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- COVER STORY
- LOCAL
- WORLD
- FOCUS ON ISSUES
- OPINION
- CALENDARS
- ARTS&LEISURE
- PHOTO GALLERY
- COMMUNITY
- LIFECYCLE
- AUDIO/VIDEO
- BLOGS
- SPECIALS
- D'VAR TORAH
- HOLIDAY
- SPORTS
- ROCKLAND
- LAST WORD
- ARCHIVES

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MOST POPULAR

Bayonne graduate spotlighted in Israel government film

Abigail Klein Leichman • Local | World
Published: 15 February 2013

JERUSALEM — Michael Faivush of Bayonne, 24, didn't come to Israel to be a movie star. He came to take part in Israel Government Fellows, a professional internship program for young adults from overseas. He is in the middle of a 10-month stint with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' Jewish Communities Department and its Department for Combating Antisemitism. But Faivush was put in front of the camera for a short promotional film about the program, which will be posted on its website, www.igf.org.il.

"It's meant for perspective applicants, and it showed some glimpses of our experiences," Faivush said.



Government Fellow Michael Faivush in front of Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

For his internship, Faivush, who graduated from Bayonne High School and New Jersey City University, was assigned two main tasks: planning this summer's Young Jewish Leaders Diplomatic Seminar and coordinating the fourth international Global Forum for Combating Antisemitism. Both will take place in Jerusalem while he is still in town. He is being mentored by Ami Mehl, a former Israeli ambassador to Uzbekistan.

Until participating in a Birthright trip two summers ago, Faivush never had visited Israel. He was raised in an affiliated Reform household; his grandparents were founders of Temple Beth Am and his mother at one time served as its president. "I was engaged with the Jewish community but not so much with Israel," Faivush said. "Birthright gave me the motivation to come back."

It was a Birthright mailing that brought him to an Israel conference in New York, where he learned about the IGF through MASA Israel Journey, a Jewish Agency- and government-supported clearinghouse for gap-year, study-abroad, post-college, and volunteer programs in Israel for young Jewish adults. "I spoke to someone at the IGF, and it interested me, so I applied for it and got it," said Faivush, a psychology major with double minors in philosophy, religion, and international studies. Faivush dorns with 21 other fellows in the International Student Village at the Hebrew University Mount Scopus campus in Jerusalem.

"I feel positive about Israel now," he said. "The relationship has grown and matured from living here. I'm somewhat in a bubble, because everyone speaks English to me and I live in a student village. But it's as close I can get to real Israeli life, and I am taking a lot in, so it's changing my relationship with Israel."

The film in which he is featured also turns the spotlight on fellows from Russia, Canada, and the United States as they speak about their experience working at the heart of government.

Established in 2007, the IGF program is based in the Menachem Begin Heritage Center, bringing to life the former prime minister's vision of strengthening connections between the diaspora and Israel. Fellows join the program after graduating college or a few years later, after spending some time working in their field.

"Most countries are not rushing to bring foreign nationals into key ministries," the IGF's program director, Paul Gross, said. "However, we believe that one way to connect diaspora Jews with Israel is to provide them with the opportunity to be involved with the decisions being made at the highest level in Israel."

For Faivush, the program has provided "a chance to examine Jewish identity in a Jewish society. It's very different than the Jewish identity we know in New York and New Jersey.

"Being around Jews nonstop impacts the way you view what it means to be Jewish. It gives you a fuller Jewish connection," he said.

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Baum forges forward RCBC head works to keep it kosher on the plate and between Jews

Marla Cohen • 1 March 2013
Local

Rabbi Shalom Baum of Congregation Keter Torah in Teaneck assumed the presidency of the Rabbinical Council of Bergen County a little more than 18 months ago. During that time, he has built on efforts of his predecessors, especially in working with the more liberally observant rabbis of the community.

