

whole life ^{times}

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sustainability goes way off the grid

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+
surviving a panic attack
yoga as a path to forgiveness
falling in love with Portland
success track: get it done

HOMEBOY'S Where the HEART Is

A safe space in the meanest streets

A quarter century has gone by since Father Gregory "Greg" Joseph Boyle, a Jesuit priest, started Jobs for a Future, which ultimately blossomed into Homeboy Industries (www.homeboy-industries.org). It not only got thousands of teens and young adults off some of L.A.'s meanest streets in South Central, but also transcended the traditional parameters of what anti-gang and



Father Greg at Homeboy Industries, Thanksgiving morning 2011

rehabilitation programs could offer. It's grown so that each year about 300–350 work in the job-training program, and an additional 12,000 come in for tattoo removal and other services.

The Homeboy organization got its start in a bakery across from the Delores Mission in Boyle Heights, and has expanded into such enterprises as the farm-to-table Homegirl Café & Catering, Homeboy Farmers Markets, Homeboy Diner at City Hall and Homeboy Grocery (launched in 2011 with branded tortilla strips and several salsas, available at Ralphs and elsewhere). While the homespun, locally sourced food products are confirmed hits, environmentalists will also be pleased to learn that Homeboy Industries now offers a solar panel installation training and certification program.

"Because our trainees come from deep poverty, missed out on childhood and in many cases were pushed out of school, their opportunities have been limited, and the vast majority have some kind of [prison] record," explains Alison Camacho, director of marketing and communications. "This is why we focus on industries like food service and solar energy. However, we've also found these to be places where our trainees not only develop skills, but also meaningful experiences. When you learn to bake bread side-by-side with someone who used to be your 'enemy,' or you grow carrots in the neighborhood where you were once shot and left to die, as one of our Homegirls does now, you get a sense of being able to create new life in the day-to-day work you do."

The ever-expanding food enterprises most recently caught the imagination of nationally prominent chef Thomas Keller, who toured the facility. "When you see its inner workings, you want to become a part of the effort to make a difference," says Keller, who was moved to launch an externship program for a hand-selected group of Homeboy participants alongside students from such schools as Culinary Institute of America. It is funded in part by upscale cooking school programs at his French Laundry and Per Se restaurants.

While Keller's high-profile involvement has brought a welcome spotlight to Homeboy Industries, Camacho says the various programs are still squarely focused on finding new ways to create opportunities for young people born into life-limiting circumstances that would otherwise be difficult to escape. "For us," Camacho says, "having a safe space where our trainees can share their stories and speak with people from all over the city is in itself a triumph."

—Elyse Glickman

contributors

Elyse Glickman

I've had a lifelong love affair with food, especially rich things served during the holiday season. Unfortunately, it showed a little too well a few years ago. As I am always interested in finding creative ways to have my cake and eat it too, I was inspired by the new breed of vegetarian and vegan restaurants creating sweets and savories that are also fantastic comfort foods.



FOOD OPTIONS GET "REAL" AT TERMINAL 4



By Elyse Glickman

Healthy eating prepares for take-off

Despite extra security and austerity in travel, LAX is answering the call for healthier, more wholesome options that can be enjoyed before or during a flight. Coming soon to Terminal 4: L.A. favorite Real Food Daily (RFD).

Having launched three successful Southland locations, Ann Gentry, founder and operating owner, propelled her concept (creative, organic plant-based fare) into an airport destination she is confident will fly not only with vegetarian, vegan and food-sensitive customers, but anybody seeking an alternative to the customary "airport food."

While RFD's contributions to the evolution of airport dining has been three years in the making, Gentry projects the venue will open in time for this year's busy holiday travel season.

"As people have to spend more time at airports because of security, they want to eat smarter," Gentry muses. Interest in fast food is waning, as people become more health conscious, and "what they will instead ultimately experience in Terminal 4 and at Tom Bradley Terminal next door are authentic, quality restaurants that all had their start in L.A. We are representing in our airport what is on the street and popular with locals."

Terminal space limits and time restrictions for travelers



mean a condensed version of her menu, but Gentry notes items featured were tested by regular customers and friends at the West Hollywood location over several weekends. Although there will be a handful of "grab-and-go" items for the plane, including chilled salads and a hummus wrap, RFD at LAX is all about delicious choices prepared fresh and customized to order.

"Our biggest meal period will be breakfast, served from 5-11am daily, with selections including pancakes, French toast, tofu scrambles, and our new tofu and English muffin-based RFD Breakfast Sammie," Gentry reports. "While our main courses and daily specials won't be on the menu, as hot doesn't travel well, we will have our Real Food Basics & Bowls, salads, starters, desserts and nachos—for in-terminal dining, of course. We're also excited about our full juice bar, which offers travelers far more than just a \$4 bottle of water."



Kimchi-maki photo: Tara Punzone (top right)



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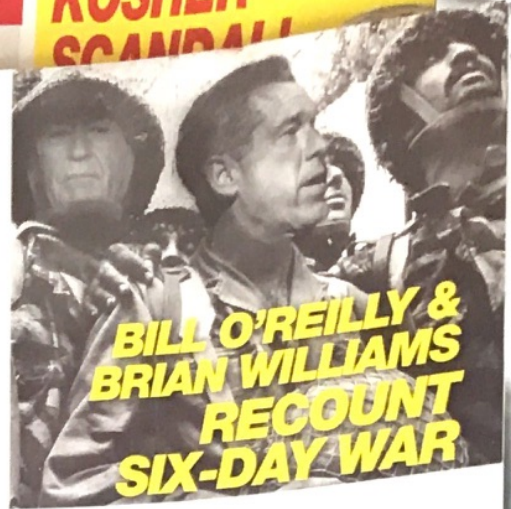
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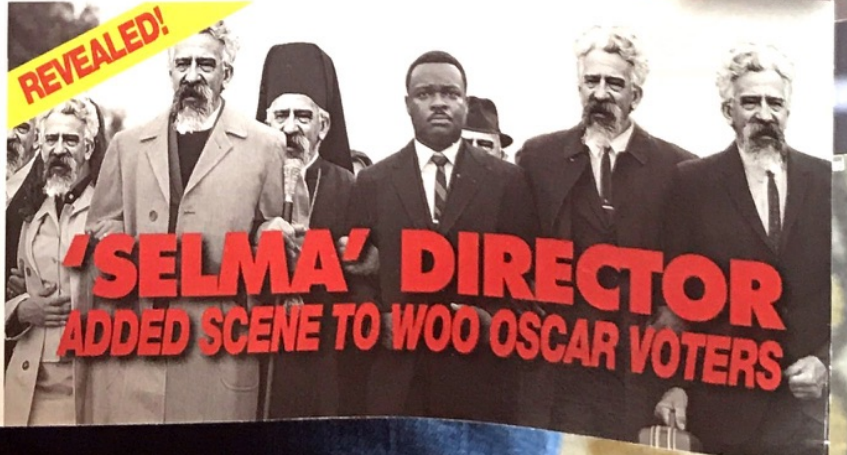


**LEAKED STILL
FROM THE
SEQUEL!**

**'50
SHADES
OF BLACK'**



REVEALED!



