

OUR COMMUNITY

Newsletter



Jewish Federation
OF ST. JOSEPH VALLEY

December 2023 - January 2024
Kislev-Tevet-Shevat 5784



Americans March for Israel

Miriam Dancziger Reflects on the Experience on Page 7

Photo credit: Chris Williams, Jewish Federations of North America

Minute With Moshe

A Match, a Candle and a Vision

Our tradition teaches us that just one mitzvah can change the world.

Mitzvot, doing good deeds, is the Divine assignment the Jewish People were given. Proverbs teaches, “A mitzvah is a candle, and the Torah is light.” Our sacred texts and the Rabbis’ teachings leave no doubt that the Jewish People are on a mission to bring light into the world.

Here at home, as we contemplate the promise of our Jewish future, the communal assignment is clear: in our mission to create a safe, secure, and sustainable community, we should look beyond the short-term solutions which would be analogous to lighting a match, taking delight in the fire’s flare, only for it to burn down and quickly die.

However, if we put the lighted match to the wick of a candle, the flame lives. With this longer-term idea in mind, we should be thinking about our collective future as we continue our community conversations this Hanukkah season and into 2024.

If one mitzvah—one candle, can illuminate the world, consider what our Jewish community can do to find common ground for a brighter future. During this Festival of Lights, the power of our collective light is a source of strength, knowing Jews in Michiana and worldwide are lighting candles.

In keeping with the theme of Hanukkah, I have eight community-building candles to light. Each candle offers inspiration for a brighter Jewish future. Each candle is a specific confidence-building measure to become our best selves and, yes, the best little Jewish community in America.



Together, these eight priorities will propel us forward—in our conversations and community planning.

CANDLE 1

Candle one is the Federation’s unwavering commitment to strengthening our community. We’re blessed to have a dedicated professional team at the Fed. See page 15 for staff listing and contact info. In serving our community, they are the light. Without them, the Federation’s lights would be turned off.

CANDLE 2

Candle two is you—our community partners and community members. Your support nurtures our community, builds resilience, and combats antisemitism and so much more. We need you. We are more robust and brighter together. If you haven’t done so, please give generously to the 2024 annual campaign by visiting TheJewishFed.org/2024

CANDLE 3

Candle three speaks to our security and safety. And, by extension, the programs we hold at the Fed. Safeguarding the Federation is of paramount importance to our mental and physical well-being. Equally important, a secure campus makes programming possible. Programming is the animating spirit of the Fed—the vital spark fueling our mission, vision, and values.

Look for new programming in the new year, including Sundays at the Fed. We are planning a wide assortment of activities for children, families, and adults on the first Sunday of January, February, and March. Stay tuned for more info as we bring our community center to life.

CANDLE 4

Candle four illuminates our strategic plan to meet our needs for today and tomorrow. The Federation’s strategic plan is a three-year community-building plan called Vision 2025. The development of this plan is shaped by three guiding principles.

1. Jewish unity. Like our Jewish obsession with light, the tremendous breadth, depth, and passionate commitment to “community” has long defined the Jewish People. Our goal is to reduce the amount of division in the community. We must find ways to connect across differences, make it easier for everyone to feel included, and create a strong sense of social equity

for people to embrace unity without uniformity.

2. Bayit chazak (creating a strong Fed house for a stronger community). A strong home requires a sturdy foundation with rooms that provide for the unique needs required by the household. The same is true for our community and our capacity-building efforts.

In my 2023 New Year’s message, I discussed developing a “university-like model for the Fed” to best serve our diverse community. A university concept is pluralistic and inclusive. It offers a platform for learning, exploration, and connection.

Building a mighty Jewish house also entails strategic decisions for financial viability. As we continue our internal discussions at our respective congregations with the potential of cross-pollinating into a more comprehensive community plan, it will be imperative to understand our individual and collective financial health and impact information. Considering that almost 90% of Fed donations come from Temple and Sinai members, I recently ran a report based on the 2023 campaign. Then, I filtered out people over 65 (as accurate as our records are). Here is the result:

- **2023 campaign dollars**
\$491,344
- **2023 campaign dollars without 65+**
\$167,559

Any commentary on this analysis strongly suggests that, given our aging demographic, we are stronger together and need to find creative ways to bring young Jewish people into our community.

3. Strong board governance, healthy staff culture, and data-informed decision-making. I cannot understate the value of these three endeavors relative to our twin goals of increasing the Federation’s mission impact and financial sustainability. Progress is being made in each of these areas. Earlier this month, we held a one-day board retreat. The professional team remains nimble, agile, and proactive, and we are developing better data collection systems, particularly in the programming area, to support decision-making.

CANDLE 5

The fifth candle is for a Federation campus that’s warm and welcoming—where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. Through its spatial and visual relationships,

the campus design will enable immersive experiences for all ages. In short, the business model for developing our campus is our map to the future.

The campus has changed little over the last 20 years. A meaningful way of “unfreezing” the status quo is to introduce choices. The introduction of a new choice awakens our evaluative judgment. That is, we can look at things with fresh eyes, including the:

SCULPTURE GARDEN

We have a new look at the “front door” of our campus. Coming up Shalom Way, the lawn in the circular drive is now the home for Temple’s Berman-Brenner Family Sculpture Garden, including George Rickey’s Two Open Triangles Up Gyratory IV.

MITZI CUNLIFFE SCULPTURE & PLAZA

This iconic piece of art was miraculously saved from the dumpster. It now has a conceptual rendering for its installation on the Fed campus. The renderings define an aesthetic space to enable an immersive experience within the proposed surrounds of the Mitzi Cunliffe sculpture and plaza that includes an outdoor natural amphitheater.

HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE GARDEN & EDUCATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

The Federation seeks grants to build this Educational Resource Center & Remembrance Garden. The timely, powerful messages of the Garden will support the vital work of the Federation’s

Holocaust Education Speakers Bureau, which provides Holocaust education in schools and at public events.

Holocaust education is inexorably tied to combating not just antisemitism but the growing waves of hate attacking communities across the country. By teaching the lessons of history and imparting how they resonate with the context of today’s world events, the Garden will become a community hub for discussion, events, and activities to help reverse the worrying trend of growing identity-based hate.

The rest of this article is continued on the next page.



