

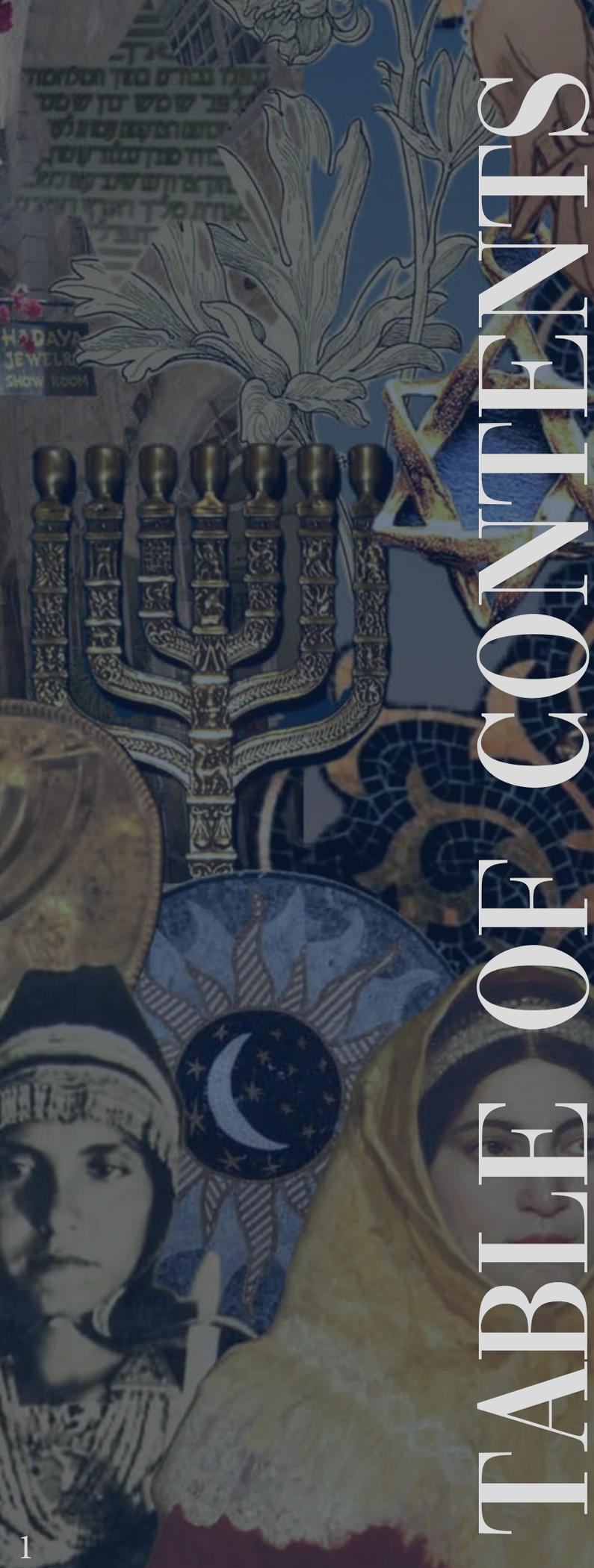
# TEKIAH

MAGAZINE



OCTOBER 2025, ISSUE 1





# TABLE OF CONTENTS

*02*  
**CULTURE**

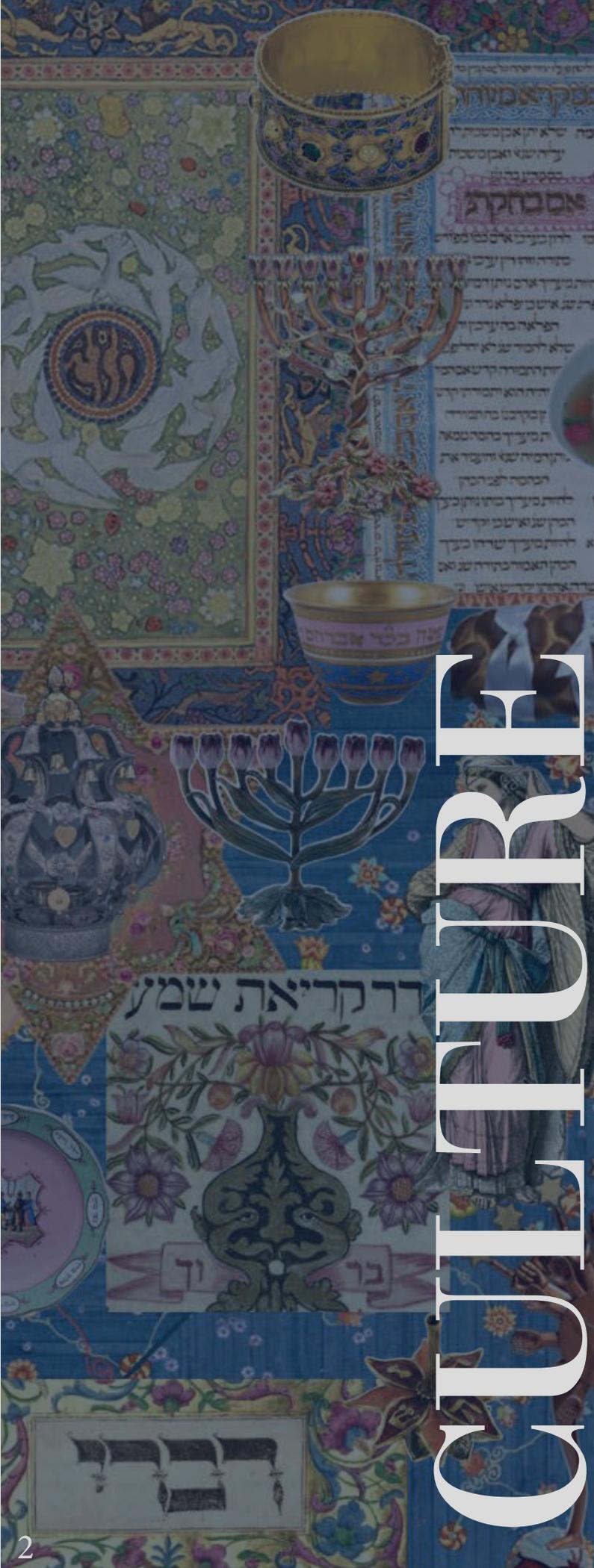
*04*  
**HOLIDAYS**

*06*  
**INTERNATIONAL  
AFFAIRS**

*08*  
**NEWS**

*10*  
**OPINIONS**

*13*  
**CONTRIBUTORS**



# KOSHER DINING FINDS ITS PLACE AT GW

BY NADIA FRIEDMAN

For Jewish students at The George Washington University, kosher dining isn't just a nice extra, it's essential. The university has been actively working on this, and this year's expanded options during the High Holidays show that effort. Compared to last year's Passover meals, which were only at Thurston Dining Hall and felt limited and low-effort to say the least, this is definitely progress. After actually trying the meals and navigating the kosher on campus system, it's clear that while things have improved, there's still room for growth.

GW Dining partnered with GW Hillel and the Center for Interfaith and Spiritual Life to roll out expanded kosher offerings from October 2nd to October 18th. According to the announcement, sealed OU and Star-K certified meals are available at all three all-you-care-to-eat dining halls and at Shenkman and District House Markets. They also promoted "kosher-style" dining stations in the halls, with rotating menus featuring Jewish meal classics, like falafel, white fish salad, or pastrami on rye.

On paper, it looks impressive. Five locations, certified kosher meals, including options for students who are less strict about proper Kosher law. It reads like GW is taking kosher dining seriously. For students who have struggled in the past to find even a single kosher option on campus except for Zingers in the lower level of the GW Hillel building, the announcement was encouraging. But the reality does not line up perfectly.

I wanted to test these Kosher options myself, so when I went to Shenkman Dining Hall and asked where the kosher-style section was, the staff simply said, "Everything here can be kosher." The idea seemed to be that if a dish didn't involve pork, shellfish, or mixing meat and dairy, it counted. That's not inherently incorrect, but it's not what most students expect when they hear the word "kosher." Kosher-style could have been a useful middle ground.

For example, meals made with kosher ingredients, even if not in a kosher kitchen which was made clear. Instead, there were no labels, signs, or dedicated sections. For students who are more flexible, like myself, that may work, but for others it creates uncertainty.

The safer option is the certified, prepackaged kosher meals. These are frozen, sealed, and OU/Star-K approved, so students can rely on them for kosher dining. Using a meal swipe, I tried the pot roast with mashed potatoes and vegetables, and it was pretty good. It tasted like what I expected, not necessarily gourmet, but filling and trustworthy. Other options include chicken, turkey, and fish with different sides.

The trade off here is convenience. Because they're frozen, they need to be heated, which isn't always ideal for students in between classes. At the same time, frozen meals make sense for dining operations. They're easier to stock, they last longer, and they

