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WHAT'S DRIVING THE AMERICAN JEWISH CONVERSATION

Forwarding the News

WITH BENYAMIN COHEN



Senators confirm U.S. ambassador to Israel, neo-Nazi cross-examines Lipstadt at Charlottesville trial, photographing Yitzhak Rabin and more.

SPECIAL REPORT: 'FIDDLER' AT 50



Illustration by Nikki Casey

The movie adaptation of “Fiddler on the Roof” premiered 50 years ago this week. Tevye and Topol and “Tradition” became a part of the cultural firmament. In honor of that anniversary, we’re publishing a series of articles about the impact of ‘Fiddler’ and its legacy. *L’chaim!*

I went my entire life without watching ‘Fiddler on the Roof.’ My first viewing was underwhelming – until it wasn’t. When the *Forward’s* culture team met to talk about how to mark the film’s golden anniversary, Irene Katz Connelly had to divulge a painful and long-protected secret: She had never seen it. “Not the movie, not the play. Not on Broadway, not in a school auditorium, not on my own TV,” she explains. “I thought I might get fired.” So she watched, and at first she wasn’t feeling it. Then, two hours and 37 minutes in, something clicked. [Read the story >](#)

Coming of age in a central Ohio JCC production: Eliya Smith was 15 when she was cast as Tzeitel, Tevye’s oldest daughter. In some cases, the show mirrored her own personal growth, becoming an outlet for romantic and social exploration. “I did not understand my emotions but felt them so intensely it sometimes made me afraid,” she recalls. But onstage, in the psychodrama of shtetl life and arranged marriages, she found reprieve from a changing sense of self. [Read her essay >](#)

How ‘Fiddler convinced me to convert to Judaism – really. Maura Lee Bee says she grew up “Catholic-adjacent,” yet somehow ended up playing Tevye’s wife. One day, a rabbi – an actual, real-life rabbi – showed up on set to bless the cast. It was, Bee said, “the first spiritual experience that moved me.” The show led to a love of musical theater – she later sang in “Hair,” “Godspell” and “Funny Girl” – and to making a lifelong friend, who would open the doors to Judaism. [Read the story >](#)

We've got more 'Fiddler at 50' coverage coming.... You can [find it all here](#) – along with our coverage of the film and show from years past.

ALSO IN THE FORWARD



[Lipstadt tells jury she was 'taken aback' by antisemitism in Charlottesville:](#) One of the foremost experts on the Holocaust, Lipstadt explained basic tenets of Jew hatred to the jury, reports our Arno Rosenfeld, who was inside the courtroom. When one of the defendants, on cross-examination, suggested that his antisemitic comments were merely jokes. Lipstadt replied: "I find it hard to imagine using a genocide, which killed six million people, irrespective of their religion, their identity, their nationality, as a topic of jokes." [Read the story >](#)

[Old antisemitic tropes found new life in Phoenix:](#) After a woman went on a rant about how Jews are profiting from unsafe vaccines at an Arizona school-board meeting last week, the board president shrugged it off, saying "this is not something we can do something about." In a new essay, Jonathan Greenblatt, chief executive of the Anti-Defamation League, argues that was a missed opportunity. "What's most shocking about this episode," is not what the speaker said, Greenblatt notes, "but that not one single person at the meeting had the courage to stand up and denounce her words as hateful, hurtful and untrue." [Read the OpEd >](#)

A message from our sponsor: Other Israel Film Festival



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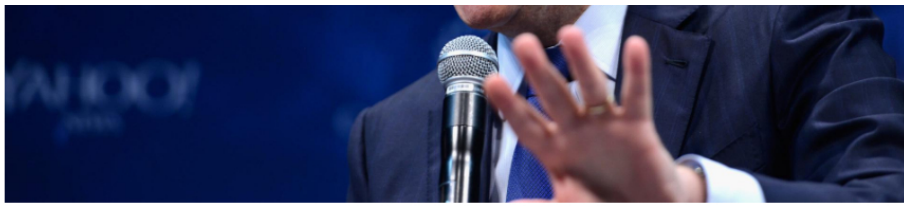
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For more info and tickets, visit otherisrael.org.

