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Jewish Nonprofits Look to Feds, States to Help Pay for Security. But There's Not Enough Grant Money to Go Around.



A San Diego County Sheriff's deputy directs traffic in front of the Chabad of Poway synagogue on Sunday, April 28, 2019 in Poway, California. Credit: Sandy Huffaker/AFP/Getty Images

By Louis Keene

Note: This story has been updated to reflect more recent events. Previously posted at Forward, reprinted with permission.

After he took a job leading a synagogue in Bakersfield, California, in May of 2020, Rabbi Jonathan Klein realized his community was vulnerable. Temple Beth El didn't have much in the way of

protection, and the rabbi worried about extremists, including the Ku Klux Klan, active in the surrounding county.

The feeling of exposure was heightened after an 11-hour hostage crisis unfolded at a Texas synagogue last month.

"We're feeling the stress of Poway, Pittsburgh, Colleyville," Klein said, referring to synagogue attacks that have occurred since 2018. "We've been feeling very prone."

But now Klein looks forward to feeling safer. He recently learned that Beth El will receive a nearly \$200,000 grant to beef up its security from the California Office of Emergency Services.

A handful of other states award grants to help vulnerable nonprofits protect themselves, but the largest source for such funds comes from the more established federal Nonprofit Security Grant Program. Texas Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker, who was taken hostage with three congregants during Shabbat services last month, will testify Tuesday before a U.S. House committee on the need to increase funding to the program. It doled out \$180 million in 2020, but turned down most applicants.

Jewish groups, at the inception of the federal program 17 years ago – when it gave out a fraction of the money it now allocates – received about three quarters of its funds, said Nathan Diament, executive director for public policy for the Orthodox Union. But competition for the money is rising.

The federal government doled out

\$180 million for security grants last year, yet still turned down most applicants.

Interest in and applications for these grants "have expanded significantly in recent years beyond the Jewish community to other faith communities," Diament wrote in an email. "This is in the wake of attacks at churches, such as in Charleston and Sutherland Springs, and others – such as the Sikh Temple in Oak Creek, Wisconsin." The Orthodox Union and many other Jewish groups after the Texas hostage-taking have amplified their calls for a doubling of the federal funding to \$360 million.

The hostage incident has also galvanized efforts to launch or boost similar programs within state governments. California is at the vanguard of this movement.

The money headed to Klein's synagogue is part of a recently announced round of grants to 291 nonprofits in the state. They'll share in a total of \$47.5 million to better protect themselves with security doors, cameras and guards,

(See **Security** Page 3)

Historically Jewish Fraternity Initiates Holocaust Program with Hillels of Memphis

Though recognized nationally as the very first Jewish collegiate social fraternity, Zeta Beta Tau (ZBT)'s local chapter, on the University of Memphis campus, hasn't had a Jewish member for years. Despite this, the young men of ZBT strive to intentionally maintain connections to Jewish traditions and to Jewish Memphis through a key on-campus ally – Hillels of Memphis, a program of Memphis Jewish Federation.

For the last several years, ZBT has partnered with Hillels of Memphis to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day by bringing meaningful educational programing into the frat house. This year Joseph Duncan, Jr, the chapter's programming director and a

second-semester sophomore, tapped Hillels of Memphis Director Sophie Bloch to reflect on antisemitism and curate video content to screen for a group of 15 ZBT members and their friends in late January.

"We really enjoy learning about our fraternity's Jewish heritage," said Joseph. "If it wasn't for the group of Jewish men who founded this fraternity, I couldn't have met this group of people who have become my best friends. Learning about our Jewish heritage is not only interesting, but also brings us together as brothers."

"Since I have become the Director of Hillels in Memphis, Hillel and ZBT (See **ZBT** Page 4)



For years, the Zeta Beta Tau fraternity at University of Memphis has partnered with Hillels of Memphis to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day by bringing meaningful educational programing into the frat house. This year ZBT tapped Hillel Director Sophie Bloch to curate a program for a group of 15 members and their friends.