CULTURE

guarantee consistency. But on the contrary, these factors could be avoided if there were just a dedicated dining hall section. With a meal plan, they cost one swipe. Without one, they cost \$17, which seems like a steep price for what essentially was a kosher TV dinner.

What's missing most right now is flexibility. The current system is heavily dinner focused, with no options for breakfast, lunch, or snacks. A kosher bagel station, a small selection of sandwiches, or even traditional snacks like hummus and pita chips would make a big difference. These kinds of lighter, ready to eat options are staples of campus dining in general, and kosher students deserve the same variety.



Credit: GW Dining

Another issue is that the “grab-and-go” label doesn't fully match what you're receiving. Yes, the meals are available in campus markets, but if you need to microwave a frozen dinner, it's not really grab-and-go. For students with packed schedules, that can be a deal breaker. Offering a mix of frozen meals and a few ready to eat certified options would make the program more practical day-to-day.

These details matter because GW falls in the top 60 schools by Jewish population percentage in the country. Kosher meals are not a niche request but a central part of serving the campus community. Students typically say they'll “take what they can get,” but that reflects lowered expectations rather than true satisfaction. The message is that Jewish students shouldn't have to settle.

However, it's important to acknowledge the progress. Compared to last year's very limited options, this year's program is a noticeable step forward. Partnering with Hillel shows that the dining team is paying attention. The certified meals provide a safe baseline. And the fact that kosher meals are now offered at multiple locations across campus means students don't have to travel to just one dining location to find them. That type of accessibility matters.

Kosher dining at GW is better than it's been, and that's worth recognizing, though it's still a work in progress. Clearer kosher-style options, more variety, and a balance between reliability and convenience would make a big difference. Right now, the system feels functional but not seamless. It's something you can work with, but not something fully integrating Jewish students into everyday campus life.

Jewish students at GW don't expect five-star meals, but they do expect consistency, clarity, and accessibility. This is a standard that all students deserve from campus dining. Food is one of the most basic ways a university shows its students that they belong. When kosher options are limited it sends the opposite message.

This year shows progress, but shouldn't be the endpoint. With one of the largest Jewish populations of any university, GW has the chance to set the bar for how kosher dining can work on campus. Until that happens, students will keep utilizing what is available. Kosher dining should feel as natural and dependable as every other part of eating at GW. ★

