Health & Wellness

**LABRIUT** 

## Before You Can Love the World, You Have to Love Yourself

Practice self-hesed

By Ronit Feinglass-Plank • 10/23/2018 at 4:46pm • Published in the October 2018 issue of Jewish in Seattle Magazine

was teaching my Tuesday night ninth-grade religious school class, passing out the next reading

IMAGE: ISAEVA ANNA/SHUTTERSTOCK

for our discussion on tikkun olam (repairing the world) and gemilut hasadim (acts of loving kindness), when one of my students slumped a little in her chair. "Can we take a break?" she asked. "We go all day at school, we work so hard, and then we come here, even though we have homework and tests to study for. Can't we have a minute?" My arm still outstretched, handout attached, I paused and looked at my students' tired faces. Some had come from soccer, some from play rehearsal, others from long bus rides. I glanced at the clock and tensed up. We still had so much to cover. But in asking me for a break, my student gave me the perfect opportunity to model the gemilut hasadim and tikkun olam we were learning about in the classroom. "OK," I said. "Let's relax for a few minutes." Most of us could use a little more gemilut hasadim than we get. Rabbi Sara Paasche-Orlow, in her

article "Acts of Loving-Kindness," explains that "hesed" (or "chesed") appears in the Torah to communicate God's kindness and love toward humanity as well as human kindness and love toward each other. While the first instance of the term "gemilut hasadim" appears in the Mishnah, the Talmud "established chesed as one of the core pillars of human behavior."

lives for self-care. "On a practical level," writes Paasche-Orlow, "a person who has received love and aid is far more likely to be able to pass on chesed to another person." When someone feels rejuvenated, they may then be able to become "engaged, empowered actors of chesed." Of course, moments of self-care can be hard-won. It's not easy to balance work, family, and friends.

As Jews, we are commanded to give back to our community, and that also means making room in our

There is so much to be done — especially here in Seattle, where myriad worthy causes abound — that slowing down might be challenging. But each of us deserves time to repair, which is an important part of being Jewish, too. "Judaism provides a path to not run yourself ragged — a path for not just physical health, but

emotional and spiritual health, too," says Rabbi Ruth A. Zlotnick of Temple Beth Am in Seattle.

Shabbat, for example, enables you to "cease the busy-ness of everyday life and refresh your soul." She

points out that a "foundation stone of Judaism is Hillel's teaching, 'If I am not for myself, who will be

for me? If I am not for others, what am I?" Living a meaningful life includes caring for ourselves,

because we cannot give from an empty well. When we honor our own needs, we have more to offer

At my next Tuesday night class, I put together a list of self-care ideas as part of my lesson. Go to a yoga class, play a board game, call someone you haven't talked to in a while, remember to eat breakfast, take a deep breath. I asked my students to check off five that they thought they might like to try, and I did the same. The room was quiet for a few minutes while we made our choices. We were

creating room in our lives to slow down so that we could replenish ourselves before we got back to

When my students put down their pencils, I opened a box of chocolate chip cookies I had brought to

