

New Survey Examines Divorce In The Jewish World

BY BARUCH LYTLE

A newly released survey examines the attitudes and behaviors that most often play a role in divorce amongst orthodox Jews. With more than 1700 participants—809 identifying as Modern Orthodox and 660 as Haredi, and with 350 participants identified as divorcees—the study was the largest of its kind ever conducted on this demographic. The survey revealed that the average modern orthodox couple stayed married for 16 years, while the average Haredi couple stayed married for 11. Also, of the divorced, 80 percent of those surveyed had children under the age of 18.

Nishma Research has been conducting surveys focused on Orthodox Jewry since 2016, diving into the beliefs and experiences of Jews on various aspects of modern day life, including finances, antisemitism and prevalent political views. Their 23rd survey, titled “A Survey of Orthodox Jewish Family Life, Marriage & Divorce” was released in early July.

The survey questionnaire was distributed by email to a large panel made up of previously surveyed respondents, religious organizations, social media groups, and shul congregants. While mainly focusing on the experiences of previously married individuals, it also asked never-married singles to share how known divorces in their community has affected their approach to dating. “I put up a very short online pre-survey and over 300 people



Mark Trencher

gave me ideas of questions to ask,” shared Mark Trencher, founder of Nishma Research. “So this is really of the people by the people and for the people.”

The study found that only 9% of Modern Orthodox and 16% of Haredi divorce take place within the first four years of marriage. It also concluded the average age of divorcees among Modern Orthodox was 43 and 34 years of age for Haredi. Divorce in the Haredi world was more likely within the first 9 years of marriage, while divorce in modern orthodoxy happened more often after 9 years of marriage. Trencher suggested this may be due to the Haredi phenomenon of marrying at a younger age. “The Haredi may be a little

less mature, less ready, while the modern might have finished college and gotten a [career, leading to more financial stability and life experience]..”

Overall for the two groups, the top five reasons cited for divorce were bad habits (49%), unaddressed mental health challenges and/or personality disorders (47%), abuse (emotional or verbal) (42%), dishonesty (39%), and a spouse having “become a different person” after marriage (36%).

The study also found correlations between childhood trauma and divorce. 24% of divorcees reported experiencing childhood physical or emotional abuse, compared to 9% of marrieds who had never been divorced. The study hopes that “raising awareness of how childhood trauma affects marriage will encourage parents, rabbis, shadchanim, as well as those who are dating to promote and seek individual therapy proactively, and to help people address and resolve trauma and attachment injuries before marriage.”

There were some notable surprises in the survey. Contrary to popular belief, the study did not find that the 2020 Covid epidemic and quarantine played a significant role in inflaming the divorce rate. “I think Covid obviously affected family life but it didn’t top off as a major factor for divorce,” Trencher noted. Also disproven was the common belief that Jewish families’ experiences are not as prominent as those of non-Jewish families. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

conducted surveys that found that 47% of all women and 47% of all men (married or divorced) experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner during their lifetime. Nishma found this number among the orthodox to be at 42%. Also, a 2015 American Sociological Association study found that 68% of divorces were initiated by women, compared to 58% in the orthodox study.

Participants noted key deterrents to divorce being social pressure and stigma, especially for women and single mothers. A common quote cited in the ‘sample verbatim responses’ portion of the survey, was “Divorce is so stigmatized... scary and lonely to be a single mom.” Encouragingly, Trencher notes that orthodoxy seems to be becoming more tolerant, educated and sophisticated in its sensitivity and approach to the subject.

“There are two things that I found to be very interesting, the impact of mental health on the divorce rate, and also the amount of trauma,” Trencher expressed. “In the case of the Modern Orthodox, who tend to date for a longer period of time, why would they not detect any mental health concerns in their spouse till after marriage?” Later in the survey, an attempt to address this phenomenon is in the ‘sample verbatim responses’ where many participants agree with the sentiment “I believe the divorce could have been prevented if only the therapists, rabbis, etc. *believed* me when I described my

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AJC Helps Fund Critical Medical Equipment in Zambia

Israel reopened its embassy in Zambia, marking a significant milestone after more than 50 years of ties. Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar and Zambian Foreign Minister Mulambo Haimbe participated in the ceremony, and American Jewish Committee (AJC) Africa Institute was present at the opening. In November 2024, as part of AJC Africa Institute’s work, a senior AJC delegation traveled to Lusaka, Zambia, and met with President Hakainde Hichilema and Foreign Minister Haimbe, expressing gratitude for the longstanding relationship between Israel and Zambia and encouraging growing ties.

American Jewish Committee (AJC), in partnership with the Stanley, Mari-

on, Paul and Edward Bergman Family Foundation and the Israeli nonprofit Save a Child’s Heart (SACH), is working to ensure more children in Zambia have access to lifesaving heart-disease treatment.

Announced during the opening ceremony for Israel’s embassy in the capital of Lusaka, the new machine at National Heart Hospital in Lusaka will enable the hospital to perform critical cardiac surgeries on some of Zambia’s most vulnerable children.

“This machine will allow the hospital to perform lifesaving surgery on some of Zambia’s sickest children,” said AJC Africa Institute Director Wayne Sussman, who was in the capital for

the embassy ceremony. “More Zambian children will receive critical operations far sooner and the hospital can dramatically shorten their waiting lists with this purchase.”

The \$200,000 machine was jointly funded, with the AJC—along with the Bergman Family Foundation—and SACH providing half the cost. The Zambian government supplied the remaining \$100,000, which Sussman highlighted as a testament to the strengthening partnership between Zambia and Israel.

