

Forward

2020 ANNUAL REPORT



FORGING



A PATH



FORWARD



A message from our CEO & Publisher, and Board Chair

Dear Friends,

Unprecedented. Historic. Relentless. Cliches aside – 2020 was truly a year like no other.

It was a year full of news: A once-in-a-lifetime pandemic. An overdue racial reckoning. A consequential and controversial election. Our staff had no shortage of material to work with, but they also had to do it from their own homes—without in-person office meetings, and without on-the-ground reporting.

But the Forward was ready for 2020. We were deep into our digital reinvention, ready to meet our readers where they were this past year—online. Jodi Rudoren had recently joined as Editor-in-Chief, and one of the first things we did together was articulate the Forward's vision, mission, and values. We focused on our vision of supporting **a vibrant, connected global Jewish community** informed by our shared history and committed to justice, compassion, truth, and our collective responsibility to bridge divides. We honed in on our mission of **reporting on cultural, social, and political issues that matter to readers of all ages**, to lead us to a deeper understanding of what it means to be Jewish in the 21st century. We centered our values of **integrity, courage, independence, accountability, and yiddishkeit.**

With those in hand, we set out to better serve our readers. We reviewed and improved many of our editorial features, newsletters, and digital publishing tools and made plans for even bigger things in 2020. **Then COVID happened.**

Like most, we were forced to recalibrate. **We rose to the occasion in ways we never had before.** Our vision, mission, and values resonated front and center in the midst of the pandemic and social upheaval. **Throughout it all, our journalists published more than ever, keeping you informed and connected with breaking news, first-person narratives, community-focused stories, and virtual conversations with leading experts.**

Our values continued to guide us as our leadership, board, and staff committed to ensuring that the Forward's workplace, governance, and especially our coverage, are fully inclusive, reflecting our multiracial and multicultural Jewish communities.

We reached incredible new milestones in 2020. In 2019, an average of 1.5 million readers turned to the Forward each month. In August this year, we ***doubled*** that—with a staggering 3 million readers that month alone! 4,000 individuals supported us

financially, thanking us for connecting them with critical information and inspiration this year, a 56% growth from 2019.

We are incredibly proud of our board for steering this legacy organization to a place where our staff could immediately and comprehensively support our community through this challenging year. We are indebted to our supporters and to our readers and look forward to better times together.

Thank you and zayt gezunt,
Rachel & Alan





Rachel Fishman Feddersen
CEO & Publisher



Alan Silberstein
Board Chair

Mission, Vision, Values

Our Mission, Vision and Values inform everything we do at the Forward and we hope it will deepen your understanding of why our brand of journalism matters so much to the Jewish community, the American public and our precious democracy.

Mission

The Forward is the most significant Jewish voice in American journalism. Our outstanding reporting on cultural, social and political issues inspires readers of all ages and animates conversation across generations and different segments of our community. Our English and Yiddish platforms build on a century-old legacy maintained in our archives and lead to a deeper understanding of what it means to be Jewish in the 21st century.

Vision

The Forward envisions a vibrant, connected global Jewish community informed by our shared history and committed to justice, compassion, truth and our collective responsibility to bridge our divides.

Values

Integrity: We provide fair and full reporting in the highest tradition of public-service journalism, a cornerstone of resilient democracy. Through our work, we help build the foundation for a just, open, pluralistic society.

Courage: We pursue the truth wherever it takes us, delivering the news, investigations, narrative storytelling, and commentary that our community needs and deserves.

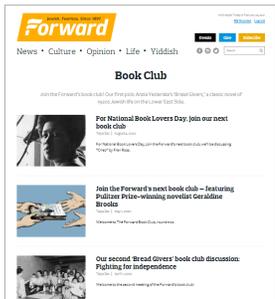
Independence: As a nonprofit supported by our readers and a broad array of philanthropies, we are not beholden to any individual, institution or ideology. We are always relevant but also irreverent, challenging conventional wisdom in respectful ways as we showcase the full spectrum of voices shaping our experience.

Accountability: Through rigorous, even-handed journalism, we hold leaders accountable to the people and communities they serve. At the same time, we believe we must continuously earn the public's trust by delivering on promises, operating with empathy, and upholding our core values.