**'SELMA' DIRECTOR
ADDED SCENE TO WOO OSCAR VOTERS**

TRAVEL

EUROPEAN TRAVEL: SHOULD I STAY OR SHOULD I GO?

by ELYSE GLICKMAN, Contributing Writer

Three days before I was to depart for Europe on a river cruise traversing the waterways of the Netherlands and Belgium, I woke up to the news that terrorists had detonated explosives at Brussels' airport and one of the city's metro stations, killing more than 30 victims and wounding more than 300 others.

Ten minutes later, I received a call from my (predictably) worried mom in Chicago, telling me to check to see if anything was canceled. A representative from the cruise line, the Calabasas-based AmaWaterways, answered my email within minutes, informing me the trip was still on, though the itinerary was changed due to the March 22 attacks: Our time in Belgium would be confined to a day and a half and we would be having more stops in Dutch towns instead.

My travel companion was on the phone with me 20 minutes later, arguing that we should move ahead as planned with the cruise, even with less time in Belgium. Otherwise, he said, "The terrorists would win."

We were not the only ones with these concerns. Jon and Robyn Cohen, a Reform couple from West Hollywood, ultimately decided to set sail, too, but not without careful consideration. We discussed the subject en route to a half-day excursion in Ghent in northern Belgium, where we experienced an unsettling moment crossing through an underpass defaced with neo-Nazi graffiti.

Jon, a comedy writer and ad operations manager at Midroll, a Hollywood podcast company, said the package he and his wife selected was based on what was and what wasn't on the itinerary.

"I did not want to go to France, especially given the attacks in Paris and how Jews were affected by them," he said. "[As I followed] the news, I found few anti-Semitic [events] happening in Belgium and Holland."

That didn't stop his father from issuing the familiar warning, "Don't tell anybody you are Jewish." And Robyn, a travel agent with Pleasant Holidays, was cautioned by her mother against wearing religious jewelry.

Informed by a career in tourism that included time at the Chicago Convention and Tourism Bureau, Robyn took a pragmatic view of the situation.

"[Terrorism] can happen anywhere, including L.A.," she said. "I left the final decisions to AmaWaterways regarding whether or not the cruise would be canceled or how they would modify the schedule."

"One thing that puts this kind of situation into perspective is that I work with Pleasant's Caribbean products, and we've been doing battle with the Zika virus and the perceptions generated in the news. While I can't travel there, as I am pregnant, for everybody else traveling there, I advise taking common sense precautions."

Although Jon insisted Robyn make calls to

the cruise line to get updates, she assured him that Amsterdam — the start and end point for the cruise — was far enough away from Brussels, and security precautions had been taken. Our conversation shifted again to our one full-day Belgian adventure in Antwerp, which went without a hitch.

"However, the concerns would be different in many places if I were Orthodox," Jon said.

The increased security presence around Antwerp combined with the business-as-usual spirit made us truly appreciate the frites, architecture and bike tour of the Jewish quarter all the more. Religiously observant men with beards and tallitot went about their day, breezing past us on their bikes as the guide explained that the city has one of the highest concentrations of Orthodox Jews in the world outside Israel and Brooklyn.

Several travel agents specializing in Jewish travel advised customers to proceed with their plans these days, as long as they keep both their minds and eyes open to stay safe.

Florida-based Sophia Kulich, who operates Jewish Travel Agency and Sophia's Travel, suggested that her clients take U.S. government travel advisories seriously and register with its Smart Traveler Enrollment Program (step.state.gov) to stay up to date on travel alerts. She also recommended investing in travel insurance, particularly "cancel by any reason" policies, should events pose a threat to travelers.

"So far, we have not had any cancellations [for European travel], but then again, our Jewish clients continue to go to Israel on a regular basis despite attacks," Kulich said. "Anybody who is afraid of traveling will not travel; experienced travelers will go."

Irina Vishnevskaya, owner of Allé travel, a custom-itinerary travel company based in Minneapolis whose client base is predominantly Jewish, recently addressed client concerns on her blog at alletravel.co. Vishnevskaya's advice is to compare one's fears with the available facts while taking into account the possible biases of different sources, including travel companies that want your business. It's also important to remember that tourism is the lifeblood of many cities' economies and visiting may be one way to help. In the end, she said, it all comes down to the individual.

"There's always the 'if you cancel your trip you're letting the terrorists win' argument, which certainly may be true, but I don't like to tell people that because it's about personal choices, and doing what feels right for each and every individual traveler," she wrote. Author



Robyn and Jon Cohen's trip to Europe included a visit to Ghent, Belgium. Photo by Elyse Glickman

Bob Tupper, who travels the world with his wife, Ellie, to research the world's craft beers, said Jews should actually make it a point to expose themselves to Jewish destinations across the European continent.

"The question of why Jews travel to Europe is an easy one to answer," the Washington, D.C., resident said. "Jewish quarters are among the most beautiful sights in Europe. Jewish travelers might want to consider a visit to Prague, as it is an exceptionally safe city. In Amsterdam, a visit to the Anne Frank house is a reminder that things have been worse, and even when they were worse, courageous people risked their lives to do the right thing."

It occurred to me that this wasn't the first time unforeseen events coincided with one of my trips, giving me a unique perspective on an ever-changing world. In November 2014, I traveled to Hong Kong in the middle of protests between students and Chinese central government authorities. The scene was a lot calmer than what was broadcast; public announcements in the subways and on local blogs made it easy to avoid protest flair-ups. And during a trip to Israel in March 2012, I experienced a campus evacuation during a visit to Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in Beersheba when an air raid siren went off. I marveled at how people calmly pulled together to get to safety, and how a dinner with students was relocated without drama or fanfare.

Inconvenient? Yes. Sobering? Absolutely. But moments like these — including my visit to the Benelux waterways — are as important to the travel experience as the meals and historic site visits that still put a smile on one's face years later. ■

TRAVEL

A JEWISH STATE GROWS IN BASEL

by ELYSE GLICKMAN, Contributing Writer

Basel, Switzerland, could be thought of as the cradle of modern Zionism. It was here that the First Zionist Congress was held in 1897, and the city remains a pilgrimage site for many American and Israeli Jews.

One of the most powerful and attractive locations that still draws visitors is Grand Hotel Les Trois Rois (lestroisrois.com), where journalist and father of modern Zionism Theodor Herzl stayed in 1897. Noted for its plush interiors, picture windows and central location, Les Trois Rois is as grand a hotel today as it was when it first opened in 1844, thanks in part to the extensive renovations undertaken on the property in 2004.

Herzl memorably occupied a room that overlooks the Rhine River, and an iconic photograph captures him on the balcony deep

"Were I to sum up the Basel Congress in a word — which I shall guard against pronouncing publicly — it would be this: At Basel I founded the Jewish State," Herzl wrote. "If I said this out loud today, I would be answered by universal laughter. Perhaps in five years, and certainly in fifty, everyone will recognize this."

Future congresses would be held here as well, but to understand Basel's context within world Jewish history, one has to think beyond Les Trois Rois and Stadt-Casino. A good place to start is with Bâleph (baleph.ch), an ambitious smartphone and tablet app launched in 2014 for Jewish travelers to Basel. It offers a multimedia walking tour that covers the 800-year history of Jews in the city.

Although Jews living in Switzerland today coexist relatively peacefully with Christians,



Grand Hotel Les Trois Rois, which opened in 1844, is where Theodor Herzl stayed in 1897, when the First Zionist Congress was held in Basel. Photos by Elyse Glickman

in meditation. The junior suite, which can be booked based on availability, may have slightly more modern and luxurious appointments than it had over a century ago, but the inspiring, panoramic river view remains.