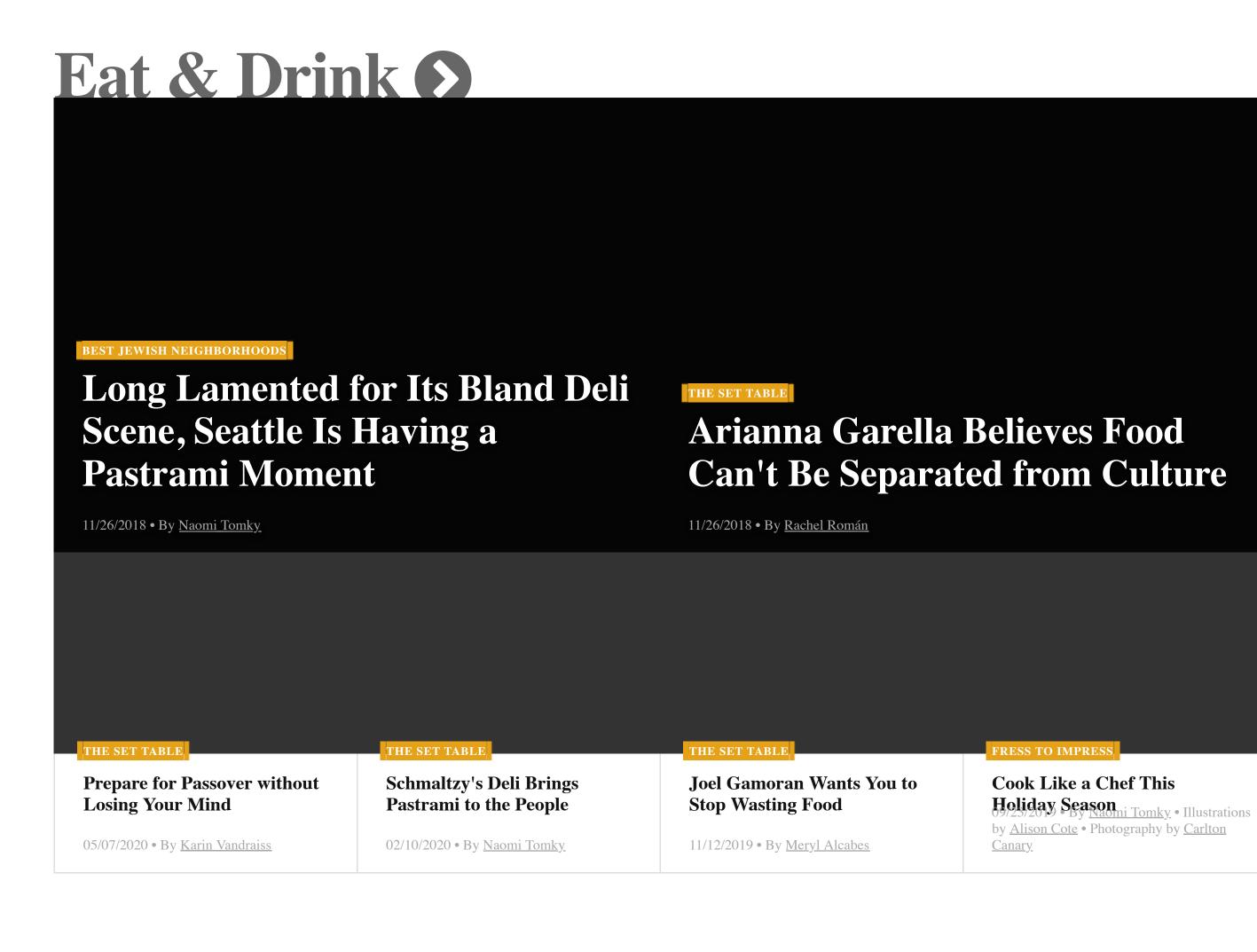
share in celebration. Cookies are a form of self-care I am really good at remembering. Filed under wellness, self-care, hesed