Yiddishkeit: We revel in the richness of our culture and history, providing a smorgasbord of art and politics, argument and understanding. We also share our rich Yiddish heritage, promoting it as a living treasure for future generations. Sharing stories, in English and Yiddish, of the diverse ways Jews of all backgrounds—and our neighbors—live and think and celebrate and mourn enhances our human connections. Ours is a particularly Jewish-American way of looking at the world: contrarian, cosmopolitan, fiercely intelligent and wickedly funny.

COVID Impact

When COVID-19 changed life as we know it, the Forward immediately renewed our commitment to serving the community with critically important journalism, and fostering connection to each other.



We published more news than ever

The Forward has been reporting on the pandemic since New Rochelle's Jewish community was rocked in March 2020. During this time of crisis, we created a revitalized obituary section and reintroduced our Scribe platform to showcase community voices. And when our readers needed it most, we lifted the paywall on our coronavirus coverage to make sure information was available as widely as possible.

We cultivated community connection

Over 22,000 people joined our vibrant, informative, and inspirational "live journalism" Zoom events. Our journalists have covered a wide range of topics, including antisemitism, racial justice, Yiddish culture, and Jewish food, fostering connections between our audience members and their community.

The Forward Book Club, launched last spring, offered another way for our readers to connect to one another. Hundreds of people from across the country have joined to discuss books including James McBride's "The Color of Water" and Geraldine Brooks' "People of the Book."



We expanded our reach

Our new national expansion, spearheaded by Rob Eshman, ensures more members of our community across the country feel connected. This has proven to be particularly valuable during a fraught year – we published more than 220 articles spanning 24 cities and held a series of discussions, *Forward Forums: Local Perspectives on National Issues*, taking on community-specific topics.



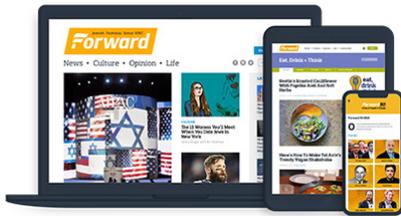
By The Numbers

Forward.com

1.9M

Average visitors/month

↑ 30% year over year



30% of our readers are under 35



Newsletter Subscribers

↑ 66%

Yiddish Site

פֿאַרװערטס

673
Original articles

115
Yiddish Word of the Day videos

650,000+ Yiddish Word of the Day views

YouTube Channel Subscribers ↑ 41%

Yiddish Twitter Followers ↑ 15%

Social

↑ 35% Instagram Followers

101,492 Facebook Followers

Awards



9 Rockower Awards American Jewish Press Association



2 Society for Features Journalism Awards



1 Deadline Club Award

Zoom Events

36
Zoom events

22,067
People registered for events



Fundraising

Online gifts ↑ 198%

Number of Donors ↑ 56%

Donors who increased their giving this year ↑ 38%

Leading Stories

The Forward is particularly proud of our outstanding reporting in 2020 – breaking news, inspiring stories, exclusive investigative pieces, in-depth cultural features, and a wide range of opinions across the Jewish spectrum.



“Unorthodox” is a dangerous, misleading fairy tale of transitioning from the secular world

April 28, 2020 | By Frieda Vizel

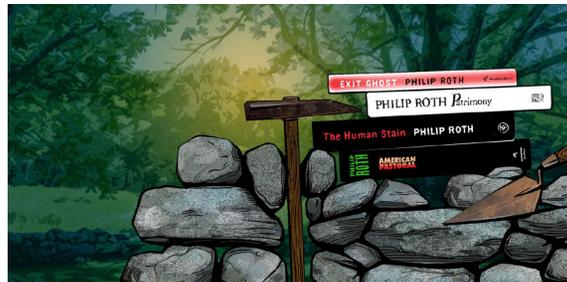
Frieda Vizel, a former member of the Satmar community in Kiryas Joel, wants people to know that the journey out of her insular Hasidic community was not as easy or romantic as Esti’s in “Unorthodox.”



The monumental effort of translating ‘Harry Potter’ into Yiddish

February 6, 2020 | By Jordan Kutzik

Arun Viswanath, of the Schaechter Yiddish dynasty, takes on translating the bestselling Harry Potter series.



Philip Roth doesn’t live here anymore: A writer, a stonemason, an American friendship

May 17, 2020 | By Talya Zax

Talya spent months carefully reporting with patience and insight on the caretaker of Philip Roth’s property. A Columbia Journalism professor commented that it was a “truly wonderful piece filled with insight, humor and a real sense of Roth’s inner life.”