The new equipment will enable Zambian doctors to double the number of children who can be treated for serious heart conditions. Additionally,

SACH provided specialized training for the hospital’s cardiac team at Wolfson Medical Center in Israel, empowering local medical professionals to perform surgeries independently.

Over the past three decades, SACH has treated 8,000 children from 72 countries, including more than 200 children from Zambia. The organization continues to transport and treat children from Africa and other regions during the current war in Gaza.

AJC also worked to provide assistance to Zambia last year, when it provided a grant to Tevel, an Israeli NGO, to deliver food aid at a time when Zambia was suffering from a cholera outbreak and severe drought.

Hochul Signs Legislation to Confront Campus Antisemitism

New York Governor Kathy Hochul recently signed legislation that enhances civil rights protections that will help Jewish students at colleges and universities throughout the state. The new law requires all higher education institutions in New York to appoint a Title VI civil rights coordinator to oversee these protections.

“This law is a meaningful tool to make our campuses places where students can learn without fear of discrimination,” said Ted Deutch, CEO of the American Jewish Committee (AJC). “We thank New York Governor Kathy Hochul, Assemblywoman Nily Rozic, and Senator Toby Ann Stavisky for their leadership in passing the new Title VI Coordinator law in New York State. Every New York college will now have a trained official responsible for addressing discrimination and antisemitism, sending a clear, bipartisan message: discrimination will not be tolerated on our campuses. AJC is proud to have supported this landmark step for student safety.”

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spouse’s mental illness/abusiveness. Then they would have been able to intervene sooner, and in an appropriate way.” Nishma hopes that the findings in its surveys will lead to better understanding throughout the Jewish community and serve as a blueprint for shuls and Jewish organizations to provide the most effective service possible.

On a sobering note, divorces in general were often viewed as more hostile (47%) than amicable (28%) with Modern Orthodox women viewing their divorces as much more hostile than do men. But the majority said there is strong agreement that getting the divorce was good (76%), and people were happier (69%); with mixed feelings on whether their children were better off.

Nishma also asked participants what they most attributed to a Successful Marriage: Good behavior (71%), followed by willingness to work through challenges (63%), and the couple being

on similar religious levels (62%). A refreshing highlight in the survey was found in the sample verbatim responses, where participants that had previously been divorced, then successfully remarried, gave their advice. Thoughts shared included: “While being single is lonely, don’t get sucked into the single life. Stay determined to remarry. When getting remarried, if kids are involved, do a lot of planning, kids / step kids will impact your life,” and “Don’t badmouth your ex spouse. Describe how their behavior affected you and what can be triggering as a way to learn about best ways to build relationships. Find a trustworthy person who can provide potential mates with what they need to know about the divorce without resorting to lashon hara.”

Baruch Lytle is an African American Orthodox Jew. He has written over 200 published articles, and received a Simon Rockower Award for Excellence In Jewish Journalism in 2023.

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Yom Kippur 5786

Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, begins at sundown on October 1 and ends at nightfall on October 2. Westchester synagogues offer these services to observe the holiest day in the Jewish calendar.

Westchester Jewish Center, Palmer and Rockland Avenues, Mamaroneck
Erev Yom Kippur
Wednesday, October 1
5:45 PM Sanctuary Kol Nidre Service Begins*
Yom Kippur
Thursday, October 2
8:30 AM: Combined P'sukei D'zimra and Shacharit
10 AM: Adult Service*
10 AM-11:15 AM Family Service*
7:18 PM: Fast Ends/Ma'ariv
7:18 PM-8:45 PM-Community Break-Fast*
*Registration Required
For more information, email info@wjcenter.org.

Congregation Emanu-el of Westchester, 2125 Westchester Avenue East, Rye
Yom Kippur
Wednesday, October 1
7:30 PM: Kol Nidre
Thursday, October 2
10 AM: Morning Service
3 PM: Afternoon Service
3:30 PM: A Healing Service of Music and Meditations
4 PM: Yizkor/Memorial Service
4:45 PM: N'ilah/Concluding Service
5:45 PM: Break Fast
For more information, call 914-967-4382.

Temple Beth El of Northern Westchester, 220 South Bedford Road, Chappaqua
Kol Nidre
Wednesday, October 1
7:45 PM: Yom Kippur Evening Service
Yom Kippur
Thursday, October 2
9:30 AM: Yom Kippur Morning Early Service
12:30 PM: Yom Kippur Morning Late Service
2:30 PM: Service for Families with Children in Elementary School

