



Orthodox Jewish Athlete Wins on CBS' Million Dollar Mile, Produced by LeBron James

Two weeks ago, Michael Neuman, 26, a psychotherapist living on Miami Beach, became the first and only Orthodox Jew to defeat a pro-athlete on CBS' Million Dollar Mile produced by LeBron James. He wore his yarmulke (traditional headwear for Orthodox Jews) proudly with the hopeful message that all people can get along and respect each other.

Michael ran to create awareness against prejudices: "Stigmas are plaguing our country, and in a time where minorities and religions are being targeted, I felt it was time to try to break down the prejudices long associated with the Jewish people."



Michael Neuman

The show gives the contestants a two-minute head start to complete as many obstacles as possible before a professional athlete chases and attempts to finish before the contestant. Michael defeated Veejay Jones in 3 obstacles including scaling a 15-story building, to win \$25,000, making Michael the top winner in the episode.



Michael outlined his Jewish background and love of sports on the show: “Growing up as a kid, my passion was always sports, but all of the leagues were on Saturday, and as an Orthodox Jew, we were resting and having our Sabbath. So, I was never able to compete as most kids get to do. As an adult, I still

Stigmas are plaguing our country.

have that passion for sports, and I started to get into obstacle course racing which are on Sundays. Ever since that moment it was like a second chance at being the athlete I always wanted to be. This is my way to prove to the orthodox community that anything is possible, and we can be strong and powerful and go for anything we want.”

Michael is passionate about the belief that everyone should be accepted based on who they are and not on the biases based on race and religion.

“I’ve encountered people in obstacle competitions who look at me as someone different and unapproachable. But at the end of the race, we are smiling, joking and connecting on Instagram.”

Michael has developed a unique form of psychotherapy, Movement and Active Psychology (MAP) that includes movement and exercise to help others feel emotionally and physically empowered. He’s on a mission to help us all love ourselves and each other. ☆

Congregation Ahavas Sholom

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Looking Back:

a snapshot of the History of Ahavas Sholom, 1940



Wedding of Edna Jacobson and Walter Wechsler in Congregation Ahavas Sholom in Newark, 1940. Edna Wechsler's parents were among the founders of the congregation, which built its temple on Broadway in 1921. Besides the Mount Sinai congregation, which holds services in an apartment complex, the synagogue is the last one functioning in Newark today.

Edna Wechsler

Simon Says

Weekly insights from Rabbi Simon Rosebach



Rabbi Simon Rosenbach

“**A**nyone, however, who strikes another with an iron object so that death results is a murderer; the murderer must be put to death.” Num. 35:16.

The Justice Department recently announced that the federal government would resume implementing the death penalty, starting with five cases. The death penalty is a contentious issue, along with abortion, or gun control. So I will tell you

about the recent history of the death penalty in New Jersey, and I will air my personal views about the death penalty.

For all of you non-lawyers out there, New Jersey’s collection of statutes is arranged in titles. Not titles like “Gone With the Wind,” but numerical titles, like Title 3B, or Title 4, or Title 52. Each title comprises all laws on a particular subject. Title 19 encompasses election laws, Title 3B encompasses estates, and Title 2C is the criminal code: most crimes and disorderly-persons offenses (for you New Yorkers, felonies and misdemeanors) are included in Title 2C. Title 2C was enacted in the autumn of 1979, and the Legislature made an effort to group all related crimes together in what are called chapters. Title 2C replaced Title 2A, where the crimes were arranged in, well, alphabetical order.

In New Jersey, we had a death penalty (by electric chair), but that death-penalty was invalidated by the United States Supreme Court in 1972, because if a defendant pled guilty to murder, he was spared the death penalty. In other words, wanting a trial had a cost: you could be executed. In 1972 also, the United States Supreme Court invalidated all capital punishment in the United States, but provided directions to the states how to constitutionally craft a death-penalty statute. In 1976, in a series of decisions by the United States Supreme Court, those carefully worded statutes were upheld. Later, the United States Supreme Court decided that you couldn’t

be executed if you were convicted of rape (called aggravated, sexual assault in New Jersey).

Title 2C when enacted in 1979 did not include a death penalty. A few years later, New Jersey added one of these carefully crafted, death-penalty statutes, but the statute was repealed in 2007. While the statute was in existence, there were 228 capital trials, and in 60 of them the jury returned a sentence of death. Most of them were vacated by the New Jersey Supreme Court, and the remaining sentences were converted to life imprisonment without parole.

I was a prosecutor for almost 35 years, and I never was in favor of the death penalty. The appellate process dragged out over years and decades, so the death penalty was not a deterrent. More than that, our criminal justice system convicts people by the standard of beyond a reasonable doubt. That leaves room for error. We have cases where convicted murderers have spent years, even decades, in prison, only to be freed with newly discovered DNA evidence. We have cases where convicted people (who didn't murder) have been freed because somebody truthfully confessed, like the Central Park Five. I personally was not comfortable with playing God with people's lives, as long as there was room for a mistake. (I tried a sexual-assault case where the victim

identified her assaulter by his peculiar limp, but that defendant was

exonerated by newly discovered DNA evidence.)