MORE INFO + TICKETS

WHAT ELSE YOU NEED TO KNOW TODAY





Tom Nides was a former deputy secretary of state. (Getty Images)

11 The Senate confirmed Tom Nides as U.S. ambassador to Israel on Wednesday after Republican lawmakers lifted their hold on his nomination. Nides, a former official in the Clinton and Obama administrations, ran Sen. Joe Lieberman's vice presidential campaign in 2000. Our senior political reporter, Jacob Kornbluh, says Nides [“brings both political and diplomatic experience to the job,”](#) and has been characterized as ‘charming’ by people who have worked with him.” ([JTA](#))

☹️ **Antisemitic flyers were found on the campus of Arizona State University this week.** The flyers asked “Who Controls The World?” and answered “Jews Do” in dripping-blood font against a Star of David. They were posted near a kosher restaurant and in a newspaper dispenser. ([Algemeiner](#))

🔍 **Israeli police say they’ve cracked open an unsolved murder linked to a Hasidic cult** run by a rabbi who is a convicted sex offender. Based on new information, the authorities are now searching for the remains of a 17-year-old boy who disappeared in 1986. When confronted by a relative of the boy in court on Wednesday, the rabbi reportedly said, “You can sit shiva and say Kaddish, I am sorry I didn’t tell you 35 years ago.” ([Times of Israel](#))

🗳️ A school-board candidate in Idaho with a history of antisemitic tweets – [and the local GOP’s endorsement](#) – **lost in Tuesday’s elections.** David J. Reilly received 46% of the vote to Jake Dawson’s 53%, in the growing city of Post Falls.

🏃 A Jewish student from Montreal whose grandfather escaped the Nazis plans to **run the New York City Marathon on Sunday in order to raise money for Holocaust survivors.** “It should be all of our duty to take care of the Holocaust survivors and their families who are still living,” he said. ([Canadian Jewish News](#))

💎 **A jewel thief in Haifa quite literally slipped up.** He stumbled on some smashed glass during his getaway, cutting himself and leaving drops of blood that the police used to identify him. ([Times of Israel](#))

🎬 **Gal Gadot may go from superhero to supervillain.** Best known as Wonder Woman, the Israeli actress is in final talks with Disney to play the Evil Queen in a live-action adaptation of “Snow White.” The film is set to go into production in 2022. In the meantime, Gadot can be seen in the new action-comedy “Red Notice,” which arrives on Netflix next week. ([Deadline](#))

Shiva call > Izzy Arbeiter, a beloved Holocaust survivor in Boston, died at 96. When he arrived in America, he became a tailor and later bought a dry cleaning business. “He had a multitude of friends, was a snappy dresser, and had an impeccable sense of comic timing,” writes Linda Matchan, a Boston-based contributor. “He was fond of saying that he was a CPA by profession: ‘Cleaning, Pressing and Alterations.’” ([Forward](#))

What else we’re reading > The Netflix series that is making [religious people uncomfortable](#) (no it’s not the one you’re thinking about) ... A rabbi searches for [a congregation in Saudi Arabia](#), birthplace of Islam ... This multiracial rapper [bridges cultures](#) as he brings his music from Southern California to Israel.

FROM OUR ARCHIVES





In 1956, Alfred A. Knopf published possibly the world's only tale of a New York City pigeon who loved a Jewish newspaper. Our review carried, at first glance, the world's most skeptical headline: "Two Christian Girls and Their Book About A Pigeon On The *Forverts*' Roof."

Created by the writer-illustrator couple Jean Merrill and Ronni Solbert, the children's book depicts a pigeon named Marco who flies over the city's East Side, frequently alighting on the historic neon *Forward* rooftop sign. "Perched on the tallest television aerial, Marco could see: to the east a river, to the west a river, to the south three bridges, due north, the tallest building in the world," wrote our reviewer, S. Regensberg. "And in the sky nearby, a big red sign said: FORWARD." Throughout the book, Marco and his friends consider the word "Forward," pondering its meaning. "Forward means *upward and onward*," older pigeons advised.

It's a hopeful message that matches our paper's origins and still resonates today.

ON THE CALENDAR



Robert A. Cumins

On this day in history: Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated on Nov. 4, 1995. Ten days earlier, he was in Washington to present an award to President Bill Clinton for his efforts to achieve peace in the Middle East. Robert A. Cumins, a photojournalist who has spent decades covering world-changing events, was there.

"I actually straightened the prime minister's borrowed bow tie just prior to his taking the stage," Cumins recalled. "I had spent a lot of time previously with Rabin. Otherwise, I would never have gotten near his neck." His picture would be the last photo of Clinton and Rabin together.

When he heard the news of the assassination, Cumins got on the next available El Al flight – along with delegations from Jewish groups and New York's Mayor Ed Koch and Gov. George

Pataki. Cumins photographed the soldiers saluting the casket and each person who gave a eulogy – including a Rabin aide who read from the blood-stained speech found in the prime minister's jacket.

He had, only two weeks earlier, made a photo of Clinton and Leah Rabin laughing. As the ceremony ended, Cumins made one of the American president consoling her, now a widow.



Robert A. Cumins

Thanks to Laura E. Adkins, Rob Eshman, Mira Fox, PJ Grisar, Danielle Kaye, Lauren Markoe, Chana Pollack, Eliya Smith and Talya Zax for contributing to today's newsletter. You can reach the "Forwarding" team at editorial@forward.com.

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