Existing Space



Rendering



Rendering

TOP ROW: Grandmother & Granddaughter by Kirk Newman as seen in the Berman-Brenner Family Sculpture Garden at the Jewish Federation; Two Open Triangles Up Gyratory IV by George Rickey

MIDDLE: Existing space near picnic shelter; Rendering of proposed Mitzi Cunliffe sculpture & plaza

BOTTOM: Rendering of the Transcending Darkness segment of the Holocaust Remembrance Garden

CANDLE 6

Candle six is our ten-year master plan. Given the scope of planning, the consensus building, and the board and community input this initiative requires, I'll wait until a more appropriate time to provide an executive summary. Nonetheless, this is a critical candle that needs to be lit as this provides a comprehensive long-term vision for the community's development.

CANDLE 7

Succession planning is candle seven. When my term ends in March 2026, we'll need to ensure the organization has the right people in the right positions at the right time. For the good of our collective, may it be a present-day Jewish priority.

CANDLE 8

Candle eight is the story we'll write together. We're at the crossroads for

how we envision our Jewish future, as we grapple with declining membership, shrinking revenue, and leadership fatigue. I've heard the phrase, "As Temple and Sinai goes, so goes the Federation," given that close to 90% of Fed funding of our annual campaign comes from Temple and Sinai members.

The Fed stands ready to choose a coordinated path forward with our partners to ensure we can fulfill our mission as a communal resource for the Jewish community. In this sacred partnership, the Fed must meet the interconnected twin challenges of impact and sustainability to fulfill our mission as a communal resource for the Jewish community.

Reflecting on the Jewish tradition's deeply ingrained spiritual metaphor of light, I'm infused with hope and confidence. In looking ahead, we need to be

clear-eyed with an intelligent understanding of the multi-decade, long-term investment decisions we must make collectively as one community—including the possible structural changes that may be necessary for advancement towards a vibrant and brighter future.

As in the days of our past, may this month, and in the days ahead, usher in great miracles for our community. I believe in miracles. It begins with a vision, understanding organizational priorities, and how just one mitzvah can change the world.



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Upcoming Programs

Sunday Funday at the Jewish Federation coming this January

The Jewish Federation of St. Joseph Valley is delighted to invite you to our vibrant and diverse **Sunday Funday** at 11 AM on January 7, 2024 at the Jewish Federation. **This will be the first Sunday Funday in a 3-part series this winter.**

This upcoming gathering promises a delightful array of programs and activities that cater to every member of our community.

Chit Chat Café

A space buzzing with animated conversations and shared laughter awaits at our Chit Chat Café. Engage in meaningful dialogues, forge new connections, and strengthen existing bonds over delightful refreshments and engaging discussions.

Slice of Israeli Life with Omer Karavani

Embark on a cultural journey with the charismatic Omer Karavani as he offers a captivating glimpse into the diverse and rich tapestry of Israeli life. Discover the essence of Israeli traditions, flavors, and stories in an engaging session that promises to broaden horizons and deepen cultural appreciation.

Judy Sassler's Craft Corner

Let your creativity flourish under the guidance of Judy Sassler. Dive into a world of artistic expression and hands-on activities



as Judy leads us through a delightful crafting session, sparking imagination and fostering a sense of artistic fulfillment. This could be something kids may enjoy too!

Lesser-Known Figures in Jewish History with Rabbi Fred Nebel

Interested in Jewish history? Join Rabbi Fred Nebel as he unveils stories and insights about lesser-known figures who played remarkable roles. Discover the hidden gems of our history in an illuminating session led by Rabbi Nebel's expertise.

Planning the Federation's 80th Anniversary

Be part of history in the making as we chart the course for the upcoming 80th Anniversary celebration of The Jewish Federation of St. Joseph Valley. Your insights, ideas, and participation will shape the year that commemorates our rich legacy and paves the way for an even brighter future.

Israeli Style Kosher Lunch

Indulge in the flavors of Israel with a delightful lunch featuring samples of Israeli cuisine. Experience the delicious tastes and aromas that characterize this vibrant culinary tradition - SBK supervised.

FOR KIDS & FAMILIES

PJ Library's What is Tu B'Shevat?

Join us to learn more about Tu B'Shevat, the Jewish New Year for Trees, highlighting the significance of nature in our lives. As always, we'll share stories, crafts and snacks with our youngest friends!

Zoo to You by Potawatomi Zoo

The day continues with an adventure brought straight to our doorstep! Potawatomi Zoo's captivating Zoo to You program will bring a menagerie of fascinating creatures for an up-close encounter—an enriching experience for kids and adults alike.

Sunday Funday encapsulates the spirit of unity, learning, and joyous celebration. Mark your calendars and join us at 11 AM January 7th at the Jewish Federation for a day brimming with discovery, connection, and the vibrant tapestry of our community. **And be sure to join us again on Sunday, February 4th and Sunday, March 3rd.**

RSVP AT [THEJEWISHFED.ORG/](https://www.thejewishfed.org/) FUN AND LET US KNOW WHICH PROGRAMS YOU'RE INTERESTED IN.

Community Connections

The Power of Chanukah Lights

The joyous holiday of Chanukah celebrates the miraculous victory by a small band of Jews (Maccabees) over the entire Syrian-Greek armies. Strangely though, we don't really celebrate the military victory, but rather the finding of untainted olive oil that was used to light the Menorah in the Temple. A possible reason for this focus is that while one could always rationalize the victory and take credit for it, the miracle of the oil could only be credited to G-d.

As we all know, it was only enough to last for one night, but miraculously lasted for eight days, until a new shipment could be produced that would allow the Menorah to remain lit continuously. We celebrate the spiritual dimension of Judaism, spreading the increasing light of Torah, as is demonstrated as we increase a candle every night for eight nights. It can be seen as a symbol of hope, the proverbial "light at the end of a tunnel."

We are instructed to celebrate this holiday in a public manner so as to let people experience the victory of light over dark, good over evil. This is especially important since October 7th, when our world was rocked by the savage murders, violence, and kidnappings in Israel and the onslaught of antisemitism that has grown astronomically in the world at large. We have not experienced such an existential threat since the Holocaust! Yet we go on and get ready to bring light into the world as we light our menorahs.