Orthodox Jews are donating plasma by the thousands to fight COVID-19

April 22, 2020 | By Ari Feldman

What began as a one-man volunteer effort by Chaim Lebovits to connect post-COVID Jews with New York-area hospitals to donate plasma has now become a broad coalition amongst the Orthodox community.



A prophet in his own city: Jacob Kornbluh, the Hasidic reporter standing up for social-distancing

May 25, 2020 | By Avital Chizhik-Goldschmidt

Jacob Kornbluh, a Hasidic Jew and the Forward’s new Senior Political Reporter, is devoted to increasing awareness and preventing the spread of COVID-19 within his community. But instead of cooperation, Kornbluh has been labeled a “*muser*,” or traitor.



Editorial | What James Bennet taught me about terrorism – and courage

June 15, 2020 | By Jodi Rudoren

Facing backlash for tweets on the looting and violence in the early days of the George Floyd protests, former Opinion editor of the New York Times, James Bennet, resigns from his position. The Forward's Editor-in-Chief offers an alternative perspective.



The 16 customers you'll meet at the Zabar's lox counter

July 11, 2020 | By Len Berk

The Crasher, the Spotter, the Player and the Kid. Len Berk, a fixture of the iconic Zabar's lox counter for over 26 years, describes the 16 customers you'll meet while waiting for your order.



I'm a Black rabbi. I've never been in a Jewish space where I wasn't questioned

June, 2020 | By Sandra Lawson

Rabbi Sandra Lawson converted to Judaism out of pure love for the religion. What she didn't expect was the regular racism, ignorance, and marginalization she faces as a Black female rabbi from her community.



As the corona crisis continues, our kids could use some Tchaikovsky

August 7, 2020 | By Rukhl Schaechter

In times of crisis, a grandmother knows best. Rukhl Schaechter, Editor of the Forverts and beloved grandparent, shares how classical music can give solace to anyone during a time like this, even a three year old.



Bintel Brief Revival

From its creation in 1906, A Bintel Brief was a pillar of the Forward. As one of the first advice columns in the United States, the letters described the tribulations experienced by the Eastern European immigrants in their adjustment to life in a new land. This year, we revived the column to help readers navigate the complexity of being Jewish in the 21st century by answering questions that ranged from parenting a toddler, to why God created the pandemic, to splitting chores between spouses.



'They are bullies' – rabbi who confronted Mark and Patricia McCloskey speaks out

August 24, 2020 | By Rob Eshman

Amid the Black Lives Matter protests, the world was horrified by photos of St. Louis residents Mark and Patricia McCloskey brandishing guns at peaceful protesters. Rabbi Susan Talve of St. Louis speaks about her experiences of being a neighbor to the couple.



Would Tevye vote for Trump or Biden? 25 fictional Jews weigh in.

September 13, 2020 | By PJ Grisar

Fran Fine, Toby Ziegler, and Krusty the Klown. PJ Grisar answers the pressing question of who our favorite Jewish characters would vote for in the 2020 presidential election.



Debate | Is Trump good or bad for the Jews?

October 28, 2020 | By Eli Steinberg and Joel Swanson

We asked two of our writers, Eli Steinberg and Joel Swanson, to debate an essential question plaguing our community: Is President Trump good for the Jews?



The frustration, hope and diversity of Minneapolis' Black Jews

August 15, 2020 | By Ari Feldman

To many white Minnesotans, the city of Minneapolis represented a progressive paradise. But in the wake of George Floyd's murder, the systemic racism plaguing the city is coming to light, and Minneapolis' Black Jews are holding their Jewish community accountable.



Colleges express outrage about anti-Semitism— but fail to report it as a crime

August 17, 2020 | By Aiden Pink

Antisemitism is on the rise in the United States - so why are American colleges claiming to be exempt from these hate crimes? Aiden Pink explores the murky Department of Education guidelines.



Does God punish us?

August 23, 2020 | By Abigail Pogrebin

Looking back on this year, many of us wondered if we are being punished by God. Abigail Pogrebin explores this idea in an interview with Rabbi David Wolpe, head of the largest Conservative synagogue west of the Mississippi.

The Yiddish Forward

As the only secular digital publication in Yiddish, it is our responsibility to highlight the continued relevance of the historic language.



