bar and bat mitzvah business with a green focus, such as Deborah Kattler Kupetz (dkkevents.com), suggest that getting kids involved in the party-planning process may also plant seeds for good civic and personal habits.

Kattler Kupetz is best known in Southern California for creating eco-friendly parties covering everything from the selection of the foods to the décor to the post-ceremony activities with a philanthropic slant.

"The whole point of a bar or bat mitzvah is to validate a teen's learning from a sacred text and then finding ways for him or her to use the knowledge," said Kattler Kupetz, who fell into her "green" business several years ago by accident, when her daughters' green b'nai mitzvah proved to be a hit with the guests.

"I had to really develop, create and advocate for all the other elements that would complete the experience," Kattler Kupetz recalled. "During the process of sourcing the party elements and planning the activities, I was surprised at how far I could make my dollars go and how I was able to find ways to connect with the community and even Israel by sourcing things from local vendors and seeking out alternatives for décor and activities. It made me realize how interconnected I could

make a celebration be on different levels."

Celebrity event planner and author Rená Puebla (coastconciierge.com), meanwhile, believes that the teachable moments built into a bar or bat mitzvah theme can speak to not just other teens in attendance but to adult guests as well.

"The essence of a bar mitzvah is about the transition to adulthood and the responsibilities that come with that transition, to oneself and to society, and that includes the environment," she said. "[A green event] can also be a way for adults to show other adults about the conscien-



Reuse, repurpose: These clocks were purchased at Goodwill and given to guests as gifts.

tious way they planned the event. Teaching by example is an adult responsibility."

Puebla and Kattler Kupetz are like-minded in that they believe a green bar or bat mitzvah is in line with the Jewish teachings learned from Hebrew school education. The resulting experience ends up being more personally empowering, helping the teen realize he or she can make a difference at a very early age. Kattler Kupetz also stresses that a green bar or bat mitzvah shouldn't seem like a punishment or an obligation for a child. Instead, it can be presented to a youth as something

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Green Day

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spectacularly fun and festive, but with more depth and meaning.

"I feel the bar mitzvah moment is a most magnificent device to put all kinds of opportunities in front of a teen to make a difference and have it be family-supported," she said. "At its root, a green bar or bat mitzvah is a wonderful alternative to a blingy teen dance party. My job is as much about encouraging a conversation involving everybody in the family, because incorporating relevant social issues into the bar or bat mitzvah experience can improve communication among family members."

Among trends Kattler Kupetz sees taking shape are girls visiting vintage clothing shops instead of department stores or trendy boutiques.

Puebla says that Southern California offers interesting alternatives to the traditional hotel or banquet hall, including whale-watching trips and beach picnics with a guest speaker from an ocean preservation organization explaining why the ocean is so important and the importance of the ocean to the climate and global warming.

"Party favors [for outdoor-specific events] can include a beach bag with a water bottle that includes a filter, a hat, a pull-over and beach sandals, all made from eco-friendly materials," Puebla said. "In terms of clothing that works for casual and formal gatherings, H&M just launched an eco-friendly formalwear line called Conscious Exclusive that is also budget-friendly and includes age-appropriate styles."

Kattler Kupetz also encourages "twinning," where families financially affiliate their child's celebration with a charity so the day not only syncs in with the child's mitzvah project but also raises money and awareness for a greater cause. Some of her favorite organizations are Remember Us (remember-us.com), a project dedicated to connecting youths preparing for their b'nai mitzvah and children killed during the Holocaust; the North American Conference on Ethiopian Jewry (nacoej.org/get-involved/be-a-twin); and AMIT (amitchildren.org/how-you-can-help/twinning-program), which twins your child with an underserved Israeli child who shares the same bar mitzvah date.

Cindy Hassel, president of Tarzana-based S&R Originals/SRO Events Inc. (sroevents.com), has seen other trends taking shape, including sourcing food from local farms and purveyors, and doing some form of online invitation.

While Kattler Kupetz says companies like Evite Postmark have raised the bar for online invitations, Hassel admits that some of her clients still feel that online invites diminish the importance of the big day. A compromise she suggests is sending out the traditional invitation but replacing the reply card with a prompt to RSVP by e-mail or on



Live orchid plants used as a centerpiece can be replanted. Photo courtesy of SRO Events, Inc.

a Web site set up for the teen's bar or bat mitzvah.

As always, issues of finance sometimes trump issues of conscience, and Hassel says there are clients who haven't gone green because preparations for a specific theme can end up being more expensive than one might expect. By the same token, however, she points out that many things she recommends to cost-conscious parents can also end up being environmentally conscious because recycling is involved.

Even if a family doesn't bring up the issue of being eco-friendly, Hassel believes that there are teachable moments in the process.

"We can suggest to kids, for example, that we skip such party favors as glow sticks, plastic sunglasses and other 'toss-outs,' as they are not biodegradable and will sit on the floor and end up going into landfills after the party."

Another way Hassel said teens can be channeled toward more purpose-driven b'nai mitzvah experiences is through centerpieces. In lieu of flowers, parents can make a donation to organizations like the SOVA Community Food and Resource Program (jfsa.org/SOVA), and mention on special place cards that after the party the centerpieces will be donated to the organization.

Other examples include the child and family encouraging donations of toys and sports equipment, which in turn, can be artfully displayed before being sent to children's charities; animal shelters; and organizations like Vista Del Mar, which provides social and psychological services and has summer camp and sports programs. This could be based on what a teen's mitzvah project is focused on, if he or she has one.

"I realized that I could go beyond helping clients create a 'green' party experience after having create my own," Kattler Kupetz said. "I was able to introduce the event as a platform for causes I was completely passionate about, including the environment, economic development in the community, zero-waste events. A well-planned party could become a platform, in turn, for social action." **MT**



A natural grapewood centerpiece is surrounded by herb plants that can be donated to food pantries. Photo courtesy of SRO Events, Inc.

Room for One More

Including peers with special needs can be part of a teen's transition from child to adult

by Elyse Glickman

For many teens, a bar or bat mitzvah is not just a rite of passage and an embrace of a community's Jewish values; it also is an opportunity to make a mark socially by inviting BFFs and other classmates.

In the process, there are going to be kids who will not make the list — some may have special needs, difficult family situations or other qualities that make them “different” in the eyes of their peers. While the rejection itself can be painful, it can be accentuated after the service when classmates return to school and discuss the exciting day's events.