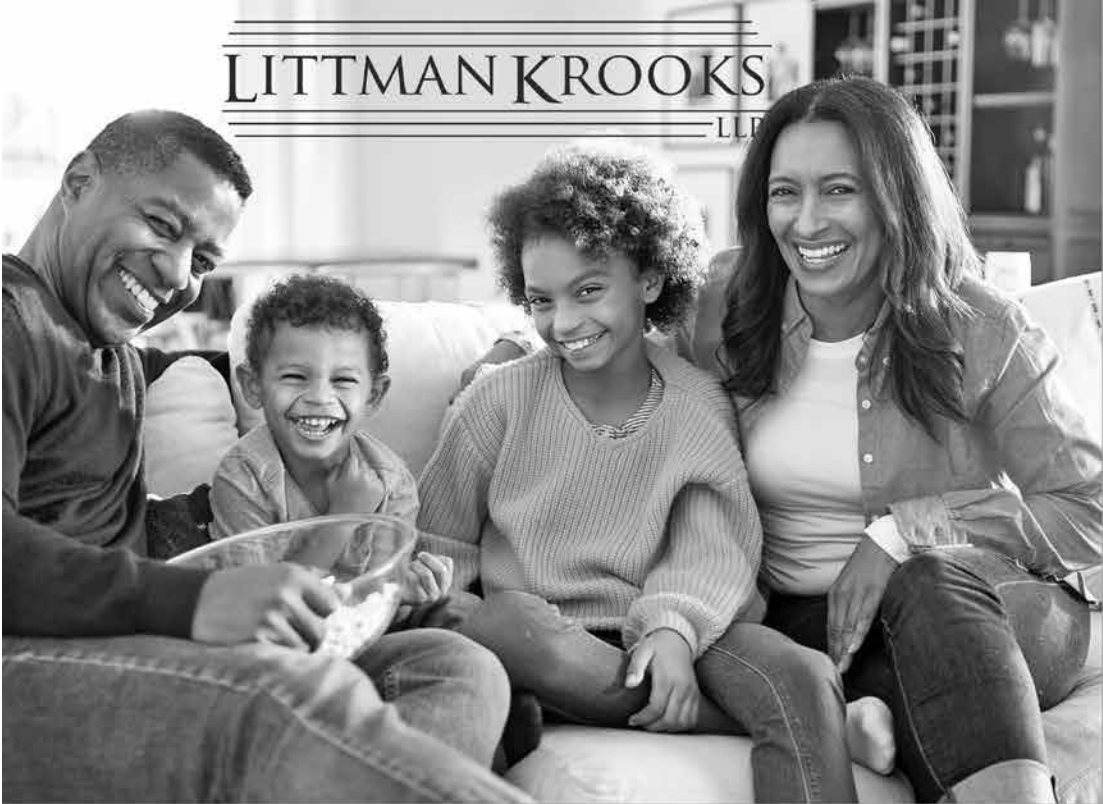
5 PM: Yizkor Service
5:50 PM: Neilah Concluding Service with Havdalah
Break-fast snack following
For more information, email temple@bethelnw.org.

Congregation Kol Ami, 252 Soundview Avenue, White Plains
Yom Kippur Kol Nidra
Wednesday, October 1
5:30 PM-7:30 PM: Early Service
8:30 PM-10:30 PM: Late Service
Yom Kippur
Thursday, October 2
9 AM-11:30 AM: Early Service
12:30 PM-3 PM: Late Service
3:30 PM-4:15 PM: Family Service
5 PM-7 PM: Yizkor and Neilah Service
For more information, call (914) 949-4717.

Temple Israel of Northern Westchester, 31 Glengary Road, Croton-on-Hudson
Yom Kippur
Wednesday, October 1
6 PM: Kol Nidre Multi-Generational Service
8:15 PM: Kol Nidra

Thursday, October 2
10 AM: Yom Kippur Morning Service
1 PM: Yom Kippur Experience for Young Families
5:30 PM: Neilah (closing service) followed by Break-the-Fast
For more information, email connect@tinw.org.

Westchester Reform Temple, 255 Mamaroneck Road, Scarsdale
Erev Yom Kippur – Kol Nidra
Wednesday, October 1
5 PM: Family Service (Beit Midrash)
5 PM: Adult Early Service
7:45 PM: Adult Late Service
Yom Kippur Day
Thursday, October 2
9 AM: Adult Early Service
10:45 AM: Family Service (Beit Midrash)
11:45 AM: Adult Late Service
1 PM: Intergenerational Service (Beit Midrash)
3:45 PM: Yom Kippur Afternoon Service includes Yizkor and Ne'ilah
For more information, contact the temple office at 914-723-7727.



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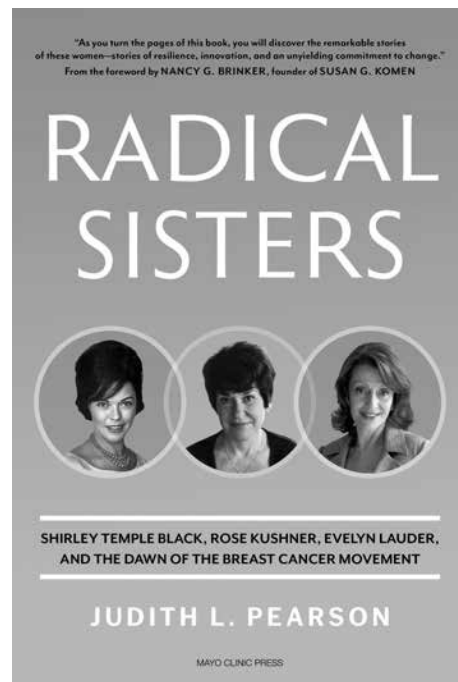
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Radical Sisters: Shirley Temple Black, Rose Kushner, Evelyn Lauder, and the Dawn of the Breast Cancer Movement, by Judith L. Pearson

Written by award-winning biographer Judith L. Pearson, *Radical Sisters: Shirley Temple Black, Rose Kushner, Evelyn Lauder, and the Dawn of the Breast Cancer Movement* is the rich and meticulously researched narrative of three women who couldn't have been more different, until they were diagnosed with breast cancer. In an era of medical myths and antiquated protocols, their intertwined stories began with the realization that treatment choices might not be their own.