In many places, South Bend included, a large menorah will be lit in the public square. Yet, in a small city in Canada – Moncton, New Brunswick – where only 160 Jews live, the mayor has decided, after 20 years of lighting the menorah in the City Hall, this year it will not happen due to the law of separation of Church and State, although the annual Christmas tree and manger scene, angels and other Christmas trappings, will all remain. While the Jewish community registered their complaint that they did not feel welcome as a result of this double standard, the mayor and her cabinet would not relent. I begin to wonder how long it will take before we are forbidden to openly share our religion here in the USA.

Since the Hamas massacre, we have seen increased antisemitism on our campuses,



Rabbi Nebel leads a Jewish History class for Forever Learning students this past month.

such as students chanting "From the River to the Sea, Palestine will be free," (otherwise known as the call for Israel's total destruction) as well as a call to kill every Jew wherever you find them. Many Jews have started to wonder where all of this is coming from and have started to explore what so many are trying to extinguish. That's where the Federation can be very helpful.

Baruch Hashem, we have the 613 mitzvot (commandments) which allow us to connect with the Ineffable in a multitude of ways. The commandments include laws of charity, business law, laws of interpersonal relationships, how to speak, eat, etc. There is something that can appeal and talk to everybody. Use the Federation to keep the fire burning!

If you want to help educate people about us, get involved with the Community Relations Council (CRC). The CRC goes into schools and churches and educates about the Holocaust, Israel, etc. They bring in speakers to let us know what is happening locally and around the world.

If you have young children, PJ Library is the address to check out. Every month, free books on Jewish subjects that are kid-friendly and age-appropriate are sent to your home, so that you can learn at your leisure with your kids. Additionally, there are programs that are run at the Federation specifically for this age group.

Our Shaliach program brings Israel into our backyard. Omer Karavani is our shaliach and runs SaBaBaH as well as other programs. He brings Israel alive and gives his personal perspective on what's really going on.

If you want to help local Jews, Jewish Family Services is the place to go. If someone needs to talk, hits a bump in the

financial road, or has anxiety about what's going on, they need only contact me. In addition, if I can't help, we have partners who are willing to step in. Mental health professionals as well as educational coaches have reached out to me asking if they can be of any service.

We also offer classes on Jewish history, thought, etc. and are willing to expand our offerings if there is interest. Check out our website, TheJewishFed.org and see what is offered. If you want something else, let us know.

As I wrote last month, what Hamas as well as all of our enemies have shown, is that they don't distinguish between Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, unaffiliated, etc. We are all just one body to them, namely Jews. Let's take their lesson to heart and continue to come together like never before! May our Chanukah lights continue to spread light into the world.

Finally, I would like to publicly thank Mike Krueger for his eight years of dedicated service to JFS as one of our main drivers. Mike was very quick to answer the call when I was trying to arrange rides for our clients and was always a pleasure to work with. As of December 31st, he has stated that he would like to retire. Mike will be sorely missed!

If anybody was thinking of volunteering as a driver, now is the time to apply. Please contact me ASAP and we can get the ball rolling. At this point, we have a light load, maybe three rides a month.

Have a happy and healthy Chanukah.



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The Case for Israel: Retelling the Story of Zionism

Part 1 in a Multi-Part Series Exploring the Missing Context in the Discourse Around Israel

While Israel is fighting a war for its survival against Hamas, Hezbollah, and their sponsors in Iran, there is another war being fought here in America. Especially on college campuses, this is an information war for the legitimacy of Israel

For more than two decades, the BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement has been working tirelessly on college campuses to demonize and delegitimize Israel and its right to exist. Today, we are witnessing the troubling results of this campaign.

This article will be Part 1 of several articles to help support this information campaign that we'll call: "The Case for Israel."

Ever since Israel declared independence in 1948, there has been a pervasive and dangerous myth in the Middle East that undermines any hope for peace. Israel's enemies claim that the Jewish state was created at the expense of the Arabs of Palestine in order to ease the conscience of the world over the tragedy of the Nazi Holocaust.

The modern version of this effort to delegitimize the Jewish state is the false accusation that Israel is, "a White European colonial settler society."

The myth—that Israel was born in sin—continues to fuel the fires of the conflict. It is behind the efforts to delegitimize Israel here in America. We must retell the story of Zionism for multiple reasons: to bring about peace, to support Israel in America, and to reaffirm Israel's right to exist.

It's important to remember that the area referred to geographically as Palestine had always been under control of larger Middle Eastern empires. Until the British took over in 1917 as a result of World War I, it had been controlled by the Ottoman Empire for 400 years. Britain's temporary control of Palestine was recognized by the League of Nations. In 1920, the British were given a "mandate" to bring the peoples of the area to independence.

After World War II, the British decided to turn the complex issue of Palestine over to the newly created United Nations. In 1947, the United Nations created a committee



The first group of pioneers in Gan Shmuel. In the background is the first courtyard wall and the first house built in 1896.

to investigate and recommend a solution for the future of Palestine. It was called the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine or UNSCOP, which had representatives from eleven countries.

While there is no doubt that the tragedy of the Holocaust had an influence on the members of UNSCOP, what they saw during their visit to Palestine in 1947 had a much more profound effect on their eventual decision to recommend partition. They saw a well-organized Jewish community that had already created the institutions necessary for an independent state.

What were those realities, and how were they created?

During the 50 years of intense Zionist activity prior to 1947, the Jewish community of Palestine had created Hebrew-speaking schools, Hebrew newspapers, Hebrew theatre, agriculture, industry, a health care system, and a Hebrew University in Jerusalem. None of these accomplishments were done overnight.

In 1897, Theodor Herzl created the Zionist organization. Beginning the difficult process of nation building, the organization's goal was to create a Jewish state in Palestine. And to be clear, Zionism was nothing less than the desire of the Jewish people, an indigenous people of the Middle East, to return to their ancient homeland in the Land of Israel. In fact, today more than half of the Jewish population of Israel is

comprised of families who never left the Middle East or North Africa.

Land that was legally purchased from Arab landowners by the Jewish National Fund—a creation of the Zionist organization—allowed for the building of Jewish cities and farms. This year we mark the 114th anniversary of the founding of Tel Aviv. Other Jewish cities like Rishon L'Zion, founded in 1882, even pre-date the Zionist movement.

