



Union rejects boycott

NEA declines to cut ties with ADL, p.2

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Shalom Chaverim

Tzofim Friendship Caravan brings joy and unity to North Texas p.8



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Photo: Courtesy
The Tzofim Friendship Caravan is greeted by Riva Campo, volunteer engagement manager at The Legacy Senior Communities.

SUPPORTING FLOOD VICTIMS

BBYO teens raise almost \$30K for Central Texas, p.3

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NEA board rejects proposal to cut ties with ADL

The decision follows a series of letters from Jewish organizations condemning the effort

By Grace Gilson

(JTA) — The board of directors for the National Education Association, the United States’ largest teachers union, has rejected a proposal by its delegates to sever ties with the Anti-Defamation League.

The rejection, issued Friday night, followed the earlier passage of a proposal by NEA delegates calling on the union to stop using, endorsing or publicizing any materials from the ADL. That proposal had drawn swift condemnation from Jewish organizations across the country.

In a statement announcing the board’s decision, NEA President Becky Pringle emphasized that the move was not an endorsement of the ADL. She also urged the ADL to “support the free speech” of students and educators — a likely reference to criticism the ADL has received for opposing certain forms of pro-Palestinian advocacy in schools.

“NEA opposes efforts to shut down debate, to silence voices of disagreement and intimidation,” Pringle wrote. “Not adopting this proposal is in no way an endorsement of the ADL’s full body

of work. We are calling on the ADL to support the free speech and association rights of all students and educators.”

The proposal approved by delegates had reflected a broader shift among some progressives away from the ADL during the war in Gaza, as critics have increasingly taken issue with the organization’s staunch pro-Israel stance and its framing of some criticism of Israel as antisemitism.

The board’s rejection came a week after the ADL spearheaded a letter signed by 400 Jewish organizations and congregations nationwide urging the NEA to reject the measure and commit to addressing antisemitism within the union.

“The effort to exclude ADL’s voice from educational spaces at a time of skyrocketing antisemitism — including in K-12 classrooms — speaks volumes about the climate within NEA that allowed this measure to pass, and the lack of understanding, if not outright hostility, behind it,” the letter read.

The Jewish Council for Public

Affairs also sent a letter to Pringle urging the board to reject the ban. “One does not need to align with the ADL on every issue, but choosing to cut off all engagement and dialogue runs counter to our shared goals of countering antisemitism and broader hate and bias,” wrote JCPA CEO Amy Spitalnick.

In a separate letter, Jeremy Ben-Ami, president of J Street — a liberal pro-Israel lobby — also condemned the original vote but rejected the ADL’s assertion that the decision was rooted in antisemitism. He wrote that such a claim “demeans the meaning of antisemitism and runs the risk of fanning its flames.”

After the NEA board rejected the proposal, leaders of the ADL, American Jewish Committee, Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations and Jewish Federations of North America issued a joint statement welcoming the decision. They called on the union to clearly communicate how the measure was “harmful to educators, students and families concerned about the rise of antisemitism and hate.”

“While teachers’ unions have little power to dictate curriculum, divisive campaigns to boycott reputable, centrist Jewish organizations and educators normalize antisemitic isolation, othering and marginalization of Jewish teachers, students and families in our schools,” the statement read.

Local response from ADL Texoma

“The decision made by the NEA executive committee reflects a collective advocacy effort from students, teachers and parents around the country,” ADL Texoma Regional Director Alex Horn told the TJP on Monday. She noted that the ADL mobilized thousands of supporters from across the political spectrum.

“The Jewish community will not stand idly by — this is a crucial moment to engage in open dialogue, ensuring that Jewish voices are heard and respected,” Horn said.

Horn also highlighted ADL Texoma’s ongoing efforts in local education. In the past year, 55



Photo: Paul Morigi/Getty Images for March For Our Lives
Rebecca Pringle speaks during March for Our Lives 2022 on June 11, 2022 in Washington, D.C.

schools in the region participated in the ADL’s “No Place for Hate” initiative, which helps schools build a culture of allyship and address bias, bullying and hate.

This summer, ADL Texoma co-led a faculty professional development day featuring its mini lesson on antisemitism, as well as several “Words to Action” programs for students in grades 8–12.

“ADL Texoma is grateful for our partnership with both public and private schools,” Horn said.

The TJP contributed to this report.

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BBYO teens raise nearly \$30K for Texas flood relief

In the wake of devastating floods that struck Central Texas earlier this July — damaging homes, displacing families and impacting beloved summer camps — teens at BBYO’s International Leadership Training Conference (ILTC) sprang into action. Through a heartfelt and high-energy fundraiser known as BBYO-Thon, teen leaders from around the world raised \$29,370 in under 24 hours, nearly doubling their initial goal.

BBYO-Thon has become an annual tradition at ILTC, a flagship summer program that brings together hundreds of Jewish teen leaders to strengthen their skills and shape the future of the global Jewish community. This year’s ILTC welcomed 240 participants representing 14 countries across BBYO’s vast network.

When news of the floods reached the ILTC community, the teen-led planning committee quickly dedicated this year’s BBYO-Thon to Central Texas flood relief. The cause hit close to home, especially for BBYO’s North Texas Oklahoma (NTO) and Lonestar regions, whose members live in and around the affected areas. The dance-a-thon-style event was not only an opportunity to raise critical funds but also a powerful reminder of BBYO’s commitment to caring for one another, no matter where we live.