That's why teaching teens ongoing lessons

cess of the program.

“The first lesson coming out of the Torah is that all humans are created in God's image,” she said. “This is what prompted us to start a community-inclusion program at temples throughout Los Angeles, helping [educators] to create their own programming for kids who learn differently and create an inclusive environment.”

Redner explains that practices at Nes Gadol, which means “a great miracle,” can be done in every household. When parents have their discussion about bar or bat mitzvah invitations, it should be clear that it is not just about inviting a certain child, but what they can do as

“Our tradition tells us to be sensitive to those among us who are different in some way, particularly in ways that might make them seem or feel weaker.”

— Tom Fields-Meyer, author

about inclusion is important, especially at this critical moment in their lives, according to Jerome Schultz, a clinical neuropsychologist at Harvard Medical School and author of “Nowhere to Hide: Why Kids With ADHD & LD Hate School and What We Can Do About It.”

“It is a matter of right, as well as a reflection of the Jewish philosophy about embracing difference within our own community,” he said.

While Nes Gadol, a program of Jewish learning for children with special needs at Vista Del Mar, a Los Angeles social services agency, offers the b'nai mitzvah experience, its director, Rabbi Jacqueline Redner, believes including special-needs youths in the coming-of-age ceremonies of their peers can magnify the suc-

cess of the program.

“Having been a teenager yourself, whether you were one of the kids invited or one of those put on the shelf, you know your teen's rite of passage can also be a teachable moment if you do it with sensitivity and care,” Redner said. “With some guidance, you and your teen can be a living example of a value that is clearly stated in the Torah.”

Getting kids to think about inclusion doesn't have to be something that waits until they're a teen. Lisa Niver Rajna, formerly a science teacher at Brawerman Elementary School at L.A.'s Wilshire Boulevard Temple, has throughout her career worked issues about

diversity and inclusion into her lessons.

“We observe how caterpillars become butterflies,” she said. “Some butterflies emerge that may have a wing with a problem. I leave all of them in the habitat. When we go outside to release all of them, we talk about how not everyone is the same. Some butterflies, like people, have a problem with a limb or other body part, yet we are all part of the community.”

Schultz says that today's youths are exposed to a wider range of children with differences than in the past, due to mainstreaming in the classroom. As a result, he said, “Today, the discussion between parents and kids would be, ‘Why would you not invite a particular classmate?’ If a special-needs child is a part of the world the typical child inhabits, the idea of exclusion seems ethically and morally wrong.”

West Los Angeles author Tom Fields-Meyer, the father of a son with autism, says that a bar or bat mitzvah celebrates a young person taking a place of responsibility in the community, and that comes with certain obligations.

“One primary Jewish value is ‘kol yisrael arevim zeh la zeh,’ or, ‘All Jews are responsible for one another.’ What a perfect way to demonstrate that — by making sure that everyone in your circle feels included in your *simcha*,” said Fields-Meyer, who wrote “Following Ezra: What One Father Learned About Gumby, Ot-

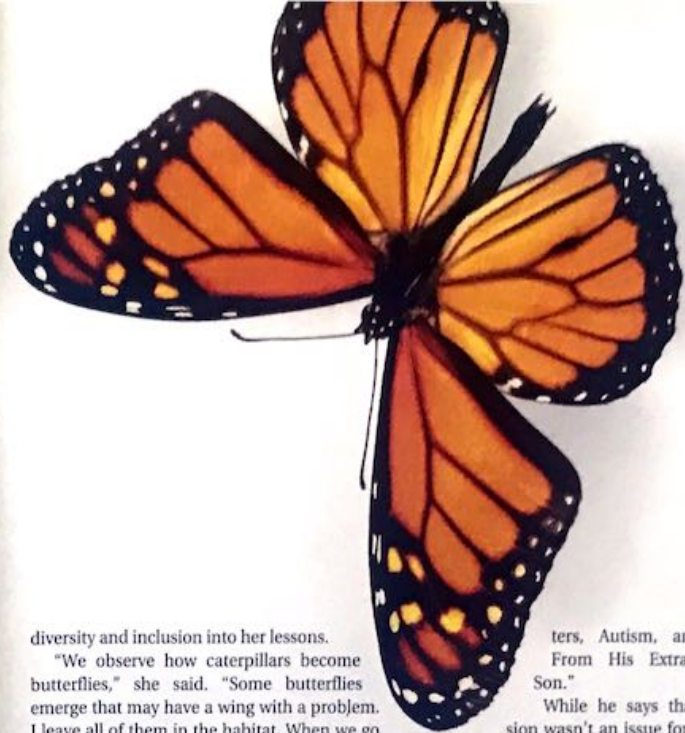
ters, Autism, and Love From His Extraordinary Son.”

While he says that inclusion wasn't an issue for his son, he stresses that the process of Hebrew school that leads up to the bar or bat mitzvah is full of countless teachable moments on all sides.

“Our tradition tells us to be sensitive to those among us who are different in some way, particularly in ways that might make them seem or feel weaker.”

Susan North Gilboa, director of OurSpace — a collaboration between Temple Aliyah in Woodland Hills and Valley Beth Shalom in Encino that facilitates Jewish experiences for people with special needs — says parents and teens often reach out to her expressing interest in volunteering for a bar or bat mitzvah project. However, before they sign on, Gilboa advises them that the participants in the OurSpace classes, social groups, art class and choir are not “projects.”

“[Volunteering] isn't just about ‘being nice to them’ or ‘trying to include people with special needs,’” she said. “It's about learning about our [participants'] special abilities and successes,” she says. “While volunteering, teens also learn from OurSpace and its participants about the value of creating spaces for everyone in our community.” **MT**



Tom Fields-Meyer Photo by Joanna Wilcox



Above: Chuppah setup in the Guerin Pavilion, design by Luna Gardens Events. Photo by Albert Postel

Opposite: Guerin Pavilion interior at dusk. Photo by Elan Schoenholz

NEW AND IMPROVED

These upgraded venues aim to add 'wow' to your vows

by ELYSE GLICKMAN, CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Some brides look for the hottest new places for their wedding ceremonies and receptions. Others are interested in staging their nuptials at L.A. mainstays. There are places, however, that offer the best of both worlds — locations that are definitively part of the local DNA, yet have undergone renovations or added new spaces that make them modern and more relevant than ever for today's brides.