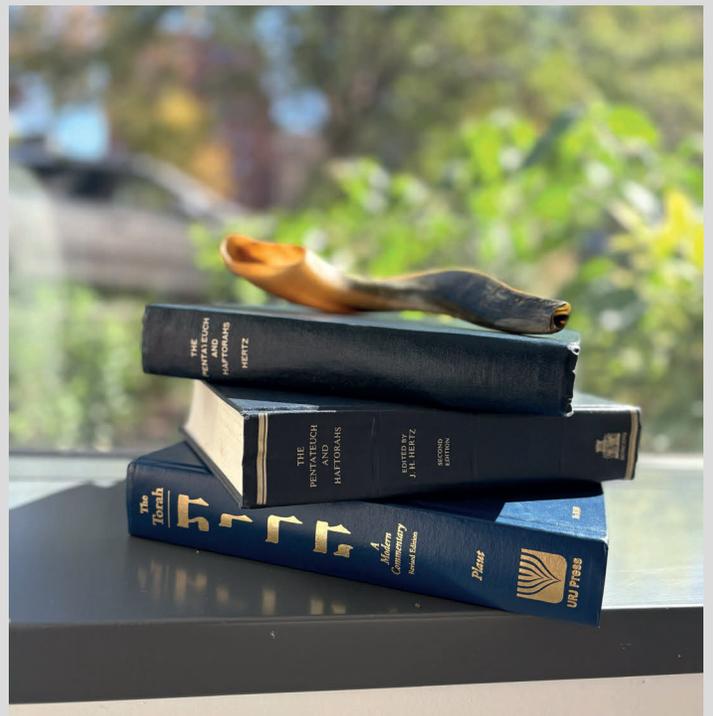
# A JEW'S MOST HATED QUESTION

BY TALIA RIDI

The Jewish community is a tight-knit, intertwined community. Many of us like to classify it as a second family. No matter what area you live in, in many cases the Jews in town are familiar with one another and also may possibly share family. What most people fail to talk about is the division within the Jewish community that leaves many, including myself, feeling like an outcast within their already small network.

Being Jewish is not just a religion, but an ethnicity. Judaism traces back thousands of years with a cultural and ethnic heritage. Along with this, there is a geographic division specifying the regional Jewish identity that you are. For example, I have Middle Eastern and Northern African roots, making me a Sephardic Jew.

Those with European roots are known as Ashkenazi Jews. There are then different subcategories and divisions that many people identify with. I usually lead by saying I am a Sephardic Jew; however, I more closely identify as being a Yemenite Jew with a different cultural background in terms of food and traditions. Yemenite Jews are specifically from Yemen ancestrally and as such absorb more traditions from that country itself.





# YOM KIPPUR FOR DUMMIES

BY ARI MANDELL

“Have a happy Yom Kippur,” my professor called out to me as I left the classroom after my midterm on Tuesday. I smiled and thanked him without correction, as I left the classroom and began my walk back to my dorm.

As I walked through Kogan, I bumped into a friend and we stopped to talk. I mentioned to her that I was going home on Wednesday, and when I told her it was for Yom Kippur, I had to hide my surprise when she asked “what’s that?”

Now, I am not ignorant. I know that most Americans have only heard of Hannukah, and maybe Rosh Hashanah if you’re lucky out of all the Jewish holidays. But it still took me by surprise that a day so holy, so sacred to me and so many others, could not exist in every person’s mind.

Many of those I have met who do know what Yom Kippur is, are still unclear of its meaning. They believe we are either celebrating something, or fasting as a form of punishment, neither of which are completely true. I have compiled together a list of infrequently asked questions about Yom Kippur, that can help educate those who are unaware of their answers. I call it Yom Kippur for dummies.

First of all, what is Yom Kippur? Well, Yom Kippur is widely considered to be both the most solemn and the holiest day of the year for Jewish people. The idea of Yom Kippur is that it is a day for us to atone for the sins we have committed over the past year to both God and others. It is a day full of self reflection, prayer, and occasionally a few apology texts to people you may have hurt or wronged.

Personally, I take Yom Kippur as a time to go home. I spend most of my day in the synagogue that I grew up in. I find it hard to reflect at school, given that it is a place with such weighted emotions. By atoning at home, I find myself able to be closer to the points in time where I was the best version of myself, surrounded by the people that have raised me to be the best version of myself.

When was the first Yom Kippur? Some scholars actually cannot agree on this one, believe it or not, but for the most part we say that the first Yom Kippur was preceded by Moses’ “golden calf incident.” This is the story I was told when I was a little kid sitting in Hebrew school, and so this is the story I will share with you all.

In this story, Moses was given tablets with the ten commandments on them from God at Mount Sinai. While this was happening, the Israelites were creating and worshipping a golden calf. This caused God to get angry because Jewish people do not worship idols, only God, and God broke the tablets with the commandments. After 40 days of Moses pleading with God on Sinai, God decided to

forgive the Israelites, and presented Moses with two new tablets. This act of forgiveness happens on the 10th of Tishrei, the first month on the Jewish calendar, which is the day we now celebrate Yom Kippur every year, ten days after Rosh Hashanah.

Now that brings up the question of why is Yom Kippur ten days after Rosh Hashanah? Well, these 10 days are usually referred to in English as the “10 days of repentance” or the “10 days of awe.” Think about how on New Years most people make resolutions. These resolutions are used as a way to improve for the coming year. These ten days reflect a very similar concept.

Jewish people, like most, believe that we should start the new year off on a good note. Because of that, these ten days after Rosh Hashanah are spent reflecting on how we can do that. How we can treat other people more kindly, and do better in this world. During these ten days, personally, I aim to reflect on my experiences in the past year, think about anyone I have hurt, and how I can work to do better in the upcoming year.



Credit: Maurycy Gottlieb

I also like to think about projects I can help with that allow me to give back to my community, and what part I can take in helping make the world a better place. Some examples that I have done in more recent years include volunteering at a soup kitchen by my house and also helping with get out the vote work!

**“By atoning at home, I find myself able to be closer to the points in time where I was the best version of myself, surrounded by the people that have raised me to be the best version of myself.”**

Why do we wear white on Yom Kippur? Traditionally, many Jews wear white to services on Yom Kippur, and there are two main reasons for this. The first meaning is to signify purity, and how we are going into the new year with a clean slate. The second, more biblical, reasoning is that we are attempting to be as close to angels as possible on this day. Another reason that I really like the idea of us all wearing white because we are all equal on this day in the eyes of God.

Next, let me address the elephant in the room that I am sure you all are wondering. Why exactly do we fast, if not as a punishment? The answer to this, is just so that we are able to focus more closely on our spirituality, and not to be distracted by needs for physical things. It is an act of solidarity with those who have suffered before us. It is

not meant to be a punishment, it is meant to help us reflect and learn to be the best versions of ourselves!