In *Radical Sisters*, Pearson skillfully transports readers through three decades of a changing social landscape in America (the 1970s through the 1990s), highlighting the courage that transformed society's approach to breast cancer. Independently, these pioneers took on the most prevalent issues of their time: the cause, treatment, awareness, and cure of the disease. While none of them set out to be the trail-blazing advocates they became, they did for themselves what the mainstream healthcare



system refused to do.

When Shirley was diagnosed in 1972, she eschewed the current surgical protocol of biopsy and potential radical mastectomy all in one step. She then took the daring step of becoming the first celebrity to publicize her cancer. After Rose's 1974 diagnosis, and against overwhelming odds, her self-proclaimed "streak of stubbornness and loud voice" eventually saw to the eradication of that outdated "one-step" procedure, along with the barbaric radical mastectomies. From her deathbed, she valiantly shepherded legislation for insurance coverage of mammograms and breast reconstruction (which passed Congress just months after she died). Evelyn Lauder then picked up the battle when she was diagnosed with breast cancer in 1988. She was incensed by the lack of a comprehensive treatment center, paltry research funds, and lack of awareness for a disease that was literally killing women in epidemic propor-

tions. Employing her impressive address book, she oversaw fundraising for New York City's Evelyn Lauder Breast Center and the Breast Cancer Research Foundation. And in a 1992 stroke of genius, she used her world-wide network of cosmetic counters to launch the now ubiquitous pink ribbon.

With a foreword by Nancy Brinker, founder of Susan G. Komen, and timed for the 2025 National Breast Cancer Awareness Month, *Radical Sisters* acts as a mirror, allowing readers to see reflections of themselves, and their own experiences and struggles. It is a powerful and emotional take on the evolution of the women's health movement (and their participation in medicine) and the breast cancer revolution.

All women (more than 300,000 of whom will be diagnosed this year) and those who love them owe these "radical sisters" a debt of gratitude for their place in history.

The Pros and Cons of Co-Fiduciaries in Estate Planning

BY BERNARD A. KROOKS, CERTIFIED ELDER LAW ATTORNEY
SPECIAL GUEST CONTRIBUTOR: JOEL KROOKS, ESQ.

In estate planning, a fiduciary is someone entrusted with managing another person's assets and affairs, often serving as an executor, trustee, or power of attorney. Many individuals consider appointing co-fiduciaries—two or more people sharing fiduciary responsibility—to ensure a balance of perspectives and safeguard decision-making. Many clients express a desire to treat all of their children equally, which often leads them to consider naming all of them as co-fiduciaries. While co-fiduciaries can offer several advantages, there are also important drawbacks to consider.

Pros of Appointing Co-Fiduciaries

Checks and Balances: One of the most common reasons for appointing co-fiduciaries is to create a system of checks and balances. When more than one person is involved, the risk of mismanagement, fraud, or favoritism is reduced. This can be particularly important in high-value estates.

Shared Workload: Estate or Trust administration can be time-consuming and complex. Co-fiduciaries can divide responsibilities, such as com-

municating with beneficiaries, managing assets, filing taxes, and handling legal matters. This shared workload can reduce stress and ensure that no single fiduciary is overwhelmed. Co-fiduciaries can also bring complementary skills to the table. For example, one fiduciary might be financially savvy, while the other has strong interpersonal skills for dealing with family dynamics. This can lead to more well-rounded decision-making.

Family Representation: In blended families or when children from multiple marriages are involved, appointing co-fiduciaries from different branches of the family can help maintain neutrality and foster trust among heirs.

Cons of Appointing Co-Fiduciaries

Risk of Disagreement: Co-fiduciaries must make decisions together, and disagreements can delay important actions or lead to legal disputes. If the co-fiduciaries have conflicting personalities or values, the process can become contentious, causing friction among heirs and potentially increasing legal costs. If the co-fiduciaries are family members, it can also lead to conflicts among family members and strain or even damage relationships. While the intention

may be fairness, asking children to manage an estate together can place emotional stress on them—especially during a time of grief. The pressure to make joint decisions under emotional strain can deepen rifts rather than promote unity.

Slower Decision-Making: Requiring the agreement of multiple parties often slows down decision-making, especially if the fiduciaries are located in different cities or states. In urgent situations, such delays can be problematic. If co-fiduciaries are evenly split on a decision and there's no mechanism in the estate plan to resolve a deadlock, administration can stall entirely. This might require court intervention to break the tie, further complicating the process.

Unequal Participation: In practice, one co-fiduciary may end up doing the bulk of the work while the other remains passive. This can breed resentment or lead to inefficiencies, particularly if compensation is shared equally.

Difficulty in Financial Institutions and Courts: Some banks, brokerage firms, or courts prefer working with a single decision-maker. They may impose stricter requirements when multiple fiduciaries are involved—such as needing all signa-

tures for every transaction—leading to delays and frustration.

Conclusion

Appointing co-fiduciaries in an estate plan can provide balance, accountability, and shared responsibility—but it can also introduce the risk of conflict, inefficiency, and delays. When considering co-fiduciaries, it's important to choose individuals who communicate well, share mutual respect, and are capable of working together under pressure. Consulting with an estate planning attorney can help you weigh these factors and structure your fiduciary appointments to best serve your estate's goals.