Skirball Cultural Center

The most recent addition to the area's venerable venues is in the Sepulveda Pass at the Skirball Cultural Center. That's where bride-to-be Danielle Cohn expects to be the first bride to marry at the Skirball's new Herscher Hall and Guerin Pavilion this December.

"I was looking for something unique, something that would have sen-

timental meaning for me as a Jew," said Cohn of Los Angeles. "I looked at a ton of places, and they all looked the same to me. When I saw the plans [for the new hall], I loved the idea of doing something completely new but in a place so associated with L.A.'s diverse Jewish community."

"I love its colors, which remind me a little bit of Israel. When it was built and I saw it, I loved it, because it looked exactly as it appeared in the plans."

Marilyn Delanoeye, vice president of hospitality and private events at the Skirball (skirball.org), is just as enthusiastic about how the expansive, 17,500-square-foot event facility conceived by world-renowned architect Moshe Safdie will expand ceremony and reception options. One of the most stunning features of the project is a fully retractable window-wall that gives a dramatic view of a cascading terraced garden, providing

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New and Improved

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an impressionistic mural-like feel. The entrance plaza, meanwhile, is accented with coral trees, enamel art panels and a monumental fountain.

"The Skirball is deeply rooted in both Jewish tradition and the local Jewish community," Delanoeye said. "We are proud of our history as a gathering place for Jewish families of diverse ancestries. Based on the way the concept of a *chuppah* has been built into the architecture [an effect achieved with arched ceiling appointments and tiered gardens in full view], for example, wedding ceremonies can take place indoors or outdoors."

The facilities also include a bridal suite, rooms that can be used as a private space for the groom and his groomsmen, a room for the *yichud* following the ceremony just for the newly wedded couple and a family room for gatherings of the immediate family. While there is one caveat — the 4,000-square-foot kitchen is not equipped for glatt kosher events — award-winning chef Sean Sheridan and his team are able to plan menus tailored to the tastes and preferences of the couple using kosher products or kosher-style service.

"We really look at the total needs of the family and the extended community as well as the couple getting married," Delanoeye added.

The Skirball's Herscher Hall and Guerin Pavilion accepts listings and bookings for up to 18 months in advance, though Delanoeye said that there is a greater demand for wedding bookings between the months of March and October.

Sportsmen's Lodge

Sure, the five-star prestige hotels dotting L.A. County have name recognition. But when it comes to historic name-dropping, it's hard to top Sportsmen's Lodge in Studio City, which opened in the 1880s and later evolved into a popular "rural" hangout for Hollywood legends such as Clark Gable, Bette Davis, Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn. Although Los Angeles' urban sprawl has since spilled over into the San Fernando Valley, it is still a popular place for Hollywood productions, including the television series "Parks & Recreation."

Throughout its history, Sportsmen's Lodge Event Center (sportsmentslodge.com) has also been a reliable go-to venue for Jewish weddings and b'nai mitzvah. While it closed for a \$6 million remodel in 2009 and re-opened in 2010, it continues to undergo improvements and upgrades that have transformed it from a dated Western setting to a bright look that is both contemporary and recalls the venue's glory days. The look that is emerging is clean and white, down to the marble floors, winged-back leather chairs, grand entrance and more. There's a garden room with a wall of windows trimmed in

▶ ▶ ▶ 12



The Sportsmen's Lodge has a country charm that makes it attractive for weddings.

Photo courtesy of the Sportsmen's Lodge



The Olympic Collection has six ballrooms and a large, open-air terrace.

Photo courtesy of the Olympic Collection

New and Improved

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white as well.

Meanwhile, the landscaping and country charm are still major selling points for Jewish couples, down to a gazebo that can be adapted into a chuppah on the north end of the property, said director of sales Angie Groves.

"It is a unique venue in the Valley, as not too many other places in the area have lush ponds, waterfalls, bridges and century-old trees," Groves said. "While we don't have a kitchen, what makes Sportsmen's Lodge appealing to the many Valley Jewish communities is that we do allow outside kosher catering.

"While some families love the Hollywood history behind it, others come for one of our two unique ballrooms. We have the 9,550-square-foot Empire Ballroom that features a built-in stage and can accommodate up to 600 guests, while our Starlight Ballroom has windows on two sides of the ballroom that overlook our gardens. The spaces are certainly not the typical four-wall banquet room."

Other features and amenities include portable dance floors, bars, high-tech audio/visual capabilities, individualized décor and assistance in booking all sorts of live entertainment. While the event page on their Web site promises, "We'll help you plan an old-Hollywood soiree for the ages," the staff is also sensitive to the needs and concerns specific to Jewish weddings. Weddings need to be booked up to 18 months in advance.

The Olympic Collection

Although the Olympic Collection (ocbanquet.com) has provided Jewish Angelenos with an appealing alternative to traditional hotel wedding venues since 1991 — as well as space for many Jewish singles events and holiday observances through the years — continuing upgrades have transformed the 35,000-square-foot space consisting of six ballrooms, a large open-air terrace and three meeting rooms (which can be used as dressing rooms or for *ketubah* signings) into a venue that combines function, fashion and flexibility, according to Darien Morea, senior catering and conference services sales manager.

Although Morea says that the cost of the renovation is being kept under wraps, opulent upgrades in the public areas of the West Los Angeles venue include new carpeting, charcoal granite flooring, Venetian glass chandeliers, hand-painted wall frescoes, modernized bars with chocolate granite tops, higher quality fine linen for tables and buffets, marble moldings throughout all of the ballrooms, new champagne and cream color banquet chairs, a new granite stairway for the main ballroom, and modernized upholstery for the third-floor Regency Ballroom walls.

As a chuppah is traditionally connected to the outdoors, according to Morea, the large Regency Ballroom includes a garden terrace with a built-in gazebo that can be customized with florals and greenery. For the winter months, the ballroom includes a skylight at the top of a beautiful curved marble stage that opens fully to the sky. The smaller Atrium Ballroom, accommodating up to 150 people, features windows and sliding glass doors for clients desiring natural light during their events.

The Olympic Collection's executive chefs hail from Spain, France, Iran, Armenia and Central and South America, and can fully integrate the client couple's desired culinary style with the dietary requirements of the family and guests. Behind the scenes Morea said there is a separate on-site kosher kitchen under supervision from the Rabbinical Council of California.