Herzl's road to Basel, which shares a border with both France and Germany, began after he witnessed various events in his work as a journalist covering the Dreyfus affair in France. The Hungarian-born writer penned "Der Judenstaat" (The Jewish State) in 1896, a volume detailing the necessity for a Jewish state free of the wholesale persecution that had plagued European Jews for centuries. He then convened about 200 people from 17 countries at the First Zionist Congress at Basel's Stadt-Casino concert hall, forming the World Zionist Organization and propelling the vision for a Jewish state.

Even though Israel would not be established for another 50 years — long after Herzl's death — he expressed no doubts in his diary about what was accomplished in Switzerland during that first gathering.

It is important to remember that Basel, like other European cities from the Middle Ages to the 19th century, was a place where Jews were subject to second-class-citizen status, vocational restrictions, persecution and pogroms. In 1349, for example, 600 Jews were burned at the stake and the surviving 140 children forcibly baptized.

According to various sources — including my Basel Tourism guide Armgard Sasse, a registered city tour guide well versed in Jewish history and with close ties to the Jewish community — Jews were required to live outside Basel's city walls and restricted to the money-lending trade. Until recently, one gate leading into the present-day central business district featured a plaque dating to the early 18th century listing entry tolls and warning Jews to be out of the city when a loud curfew bell was rung.

Relief came to Swiss Jews starting with the Great Council of Helvetia (1798-1799), where some of Switzerland's most liberal citizens advocated civic equality for the Jews and attacked



Basel's neo-Byzantine Great Synagogue was built in 1868 and enlarged in 1892. Its basement houses a kosher fine-dining restaurant.

the ancient prejudices of intolerance. Ambassadors of France, England and the United States insisted that the right of settlement should be granted to all citizens of their respective countries, without distinction of creed. After years of conferences and debates, all restrictions concerning the right of Jews to establish residence were finally abolished in 1866. Eight years later, the nation's new constitution declared full emancipation.

During World War II, Swiss Jews were protected by the nation's neutrality, yet a number of government initiatives prevented the entry of Jewish refugees. Its banks also have been accused of working closely with Nazis and of holding assets of Holocaust victims. Under pressure from the international community, Switzerland was forced to confront its behavior during the Holocaust, and one result has been restitution for aging survivors.

Out of all the darkness, there's light as well in this city. One can visit the Stadt Casino, which still retains its Belle Époque aesthetic, with light fixtures and artwork still cleaned and maintained by hand. You can also stroll through Israel Park, a grove of 40 trees presented to the city by Israel's sixth president, Chaim Herzog.

Basel also is the site of Switzerland's only Jewish Museum (juedisches-museum.ch), which is small in size but rich in artifacts and history. Highlights include Judaica from the villages of Endingen and Lengnau (two towns where Jewish communities were allowed to thrive and settle within the greater communities), relics from Basel's medieval Jewish communities and a selection of Hebrew documents revealing that Basel was a center of Jewish book publishing from the 16th through the 19th century. Of course, there's also a wing paying tribute to the activities of Herzl.

Then there's the Great Synagogue. The impressive, neo-Byzantine domed structure — originally constructed in 1868 and enlarged in 1892 — is flanked by the Rhine River and looms large amid charming apartment buildings and quiet residential streets. The interiors blend antique and Belle Époque influences.

Sasse, my guide, is close friends with Joel

Weill, the Basel Jewish community's head of administration, and the three of us had lunch at Topas (restauranttopas.ch), a kosher fine-dining institution in the basement of the Great Synagogue. That's where Weill explained that locals — there are more than 2,000 Jews in Basel and multiple synagogues — take pride not only in the kosher-certification process he helps oversee, but in the diversity, quality and flavor of what is served in restaurants such as Topas.

"As Basel is a small city with a small market for kosher food, we can't have everything," Weill said. "For being such a small community, however, we have a very good infrastructure. [We have] a superb kosher butcher who brings in and prepares *kashrut* meat from France, supermarkets with kosher sections, long-established bakeries Schmutz and Krebs offering kosher baked-goods sections, casual meat-kosher restaurants, and a milk-kosher restaurant in our old-age home. Our community regularly provides a list for retailers informing their customers of what goods in their shop are certified kosher."

As Basel is known internationally for its patronage of the arts and fine museums, it is only fitting that there are some can't-miss destinations for Jewish travelers there, too. The Kunstmuseum Basel (kunstmuseumbasel.ch) features several of Marc Chagall's revered studies of rabbis as well as a moving portrait of his wife, Bella, and an idiosyncratic self-portrait. Just outside the city, the Fondation Beyeler (fondationbeyeler.ch) provides a fine escape from urban crowds, with temporary exhibits, permanent installations by the likes of Chagall and serene outdoor landscaping.

Speaking of contemporary art, the retro-chic Hilton Basel (hilton.ch/basel), located in the middle of Basel, and walking distance from the train stations and trolleys to the city's central shopping areas and attractions, makes a great tour base for Jewish families, especially with its excellent kosher-food program on request.

Jewish travelers to the city will find more helpful information from SIG/FSCI, Switzerland's Jewish Federation (swissjews.ch/en). ■

AN OPTIMISTIC ENTREPRENEUR EARNS HIS STRIPES

by ELYSE GLICKMAN, Contributing Writer

While some people wear their hearts on their sleeves, Georgia native Cameron Alpert prefers the front of a T-shirt or a hoodie. That's what led him to start Akiva Stripe, a Los Angeles-based and Jewish-inspired urban clothing line, with the hope that others will proudly do the same.

"I always thought about ways I could express my Jewish identity in a fashionable way, and I had not found anything in the marketplace that would allow me to do that," Alpert recalled. "I began to create the shirts and hoodies as an outlet where I could express myself. However, when I started wearing them out in public, I found my friends liked the idea and rallied behind it. From there, I decided to extend my idea into a fully functioning brand."

The designs for the men's and women's tops, developed by hand at a studio in Los Angeles and launched earlier this year, are inspired by various aspects of Jewish and Israeli history, from geographic locales to key events in Jewish history to Jewish iconography.

"For the initial run, I looked for symbols and images I had been exposed to during the course of my lifetime that really spoke to me as touchstones the Jewish wearer could relate to," said Alpert, 26. "One of my favorite designs, and one of the most popular in sales, is the shirt with the Kohen hands. When I traced my

family tree, I had discovered there were Kohen priests in my bloodlines, and the image of the hands themselves were emblematic as a Jewish reference."

Other designs make use of the Star of David, the hamsa, a kabbalah-inspired Tree of Life, and an image of southern Israel paired with the words "Eretz Yisrael." Another shirt, called "LAX>TLV," features abstract artwork of the two cities.

In his journey to embrace his Jewish identity during college, Alpert was a member of Jewish fraternity AEPi, participated in Hillel and Chabad, and staffed a Birthright trip for USC Hillel. However, the experiences that led him to create Akiva Stripe also had a lot to do with growing up in Georgia in a single-parent home and having mostly non-Jewish friends. He said developing the brand is an outgrowth of his continued desire to celebrate pride in his identity, especially after his move to Los Angeles and his activities during college.