Bernard A. Krooks, Esq., is a founding partner of Littman Krooks LLP. He was named 2021 "Lawyer of the Year" by Best Lawyers in America® for excellence in Elder Law and has been honored as one of the "Best Lawyers" in America since 2008. He was elected to the Estate Planning Hall of Fame by the National Association of Estate Planners & Councils (NAEPC). Krooks is past Chair of the Elder Law Committee of the American College of Trust and Estate Counsel (ACTEC). Mr. Krooks may be reached at (914-684-2100) or by visiting the firm's website at www.littmankrooks.com.



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Lisa Zach and Tomer Hoory join the Westchester and Connecticut team at Friends of the IDF (FIDF)

Friends of the Israel Defense Forces (FIDF) appointed Lisa Zach as the new Associate Director of Westchester and Tomer Hoory as the new Senior Development Associate for Westchester and Connecticut. Both with strong backgrounds in community engagement and Jewish leadership, they step into these roles with a shared goal: to educate and engage the Westchester community with the incredible humanitarian work FIDF does every day to support Israel's soldiers and their families.

"I am excited to welcome Lisa and Tomer to the FIDF family. They are

a great addition to our team," says Anat Chavkin, Executive Director of the Chapter. FIDF provides essential support that ensures soldiers' wellbeing, educational advancement, mental health, and medical needs. "My mission is to connect families with the impactful work FIDF does every day. By raising awareness of their mission, we create opportunities for meaningful com-



Lisa Zach

munity involvement that leads to lasting change," said Zach. "I am honored to join FIDF in this capacity," added Hoory. "My focus is on strengthening expanding opportunities within the Westchester Jewish community so that more members of our community can stand behind Israel's soldiers in the meaningful ways that FIDF can offer."

Under their leadership, Zach and Hoory hope to deepen local involvement through intimate parlor events, synagogue partnerships, and educational



Tomer Hoory

programs for families and teens. Together, they are building meaningful bridges between the IDF's frontline efforts and the Westchester community. "FIDF is about humanity, healing, and helping people thrive," Zach noted. "I'm honored to share that story here." "It's a privilege to join Lisa and our incredible

Westchester and Connecticut team," Hoory says. "Together, we hope to assist in the growth of our strong and engaged community in support of Israel's heroes." For more information, visit www.fidf.org or email Zach at Lisa.Zach@fidf.org and Hoory at Tomer.Hoory@fidf.org.

New Haredi Yeshivat Hesder Opens in Israel

Israel Sci-Tech Schools (ISTS) has inaugurated a new Haredi Yeshivat Hesder at its Hermelin College in Netanya, in collaboration with Rabbi Yonatan Reiss, Founder & Director of Chedvata.

The yeshiva was established in response to growing demand from local families seeking an educational path for their children that integrates religious commitment, academic excellence, and service to the State of Israel.

This innovative program offers a unique model: students will dedicate their mornings to Torah study and their afternoons to matriculation coursework and a practical engineering degree. Upon completion of their studies, graduates will enlist for full military service in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF).

"We at Israel Sci-Tech Schools are proud to be part of this unique and groundbreaking program, which allows Haredi youngsters to continue their Torah learning while also contributing to Israel by pursuing higher education and later serving in the IDF," said Raz Frohlich, CEO of the Israel Sci-Tech Schools Network. "In this historic juncture that Israel is facing, we at ISTS are leading a change that will greatly impact the integration of the Haredi community and their contribution to Israeli society."



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Israel Sci-Tech Schools Open 2025-2026 School Year

Israel Sci-Tech Schools (ISTS), Israel's largest independent charter school network, officially opened the 2025-2026 school year in September, welcoming approximately 100,000 students across 264 educational institutions nationwide. More than 8,100 devoted staff members greeted students.

Israeli President Isaac Herzog and First Lady Michal Herzog joined Israel Sci-Tech Schools' Danciger High School in Kiryat Shmona to welcome students on their first day of school.

This year's opening was marked by both excitement and profound sorrow, as the network mourns the loss of 158 alumni who fell in the ongoing Iron Swords War. In addition, three graduates — Itay



Emma Barrebi, ISTS, and Mark Levenfus, Chairman of Friends of Israel Sci-Tech Schools. Photo Credit: Courtesy of ISTS

Hen z"l, Nimrod Cohen, and Matan Angrest — remain in captivity.

Nationwide, about 2.6 million Israeli students returned to classrooms amid the war and an ongoing shortage of teaching staff. Of these, 149,000 entered 12th grade, their final year in the education system. The 2025-2026 school year began against the backdrop of the Iron Swords War, now entering its third year.

Joining the network's back-to-school events across Israel was Mark Levenfus of Scarsdale, Chairman of Friends of Israel Sci-Tech Schools. Among the highlights was a gathering of all 400 ISTS principals for a special conference held ahead of the school year.

"The education of students in Israel — especially in STEM — is the most important investment in the country's future and the only way to ensure it will thrive moving forward," said Mark Levenfus. "Our world is moving faster than ever in terms of technology and AI, and I had the honor of meeting 400 principals from Israel Sci-Tech Schools who are deeply dedicated to this mission. While Israeli society is facing enormous challenges — perhaps the greatest since

the establishment of the state — the way to overcome them begins with the best teachers and principals who care profoundly about their students."

As the year kicks off, ISTS is launching Israel's first Code of Ethics for the responsible use of AI tools in the education system. This year, the network's youth movement division will lead more than 40 community engagement programs initiated and led by the network's students. The division will expand its activity particularly in peripheral areas and focus on initiatives fostering resilience, a sense of belonging, and unity among students.

