

# THE JEWISH VOICE

INFORMING AND CONNECTING JEWS IN EL PASO-LAS CRUCES

Av/Elul/Tishrei 5783-5784  
August/September 2023

*High Holidays*  
**5784**

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# We're Back!

## Jewish Federation of El Paso & Las Cruces



**By Debra Kanof, President, JFED El Paso & Las Cruces**

If you haven't met our new Executive Director, Marla Cohen, you don't know what you're missing. A life-long Jewish Professional, Marla has done everything from Synagogue Director to Human Resources Manager and Leadership Developer; and from Jewish Youth Programs and

Camp Director to Hillel Foundation Director. In short, we hit the jackpot. In the brief two months of her current tenure, we have reclaimed our Federation nomenclature, established a satellite office in Las Cruces, (with thanks to Mike White and space at White's Music Box in Las Cruces), and joined forces with all of our fellow Jewish and Jewish related organizations to create a future of excellence in providing programs and services tailored to fit the needs of every aspect and age of our community while placing primary objectives on education and fighting antisemitism.

Marla inherited a Federation with heart but also with many challenges. During and after COVID, like most not-for profit organizations, our small, but mighty establishment experienced financial shortfalls due to

our past generosity, declining contributions, and many greatly increased expenses. Some programs and expenditures need to be scaled down, and others put on hold until we can revitalize our campaign. We are thrilled, however, that El Paso native, Susie Schaechner has come home to roost, has joined our Board, and fortuitously agreed to be our Campaign Chair, a position that has sat vacant far too long. Partnered with Marla, our Treasurer, Carlos Kaplan, our new Finance Chair, Scott Kobren, our wonderful staff of Sue, Rebecca and Aaron, not to mention our other committed board members and officers (President Debra Kanof, V.P. Lee Chayes and Secretary Shane Wagman-Romero, Immediate Past President Monika Kimball), we, like the proverbial Phoenix,

who majestically symbolizes strength, new beginnings, positivity, resilience and determination, will rise beyond even our former glory.

A great emphasis is being put on developing our future leaders, envisioning a strategic plan, and keeping what is working (like Café Europa, Shofar Across Borders and Chanukah on the Plaza) while revamping what was not. In light of our renewed enthusiasm, we encourage you all to join us as volunteers, committee members and chairs and to make a meaningful pledge. Marla has established "office hours" and I strongly encourage a visit, to meet, greet, schmooze, and give input to this knowledgeable and delightful addition to the El Paso Jewish Family. You will not be disappointed.

### New Name Reflects Inclusion

**We are proud to announce, with the approval of our Board, our new name is:**



**We thank the community for your input in choosing a name that reflects the work we do in our greater community!**

## THE JEWISH VOICE

A Publication of

Jewish Federation  
of  
El Paso & Las Cruces

The Jewish Voice, published six times a year, is dedicated to informing, educating, and uniting the Jewish community by providing news items of local, national, Israeli and international concern.

The Jewish Voice will consider for publication any materials submitted that support the mission of Jewish Federation of El Paso & Las Cruces and have relevance and appeal our Jewish community. Articles are subject to editing at the editor's discretion and are subject to space limitations. Letters cannot be longer than 150 words and articles must be kept to a maximum of 1,000 words.

Please email to [thevoice@jewishelpaso.org](mailto:thevoice@jewishelpaso.org)

Opinions are those of individual writers and not necessarily those of Jewish Federation of El Paso & Las Cruces. The Jewish Voice is not responsible for the kashrut of any product or eating establishment advertised herein.

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### FROM THE HEAD OF CONTENT

The opinions expressed in this publication are those of the authors. They do not purport to reflect the opinions or views of Jewish Federation of El Paso & Las Cruces.

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# SURVIVAL OF A NATION

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through the Lens of  
the Six-Day War*

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A special six-week course by the Jewish Learning Institute

Six Tuesday Evenings | August 8 - September 12 | 7:30-8:45pm

All classes held in-person and on Zoom

Fee: \$65 | Cosponsor: \$180

Register today at [chabadelpaso.com/survival](http://chabadelpaso.com/survival)

# Finding Your Roots in El Paso: A Summer Conference You Don't Want to Miss



**By Corinne Joy Brown,  
SCJS Vice President of  
Communications and Edi-  
tor of HaLapid**

Why should a history conference in El Paso matter to locals—and a Jewish history conference at that? The answer lies in the 16th century Spanish Colonial conquest of Mexico and the greater Southwest in general, a historical event that set the stage for a world in which Texans from El Paso to the Borderlands became descendants of a rich and varied heritage. Many in our city have backgrounds that include Spaniards, Native Americans, African Americans, Mestizos and, even— Jews. If that news surprises you, and you've never taken a peek at your ancestry, maybe the time has come.

The conference, scheduled for August 13-15, will be held at the Judson F. Williams El Paso Conference Center. It is sponsored by the Society for Crypto-Judaic Studies, a secular and academic organization founded in 1990 in New Mexico with membership open to anyone. Through the organization's annual conferences and biannual journal, SCJS explores the history of Spanish and Portuguese Jews who were forced to convert to Christianity in the 15th century when the monarchs of Spain unified their country and declared Catholicism the official religion.

Jewish communities that had once flourished in Spain for over 900 years

had to accept conversion by force or leave. Thousands did leave, creating one of the largest diasporas in the medieval world, taking Iberian Jews and their culture into Portugal, Greece, Turkey, and Rhodes and across the Mediterranean to North Africa, as well as various countries in Europe and around the world. Those who stayed suffered persecution at the hands of the Church which mercilessly sought out and punished heretics for over 300 years, in Spain and wherever the Church was strong. No converted Jew was ever considered faithful enough, forcing an entire culture to hide their origins in secret, until the passage of time eventually buried a family's truth, leaving nothing but traditions.

This ancestry belongs to more people than many realize. At the same time that the Inquisitor's reign of terror shaped life in Iberia, a new age of exploration brought the Spanish and Portuguese to Mexico, the Americas and the Caribbean. In Mexico, Spanish conquistadors established a new empire requiring thousands of settlers. What most people do not know, thanks to DNA testing today, is that one out of four Spanish males had (and still have) identifiable Jewish ancestry. That's one quarter of the population; their descendants numbering in the millions.

This information matters, especially regarding issues like personal identity and health. Further, modern research in the areas of folkways, food, and rituals has proven that many Christians have long been maintaining Jewish customs and practices unknowingly. From farming and ranching to customs regarding birth, marriage and death, many Jewish traditions still prevail.

## Why You Should Attend

The SCJS conference is titled "Exploring the Crypto-Jewish History of the Borderlands." To some, the term Borderlands is merely a geographic area joining two worlds. But to citizens of South Texas, their history is being analyzed with new eyes, focused on the intersection of traditions and culture.