Our new initiatives have brought in hundreds of thousands of people who are excited to engage with their culture and improve their Yiddish:

Interactive crossword puzzles

Yoga classes

Virtual conversations on Yiddish culture, comedy and music

Yiddish Word of the Day series

Forverts' YouTube channel grew 69% compared with the previous year and our videos were played over 1.2 million times on YouTube and Facebook

Keeping the community informed was essential in 2020. Since the pandemic began, the Forverts has been working tirelessly to reach the hard-hit Yiddish-speaking Hasidic community that is isolated from secular news. We have shared precise reporting about the pandemic with audios and videos on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 in their communities.

Meet the Forverts Team

Rukhl Schachter
Editor, Forverts



Jordan Kutzik
Deputy Editor,
Forverts



Rukhl Schachter is the editor of the Forverts and the first woman to hold that position since its founding in 1897. Under her guidance, the Forverts has become a clearinghouse for the latest news in the Yiddish world, while simultaneously increasing the Forverts' profile. Boosted by active Facebook and YouTube channels, international podcasts, regularly translated articles and subtitled videos have found broad audiences. Her YouTube series, Yiddish Word of the Day, launched during the pandemic, has already gotten over 600,000 views.

Jordan Kutzik joined the Forverts in 2013 as a staff writer and social media coordinator. He has received an Ippies Award for best opinion article, several first-place Rockower Awards for opinion writing, cultural reporting and personality profiles and was part of the Forward's four-person reporting team that won a Deadline Club Award for best Spot News Reporting for its coverage of the 2019 antisemitic terrorist attack in Jersey City.

The Year In Review

Turning on a dime in March 2020, we realized live events were no longer an option, and we found a way to connect our readers around the world with engaging and relevant conversations.

We hosted over 30 virtual talks – or Zoominars, as our Editor-in-Chief likes to call them – **spanning Yiddish comedy, Juneteenth, the Unorthodox television series, interviews with leading politicians, challah baking, and so much more.**



It's hard to remember a time when we gathered in person but in January 2020, we were honored to partner with the historic Sixth & I synagogue in Washington, D.C. Editor-in-Chief Jodi Rudoren and Michael Barbaro, host of The New York Times' podcast "The Daily," sat on stage in front of hundreds of attendees to discuss the tense 2020 political landscape through a Jewish lens.



- Mar 17** Being Jewish in the Time of Coronavirus
- Mar 18** Israeli Politics in a Pandemic
- Mar 24** The 11th Plague? Passover in a Pandemic
- Mar 31** A Fraught Conversation: Racism and Anti-Semitism in Politics
- Apr 2** Parenting in a Pandemic
- Apr 6** A Plague of Our Own
- Apr 14** Look to the Helpers: Caring for Vulnerable Populations
- Apr 21** Is Anti-Zionism Anti-Semitic?
- Apr 22** (Jewish) Journalism in (the Coronavirus) Crisis
- Apr 27** 'Unorthodox:' Reality vs. fiction
- Apr 28** How should American Jews observe Israeli Independence Day?
- May 5** Coupling in Quarantine
- May 19** Yihye Tov: A conversation/concert with David Broza
- May 21** The Future of the Jewish People...and Cocktails
- May 26** Talking Shavuot with Ben Katchor, author of The Dairy Restaurant
- May 27** After Corona: How our Jewish world will change
- Jun 17** Will Israel really annex the West Bank (and what happens next)?
- Jun 19** A Jewish conversation about Juneteenth
- Jun 22** Why are Yiddish Songs So Popular Now?
- Jun 30** A Jewish conversation for Pride Month: How far we've come, and what happens next?
- Jul 8** An exit interview with Amb. Dani Dayan
- Jul 13** An Interview with Cory Booker
- Jul 13** Five Yiddish Comedians Walk Into a Zoom...
- Aug 31** The new way to raise money for the causes you love
- Sep 8** Fiction is Stranger (Michael Oren)
- Sep 10** The Asian secret to the world's best challah
- Sep 22** On Lox and Life
- Oct 1** Still Small Voice: Talking about God in the midst of a plague
- Oct 22** The 2020 Election: Disinformation and Democracy
- Oct 26** Divided We Fall: How the crises of 2020 have furthered the gaps among groups and what to do about it
- Dec 3** Healing Racial Divides - Lessons from Chicago
- Dec 8** Innovate or Die: How Jewish nonprofit leadership weathered 2020 and is leaning into 2021
- Dec 9** The Jewish Democratic Vote in 2020
- Dec 15** Why can't we solve homelessness now?
- Dec 16** An interview with Rep. Max Rose on his plans to run for Mayor of NYC

Come As You Are Gala: Comedy and Cocktails in Challenging Times

In October 2020, the Forward produced our first ever virtual *Come as You Are Gala: Comedy and Cocktails in Challenging Times*. Our all-star lineup included Mayim Bialik, Michael Bloomberg, Zach Braff, Avi Liberman, Craig Newmark, Peter Yarrow and others! Everyone who joined had a good laugh, enjoyed nostalgic tunes, learned more about our work and met some of the journalists who write the intelligent articles and compelling stories that you love.