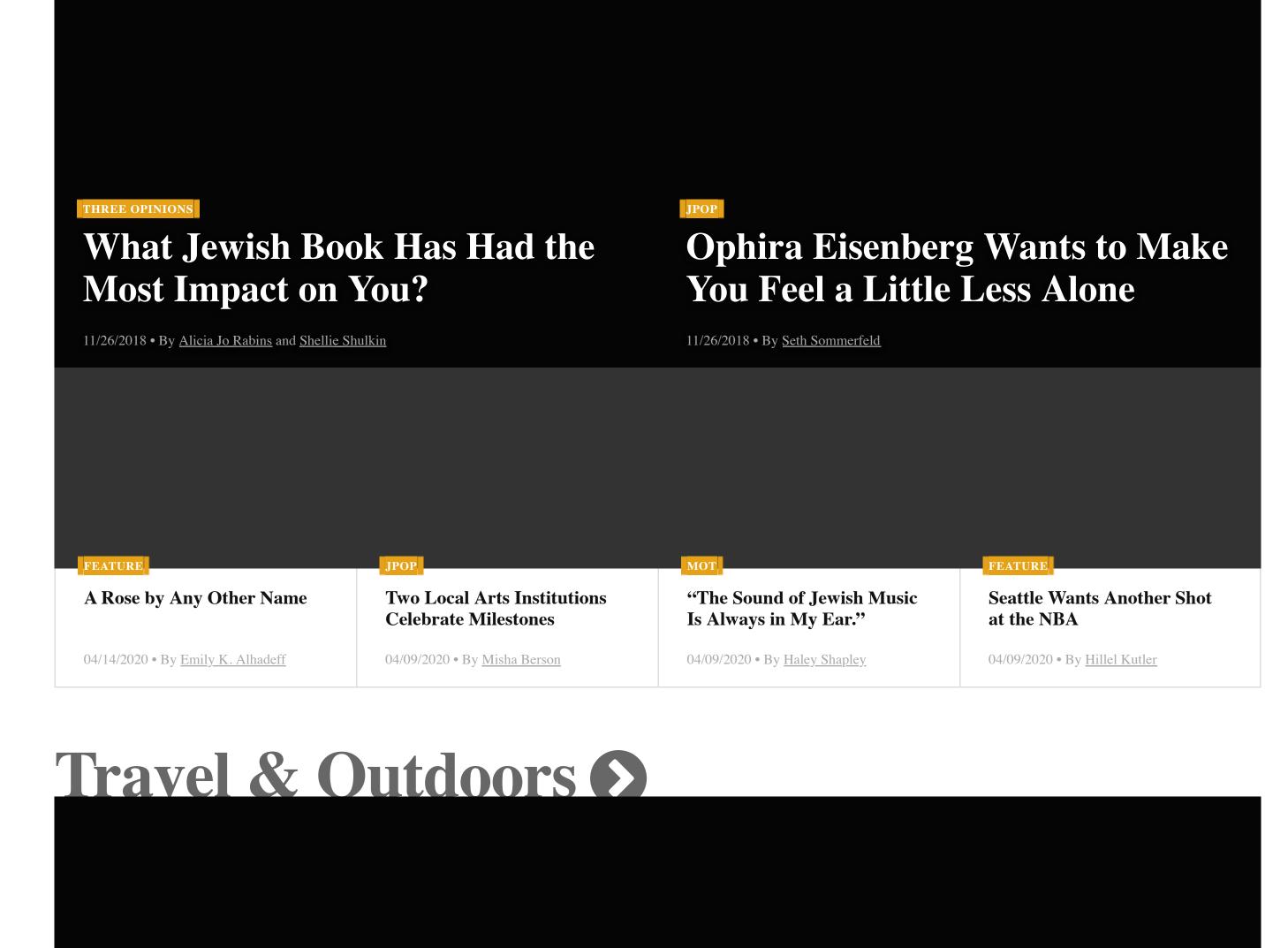
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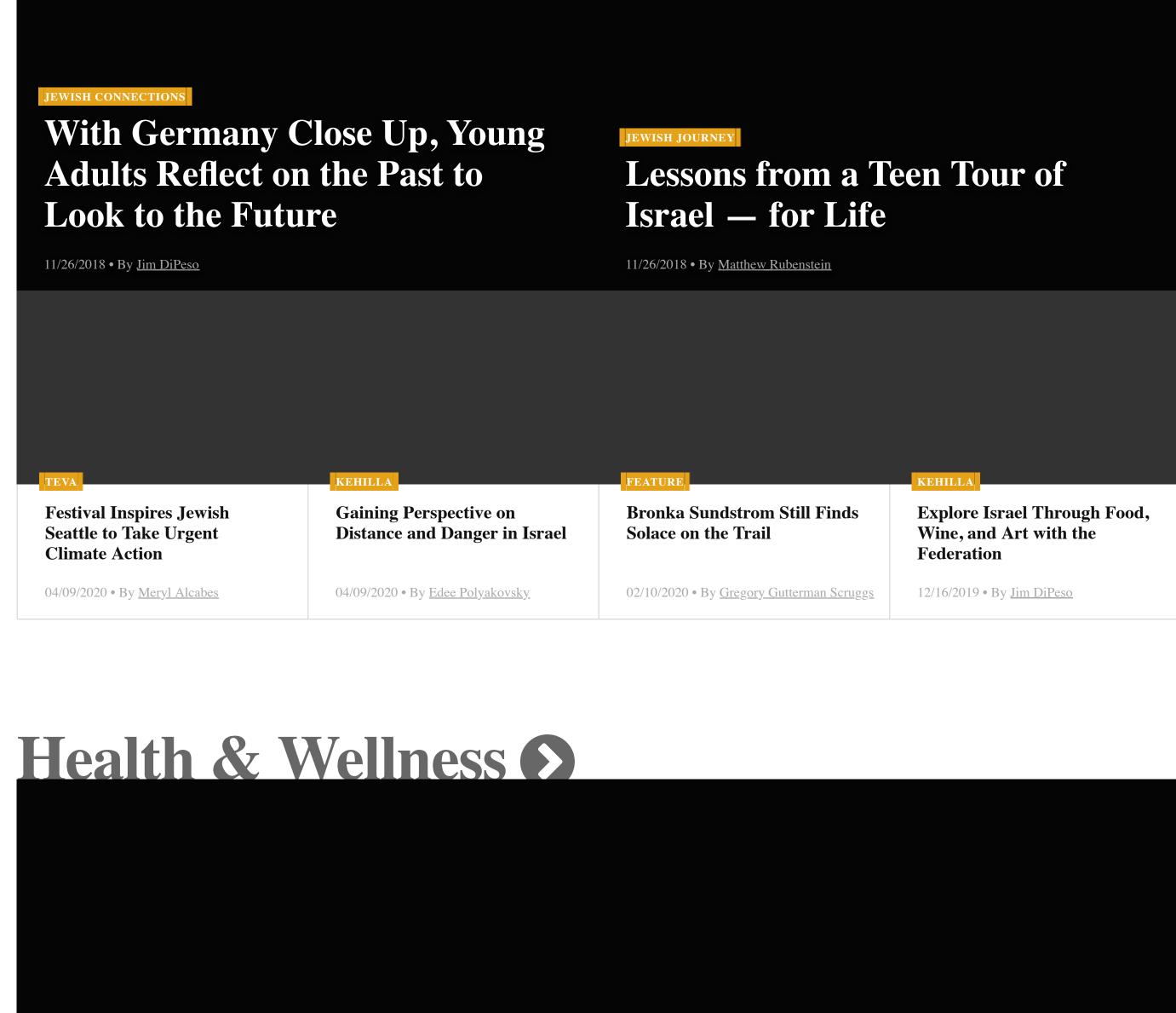