Previous understanding of Borderlands history has relied on the connection between Anglo and Spanish America. Later historians sought to widen the scope, documenting histories and narratives of ethnic Mexican culture and identity in Texas, the Southwest and northern Mexico. But behind the current focus on Mexican identity and diversification is also the untold story of a hidden minority, assimilated, yet at the same time, separate and intact; the descendants of Spanish Colonial settlers who were crypto-Jews. Traditions and folkways do not lie, hinting clearly at Spanish or Portuguese Jewish origins and established ways of living. Through this lens, some believe that the real understanding of the Borderlands may have just begun.

afternoon are a series of pre-conference events beginning with a film festival Saturday night featuring two films: "Remember My Soul" by Texas graduate student Jillian Glantz about hidden Jewish history in the Lower Rio Grande Valley and "The Long Journey" by Isaac Artenstein, focused on hidden Jews in New Mexico. Sunday morning offers a guided tour by bus of the Camino Real de Tierra Adentro with visits to historic sites, concluding at the Los Portales Museum in San Elizario for lunch.

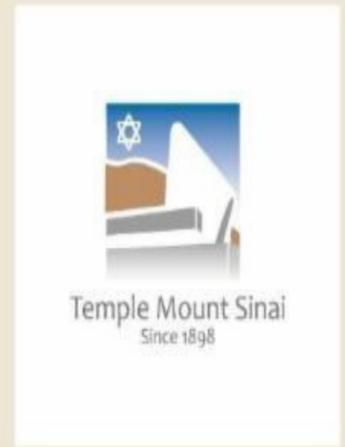
At 1:00 p.m. registrants can attend a two-hour genealogy workshop featuring Arturo Cuellar from Family Search with an emphasis on records from Mexico, and Genie Milgrom, a genealogist from Florida who is an expert on Church archives and digitization. Musical entertainment on Monday night features renowned musician Robyn Helzner presenting "The Key to the Casa", sights and sounds of Medieval Spain. Over two and a half days, 29 different presenters will be delivering lectures on fascinating topics related to the theme and beyond.

SCJS thanks many local individuals and organizations in the community for bringing this important event to life. While registration deadline was July 25, there may still be room to attend. For questions and more information contact Blanca Carrasco at [epjf.bcarrasco@gmail.com](mailto:epjf.bcarrasco@gmail.com).



The conference begins officially Sunday afternoon August 13 at 3:00 p.m. with the introductory panel of speakers, followed by a cocktail reception and fiesta, dinner and a distinguished keynote speaker, historian Dr. Silvia Hamui Sutton from Mexico City.

Prior to the opening



Temple Mount Sinai

# HIGH HOLIDAYS COOKING CLASS

Join us for an evening  
High Holidays-inspired Cooking Class  
on Saturday, August 19th, 2023  
Starting at 5pm

**Hosted by Lori Gaman & Susan Glazer**

The evening will consist of enjoying wine pairings with hor' dourves, learning new recipes, creating exciting holidays-inspired dishes, tasting delicious self-made dishes, and laughs with friends.

**Event Pricing: \$30 \*\*Space is limited  
RSVP Required by Tuesday, August 15th**

**\*\*This is an Adult Only Class**

**Make your reservation at:**

**<https://form.jotform.com/231946755252159>**



**High Holidays  
with  
Jewish Federation of  
El Paso & Las Cruces**

**Shofar Across Borders**

**Sunday, September 10, 2023 @ 2:30pm**

**Border Monument 1**

**Café Europa: Rosh Hashanah Celebration**

**Tuesday, September 12, 2023 @12:00pm**

**Location: TBA**

(Correction to incorrect date, September 23, 2023, printed August/September 2023 issue The Jewish Voice)

**Watch for Details**





**2023 Schedule of High Holiday Services at Temple Mount Sinai**

**Selichot**

Saturday, September 9  
Reception & Evening Service 7:30 P.M.

**Rosh Hashanah**

Friday, September 15  
Evening Service 8:00 P.M.

Saturday, September 16  
Family Service 9:00 A.M.  
Morning Service 10:30 A.M. (Childcare Provided with RSVP)

Sunday, September 17  
**Kever Avot Memorial Service** 5:00 P.M. Mount Sinai Cemetery

**Shabbat Shuvah**

Friday, September 22  
Kabbalat Shabbat Service 6:15 P.M.

Saturday, September 23  
Torah Study 9:30 A.M.  
Shabbat Morning Service 10:30 A.M.

**Yom Kippur**

Sunday, September 24  
Kol Nidrei 8:00 P.M.

Monday, September 25  
Family Service 9:00 A.M.  
Morning Service 10:30 A.M. (Childcare Provided with RSVP)  
Leadership Discussion 1:30 P.M.  
Moments of Reflection and Study 2:30 P.M.  
Afternoon Service 3:30 P.M.  
Yizkor, Memorial Service 4:30 P.M.  
N'ilah, Concluding Service 5:15 P.M.  
Break-The-Fast 6:30 P.M.

**Sukkot & Religious School Consecration**

Friday, September 29  
Erev Sukkot Service 6:15 P.M.  
Followed by Sukkot Under the Stars Shabbat Dinner

Saturday, September 30  
Sukkot Festival Morning Service 10:30 A.M.

**Simchat Torah**

Friday, October 6  
Simchat Torah Celebration 6:15 P.M.

**Sh'mini Atzeret**

Saturday, October 7  
Festival Morning Service with Yizkor 10:30 A.M.



# B'nai Zion High Holiday Service Schedule 5784

## Selichot

### Saturday, Sept. 9, 2023

Shabbat Ends 7:56 PM

10:00 PM Selichot Program followed by Selichot Program in Social Hall

## Kever Avot – Cemetery Service

### Sunday, Sept. 10, 2023 11:00 AM

B'nai Zion Cemetery

## Rosh Hashanah

### Erev Rosh Hashanah, Friday, Sept. 15, 2023

6:54PM Candle Lighting

6:45 PM Erev Rosh Hashana Services

### 1st Day Rosh Hashanah, Saturday, Sept. 16, 2023

9:00 AM Rosh Hashanah Morning Services

10:30 AM Children's Services

7:00 PM Mincha/Maariv

7:53 PM Candle Lighting

### 2nd Day Rosh Hashanah, Sunday, Sept. 17, 2023

9:00 AM Rosh Hashanah Morning Services

10:30 AM Children's Services

7:00 PM Mincha/Maariv

7:46 PM Havdallah – Holiday ends

## Tashlich

### Sunday, Sept. 24, 2023

1:00 PM - same location as last year off

Paisano on the Rio Grande

## Yom Kippur

### Erev Yom Kippur, Sunday, Sept. 24, 2023

6:30 PM Musical Interlude

6:42 PM Candle Lighting

6:45 PM Kol Nidre

### Yom Kippur, Monday, Sept. 25, 2023

9:30 AM Yom Kippur Services

11:00 AM (Approximate) Yizkor

11:00 AM Children's Services

5:15 PM Mincha

6:15 PM Neilah

7:35 PM Shofar Blowing

## Sukkot

### Erev Sukkot, Friday, Sept. 29, 2023

6:30 PM Sukkot Evening Services

6:36 PM Candle Lighting

### Day 1, Saturday, Sept. 30, 2023

9:00 AM Torah Study

9:30 AM Sukkot Morning Services

7:34 PM Candle Lighting

### Day 2, Sunday October 1, 2023

9:30 AM Sukkot Morning Services

7:27 PM Holiday ends

## Shmini Atzeret/Simchat Torah

### Erev Shmini Atzeret, Friday, October 6, 2023

6:27 PM Candle Lighting

6:30 PM Sukkot Evening Service

### Saturday, October 7, 2023

9:00 AM Torah Study

9:30 AM Shmini Atzeret Morning Services  
(Including Yizkor approx. 11:00 AM)