Daniel G., a teen from BBYO’s Liberty Region (Philadelphia), helped lead the initiative. “The second we chose the Central Texas flood relief to be our cause, I could not wait to raise money, awareness and help their community,” he shared. “I spent

most of my day organizing the event because I knew that the better the event, the more impact we could make.”

In just 45 minutes, the group surpassed their original \$15,000 fundraising goal. By the end of the next day, they had raised nearly \$30,000. The funds will support families and community institutions across Central Texas, including areas close to BBYO’s Texas regions.

“To watch 240 teens come together to help another community just like ours was incredible,” Daniel said. “It is so rewarding to know I was able to make such a positive difference and inspire so many others to do the same during this tragic time.”



Photos: Courtesy BBYO
Daniel G., left, and BBYO International Grand Aleph Godol Logan Reich.

BBYO’s response to the Texas floods is more than a one-time act of tzedakah. It’s a testament to the empathy and leadership that define this generation of Jewish teens. As Daniel noted, giving anonymously — one of the highest forms of tzedakah in Jewish tradition — made the experience even more meaningful.



Daniel G., who helped lead the BBYO-Thon fundraiser for Texas flood relief, speaks to fellow members at BBYO’s International Leadership Training Conference in July 2025.

In a time of grief and uncertainty for many Texans, the outpouring of support from BBYO teens across the globe stands as a beacon of hope. When one community is impacted, the entire Movement rallies together — because that’s what it means to be part of the BBYO family.

—Submitted by
Jen Appel for BBYO

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Genecov Orthodontics: 65 years of smiles



Photo: Courtesy Genecov Orthodontics
Harris Block, a patient from 1965 to 1968, represents one of many multi-generational families treated at Genecov Orthodontics. His and Dr. Jeff's families have been connected for decades.



Photo: Courtesy Genecov Orthodontics
Dr. Jeff Genecov with his father, Dr. Ed Genecov, at the Dallas office circa 2004. Dr. Ed, who passed away in 2009, was known for his compassion and mentorship.



Photo: Courtesy Genecov Orthodontics
Nancy Knubowitz, left, with Dr. Jeff Genecov and patients Eden and Ariella Staub (in the chair) and Ilene Knubowitz at the Plano office in July 2025. Nancy has worked with the practice for more than 34 years.

2 generations of doctors have cared for 3 generations of families

By Deb Silverthorn

Genecov Orthodontics has been straightening smiles for 65 years — providing orthodontic care and a friendly touch to thousands.

The practice opened in 1960 and has flourished to serve generations of families, now operating offices at Preston and Forest and in Plano.

“Together and always, we’ve had the benefit and blessing of an incredible practice,” said Dr. Jeff Genecov, who worked alongside his father, Dr. Ed Genecov (Dr. G), of blessed memory. Jeff has led the practice since his father’s retirement in 2008.

“Our patients have been loyal,” Jeff said. “My father was dedicated and cared about the work and the people around him.”

Dr. G, a Dallas native, graduated from Highland Park High School, the University of Texas at Austin and Baylor Dental School. He met his wife, Sally, a Los Angeles native, while serving in the Naval Dental Corps. He completed his residency at Columbia University in New York. In 1960, the couple moved to Dallas with 8-month-old Jeff, later welcoming children Julie (Rob Shrell) and David (Lisa).

Beyond braces, brackets and bands, Genecov Orthodontics has treated patients with craniofacial anomalies, cleft palates and other complex conditions. Dr. G worked closely with the late Dr. Ken Salyer, a world-renowned plastic surgeon. Together, they lectured to dental and plastic surgery professionals worldwide.

Jeff ultimately became an orthodontist, and David became a surgeon who assumed Salyer’s practice. Until David’s passing, the brothers carried on the work started by Dr. G and Dr. Salyer. Genecov Orthodontics has long provided pro bono services through medical and dental organizations locally and globally.

“Over the years, much has changed — from hand-made orthodontic appliances to digital x-rays and 3D, AI and other technologies,” Jeff said. “We now work with patients with sleep disorders and facial surgeries that weren’t even considered years ago, but my father was part of that evolution.”

“It used to be solely about teeth fitting together. Now, it’s also about the appearance of the whole face — smiles and aesthetics,” he added. “We still remind patients to clean their teeth and wear rubber bands, but the biology of teeth hasn’t changed. Our work is as much science as it is art.”

Nancy Knubowitz has worked as a Genecov Orthodontics assistant for most of the past 34 years.

“Dr. G and Dr. Jeff have been wonderful to work for,” said Nancy, who began with Dr. G in 1991. Her son Taylor Granger and daughters Allison and Rachael Knubowitz were also patients. Now working with Dr. Jeff, she’s a patient herself.

“When I first moved here, Dallas was a ‘big city,’ but not to Dr. G,” she said. “He was very caring, he knew everyone and was deeply connected. In those ways, Dr. Jeff has followed in his dad’s footsteps.”

The Knubowitz connection runs deep. Ilene Knubowitz, Nancy’s sister-in-law, had braces as a child but wasn’t satisfied with the results. She became a Genecov patient in recent years and couldn’t be happier. Lynn Staub, whose son is married to Ilene’s daughter, was also a patient.