"We are opening the school year with a profound sense of mission," said Raz Frohlich, CEO of the Israel Sci-Tech Schools Network. "Our educational teams bring both commitment and a deep belief in the power of education to shape Israeli society and strengthen its resilience from within. As a leading educational organization with a broad and diverse nationwide presence, bridging sectors, religions, and communities, we are placing special emphasis this year on fostering communal resilience and unity. In addition, out of our commitment to relevant education in a changing world, we developed the first Code of Ethics in the Israeli education system for integrating AI into education."

Standing Strong, Proud, and Pro-Israel: A Jewish Future of Possibility



BY MYRA CLARK-SIEGEL,
AJC WESTCHESTER/FAIRFIELD
REGIONAL DIRECTOR

This is a moment that demands clarity, courage, and pride. As Jews in America, and as part of the global Jewish community, we are living through turbulent times. Antisemitism has grown more visible and more aggressive, both in our political town squares and social media. Israel continues to face profound security challenges, even as it remains a vibrant democracy and the homeland of the Jewish people. And yet—this is also a moment filled with extraordinary possibility.

At American Jewish Committee (AJC), we see both sides of this reality every day. On one hand, Jewish students in K-12 schools and on college campuses have experienced intimidation, exclusion, and, at times, outright hostility. On the other hand, those same students are standing taller, speaking louder, and claiming their Jewish identity with strength, dignity, and Jewish joy. Through AJC programs like Leaders for Tomorrow (LFT) for high school students and Campus Global Board for college students, our

younger leaders are equipped with knowledge and confidence to advocate for Israel, stand against antisemitism, and lead their peers with resilience and pride.

Globally, there are reasons for optimism. The Abraham Accords have already reshaped the Middle East by fostering historic peace and cooperation between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, and Morocco. Today, we are on the threshold of new possibilities: expanded agreements that could bring even more countries into a regional framework of coexistence, prosperity, and mutual respect. AJC has been at the forefront of this work, building relationships, opening channels for dialogue, and helping lay the groundwork for a more secure and integrated future.

Here in Westchester, our Jewish community has a vital role to play. We must make our voices heard—not only in moments of crisis, but every day, modeling what it means to stand proudly as Jews and as Zionists. Each of us has a part in this story: getting involved with advocacy, showing up for one another, supporting Israel, and building bridges across communities.

This is a deeply challenging time. But it is also an inspiring one. Together, we can ensure that the Jewish future is not defined by fear, but by strength, leadership, and the boundless possibilities of what we can achieve—here in Westchester, across America, and around the world.

AJC (American Jewish Committee) is the global advocacy organization of the Jewish people. To learn more or learn how to be a strong Jewish advocate, email westchester@ajc.org or go to ajc.org.

Birthright Israel Onward Storytellers Completes First Program

Birthright Israel Onward announced the successful completion of the inaugural cohort of its new Storytellers program, a pioneering fellowship designed to empower Jewish creatives and digital changemakers to share authentic narratives about Judaism and Israel worldwide.

Launched earlier this year, the program brought together its first group this summer: 43 participants from the United States, Canada, Argentina, Costa Rica, Australia, Mexico, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Over several weeks in Israel, participants engaged in workshops, mentorship, and content creation experiences, building a foundation for authentic storytelling in the digital age.

"This initiative was born out of the need to break out of the echo chamber of traditional pro-Israel content and to give a platform to diverse, original voices with real influence online," said Gidi Mark, CEO of Birthright Israel. "It is a



program with a long-term vision to build a community of creators and changemakers who shape the digital and cultural discourse long after the program ends. After 25 years of activity, Birthright not only connects young people to Israel but also enables them to become partners in shaping the Jewish story of our generation."

Storytellers is designed as a skill-building incubator and creative community for Jewish influencers, entrepreneurs, and thought leaders between the ages of 18-35. The program combines high-level workshops, field trips, TED-

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Calendar October 2025

Romeo & Juliet

Thursday, October 30, 6:30 PM

Sunday, November 2, 1 PM

JCCMW Bendheim Performing Arts Center, 999. Wilmot Road, Scarsdale

In this new interpretation of the classic ballet, the passion and peril of Verona are retold through a multiplicity of voices and perspectives with three different casts: male/female, male/male, and female/female. With breathtaking choreography, an emotive score from Sergei Prokofiev, and fearless storytelling from the dancers of the Jewish Community Center of Mid-Westchester and Hudson Ballet Theatre, this production challenges conventions of classical ballet. It's a celebration of love in all its forms—achingly beautiful, deeply human, and tragically fleeting.

Saturday, November 1, 6:45 PM: Romeo & Julian (male/male)

Sunday, November 2, 5 PM: Romy & Juliet (female/female)

Tickets can be purchased at [ticketleap.com/events/tickets/jccmw/RJ](https://www.ticketleap.com/events/tickets/jccmw/RJ)

Deconstructing Dark Side of the Moon

Sunday, October 5, 2 PM

Shames Jewish Community Center on the Hudson, 371 S. Broadway, Tarrytown

In this multimedia lecture, musicologist Scott Freiman will deconstruct this groundbreaking album on its 50th anniversary. Scott will lead a track-by-track journey through Pink Floyd's masterpiece that pushed the boundaries of rock music, incorporating elements of jazz, classi-

cal, and experimental music. Learn about the inspiration for and evolution of the songs that explore themes of life, death, time, and the human experience. Cost is \$25 for members, \$36 for non-members. Get tickets at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/deconstructing-dark-side-of-the-moon-tickets-1450440840599?aff=oddtcreator>

Gesher Shabbat: Celebrating

Bridge-Building to Create Community

Friday, October 10, 6:15 PM

Scarsdale Synagogue, 2 Ogden Road

Neighbors and guests are invited to celebrate the Jewish autumn festival of Sukkot at the Gesher Shabbat. Dinner sponsored by the Harvey Belkin Memorial Fund is followed by a service and performance by musical guests The Afro-Semitic Experience.