His efforts have not gone unnoticed. Observers who are familiar with the organization, which provides kashrut supervision to more than 60 area restaurants, say that Baum's understated professionalism and willingness to listen has allowed him to further the relatively recent moves toward rapprochement between the Orthodox RCBC and the New Jersey Board of Rabbis, which includes 35 members from the area's Conservative, Reconstructionist, Reform, and Renewal streams.

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Curing children with cancer Dr. Michael Harris of Tomorrows Children's Institute looks back on a 40-year career

Abigail Klein Leichman • 1 March 2013
Local

After more than 40 years of treating children with life-threatening illness, Tomorrows Children's Institute director, Dr. Michael B. Harris, says his secret weapon against burnout is his patients and their parents.

"I became a pediatric hematologist-oncologist because when I started my residency at Children's Hospital in Philadelphia [in 1970], I felt that these children and parents were the most courageous people anywhere on earth," said Harris, who at 69 has no plan to retire as chief of pediatric hematology-oncology at the Joseph M. Sanzari Children's Hospital at Hackensack University Medical Center.

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Finding a Jewish future around the world Local YU undergrads travel to underserved communities during winter break

Abigail Klein Leichman • 31 January 2013
Local

In Nicaragua, Texas, and Israel, several local Yeshiva University undergrads used their winter intersession to discover new things about the world and about themselves.

The university's Center for the Jewish Future offered four 10-day service learning trips to YU and Stern College undergraduates over the January semester break: Teaching English and self-exploration through art to Israeli teens in Kiryat Malachi, Dimona, and Jerusalem; meeting Jewish communal leaders in Dallas, San Antonio, and Houston; and two humanitarian missions in one Mexican Mayan community and the other in Nicaragua.

Sam Weinstein of Teaneck, a sophomore who is majoring in accounting, was one of 39 YU students running programs for about 450 Israeli teenagers from underprivileged Israeli neighborhoods. In Kiryat Malachi, he learned about some of the issues facing Ethiopian immigrants.

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RECENTLY ADDED

Fourth synagogue targeted Latest attack was most dangerous yet

Larry Yudelson • 11 January 2012
Local

A firebomb attack on a synagogue in Rutherford is being investigated as an attempted homicide and a hate crime, Bergen County Prosecutor John Molinelli announced on Wednesday.

"You're looking at 40 to 50 years in prison," said Molinelli, addressing the "person or persons who are doing this act" at a Wednesday afternoon press conference.

"Turn yourself in and end this now," he said. "We will ultimately solve this crime and make arrests."



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Around 4:30 a.m. Wednesday morning, several Molotov cocktails were thrown at Congregation Beth El, an Orthodox synagogue on a quiet residential street in Rutherford. One entered the second floor bedroom of the congregation's rabbi, Nossou Schuman, and ignited his bedspread.

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Weiner quits Congress, apologizes for 'personal mistakes'

16 June 2011
World

WASHINGTON (JTA) -- Rep. Anthony Weiner resigned and apologized in the wake of a scandal in which he lied about sexually explicit exchanges on social media outlets.

"I am here today to apologize for the personal mistakes I have made and the embarrassment that I have caused," Weiner (D-N.Y.) said at a news conference Thursday at a home for the elderly in Brooklyn where in the past he has announced his intention to run for office.

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From praise to anger, Jewish response to Obama's speech runs the gamut

Ron Kampeas • 20 May 2011
World

WASHINGTON -- From accolades like "compelling" to accusations like "Auschwitz borders" to radio silence, to label the Jewish response to President Obama's speech on Middle East policy as diverse understates matters.

The very breadth of the Middle East policy speech — 5,600 words and covering the entire Middle East and decades of history — helps explain the wildly divergent responses from Jewish groups and opinion shapers, even among some who are otherwise often on the same page.

One could as easily pick out points for Israel — slamming the Palestinian Authority's pact with Hamas as well as its bid for unilateral statehood — as one could the demerits — for many, the most explicit endorsement of the pre-1967 lines as the basis for future borders by any American president.

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March 2013						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

- Cover Story
- Local
- World
- Focus on Issues
- Opinion
- Calendars
- Arts&Leisure
- Photo Gallery
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