“Jeff’s done a great job,” said Ilene, whose children Shana (Knubowitz) Staub and Matt Knubowitz were patients. Now, their children — Micah, Liat, Ariella and Eden Staub and Kamilla Knubowitz — are patients too. “For everyone, they’ve done a great job.”

Among the multi-generational families grateful to the Genecovs are the Blocks. Harris Block was Dr. G’s patient 60 years ago. His siblings Gary and Amy (Hawkins) followed. When Harris’ children, Roxanne and Spencer, needed orthodontic care, Genecov was the only place he trusted.

“We have history as family friends and as patients,” said Block. “Our dads were best friends, and we grew up around the corner from one another. There’s no question about where we’d go — and the same for my kids.”

Community service has also been a Genecov hallmark. Dr. G served as president of Congregation Shearith Israel and held leadership roles at the Aaron Family JCC, the Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas and Leadership Dallas. In the dental and medical fields, he was a charter faculty member of the Baylor Graduate Department of Orthodontics and held

leadership roles in organizations including the American Board of Orthodontics, Angle Society of Orthodontists, Dallas County Dental Society, Southwest Society of Orthodontists, Northeast Regional Specialty Board and Texas Tweed Society.

Jeff, an alumnus of St. Mark’s School of Texas and the University of Texas at Austin, where he was a member of ZBT and the Texas Cowboys, earned his dental degree from Baylor College of Dentistry/Texas A&M University. He is now a clinical assistant professor. He’s been recognized by D Magazine and Texas Monthly and has served on the boards of the American Association of Orthodontists Foundation, Alpha Omega Jewish Dental Fraternity, Greater Dallas Association of Orthodontists, International Craniofacial Institute, Smile for a Lifetime, Southwest Society of Orthodontists, St. Mark’s School of Texas and the Texas Association of Orthodontists.

Jeff has also been active with the American Jewish Committee, CHAI: Community Homes for Adults, Congregation Shearith Israel, Dallas BBO Youth Commission and Chapter Parents, Friends of the Northaven Trail and the Jewish Federation of Greater Dallas. He and Lisa — parents of Adam (Bre) and Becca and grandparents of Miles — co-chaired the Federation’s 2015 “Big One” mission to Israel.

“Dad was the best mentor I could imagine,” said Jeff. “He had a great way with people, and he taught me — most importantly — how to treat people, how to care.”

TJP

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Anshai Torah adds cantor to clergy team

Hazzan Matt Austerklein’s tenure begins with Shabbat, Aug. 1 – 2

By Deb Silverthorn

Beginning with Shabbat services on Friday, Aug. 1, and Saturday, Aug. 2, Congregation Anshai Torah will hit a new high note. Hazzan Matt Austerklein will join the shul as its first full-time cantor.

“Anshai is a place where people take care of one another, where they’ve built a true family. The rabbis are connected, the lay leadership is truly committed, and it’s a privilege for me to help facilitate the congregation’s continued growth,” Hazzan Austerklein said.

“Myself, Rabbi Weinberg and Rabbi Kornsgold are thrilled to welcome Hazzan Austerklein as he becomes part of the family,” said Rabbi Michael Kushnick. “We overlapped at JTS, and I remember thinking if ever the chance, I’d love to work with him. Thirteen years later, here we are.

“He is one of the most talented in our movement,” Kushnick added, “and he’ll bring incredible knowledge, musicality, spirituality, joy and ruach to our shul and community.”

Austerklein joins Rabbi Kushnick and Rabbi Helene Kornsgold, CAT’s director of lifelong learning. Rabbi Stefan Weinberg became rabbi emeritus on July 1, and Rabbi Kushnick now serves as Anshai’s senior rabbi.

“Hazzan Austerklein is a master, blessed with a beautiful voice, a charismatic personality, a depth

of Jewish musicology and love for Jewish culture. Our prayers answered, we’re thrilled to welcome you,” said Weinberg. “As I step aside, little is more fulfilling than to see our next leaders emerge guiding and inspiring the congregation. This team is ready to lead our shul, and I’m excited.”

Austerklein will share in life cycle occasions, services and learning experiences. He will also work with the Religious School, b’nai mitzvah students and the congregation’s a cappella group, Kol Rina.

For 20 years, Kol Rina has helped define Anshai’s musical culture and is one of its most significant characterizing elements.

“Kol Rina is amazing,” said Austerklein, a member of a Jewish a cappella group in high school and a

founding member of the Wizards of Ashkenaz. “Their vibrant harmony, warmth and menschlichkeit are a real gift to this community.”

Austerklein, his wife Rabbi Elyssa Joy Austerklein, and their children Beatrice and Georgie come to Plano ready to connect. The Austerkleins — he Klein and she Auster before they married — joined their names in the spirit of “becoming one.” They met at the Isabella Freedman Retreat Center. Four days later, Austerklein told his father he’d met his future bride. Nine months later, they were engaged.

Austerklein is the son of Barbara Elkin and Paul Klein and the brother of Sarah (Isaac Hoft) Klein. He says his Jewish soul found its place at Agudas Achim Congregation in Alexandria, Virginia, where he



Photo: Courtesy Hazzan Matt Austerklein
Hazzan Matt Austerklein joins Congregation Anshai Torah’s clergy on Aug. 1.