6:45 PM Mincha followed by Simchat Torah Hakafot

7:26 PM Candle Lighting

### Sunday, October 8, 2023

9:30 AM Simchat Torah Morning Services

7:18 PM Holiday ends



# Chabad Lubavitch of El Paso

## High Holiday Service Schedule

### Rosh Hashanah

Date(s): **September 15:** Evening Services - 6:45pm

**September 16:** Morning Services - 9:00am | Evening Services - 6:45pm

**September 17:** Morning Services - 9:00am | Shofar Service - 11:00am

Evening Services - 6:45pm | Tashlich Service - 7:00pm

Place: Chabad Lubavitch Center for Jewish Life - 6516 Escondido Drive, El Paso TX 79912

RSVP To: Open to the entire Jewish community free of charge.

### Yom Kippur

Date(s): **September 24:** Kol Nidrei - 6:45pm

**September 25:** Morning Services - 9:00am | Yizkor - 11:00am | Mincha - 5:00pm | Neilah - 6:00pm

Place: Chabad Lubavitch Center for Jewish Life - 6516 Escondido Drive, El Paso TX 79912

RSVP To: Open to the entire Jewish community free of charge.

### Sukkot

Date(s): **September 29:** Evening Services - 6:35pm

**September 30:** Morning Services - 10:00am Followed by lunch in the Sukkah.

Evening Services - 6:35pm

**October 1:** Morning Services (Lulav & Etrog) - 10:00am Followed by lunch in the Sukkah. | Evening Services - 6:35pm

Place: Chabad Lubavitch Center for Jewish Life - 6516 Escondido Drive, El Paso TX 79912

RSVP To: Open to the entire Jewish community free of charge.

### Shemini Atzeret & Simchat Torah

Date(s): **October 6:** Evening Services and Hakafot - 6:30pm

**October 7:** Morning Services 10:00am | Yizkor - 11:30am | Followed by lunch in the Sukkah. | Mincha - 6:30pm | Main Hakafot - 7:30pm

**October 8:** Morning Services - 10:00am | Hakafot - 11:00am

Place: Chabad Lubavitch Center for Jewish Life - 6516 Escondido Drive, El Paso TX 79912

RSVP To: Open to the entire Jewish community free of charge.



**Temple Beth-El, Las Cruces**  
**High Holy Days Schedule for September 2023 [5783-5784]**

**Selichot:** Saturday evening, **Sept. 9**, 2023, 7:30 pm

**Erev Rosh Hashanah:** Friday eve., **Sept. 15**, 8 pm

**Rosh Hashanah, 1<sup>st</sup> day:** Saturday morn., **Sept. 16**

—Family service: **9 am**

—Morning service: **10 am**

**Tashlich** *Saturday afternoon*

**Rosh Hashanah 2<sup>nd</sup> Day:** Sunday, **Sept. 17**, 10 am Torah study and Shofar service:

**Shabbat Shuvah:** Saturday Morning, **Sept. 23**, 10 am shabbos, singing & a story.

**Cemetery Service:** **Sept 24** morning, 10 am

**Kol Nidre/Erev Yom Kippur:** Sunday eve., **Sept. 24**, 8 pm

**Yom Kippur:** Monday, **Sept. 25**

—Family service: **9 am**

—Morning service: **10 am**

—Afternoon Congregational Sharing at **1 pm**

—Text study at **2:30 pm**

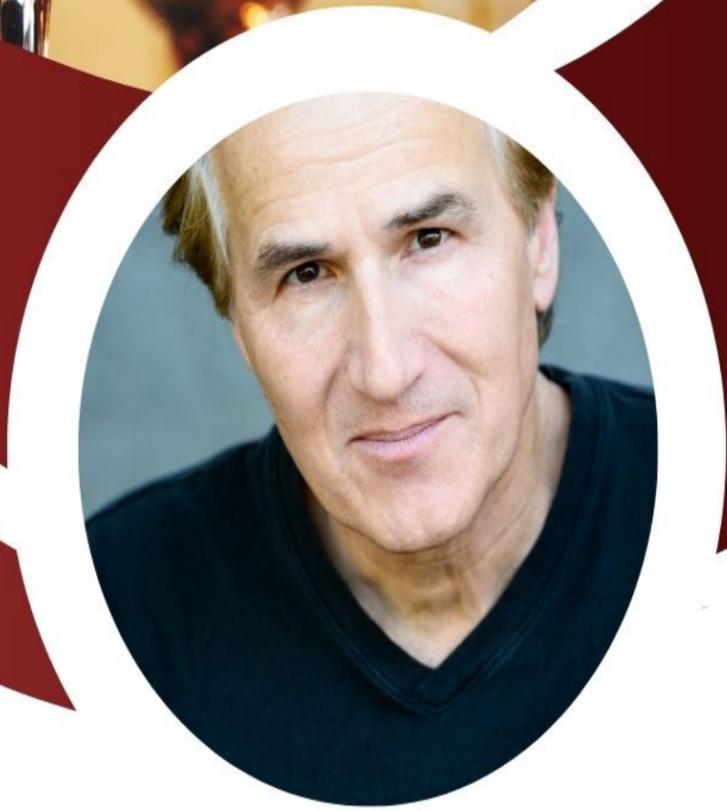
—Healing service **4:30 pm**

—Yizkor and Neilah: **5:45 pm to 7:36 pm**

—Havdalah & Break-the-Fast **7:36 pm**

***Sukkot and Simchat Torah services and times will be announced closer to their dates.***





*You are invited to an evening of*  
**Wine, Hors D'oeuvres & Comedy**

Celebrating 37 Years of Chabad Lubavitch in El Paso

*Laugh with*  
**Comedian Robert Cait**

Robert's brilliant Jewish stand-up comedy has earned him the prestigious title: "George Carlin with a kippah." Now living on the East Coast, his remarkable voice talents have landed him roles in countless films, television series and recognizable commercials. Lauded by critics for his comedy on MTV, A&E and Comedy Central, his uniquely Jewish act sprinkled with Hebrew and Yiddish makes him one of the most sought-after Jewish performers today.

- »» Monday,  
August 21 - 4 Elul
- »» 7:00 PM
- »» Chabad Lubavitch  
6516 Escondido Drive
- »» \$18 | Cosponsor \$250

Kindly RSVP by Wednesday, August 16 to [chabadelpaso.com/comedy](http://chabadelpaso.com/comedy)

# El Paso Holocaust Museum's 18th Annual Tour de Tolerance Sunday- August 20, 2023



Join EPHM's Race Against Hate & Injustice by being part of our in-person 50K Bike Ride, 5K Run/Walk, 1 mile Family Fun Walk, or 1 mile Dog Walk! Or join virtually! There is something for every age and ability, and all participants receive a tech shirt and goody

bag. Come for the athletic challenge and stay for a great meal, music, and fellowship!