As for the company name, it carries personal and biblical meaning.

"Akiva has always been my favorite Hebrew name, and it's also a cognate of Jacob, my middle name," said Alpert, who also works full time as an advertising consultant.

Akiva means "protector" in Hebrew, and the phrase Akiva Stripe, he said, is intended to

hark back to the Exodus, when the Hebrews marked the frames of their doors as protection from the plagues.

Alpert said the clothing emphasizes fit, high-quality fabrics and uses only biodegradable, water-based and discharge inks. Although Akiva Stripe is currently available only online (akivastripe.com), he said he is in talks with a wholesale consultant in New York to get the brand into shops in Los Angeles, Miami, New York and Tel Aviv. In the meantime, the brand has already found an audience in L.A. through the website.

"I like the fact that Akiva Stripe is culturally conscious and constructed using fair-trade labor," said Jonathan Rich, 28, of Culver City. "It is a thinking-man's clothing brand, and for me, embodies all the dualities and complexities of modern Jewish life. It is irreverent and iconoclastic, yet also vintage and traditional. It calls back to the Judaism of ancient times, while utilizing the imagery of modern Israel. It appeals to 21st-century sensibilities while establishing a sense of pride in continuity with the Jewish past."

Emily Cohen, 23, of West Hollywood added, "The brand inspires me to be proud of my culture and who I am. It makes me smile at the fact that I am able to be fashionable and show

Continued on page 27

The L.A.-based Akiva Stripe urban clothing line features such iconic Jewish images as the Star of David, hamsa and Tree of Life.



Stripes

Continued from page 23

my identity in a modern, edgy way.”

Social media play a role in getting word of the brand out to like-minded customers, but

Alpert continues to look to connect with other creative people he feels share his vision.

“Since the beginning, we’ve been partnering with American and Israeli Jewish artists, rappers, musicians and other celebrities to promote Akiva Stripe as a lifestyle brand at the intersection of physical fashion and social me-

dia,” Alpert explained. “We couldn’t be more excited to grow the brand in the U.S. and Tel Aviv, where we draw so much of our inspiration.”

In the end, though, his hope is that Akiva Stripe will do more than just make money.

“My ultimate goal for the line is to promote

a positive image of Israel, the Jewish community and our heritage to young people, who will also be receptive to the cool, pop culture-tinged designs,” he said. “I feel there is a need for a product line like this that will make other young people feel good about their Jewish identity.” ■



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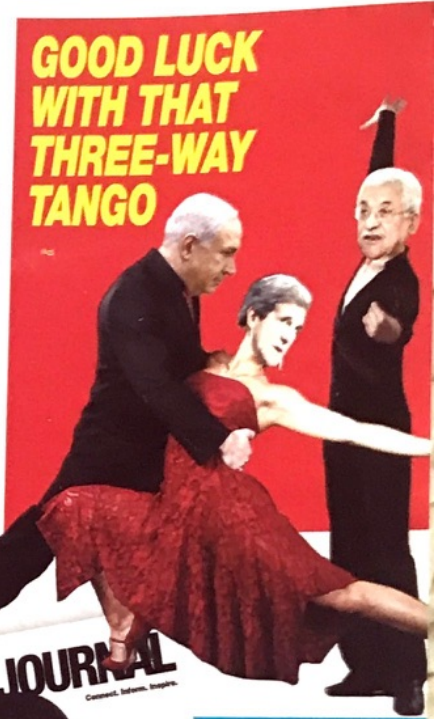
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**"LAZAR
WOLF
OF WALL
STREET"**



**BYE
BYE BYE
BYE BYE**

**WHAT DOES
THE FOXMAN
SAY?**

BUSINESS & FINANCE

A MILLENNIAL IN THE MODERN BUSINESS WORLD

by ELYSE GLICKMAN, Contributing Writer

While still in her 20s, L.A. native Elana Joelle Hendler had already fulfilled one of her dreams: She created a successful luxury lifestyle business, EJB Brands, based on her artwork. Hendler produces candles, home décor accessories and wildlife-themed art prints that have drawn accolades from *Forbes* ("10 Companies Crushing it in Art and Fashion"), *Los Angeles Business Journal* ("20 in their 20s"), *FOX News* and other media outlets.

The starting point for Hendler, now 30, was her longstanding passion for making art. The Milken Community Schools alumna creates her images in striking black and white. "My art has never been about color. ... [A]rt started for me as a child doodling shapes in my notebook with pencil or pen," she said. "I think I was subconsciously exploring how shapes relate to each other [on] a two-dimensional surface and finding a sense of movement between those shapes. Art was always a personal exploration for me."

Although some of the animals depicted on her canvases are not native to Southern California, Hendler said they are nonetheless inspired by her "experience of growing up in Southern California." From her many visits to the San Diego Zoo to family trips to the beach, Palm Springs and Arrowhead, she was inspired by the variety of landscapes and wildlife she encountered, as well as learning about culture at local institutions such as LACMA and The Getty.

"There's something eternally fresh and inspiring about learning to appreciate art and nature in Southern California," Hendler said. "I try to reflect that in my work, which extends to the eco-friendly materials used in my products. ... I like to think there is a natural flow of the artwork into the texture of the materials. My collection is an extension of my exploring what it means to be a Californian."

Hendler said her family and Jewish upbringing helped her find her path from among her many interests, which included acting, music

and, later, art history, in which she earned her degree.

"All of my upbringing has influenced my identity as an artist as well as my identity as a woman, a Jew and a Californian," she said. "My mother's parents — who are of European descent and immigrated first to Mexico and then to Los Angeles in the 1950s — brought their cultural heritage with them. My [maternal] grandmother, a concert pianist in the 1940s, brought music. My [maternal] grandfather, an engineer, entrepreneur and religious Jew, brought education and a love for learning. These roots, emphasizing bettering yourself through knowledge and asking many questions, [were] bolstered by the nurturing influence of my mother, who studied design at UCLA."

Hendler's family encouraged her natural curiosity; she described her younger self as a creative, expressive person who could do many things. But, she said, it was difficult for her to "pick one specific thing, in fear of isolating or losing track of the other skills." At 24, like many other millennials, she asked herself, "Now what?"

"I come from a very entrepreneurial family. Following my grandfather's lead, I asked myself ... if I could pull together my interests and talent to create something that is mine. I then realized I still very much love to draw and write, and those interests transitioned into creating my own brand."

Hendler knew that building her own business would not be easy. "It was a moment when I had to be brave, and I just went for it," she said. "This meant allowing myself to be vulnerable, learn, try and make lots of mistakes. One of my biggest challenges was learning how to work with manufacturers. It's not always easy for a friendly, eager 24-year-old to work with older, more experienced manufacturers, especially men. I am sure I was taken advantage of in areas like pricing, but I was sort of expecting that to happen." ■



Photo by Jhana Parris, courtesy of EJB Brands



Elana Joelle Hendler, creator of EJB Brands, and two of her creations: Chimp Decorative Throw Pillow and Signature Collection Eucalyptus & Mint Sage Candle.

CELEBRATIONS

TIPS TO CONSIDER BEFORE YOU REACH YOUR DESTINATION (WEDDING)

by ELYSE GLICKMAN, Contributing Writer

For Jewish couples contemplating a destination wedding, Israel is often the first country that comes to mind. But the Promised Land isn't always an option, nor is it every couple's dream wedding location. Every couple has its own definition of paradise — the choices can seem limitless. And no matter the location, a destination wedding presents unique challenges and requires extra planning. We've put together some tips from several event planners to help you get hitched in any time zone ... without a hitch.