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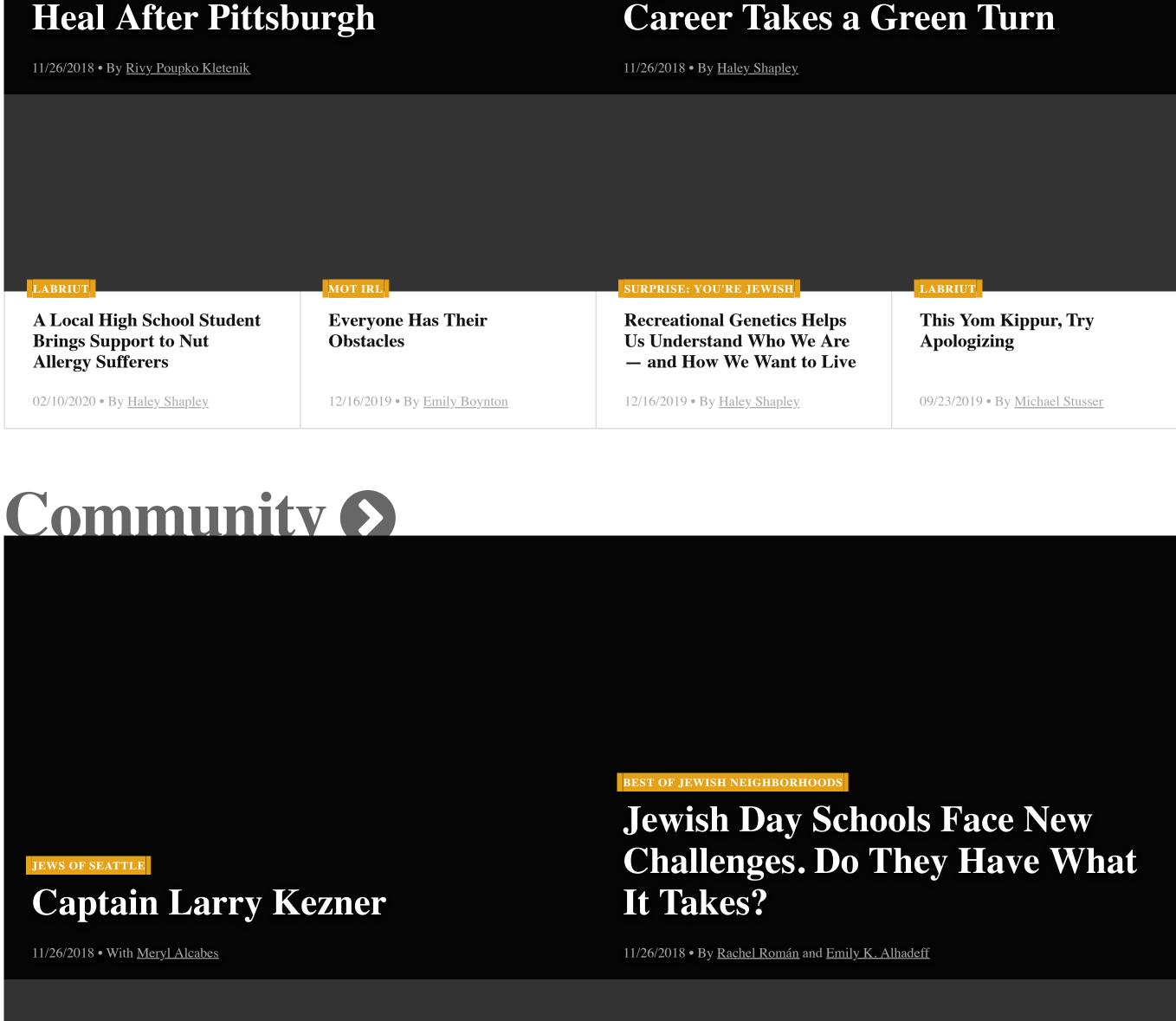
repairing the world.