The Austerklein family, from left: Hazzan Matt and Rabbi Elyssa Joy Austerklein with their children Georgie and Beatrice — in Akron, Ohio, in December 2024.

remembers running up and down the aisles singing “V’shamru” as a young child. He studied for his bar mitzvah and then served as a teen tutor and service leader. In addition to playing the cello in a Jewish string quartet, he

see AUSTERKLEIN, p.11

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Federation program to address campus antisemitism on Tisha B'Av



A scene "October 8." The Jewish Federation of Fort Worth & Tarrant County is sponsoring two programs on campus antisemitism on Sunday, Aug. 3.

On Sunday, Aug. 3 — Tisha B'Av, a significant day of reflection in the Jewish calendar — the Jewish Federation of Fort Worth & Tarrant County will host a two-part afternoon program addressing antisemitism on college campuses.

At 1:30 p.m., the Federation, in partnership with the ADL and area Hillels, will offer discussion forums for high school juniors and seniors, incoming and returning college students and their parents. The program will explore the



Photos: Briarcliff Entertainment
The "October 8" one sheet.

rise of antisemitism in higher education and provide students with tools to navigate campus life with awareness and confidence.

Later that day, at 4 p.m., the community is invited to a screening of "October 8," a powerful documentary that highlights the alarming surge in antisemitism on college campuses and throughout society.

Both events will take place in the 76109 ZIP code. RSVPs are required to attend one or both events. Location details will be provided upon RSVP.

To register, contact Cindy Simon at c.simon@tarrantfederation.org or 817-569-0892.

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Latino-Jewish Caucus marks AMIA bombing, demands justice for victims

(JNS) The Latino-Jewish Caucus in the U.S. House of Representatives sponsored legislation last week commemorating the 31st anniversary of the 1994 car bombing of the Argentine Israelite Mutual Association Jewish (AMIA) Community Center in Buenos Aires, demanding justice and accountability for the attack.

It was sponsored by Caucus co-chairs Reps. Mario Díaz-Balart (R-Fla.), Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.), Adriano Espaillat (D-N.Y.) and Tony Gonzales (R-Texas).

“More than three decades after the tragic AMIA Jewish Center bombing, and there’s still no justice for the 85 victims, the hundreds of injured, and countless people who were traumatized by this attack,” Wasserman Schultz said. “With antisemitism skyrocketing around the world, this gruesome attack on Argentina’s thriving Jewish community cannot go unanswered.”

Reports have long pointed to Iran as behind the attack.

The suicide bombing on July 18, 1994—the worst terrorist incident in Argentina’s history—targeted the seven-story AMIA community center in Buenos Aires, leaving 85 people dead and more than 300 wounded.

Argentina has one of the largest Jewish communities in the world and the largest in Latin America, with a population of about 200,000, according to the World Jewish Congress.

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Israeli teens strengthen bonds with Texas Jews

The Tzofim Friendship Caravan, one of Israel’s longest-running and most beloved cultural initiatives, brought song, energy and the warmth of Israeli friendship to North Texas from July 1 to 10.

A group of 10 talented Israeli teens delivered inspiring performances filled with music, dance and personal stories that captivated audiences across the Metroplex. Stops included The Legacy Senior Communities, NorthPark Center, the JCC summer camp, Temple

Emanu-El’s summer camp and St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church in Frisco. The programs celebrated Jewish unity, a shared love for Israel and the deep bond between North American Jewry and the people of Israel.

“After more than a year of war in Israel, and just following the recent war with Iran, while we still await the return of our hostages, the Friendship Caravan serves as a vital link between the next generation of Israelis and the Jewish community in

the United States,” said Yaniv Biran, CEO of Tzofim North America. “The members of the Caravan are the beautiful face of Israel, proud to represent their country and eager to build lasting bonds of friendship and solidarity.”

Eran Tzivon, director of the Tzofim Friendship Caravan, added: “Preparing for this summer’s tour was unlike anything we’ve experienced before. Rehearsing while sirens sounded and uncertainty filled

the air was incredibly challenging for both our teens and staff. But through it all, their determination never wavered. We understood how important it was to bring the spirit of Israel to Jewish communities in North America, especially at a time like this. I am immensely proud of this remarkable group for standing tall and offering hope, strength and connection when it’s needed most.”

Each summer, the Caravan travels across North America,

bringing a message of peace, pride and Jewish togetherness through music and movement. The program has become a cherished tradition that strengthens community ties and builds bridges between young Israelis and their peers throughout the Jewish world.

This year’s tour is made possible in partnership with Jewish National Fund-USA and Alexander Muss High School in Israel.

Photos: Courtesy



Members of the Tzofim Friendship Caravan enjoy fireworks on July 4, 2025 in Plano.



Members of the Tzofim Friendship Caravan perform at NorthPark Center in July 2025.



The Tzofim Friendship Caravan brought their ruach to The Legacy Midtown Park in July 2025.



Residents of The Legacy Midtown Park dance the hora during the Tzofim Friendship Caravan performance in July 2025.



The Tzofim Friendship Caravan had plenty of swag to share with the residents of The The Legacy Midtown Park during their visit in July 2025.



The Tzofim Friendship Caravan is greeted by Rivae Campo, volunteer engagement manager at The Legacy Senior Communities.



The Tzofim Friendship Caravan at The Legacy Midtown Park in July 2025.



The Tzofim Friendship Caravan brought joy to the residents of The Legacy Midtown Park in July 2025.

In their words . . .

Columnists, opinion from the TJP

Don't Drink and Drive!