And by being part of Tour de Tolerance, you are part of EPHM's mission to combat hatred and bigotry for a better future. Proceeds directly support EPHM's educational programming and outreach initiatives. We can all make a difference and be Upstanders!

**Event Times:** Sunday, August 20  
50K Starting Time - 7:30 M  
5K Run/Walk Starting Time - 7:45AM  
Family Fun Walk & Dog Walk - 7:45 AM

**Event Location:**  
Santa Teresa High School  
100 Airport Rd. Santa Teresa, NM

**Packet Pick-up:**

Time: Saturday, August 19, 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM. Location: El Paso Holocaust Museum: 715 N. Oregon, El Paso, TX 79902

In-person registration for all events available at Packet Pickup: August 19. There will be no registration on race day.

For information and to register: [runsignup.com/tourdetolerance](https://runsignup.com/tourdetolerance)  
Online registration for Tour de Tolerance available through August 18

## El Paso Holocaust Museum: Summer Camp Recap

**By MaryLou Rocha,  
Education Coordinator,  
El Paso Holocaust Museum &  
Study Center**

We are excited to share the success of our recent summer camp, "Staying Afloat on the Friend-SHIP!" at the El Paso Holocaust Museum. Over the course of our summer camp program,

we were delighted to welcome 26 students and were supported by the dedication of 13 volunteers. Together, we embarked on a remarkable journey filled with fun and educational activities, centered around fostering kindness, acceptance, inclusion, and becoming upstanders in our community. The campers engaged in a wide range of

important topics, from developing empathy towards others to understanding the significance of protecting our seas and being environmentally aware. It was truly an unforgettable experience, and we are grateful to everyone who contributed to making it a remarkable success.

## Addressing Antisemitism Without Fear



**By Hadassah-El Paso**

Hadassah-El Paso proudly presented "Addressing Antisemitism Without Fear" on June 25, 2023. An informative and educational hybrid panel discussion about antisemitism as well as methods to address it. Antisemitism was defined with a Hadassah video using the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance definition (IHRA), recognized worldwide. Thereafter, Julian Cohen presented a "Brief

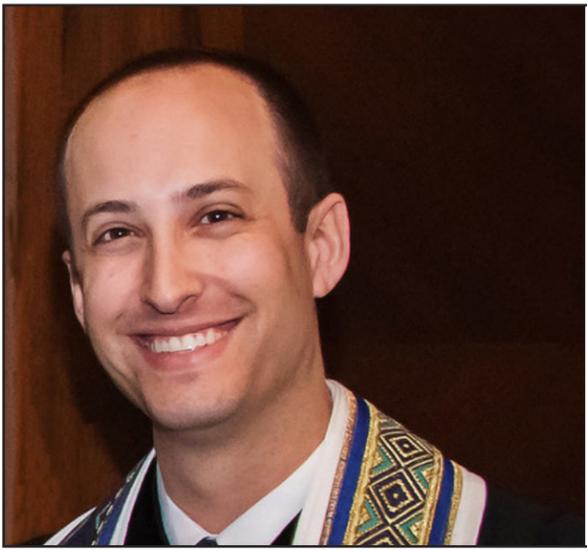
History of Antisemitism." The moderator for the event-Rita Shapiro (National Hadassah Co-Chair of Antisemitism, Education and Advocacy Division) assisted and provided Hadassah's perspective on this important topic. The distinguished panelists included Ed Cruz (Assistant Special Agent in Charge-FBI), Kat Huddleston (Director, Jewish Student Life-Jewish Nevada), Peter Svarzbein (Community Engagement Manager-ADL) and Dr. Jake Wolfson

(State Coordinator of Education-Texas Holocaust, Genocide and Antisemitism Advisory Commission). Co-Chairs for the program were Debbie Cohen (President-Hadassah-El Paso)

and Alia Garcia-Ureste (Advocacy Chair-Hadassah-El Paso). For more information about this event or Hadassah-El Paso please contact us at

[Hadassah.elpaso@gmail.com](mailto:Hadassah.elpaso@gmail.com).

# God is in the Details



**By Rabbi Ben Zeidman, Temple Mount Sinai El Paso**

*“How great are your works, O God,  
how very complex are your thoughts”  
(Psalm 92:6).*

*“The Eternal God formed the human from  
the dust of the earth, and God blew into  
the human’s nostrils the breath of life.  
So, the human became a living being”  
(Genesis 2:7).*

*“On this day, the world came into being...”  
(Rosh Hashanah Liturgy).*

The language of Torah and prayer includes descriptions of God which of-

ten, on the surface, fail to resonate. That framing is meant as an invitation into deeper ideas. Concepts beyond the capacity of human language to truly articulate. While God often appears as a “character” in our textual tradition – one who does things, changes things, alters things. That is not the end of our conversation about God, it is the beginning. If after saying in services: “Avinu Malkeinu – Renew for us a year of goodness,” we leave thinking that it is now up to God whether we have a good year or not, then we’ve totally missed it.

The liturgy of the Holy Days tries to inspire us to reach deeper. On the surface, the language of prayer and Torah is powerful because it has come from the mouths of generations of our people. Just as importantly, the words are powerful because of what they inspire in us (above and beyond what they seem to say to the casual listener). They are a declaration of our ideals and our values. Of who we are and who we are supposed to be.

Most of all, we are supposed to be aware. Aware of how incredible it is that we exist. Aware of how rare and miraculous life is. Aware of how each breath is a kind of miracle when considered against the vastness of the universe. Aware of how little we know despite how much we

learn.

On Rosh Hashanah we celebrate the New Year. Said to be the anniversary of “Creation,” we are drawn to an awareness of the world around us. We become aware of our own place in it. The tradition of Torah teaches that we are a part of the world, and the world is a part of us. It teaches that we are lucky to be here, and that the soil beneath our feet (and everything all around us) is incredible merely for existing. Prayer is meant to help spark an awareness of it all.

As we pray, we express our worries, our concerns, and our excitement for the new year that is beginning. We do so not because we think our prayers will impact some cosmic, Divine Being and convince them to alter the path in front of us. But because we know that living without trying to touch something deeper and more meaningful than ourselves is not really living. That despite the momentary joys we might encounter, there can be no true contentment. Not without the occasional effort to touch the infinite. Seeing the world as full of items to be used and discarded, present just for us personally, is not particularly fulfilling (though sometimes necessary). Feeling a bit of gratitude, awe, and joy in the mundane is the path to a lifetime of contentedness. Happy New Year.

## The Frozen Water Bottle Mitzvah



**Rabbi Evette Lutman  
Temple Beth-El, Las Cruces**

At our most recent meeting of the interfaith group “Faith for The Unhoused”, we heard from Yvette Gutierrez, the outreach coordinator for Messilla Valley Community of Hope. Yvette has been out on the streets, passing out bottles of frozen water to people experiencing homelessness in our community.