Prior to the outbreak of World War II and the Nazi Holocaust, the Jewish population of Palestine already numbered 450,000. And by 1947, the Jewish population of Palestine was 630,000.

On November 29, 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted to accept the recommendation of UNSCOP and supported the partition of Palestine into two states: one Jewish and one Arab. By doing so, they were simply validating a reality that already existed.

On December 1, shortly after that historic vote, the London Times published an editorial that supported the decision of the United Nations with this powerful argument: "It is hard to see how the Arab world, still less the Arabs of Palestine, will suffer from what is mere recognition of an accomplished fact—the presence in Palestine of a compact, well-organized, and virtually autonomous Jewish community."

There is no doubt that when the United Nations voted on partition, they did so with

full knowledge that the Jewish people had earned the right to statehood through legal land purchases and the hard labor and sweat of Jewish pioneers.

It's also important to note that the land area of the Jewish state proposed under the U.N. Partition Plan was a miniscule 5,500 square miles. At least 70% of the land area assigned to Israel was desert and virtually empty of any population. Jerusalem was to be an international city administered by the U.N. By comparison, Indiana is 36,000 square miles.

Visit TheJewishFed.org/Map to see the U.N. Partition Plan.

As we know, the leadership of the Zionist movement and the Jewish community of Palestine accepted the decision of the United Nations with great joy and celebration. And they did so with full recognition that they need to share the land with their Arab neighbors. Tragically, the Arabs of Palestine and the Arab world, rejected the U.N. Partition Plan. In 1948, they launched the first war for the destruction of Israel.

Had the Arabs accepted the U.N. decision on partition, there would have never been an Arab-Israeli conflict; and today, the Palestinians would have been celebrating 75

years of independence.

Recognition of these fundamental facts by Israel's Palestinian neighbors and the Arab world will open the door to peace through the two-state solution. An understanding of this simple history lesson by anti-Israel students on American campuses would cause them to re-think the slogans they shout calling for the destruction of Israel.



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Nearly 300 thousand gather in Washington D.C. for the March for Israel on November 14, 2023.

Reflecting on the March for Israel in Washington D.C.

Miriam Dancziger attended the rally with a delegation from the Jewish Federation of Greater Indianapolis.

As I sit on the bus back to Indiana, I have so many thoughts and feelings about the rally in DC today. My biggest takeaway right now is how proud we Jews are to be Jewish. From the most observant to the least affiliated, we were all there together today, proclaiming our love of G-d, Israel, and the Jewish nation.

I have experienced a range of emotions this past month, from fear and despair to hope and empowerment. But today all I feel is pride. There were members of our holy tribe everywhere I turned. It was thrilling to learn how many distant cities from which people travelled, to chat with the attendees who stood near me, to be cheered by

Israelis in the Pentagon City mall for wearing a sweatshirt with a Magen David, and to stop at a rest stop and observe men praying Maariv.

I am grateful to the Jewish Federation of Greater Indianapolis for chartering the bus that allowed me to attend this momentous event. Jeff Linkon went out of his way to accommodate me and all of my fellow travelers. Thank you to all of my bus mates for befriending me and for allowing me to sanctify our trip by reciting Tefillas Haderech aloud. I hope this will be the beginning of a beautiful relationship. An extra thank you is owed to our friends who are not Jewish but support us in our time of need. We are grateful to have you on our side!

Perhaps the most meaningful part of my day was singing Acheinu with hundreds of thousands of my brothers and sisters.

I couldn't stop the tears as we all felt the pain of the hostages, their families, and the families of those who have been murdered. I pray that G-d sees our unity and accepts our prayers, and brings an end to this war and to all the pain we are suffering. G-d, look at your children setting aside their differences and bridging the gaps to help each other! We are all striving to come closer to You! G-d, when will our suffering be enough?

I would like to urge us all to push ourselves a tiny bit more, to try a tiny bit harder. It doesn't matter in what area. Do what you can. And then if you are able, do a tiny bit more. G-d sees all of our efforts, and this may be enough to bring the redemption.

Miriam Dancziger
Community Contributor

Letter to the Jewish Community of Michiana

A message from Karin Wasserman, Former Israeli Emissary from Jewish Michiana

I am writing to you on the 36th day of the war against the Hamas terrorist organization. I want to express my gratitude for you reaching out to me. I appreciate your love and support in these hard days.

On Shabbat morning, October 7th, my boyfriend Ran and I stayed at his parents' home in the center of Israel and woke up to the sound of sirens, like everyone else, at 6:30 AM. We initially thought it was a mistake and never imagined what was about to come.

October 7th will forever be a cursed day, marked by death and deep sadness.

Hamas chose to brutally murder children, babies, the elderly, men, and women. Non-Jews, including Arabs, Bedouins, and foreign workers, also fell victim. Over 1,200 people lost their lives in a single day, making it the most significant tragedy for the Jewish people since the Holocaust. Additionally, 240 people were kidnapped to the Gaza Strip, and currently, 38 children remain there, many orphaned and exposed to unimaginable trauma.

Ran, my boyfriend, joined reserve duty on the same day as an officer in the Artillery Corps, undertaking significant actions to help rescue lives. He is a staff officer in the Gaza division. Since that day, I've been filled with worry and shock. To preserve my soul, I decided to volunteer in various capacities. I couldn't sit in front of the news on TV and do nothing.

In times of crisis, the resilience of the Jewish people shines through. Numerous civil society organizations didn't wait for the government to act. They assisted with housing for residents around Gaza that got destroyed, organized donations of clothes, food, and other essentials for people and soldiers across Israel. Groups of protesters against judicial reform (like Brothers in Arms) quickly redirected their efforts to support the war needs, providing rides to soldiers in dangerous places, protecting villages and neighborhoods, aiding people during rocket attacks, and even rescuing animals and pets in the ruins.

Personally, I participated in collecting donations and assisted in clearing shelters

in my hometown of Haifa. I helped the elderly prepare their safe rooms and established an emergency special staff in my neighborhood, including a first aid team, fire aid, self-defense in shelters, and more. I also attended Nihum Avelim (condolence visits) for families who lost loved ones in this massacre.