To register, go to <https://www.sstte.org/event/gesher-shabbat/afro-semitic-experience.html>

Fall Fest: Celebrate, Connect and Discover

Sunday, October 19, 11 AM to 2 PM

Jewish Community Center of Mid-Westchester, 999 Wilmot Road, Scarsdale

The annual Open House event has music, entertainment, fun activities, crafts, gymnastics, dancing, swimming, sports, classes, games, delicious food, and more! Learn more at <https://jccmw.org/event/fall-fest-2025/>

Leonard Cohen: The Man Who Saw the Angels Fall

Wednesday, October 22, 7 PM

Durst Theatre, Purchase College, 735

Anderson Hill Road

Professor Christophe Lebold will discuss his prize-winning book Leonard Cohen: The Man Who Saw the Angels Fall. Blending literary analysis, theology, and cultural theory, Professor Lebold explores the poetic, spiritual, and philosophical dimensions of Cohen's life and lyrics, tracing how the legendary singer-songwriter navigated faith, doubt, desire, and redemption. Free admission.

To register, go to <https://www.purchase.edu/calendar/event/73188-leonard-cohen-the-man-who-saw-the-angels-fall-a-talk-w>

Alice + Olivia Benefit

Tuesday, October 28, 6:30 PM to 8:30 PM

Alice + Olivia, 335 Greenwich Avenue, Greenwich, CT

Enjoy an evening of shopping to benefit Westchester Jewish Community Services (WJCS), with 10 percent off purchases and 10 percent going to WJCS. Kosher champagne will be served.

To RSVP, go to https://secure.qgiv.com/for/wjcs/event/aliceoliviabenefit?blm_aid=450658305

AJC Westchester/Fairfield Fall Gala

Tuesday, November 18, 6 PM

Save the date for the American Jewish Committee (AJC)'s annual fall gala, honoring AJC Past National President Harriet P. Schleifer and featuring AJC CEO Ted Deutch. Cocktail hour begins at 6 PM, followed by the program at 7 PM. Ticket prices start at \$360.

Learn more at www.AJC.org/WestFair/2025Gala

Thanksgiving Diversity Breakfast

Thursday, November 20, 8 AM to 10 AM

Save the date for the 23rd Annual AJC Westchester/Fairfield Thanksgiving Diversity Breakfast "One Table, Many Voices: Standing Together." The event celebrates the rich diversity of the community and challenges attendees to listen, learn and take action together. To register or volunteer at the event, contact the American Jewish Committee of Westchester/Fairfield at Westchester@ajc.org.

Birthright Israel Onward Storytellers Completes First Program

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style peer exchanges, and incubation time for project development, equipping participants to produce content and initiatives that expand the reach of Jewish stories and strengthen Jewish identity online.

Flagship Tracks Launched This Summer are:

- The Storytellers Reichman Geopolitics & Digital Influence Fellowship — A three-week, campus-based program at Reichman University focused on storytelling, digital influence, and geopolitics.

- The Storytellers Impact Incubator — A nine-day immersive program running four times per year, blending brand-building, content creation, and experiential learning.

Chelsea Jacobson, a New York-based writer and creator with an audience of more than 30,000 across TikTok and Instagram, joined Storytellers to deepen

her relationship with Israel and Jewish identity. "This program gave me the space to connect my creative work to my heritage in a meaningful way," she said.

Aurele Tobelem, a 22-year-old British-Israeli historian and policy researcher, added: "Through Storytellers, I was able to amplify Mizrahi and Sephardi voices in the digital space and create bold, visually compelling content that challenges misinformation."

Building on the success of its first cohort, Birthright Israel Onward plans to expand Storytellers with multiple programs annually, creating a long-term ecosystem of Jewish creatives committed to elevating Jewish voices and narratives across digital platforms.

For more information about registration for the program, contact Jacqueline Korren, Program Director, Birthright Storytellers, at jacqueline.korren@birthrightisrael.com.

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Mary DeYoung, Advertising Account Executive
mdeyoung.61@gmail.com

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UJA-Federation of New York Announces \$7.8 Million in Grants for Israel

United Jewish Appeal (UJA)-Federation of New York announced new grants totaling approximately \$7.8 million to expand support for Israel's recovery and long-term rebuilding efforts. These grants bring UJA's total giving for Israel since October 7 to more than \$300 million, funding both essential needs and sustained support for communities across the country.

The latest round of funding includes support for 55 new grants, with a strategic focus on three primary areas:

- Recovery and Rebuilding in Israel's North: Grants are complementing current work that is helping families cope with trauma and restore stability, including the placement of social workers in municipalities where nearly 300 welfare positions remain unfilled. These efforts are helping families return home, rebuild their lives, and restore a sense of safety and belonging — especially in places where vulnerable children and their caregivers are struggling to regain routine and emotional resilience after months of displacement.
- Recovery and Rebuilding in Israel's South: Since October 7, UJA has worked in partnership with the most affected communities, including Be'eri, Kfar Aza, and

Nir Oz, and this round of funding will continue critical supports, including trauma care, education, and community rebuilding. Some communities remain displaced with no return date, and the grants are helping them maintain solidarity across temporary locations and continue the long process of healing and renewal. Also, funding will expand trauma-sensitive programming in schools and informal education settings, helping children, educators, and families navigate the psychological toll of war.