What does the fast look like? Now this one is my question that I am asking for you. I am sure you all have an image in your head of what a fast should look like. No food or water all day. But it is actually a lot more complicated than that, and it is important to note that everyone's fast looks different, and that is more than okay. The traditional fast goes from sundown to sundown, and is a 25-hour fast. During this time, many people do not eat food or drink water. In addition to that, many do not wash themselves, or wear leather. On top of those, many treat Yom Kippur as a typical Sabbath, where they abstain from any work. This involves no driving, turning on lights, or writing, to name a few.

There it is, Yom Kippur for dummies in a nutshell. Now you understand that this day is neither a punishment nor a celebration. It is a day of reflection for how we hurt others in this past year, and how we can work to right our wrongs in the future. As I write this, I reflect on my personal ignorance when it comes to other cultures. Most holidays that I know the names of, I know nothing about in terms of their deeper meanings.

Not only that, but I am sure that there are hundreds of holidays or simply special days that I do not even know the names of. Because of that, may this article be a lesson to you and me both. Whether you are Jewish or not, maybe we can all take this new year, 5786, as a chance to take the time to learn about other religions and cultures, and the days that they hold close to their hearts. The first step to overcoming ignorance is curiosity. ★



# INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

# PAST AND PRESENT: SEPHARDIC JEWS AND THE PATH TO SPANISH CITIZENSHIP

BY BEN DANIEL

The Spanish Empire, which began in 1492 with the voyage of Christopher Columbus to the new world, set out to assert massive influence on the world stage and brought Catholicism as its driving force along with its colonial reign. In this push to spread Christendom and the beliefs of a uniting force amongst all tongues that uttered the Spanish language, Spain promoted Christendom to unite the Spanish-speaking world, and heavily enforced the exclusion of marginalized groups that opposed Catholic orthodoxy.

With the guidance of Tomas de Torquemada and other inquisition visionaries, the Jews became one of the most heavily targeted groups of hate and hopeful exclusion along with the Moors who had been the opposition force of the Christian led Reconquista. In 1492, as Columbus set sail for the future Latin American landmass, the Spanish Royalty issued the Decree of Expulsion, which declared all Jews to either flee Iberia under penalty of death or convert to Catholicism.

Judaism as a whole, being a heavily traditional and ethnic religion, was not conducive to the demands of abandonment by the newly united Iberian kingdoms. Many among the Jewish community saw themselves as a part of new Spain and converted or even became leaders in the Catholic community, continuing to pass the oral traditions of their forefathers in the light of christian scripture to their posterity and community. However the majority of the Iberian Jewish communities defended their faith and tradition to the last breath and fled the region for North Africa, Turkey, the Balkan states, and boarded the ships to new Latin America.

The word Sepharad (סְפָרַד) in Hebrew is the literal translation of the word "Iberia." When the modern Jewish community as a whole, mainly in the United States, Israel, and Europe typically describe Sephardic peoples, they tend to associate the word "Sephardic" with essentially anyone who is not a white Jew, commonly referred to as Ashkenazi. This has been a surge across many countries, especially recently in Israel and the United States, focusing on phenotypical and racial traits and creating a general stereotype of how Sephardic Jews are different from Ashkenazi Jews.

Those that are commonly misconstrued as Sephardic in the media and culture often more closely align with the Mizrahi identity, or those whose families originated from the Middle East. Spanish and Hispanic Jews specifically descending from the Iberian expulsion also bring with them an important piece of the classification for possible citizenship, Ladino. This language, also known as Judeo-Spanish is a mix of Semitic and old Spanish words, which has been communally spoken in Latin America and southeastern Europe since the expulsion and is undergoing cultural revival in the modern day.

"Sephardic" Jews were reclaimed in International politics for the first time in 2015 when the European Union began to identify

Sephardic Jews internationally as those who actually were forcefully displaced from Sepharad, or Iberia. This was decreed by the Spanish parliament as a reparations decree and dubbed a "right of return." A potential foreign national wishing to claim Sephardic ancestry with hope of naturalization into Spain would need to prove descent via surname and connection to both the Sephardic and Spanish cultures, as the Spanish Government intended with this offer to revive the diversity of Spaniards.

If an individual were to check off all the boxes, they would be considered a "Sephard Tahor" in Hebrew terms, a descendant of those displaced from the Iberian peninsula to the east or Latin diaspora. With the obligation to complete a heavily accelerated residency period in Spain provided a claim has been filed the Sephardic ancestry passport is entirely both right and a responsibility for potential applicants. Sephardis enjoy the right to live and work in Spain, as well as using the provided passport for Full EU-Schengin zone access and visa-free access to many countries that a US or Israeli passport does not have access to.

However, there is a catch: there is a requirement to still demonstrate knowledge in general Spanish culture. Along with documents for accelerated Spanish citizenship proving connection to the diaspora of Iberian Jewry as a "peninsular." One must also pass several exams to demonstrate genuine interest in Spain. The CCSE or Constitutional Socio Cultural Exam is a written exam required to demonstrate cultural knowledge of Spanish culture and history, regardless of Jewish connection. In addition, the DELE Spanish language exam is required for all claims to nationality with a required passing level of A2 or above.



Credit: The Wall Street Journal

Initially in 2015 with the previous decree, no residency was required to obtain this valuable dual EU citizenship. Any person of Sephardic descent could apply for the passport free of obligation to live inside or visit Spanish borders. However, with more requests being submitted than initially expected, in 2019 the Royal Spanish Government ended this offer amid a massive immigration crisis arising from the Middle East and North Africa. At the same time, with Trump's stricter border policies in the United States diverting immigrants away, Spain saw increased immigration from Latin America as it offered a similar reparation nationality which was another pathway to EU citizenship.