Why frozen bottles I asked?  
“Because as the ice melts it provides cool water to drink throughout the day”. What a great idea, I

thought. And what an incredible mitzvah. That’s a mitzvah we can do too. Many of us have a cooler sitting somewhere on a shelf. We take it out when we go on picnics, then put it back on the shelf. But what if, instead, we put that cooler in the car and filled it with a six-pack of frozen water bottles? Then we too would be ready to perform the Frozen Water Bottle Mitzvah!



**Calling all Lions and Pomegranates**

**WINE NOT**

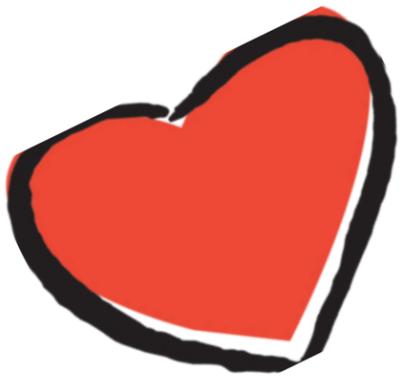
**Save the Date**

**Tuesday, October 24, 2023**

**11:30 am**

**D.H. Lescombes Winery & Bistro**

**Watch for further details**



# Celebrating

## Larry & Laurie Lesser

### By Larry Lesser

I met Laurie at a Hanukkah party in Fort Collins, Colorado, a small town that had almost no other single Jews my age. Our mutual friend hosting the party later confessed that she'd set us up but didn't tell us; at the time, we were clueless. Our first conversation led to our first date—on snowshoes! We got engaged eight months later.

Laurie suggested the hike on snowshoes. It was the first time for both of us, which in hindsight made it a perfect first date because we were both trying something new on multiple levels and stumbling around (snowshoeing is harder than it looks), making it easier to bypass any pressure to maintain facades. We had both been through a lot: cross-country moves, stressful job situations, failed previous relationships, and the struggle to reconcile childhood challenges.

But I lived in Greeley, 40 miles away. That may not sound

like such a long drive, but it was daunting with our busy schedules and the possibility of icy roads for some of the year. Laurie really loved Fort Collins (it's a hip and pretty city, while Greeley often smells like the feedlot town it is), so when she said she was willing to move to Greeley to make it easier to spend time together, I knew this was going the distance!

I was trying to earn tenure at a university. Laurie left her post-doc position to launch a new career in the healing arts. At one point, she actually had four part-time jobs at once: as a cook for a family, tutor for B'nai Mitzvah, synagogue administrator and massage therapist.

I'm still astounded at what aligned for us. We discovered that the mom of my friend since second grade, Jon, was a childhood friend of Laurie's friend, Barbara. My dad was always really into family genealogy; when he learned that I was taking a job in Greeley, he recalled that he had third

cousins there. We'd never met or spoken to them, but my dad reached out to them right away—and they lived 10 doors down from me. When they left for the winter, Laurie stayed there, keeping the house Kosher.

I don't remember where I heard that the Talmud compares finding your beshert to splitting the Red Sea, but the internet (e.g., Sefaria) made it easy to dive deeper (no pun intended) and learn more. I found the Talmud's metaphor for the difficulty of matchmaking in Sotah 2a, Sanhedrin 22a, and Megillah 10b.

It hit me that I could write a song in that

spirit about meeting Laurie, incorporating the "universal" passages from Talmud. It's called "Tearin' the Sea." The chorus:

*Our Maker makes all matches,*

*but it's not easy and free:*

*it's hard to pair as it was to tear the sea.*

*And later this line for Laurie:*

*It's too small a chance all that was chance.*



## Michael & Sandra Blau

### By Michael Blau

Both born and raised in France, my wife and I met in Middle School when we were about 13 years old and became friends shortly after. From her point of view, Kindness, Positivity and Affection were the things she appreciated the most from me and out of all the things that she brought to the table, Trust and Reliability were the things I was missing the most of in my life and appreciated the most from her but I was not ready for dating. On the other hand, she was.

Our first date ended-up under the sparkling Eiffel Tower at the age of 16 years old. Thinking about it today, it is hard for us to grasp that only 3 years went by between the time we met and the time we dated because, at the time, those 3 years

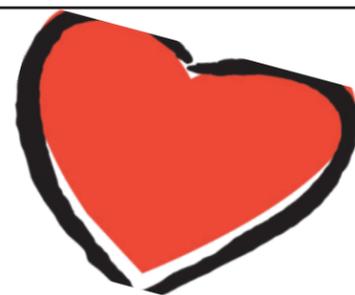


felt like 20 years went by easy.

We got married at 18 years old, as soon as we could, had 2 kids by the time we were 21 and struggled to get by for many years after that but we are now 33 years old with a wonderful family circle, comfortable lives and professional careers we thrive in. It has been 20 years since we met and our love for each other grows stronger every day.

Shabbat among all the other Jewish Traditions have played a big role in keeping our family together and stay strong through all the rough times as well as celebrating the good times.

*Tu B' Shav*



## The Shabbat Apple

By Doug Marlowe, father of Alison Westermann,  
grandfather of Sam and Dena

*I am apple, a big, juicy red apple  
I was hanging off a tree in the orchard  
When a lady's soft hand picked me and put me in her apron*

*She put me in a small basket with a lot of my friends, other apples  
from my tree  
And she went to to the town square to sell her apples.*

*It was market day, the day before Shabbat.  
In Kobryn, a small town in a place close to Russia.  
A boy bought me, then he polished me on his vest*

*He looked at me and smiled  
I was proud, I'd made him happy  
We walked a bit, and he met his friends.*

*He saw this pretty girl across the square  
Standing by the fountain  
He said to me, "Please make this girl love me."*

*He threw me at her aiming for the fountain by her side.  
Oops! He missed. I hit her head and bounced into the water.  
He ran over and apologized.*

*He fished me out of the fountain and offered me to her.*

*"I bought this for you."*

*They fell in love.  
All over an apple (that's me!)  
On Shabbat.*

*This is how my grandfather met my grandmother.*

# Mia Berkson shines in musicals, plays, ballet ... and even track

**By Mike Cook**  
**Las Cruces Bulletin, Re-**  
**published with permission**  
**of the Las Cruces Bulletin**

Mia Berkson is well on her way to living her dream of performing professionally in live theatre.

Earlier this year, Mia, 15, played the lead in the musical "Matilda," singing, dancing and acting to rave reviews at Las Cruces Community Theatre.

She also performed in "The Crucible," "Mary Poppins" and "Annie" at LCCT and was in the cast of 15 shows for A Children's Theatre of the Mesilla Valley. (Her first stage roles, as a 3- and 4-year-old in pre-school, were as a frog and a leprechaun.) Mia is studying ballet, tap and



jazz at the Las Cruces School of Dance and Music, and has performed in "The Nutcracker Suite," "Cinderella" and "The Grinch" for the school and Borderlands Ballet. Mia is also taking voice lessons from Las Cruces singer/actor Della Bustamante.