Negligence is serious; Even an ‘innocent’ mistake requires some atonement

Some years ago, I was driving down an empty and very wide road in Johannesburg, South Africa, where I live, tempted to go beyond the speed limit.

Unfortunately, a traffic cop was waiting for me and ready to give me a ticket. I tried to convince him to let me off. I said, “I’m a rabbi. I don’t drink. I don’t smoke. I don’t gamble. I don’t mess around. So, occasionally I may speed a bit. Do you have to make such a fuss?”

Sadly, all my charm was wasted. The officer, who had no sense of humor, wrote out the ticket without even cracking a smile.

I cannot say that I’ve completely changed my errant ways, but this week’s Torah reading does give some pause for thought.

In the second of the two readings, Massei, we have the commandment to establish Cities of Refuge across the Land of Israel (Numbers 35). These were to provide safe haven for one who may have been guilty of manslaughter. If someone killed another person accidentally—for example, it was not premeditated murder but unintentional—he was given the opportunity to escape the vengeance of the victim’s relatives by finding shelter in one of these designated Cities of Refuge.

There was also another purpose to the Cities of Refuge. Besides providing physical safety and security, they offered spiritual atonement for the perpetrator. While it may have been an accident, there may also have been a degree of negligence on his part.

Later, in Deuteronomy, the Torah gives a classic example: If a person was chopping wood and the blade of his axe flew off the handle and struck someone nearby, killing him, the woodchopper would go to the City of Refuge.

Now, obviously, this was an accident. You couldn’t make that happen even if you tried hard to do so. Why then was he required to leave his home and go to the City of Refuge? The answer is that there was a degree of negligence. He should have checked how secure the blade was in the axe before he started swinging it. He therefore needed to be exiled to achieve atonement for his mistake that tragically took the life of another human being, even though it was done inadvertently.

There’s an important message here. Yes, mistakes happen. But if we are more careful with our actions in the first place, we might avoid such instances. Even if an act was unintentional, we still bear a measure of culpability. There was some negligence involved—we could have paid better attention to the task at hand and prevented the mistake from happening in the first place.



D’VAR TORAH
By Rabbi Yossi Goldman
Parashat Matot-Massei

Just because something was an “accident” doesn’t necessarily mean the person responsible is completely innocent. Sometimes, it may have been completely unavoidable, in which case they are indeed blameless. Other times, there may be clear evidence of negligence, in which case they are not all that innocent after all.

Some mistakes are much more serious than others.

I recall walking home from synagogue one Friday night with my children, who were then still quite young. To get home, we had to cross a very busy street. That Friday night, there were two cars drag racing at very high speed down that street. At the very last second, I managed to yank my son back onto the sidewalk—just in time, literally, to save his life.

Now, if God forbid there had been a crash, would that be considered an “accident?” Would those drag racers have made an innocent mistake, or would we consider them as virtual attempted murderers?

If someone drinks and drives and kills someone on the road, is that an “accident?” That’s not manslaughter—it’s criminally negligent. In some countries, it’s known as “culpable homicide.”

Such a person would not be deserving of the City of Refuge. His crime is too severe. His negligence and recklessness are above and beyond.

On the other hand, if you’re sober and driving within the speed limit, and a person runs out into the middle of the road and you unavoidably hit them, it may not be negligent at all. Clearly, the negligence was on the part of the person who ran into busy traffic.

These are the two extremes. The City of Refuge was made for the in-between cases—where some degree of negligence was involved but certainly not enough to be considered reckless or grossly irresponsible.

The message here is that negligence is serious. Even an “innocent” mistake requires some atonement.

I guess we could all learn to be more careful. Saying something was an “accident” isn’t really a good excuse.

What suggestions apply to today’s times? Make sure everyone’s seat belt is fastened before starting the car? Ensure that you have fencing around your swimming pool?

It’s not enough that we don’t “drink and drive.” I suppose we should try harder not to speed.

Me, too.

Rabbi Yossi Goldman is life rabbi emeritus of Sydenham Shul in Johannesburg and president of the South African Rabbinical Association. He is the author of “From Where I Stand,” on the weekly Torah readings, available from Ktav.com and Amazon.



Start the Work — Even If You Can’t Finish It

This summer, the Shabbat Lady is challenging your family to study the Talmudic tractate known as Pirke Avot, Chapters of the Sages. Pirke Avot is comprised of six chapters and more than 150 mishnahyot, or teachings. With JCC summer camp keeping her busy for nine weeks, the Shabbat Lady has prepared a mishnah for each week. Spend time each Shabbat talking about the mishnah using the questions below as a guide.



SHALOM FROM THE SHABBAT LADY
By Laura Seymour

Begin by reading the words, then break down the parts — and trust that even young children can contribute meaningful thoughts to the discussion. Listening to one another is the beginning of learning.

Dear Families,

Yet another well-known *mishnah* with a message that is especially important today.

How often do we say that we can’t do everything, so we end up doing nothing? This *mishnah* reminds us to take the first step.

Rabbi Tarfon says:

“You are not required to complete the task, yet you are not free to withdraw from it.”
— Pirkei Avot 2:21

Questions to Ask:

- Why are we not required to complete the task? Isn’t it important to finish everything we begin? Are there some jobs that you need other people to help you finish?
- If you can’t do the entire job, should you even start it? Are there some tasks we should

begin even when we know we won’t be able to finish them? What kinds of jobs would those be?