The Olympic Collection accepts listings and bookings for up to 36 months in advance, and its staff of wedding planners can assist couples with the items necessary to fully customize their wedding and reception, including dance floors (with a *mechitzah*, or divider, if desired), bars, tables, chairs, custom linens, lounge furniture and specialty lighting and even the wedding cake itself. ♦



ATTIRE THAT INSPIRES

**As the style standards of teens evolve,
so do the fashions they choose for their big day**

by ELYSE GLICKMAN

Un Deux Trois features looks for girls designed by Beverly Shorkend.

Back in the day, b'nai mitzvah fashion was oh-so-simple. Boys often dressed as their dad's mini-me, while girls either donned something frilly or severe (many moms, no doubt, remember the omnipresent Gunne Sax and Jessica McClintock dresses).

Today's tweens and teens, though, would rather express themselves, dressing as the adult they eventually would like to become, according to Brett Bastello, consumer sales analyst for the San Diego-based jewelry website emissions.com.

"Kids today are more expressive in how they present themselves," he said. "As the culture surrounding bar and bat mitzvah celebrations continues to evolve, so, too, does the range of what is considered acceptable. As time passes, what was once considered edgy will ultimately be considered acceptable."

He said modern b'nai mitzvah attire is adapting everyday fashion trends, which can be seen in the styles in stock at national chains.

Closer to home, Marty Rudnick

of Rudnick's, an Encino mainstay since 1946 that sells boys' and young men's fashions, couldn't agree more. He said he's seeing more form-fitting skinny pants, fitted dress shirts, men's neckties and bow ties scaled for teens, and increasingly liberal uses of color.

While the store does a good business with its own labels, Rudnick's also offers trendy brands Elie Tahari, John Varvatos and Donna Karan.

"If you don't stock that kind of stuff or alter it to how these young customers want their final outfit to look, forget it," Rudnick said. "Kids today know what they want. Even the Orthodox Jewish kids who come in here want their pants narrow and skinny."

Rudnick also has noticed more upscale-casual looks for boys, a departure from the suits that their fathers wore decades ago.

"In the '60s and '70s, kids dressed up more for special occasions, and the big brand was Pierre Cardin," Rudnick said. "We sold many more suits back then, and other than the popular Pierre Cardin velvet suits, the

Continued on page 12



A Donna Karan suit is a fashionable, classy choice for a bar mitzvah. Photo courtesy of Rudnick's

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Attire

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overall look was more conservative. A lot of people wore turtlenecks with their suits, and the pants were bell-bottoms.

"Also, as a lot of kids are now staging their bar mitzvahs in parks, beaches and other outdoor settings, we have to carry everything to stay relevant."

For girls, Un Deux Trois has become "bat mitzvah central," according to Melissa Mayon, a stylist at its Tarzana location. While the brand, designed by Beverly Shorkend, has had dresses on the racks of Nordstrom and Saks Fifth Avenue, the Los Angeles stand-alone boutiques offer a more personalized shopping experience.

"Beverly pulls her ideas for young girls' dresses from so many sources, from runways to pop culture, which is why our stores appeal to so many different types of girls and their parents," Mayon said. "We have something age-appropriate for everybody, from a sweet prom dress look to laser-cut pleather dresses.

"Most girls come to us with their bat mitzvah party theme, party color scheme or personal favorite designers in mind. We style them from head to toe, putting together a look that makes them feel their best and have the best bat mitzvah day possible."

The dresses in Tarzana feature current and timeless looks inspired by Betsey Johnson, Calvin Klein, Halston, Valentino, Sue Wong and Jessica McClintock. Tailoring services, such as hemline lengthening, are available to

*"We style them from head to toe,
putting together a look that makes them
feel their best and have the
best bat mitzvah day possible."*

— Melissa Mayon, a stylist at Un Deux Trois

make runway-fresh looks appropriate for girls from more religious families.

"Because all of our L.A. locations are so heavily used by local Jewish families, we even go as far as having a registry for the dresses for the girls, which comes in handy when you have girls going as guests to several of their classmates' bat mitzvahs," Mayon said. "This ensures each girl having a bat mitzvah has that special day and nobody else will be wearing her dress on that special day."

While Radiant Orchid — a mix of fuchsia, purple and pink that was named 2014 Color of the Year by the Pantone Color Institute — will be big in the late summer and early fall, Mayon said coral and mint green are extremely popular this season.

Accessories can help make even more of a statement. Mayon noted that bling is still a big thing, from bib-style necklaces and crystal bracelets to headbands and bows of crystal.

LF, another L.A.-based boutique chain focused on teen girls, offers dresses from brands such as Paper Heart, Emma & Sam, and Carmar, which cost on average between \$120 and \$160. Larchmont store stylist Rachel Posner said her customers have taken an interest in asymmetrical swing dresses, peasant-style dresses and feminine strap treatments (made more conservative with cardigans, kimono wraps and jean jackets). Pastels and multicolor prints are in demand, too.

"When I had my bat mitzvah 10 years ago, I wore a very formal black-and-white dress," Posner recalled. "It was almost as if I was getting married. While I wore slightly more casual things to other people's bar and bat mitzvahs, the look back then was pretty conservative. Today, as long as you're age appropriate, there are so many more possibilities for how you can express yourself on the big day." **MT**

JUST ADD WATER

Beachfront locales and waterfront hotels offer L.A. families 'see-worthy' venues

by ELYSE GLICKMAN



Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel

While some local families opt for bar or bat mitzvah celebrations in synagogues or hotel ballrooms, others are drawn to a more intimate destination with a stunning backdrop: the Pacific Ocean.

There's a certain romance tied to beachfront weddings, and that appeal extends to b'nai mitzvah ceremonies, according to Ruth Hurwitz of kosher caterer Tarte Catering. She cautioned, however, that the reality of what's required for beach events may pose a challenge to the fantasy.

"We cater events at places like Zuma free beach ... One caveat is you cannot serve alcohol on the beach, and another more important one is that you need to get a permit from the county and city to stage something on a free beach with sand on your toes," she said.

Securing the permits can be complicated, but information is available at marinadelrey.lacounty.gov. Other challenges to consider, Hurwitz said, include the parking situation, restroom availability, furnishing a site with party rental furniture that will be stable in the sand, and creating a beachfront menu that will mitigate the chance of bugs and sand getting in the food.