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My Teen Israel Experience



Aiden Kahane, right, made memories and friendships that will last a lifetime, and found a connection to the land of Israel.

Aidan Kahane, son of Elana and Josh Kahane, is a senior at Cooper Yeshiva High School for Boys. Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemsky Endowment Fund provided him with a Teen Israel Experience grant to help offset the cost of his NCSY JOLT program in Israel.

By Aidan Kahane

What does Israel mean to me? Is it important to me? Am I supposed to have a connection to the land itself?

The above are all unanswered questions that I proceeded to ponder for the first half of my NCSY JOLT Israel experience. Before the pandemic, I was a frequent visitor of the country, which allowed me to have familiarity with the language and the culture, but it sadly also caused me to lose appreciation for the land. As I traveled the land with other Orthodox teens, with similar religious backgrounds, from across the country, I began to understand ideas that I could not at younger ages. Concepts pressed into my mind trip after trip finally resonated with me. I began to appreciate the land, not only for its fun activities and the people who inhabit it, but for the feeling of belonging, which I only achieved over the summer.

NCSY JOLT Israel, the trip I was so fortunate to go on, was a five-week coed program focused on both touring and leadership training. We spent the first two weeks touring and hiking the country as a group, absorbing the cul-

ture, and creating unbreakable bonds of friendship, which surely will last a lifetime. During the program's third week, each participant was given a once-in-alifetime opportunity to run a camp for children whose siblings have chronic illnesses. At first, this concept seemed strange, as I initially thought all the focus should be shown directly to the sick children. Seeing the look of joy on a child's face after saying hello to him caused me to realize the importance of this camp. These children have grown up living in the shadows of emergency hospital trips and sad glares from neighbors. All these kids grew up with the title of "the sick boy's brother," or "the sick boy's sister." This camp gave the children the opportunity to create a name for themself, an identity, and a sense of self-worth.

The last two weeks of the program flew by as we tried to fit as much as we could in such a short amount of time. Almost every day there were opportunities to go to night stories and to join night and early morning hikes. I took it upon myself to go to every single one of the optional events to truly reap every ounce of growth from the program. In the end, these optional night and early morning activities became my most inspirational moments, as they were the times I felt closest to the land beneath my feet. With every step we took and the mountains we climbed I gained a stronger feeling that this was my homeland, and this is where I belonged. JOLT Israel provided me with experiences and friendships that will last a lifetime, as well as a love and a connection to the land, which I will carry with me for the remainder of high school, yeshiva, and into my adult life.

I am grateful to Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemsky Endowment Fund for helping to make my NCSY summer program possible.

All rising high school juniors and seniors in the Memphis Jewish community are eligible for grants up to \$3,000 to attend a recognized teen summer or semester program in Israel. Teen Israel Experience applications for Summer 2022 are now available online. To learn more and apply, please go to: www.jcpmemphis. org/lemsky-endowment-fund. HW



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Memphis Candlelighting Time

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Weekly Torah Portion: Ki Tisa

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

An article "Are Jews White? Is Whoopi Goldberg Jewish? 'The View' Holocaust Controvery, Explained" appeared on page 1 in the Feb. 10, 2022 edition.

Give me a break (and not the kind that Whoopi Goldberg rec'd so unjustly from ABC)! So she uttered a platitude about The Holocaust being a case of "Man's inhumanity to Man," which wasn't untrue.