- When the school year or camp ends, we know we must keep learning and stay connected with our friends. Are there things we feel we’ve left undone when those experiences end? Do you ever feel sad about something ending and wonder whether you should have even started it? Why do we feel that way?
- Today, many people are very worried about the state of the world, and sometimes we

think there’s nothing we can do to make a difference. What *can* we do to help improve the world around us?

- Think of something you can start today — even if you may not be able to finish it. What plan could you make to ensure that someone else continues the work?
- What does this *mishnah* teach us about how to live our lives each day?

Laura Seymour is Jewish Experiential Learning director and Camp director emeritus at the Aaron Family JCC.

Light gluten-free feast with just a touch of heat

By Tina Wasserman

It’s hot, I’m on vacation — don’t hate me — but even in the mountains, it’s hitting the 90s! I get visitors when I’m away, and I sometimes need to entertain. Last week, I made dinner for company twice, and both meals required a gluten-free menu for legitimate health reasons. So I needed to come up with something satisfying and delicious that met dietary needs *and* didn’t keep me in the kitchen for hours.

Fish was an easy choice — it can be served hot, warm or at room temperature, which gave me some leeway with timing. I tried to use fresh produce and herbs to brighten the menu. Gluten-free crackers were served with assorted cheeses, including Manchego topped with a slice of *membrillo* (quince paste) in the Spanish tradition. For dessert, I made flan in advance one night and a very crunchy pavlova with fresh macerated peaches the next. Tonight? I’m going out to dinner!

Grilled swordfish with lemon thyme

Adapted from “At Home” by Steve Poses

When I lived in the Philly area, the most creative and down-to-earth chef/restaurateur was Steve Poses. His Commissary restaurant pioneered casual dining with fresh, innovative recipes. His carrot cake was legendary (and I’ll share that with you later!). When I saw he wrote another cookbook using recipes from his catering company, I had to buy it. This recipe comes from that book — I adapted it slightly for your use. The tidbits are all mine!

Ingredients

- 3 large garlic cloves, finely minced (about 2 tablespoons)
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped lemon thyme
- 3 tablespoons fruity olive oil
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper, to taste
- 24 ounces swordfish, cut into four 6-ounce steaks (or use skinless salmon fillets)

Instructions

1. Combine garlic, lemon thyme and olive oil in a 13-by-9-inch glass dish.
2. Add fish and coat well with the marinade. Refrigerate for 30 minutes to 2 hours.
3. Preheat grill on high for 15 minutes.
4. Season fish with salt and pepper. Place seasoned side down on the grill.



Photos: Tina Wasserman

Avocado-mango salsa

5. After 3 minutes, turn the fish. Lightly season again and grill another 2–5 minutes, until fish is springy but firm.
6. Serve with avocado-mango salsa or a lemon wedge. Serves 4.

Tina’s Tidbits

- Make the marinade ahead in a larger batch if needed.
- Never reuse marinade that has touched raw fish or meat.
- Rule of thumb: 10 minutes of grill time per inch of thickness.
- The Conservative movement considers swordfish kosher due to scales present during its embryonic stage.
- Use the finger test to gauge doneness — firm but not hard.

Avocado-mango salsa

It’s hot, and I wanted something vibrant, refreshing and easy to top my grilled fish. This recipe is more like a relish, but as the fruit macerates in oil and vinegar, it becomes salsa-like. Either way, it’s great!

Ingredients

- 1 mango, peeled, seeded and diced into ¼-inch pieces
- ½ red bell pepper, seeded and diced
- ¾ cup finely chopped red onion
- ½ tablespoon sugar
- 1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil
- 1 tablespoon white balsamic or rice wine vinegar
- 1 avocado, diced into ¼-inch pieces
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Instructions

1. Toss mango, pepper, onion, sugar,

- oil and vinegar in a bowl.
2. Gently fold in avocado. Season with salt and pepper.
3. Refrigerate until serving. Yield: about 1½ cups.

Tina’s Tidbits

- Ataulfo mangoes are soft, sweet and great in summer; Alphonso are larger but less sweet.
- With Ataulfo, you may not need sugar.
- For a Southwestern twist, use lime juice and add cilantro or mint.
- Bring to room temperature before serving — cold oil can make the salsa look clumpy.

Summer corn and basil salad

A fresh way to enjoy sweet summer corn without slathering on butter (though that’s great, too!). Perfect for picnics or BBQs — double or triple the recipe if you’re feeding a crowd.

Ingredients

- 4 ears corn, husks on
- ½ cup finely diced red onion or sliced large scallions
- 1½ tablespoons rice wine or white balsamic vinegar
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- ½ teaspoon kosher salt
- Freshly ground black pepper (about 15 grinds)
- 1 or more teaspoons sugar, if needed
- ⅓ cup chiffonade of basil leaves

Instructions

1. Cut ends off ears of corn, but leave husks on. Rinse thoroughly. Microwave two ears at a time for 3½ minutes.



Crunchy meringue pavlova with peaches

2. When cool, remove husks and silk. Cut kernels off cobs and place in a medium bowl.
3. Toss corn with onion, vinegar, olive oil, salt and pepper. Fold in basil.
4. Refrigerate until ready to serve. Serves 4–6.

Tina’s Tidbits

- Use mild vinegar to highlight the corn’s sweetness.
- To chiffonade basil: Stack leaves, roll lengthwise and slice into thin ribbons.
- Frozen corn (defrosted, not canned) can substitute when fresh is out of season.