In the present moment, the Sephardic pathway to citizenship is still a massive benefit to Jews that have genuine interest in living in Spain. With the typical citizenship requirement of residency being 10 years decreased to 2 years or even significantly less depending on work visa status or other exceptions, it is still a decent decrease in required work to reclaim this nationality.

Portugal underwent a similar process of naturalization, which

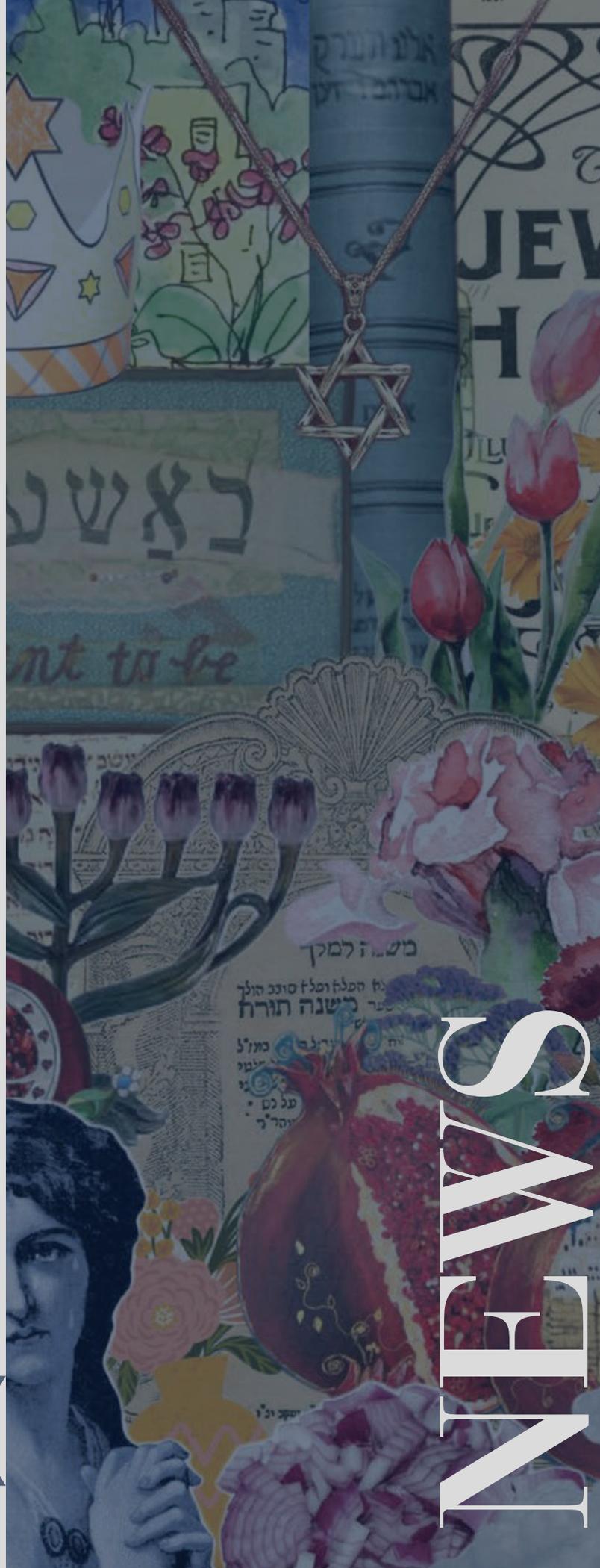
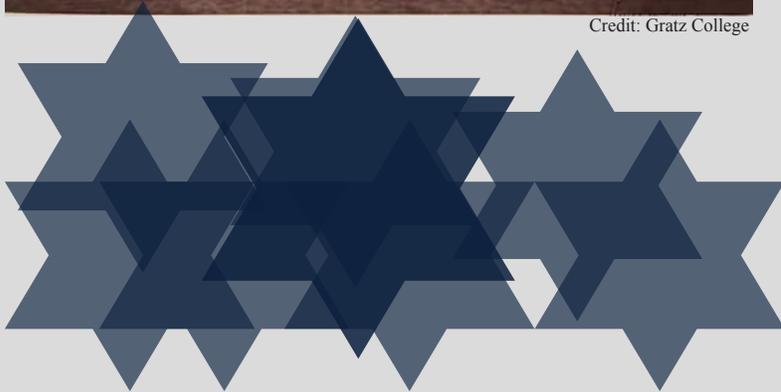
was commonly used to secure secondhand Spanish citizenship after a quicker citizenship process that saw more flexible residency requirements and was more lenient among applicants, as the pool of requests for Portuguese nationality was much smaller than for Spanish nationality since 2015. Portuguese nationality was also a method for Sephardic Jews to apply directly for Spanish nationality, as the two nations had an agreement to allow for reparations to all of the Iberian Peninsula.

However, as of June 2025, the Portuguese government followed the same process as Spain, but increased its restrictions, eliminating the previous vector for Sephardic Jews to have their own pathway to citizenship. With the decreased application cycle in Spain, Portugal received a much higher volume of applicants and its government pushed to retract the offer, but with more intense restrictions than in Spain.

As of now, Spain continues to offer the most accessible route to citizenship for Sephardic Jews seeking to reclaim Iberian heritage. However, with ongoing immigration debates across the EU, the policy is likely to continue evolving. ★



Credit: Gratz College



# NEWS

# ISRAEL AND HAMAS REACH APPARENT PEACE DEAL

BY MARA RIEGEL

Friday, Oct. 3, 2025 — Donald Trump recently released his plan to end the roughly two years-long war ravaging Gaza. Much like his presidential predecessor Woodrow Wilson, President Trump's roadmap to peace in the Middle East is broken down into a 20-point system. This plan has also notably garnered the support of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

After meeting at the White House on Sept. 29, the two leaders announced a plan that could end the war within days if Hamas accepts it. The plan begins with some initially required actions that would need to be fulfilled in order to carry out the rest of the agenda for peace.