The disaster impacted me not only at a national level but also on a personal level. I lost a friend. Ilan Moshe Yaacov, a friend of mine from university, was brutally killed in the dance party in Reim. He was a kind person who enjoyed life, worked with at-risk youth in Tel Aviv, and was a social activist. May his memory be a blessing.

Another friend of mine, Liron HaCohen, is a survivor of the massacre in Kfar Gaza. These are her words:

"I am hurt, and I am furious. During those terrible hours, my entire family was in Kfar Gaza. My husband and I spent 20 hours hiding in a room, while our dear and beloved were murdered, and their homes looted. They showed no mercy, sparing no one. Only death and murder in their eyes.

I am shouting out to you! Wake up! The senseless killing of innocent children, women, men, and elderly who have done no harm should shock every human being. My neighbors' house was set aflame along with them—parents and children. Fortunately, they survived, but the trauma will stay there forever. We waited in fear for them to get to us, with no way to defend ourselves. My husband's brother, Yahav Viner, was ruthlessly murdered after saving his wife and one-month-old daughter. All we ever wanted was peace, but instead, we received evil and violence. I shout the cry of the murdered and the cry of the kidnapped who are still in Gaza!"

I was worried for Liron and her family and I'm heartbroken at the thought of Shaya, Yahav's daughter, will never know her father.

My dear lovely community, I'm also worried about you and the rising wave of antisemitism in America and all over the world. I listened to the sermon of Rabbi Angela Buchdahl, the Rabbi of the Central Synagogue in Manhattan, for Rosh HaShanah eve just a few weeks before the disaster.

Rabbi Buchdahl compared the relationship between the Jewish American people to the Jewish people in Israel. She said:

"If we want to test whether the Jewish people is still one body, we must test how one hand responds to the suffering of the other. They said that in every crisis there is an opportunity, and I think that what happened showed, and reminded us, that we, all the Jewish people, are one body, one soul, and one nation. When one hand is suffering all the body feels that too. In my eyes, this is valuable and will create stronger connections in the next decades."

This war, coupled with the surge in antisemitic protests globally, brings us back to the fundamental Zionist principle—the right of the Jewish people to defend themselves—and live an independent life in the sovereign State of Israel. It is disheartening to witness protests against Israel and denial of the Hamas massacre. In these times, unity becomes paramount. We must stand together as one people.

I pray for better days and the return of the Israeli hostages in Gaza.

With love,

Karin Wasserman
Community Contributor



Karin Wasserman was shlichah to our community from 2017-19.

The Context War

Those of us defending Israel are facing a challenge. The problem is this: too many people in America are not getting the complete picture of what this war is all about.

I can tell you what it's not about. Our war is not with the Palestinian people. Our war is against Hamas and anyone else who thinks Israel does not have the right to exist.

Later in this article, I will give you ways you can help. But first, let me tell you about my life and how it has been affected by this ongoing war for the survival of Israel.

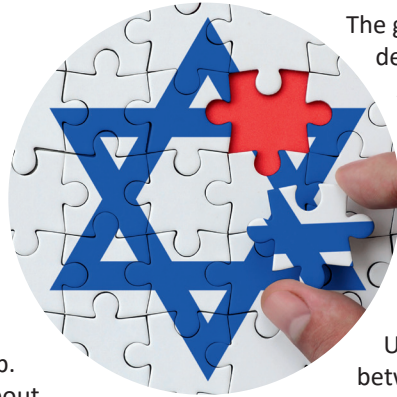
I grew up in Ashkelon which is 8 miles from the Gaza border. Rocket attacks from terrorists in Gaza targeting cities and towns around the border began in 2001. Since I was born in 2000, I grew up with rockets and sirens going on and off as part of my childhood and adult life. It is important to remember that for my first ten years, we did not have the Iron Dome. That only came about in 2011. The Iron Dome helps a lot for the safety of the people in Israel, but as you can see in this war right now, the Iron Dome is not perfect.

My first memories of these attacks are running to shelter as a family, at home or at school. Right now, I can tell you that even when I hear an ambulance siren here in the US, for a split second I am thinking about the nearest place to find shelter. Yes, it doesn't leave you that easily, and sometimes the PTSD can overcome the logical scenario, that this is an ambulance and there is no way I just heard an alarm going off.

In the big picture, let's remember that since I was born in 2000, my country has experienced 140 suicide bombings, more than 40,000 rockets from Gaza, and over 4,000 rockets from Hezbollah in the second Lebanon War in 2006.

Now, let me focus on how we need your help. Israel is facing false accusations from supporters of Hamas that are often repeated in the media. For example, one

false claim is that when Israel left Gaza in 2005, it turned it into an "open air prison." Based on this false claim, one would think that Hamas is simply fighting for the freedom of the people of Gaza. Nothing could be further from the truth.



The goal of Hamas is the destruction of Israel.

According to an article written by Bob Feferman, "When Israel left Gaza in 2005, there was an agreement signed between Israel, the Palestinian Authority, Egypt and the European Union on open borders between Gaza, Egypt and Israel.

Here was an opportunity for peace and prosperity for the people of Gaza. Everyone was happy with the agreement — except Hamas and their backers in Iran.

In 2007, Hamas took control of Gaza by violently expelling the Palestinian Authority. It then turned Gaza into an enemy territory by firing thousands of rockets at Israeli civilians and digging terror tunnels under the border.

Since 2007, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad have fired more than 30,000 rockets at Israeli civilians. That's why Israel put in place a naval blockade to prevent the smuggling of weapons into Gaza in 2007. And to be clear, this was a naval blockade and not a military siege, because everyday tons of food, clothing, medicine and humanitarian goods came into Gaza through the Israeli border crossings."

The other false accusation is that the Israeli army is intentionally targeting civilians. As an Israeli soldier, I am angered at this accusation.

I'll give you just one example. On October 18, when the Al-Ahli Baptist Hospital in Gaza was bombed, everyone claimed Israel was responsible and condemned Israel's action. But when it was discovered that it was actually a rocket from Islamic Jihad that failed and fell short, suddenly everyone was silent. Antisemitic? I will let you think for yourselves.

Furthermore, we need to address this question differently. Why is Israel bombing places full of people?