Determining the destination

"For destination weddings, the guest experience is of paramount importance when considering the final destination," said David Merrill of AOO Events, which is best known for weddings and celebrity parties. For this reason, several planners said, a top consideration should be ease of transportation. "Direct flight vs. connect[ing] flights — you need to honestly consider how remote the location is beyond the airport," Merrill said.

Another consideration should be safety, which can be a challenge in an unfamiliar land. Los Angeles-based planner Julie Pryor of Pryor Events tells her clients to be sure the hotel or resort has a good water supply and high sanitation standards. And Merrill stressed not only the importance of food and beverage safety, but also security and "safety of the guests."

Once you've narrowed your location to a few choices, check local calendars. "I always urge clients planning outside of their country to keep in mind any possible holidays or local events in your destination that may cause flights or hotel prices to soar or even sell out," Manhattan Beach-based planner Jen Bergmark of First Pick Planning said. "Pay attention to see if your top-choice vendors are charging more for those weekends or [are] unavailable."

And, lest we Southern Californians forget, other parts of the world can have challenging weather. "Make sure that you have de-



Floral arrangements and flowing fabric adorn the simple frame of this chuppah used for a beach wedding last month at the Hacienda Encantada Resort and Spa in Cabo San Lucas, Mexico. Photo by Quoc Ngo

termined what kind of weather your destination will have at the time of year you want to get married," Pryor said. "You don't want to travel to a country during its rainy season or hottest season. Also, check the Centers for Disease Control to see if there are any outbreaks or viruses, such as the [Zika] virus carried by

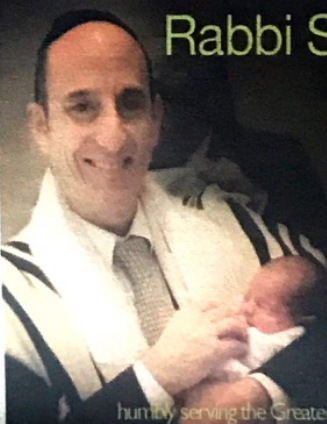
mosquitoes, making the news in certain areas of the Caribbean."

Think, too, about any specifically Jewish aspects of your ceremony and reception; you want to be sure you have access to needed services and/or items (e.g., bentschers). Danielle Rothweiler of Rothweiler Event Design said

she's worked with clients who shifted their original location when they saw how many roadblocks existed for Jewish resources.

Costs for you and your guests

"The whole idea of a destination wedding See **DESTINATION WEDDING** on page 43



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Destination Wedding

Continued from page 42

is to have a more intimate bonding experience for your key guests and families," Merrill said. "The money you would normally spend on ... a large number of guests, you [can instead] consider utilizing for a [smaller] destination wedding."

The prospect of paying for airline tickets and rooms will deter some guests from attending. Some couples pay part or all of the cost of guests' accommodations, but planners recognize that this isn't always possible. Rothweiler said some couples instead pay for guests' food and beverages, which is easier to do at all-inclusive resorts.

"Most guests will pay their own way, but I tell my clients that if there is a close family member or friend who may find the expense of travel a hardship, you will want to pay for their airfare and accommodations if they [are] important in your life," Pryor said.

No matter your budget, be sure to find out all the costs up front. "Locations have a way of luring you in with low pricing ... and then the extras on top of it really add up," Merrill cautioned. "Don't assume the price they give you to sign is the only pricing you will be responsible for."

Choosing vendors

Couples can bring vendors from home, hire locally or both. Travel-related expenses for vendors will vary and are often stipulated in their contracts. Bergmark said it is usually standard for all wedding vendors — such as photographers, florists and wedding planners — to charge travel fees when a wedding is farther than 50 miles from their home or office.

When selecting vendors at the destination, it's important to meet them in person ahead of time, Pryor said. She recommends "traveling to the destination in advance of the wedding trip, at least once, to taste the food, determine the actual spots for the ceremony, reception and cocktails."

Kashrut, rituals, dress codes

Finding venues that have kosher kitchens or kosher caterers, especially overseas, requires some research, Bergmark said. If you want to use an offsite kosher caterer, make sure your venue allows for outside catering. If you're opting for a kosher-style wedding, Bergmark recommends asking your guests on the invitation response cards if they have any special dietary needs.

"For [an observant] Jewish destination wedding, [look for a property] that can create a whole Shabbat weekend for the couple and their guests," said Laura Ellis, senior catering sales manager at Four Seasons in Westlake Village. "You will want to ensure [your guests] have a seamless weekend of celebration, especially if you're staging an Orthodox wedding including the ketubah signing, tish and bedeken." Although all couples should decide on their dress code — and consider local weather when doing so — this is especially important for observant Jews, Rothweiler said. She has been in situations with observant Jewish couples where dress is conservative, which can be challenging if they've opted for a beach in Aruba in August. Rothweiler recommends

putting dress code information on the invitation, along with predicted weather at the location.

Choosing a rabbi and making sure it's legal

For couples who don't already have a relationship with a rabbi, Rothweiler recommends they get to know one, preferably near their hometown, who is willing to travel to perform the wedding. Ideally, the rabbi will be present for the onsite rehearsal, as well. Pryor said couples should cover the rabbi's expenses, including flights, food and accommodations.

"If the rabbi insists on covering his or her travel costs associated with your wedding, maybe because he or she is a close family friend or offers to be a part of your wedding

as a gift to you," Bergmark said, "I believe the appropriate thing to do as a form of gratitude would be to make a donation to the temple in the rabbi's name. ... This can also be done regardless, as a thank-you ... after the wedding."

Several planners said couples should check the U.S. State Department's website for regulations regarding getting married abroad.

It's also important to check "with the city and country you are getting married in regarding rules and regulations and forms your rabbi will need to fill out," Bergmark said.

"Every country is different [and it is important] to arrive in advance to handle any paperwork," Pryor said.

Last but not least: The chuppah

No Jewish wedding is complete without

a chuppah, but what's the best way to ensure you get the one you want, where you want it, when you need it? You can have a chuppah created locally and shipped to your destination, but this can be costly and often isn't necessary.

"It's fairly common for major destination hotels to offer some sort of chuppah rental," Bergmark said. Couples can customize the chuppah, for example, with flowers, or their own tallit, she added. If the venue doesn't offer a rental, clients can usually find a local florist who will custom-build one. For example, Bergmark said she's "worked with local florists who have built custom birch wood pieces, which the clients had chuppah holders carry and hold during the ceremony." ■

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TODD BIRD

Opening Doors to Addiction Recovery

by ELYSE GLICKMAN, Contributing Writer

In the 1990s, Todd Bird was a Hollywood nightlife mover and shaker and promoter. He opened Hollywood's first mixed martial arts gym at the turn of the millennium. In the years that followed, he soared in the call-center business. However, Bird's drug addiction ran concurrent with his work ethic, causing him to exhaust his financial resources, his family's patience and his ability to buy insurance to afford treatment.