In the Torah, God commands the death penalty for murderers, but in later years ("later years" means for than 2000 years ago) the rabbis realized the fallibilities of human justice. The rabbis enacted safeguards to make executions almost impossible. Indeed, the Mishnah (compiled in the

early second century) describes a court that executes one person in seven years as "murderous."

Times change. Proponents of the death penalty find support in the Torah, and the Torah indeed sanctions the death penalty. In my view, however, finding support in the Torah ignores the evolution of the Jewish view of the death penalty. ✡

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It's been estimated it will take \$60, 000 to properly renovate our kitchen.

April Modlinger, who has always been a pillar at Congregation Ahavas Sholom, has generously pledged \$10, 000 to making this happen.

We have recently received another pledge for \$2,200, bringing the total to 12, 200.

With your help Congregation Ahavas Sholom will soon have a kitchen we all deserve.

Make your pledge today!

Join Us at Ahavas Sholom

Saturday night, August 10th, Erev Tisha B'Av.

**On Tisha B'Av we remember of the destruction of the First and Second Temples,
and our expulsion from Spain. We'll be reading Eicha (The Book of Lamentations)**

Bring a flashlight and remember to wear non-leather shoes.

8:30 pm - Ahavas Sholom, 135 Broadway, Newark

CAS Tzedakah Honor Roll

We would like to thank and recognize those who gave
so generously to support Congregation Ahavas

Sholom in its various efforts to foster Tikun Olam

Rabbi Simon and Gayle Rosenbach - *The Ronald and Joan David
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Who Wants to Be A Jewish Writer?: And Other Essays

By Amy Oringel

Reprinted Courtesy of the Jewish Book Council

The debate about how to classify writers and writing, and whether to do so at all, has heated up over recent years. Jennifer Weiner famously spearheaded a rallying cry for more women to be considered “literary writers” alongside luminaries like Jonathan Franzen. The debate over the question of the “Jewish writer” is of course more layered, particularly because it has been so soundly rejected by heavyweights like Philip Roth and Saul Bellow. With the title of Adam Kirsch’s book phrased in the form of a question, the reader is inclined to expect some form of answer. Call it Jeopardy in reverse; but, surprise, surprise, it’s not that simple. Kirsch’s book is actually a collection of his essays, many of which originally appeared in publications such as *The New Yorker*, *The New Republic* and *The Jewish Review of Books*. A poet, critic and author (his most recent work was the instant classic “The People of the Books”), Adam Kirsch has established himself as one of the most prominent and respected voices in the world of literary criticism. His depth of knowledge and analysis are on full display here as he dissects the relationship between religion, politics and poetry. There are deep dives on how non-Jewish writers, such as Irish Catholic poets Seamus Heaney and Christian

Wiman, interpret their own religious background and how it is (or isn’t) incorporated into their work.

Kirsch explores the motivations, interpretations and outcomes of past Jewish authors like Walter Benjamin, Stefan Zweig, and Isaac Detacher. Contemporary issues are also given attention, particularly the role of social media in determining the course of an author’s reputation and career arc. He draws on the example of Jewish author Keith Gessen, who received brutal online backlash after the release of his first novel and how “worthy” he was of his success.

But at the heart, Kirsch draws the parallel of how the question of the Jewish writer mirrors the current conundrum of American Jews as a whole. As the nuts and bolts of religious practices slowly fade in importance to many American Jews, how does this affect their relationship to their “Jewishness” and frame their perspectives?

While critiquing the work of a critic is an unusually Meta exercise, it’s easy to recommend diving into Kirsch. This is no casual summer read, but the complexities reveal the unique expertise and brilliance of the author. *Reprinted Courtesy of the Jewish Book Council,*

www.jewishbookcouncil.org ☆

Kiddush Sponsorship

Sponsoring Kiddush is \$150, which barely covers the cost of the lunch. Our goal is to have every Kiddush sponsored. To sponsor a Kiddush, email Rabbi Rosenbach or contact Alla Eicheldinger at Alla7815@yahoo.com. You can also help us by shopping, which doesn't cost any money, just a little time. We'll give you a list of items, you shop and we'll reimburse you.

Our Sister Synagogue in Uganda Needs Our Help

Ravaged by famine and drought, the Namutumba Synagogue is reaching out to us; let's not disappoint them.

The Namutumba Famine Relief Fund to learn more [Click here](#)

Shabbat Services

Join us this Saturday for Shabbat services. Strangers, visitors, friends, old and new; our doors are open to you. Looking for a new home? New members are always welcome at Congregation Ahavas Sholom services starts at 9:00AM. Our congregation is open and welcoming, so feel free to pay us a visit.



**This week's choir
rehearsal will be
held in the
sanctuary after
Kiddush.**