Crunchy meringue pavlova with peaches

This is the perfect light dessert for a summer night — crunchy, sweet and satisfying without being heavy. I had three egg whites in the fridge, so I didn’t mind using a fourth and saving the yolk for another dish.

Meringue

- 4 large egg whites (preferably at room temp)
- ⅛ teaspoon table salt
- 1¼ cups sugar (I prefer Domino’s — finer texture)
- 2 teaspoons cornstarch
- 1 teaspoon white balsamic or fruity vinegar
- ½ teaspoon vanilla extract

Topping

- 3 large ripe peaches, unpeeled and cut into ¾-inch chunks
- 1 cup blackberries or raspberries (optional)
- ¼ teaspoon almond extract

- ¼ teaspoon vanilla extract
- 1 teaspoon white balsamic or fruity vinegar
- Optional: Whipped cream or vanilla ice cream

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Draw a 9-inch circle on parchment using a cake pan. Place paper (ink side down) on a cookie sheet.
2. Beat egg whites and salt until soft peaks form.
3. Gradually beat in sugar until stiff peaks form and mixture is no longer gritty between your fingers.
4. Gently fold in cornstarch, vinegar and vanilla.
5. Spoon mixture inside drawn circle. Smooth top and sides with a spatula.
6. Reduce oven to 300°F. Bake 1 hour, 15 minutes. Turn oven off and leave meringue inside until completely cooled.
7. When ready to serve, remove parchment, place meringue on a serving plate and gently break a cavity in the center. Spoon fruit into the center. Top with whipped cream or ice cream, if desired. Serves 8.

Tina’s Tidbits

- Cornstarch gives the meringue a crisp texture — leftovers stay crunchy for 3 days (unfilled).
- Use any colorless vinegar; white balsamic adds subtle sweetness.
- Any summer berries or fruits work well.
- Avoid convection settings — circulating air can distort shape and overcook the outside.
- Pasteurized egg whites (from a carton) may not whip properly.

Elisa Kaplan Miller
April 6, 1957 – June 22, 2025

Elisa Kaplan Miller passed away on June 22, 2025, shortly after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

Born on April 6, 1957, Elisa led a vibrant life full of curiosity, compassion and creativity. Her professional journey was as diverse as it was impactful. Her roles spanned the U.S. Post Office, startups, corporations and academia. At heart, Elisa was always a teacher. She taught at several institutions

including SMU, Austin Community College, Kennesaw College, Elizabethtown College and most recently at the Bass School of UT Dallas, where she had just completed her first semester and proudly held the title of associate professor.

A lifelong learner and educator, Elisa earned a master’s degree in instructional technology from the University of Texas at Austin and a Bachelor of Arts in journalism



Elisa Miller

from the University of Arizona. She published her first magazine article in college and went on to spend nearly three decades studying and innovating in user experience, blending human behavior with thoughtful design.

Outside the classroom, Elisa found joy in books, concerts, Dungeons & Dragons game nights, musicals and cooking, especially baking challahs that she mailed to her family. Her home, brimming

with colorful tchotchkes and cross-stitch art, reflected the warmth and whimsy she brought into the lives of others.

Elisa never met a stray dog she didn’t want to rescue, embodying her generosity and fierce loyalty. She made friends of all ages and backgrounds and treated people with dignity, valuing who they were over what they did.

Elisa is survived by her partner Teal Ashby; her mother Karen Kaplan; her brother Michael Kaplan (Wendy); her sister Meryl Evans

(Paul); and her nieces and nephews Shelby Evans, Stephanie Parten (Chris), Lane Evans and Zachary Evans. She was preceded in death by her father Alvin Kaplan.

Her legacy lives on through the students she inspired, the friends she cherished and the family she adored. Many remember Elisa for her boisterous laugh and for always being herself. As her niece Shelby said in tribute, “She never squirreled away her brightness; she showed it and shared it, lighting up spaces and faces with her vibrance.”

Alan Bergman, Oscar-winning lyricist and ‘father figure’ to Barbra Streisand, dies at 99

By Andrew Silow-Carroll

(JTA) — Oscar-Winning lyricist Alan Bergman, who with his wife Marilyn wrote the words for some of Barbra Streisand’s best-known hits as well as her 1983 film “Yentl,” died Thursday at his home in Los Angeles. He was 99.

The Bergmans were already an established lyrics-writing team when, in 1962, they met Streisand after a performance at the Bon Soir nightclub in Manhattan. It wasn’t until 1969, however, that she recorded one of their songs, “Ask Yourself Why,” for her “What About Today?” album.

What followed was a string of signature hits for Streisand — a fruitful collaboration among Brooklyn-born Jews that included “The Way We Were,” written for the hit 1973 film of the same name, and “You Don’t Bring Me Flowers,” Streisand’s 1978 duet with Neil Diamond, yet another Brooklyn Jew. In 2011, Streisand recorded an album of Bergman songs, “What Matters Most.”

Streisand recalled their collaboration in a statement on Friday. Marilyn Bergman died in 2022, at age 93.

“Alan Bergman was not only

a prolific lyricist, and incredible husband, father and grandfather, he was family to me — a father figure,” said Streisand. “We met over 60 years ago, and we never stopped loving each other and collaborating together. My last conversation with him was about a wonderful song he was working on. At 99, his creative gifts still flowed. I like to think he’s again in Marilyn’s warm embrace and I’m sure they have started collaborating again on another song! I will miss them both.”