And if we decide to dig deep, literally, beneath those schools, hospitals, and homes, there are Hamas tunnels and Hamas members.

But wait, why would Hamas put its own people in risk and build their terror headquarters beneath those places?

If you ask this question, we are making progress. But if you think Hamas cares about the well-being of the Palestinians, you are completely wrong. Hamas has one main goal: the destruction of Israel. They are not hiding it and say it bright as day.

If they can use their own people as human shields to present to the world that Israel is bombing kids, that will be it.

We know for a fact that the IDF warns the civilians before they attack a terrorist nest, and we know from testimonies of civilians in Gaza that Hamas does not let them leave. Moreover, since 2005 more than 40,000 rockets were fired into Israeli territory. It's estimated that the cost of each rocket is between 300 to 800 dollars. Which means that the minimum amount of Hamas' luxury shopping trip costs between 12 million to 32 million dollars. I wonder what they could do with this amount of money to help their people, and we are not even calculating the amount of money Hamas spends on tunnels.

So, here is where we need your help. I am asking you to continue to ask and learn about the situation. This is an information war for the missing context not provided by the media. I urge you to look at the Israeli side of the story. You can look at the websites of Israeli English language newspapers, you can follow the posts of the Jewish Federation, follow Middle East experts, or you can simply ask me. And if I do not know the answer, I'll find it for you.

If you are active on social media, please share the articles Bob Feferman selects for our weekly The Missing Context email newsletter, which can also be found at TheJewishFed.org/MissingContext.



Omer Karavani

Israeli Emissary
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Life in Israel in Times of War

After making Aliyah to Israel from Michiana in August, Rebecca Clemans reflects on life in Israel post-October 7th.

On October 7th, 2023, Simchat Torah, our family went to bed celebrating Shabbat and awoke in a stupor around 6:30 am to alarms we didn't expect to hear, only six weeks into our Aliyah. We frantically yelled for our kids as they were jolted out of their sleep. We had 90 seconds to get out of bed and make it down four floors with six kids to the safe area of the lobby (our oldest was in a Mechina—a pre-military camp). We actually did make it down in time and finally met all our new neighbors in the bomb shelter. There were five families consisting of 11 adults & 17 kids, all packed in like sardines. Everyone spoke loudly in Hebrew about what was transpiring, and after five minutes I began asking even more loudly, "IN ENGLISH?!" Then they explained that there was an attack in the south, and the whole coast was being shelled by terrorists from Gaza. We were in the shelter approximately three hours that morning with 50 alarms (and multiple rockets with each one) throughout the day and into the evening. By the end of the day, more than 2,000 rockets rained down on Israeli civilians.

As the sirens blared on our second trip down, I noticed an elderly man with very blue eyes sitting in a wheelchair by his open door watching us all go down to the shelter. I asked, "Can we help you?" He said, "No, I'm old. Go." It was an awful feeling leaving him there. On the way back up to the apartment, we introduced ourselves. He said, "Finally! The Americans!" His name is Daniel and he made Aliyah forty years ago from New York. I introduced him to my younger children and said, "This is Daniel." And he responded affirmatively, "Grandpa. You can call me Grandpa." Such lovely words to hear in such an unpleasant situation. Thankfully, after two days, someone took him to a safer location.

As the day continued amidst consecutive sirens, we slowly started to regain some of our senses. Within three hours, parents brought games down to the shelter to play with their children in hopes of calming them down, even though we were all literally shaking on the inside. After the 15th round, one family brought a candy tray to be passed around because their teen

was celebrating his 16th birthday. So, we celebrated with him, putting on anxious smiles and congratulating him.

By midday, our neighbor in apartment 1 had the clarity to see a need to clean and "warm up" the bomb shelter. Over the course of the afternoon, we helped him remove the junk (it was being used for storage) and sweep the floor. He then brought multiple items from his sukkah. He covered the floor with a large, practically new, robin's-egg-colored vinyl tablecloth, set up a fan, arranged chairs, and hung decorations and lights, etc. At the end of the day, it was actually a little cozy, almost welcoming (especially compared to its original state). This made it feel a lot less traumatizing.

Over the next several days, we began getting to know our neighbors, as running to the shelter became "routine." One particular evening bombing, our neighbor managed to keep his four-year-old daughter asleep while hurrying into the safe room. Smiling at this accomplishment, he casually asked my husband, "So, how was your day?" As we all stood in our PJs waiting for the loud thud of the Iron Dome to dismantle the rocket(s). This, in and of itself, was our small win. This unusually casual exchange showed terror having less of a hold on us.

The next day, we heard there were reserves sleeping on concrete floors at a mall (which had been shut down that week) with not much food. Few people realized they were there. Then more soldiers started showing up in different areas as reserves flooded our town. Our entire community scrambled to help meet their needs. I asked Eldad, our real estate agent, while he was checking up on us—if he knew of a way to help feed them. He said he would check, and

he quickly got back to me. He told me if I could make warm food and have it ready by lunch, he would pick it up and deliver it to the soldiers. I grabbed everything I had on hand—potatoes, rice, quinoa, peppers, onions, and frozen green beans. I ran to all my neighbors asking if they could make a batch of something; and in two hours, we had food for a hundred reserves. For the next ten days, Eldad told me what the service men and women liked and needed, and I would see how much food we could make. At first it was hot food, then sandwiches and trail mix for on the go, then water, water, water.

One thing we noticed when homemade food was carried out to cars was that the trunks were filled with donations of chips, coke, and candy. The "food" tables at the stations were piled high with pastries and processed food. These boys are literally going to fight the fight of their lives and they are being fueled with this? So many of these soldiers look just like my teens. As parents, it made our stomachs turn to think of our oldest (who will be entering the army in the next six months) fighting a war with this diet. We have five sons and two daughters. When we see these young faces, we see our children. All of these soldiers are all of our boys and our girls, our family. All of these kids are making a sacrifice hoping that the next generation won't have to. So, it became our goal to make as much healthy food for them as we could.

Rebecca Clemans
Community Contributor

Read the rest of the article at TheJewishFed.org/Food and find out how you can help the Clemans family's efforts!



Members of the Clemans family delivered homemade meals to IDF soldiers.