Hurwitz recommends a barbecue format, where food is fresh and grilled-to-order, adding that the familiar banquet style doesn't mix well with the beach.

"We work with several South-African Jewish families who have us create a traditional *braai* [barbecue] experience," Hurwitz said. "Persian and Israeli families have us create a menu involving cooked kabobs on skewers, and our equipment includes 2-foot swords to roast meats and vegetables. As we're based in Malibu, we do a lot of work with local farmers and bring in a lot of that 'farm-to-table' produce experience, giving the party freshness and color."

Dana Bresin, a professional event planner and owner of DB Creativity, has extensive experience with beachfront event planning. She said those smitten with the idea of having the ceremony outside underscored many possible difficulties, including taking the Torah out on the sand, where it is vulnerable to wind, and the possibility of people being less comfortable outside, as it can be a long ceremony.

She encouraged people to use a planner to help facilitate the permits and the necessary preparations. A planner, Bresin said, will organize the information required for the permits, approach the county's parks and recreation bureau, recommend and procure the right rental furniture and help pinpoint the best location.

Rooms with a View

The venue doesn't have to be right on the sand to have the beach-like feel. Several waterfront hotels and restaurants in Los Angeles County not only offer the valuable commodity of location, but also high-end hotel amenities and services along with the ability to stage a bar mitzvah on the waterfront — or at least facing it.

Terranea Resort in Rancho Palos Verdes has much-touted waterfront space and myriad other features. Event spaces include the Catalina Room — complete with an outdoor terrace — the Marineland Ballroom and Palos Verdes Terrace. The Palos Verdes Grand Ballroom, Terranea's largest space available, can accommodate up to 900 people.

Leslie McCammon, senior catering sales manager at Terranea Resort, said Terranea works exclusively with Pat's Kosher Catering in West L.A., and a satellite kitchen can be built for those events.

Terranea also boasts a cadre of other activities for adults, teens and kids to enjoy before or after the party, including golf, spa, Pointe Dis-

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Water

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covery activities (falconry, horseback), as well as the Tide Pool Kids Club.

For those who want an oceanfront/maritime ambiance but are not fond of sand, The Ritz-Carlton, Marina Del Rey offers custom bar and bat mitzvah packages.

"For smaller bar or bat mitzvahs, The Ballroom Terrace welcomes up to 70 guests (50 with a dance floor), breathtaking views of the marina, and is a wonderful space for candle lighting and other elements of the ceremony," Hernan Berlese, the catering sales manager, said. "For larger parties, our Marina Vista room on the lobby level delivers ambiance without worries of sand or rain, along with a private verandah with panoramic marina views and luxurious crystal chandeliers."

Although the hotel does not have a kosher kitchen, Berlese said it refers to a list of recommended kosher caterers and the Rabbinical Council of California, which gives the hotel the ability to kosherize its kitchen.

"We can also do kosher-style for less religious families, using kosher meats and ingredients, without the Mehadrin kosherization in the kitchen and dining room required for glatt kosher," he said.

Style in Santa Monica

The waterfront flanking Santa Monica offers families a banquet of other choices. According to Loews Santa Monica Beach Hotel's senior catering manager Li-Ling Li, the airy, contemporary property includes the Venice Room and the Ocean & Vine Restaurant, which are connected and feature ocean views and an outdoor patio — perfect for families planning to separate adults and kids during the reception. Loews also has many different dietary needs covered.

"We offer kosher-style and glatt kosher catering since we have a

kosher kitchen," Li said. "We also allow outside catering as long it is through a professional caterer. We offer nontraditional and traditional bar mitzvah set-ups all within one beachfront property.

"Loews is a kid-friendly hotel, and we always have plenty of activities to offer. We are also located on the beach and within walking distance to the Santa Monica Pier, Venice Beach and the Third Street Promenade," Li said.

While neighboring Shutters on the Beach and Hotel Casa Del Mar have long been fashionable destinations for both local and out-of-town visitors, they also offer their own unique takes on the Santa Monica bar or bat mitzvah experience.

Shutters on the Beach has a simple but luxurious beach-house vibe. Neighboring Hotel Casa Del Mar has history going for it — the 1920s structure has been beautifully restored to its Renaissance Revival architectural perfection.

What both hotels have in common, in addition to a view of the festive Santa Monica Pier, is a catering/events team headed by Stephen Friddle. According to Friddle, Shutters on the Beach's Pacific Terrace rolls out to beach and ocean views, making it a perfect pre-dinner reception space. The Grand Salon, Shutters' main ballroom, seats up to 220 guests with a dance floor and features a working fireplace. The Promenade Room and Terrace, adjacent to the Grand Salon, is often used as a separate kids space for activities, games and food stations, he said.

Hotel Casa Del Mar's Colonnade Ballroom, distinguished with floor-to-ceiling windows facing the ocean, seats up to 270 guests. The ballroom configuration is ideal for lounge-type seating and vignette play spaces. The outdoor terrace, meanwhile, is a fun area for food stations, a s'mores bar, or, in the daytime, beach activities.

Both properties offer *a la carte* menus and bar or bat mitzvah packages, and Hotel Casa Del Mar is equipped for hotel-approved kosher caterers. **MT**

Beyond the ballroom

by ELYSE GLICKMAN



Warner Bros. Studios offers a number of themed outdoor backlot sets.

NEED A CHANGE IN PARTY PAGE? CHECK OUT THESE EXCITING SOCIAL LOCALES!

Themed bar and bat mitzvah celebrations built around a teen's personality and interests have long been popular. Another trend has been destination bar or bat mitzvahs, where families hold the event at a meaningful site in another state or country.

But there is a middle ground between trying to personalize a local ballroom and undertaking the herculean effort of a family pilgrimage: finding a local venue that is out of the ordinary. And when it comes to attractions — especially in the worlds of cinema, science and history — Los Angeles has an embarrassment of riches, many of which can provide the right setting for an out-of-this-world, coming-of-age celebration.

As with any venue, proper planning is a must — from securing dates and creating a budget, to making sure the venue is a good fit for your family. Here are some recommendations and contacts to get you started. Happy hunting!