Right? Would she be off the hook if she'd added "the most egregious example known of...." or words to that effect? And are we Jews now considering the Nazis the arbiters of human biology (or whatever "Race" is; Lorraine Hansberry defined it best in her play, "Young, Gifted and Black," when she said that "Race is a device.") And here I've been claiming all these long, long years that

Judaism is not a race. We know that the Nazis, although they claimed it was, couldn't keep their own council, witnessed by the fact that they were known to have kidnapped fair-haired, blue-eyed Jewish children and adopt them out to "fine upstanding Aryan couples." My sister-in-law, with her red hair, freckles,

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and blue eyes, might have been one of those children. Of course, she may have blown her cover by speaking fluent Yiddish, as she did from the age of three. I guess I'll have to take that "shtick" about my looking Jewish out of my stand-up comedy routine. I relate how when people say to me "You look Jewish," I respond by saying: "Folks always get me confused with Sammy Davis Jr." No big deal; I didn't get that many laughs. I recently returned from a visit to my son in Eilat, Israel, but gave up my slot in the Miss Universe contest, which took place there, to get back to the States before the Omicron variant got into the country (perhaps a day after I'd left). While there, I saw several black men walking around wearing yarmulkas with tzitis hanging out of their shirts. Would they have been spared the fate of the six million because they weren't earmarked as part of the "inferior race" Hitler wanted to wipe off the face of the earth? If Whoopi is off without pay for these two week, I suggest we take up a collection to pay her salary. It won't really hurt us; after all, we know what people say about all Jews being rich!

~ Alice Zalon, Memphis, Tennessee HW

Security...

(Continued From Page 1) among other enhancements. Jewish groups received about half the total dollars the California program distributed this year, up from about a third in 2019.

Even if funding for the federal program is increased this year, the architects of analogous state security programs expect demand for their grants to remain high.

Prompted by Poway

California's legislature established its Nonprofit Security Grant Program in 2019 after a mass shooting at Chabad of Poway that killed one person and wounded three others. It allows institutions to apply for up to \$200,000 per year provided they can demonstrate need and show how the money will be spent.

Since the program's formal inception – security grants had been a line item in the state budget beginning in 2015 – it has helped fortify hundreds of religious, political, and mission-based institutions like Planned Parenthood clinics across the state, and spawned similar programs in other states including Pennsylvania and Illinois. New York has been giving out grants since 2017.

In the latest round of California grants, Jewish schools, synagogues, community centers and charities – 138 in all – received approximately \$23.7 million, or roughly \$172,000 each.

Klein said Beth El, which received \$196,724, plans to construct a fence around the perimeter of the campus, install security cameras and reinforce the synagogue's windows. Other synagogues plan to buy more secure front doors or motorize their gates.

"There's plenty of other things that we need," Klein said, security guards being one. "But this is a great step forward."

State Assembly member Jesse Gabriel,

who chairs the California Legislative Jewish Caucus and wrote the legislation establishing the grant program, recently introduced a bill that would make it permanent. It is currently set to expire in 2025.

While California's latest grant allocation was more than triple the amount it gave in the program's first year, not all applicants get funded.

Among those rejected was Temple Beth El of South Orange County, a merger of Reform and Conservative congregations that now serves about 500 families. (It is not affiliated with Klein's synagogue.) Lisabeth Lobenthal, Beth El's executive director, said the synagogue would try to fundraise for the security upgrades it sought and apply again this year.

Lobenthal said she didn't know why Beth El had been turned down, and assumed it was because more nonprofits applied than there was money to go around. But in looking at the recipients, she noticed that some wealthier synagogues secured funding, while some financially challenged ones did not.

"I saw people having received the requested grants that easily could have written the check out of their operating budgets, without even feeling it," Lobenthal said, adding that she remained grateful for the program and the state's willingness to take threats seriously.

As with the California state grants, there are more institutions that apply for federal security grants than receive them. According to a Jewish Insider report, nonprofits across the country submitted 3,361 applications requesting nearly \$400 million in security funding, far exceeding the \$180 million available through the Homeland Security program, which is run by the Federal Emergency Management Agency. Fewer than half those applications were approved.

It's not only Jewish groups calling for more funding for the federal program, created after 9/11 along with other efforts to bolster domestic security. Last year, a bipartisan coalition of 145 members of Congress pushed to double the federal grant allocation, but were unsuccessful. Since the Colleyville incident, the campaign to boost funding has gained strength, with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas among those voicing support.