Starting the list presented by the President is the condition that all hostages still held by Hamas, both dead and alive, be released within 72 hours of accepting the proposed plan. Currently, Hamas is still holding 48 hostages out of an original 251 hostages, 26 of whom are deceased and 22 of whom are presumed to still be alive. Among these 48 hostages are two American citizens— 19-year-old Itay Chen and 21-year-old Omer Neutra, both of whom are among the deceased.

The important part about the hostages' release is also what Israel is giving in exchange for them. The plan stipulates that in exchange for all 48 hostages, Israel will release 250 life sentence Gazan prisoners plus 1700 Gazans who were detained on Oct. 7, including every woman and child in custody.

Moreover, any members of Hamas who swear to live a life of peace and decommission their weapons will receive full amnesty from criminal penalties. Additional members of Hamas who simply wish to leave Gaza will also be given free, clear, and safe passage to do so to any country willing to receive them.

Hamas has agreed to certain conditions of this peace plan, however they also have been unclear on other sections and seem to want to change some provisions of the current iteration of the deal. For example, a provision of the existing plan— specifically point 13— was not clearly affirmed. Point 13 outlines the fact that if accepted, Hamas will no longer have any role in the governance of Gaza in any form.

However, should Hamas fail to accept the existing proposal, both President Trump and Prime Minister Netanyahu have made it clear that the action will not be met kindly. Trump actually told Netanyahu that if Hamas were to reject this proposal, "you'd have our full backing to do what you would have to do." Analysts speculate that this may signal increased Israeli military action. President Trump further reaffirmed that idea, stating that Hamas would face, "all HELL" if they were to reject the peace agreement.

Should Hamas accept the proposal, the end of the war would

follow very shortly thereafter. The plan outlines that upon the agreement of both sides, all fighting would immediately cease and that Gaza would be deemed a "de-radicalized terror free zone" that does not pose a threat to its neighbors.

The plan further states that as soon as peace is declared, UN and other humanitarian relief organizations will immediately be allowed in to distribute medical aid, food, and any other kinds of relief. This additionally includes the restoration of infrastructure including bakeries, roads, hospitals, and more.

This peace plan also includes commentary about how the governing of Gaza shall be undertaken. The plan stipulates that Gaza will be ruled temporarily and transitionally by a board of "technocrats" who serve in a non-partisan manner to carry out day-to-day functions. Moreover, it will consist of qualified Palestinians and international experts.



This board will further be supervised by a "Board of Peace" that is to be chaired by President Trump himself, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, and other yet to be announced heads of state. This board will serve until the Palestinian Authority— the group that governed Gaza until 2007 when Hamas took over— has completed its rehabilitation efforts. The Palestinian Authority has "welcomed" the plan and efforts of President Trump.

Moreover, the plan includes provisions for the economic development of the region. The provisions largely contained within points 10 and 11 state that the region will have another board to supervise the economic rebirth and successes of the newly freed region. This board shall further be staffed by experts who have worked on other "miracle cities" in the Middle East. The region will also have preferential trade terms for countries who participate in this venture.

Additionally, the plan includes terms that surrounding countries must acquiesce to in order for it to work. The plan includes the point that surrounding countries in the area must work to ensure the region stays terror-free and that these rules and standards are upheld.

The plan concludes by stating that if all of the above is carried out successfully and the Palestinian Authority retakes leadership of the region, that the US will facilitate conversations between Palestine and Israel to create a pathway for statehood and independence.

Political analysts across both parties have so far responded positively to the proposal, calling it one of President Trump's most detailed foreign policy efforts. Hamas has until Sunday, Oct. 5 at 6:00 p.m. to accept or reject the stated proposal, otherwise the war will carry on as it has been going. ★

# THE WORST THING THEORY

BY ARCHER BERENSON

Recently, while having what felt like a civilized discussion about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with an acquaintance online, my interlocutor suddenly messaged me, “Sorry, I don’t argue with Nazis” and blocked me. Other than one girl at my high school who confided in some friends that I was, “worse than Hitler” (shout-out to you, Chloe), this was the first time I had ever been compared to any of the villains of World War II. Being Jewish myself, it’s quite difficult to take these sorts of comparisons or insults seriously. But they are serious. And they’re reflective of a much broader sociological phenomenon, one that I call, “Worst Thing Theory”.



Credit: CNN

Here’s the idea: what is the Worst Thing that’s ever happened? Seriously. Give it a go. Chances are, like most Americans, your mind immediately went to the rise of Hitler and the Holocaust. The two big ‘H’s simply occupy a special part of our collective imagination. They epitomize a sort of comic-book villainy evil, the kind that seeks to take over the world and exterminate the impure. It’s not that far off from reality, but this mental reflex to draw comparisons to Hitler, and the Holocaust in particular, has wide reaching consequences, not just on Holocaust memory, but on our ability to precisely analyze modern events.

The ongoing war in Gaza, for example, has people literally tripping over themselves to protest in the streets against Israel’s “holocaust” of the Palestinians. The term “Holocaust inversion” has become fashionable among Zionist intellectuals and scholars to describe this phenomenon, but I’m not convinced it captures the full absurdity. Holocaust inversion implies that a Harvard or George Washington University student likens Gaza to the Holocaust mainly to insult Jews by weaponizing their history and memory. That may be

SONS  
THINGS  
THAT  
ARE



part of it. But something else is at work here.

This reflex surfaces in American domestic politics too. In 2019, U.S. Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (AOC) compared migrant detention centers at the U.S. border to “concentration camps.” She later doubled down on Twitter, calling it a historically accurate label for “the mass detention of civilians without trial.” Technically, “concentration camp” has been applied to many contexts outside the Holocaust but, in the American imagination, the term is inextricably tied to Nazi death camps. Invoking it willfully conjures the Worst Thing.