The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County

If your teen's interest in prehistory, science or wildlife runs deeper than the silver screen versions (i.e. "Jurassic Park," "The Jungle Book"), the Natural History Museum in Exposition Park can transform his or her celebration into an exciting journey. Incredible backdrops for larger events include the Oschin Family Hall of African Mammals and the North American Mammal Hall, with their life-size habitat dioramas, and the Grand Foyer, where the iconic "Dueling Dinosaurs" (triceratops and Tyrannosaurus rex) keep a close eye on the action.

Event packages, which range from \$10,000 to \$17,500, include an event manager, use of or access to multiple rooms, parking, and a one-year membership in the museum's premier group of benefactors. While the museum provides a list of food vendors providing kosher-style options, the list also includes Thank Goodness It's Sophia (tgiscatering.com), which uses a fully *kashrut* kitchen for food preparation, making it a good option for more observant families.

900 Exposition Blvd., Los Angeles. For more information, contact Jesse Schoeffling at (213) 763-3308 or jschoeffling@nhm.org.

The Los Angeles Zoo

Is a safari at the top of your bucket list? The L.A. Zoo can provide the next best thing for bar and bat mitzvah families. One of the most enchanting areas for a party is Elephants of Asia, which seats between 450 and 650 people; the rental fee is \$5,000 for an evening. More intimate settings include the Cambodia Pavilion, a Southeast Asian-inspired space overlooking the elephant habitat (seating for 50: \$2,200); the Stilt House, a space surrounded by jungle greenery adjacent to the Rainforest of the Americas section (seating for 80: \$2,500); and Chimpanzees of the Mahale Mountains, graced with giraffes and other African wildlife (daytime seating for 150: \$1,000; evening seating for 250: \$2,200). Packages include zoo admission, tickets for daytime events, security, custodial staff, linens and other incidentals.

Menu packages are as diverse as the animal kingdom itself. "The Taste of the Wild" includes a sandwich and salad buffet or build-your-own-burger arrangement (\$18 per adult; \$13 per child) and dinner buffet (\$42 per adult; \$25.95 per child). Observant families can opt for catering from Got

See **VENUES** on page 24



Pacific Park on the Santa Monica Pier Photo courtesy of Pacific Park



The Globe Theatre at Universal Studios can offer a customized marquee.



Moulin Rouge-themed bat mitzvah at the Globe Theatre



Graffiti-themed party at the Globe Theatre

Venues

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Kosher? (gotkosherinc.com). Optional add-on activities (for an additional charge) include an Animal Walkabout, face painting and a caricature artist.

5333 Zoo Drive, Los Angeles. For more information, contact Cathy Walker, manager of private and corporate events, at (323) 644-4781.

Pacific Park on the Santa Monica Pier

Opened in 1996, Pacific Park is the first amusement park to exist on the Santa Monica Pier since the 1930s. The two-acre park boasts classic fun with 12 amusement park rides and 14 midway games, along with an over-the-ocean food plaza featuring favorites like cotton candy and ice cream.

The Park's 3,600-square-foot Event Pavilion accommodates from 100 to 300 guests. The pavilion has a minimum fee of \$12,000 to rent the space, which includes everything

needed for a complete carnival experience. Packages start at \$55 per person and include use of the pavilion for up to four hours, unlimited barbecue buffet for 1 1/2 hours, bottled waters and canned sodas, an unlimited ride wristband, \$10 in game play "money," an event manager to assist on site, and a grounds crew to set up and break down the area.

For larger groups of up to 1,500 people, the entire park can be rented. "Buy Out" proposals are customized for each event and can include catering, bar service, unlimited rides, game play, popcorn, cotton candy, funnel cakes, Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf drinks, classic photo booths and more. Outside kosher catering can be brought in. Pacific Park also has a list of recommended on-site vendors.

Parking is in a city-owned lot; rates vary between \$6 and \$15 depending on the season and day of the week, and may increase during special pier events. Contact the city of Santa Monica at (310) 458-8295.

*See **VENUES** on page 31*



Battleship USS Iowa



The Los Angeles Zoo

Venues

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380 Santa Monica Pier, Santa Monica. To begin planning your event, go to pacpark.com/events-picnics to fill out a request.

Battleship USS Iowa

This historic military vessel is the perfect place for a history buff or maritime enthusiast to celebrate. Known as the "Battleship of Presidents," the Iowa can accommodate up to 1,500 people for a standing reception and 800 for a seated banquet. There are eight venue options, including the flight deck with its front-and-center view of the battleship's impressive artillery section. Thanks to the ship's practical design, it is also an ideal site for smaller bar mitzvahs, with unique spaces that include the Wardroom, the Admiral's Veranda, Captain's Veranda and Chief Officer's Mess Hall. Fireworks, parachuters and other unique enhancements are also available.

"We thought this was a perfect fit," said Matthew Skoll, who select-

ed the battleship for his son Riley's big day back in January. "The kids got to tour the ship, and there were plenty of activities on board that kept everybody busy, entertained and learning about some interesting history in the process."

Skoll also liked the location near the Port of Los Angeles, which he said made for spectacular photographs, as well as the freedom to get creative with his choice of caterers — he hired a couple of food trucks and another caterer to provide appetizers.

The costs for most custom packages run \$23 per guest if families opt for one of the site's preferred vendors, and \$26 per guest if they bring in their own caterer.

250 S. Harbor Blvd., Los Angeles. For more information, contact Todd J. Caleca, events manager, at (877) 446-9261, ext. 704 or events@labattleship.com.

Warner Bros. Studios

For a teen fascinated with the behind-the-scenes workings of Hollywood, look no farther than the fabled

backlot of Warner Bros. Studios. Depending on the number of guests, a family can keep it simple with a VIP tour followed by lunch, or opt for an awards-show-inspired night on the town with red carpet and stellar outdoor lighting. Groups can range from 50 to 2,000 people, and prices will vary depending on guest count and space.

"We have a variety of themed outdoor backlot sets along with interactive museum space that can be used for special events," said Natalie Hagee, special events sales manager at the studio. "They offer an exciting glimpse into the movie-making process. ... One of our most popular themes right now is the superhero party, since the release of 'Batman v Superman' and the success of [the television series] 'Supergirl.' We may even be able to use props from the actual movies, including Batmobiles."

3400 W. Riverside Drive, Burbank. For more information, visit wbsspecialvents.com or call Natalie Hagee at (818) 954-2652.