A 'godsend'

Those who have received the California state grants said the security enhancements will be transformative.

"This is a real godsend for a small synagogue like ours," said Rabbi Alan Henkin of Beth Knesset Bamidbar in Lancaster, which has a membership of about 50 families about an hour's drive north of Los Angeles.

Its backers hope the state security grant program, which has grown in fits and starts since its 2019 founding, will continue to expand. In 2019, about \$12 million was allocated, with approximately a third of it going to 44 Jewish organizations. Because California was facing a pandemic-induced deficit in 2020, it did not award any grants last year, though 29 Jewish organizations in the state received federal security grants.

Jewish nonprofit recipients of the California grants this year includes 30 Chabad institutions, mostly synagogues, which received a total of about \$5.4 million, slightly less than a quarter of the Jewish nonprofit total.

The recipients also include larger synagogues such as Stephen S. Wise Temple, Jewish schools such as Milken Community School, and four Jewish Family and Children's Services offices. Valley Jewish Community Center in West Hills,

which was the target of a mass shooting in 1999, was one of 63 Jewish nonprofits to receive the maximum amount.

The growing interest in the grant program predates the Jan. 15 hostage-taking at the Reform synagogue in Colleyville, Texas. But since the hostage crisis, the governors of Pennsylvania and Illinois have introduced their own nonprofit security grant programs to complement the federal one.

Colleyville parallels

Eleven hours after Rabbi Charlie Cytron-Walker invited in a cold-looking stranger and offered him tea, he and the remaining Colleyville hostages escaped the building unharmed. Afterward, Cytron-Walker, who had thrown a chair at the captor to buy them time to run, credited his synagogue security training, but also said he wished an armed guard had been present.

Klein, of the Bakersfield congregation, said he regretted that synagogues had to adopt the aesthetic of "a war zone." He couldn't shake the feeling that what happened at Cytron-Walker's synagogue could have happened at his.

Cytron-Walker attended the same seminary as Klein, and the two have scores of mutual friends on Facebook.

"That guy is 100% my story," Klein said. "I just happen to be in a different town."

But the vulnerability of his synagogue was not the only aspect that spooked him. It was also the sense that a rabbi's generosity could be a hole in the fabric of synagogue security – and one he might not want to patch.

"He's doing what we do," Klein said of Cytron-Walker. "We let people in, we give them a cup of tea.

"I would do the same thing," he continued. "Maybe not anymore. I don't know."HW

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NJ Snowplow Operator Fired for Allegedly Blasting Jews with Snow and Ice

(JNS) – The New Jersey snowplow operator who was allegedly caught on film spraying two religious men with snow and ice was fired over the weekend, according to media reports.

Danny Klarmann, who was employed by New Jersey Waste Management, reportedly posted a video on Facebook, recorded by a friend, of himself targeting the two Orthodox men while driving though Lakewood, New Jersey. The video caption read, "This one's for you JC." It has since been removed.

Klarmann is also facing potential hate crime charges from the two men. Lakewood police and the Ocean County Prosecutor's office are investigating.

The names of the victims have not been released.

The Orthodox Jewish Chamber of Commerce cited the "sickening antisemitic incident [last] Saturday [that] was recorded and posted to Facebook by the perps themselves." Duvi Honig, CEO of OJCC called for Waste Management to "dismiss these employees as soon as possible."

In response, Waste Management issued an official statement asserting, "the hateful conduct depicted in the video is unacceptable and does not reflect the values of inclusion and diversity we hold as a company." **HW**

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ZBT...

(Continued From Page 1)

have worked together at least once a semester. However, I know that we have always had a close connection," said Sophie. "It's more important than ever for the Jewish community to have non-Jewish allies combatting antisemitism alongside us, and the only way we can do that is by sharing information, talking about it, and educating each other on its prevalence."