**“Worst Thing Theory, at base, is about the failure to make distinctions and to do the —sometimes quite challenging— moral calculus of every tragedy.”**

And that’s the point. AOC, like the aforementioned college students, wasn’t just aiming to provoke Jews. She was leveraging the Worst Thing to inflate the moral urgency of an issue that had captured her interest. This is Worst Thing Theory in action: when accountability is low and passion is high, people instinctively reach for the Holocaust, not because they’re trying to disrespect its Jewish victims, but because no other comparison seems big enough. To be clear: there is no such thing as, “a holocaust” when it comes to moral comparisons, there is only The Holocaust. Any invocation, in the context of a moral argument, of a lowercase ‘h’ holocaust erases the Jewish specificity of the actual Holocaust. When we offer the Holocaust as a comparison for just about anything, it not only cheapens the memory of six million dead Jews, but it also decreases the moral legitimacy of whatever it is being compared to.

Consider the following two moral catastrophes. The Rwandan Genocide was a genocide in its strictest sense: a systemic effort to eliminate the Tutsi people. The indiscriminate murder of Tutsi men, women, and children over those hundred days in 1994 make calling it a genocide an unquestionably legitimate moral assertion. Now, think about South African Apartheid. Apartheid was discriminatory and dehumanizing, but it was not exterminatory. Calling Apartheid ‘genocide’ would be an inappropriate misapplication of a critical moral term, just like calling the Rwandan Genocide ‘discriminatory’ would be a criminal understatement. To understand either ethical disaster, it is imperative that we have precise moral language to be used appropriately.

Worst Thing Theory, at base, is about the failure to make distinctions and to do the —sometimes quite challenging— moral calculus of every tragedy. If you can label every humanitarian crisis a Holocaust, you can bypass the hard work of ethical reasoning and land directly in the moral stratosphere of absolute evil. This, of course, comes at a tremendous cost: bandying about words like Holocaust and genocide reduces the impact of our moral vocabulary. If every tragic event rises to the level of genocide, then nothing does. If everyone’s political opponent is Hitler and their supporters Nazis, then nobody is. When real atrocities happen, and real Nazis emerge, we must be able to talk about them with adequate moral seriousness.

There is no easy fix for this phenomenon. We need to demand better of one another and, especially, of ourselves. It is crucial that we are engaging with moral issues unflinchingly, but without hyperbole. Critically, but without reaching for imprecise comparison. Sensitively, but without disrespecting the victims of past tragedies by lowering or distorting their suffering. Precision is not pedantry, it’s the foundation of moral clarity. Without it, we risk losing the ability to recognize the Worst Thing when it appears again. ★

# HOW CAN YOU BE A DEMOCRAT AND A JEW?

BY MARA RIEGEL

The United States’ political system doesn’t have the bandwidth for cultural identities to feel truly represented by our current party system. Many Americans know this and simply pick the party that, when voting with their identity, caters more to the issues that matter most to their own community. For example, Black Americans tend to vote more favorably toward voting rights and pro-choice initiatives. But different from most other religious and ethnic groups, Jews don’t have that kind of natural gravitation toward one side or another.

When I participated in the College Democrats vs. College Republicans debate last semester, I was asked a question by my opponent that at the time confounded and offended me, but later gave me much food for thought. He simply asked, “how can you be a Democrat and a Jew?” This question on its face is absurd; how do you relegate an entire religious and ethnic group into an expectation of Republicanism?

But this question tells us a lot as a society about what America expects of its Jewish population when voting. Society is at a recent high for incidents of anti-Semitism. At least personally, I watch who I talk about my opinions to a lot more now, and I stay wary of people I’m not too familiar with. It’s like rather than being multi-faceted and complex people, we’ve been relegated to a defensive position where we need to constantly reassure people of our innocence in society.

My opponent expected that by virtue of my Judaism, other issues that did not concern that part of my identity should not hold as much weight as issues that do in considering my political affiliations. The better question then becomes what issues as a Jew should make me a Republican?

To get into what issues “should” dictate my politics as a Jew, we must talk about how American Jewishness is interpreted and seen. I think a lot of the reasoning for that question I was asked had to do with what most Americans know about Jews vs. what they think they know about us and stereotyping. Many of us Jews have heard the comments about us hoarding our wealth or all being tied to Israel in a more tangible way than just a spiritual and ancestral connection. This question legitimized those stereotypes in a way that not only assumed their correctness, but also created a causal relationship.

Abiding by the standards of Jewish stereotypes, what are we left with? We have tax policy, Israel and the Middle East, anti-Semitism, and maybe abortion, though our religious perspective never seems to matter when that conversation comes up.

If we truly are to expect Jewish-Americans to vote on those issues alone and according to what everyone else thinks of our community, then maybe most Jews would be Republicans. But what that question failed to account for and what the calculation of Jewish voting responses still falls short on is the fact that we are not indeed stereotypes or caricatures.

There is so much diversity throughout our community that to generalize us all into a political expectation not only is anti-Semitic, but it is a disservice to the education available on the subject, and to the individual who moves through the world thinking that people are two-dimensional in that way. As a community, I don't think that there is a single issue that the entirety of Jewish people agree on except for being against anti-Semitism, and even that is subject to interpretation with what can be defined as anti-Semitic.

Moreover, while some may expect all Jews to fall in line with one particular political party –in this case the Republicans– there is yet another important factor they leave out of consideration: people never consider how the parties themselves actually treat the Jewish community.

I've heard people argue time and time again that the Republican Party is the only party that truly supports the Jews. However, that takeaway is a fallacy. The Republican Party, in their action that they've taken "on behalf" and "in support" of the Jews, have never actually improved our lives. They have treated us as political pawns and bargaining chips, and put a larger target on our backs than we had before.

When Donald Trump moved the American Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, it was supposed to be both a sentimental gesture, as well as a diplomatic one to show the Palestinians that America's allegiance is with Israel. While it's nice that that happened, it didn't do anything to improve our quality of life and it didn't stop Hamas from coming to power and hurting people, including dual American-Israeli citizens like Omer Neutra.

On a recent level, the DOJ taking on higher education institutions in the name of combating anti-Semitism, withholding their funding, monitoring their curriculum, and disallowing students from other countries has only further hurt the Jewish community. By making these deeply unpopular decisions in our name, the federal government has given those who are upset about what's happened a group to which they can direct their anger.

