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300x250
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JTA
The University of Chicago was just given the largest private collection of antique Haggadahs. Here are a few of them.

BY GARY FREEMAN  
Wednesday, March 21, 2023, 10:00 AM

The works in this collection are written in 11 languages, “from medieval Italian, Hebrew and Yiddish to Modern Hebrew, Arabic and Judeo-E.,” spoken by the Jewish community in the once-Caucasian mountains,” according to Chicago News.

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Queen Esther’s Story Means More to Me After Coming Out

I used to feel shame about not telling my parents sooner, until the Megillah taught me that hiding a secret isn’t evil or a lie if it is necessary.

by Avital Asteoune
March 14, 2022

Esther was beautiful, brave and wise. That’s how we learned about her in Hebrew school during readings of the Megillah during Purim. Her story resonated with me across my life. Her very name, we learned, was the name of my grandmother, evoked respect, wisdom and a deep love. I dreamt every Purim in a white and gold henna as my grandmother perched on a throne in my room. She was everywhere, the role model I didn’t know I needed to emulate every year.

Esther was also a risk taker. She hid her identity as a Jewish woman from her husband, King Ahasuerus of Persia. Purposefully. Yet, every Purim, we all gather to celebrate her and her uncle Mordechai and finally her Hanan, the man who would know all the Jewish people in Persia killed over an incident 10 years ago. After King Ahasuerus’ purchase of Vashti, was killed for “disobeying” her husband’s command to attend a banquet in her husband’s court, the king searched the land for a new queen. Esther was chosen for her beauty, and she boldly brought herself as a person to be treated with the nation’s welfare.

My fear around coming out was rooted in a lifelong training that being queer was wrong, predatory, abnormal. Still, in our family, not to see our religious, not to see ourselves. I thought I could change myself, overcome myself, become myself, but eventually, I realized that not only was it necessary to act on or explore who I am, I was afraid of my partner. I realized I couldn’t ignore it anymore, couldn’t pretend that being his loose that I could make everyone happy by marrying a man.

I first came out to my parents, especially. I think as queer people, we are told that the outcome of our coming out will be one of two options: rejection or acceptance, or rejection to the deepest degree. No one prepares you for the other option available. My dad was on his tablet and asked if that meant I was still interested in boys. I said yes, but reminded him that it is also normal I might end up with someone who wants a man. My heart was pounding, my voice was shaking. I said something I want ready to say. Working on, when I told him I was dating someone who wants a man, it’s his family, you’re “Is the bigger than you?”

My mom, on the other hand, was more laid back. The several times between then had my head spinning. She demanded to know why I lied. How she never expected me to be a baby. That she saw me successful, feeling things in order to get what I want, feeling things, didn’t have the same explanation as her. She thought she was doing something good, but now, looking back, I look back and think I want it too.

The decision on what to do with the story was discussed, the decisions of the day in feminism and gender, the racial movements shown on me at the Hillel table. “We’re not going back from Brown.” I’m pulling her out.” Nothing I could say changed the severity of my pain. How do you communicate a lifetime’s worth of conditioning in one conversation?
several difficult conversations about our vastly different religious practices.

When we met, I was approaching 30 and had begun to lose all hope of even finding a nice Jewish guy on the streets (and ads) of New York City. But then, one day, Josh’s picture appeared on a dating site called Coffee Meets Bagel, a dating app that uses an algorithm to match people who are in the same social network but have not met — kind of a tech equivalent of the local matchmaker in the Old Country.

Josh checked all the boxes: Jewish, Ivy League-educated, and, most importantly, dorky, normal. He also had a very kind smile and his profile was embedded with his character hist figures.

On our second date, Josh took me to an Italian
I'm a Nonbinary Person. Can I Still Be a Jewish Mother?