ZBT's Holocaust Remembrance Day programming began with a conversation about the insidious role that centuries of European antisemitism had on driving the horrific inhumanity of the Holocaust. Sophie brought the discussion closer to home with two videos about antisemitism awareness, one produced by Hillel International as a part of Hillel's new initiative to combat antisemitism on college campuses, and the other an entry in Memphis Jewish Federation's Shine A Light on Antisemitism series, which debuted during Hanukkah. The full series can be found at jcpmemphis.org/antisemitism.

After finishing the videos, the students had the opportunity to cluster Jews who perished in the Holocaust.

"Reading the names of Holocaust victims and learning more about their personal backgrounds was the most impactful moment from the program for me," said Joseph. "You hear that there are six million Jewish people who lost their lives, but when you put names and sometimes even faces to it, it just has that much more of an impact.

"The more we talk about antisemitism, bring light to it, and tell people it isn't right, the more positive change can be made," he continued. "It is going to take a lot of correction, and even then, some people will still not agree with us. With constant, deliberate action, we can work towards fixing that." HW

Tower Ventures Branches Out into Arlington

By Shoshana Cenker

Tower Ventures CRE has bought a 45acre site on Milton Wilson Road near Airline Road in Arlington for around \$12 million. Tower Ventures principal, Benjamin Orgel, is overseeing the plan to develop the land into the mixed-use Providence Place. This is the company's first project in Arlington - it's joining a longplanned development led by the Bank of Bartlett, which sold the land to Towers.

Though Towers frequently works on developments in Downtown and Midtown Memphis, Orgel said this was a great opportunity to expand its business. "The leadership from the Bank of Bartlett, Arlington Mayor [Mike Wissman], the [Arlington] Chamber of Commerce, and everyone who's been involved in this project have set us up for a wonderful partnership and a great opportunity for us to grow," Orgel said. "If you want to build a successful business, you have to adapt."

Plans for the \$90M project include residential space: detached single-family homes, townhomes, and apartments

- with many of the apartments reserved specifically for people aged 55 and up. Also in the works is a one-acre lake, community garden, open plaza, and pedestrian corridor. The commercial aspect will include retail space, an 80-90-room hotel with restaurant and office space, and commercial office buildings.

Towers seems to be getting into Arlington at just the right time, with Ford Motor Co.'s Blue Oval City announcement and other nearby developments planned including a grocery store, the Shops at Arlington Village, and a hospital emergency room.

Plans are currently being worked through, and Towers might bring on partners to build out the townhomes and single-family homes, while it focuses on the apartments and hotel.

"We obviously want to take on as much as we can, but when we need a partner with expertise or to sell the land and let someone else come in, we're not afraid to swallow our pride and do that," Orgel said. "This is our first project of hopefully many in Arlington." HW

together in smaller break-out groups to share points of view and reflect on what they learned, closing on a solemn and reverential note, with audience members invited to read the names of six Holocaust victims, followed by six minutes of silence in honor of the six million

Rabbi Joel Finkelstein has announced the program for the winter semester at the Mary Hytken Dumont University.

Dumont University

On Tuesday nights at 7 (March 1 at 7:30 p.m.), Rabbi Finkelstein will teach on the following topics.

February 22: Torah and Science March 1: Torah and Nature

March 8: Torah and Health

"The intersection of Torah and other dis-

ciplines is the full panoply of the expression of wisdom, which we are commanded to pursue," said Rabbi Finkelstein.

The Dumont University was founded by the children of Mary Hytken Dumont to promote Jewish learning at ASBEE. All classes are available on the ASBEE Zoom Room https://us02web.zoom. us/j/6607859383, or by entering the zoom room 6607859383. HW

Synagogues Co-Host Scholar-in-Residence Rabbi Hayyim Angel March 4-5

ASBEE Launches Semester of

Anshei Sphard Beth El Emeth and Baron Hirsch announced this week a special scholar-in-residence weekend on March 4 and 5 featuring Rabbi Hayyim Angel, the National Scholar of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals.

