

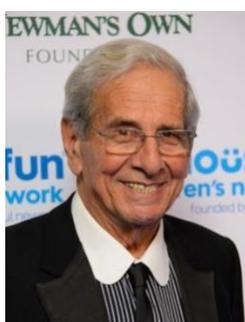


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## ***TO LIFE, TO LIFE, L'CHAIM***

*By Gail Androphy*

For more than four decades, Topol has brought to life the iconic character of Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof* to audiences in Australia, Canada, the United States, Europe, and Japan. Now, as Topol celebrates his 80th birthday, he has expanded his repertoire – he's a philanthropist and a change maker.



I first met Topol in my living room in the '80s while watching *Fiddler on the Roof*. I saw it on TV, VHS, and perhaps even on Betamax. When I actually met the man behind the character I was surprised – he was tall, thin, and perfectly shaven – but when the words came out of his mouth I realized that Topol was Tevye.

That day, I should have been awe-struck. Here was Israel's first international movie star, an Oscar- and Tony-nominated and a Golden Globe-winning actor, but all I could see was a man who was committed to helping others.

For the last 15 years, Topol has dedicated himself to working with the late Paul Newman and Murray & Marilyn Grant (z'l) to start the Jordan River Village in Israel, a free, year-round, overnight camp for children of all religious and ethnic backgrounds living with life-threatening and chronic illnesses. They were committed to giving these children the opportunity to experience a childhood that had been so cruelly robbed from them.



A few days a week, Topol still makes the two-hour trip from Tel Aviv to the lower Galilee to be with children in the Village. While there, he isn't visiting, he is fully participating – belaying on the only wheelchair-accessible climbing tower in Israel, participating in theater workshops in the state-of-the-art theater, cheering for children on horses, sharing meals, and so much more. To the children who come to the Village, Topol is their cheerleader and their friend.

Jordan River Village and its more than 4,500 campers have become Topol's passion. He has translated this commitment into his role as Board Chairman, donor, fundraiser, volunteer, mentor, and friend. It's likely if you've read an article about Topol written in the last five years, you've read about the Village since he's also the Village's PR machine.



Topol's doesn't commit himself to *tikkun olam* for the notoriety; he does it because he knows that his efforts make a world of difference for one child, for one family, and for the entire country of Israel.

Please join us in celebrating Topol's birthday by posting a birthday greeting at [facebook.com/FriendsofJordanRiverVillage](https://facebook.com/FriendsofJordanRiverVillage) or by emailing [info@afjrv.org](mailto:info@afjrv.org).

Happy birthday!

*Gail Androphy is the Executive Director of the American Friends of Jordan River Village and can be reached at [gail@afjrv.org](mailto:gail@afjrv.org)*