Federation Book Club Reads Demon Copperhead by Barbara Kingsolver

We missed one of our members at our last Zoom gathering, but she wrote this: "In my opinion the book is masterfully written. Kingsolver uses the vernacular voice in a very credible way. It made for slower, careful reading to make sure I understood the meaning; but it made it that much more authentic. It also added another depth and reality to the opiate crisis. Very difficult to 'rise above your raising.'"

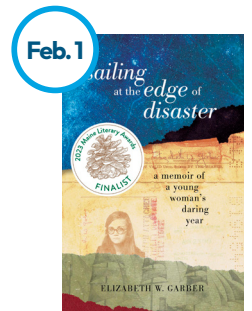
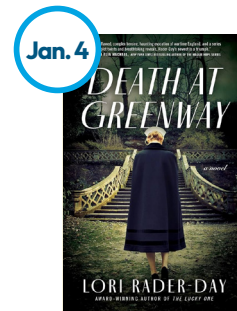
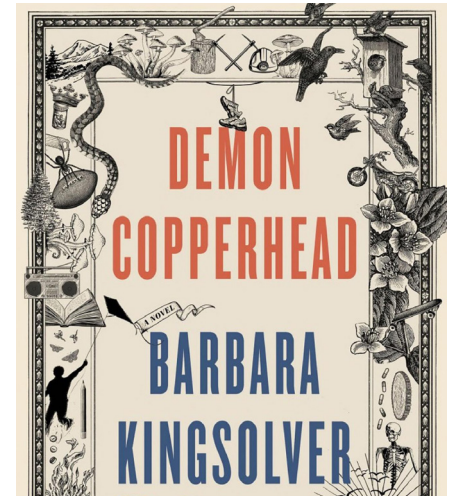
For those of you noticing the title's similarity to David Copperfield, you're right. It's deliberately a contemporary rendition of that Charles Dickens classic. Full of exaggerated characters, parallel plotlines, and similar names (such as Mr. Dick/Brother Dick, Mr. McCobb/Micawber, Agnes/Angus, Dora/Dori, and Tommy), one reader was grateful for having previously read the original since Demon Copperhead is a difficult book. Both reflect the timeless failure of social services for protecting those in foster homes. Taking advantage of

alcoholism (anyone remember Uriah Heep?) is the model for Demon Copperhead's ongoing theme of drug addiction starting in childhood.

Satisfyingly full of memorable characters and redemptive resolutions, one member pointed out that the novel "stretched out reality too far, making more of an allegory." Isn't that what Dickens did so well? She added that a well-depicted story taking place in Appalachia is "helpful for the country as a whole. We need to learn about pockets of the population different from ourselves."

Beth Buechler
Community Contributor

The Jewish Federation Book Club meets via Zoom at 4 PM on the first Thursdays of every month. If you're interested in joining or learning more about future titles on our list, please visit TheJewishFed.org/Books.



Upcoming Books (subject to change)

Ruthie Barton's Award-Winning Chili from Our Community Table

Greetings to our dear Our Community Table readers!

*We have a special treat for you this issue. Our community member and Federation board member, **Donna Barton Ayres**, who shares our love of recipes, cooking, and all things culinary, gifted us this month's article and recipe for her Aunt Ruthie's chili. I don't know about you all, but whenever I am in the mood to make chili, I always find myself searching for a new chili recipe to love. I just haven't found the perfect one yet. Perhaps this will be the one! Thank you, Donna!*

My aunt, Ruthie Barton, knew chili. And who doesn't love chili, especially on a crisp, cold day in the fall? In 1980, Ruthie's husband, Max, and her younger son, Todd, opened "Max's Hot Dog Restaurant in Tuscon. Max suggested they give out small freebie samples of chili based on Ruthie's mother's 1890 recipe. It was a great marketing idea since they were soon making up to 19 gallons a day to put onto hot dogs, into tortillas, or sending out as take-home orders for customers as far away as Chicago and New York. The restaurant was a hit for the year and a half it stayed open, ending because of Max's difficult

commute between Munster, Indiana, to Tuscon, Arizona.

See if you can improve on this easy but delicious recipe—add hot pepper jelly or jalapeños. Then send us your own version. In the meantime, make it yourself and top it with your favorite toppings!

As a side note, you may remember Ruthie's older son, our esteemed Jewish community member for many years here in South Bend. He is my first cousin, Doug Barton.

Donna Ayres
Community Contributor & Board Member



Ruthie Barton z"l

Ruthie Barton's Award-Winning Chili Recipe

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ½ lb. lean ground beef
- 2-3 (15 oz) cans of red kidney beans
- 1 onion
- 2 long pieces of celery
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 (28 oz) can tomatoes
- 2 tb chili powder
- ½ cup catsup

DIRECTIONS

1. Cut onion and celery into small pieces.
2. In a skillet brown the meat and add the onion and celery to cook.
3. Crush and then add the clove of crushed garlic and chili powder.
4. In a large pot cook the beans & tomatoes on low.
5. Add the catsup, then add the meat after pouring off the grease.
6. Cook 2 hours until thick. Add water to thin.
7. Put it on hot dogs, burgers or eat by itself!

Last month at the Jewish Federation



A Concert for Israel, in support of Beit Halochem, took place on Thursday, November 30 with community musicians pictured above: Rose Wollman, Anne Slovin & Dror Baitel. Visit TheJewishFed.org/Concert to watch the entire concert.



BEIT HALOCHEM USA/FIDV
Supporting Israel's Wounded Veterans



We're pleased to announce PJ Library at the Jewish Federation has two new professionals.

Judy Sassler has assumed the role of PJ Library event planner, making sure our kids and families have fun while learning about Jewish holidays & values, along with yummy crafts & snacks.

Meanwhile, Elliot Marino, our administrative assistant, makes sure our PJ families continue to receive their monthly books in the mail.

Shout out to Judy & Elliot for planning and executing a successful event last month—Little Children, Big Feeling, with special guest Ahuva Gurwitz from Hebrew Day School!



NEXTGen Young Adults (ages 21-45) had a successful Schmoozing by the Fire event with over twenty participants!