Rabbi Angel has taught advanced Bible courses to undergraduate, graduate, and rabbinical students at Yeshiva University since 1996. He travels the world as a scholar-in-residence and has a traditional Orthodox approach to Tanach combined with the best insights of modern scholarship. His approach is thought provoking but also explains things in a clear and concise way.

The congregations will kick off the weekend with a Friday night dinner, which begins at 6:45 p.m. A traditional chicken dinner with a salad and sides will be served. The cost of the meal is \$25 per adult and \$15 per child (ages 3-12) with a family cap of \$75. Sponsorship opportunities are available for \$100 and includes dinner for a household.

The lecture will take place at 8 p.m. following the Friday night dinner and Rabbi Angel will be lecturing on "Dogma, Heresy, and Classical Debates: Creating Jewish Unity in an Age of Confusion."

Special dietary restrictions and reservations must be made by February 29. Reservations can be made to Baron Hirsch at 901-683-7485 or to gwen@ baronhirsch.org.

On Shabbat morning, Rabbi Angel

will give a Drasha on the topic of "The Afterlife in Jewish Thought."

Rabbi Angel's Shabbat Afternoon Lecture is entitled "Megillat Esther: What They Didn't Teach Us in Day School" and will take place at 4:30 p.m.

Rabbi Angel will wrap up his Anshei Sphard and Baron Hirsch scholar-in-residence weekend with a Saturday Night Zoom lecture entitled "When the Torah and Contemporary Moral Values Seem to Clash." The Zoom call will take place in the ASBEE Zoom Room and can be accessed at https://tinyurl.com/2p8tpmj

Rabbi Hayyim Angel received his Bachelor of Arts in Jewish Studies Summa Cum Laude from Yeshiva College, his Master of Arts in Bible from the Bernard Revel Graduate School, his Master of Science in Jewish Education from the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education, and his Rabbinical Ordination from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University. His scholarship focuses on the interaction between traditional and academic approaches to Bible study. He has published over 120 scholarly articles, primarily in Bible, and is author and editor of 15 books.

This program is made possible by a generous gift from Dr. Phillip and Barbara Lieberman and from the Baron Hirsch Scholar-in-Residence Fund. All lectures are free and open to the community. For more information, contact the Baron Hirsch office at 901-683-7485. **HW**

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Three Arrested in Orlando After Jewish Man Assaulted at Neo-Nazi Rally

By Ron Kampeas

(JTA) - Police in Orange County, Florida, arrested three men accused of violence and theft during a neo-Nazi rally in Orlando that made national headlines.

Local media identified the men as Joshua Terrell, 46; Jason Brown, 47; and Burt Colucci, 45. Terrell and Colucci are charged with battery, but officials said that charge could later be elevated to a hate crime. Brown is charged with theft.

The rally on Jan. 29 at an overpass drew about 20 people identifying with the neo-Nazis, who shouted slurs at passersby. The arrests appear to be related to a pepper-spray attack on a Jewish man who approached the neo-Nazis after one spat into the sunroof of his car.

The man got out of his car and identified himself as Jewish, the reports said, and assailants pepper-sprayed and punched him and knocked the phone out of his hand. He got back into his car and a man continued to spit at him.

The alleged attack came during a weekend of antisemitic incidents in Washington, D.C., in Canada and in Chicago, and just weeks after an antisemitic assailant held a rabbi and three congregants hostage in a Texas synagogue. HW

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Alpha Epsilon Pi Awards Three with Highest Honor for Jewish Communal Accomplishments



Flan S Carr

Elan S. Carr, Daniel Elbaum and Hon. Ronald Klein have been awarded the Gitelson Silver Medallion by the Alpha Epsilon Pi Foundation. The Gitelson Silver Medallion recognizes AEPi alumni for their commitment to Jewish communal services. In the 108-year history of Alpha Epsilon Pi, only 55 AEPi alumni (out of more than 120,000) have received this prestigious honor.