At his lowest point, Bird got a break when he found a spot at Beit T'Shuvah Los Angeles, a treatment center with full-service congregation offering religious services, holiday celebrations and study. With the spiritual guidance of Rabbi Gavriel Hershoff and a lot of hard work, Bird successfully completed the program in 15 months. Soon after, he was back on track professionally as a business and marketing consultant for a variety of startup companies and small businesses.

This past summer, however, he realized just how fortunate he was when he got to know a young drug addict who called herself "Allie McStruggles."

"She had no money, health insurance or support," he said. "I started making phone calls on her behalf to every treatment place I knew that had a subsidized bed. We ran into roadblocks with the free places I knew about, because a law had just been passed that nonviolent drug offenders were sent to treatment centers rather than jail. This meant all the places that would have taken her free of charge were filled. One place said they could only help her if she got arrested, and she did not want to get arrested."

Grateful for his own recovery, and wanting to pay it forward, Bird began laying the groundwork for The Struggle Foundation (for which Hershoff now serves as a board member). The nonprofit, launched in August, focuses on signing up addicts and paying for health insurance policies that, in turn, will make drug treatment programs more accessible. Another goal is to shift the paradigm of how the public views addicts.

"Drug addiction is not to be treated as current-event fodder," he pointed out. "The deaths of celebrities like [musician] Scott Weiland and [actor] Philip Seymour Hoffman show it is not reserved for some random guy living on the street. When the news stories touch upon the people they left behind, it becomes clear that addiction touches everybody around the person with the illness."

The Affordable Care Act has also helped in the early success of The Struggle Foundation, as insurance companies can charge based only on age and location of the prospective patient the foundation is helping. In other words, someone who has gone to rehab 10 times is charged the same premium as someone who has never been.

Between August and Dec. 1, 2015, The Struggle Foundation helped get 100 people into treatment. As more fundraising is necessary to afford insurance premiums for so many patients, Bird plans to dedicate 2016 to not only making his organization financially viable, but available in other states.

"I asked [potential supporters] what they would do if a loved one needed treatment, and they said they absolutely would send them to treatment," Bird said. "I then asked them how much it would cost, and they would reply something like, '\$35,000 a month.' I point out that the same \$35,000 could potentially get many people into treatment in programs covered by insurance. In one case, I was able to get seven people from the same family into treatment, with a donation from one person after I got the first one in."

Although several patients Bird has assisted, as well as some parents, have thanked him for putting them on a path back to sobriety, he remains humble about his motives and the program's early success.

"I open doors for people who need help who cannot get it elsewhere. That's it," Bird stated. "Out of the 100 people so far whom I have opened doors for, only three have left treatment. ... While what I do is a small gesture, it feels really good to be able help them see the bigger picture as I have." ■

THE MENSCH LIST continues on page 20

Bringing a Jewish-Based Education Back Home

by **ELYSE GLICKMAN**, Contributing Writer

Jewish parents interested in home schooling their children may find the process of implementing the religious, cultural and language elements of Jewish education to be daunting. Yet numerous resources and groups are available to help structure a curriculum that fits a child's individual learning style and special needs.

"The first thing new home-schooling parents should do is let go of the conventional

for their household."

Silvera said that when she speaks to parents about home schooling, she encourages them to reflect upon their own childhoods to determine which elements of their Jewish education stuck with them, or what they felt they missed.

Although parents who contact the group often express concerns about the possible high cost of home schooling — and some



Photo courtesy of Rabbi Yosef Resnick

Rabbi Yosef Resnick founded Monson, Mass.-based Room613.net, structured to ease the transition to home schooling and connect Jewish home-schooling families.

school mindset and be prepared to be there for their child, taking notes of what things work and what doesn't," said Yehudis Litvak, moderator of the LA Jewish Homeschoolers group on Yahoo. "You don't have to stick to in-the-box curriculums the way you would by sending kids to Jewish day schools or public schools."

Membership in the group is limited to families already involved in home schooling, but parents considering whether to teach their children at home can post questions on the group's Facebook page (www.facebook.com/lajewishhomeschool).

"We also invite prospective members of the group to a 'Park Day,' which takes place every other Tuesday," said Leat Silvera, a former moderator and current member of LA Jewish Homeschoolers. "They will get to meet home-schooling families and get ideas from them on how to make home schooling work

families do hire rabbis or teachers and purchase books — Silvera said excellent free or inexpensive materials and resources can be found online or in person that will suit families of various backgrounds.

As an example, Silvera cited the Los Angeles Teacher Center of Torah Umesorah, (torahumesorah.org) an education lab where a parent can come in to talk to a staff member about a given Jewish subject they want to teach their child. A staff member at the center will suggest a variety of booklets and materials appropriate to a child's age and learning style.

The Nagel Jewish Academy (nageljewishacademy.org) offers free, after-school classes to Jewish children between ages 5 and 11 who do not currently attend a Jewish day school, including those getting their general education through home schooling.

The Hillel Hebrew Academy in Beverly
See HOME SCHOOLING on page 49

Home Schooling

Continued from page 47

Hills, meanwhile, has programs open to home schoolers, including teen and after-school programs available to home-school students. The programs include free, college-level Hebrew classes that qualify for credit at Santa Monica College.

Room613.net, founded by Monson, Mass.-based Yosef Resnick, is another affordable option structured to ease the transition to home schooling while connecting Jewish home-schooling families throughout the country. Resnick also uses social media to support students and their families, answer questions, and respond to inquiries from parents interested in enrolling their children in his classes.

"Once parents pay the tuition for their kids to participate, they don't need to buy books or many other additional supplies," Resnick said. "I recommend parents invest in small things like a Hebrew-English dictionary, but the books and *seforim* many parents have at home are usually adequate. Lessons, texts and classwork are presented right on the screen and can be printed out. The curriculum is designed to replace any Jewish day school program, and real-time classes will feature a full, robust set of Torah lessons, as well as Tanakh, *halachah* and almost every other topic covered in a day school."

Resnick emails weekly newsletters to keep parents informed about class topics and to address common questions about home schooling. If a student has to take a few days or a couple of weeks off, Resnick offers recordings of classes that enable students to keep up.

Exact data on Jewish home schoolers could not be found for this article, but the National Home Education Research Institute estimated in March that there were 2.3 million home-educated students in the United States, with that number growing 2 to 8 percent each year. A demographic study by the institute in 2010 estimated that 0.4 percent of home-schooling parents were Jewish.

Silvera said the LA Jewish Homeschoolers group, which has 142 members, has been growing steadily since its launch in 2009.

Litvak, the group's moderator, also maintains the TorahThroughLiterature.com blog, which offers home-school parents lists of recommended "living" novels and nonfiction books, along with guidance on how to connect the books to the lessons and values of the Torah and make them relevant and relatable to kids of different ages and abilities.

"In contrast to multi-subject textbooks used in many schools, 'living books' are written by people passionate about a given subject who truly bring it to life," Litvak said. "You want learning to be alive, relatable and meaningful, not broken down into multiple-choice exercises. The goal is to help the kids retain information in the long run."

And, she said, home schooling allows parents to teach their children as they want them taught.

"The approach is different for each of us. However, one thing I know for certain is that home schooling affords a family the ideal of surrounding their children with their own family values, living the learning and bonding while spending time together. You and your child can experience Judaism in a way that it was intended to be lived and experienced." ■



Nava Feller

What Comes Naturally: Nava Feller

by ELYSE GLICKMAN, Contributing Writer

Being the founder of a business specializing in natural skin care and wellness products can come with a level of glamour, as you tap into the desires of customers looking for an emotional lift or a burst of energy from your gels, creams, capsules and cleanses.