- Families of reservists and wounded soldiers, female soldiers, bereaved families, hostage families, and children who have been orphaned by war - many of whom face profound emotional and financial hardship.

"The needs remain immense," said Eric S. Goldstein, CEO of UJA-Federation of New York. "We remain focused on helping communities rebuild — especially in the north and south — and on supporting those who have borne the greatest burdens: families of reservists and wounded soldiers, bereaved families, and children affected by trauma. Each grant is a lifeline — an investment in healing, resilience, and the Israeli future."

Assisting Holocaust Survivors In Need

The Blue Card is dedicated to supporting Holocaust survivors, many of whom live in poverty and face significant health and emotional challenges in their later years. The organization provides year-round programs that bring dignity, comfort, and security. Its Telephone Emergency Response System (TERS) ensures help is only a button away in times of crisis. Through the Birthday and Holiday Programs, survivors receive cards and meaningful gifts that remind them they are never forgotten. The Blue Card also offers monthly stipends to ease the burden of living expenses, along with innovative supports such as robotic pet companions and mood lights, which bring comfort and help reduce loneliness. Each of these programs is designed to meet both the practical and emotional needs of survivors, helping them live with safety, joy, and dignity in their final years.

The Blue Card's annual Summer Retreat offers Holocaust survivors a rare opportunity to step away from daily hardships and spend several days surrounded by community, care, and joy. Survivors—many living in poverty and facing health challenges—come together in a warm, supportive environment where they share meals, participate in creative workshops, enjoy cultural programs, and connect with one another. For many, this retreat is the highlight of the year, bringing laughter, healing, and a true sense of belonging.

The Blue Card is a member organization of Westchester Jewish Council.

To support this program, go to <https://bluecardfund.org/become-involved/donate/>



Holocaust survivors together with The Blue Card's Executive Director, Masha Pearl, and former hostage of Hamas captivity, Andrei Kozlov.

Scout Troop 613 for Jewish Children

Jewish Scouting is available to all boys and girls in our area. What makes Scout Troop 613 (based in White Plains) special? All the classic Scouting activities (camping, cooking, civic engagement, leadership development, teamwork, volunteering, orienteering, first aid, high adventure treks and more) are offered, in ways that meet the needs of Jewish Scouts, like learning about Judaism, observing Shabbat, and with kosher food.

A Scout is Trustworthy, Loyal, Helpful, Friendly, Courteous, Kind, Obedient, Cheerful, Thrifty, Brave, Clean, and Reverent—that's the Scout Law, and it contains skills, attitudes, and values which are increasingly rare and in growing demand in today's world.

For more information for children ages 5-10 and their families, contact Cubmaster Jason Nadell at j_nadell@hotmail.com. For more information for children ages 11-17 and their families, contact Scoutmaster Uri Cohen at uricohen613@gmail.com.

The Importance of Integrating Mental Health and Medical Care

New data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention indicate that the prevalence of depression in US adolescents and adults has risen 60 percent over the past decade. Providing access to mental health care has long been a vital part of the mission of Westchester Jewish Community Services (WJCS), a human services agency founded in 1943. In 2024 alone, WJCS provided mental health and trauma services to 3,594 clients at its four behavioral health clinics and 14 satellite clinics, including 11 located in schools.

Recognizing that mental health challenges rarely exist in isolation, WJCS addresses the full spectrum of needs that can impact recovery. Its clinics in Yonkers, Mt. Vernon, Peekskill, and Hartsdale also offer substance use treatment, vocational counseling, assistance from peer specialists with lived experience, and referrals for housing, food, and legal support.

Thanks to support from Fidelis Care, WJCS recently took an important step toward closing one of the most significant gaps in care: access to physical health services. Research published in the Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal reveals that individuals living with serious mental illness have a life expectancy 10 to 25 years shorter than the general population — with roughly 60 percent of that excess mortality attributable to untreated or undertreated medical illness. Among WJCS behavioral health clients, only about half have an established primary care physician or receive annual physical exams. For many, poverty, trauma, and other barriers make it difficult to follow through on recommended care. Missed appointments, unfilled prescriptions,

and undiagnosed diseases can lead to unnecessary suffering — and, too often, preventable early deaths.

To address these challenges, WJCS now employs a Patient Navigator who serves as a critical link between clients and the medical system. When a clinician refers a client to a primary care physician, the Patient Navigator schedules the appointment at a convenient time, assists with transportation, collects medical records, and ensures necessary paperwork is complete. From the first referral to the annual check-up, the Patient Navigator stands alongside clients, helping them overcome obstacles and stay engaged with their medical care.

For people with mental health challenges, this integrated approach can be transformative. Annual physicals enable primary care physicians to offer preventive care, monitor chronic conditions, order diagnostic tests, and recommend lifestyle changes that support overall health. These visits also ensure clients stay current with vaccinations and receive early intervention for conditions such as heart disease, diabetes, or osteoporosis — all of which can dramatically improve quality of life. Each appointment kept, each condition detected early, and each client supported represents improved health and greater stability, dignity, and hope. All of us need to recognize and ensure that mental health care is not only about treating the mind, but also about nurturing the body and empowering individuals to live fuller, healthier, and more connected lives.

Learn more about Westchester Jewish Community Services at www.wjcs.com.

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