Elan Carr, an attorney, served as the United States Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism from 2019-2021. During his two years in office, Carr negotiated groundbreaking agreements with foreign governments, convened the first-ever U.S. government-sponsored conference on combating online hate, and drove the establishment of important new policies on Anti-Zionism, anti-Israel discrimination, and campus antisemitism. He is also a JAG Corps officer in the U.S. Army Reserve and an Iraq War veteran. Previously, Carr prosecuted violent crimes for more than a decade as the Deputy District Attorney for Los Angeles County. Carr is a 1990 graduate of the University of California, where he was a member of AEPi's Chi Alpha chapter and earned his Juris Doctor from Northwestern University. He served as the International President of the Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity from 2012-2014. He resides in Southern California with his wife and three children.

Daniel Elbaum is currently the Head of North America for The Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) as well as the President and CEO of The Jewish Agency International Development (JAID). He leads and oversees the over 90-year-old organization's work connecting Jews to Israel and each other throughout the United States and Canada. Prior to his current position, Elbaum was the Chief Advocacy Officer for the American Jewish Committee (AJC), leading the organization's advocacy efforts in combating antisemitism and protecting Israel's security. Elbaum's Jewish communal career began with the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) where he was their Midwest Region's Civil Rights Counsel and Director of Development. Previously, Elbaum was a felony prosecutor in the Cook County State's Attorney's Office. He graduated from the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in 1996, where he was a member of AEPi's Delta chapter, and then received his Juris Doctor from the University of Illinois College of Law in 1999. He lives in the suburbs of Chicago with his wife and two daughters.

The Honorable Ron Klein has worked in the private sector as a business and transactional attorney for over 25 years and in the public sector as an elected official. He is currently a member of Holland & Knight's Public Policy & Regulation Group. He is also the cochair of the firm's Israel Practice Group, where he works with the firm's attorneys, clients, and others in identifying and facilitating investment and business



Daniel Elbaum

collaboration opportunities between Israel and the United States. Since 2017, Klein serves as the founding chair of the Jewish Democratic Council of America (JDCA). Previously, Hon. Klein served in the Florida House of Representatives, the Florida Senate and as a member of Congress representing Florida's 22ndcongressional district in the U.S. House of Representatives. Klein has also served as the co-chair of the House Anti-Semitism caucus and played a significant role in the drafting and passage of the comprehensive Iran Sanctions Accountability and Divestment Act of 2010. Hon. Klein is a 1979 graduate of The Ohio State University, where he was president of AEPi's Eta chapter. He received his law degree from Case Western Reserve University. He resides in Boca Raton, Florida with his wife, Dori.

"AEPi Alumni Carr, Elbaum and Hon. Klein exemplify everything that the Gitelson Medallion represents. Their commitment to leadership in our Jewish community is inspirational and critical during these challenging times. Brothers Elbaum, Klein and Lorber per-



Marlee Jo Kirsch

Ali and Philip Kirsch of San Francisco, California, announce the birth of their daughter, Marlee Jo Kirsch, on February 2, 2022.

Proud grandparents are Ronni and the late Joe Kirsch and Marilyn and Stephen Howard of Hidden Hills, California. Her great-grandmother is Edee Shuman of Las Vegas, Nevada. **HW**



Hon. Ronald Klein

sonify the mission of Alpha Epsilon Pi – the development of the leaders of the world's Jewish communities," said Jay Feldman, Executive Director of the Alpha Epsilon Pi Foundation.

The Gitelson Silver Medallion, Alpha Epsilon Pi's most historic alumni honor, is presented in memory of the scholarship and communal activity of Nehemiah Gitelson, Talmudic scholar, and father of M. Leo Gitelson, a 1921 graduate of New York University. The Gitelson Medallion is awarded by a vote of the AEPi Foundation Board of Directors.