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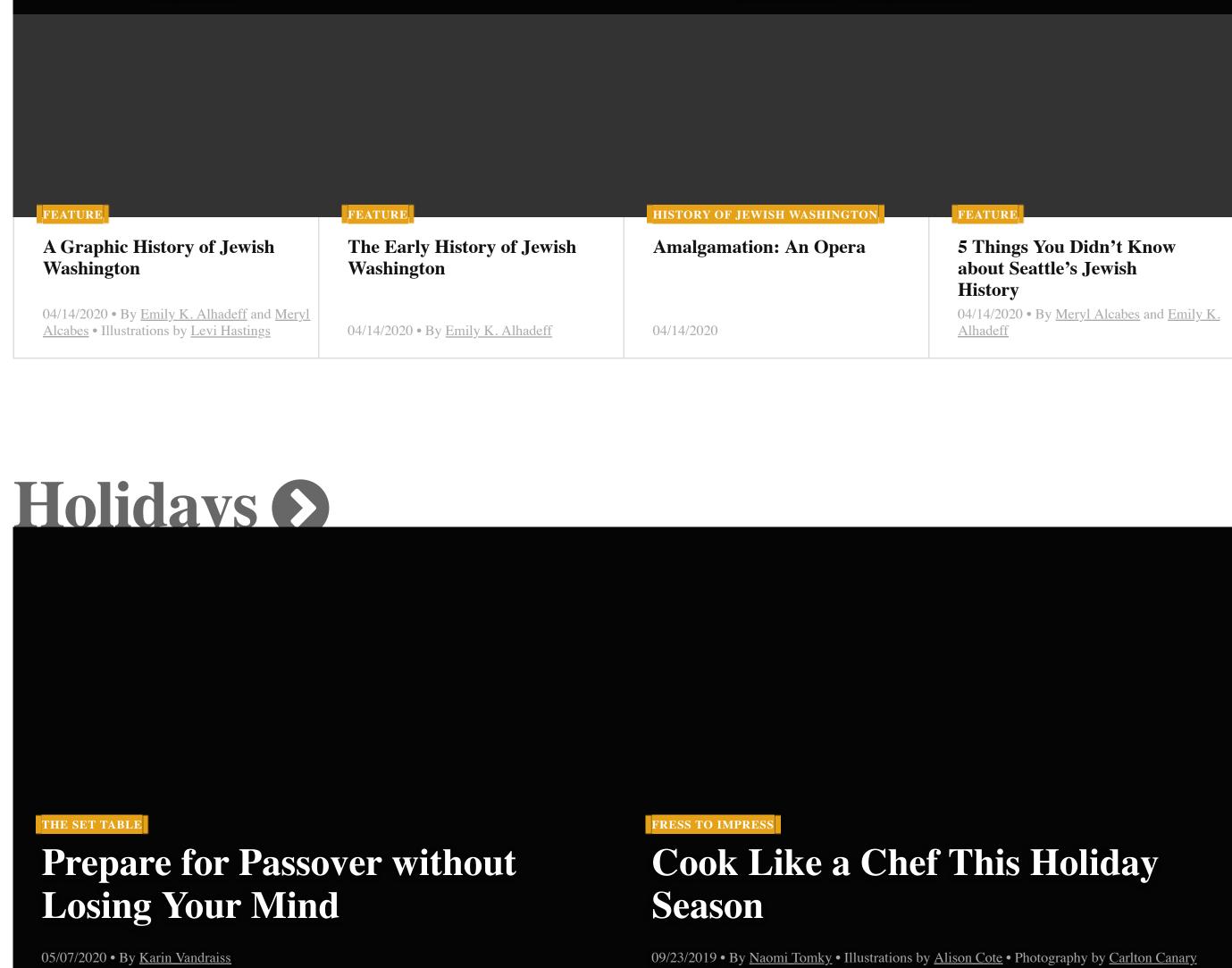






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