At Organ Mountain High School, where she will be a sophomore this year, Mia is in the theatre program and sings soprano in the OMHS choir –

she missed two rehearsals of "Matilda" in January to participate in the New Mexico Activities Association All-State Choir. During the 2022-23 school year, Mia was also a member of the Organ Mountain High track team and part of the four-girl team that broke the school record in the

4 x 800-meter relay.

As this story runs, Mia is at Stagedoor Manor summer camp in the Catskill Mountains of New York, a three-week program in which she will study musical theatre, dance and acting for film and perform in four shows. It is the third summer in a row she has enrolled in the program.

"Musical theatre is what I'm passionate about," Mia said. "I love it."

Her favorite stage musicals are "Hamilton" and "The Drowsy Chaperone," but Mia does not have a favorite song.

"I'm constantly singing a million songs," Mia said.

She also is "super interested in film," Mia said, both acting in the medium and learning the business side.

"People tell me how talented Mia is and I say, 'Yes, but she also works really, really hard,'" said her mother, Rebecca Berkson.

Mia can trace her theatrical roots back to her great grandmother, Maria Lopez, who performed in vaudeville.

"If Mia makes this passion

into a career, it's not merely because of her talent," Rebecca said. "Lots of people have talent and don't make it. When I see how she pushes herself so hard in a track race that she nearly blacks out, or she has swollen feet after two shows on pointe shoes, or how she overcame her nerves as a 10-year-old to sing the National Anthem in front of a full Pan Am Center basketball audience, I think, 'She certainly has grit.'"

"Mia Berkson is one of the most talented young actors in Las Cruces," said actor/director and former theatre owner Norman Duttweiler. "Every time she steps on stage, she brings a level of commitment and honesty to her work that one rarely sees in community theatre. I look forward to working with her again, and to following her progress as she continues to grow as an artist."

"Mia is one of the most talented, hard working and inventive young actors that I have ever worked with! Directing her in "Matilda" was a complete joy," said Mike Wise, who directed Mia in "Matilda."

## Sister act: Lilah Berkson's exhibit featured at Smithsonian National Museum

**By Mike Cook**  
**Las Cruces Bulletin, Re-**  
**published with permission**  
**of the Las Cruces Bulletin**

While her sister, Mia, was studying theatre, dancing and film in New York, Lilah Berkson, 13, was at the Smithsonian National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. and presented an exhibit at the museum's National History Day (NHD) Showcase exhibition June 14 in College Park, Maryland. Lilah's exhibit, "Adolf Hitler: A Pioneer Of Propaganda In The Media," was featured in the museum's June 14 National History Day (NHD) Showcase exhibition.

"Lilah chose this topic because unfortunately she has been running across antisemitism

locally (a swastika graffitied on the exterior of the temple the Berkson family attends in Las Cruces, and anti-Semitic comments Lilah heard from other kids) over the last couple of years," said Lilah and Mia's mother, Rebecca Berkson.

"For Lilah's work to be featured at the Smithsonian is an honor, and we at New Mexico History Day are so proud of her and the other 61 students we took to the national competition," said Heather McLenahan of the New

Mexico Humanities Council (NMHC).

Lilah is a seventh grader at Mesilla Valley Leadership Academy (MVLA).

Also representing Las Cruces Public Schools at the exhibition were MVLA students Madie Sandell and Lily Louick, both 12, and Alivia

Villanueva, 14, along with their teacher, Morgan Harding. For the competition, Alivia created a documentary about her grandfather, Danny Villanueva, who played in the NFL in

the 1960s for the Los Angeles Rams and Dallas Cowboys and was co-founder of the Spanish-language television network Univision.

Nearly 2,700 students were in College Park to compete, NMHC said in a news release. "NHD is a year-long academic program focused on historical research, interpretation and creative expression for sixth to twelfth-grade students," the news release said.

"Both of these girls are smart and talented, but it's their commitment and work ethic that makes them succeed. I admire them both for that," Rebecca Berkson said.





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Five Locations Throughout El Paso and Las Cruces

## Grants Awarded by the Jewish Federation of El Paso and Las Cruces for 2022 – 2023 - \$347,7500



We are grateful to the many donors who contributed to our recent campaign which we would like to close by August 2023. Our community produced a diverse array of programs that we are honored to support through grants. Here is a brief recap and a collage of pictures and testimonials to share with you.

Congregation B'nai Zion Book Zone brought noteworthy authors Zach Broder, Meg White Clayton, James McAuley, Shannon Sarna, Faris Cassell, Ann Salton Eisen, and Lori Banov Kaufman to El Paso. Their Culture Series produced three separate social and educational events focusing on the Jewish holidays.

Robin Krasne shared with us that this holiday series, "Brought to the forefront the idea in Judaism of healing the world. Participants learned about Jaffa Institute and how they are working to combat hunger/food insecurity in Israel while collecting canned goods to donate to the El Pasoans Fighting Hunger during our Rosh Hashana program.

We collected apples to be used locally in addition to everyone picking apples for their own holiday table. Over Tu B'Shevat, people learned about the Jewish National Fund and how they are planting trees and working on multiple other projects in Israel to benefit communities across the area. Each participant created a garden box to keep and an additional box to give to someone to brighten their day.

For Shavuot, our community learned about Genesis Seeds in Israel and how they are scientifically developing hybrid basil to combat a global basil mold that is destroying crops. Every attendee was able to take home Genesis Seeds basil and za'atar. Each participant created a posey to keep and an additional one to give to someone to brighten their day." The Federation also supported CBZ's Melton Education programs.

The El Paso Holocaust Museum received a grant for the exhibit, Let Me Be Myself: The Life Story of Anne Frank, and for student scholarships. As Jamie Flores noted in her letter to Federation upon completing the grant, "We are so pleased with the impact this exhibit and workshop had not only on the youth, but all those who visited in our community. We are so grateful to Jewish El Paso for helping us to achieve that.

From the exhibition opening on November 15, 2022, to its conclusion on February 14, 2023, EPHM welcomed over 2,700 visitors, including 3 docent-led school tours. Twenty students attended the Youth Peer Guide Training Workshop. After the workshop and for the remainder of the time the exhibition remained at EPHM, students conducted tours for the wider community. Not only was this a fantastic application of history, but it also taught these youth a new skill set and connection to the community."

Temple Mount Sinai's musical series implemented a four-part series exposing our community to up-and-coming, diverse musicians in the Jewish world. They welcomed Josh Goldberg, Coleen Dieker, Jake Shulman-Ment, and Ellie Flier.

Specific activities, crafts, games, nature walks, and meditations were planned with a Jewish focus, and provided opportunities that nurtured intergenerational connections in the beautiful mountains of New Mexico.

Chabad Las Cruces used grant funds to produce a monumental Hannukkah event which allowed new families to access Chabad's pre-school and educational programs.