However, Nava Feller, creator of the Nava Natural line of products, says she finds her motivation from different sources — her Jewish faith, her Israeli upbringing and motherhood.

Feller came to the United States in 2004 and a year later launched her business in Beverly Hills with the intent to create products that integrated natural elements from the Dead Sea. She had become familiar with the health benefits of botanicals and minerals from the Dead Sea over the course of her life, starting with her family's annual vacations there and continuing with her studies of natural medicines in Israel and at the International School of Detoxification in Sarasota, Fla.

"While [the Dead Sea] was always a favorite place, I never thought about why my parents kept taking us back there until I was older," said Feller, 57. "I then realized they wanted to take advantage of the Dead Sea's health benefits, and for my brother and I to understand its effects on the muscles, skin and our overall well-being. I also observed people from all over the world were coming to the Dead Sea to experience these benefits in addressing chronic skin diseases like psoriasis, eczema and acne, as well as cardiovascular and lung diseases."

Beginning with a handful of clients, the business now has thousands of customers who buy her products at her Beverly Hills shop, as well as from spas and salons in Palm Springs, Colorado, Oregon and Switzerland, as well as online.

Before coming to the U.S., Feller enjoyed a happy marriage, raising her two children — Stephanie, now 36, and Kevin, 32 — and several successful careers. She was a member of a professional dance troupe and then a dance instructor until 1979 in her native Israel. After she married, she and her husband moved to Switzerland, where she opened a dance and fitness studio, which she operated through the 1980s. In 1992,

she and her husband decided to move back to Israel to strengthen their children's Jewish roots and open a restaurant in Eilat.

Yet in three years, their life was interrupted when her husband received a diagnosis of terminal cancer, which tested her Jewish faith and definitions of health and wellness. The family eventually spent his last months in Switzerland, where he believed he would receive the best treatment.

"When doctors found my husband's brain tumor, they told him there was no hope," Feller said. "By telling him this, they took from him the very thing that keeps one alive, and he died three years later. Instead of allowing myself to grow bitter, however, I got into learning about preventative remedies. I turned this time into a series of teachable moments for my kids, learning from my husband's passing and paying tribute to him



Items from the Nava Natural line of products

by feeding my family a healthy, raw and vegan diet."

To set a positive example for her children, Feller said, she shifted their focus from what she considered to be the fear-driven aspects of Western medicine to proactive approaches to health and nutrition. When Stephanie was 25 and suffering from skin irritations, neck and stomach swelling, and weight gain — the cause of which doctors could not pinpoint — Feller searched for a deeper connection between inner health and outer appearances.

"I reasoned that as she was still mourning the death of her father and holding those feelings of loss and sadness within her body, this was contributing to her various maladies," Feller

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Nava Feller

Continued from page 30

said. "Then, one day, a miracle happened when Stephanie read 'The Complete Master Cleanse,' and then did the cleanse for a month." That regimen improved Stephanie's condition and motivated her to take greater responsibility for her health.

When Feller moved to the U.S., her desire to keep connected to the benefits of the Dead Sea led her to sell skin care lines with Dead Sea ingredients produced by other companies. This turned out to be field research, as she noticed some products contained parabens, petroleum and other artificial ingredients, colors and fragrances. She then decided to start her own line of products that would be free of such additives.

After Nava Natural's first few years, instead of growing her skin care line like other entrepreneurs, Feller scaled back her product offerings to what she calls the "Fabulous 5" (Eye Control, Line Control RSMO, Healing Anti-Aging Facial Treatment, Facial Peel and Sparkling Body Scrub).

"To make the customers' experience of the Dead Sea more authentic, I got rid of things that did not relate to what Israelis actually used for their daily care based on what I saw growing up," she said. "In 2015, I launched five herbal remedy kits with Dr. Robert Morse, an expert on herbal medicine under whom I studied for two years. The kits are designed to stimulate the lymphatic, endocrine, kidney, digestive and other functions that impact one's well-being."

To assign clients the right regimen of herbal tonics and supplements, Feller addresses their current health issues and general state of mind. Customers who want a comprehensive plan or cleanse can make an appointment to visit Feller's home or have her come to theirs to have her develop a custom, three- to five-day program of juicing and herbal usage.

Feller said her motherly instincts come into play when recommending different products to her clients. She helps adults pass along their newly attained habits for good health and nutrition by encouraging them

to teach their children as early as possible to read labels and make good food decisions.

"Children need to fall in love with Mother Nature — the colors of the vegetables, fruits and herbs — and understand it is made for them, as opposed to processed foods made for profit," she said. "A good visual lesson is to have kids compare the orange color of natural juice with orange soda. Have them taste and smell both, and ask them what tastes more 'real' to them. It makes an impact, and once they have an awareness of what originates from nature, you can then teach them to say, 'No, thank you' to processed food."

"Based on my Jewish upbringing," she said, "I believe that, as God created a beautiful world, there are many things sourced rather than produced that heal and nourish the body. After all, animals and birds are not buying junk food or fad beauty products. They have an instinct for finding things in nature that are good for them, and [they] don't rely on commercials or publicity to find them."

"Somewhere along the way, [humanity] took a few wrong turns, and now my job is to put it back in the right direction." ■

Portugal Touts Its Jewish 'Law of Return'

» Elyse Glickman, Contributing Writer

IN DECEMBER 2017, PORTUGAL WAS officially recognized as the "World's Leading Destination" by the World Travel Awards.

It's also one of the most Jewish-friendly countries, according to Lisbon Jewish Community President Gabriel Steinhardt, who said the presence of hate groups and anti-Semitic rhetoric in Portugal is negligible compared with other Western European countries.

Steinhardt was one of several speakers, including Lisbon Chief Rabbi Natan Peres, Portuguese Secretary of Tourism Ana Mendes Godinho and Portuguese Consul General in San Francisco Maria João Lopes Cardoso at the Sephardic Temple Tifereth Israel on Feb. 8. The delegation was on hand

tuguese Inquisition in 1536, 20 percent of Portugal's inhabitants were Jewish. This knowledge, he said, has led Jewish and non-Jewish Portuguese citizens and others of Portuguese descent to realize their family trees may have Jewish roots.

The Portuguese law of return was enacted in 2015 to encourage Jews with proven Portuguese ancestry to put down roots in Portugal. Lopes Cardoso said since the law's inception, 12,000 people worldwide have applied for Portuguese citizenship and 2,000 have received it.

"Los Angeles is an important city, as the Sephardic community is one of the biggest in the States," she said. "The Jewish contribution to Portugal has existed from the fifth



Gabriel Steinhardt, president of Lisbon Jewish Community, shares the history of Jews in Portugal along with their current status.



"The Jewish contribution to Portugal has existed from the fifth century forward."

— Maria João Lopes Cardoso

to discuss Portugal's Jewish historic and cultural legacy, as well as the country's bold "law of return" for Jews.

Steinhardt said Jewish interest in Portugal transcends monuments, cemeteries, ornate older synagogues and specialized Jewish museums, because prior to the Por-

century forward." She added that despite the Inquisition, many Jews remained in Portugal as Crypto-Jews or converts in name only.