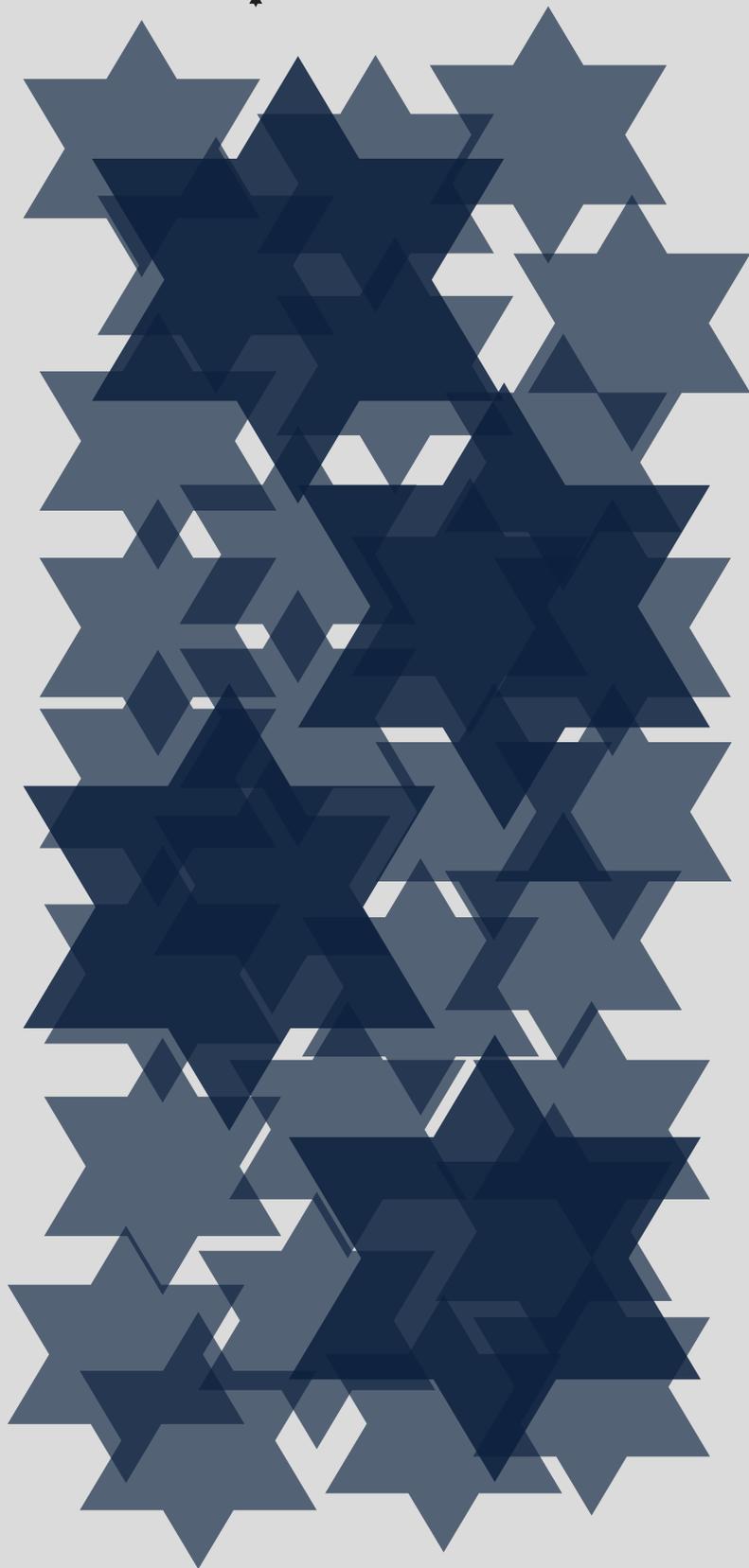


Credit: Forward.com

The Democratic Party, however, is no better. The Democratic Party doesn't even pretend to care about Jewish-Americans most of the time, and they certainly have made it clear that they don't feel an inclination to help protect our ancestral land and the US's relationship with it. Far-left Democrats today are a very significant portion of those committing anti-Semitic offenses on college campuses today, and frankly they can more often than not make me scared to talk about my culture around them. You know your party is hostile toward the Jews and Israel when even a gender-fluid, bisexual, neurodivergent woman from New York feels uncomfortable speaking about her

culture around Democrats.

So where do I and other Jews fit in the political landscape of America? The short answer is nowhere really. Instead, I, as well as many other Jews like me, pick where we feel the most seen for the other facets of our lives. For me, that's the Democrats, because even if I can't talk about my culture, they won't try to take away my civil rights and liberties, and at least they want me to be able to afford my prescriptions. Yet, I become more and more center-independent every day. This together, is why we say that Jews don't fit a party in America, and this is why we must be considered holistically, rather than two-dimensionally when we cast our ballots. ★



# CONTRIBUTORS

## KEY CONTRIBUTORS:

Evan Gower, Sr.  
The Starr Family  
Jonathan and Shelley Riegel  
Rachel Weintraub  
Anonymous  
Julie Starr  
Deborah Riegel  
Arthur Riegel  
Nancy Assuncao Sanchez  
Deb Riegel  
Fredda Romano  
Beth Feldman  
Emma Rosenstein

---

## BOARD:

Mara Riegel: Editor-in-Chief  
Alan Sukharev: Co-Managing Editor  
Sophie Starr: Co-Managing Editor  
Van Gower: Head of Finance  
Ben Daniel: Head of Outreach  
Alex Batzar: Head of Social Media and  
Marketing, Layout Designer  
Anna Falcone: Freshman Representative

TO CONTRIBUTE AND/OR TO GET INVOLVED,  
PLEASE FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM  
@TEKIAHMAG AND EMAIL US AT  
TEKIAHMAG@GMAIL.COM.



תורה  
THE TORAH  
A MODERN COMMENTARY



Revised Edition

UNION FOR REFORM JUDAISM