Educational grants were given to our four schools: Chabad El Paso's Gen Menachem School, Chabad Las Cruces' Camp Gan Israel, The Cherry Hill Day School, and The Jewish Center for Early Learning. Campaign dollars

also provided over 150 students with tuition assistance and academic and camp scholarships.

Last year, the Federation granted an Israeli organization, Hachnasat Orchikm Hebron, with resources to provide food packages to Israeli soldiers. We were and remain a partner donor to the Jewish Federation of North America's Israel Religious Expression Platform (iRep).

The Federation produced a diverse calendar of Café Europa events and assisted our community with free rides to doctors appointments and Jewish events through our Shalom Shuttle program. Both of these programs are funded by the Jewish Community Foundation and managed by the Federation. PJ Library has over 75 youngsters enrolled who receive books on a monthly basis and participate in fun activities throughout the year.

In the spring, we celebrated with The Jewish Community Foundation at Generations Day, the 20th anniversary (as it's own 501(c)3), and educated the community about the Foundation.

We ended the year with a packed house to celebrate Israel's 75th anniversary at Ardivinos Desert Crossing. The testimonials from community members and the pictures that captured many of these events tells you more than anything we could write. We are grateful to all our donors and supporters of this past year's campaign.

If you have not paid your pledge to the 2022 or 2023 community campaign, we ask you to complete your payments now to enable us to finish paying our partners for their grants, which they so richly deserve. If you have not yet made a pledge to the campaign, or tend to make your pledge towards the end of the calendar year, we ask you to consider making a pledge and payment now.

# Grant Testimonials

## Melton

"I really enjoyed taking the Melton Jewish Humor class. It was a great opportunity to learn more about a topic relevant to Jewish life through a well-established curriculum. I also like engaging with other members of our community that I had not met before."  
- Jeanne Lipson

"The sessions were nice and I did enjoy the class."  
- Riva Siegel

## Book Zone

"The Book Zone is a wonderful way to come together as a community and celebrate Jewish literature."  
- Dana Frank



## Youth Docent Training with Special Exhibit: "Let Me Be Myself: The Life Story of Anne Frank" - Training led by educators from the Anne Frank Center

"I've read her diary in two languages, but neither was as impactful as the exhibit. I think it was an incredible experience, and I'm so fortunate to have been able to participate. Reading helps you learn, but it's so different to be able to teach other what you learned, and that, I think, was the real difference. It was also so amazing to hear what the people working at the Anne Frank museum in South Carolina had to say. I just think that it's so amazing to have these experiences, and to be able to learn from these people."  
- Frances Gunn, age 15

# Shavuot at Cafe Italia Cimarron

On Sunday, June 11th, Congregation B'nai Zion hosted a celebration of Shavuot at Café Italia Cimarron. A packed house of about 70, with ages ranging from under 1 to over 100 years old were in attendance. Shavuot celebrations traditionally include dairy meals at tables adorned with beautiful flowers. The activities at the event were inspired by these traditions.

The first activity was led by Calhoun Flower Farms, a local flower farm. They designed a project that would use local flowers plus flowers and plants native to Israel including pomegranates, grape leaves and wheat. Each person made two floral arrangements or posies; one for themselves and the second to share with someone who might need a little something to brighten their day. Adding this act of chesed, or kindness, to the program added to its beauty and meaning.

The next activity was a demonstration of fresh mozzarella cheese making led by Daniel Rangel, Café Italia's owner. Daniel explained the entire process while he made large batches of cheese that were then used to make caprese salads for everyone to enjoy. The dairy meal that followed included vegetarian pizzas.

Lastly, the Shavuot program featured a third element designed to celebrate the agricultural ingenuity of Israel. Everyone received two packages of seeds that were developed in Israel. One was basil and the second was zaatar, or marjoram, which is similar but sweeter than oregano. The basil is a hybrid plant developed in Israel by Genesis Seeds that is mildew resistant to fight a plague that has been attacking basil crops globally. The hope is that each of these seed packets inspired all attendees to plant, grow and enjoy these Israeli products and remember the deep connection Shavuot has with Israel and its agriculture. The event was a huge success and was enjoyed by all attendees.

The Shavuot program was the third in a series of cultural programs that were funded by the Jewish Federation of El Paso and Las Cruces and hosted by Congregation B'nai Zion. The first was a Rosh Hashana program with participants visiting an apple orchard for apple picking and the second was decorating and filling planters in celebration of Tu B'Shevat. Each of these events had great attendance and were enjoyed by members from various congregations in our community. It was a beautiful experience for everyone to join together to celebrate these holidays throughout the year.

# Community Circles

The Jewish Federation of El Paso and Las Cruces is excited to be offering a new concept of get togethers that are volunteer driven in our area called Community Circles. It is our intention that groups will meet anywhere from 1-6 times within a six-month span. These “circles” are no-cost to low-cost opportunities for individuals to get together with people in our community who share like interests.

Below is a list of activities that can take place anywhere from Las Cruces to El Paso. Volunteer leaders are encouraged to program events to reach the largest audience possible. Feel free to let us know whether you would like to be a coordinator (915-842-9554 or [info@jewishelpaso.org](mailto:info@jewishelpaso.org)). You must include your name and contact information (email/phone number) to help us make that matching! Groups will start after Simchat Torah, late October.

- **Hiking** - There are so many trails to enjoy in El Paso and Las Cruces. This group can enjoy easy walks or more robust walks. You decide.
- **Biking** - So many places to see. Early morning, afternoons, evening rides, enjoy the scenery and head out with friends.
- **Walking** - from urban hikes (such as visiting downtown murals) to gentle slopes, walk with friends and catch up on your local news.
- **Jogging or Running** - when it isn't 105 degrees (!) Join local joggers or runners and share your favorite routes.
- **Adventure Outings** - Seeking a little extra adrenaline? Adventure outings can include a more robust hike/ bike/run or walk or something even bigger, like skydiving, or spelunking. The sky's the limit.
- **Where the Winds Blow Mah Jong** - New to the game or looking for a new group to fill in a day in the week? Start a new group.
- **Wine-Not** - explore local wineries! Join a group and discover all the varietals our region offers. Or visit local shops and taste at home with new friends.
- **Dog Park Buddies** - want to meet more folks at the dog park. Set a time, explore a new place and go have fun
- **Family Explore-a-Park Days** - want to meet other adults with younger children? Schedule a park day and see what play dates evolve.
- **Interfaith Circle** - Gather to share family stories, rituals, and coping solutions when blending families of different cultures and faiths.
- **Holiday Cooking Group** - meet to try new recipes or share family favorites.
- **Volunteer Days** - want to make volunteering at local non-profits a monthly gathering? Let's make it happen! Volunteer as a group, or sign up as individuals or family units to go to local foodbanks, Jardin de Milagro etc.
- **Archaeology Explorers** - New Mexico and El Paso area are home to amazing digs and archaeological sites. Visit what has been explored and uncover new fossils.
- **Beer Tasting and Bites** - get together to try out different local breweries together.
- **The Reel Deal** - Agree on movies to go experience together and then dine and discuss the show
- **Knitting** - crocheting and needle-pointing

We are so excited to be offering these new opportunities to gather. Have another great idea you'd like to share? We'd love to hear and see if we can help make your circle happen!