Lopes Cardoso also spoke about Jewish influences on Portugal's culinary landscape, including kosher wine production in Belmonte and how Crypto-Jews tweaked their chorizo recipes by swapping out the pork for chicken in their sausages.

Mendes Godinho said she was personally excited about the uptick in interest among Jewish people coming to Portugal, which, she said, is due in part to Portugal receiving the World Travel Award.

"We are vested in turning [Portugal's] past into its present and future by connecting other Jewish communities throughout the world, thereby making amends with the past," she said.

You can learn more about the Portuguese Jewish law of return at sephardicjewsportugal.com. ■

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Recalling Curt Lowens, 'A Figure of Wonder'

» by Elyse Glickman, Contributing Writer

AT THE SABAN THEATRE, AFTER a Temple of the Arts Shabbat service on Jan. 19, journalist Dean Piper recalled Curt Lowens, his uncle, as a "figure of wonder" midway through a tribute concert to honor the late actor, who died last May 8.

As a child growing up in the United Kingdom during the 1980s, Piper had bragging rights. His uncle had visible roles in "Babylon 5" and "MacGyver," as well as the movie "A Midnight Clear" with Ethan Hawke. He also recalled Lowens telling him years later that "descriptive words like 'extraordinary' and 'amazing' should be used only in the right situations and never in a daily phrasebook."

There was no argument among tribute participants that superlatives barely scratched the surface in describing Lowens' real-life roles, from Holocaust survivor to Dutch resistance fighter (as "Ben Joosten"), British Eighth Corps interpreter, author of wartime biography "Destination: Questionmark" and mentor to young filmmakers.

Rabbi David Baron, Temple of the Arts President Jim Blatt, journalist and founder of The Man/Kind Project Richard Stellar and others marveled about Lowens' humility when recalling his rescue of 150 Jewish children and two American airmen during World War II while still in his teens. There also was an unspoken mutual agreement (including from Lowens himself, via the Museum of the Holocaust/Harvard-Westlake School documentary "Curt Lowens: A Life of Changes") that his greatest role was as an educator determined to keep the memory of the Holocaust relevant among current and future generations of children.

"Curt was that unique young man who only had himself to be accountable for and willing to put his life on the line to save others," said Samara Hutman, Remember Us director and event chair. "When his family immigrated to America, he was expected to go to business school. He wanted to be an actor, and when he told his father, it was a bit of a scandal as actors in that era were regarded in a similar way to circus performers."

Hutman said Lowens' experiences ultimately fed the creative life he chose for himself. One of the students in a workshop he led asked him if he thought his taking on false identities during World War II fed an interest in acting. He said, "I never thought of it that way until you mentioned it, but of course."

"There's an old expression that it's hard to be a Jew because of the laws and statutes required to be a good Jew," Baron said. "In Hollywood, there's a saying that it's hard to be an actor making a living. One of the great ironies is that most of his early roles in Hollywood were as German officers [and other villains] because of his tall, blond bearing and good looks."

The concert, in cinematic fashion, built up to an emotional climax with a performance of "Bestemming," a concerto for cello based on Lowens' experiences composed by Sharon Farber, Temple of the Arts music director and a film and television music composer. Lowens himself narrated the spoken-word portions of composition for the second performance in 2014 at the Saban Theatre.



"We are defined by how far we reach out to those in need."

— Richard Stellar

"After the rabbi told Curt's story, he invited the children and grandchildren of one of the rescued pilots to introduce themselves," recalled Farber of the Yom Kippur gathering in 2013 where she first met Lowens. "Everybody was moved, but this moment changed my entire life. At the time, I was working on a commission from the Glendale Philharmonic to compose a cello concerto. I caught up with Curt and asked if I could compose a piece based on his story. He gave me a copy of 'Destination: Questionmark' and his blessing."

"Curt loved young people, and he taught me was that a relationship formed between an inner-city child and a survivor of the Holocaust is one of the greatest weapons in our arsenal in the fight against anti-Semitism," said Stellar, also a co-founder of the Bestemming Project with Farber. "He also showed that we are defined by how far we reach out to those in need, regardless of who they are or who we worship." ■

At Shalhevet, Getting Insularity Out in the Open

» by Elyse Glickman, Contributing Writer

AT FIRST GLANCE, SHULEM DEEN and Rabbi Yakov Horowitz represent opposite endpoints on the Jewish religious and cultural spectrum. However, the New York-based authors often shared common ground during a recent discussion comparing the insularity practiced by the Charedi (ultra-Orthodox) and Modern Orthodox communities.

The two spoke at Shalhevet High School on Jan. 10 at an event titled "Rethinking Insularity: The Role of Boundaries in the Modern World," which was organized by the Shalhevet Institute and NCSY.

Los Angeles writer and moderator Abigail Shrier set the tone for the discussion by defining insularity as "the impulse to shut out the outside world, and in our case, the non-Jewish world and values,

about ideas from the outside world even while living in a closed society. Cognitive insularity, meanwhile, requires community members to cut themselves off completely from facts coming from the study of science, literature, music and art.

"Cognitive insularity can be dangerous, as it [could lead to] fundamentalist extremes within the religious Jewish community," Deen said. "It may compel some to go against their natural instincts and avoid critical thinking."

When Shrier asked Horowitz if he believed insularity was a Torah value, he instead described it as a cultural value. He then suggested there was a way Orthodox parents could raise their children in a religious home without cutting them off completely from benefits of the secular world,



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and even other Jews." She then conceded that she once viewed insularity as an affliction among religious Jews until she talked to a group of Orthodox men in New York about how the internet encroached on their way of life.

Deen, who documented his journey from the Skverer Chasidic sect to a secular existence in his memoir "All Who Go Do Not Return," conveyed his views on insularity through poignant personal recollections and stories of other Jews' experiences making a similar transition.

Horowitz, known for his book "Living & Parenting" and his children's book "Let's Stay Safe," used humorous anecdotes from his years of teaching to explain challenges Orthodox families face in balancing religious parental practices with the demands of the secular world that their kids face growing into adulthood.

"My job as an educator is to transmit values and ethics in the Torah as I understand it to the children, but also give them the critical thinking skills to ask questions," Horowitz said.

Though Deen expressed empathy toward Orthodox communities practicing self-imposed isolation, he argued that there were two sides to insularity. Experiential insularity, adopted by Modern Orthodox Jews, shows a willingness to learn

including the high-tech learning tools at many of the schools in his community.

"Parents should try to shield their children from the vices of the general population, but with the understanding that it is only a temporary fix," Horowitz said. "With younger children, postpone exposure to some outside-world things as long as you can. When they get older, protect and supervise them. Once they're in their teens, prepare them to face the outside world and make good decisions."

The discussion then shifted to statistics showing that the Jewish population in New York City has increased because of the Charedi and other Orthodox groups' rising birthrate and low inclination to intermarry. Deen and Horowitz suggested the trend would spread to other U.S. cities, including Los Angeles, and have a profound influence on the American Jewish community.

"Insularity has always been around, but now [Jews from other denominations] are starting to pay attention," Deen said. "We have to think about what all of it will mean for the future of American Jews. Some Reform or Conservative Jews may say that the Charedi won't have anything to do with them. However ... why not approach a member of the Orthodox community and try to start a conversation to discuss some of the issues all Jews face?" ■