By Shelly Ze Stein

Mar 31, 2023

Every now and then, a conversation crops up about the ways in which the eldest daughter – the eldest female assigned child in a family, even if there are older brothers – can be considered to overindex gender. That’s because, regardless of gender identity, something about the way eldest daughters are socialized and the roles they take on in a family just sticks.

“Your gender can change but eldest daughter somehow is forever,” was Twitter user snoop.

“She’s my eldest daughter. I sometimes come across as a gender non-conformist,” another user wrote, to which another replied, “Consistently feel like I’m trans, then realised I had nothing to do with binary norms. It’s just the manner of eldest daughters.” (Which is sort of.)

As a nonbinary person who doesn’t present androgynously, I spend a lot of time thinking about gender, and how it connects to our identity and the way we move through the world. It’s the oldest of two, and my sister and I have joined – mostly secretly – that I played a role in by including her. I strongly believe that being an eldest daughter is a unique experience, and therefore I have no problem calling myself eldest daughter while still maintaining my nonbinary identity.

And yet, when it came to our least last December, I found myself surprisingly uncomfortable with taking on the moniker of “Jewish mother.” Considering that I’m Jewish and that I’ve spent the majority of my life identifying as a non-binary woman, I realized that not every second grader would be familiar with the label “Jewish mother.”

Jewish culture, and Judaism in general, relies on genderless language concepts, and archetypes to help create community stories and experiences. From Hebrews being an explicit genderless language, to the differences in gendered obligations to perform certain rituals, to the way we know exactly who someone means when they call. About a “nice Jewish boy” connecting to Jewish spaces and stories requires an engagement with gender.

That engagement doesn’t have to be performative or binary. Publicly identifying as a non-binary person is, and should be, a radical act in how it requires institutions and individuals to rethink with their own understandings of gender, and how it
Pavlova With Fresh Berries Recipe

This stunning dessert tastes as good as it looks.

By: Leo Waldman | March 15, 2023

728x90
970x250

This dessert is both simple, and elegant. Pavlovas are delicious all year, but are particularly impressive during Passover. You can serve it with whatever fresh fruit you prefer.

Watch Leo make the dish below:

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A new Instagram account tells the story of New Yorker Judith Kaplan, America's first-ever bat mitzvah

By Joel Beinin

February 22, 2013, 11:01 PM

The Instagram account @judithkaplan1922 was created to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Judith Kaplan's bat mitzvah, the first ever in America.
Why Some Holidays Last Longer Outside Israel

Israeli and liberal Jews observe fewer days for some holidays than traditional Diaspora Jews.

By:общеilen, 7/15

In the Torah, major Jewish holidays are shorter than most traditional Jewish holidays celebrate now. So we read, “Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread!” (Exodus 12:15). And celebrate eight days of Passover. The festivals of Shabbat, Yom Kippur, Yom Ha’atzma’ut, and Shavuot are listed as single days in the Torah.

How did Diaspora practice diverge from the Torah’s instructions? The answer lies in our history, during the time of transitions from biblical to rabbinic Judaism around the beginning of the common era.

Addressing Confusion Over the Start of the New Month

The Jewish calendar is lunar. Over 2,000 years ago, a council of rabbis from the Sanhedrin, the ancient legislative and judicial body, held special sessions in Jerusalem at the end of each lunar month to receive witness to the first sign of the new moon. Because a lunar cycle is approximately 29 days long, it was no mystery when the new moon should appear, but the Sanhedrin still declared months and holidays only on the basis of those witnesses. To encourage ordinary people to take the time to come and testify, the witnesses were fed and honored. The rabbis questioned every witness for credibility.

Where did you see the new moon? Was it before or after sunrise? Was it to the north or the south? How high was it? How high was it in the sky? Which way was it illuminated? (Niddah 2a).

Once the sighting was legitimized, the rabbis declared the new day Rosh Hashanah, the beginning of the new month. Originally, beacon fires were set on mountaintops to spread the word to distant Jewish communities, smoke rising in the sky and puffs of smoke clearing the cloud.