# Poland &



## Poland – Personal Reflections

### By Brenda Ehrlich

Why go to Poland?? For me, it was an opportunity to see the country and town where my mother and her family were born. For me, it was an opportunity to spend 6 days with 13 incredible, congenial, compassionate El Pasoans from our Synagogue, Temple, and Holocaust Museum plus great guides and including Rabbi Ben Zeidman (mom) who quietly watched over us. Yes, Poland is a beautiful thriving country with old world charm on Krakow-people walking and eating at outdoor restaurants. Warsaw has soviet bloc apartments, American fast-food chains, new

skyscrapers, busy traffic and is surrounded by a countryside of lush farmland and thick oak and pine forests. But also, it is a country with a minuscule number of people who acknowledge their Judaism. We visited old synagogues, some functioning, a JCC feeding and helping to house over 300 Ukrainians weekly, most non-Jewish, embodying the concept of Tikun Olam. A museum and educational center in Kielce is housed in a former apartment building where 42 Jewish people were murdered in 1946. It exists due to the effort of a non-Jewish activist, Bogdan, who works to prevent another happening, and calls the center a place of

memory and reconciliation. Auschwitz-Birkenau where we said Kaddish in a peaceful tree lined area, belies the previous horrors.

Again for me, a small town Kolno, is where I stood outside an abandoned home surrounded by new construction. I saw a former Synagogue, now a hotel, with a plaque memorializing the 300 year of local Jewish living, and the 3,600 Kolno inhabitants in 1939 who ceased to exist by the end of 1941. There is a forest surrounded by a cornfield where Kolnos' women and children, including my aunt Sara and her two children were murdered. An abandoned gated Jewish Cemetery overgrown with weeds and covered with

broken tombstones reminds us of our obligation to maintain our own beautiful cemeteries.

In Warsaw we had a guided tour through Polin, a world class museum of Jewish History, Hundreds of tourists filled the rooms and I hope they left with a glimpse of our history and with greater understanding of humanity. At the end of the trip after being with wonderful friends, seeing some beautiful and some not so beautiful sights, the final thought I took from my voyage found at Polin. (Miriam Turski, the 11th commandment) THOU SHALL NOT BE INDIFFERENT



# Israel Tour



## Remembrance & Reflection

### By Barry Armour

The reason for my recent journey to Poland and Israel was twofold: I wanted to visit the country that my grandfather came from and I made the trip in order to honor my dad, Richard Armour, who passed away on July 14, 2022. One of the many things that Dad and I shared was a love of history, particularly that of World War II and the Holocaust. Dad never had the chance to visit Poland or Israel, so I decided to undertake the journey on his behalf. Going on the trip with Mom made it all that more special as the trip began on Father's Day, the first one I spent without Dad.

At the Polin Museum in Warsaw, we learned that the name of the country comes from Hebrew for "And here we shall stay." When walking around Krakow, it quickly becomes clear that Jewish life in Poland is much more than what occurred between 1939 and 1945 as the history of Polish Jews goes back more than 1000 years.

As we went to Auschwitz and Birkenau I sat quietly on the bus, alone with my thoughts as each minute brought us closer to the camp. I lost my vision nearly 11 years ago, so I could not actually see the camp; however, since I have studied the Holocaust for many years, I could visualize it in my mind, and having previously visited Dachau before I went blind, I had a frame of reference to draw upon as well. When you visit a place like Auschwitz, it is a place that you cannot see; rather it is a place that you must feel.

I cannot describe in words what it was like entering Auschwitz walking under the "Arbeit Macht Frei" sign. I can tell you that we found the names of several of my grandfather's relatives listed in the Book of Names.

Mom happened to look up at one point at a video screen showing pictures of survivors, when a picture of Sarah Hauptman and her children, Guy and Monika, was shown. Mom cried out, "El Paso people; it's Sarah Hauptman!" I can tell you how it felt to follow the train tracks into Birkenau and stand on the platform where the selections were made. Given the fact that I am totally blind, I could not help but reflect that had I been sent there, I would most certainly have been killed. However, being an identical twin, I may very well have been spared only to be subjected to "scientific experiments" at the hands of Dr. Mengele.

Standing in one of the barracks while at Auschwitz and Birkenau, I could feel the sweat pouring down my chest and back, trying to imagine how it must have felt to share that space with 700 other people, yet, as we stepped outside of the barracks, a slight breeze picked up to cool the sweat on my skin. As our group gathered later to say Kaddish, a slight breeze died down as soon as Kaddish was over. It was as if the voices of our murdered people were crying out, thanking us for remembering them. It is an experience that was repeated at Yad Vashem as we stepped outside to once again say Kaddish, and the

breeze picked up. I thought it was the voices of the murdered crying out to us.

I felt a connection to Israel that I was not sure I would feel beforehand. When visiting the Western Wall and walking the tunnels underneath, my engineering brain was struck by the size of the columns as it baffles the imagination to think about what a structure pillars this large were designed to support. When I visited the Wall, I also placed my hands on it and was struck by its sheer size.

At Masada, I learned that its excavation occurred about a decade after the Holocaust, at a time when many survivors were making their way to Israel only to be asked why they did not resist and chose to go like lambs to the slaughter. By killing themselves rather than being taken alive by the Romans, the zealots of Masada found nobility in death, in suicide. As with Mila 18, the people chose suicide, yet these acts of suicide are celebrated rather than condemned because they show Jews resisting. This is because to a nascent nation such as Israel was at the time, they needed a point of pride to counteract the "lambs to the slaughter" narrative of the Holocaust.

Driving along long the Lebanese border, we were told that we most likely were being watched by Hezbollah. We had the chance to meet several members of the Israeli Defense Force, who were patrolling the area as Hezbollah was starting brush fires so the smoke would blow across the border to

the Israeli vineyards and ruin the grapes.

Tikkun Olam was part of what we did in both countries. We spent time volunteering at the Krakow Jewish Community Center, bagging rice and tea bags for the many Ukrainian refugees, most of whom are not Jewish. We volunteered at the Jaffa Institute putting together food boxes for needy people, such as elderly Holocaust survivors.

One of my most meaningful experiences was our visit to Kisra Samea, a Druze community high school, where we met several students, who are doing amazing work with artificial intelligence to help blind and visually-impaired people. This is so interesting because it is what I do every day in my job as an accessibility consultant. A blind man, whom the Nazis may well have viewed as not worthy of living because of my lack of sight, now spends his days making the world a better place for those similarly afflicted.

I have never labeled myself a Zionist, but after visiting Israel, I might have to change that. Living along the border between two countries, it gives a perspective on the situation in Israel. Despite what anyone's feelings are on immigration, the people coming to the border between Texas and Mexico are not launching rockets and missiles across the Rio Grande and are not trying to wipe our existence from the Earth. That is the situation that Israel faces along the borders with Lebanon and Syria.

# Thank You!

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