



Carnegie Shul Chatter

November 26, 2020



Coming Soon?

Well, America still hasn't had a Jewish president, but we are getting closer.

The Trump administration certainly had a Jewish presence with President Trump's daughter, Ivanka, a convert to Judaism, and her husband Jared Kushner, an Orthodox Jew, serving as advisors to the President. And the Trump Secretary of the Treasury, Steve Mnuchin, is also Jewish.

Now, the Biden administration has named its first several Cabinet members and we will have at least four Jews in the Cabinet.

Biden's Chief of Staff is Ron Klain. According to the *Jewish Chronicle*, "Klain, 59, grew up in Indiana, the son of a father who worked

A Jewish President?

Would you like to see a Jewish President of the United States?

We have certainly had more than enough Jews qualified to serve, but it was just not to be. But we have had an African American President, and we are about to have a female woman of color as our vice - president.

The times have certainly changed.

But would it be good to have a Jewish President?

Would it lead to increased anti-Semitism?

Would all Jewish people be blamed any time the Jewish president did something controversial?

Is this one of those times that we should be careful of what we wish for?

What do you think?



as a building contractor and mother who was a travel agent. He celebrated his bar mitzvah in 1974 at his childhood congregation, Beth-El Zedeck — a synagogue still operating in Indianapolis that's affiliated with both the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and the Reconstructionist movement.

But his bar mitzvah had some added stress: As *Jewish Insider* reported Thursday, Klain has talked about how his mother became ill right before the rite of passage, leading to its postponement. That meant Klain had to learn a new Torah portion.



Klain has said his Jewish identity was formed in part by being different from most of his peers.

“I grew up in Indiana, with a decent-size Jewish community, but we were a distinct minority,” he told *The New York Times* in 2007. “Not having a Christmas tree was very much part of our Jewish identity in a place where everyone else did.”

Klain has kept in touch with the congregation and appeared in a video talking about the COVID-19 pandemic with the Beth-El Zedeck rabbi in April. (The rabbi, Dennis Sasso, pointed out that Klain “became bar mitzvah ... twice, as you know by now!”)

In the video, Klain compared the plague of the firstborn from the Passover story to an infectious disease, and the Jews who were commanded to stay in their homes during the plague to people today being told to socially distance.

“Klain continues a presence with the Indianapolis Jewish community with visits to his synagogue, regular speaking engagements, and attendance at local Jewish holiday gatherings with his family,” the synagogue said in a statement Thursday.”



The new Secretary of State will be Anthony Blinken. According to *Jewishvirtuallibrary.org*, “Blinken (born April 16, 1962) was born in Yonkers, New York, to Jewish parents Judith and Donald Blinken. He attended the prestigious Dalton School in New York City until 1971, when he moved to Paris, France, with his divorced mother and her new husband, Holocaust survivor and lawyer, Samuel Pisar.

Pisar, who had survived both the Auschwitz and Dachau concentration camps, would later share his experiences during the Holocaust with Blinken, who says those conversations had a profound impact on his current policy preferences. He believes the United States and other powerful nations have the “responsibility to protect” against barbarity around the world.

The new Director of the Department of Homeland Security will be Alejandro Mayorkas. *The Washington Post* says Mayorkas is, “The son of Cuban Jews who fled Fidel Castro’s 1959 Revolution, Mayorkas would be the first immigrant and first Hispanic American to lead DHS if

the GOP-controlled Senate confirms him.” The article goes on to say, “Mayorkas, 60, who goes by “Ali,” came to the United States as a baby and was raised mostly in Los Angeles. His mother was a Romanian Jew who escaped the Holocaust and arrived in Cuba in the 1940s, where she met his father, who was of Sephardic heritage.”



And the Biden choice for Secretary of the Treasury is former Federal Reserve Board head, Janet Yellen, who will be the third straight Jewish Treasury head. *The Times of Israel* said, “Yellen was born to “not particularly observant” Polish Jewish parents and grew up in Brooklyn, New York. At Yale, she was mentored by Jewish professors Herschel Grossman and Joseph Stiglitz, a Nobel prize winner.

While she and Akerlof lived in Berkeley, they were members of a local Reform synagogue, Congregation Beth-El. *The Forward* reported that their only son went to preschool there.

She has featured in “globalist” theories involving Jews.

In 2016, Trump released a campaign ad that drew condemnation from the Anti-Defamation League, the Union for Reform Judaism and other Jewish groups. In the ad, Trump spoke about who controls the “levers of power in Washington” and “global special interests” as images of Jewish billionaire philanthropist George Soros and Yellen appeared.

Critics said it played on old anti-Semitic tropes — which also happened to be invoked against the first Jewish head of the Fed, Eugene Meyer, in 1930.”

And with Chuck Schumer the Democratic Minority Leader in the Senate, and with Jews Stephen Breyer and Elena Kagan on the U.S. Supreme Court, there should be a strong Jewish influence in our government for the next four years.

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