DECEMBER 2023 KISLEV-TEVET 5784

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SHA
					1 18 KISLEV 4:57 PM	2 19 KISLEV VAYISHLACH 5:57 PM
3 20 KISLEV	4 21 KISLEV MAHJONG 1:00 PM	5 22 KISLEV	6 23 KISLEV MAHJONG 1:00 PM	7 24 KISLEV DOWNTOWN CHANUKAH 5:00 PM	8 25 KISLEV 4:56 PM	9 26 KISLEV VAYESHAV 5:56 PM
10 27 KISLEV	11 28 KISLEV MAHJONG 1:00 PM	12 29 KISLEV	13 1 TEVET MAHJONG 1:00 PM	14 2 TEVET NEXTGEN VODKA & LATKES 7:00 PM	15 3 TEVET 4:57 PM	16 4 TEVET MIKETZ 5:58 PM
17 5 TEVET	18 6 TEVET MAHJONG 1:00 PM	19 7 TEVET	20 8 TEVET MAHJONG 1:00 PM	21 9 TEVET	22 10 TEVET FAST OF TEVET 6:39 AM-6:00 PM 5:00 PM	23 11 TEVET VAYIGASH 6:01 PM
24 12 TEVET	25 13 TEVET OFFICE CLOSED				29 17 TEVET SHI'SHUK 2:30 PM 5:04 PM	30 18 TEVET VAYECHI 6:05 PM

JANUARY 2024 TEVET-SHEVAT 5784

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SHA
31 19 TEVET	1 20 TEVET OFFICE CLOSED	2 21 TEVET	3 22 TEVET MAHJONG 1:00 PM	4 23 TEVET	5 24 TEVET 5:10 PM	6 25 TEVET SHMOT 6:12 PM
7 26 TEVET SUNDAY FUNDAY 11:00 AM-2:00 PM	8 27 TEVET MAHJONG 1:00 PM	9 28 TEVET SASSY CAKE DECORATING 1:00 PM	10 29 TEVET MAHJONG 1:00 PM	11 1 SHEVAT	12 2 SHEVAT 5:17 PM	13 3 SHEVAT VA'ERA 6:19 PM
14 4 SHEVAT SIMON FOUNDATION MOVIE NIGHT 3:30 PM	15 5 SHEVAT MAHJONG 1:00 PM	16 6 SHEVAT SASSY CAKE DECORATING 1:00 PM	17 7 SHEVAT MAHJONG 1:00 PM	18 8 SHEVAT	19 9 SHEVAT 5:25 PM	20 10 SHEVAT BO 6:27 PM
21 11 SHEVAT INTL. HOLOCAUST REMRANCE DAY PROGRAM 2:00 PM	22 12 SHEVAT MAHJONG 1:00 PM	23 13 SHEVAT SASSY CAKE DECORATING 1:00 PM	24 14 SHEVAT TU B'SHEVAT FRUIT CARVING 7:00 PM	25 15 SHEVAT TU B'SHEVAT	26 16 SHEVAT 5:34 PM	27 17 SHEVAT BESHALACH 6:36 PM
28 18 SHEVAT SABABAH 5:00 PM	29 19 SHEVAT MAHJONG 1:00 PM	30 20 SHEVAT SASSY CAKE DECORATING 1:00 PM	31 21 SHEVAT MAHJONG 1:00 PM			



Winter Camp Ideal is Almost Here

The second best part of the year is quickly approaching. Winter camp will be here soon and the counselors are eager to see you. We are excited to bring you some of the best parts of summer camp and be together again. We are planning to take two field trips and have tons of fun at the Federation during this winter break. Plus, we will be bringing back Shi'Shuk!



Thank you to our parents and community members who actively show support for our camp, campers, and counselors. We appreciate you, and will be excited to see you on Friday December 29th at 2:30 pm for Shi'Shuk. You won't want to miss out on these sweet treats.

Sound fun? Want more info? Visit our website at CampIdeal.com.

Abbee LaPlace

Director of Camp Ideal

Dear Fellow Progressive Jews of Michiana

This original date of this letter is October 15, 2023.

During the last several days, as we have watched horrors unfold in the Holy Land, we have also witnessed rifts emerge within our own communities. I do not write to advocate for one side or the other, but to remind us wars are not two-dimensional objects. If we insist on seeing the current conflict in absolute binary terms, then yes, those who identify with the Palestinians find themselves in a very uncomfortable basket with Hamas. At the same time, though, those who identify with Israel find themselves aligned with the most right-wing government in that nation's history. If we insist on viewing the situation without nuance, then each of us is guilty of looking the other way from an evil we would otherwise not abide.

Therefore, let us not judge one another based on the most unsavory connections we can find. Let us trust in one another to act from conscience and good faith. Let each of us take our positions and advocate for them with all our strength. But when the time comes that we can do no more convincing, let us remember we are still staring into the faces of our fellow Jews, part of one people, dedicated to the service of the One G-d. If baseless hatred can destroy the Second Temple, then surely it can destroy Judaism itself. Let that not be on our heads.

May the time come soon when all Israel, and all humanity, will know the consolation and security of G-d's sheltering peace.

Respectfully yours,

Rabbi Joshua Rubin

The Liberal Jewish Fellowship



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**Did we miss your birthday?
Or mistakenly list your name?**

**Let us know by emailing
steve@thejewishfed.org,
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You are worth celebrating!



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SUNDAY FUNDAY

SUNDAY, JANUARY 7 AT THE JEWISH FEDERATION

Join us from 11 AM-2 PM for a fun morning at the Jewish Federation with something for everyone! Coffee & conversation, ping pong, video games and so much more!

- 11 AM** Planning the Fed's 80th Anniversary
- 11 AM** PJ Library's What is Tu B'Shevat?
- 11:30 PM** Israeli Style Kosher Lunch
- 12 PM** Judy Sassler's Craft Corner
- 12 PM** Slice of Israeli Life w/ Omer Karavani
- 12:45 PM** Potawatomi Zoo to You
- 12:45 PM** Jewish History w/ Rabbi Nebel



Visit TheJewishFed.org/Fun to RSVP

Sassy CAKE DECORATING WITH JUDY SASSLER



Starting Tuesday, January 9 at 1:00 PM for four weeks at the Jewish Federation

Register at TheJewishFed.org/Sassy.
\$100 for 4 classes - take home what you make!
Space is limited to first 8 registrants!

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Sunday,
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MORE INFO
COMING SOON



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