“The Way We Were” was the top-selling song of 1974 and brought the Bergmans the second of their three Academy Awards. They previously won the Oscar for “The Windmills of Your Mind,” with music by Noel Harrison, which was heard in the 1968 film “The Thomas Crown Affair.”

In 1983, three of the Academy Award nominees for best song featured lyrics by the Bergmans, who received 16 nominations in all. That year they shared, with composer Michel Legrand, an Academy Award for Best Original Song Score for “Yentl.” That film, about a Jewish woman who poses as a man in order to learn Torah at a yeshiva in early 19th-century Poland, represented a

return to their Jewish roots for the singer and the lyricists.

“When we did ‘Yentl,’ we did a lot of research,” Alan Bergman told journalist Abigail Pogrebin in an interview for her 2005 book “Stars of David: Prominent Jews Talk About Being Jewish.” The couple remembered regular sessions with a Reform rabbi and an Orthodox rabbi. “We met once a week for a year — Barbra, Alan and I and a few other friends,” Marilyn Bergman recalled in the same interview.

In addition to their collaborations with Streisand, the Bergmans wrote the lyrics for the Frank Sinatra hit “Nice ‘n’ Easy” and theme songs for the 1970s sitcoms “Maude,” “Alice” and “Good Times.” Stephen Bishop’s version of “It Might Be You,” from the film “Tootsie,” spent eight weeks in the top 40 in 1983.

Among their frequent songwriting partners was the late Marvin Hamlisch, the Jewish composer with whom they shared the Oscar for “The Way We Were” as well as three Emmy Awards. “A true master of his craft, Alan’s legacy will live on forever through his songs,” Hamlisch’s estate said in a statement.

Alan Bergman was born on Sept. 11, 1925 at Brooklyn Jewish

Hospital (the same hospital where Marilyn would be born three years later). His mother, Ruth (Margulies), was a homemaker and community volunteer, and his father Samuel worked in children’s clothing sales. Bergman said he was on the receiving end of the social antisemitism of the era, and told Pogrebin about being turned away from the West Side Tennis Center in Forest Hills, New York when he applied to be a ball boy.

“Well, I had chutzpah in those days and I said [to the man in charge], ‘Well, I’m a pretty good Ping-Pong player. I’ve won a couple championships; I’m going to go to the Brooklyn Daily Eagle and tell them you won’t let me in because I’m Jewish.’” The man gave in, said Bergman, “and I was a ball boy for two years and that’s how I learned to play tennis.”

Bergman studied at University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and earned his master’s degree in music at UCLA. He met his wife in the 1950s when they worked with the composer Lew Spence.



Photo: Lester Cohen/Getty Images
Lyricists Alan Bergman and Marilyn Bergman flank singer Barbra Streisand during the 2008 ASCAP Film and Television Music Awards at the Beverly Hilton, May 6, 2008.

In “Stars of David,” the Bergmans’ daughter Julie describes her parents’ Judaism as “more political than spiritual,” although her father would often collect the broken shards of the glasses smashed at Jewish weddings and preserve them as a keepsake for the couple. She also recalled what her father said every year when they attended synagogue on the High Holy Days.

“I remember him always leaning over to me and whispering, ‘You know, Jews all over the world are doing exactly this right now,’” Julie, a writer and film producer, said.

He is survived by his daughter and his granddaughter, Emily Sender.

AUSTERKLEIN
continued from p.5

was a member of the synagogue’s a cappella group, AACappella.

An alum of the College of William and Mary, where he studied music, Austerklein had many thinking he’d become a cantor — a notion that gained strength when he helped lead Hillel Shabbat and High Holy Day services at Temple Rodef Sholom in Hampton Roads, Virginia. It wasn’t until a semester in Vienna that his voice teacher — ironically, a minister’s daughter from West Virginia — opened his eyes to a more spiritual vocation.

“I realized what I wanted was for my spiritual life to thrive,” he said. “It was the greatest trick G-d ever

played on me. I ended up going to Jewish Theological Seminary, and I’ve never looked back.”

Austerklein spent nearly 10 years as a full-time cantor at Conservative synagogues before accepting a faculty research fellowship at Oxford University. There, he studied how the role of the hazzan evolved from a rabbinic function to a full-time profession. A Jewish Studies Ph.D. candidate at the University of Halle-Wittenberg, where he just completed his dissertation, Austerklein has lectured around the world.

For Anshai board president Michael Dubner, welcoming Austerklein is a continuation of the congregation’s commitment to professional excellence.

“He’s got a beautiful voice and just as beautiful a soul,” Dubner said. “It’s the perfect time for him to

join Anshai’s family, to strengthen our all-star clergy and to join the excellence of our entire staff.

Austerklein, who has led Jewish Shakespeare events, also created the educational video series “Jewish Music Guy.” For the past two years, he has published a weekly newsletter about Jewish music on Substack (mattausterklein.substack.com). Sometimes academic, sometimes conversational — his goal is always to connect.

“I love people, music, prayer and learning — and this life brings that all together. Music is a spiritual practice where you can find G-d, find spirituality and express yourself,” Austerklein said. “Visiting Anshai Torah, even in those first few days, we felt like we had people looking out for us. That is family.”



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