We received over 500 donations and surpassed our \$200,000 fundraising goal!

As a national and international media organization, **we were thankful for the opportunity to experience the event and auction with thousands of readers from all over the world.**



MAYIM BIALIK
ACTIVIST & ACTRESS



Forward journalist roundtable



Rachel Fishman Feddersen



Zach Braff



Kosha Dillz



Yisrael Campbell



Miri Ben-Ari



CORY BOOKER
U.S. SENATOR FROM NEW JERSEY



Michael Bloomberg

Thank You

Thank you to each and every one of our 4,000 donors. We are very grateful to our generous supporters who contributed nearly \$2,320,000, and enable the Forward to deliver high-quality news and culture reporting every day.

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“Thank you for all you do. I always look forward to reading the daily Forward... During this past year, with the turbulent political situation and the pandemic, **the Forward has brought enlightenment and joy into my life on many occasions.**”



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 Connecticut

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Eleanor Roosevelt at Freedom House

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 Forward apart** in journalism
 and media in this day and
 age, making it a beacon for
 democracy.”

Barbara Flom Shapiro
 New Jersey

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“Kudos on staying relevant and compelling during a time that requires so much from all of us.”



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"I'm neither Jewish nor American, **but your journalists are awesome.** I will keep supporting you as I am a dedicated follower of all Jewish issues [especially culture and what happens in Israel] - keep up the great work!"

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“Thanks for your work and this great source of Jewish news.

The Forward is my anchor to Judaism. I have maintained connection to my Jewish world through volunteer work... and for deeper philosophical, political and literary aspects of Judaism, the Forward is my place. Thank you.”

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My Great Grandfather lived just blocks from the Forward's offices on Manhattan's Lower East side. With its visceral coverage of labor-related atrocities such as the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, the Forward deepened his commitment to worker's rights, and sparked in his son, my Grandfather, a passion for journalism that would lead him to WQXR, at that time the radio station of the New York Times, for which he covered the UN vote on Israeli Statehood live on-air.

Since it first went into circulation, **the Forward has provided substantive reporting on news pertinent to Jews and fostered a sense of community amongst us**, wherever we reside. It's done the latter during this time of isolation with **editorial features and web-based seminars that address our need for intellectual engagement, spiritual consolation and for levity and diversion.**

I'm proud to say my children are fifth generation Forward readers, benefiting like the rest of us from its breaking and groundbreaking coverage of white supremacist movements and efforts to obstruct the polls.

L'Chaim!



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Brooklyn, NY

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“As an Israeli who is the son of American Olim, I enjoy the Forward because **it covers topics containing a large array of varying opinions and perspectives that actually bring me a better understanding and connection to Jews around the world.**”



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Abraham Cahan Legacy Society

Abraham ("Ab") Cahan was a visionary. When he founded the Forward in 1897, he changed American journalism forever and earned a place in the pantheon of America's greatest editors. His legacy of activism and hope for the Jewish future continues to inspire us today. In his honor, we have created the Abraham Cahan Legacy Society.

L'dor V'dor. For the Forward that means passing along our love of the truth and social justice, while strengthening Jewish identity for a whole new generation of young people. Making a legacy gift is a meaningful way to show your support of the Forward's mission while also accommodating your own personal, financial, estate-planning, and philanthropic goals.

We thank those who joined the Abraham Cahan Legacy Society by making a legacy gift to the Forward.

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Financial Summary

Unaudited

EXPENSES	2020
Management	747,000
Fundraising	833,000
Digital Media English	3,732,000
Digital Media Yiddish	436,000
Total	5,748,000

REVENUE	2020
Advertising	317,000
Subscriptions	938,000
Fundraising	2,319,000
Other	78,000
PPP Loan	596,000
Funds drawn from investment accounts	1,500,000
Total	5,748,000

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as of April 2021

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