Universal Studios Hollywood Special Events

The centrally located, multipurpose theme park can accommodate events with 20 to 20,000 guests over a total of 65,000 square feet of indoor and outdoor space. The myriad event options, including a buyout of the entire theme park, includes Hollywood-style dining provided by the Wolfgang Puck Catering Group, which has kosher-style options available.

Features of a park event include private access to attractions and tours of the world's largest working movie studio and theme park; access to most of the park's top attractions (Despicable Me Minion Mayhem; Jurassic Park — The Ride; Transformers: The Ride 3-D; Revenge of the Mummy — The Ride; and The Simpsons Ride); a private backlot studio tour; a customized message on the Globe Theatre's exterior marquee; and a dedicated event specialist.

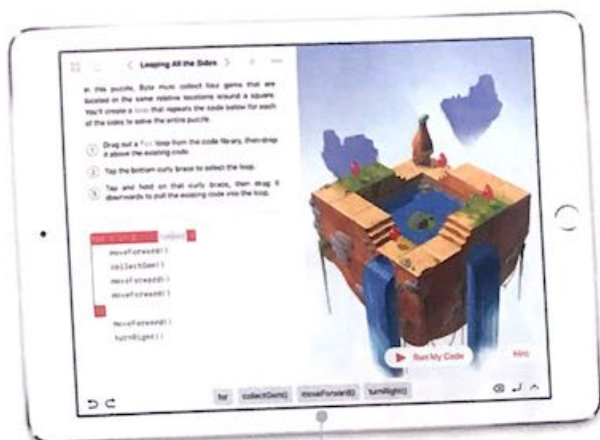
*100 Universal City Plaza, Universal City. For more information, contact Angela Griffin at (818) 622-3484. **MT***

Beyond books

STEAM-POWERED FUN FOR KIDS AND TEENS

by ELYSE GLICKMAN

It's no secret that educators are finding magic in forward-thinking and multidisciplinary STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) curricula. For parents looking to bring a little of that home, there are plenty of hot items out on the market to help. Here are a few favorites suggested by area educators.



The free "SWIFT PLAYGROUNDS" app for the iPad (no age appropriateness suggested) uses puzzles and games to teach Apple's powerful coding language used for making many of today's popular apps. That's an important head start on college — and whatever comes next, according to Rick St. Laurent, principal of general studies at YULA Boys High School. "Getting teens started with coding early is vital to their future education," he said. apple.com

YULA's Rick St. Laurent also suggested the tiny, no-frills **RASPBERRY PI** computer (starting at \$20, model shown, \$25) as "a wonderful gift for any aspiring scientist, as it allows him to jump into the world of computer science." This low-cost, credit-card-size computer enables people of all ages to explore computing and to learn how to program in various languages like Scratch and Python. It plugs into a computer monitor or TV and uses a standard keyboard and mouse. raspberrypi.org



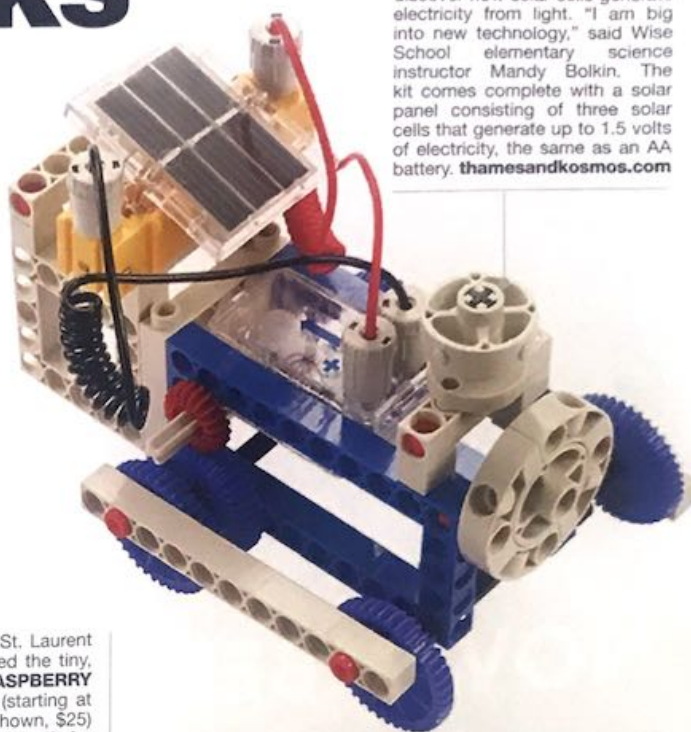
For Jim Pike, a fifth-grade teacher at the Albert Einstein Odyssey Academy in Beverly Hills, it's all about finding ways to use the popular game "MINECRAFT" (\$26.95 for Mac and Windows; anyone under 13 must go through a parent to set up an account), in which users can create their own worlds and experiences. "The things I see students doing with 'Minecraft' is above and beyond anything a textbook could re-create," he said. "While I use a textbook to introduce kids to what we're going to research, 'Minecraft' brings a project to a higher level." For example, while teaching about the inner workings of cells, Pike had students design a game in which players had to penetrate a cell to stop a virus from destroying its DNA coding. minecraft.net



GOLDIEBLOX AND THE BUILDER'S SURVIVAL KIT (\$59.99, age 7 and up) is part of a series dreamed up to introduce girls to engineering by getting them to build structures and inventions around Goldie Blox, Ruby Rails and their enterprising friends. "It's an ingenious alternative to Lego, because it comes with a story," said Felicity Swerdlow, director of curriculum and instruction at Abraham Joshua Heschel Day School. "What we found is that the girls don't want to build for the sake of building, in contrast to boys. They want a story behind what they are doing." goldiebox.com



The **THAMES AND KOSMOS SOLAR POWER EXPERIMENT KIT** (\$49.95, age 8 and up) allows kids to build their own solar-powered models and discover how solar cells generate electricity from light. "I am big into new technology," said Wise School elementary science instructor Mandy Bolkin. The kit comes complete with a solar panel consisting of three solar cells that generate up to 1.5 volts of electricity, the same as an AA battery. thamesandkosmos.com



FINDING ROOTS IN ISRAEL

Many boomers are still discovering their connection to an ancient past in the Holy Land

by ELYSE GLICKMAN

Although Birthright and other identity-instilling trips to Israel for young adults have gotten a lot of Jewish media attention, there is another subset of the Jewish population — baby boomers — looking for a similar experience in Israel that transcends the leisure vacation.

Anat Ben Yosef, director of the Western Region USA of the Israel Ministry of Tourism in Los Angeles, said there are specialized Jewish tours aimed at that age group — born between 1946 and 1964 — appealing to those who want to make a deeper connection to their heritage, much as their children and grandchildren have.

"Jews who grew up hearing about Israel, who watch the news and have heard stories from Birthright participants are probably going to want a more meaningful tour," Ben Yosef said.

The Ministry of Tourism is on the brink of launching a new campaign that is directed exactly toward boomers who are "Jewish, well-traveled and curious," she said.

Specialized travel companies — in SoCal and elsewhere in the U.S. — offer various options for planning assistance. Calabasas-based America Israel Travel (americaisraeltravel.net), owned by Noam Matas, offers numerous specialized packages, and assists independent groups, such as L'Dor V'Dor (a program offering partially subsidized trips to Israel for people 55 and older), in pulling together itineraries and logistics.

"Some Jewish tour clients [tell us] they have been there when they were younger, but want to revisit with a fresh set of eyes," Matas said.

For boomers looking specifically for Jewish identity-building trips, two Florida-based operators — Boomers Israel and Israel Celebration Tours — offer tours built around interactive experiences with Birthright-like elements.

Rabbi Baruch Plotkin, who served as the rabbi at the University of Miami and founded Boomers Israel (boomersisrael.com) in 2012, led trips that were precursors to Birthright Israel in the 1990s and led some Birthright trips in the early 2000s. He said what makes Birthright unique is how the country itself is used as a tool for travelers in exploring their "personal connections to Israel's

Skyline of the Old City, Jerusalem.

Photo courtesy of the Israel Ministry of Tourism



land and culture as Jews."

Plotkin said that having seen Birthright's impact on Jewish identity, parents and relatives of participants asked him if they could do a similar trip. His answer, ultimately, was "yes," and Boomers Israel took flight. Although the trips are not subsidized, Birthright-type elements that instill Jewish identity are front and center.

"The experience is meant to be intimate, and you're not going with a random group of strangers," Plotkin said. "We do pre-programming, where we connect with travelers online or by phone."

Visits to key historic Jewish sites are interspersed with discussion sessions during which travelers share their reactions to the sites and talk about whether they feel more connected to their Jewish backgrounds. Plotkin also aims to create a family dynamic within the boomer groups to give them a tangible experience of Jewish community.

"The 60-and-older crowd are emerging retirees, and they may have been a doctor, lawyer or business person, which became their identity," he said. "When they retire, they experience an identity crisis because they are no longer in the professional sector that defined them."

"The other interesting thing about some of the boomers, besides the fact that there are 10,000 retiring every day, is that they were hippies interested in spirituality. Today, they are coming back to that spirituality in a more wholesome, traditional way."

Plotkin said he is planning variations to his company's trips, too, including ones for women only.

Like Plotkin, Rabbi Lee Diamond spent much of his career shaping young Jewish identities. For several years he was a director of the Alexander Muss High School in Israel, where Jewish-American teenagers spend two months studying Jewish history and values in classrooms and the field.

"After the Birthright program began, it occurred to me that there is a whole generation of people who missed that opportunity — boomers born around the time that the State of Israel was established," Diamond said. "Statistics show that about 30 percent, at best, of Jewish boomers [who are] non-Orthodox [Reform, Conservative and unaffiliated] have been to Israel."

Even with the word "tour" in the company name, Diamond prefers to think of his itineraries as "telling the story of the Jewish people in the land of Israel."

"We go from site to site in ways that trace our history as it developed," Diamond said. "In that process, we not only go to places where major events happened, but we also talk about the Jewish values that came out of these key events."

For example, when Diamond's Israel Celebration Tours (israelcelebration-tours.com) group goes to Masada, participants don't just talk about the battle of Masada and look at some rocks. He said they also "talk about the sanctification of life, and why what the people did there was not suicide but bravery — people willing to give their lives for a higher value. The rocks should also help tell the story. It is not an easy journey, but it is a wonderful journey, as we

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HOUSE CLINIC

House Ear Clinic is affiliated with the University of Southern California School Of Medicine and provides instruction in otology to the otolaryngology residents at the UCLA/LAC Medical Center. **House Ear Clinic** physicians also volunteer their time teaching specialty courses locally and around the world. To date, over 22,000 doctors have received training in our facilities. Since 1946, the House Research Institute had led the way in defining the causes of hearing and balance disorders, improving medical/surgical procedures and prosthetic devices. The Institute's discoveries have helped millions of people receive successful treatments.

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Israel

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empower the travelers to become part of that story.”

Plotkin and Diamond stress that these trips are great opportunities for those who didn't have a religious upbringing to connect with Judaism. They also note that though the trips are less physically challenging than young-adult trips, there is still a lot of physical activity, and they are thus best suited for adults in good health and physical condition.

Other options include checking with The Jewish Federation of Los Angeles for the latest news on its planned mission trips to Israel. Boomers can also look for members-only travel opportunities within their synagogues. Rabbi John Rosove of Temple Israel of Hollywood (TIOH) has taken groups, many filled with boomers, on 10-day trips to Israel over the past 15 years.

“These trips are intense and transformative,” Rosove said. “They are intended to introduce my congregants to the rich diversity of opinion and expe-

rience in Israel.”

Rosove said his groups meet with politicians, military leaders, journalists, artists, settlers, and “community organizers in both the Jewish and Palestinian communities,” among others. Rosove added that two of his congregants have taken leadership roles in TIOH because of their experiences on these trips.

Keri Hausner, a recent past president of TIOH's board and a veteran of three synagogue trips with Rosove, was not only moved by historic sites but also by interactions with Israelis and Palestinians that immersed her in Israeli politics in ways that transcended the “us-versus-them” mentality.

“The most remarkable thing is that in intervals of three years, a lot has changed, and yet a lot stays the same,” Hausner said. “We spoke to people on the far left and the far right of the religious and political spectrum. The diversity of Israelis and Palestinians we met was almost overwhelming.

“This is a moment in Israeli-Palestinian history that cannot be explained or learned in a textbook,” she continued. “What the trips did for me is — especially as I have no family there but I do have spiritual and cultural ties — it prompted me to be more involved in this conversation.” ■