Alpha Epsilon Pi (AEPi) is the world's leading Jewish college fraternity, operating chapters on more than 160 college campuses. Founded in 1913, AEPi has more than 90,000 living alumni. The fraternity's mission – developing the future leaders of the Jewish communities – is demonstrated every day through acts of Brotherhood, Tzedakah (charity), social awareness and support for Jewish communities and Israel.

The Alpha Epsilon Pi Foundation promotes the values of the Alpha Epsilon Pi Fraternity through leadership development, partnerships with educational and Jewish communal organizations, and provision of scholarships, financial support and programming for the betterment of AEPi brothers, their campuses or their community. HW

Hassan Nasrallah Declares War with Iran 'Will Blow Up Entire Region'

(JNS) – Iran itself and not its allies will "forcefully retaliate against any Israeli strike" against it, Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah told Iranian media in an interview aired last Tuesday.

Speaking to the Iranian-based Arabic news channel Al-Alam, in comments translated by the Lebanese news site Naharnet, Nasrallah said that "Iran is a strong regional state, and any war with it will blow up the entire region."

Nasrallah also claimed that Hezbollah's precision-guided missiles are scattered all over Lebanon, so Israel would need to launch a full-scale war to destroy them, according to i24 News, based in Israel.

The terror chief boasted that Israeli drone flights over Lebanon have ceased "due to the superiority of Hezbollah's air defenses," reported i24.

Nasrallah said he was not "concerned" about "technical discussions" on marking out maritime borders between Israel and Lebanon.

He also dismissed observations that Hezbollah acts in Iran's interests rather than Lebanon's, challenging "anyone to name a single act that Hezbollah has done in the interest of Iran rather than in that of Lebanon." HW





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RSVP to Baron Hirsch at 683-7485 or gwen@baronhirsch.org





Sam Schloss Lodge of B'nai B'rith Presents Stuffed Bears to The American **Red Cross Mid-South Chapter**





(Left) Dr. Joel Turetzky, long-time leader of Sam Schloss Lodge of B'nai B'rith, and (right) Harold Steinberg, member of Sam Schloss Lodge and the B'nai B'rith International Disaster and Emergency Relief Committee, present bears to Joely Cifre, Disaster Program Specialist for the American **Red Cross Mid-South Chapter**

It can be almost unbearable when someone suffers from a disaster. But stuffed bears donated by Sam Schloss Lodge of B'nai B'rith make any hardship a little more, well, bearable. Recently, the lodge presented 180 stuffed bears to the Mid-South Chapter of the American Red Cross. The lodge has donated over 30,000 bears and other stuffed animals over the years.

Joely Cifre, Disaster Program specialist for the Mid-South Chapter of the American Red Cross, knows how important a stuffed bear can be to a child in distress. "It may seem simple, but being able to give a child a teddy bear to hold after a home fire or a natural disaster makes a huge difference," she said. "It's that little bit of hope and compassion that lets them know that someone

B'nai Tzedek of the Jewish Foundation of Memphis provided the necessary funding to make this donation. HW

Not Just in The Bible: Tel Aviv Researchers' Novel Explanation for **Locust Swarming**



A locust swarm. Credit: Professor Amir Ayali.

(JNS) - Locust swarms have been a major cause of famine from ancient times right up to the present day. Now, researchers from Tel Aviv University (TAU) have shown that locusts' microbiomes may play a role in their aggregation behavior.

Specifically, the researchers found that bacteria called Weissella, almost completely absent from the microbiome of solitary locusts, becomes dominant when the host joins a group.

The project was led by Professor Amir Ayali and PhD student Omer Lavy from the School of Zoology at TAU's George S. Wise Faculty of Life Sciences. The study was published in Environmental Microbiology.

"Locust swarms that decimate all crops in their path have been a major cause of famine from biblical times to the present," said Ayali. "Over the last three years, large parts of Africa, India and Pakistan have been hard-hit by locust outbreaks, and climate change is expected to exacerbate the problem even further. Locust swarms form when individual locusts, usually solitary and harmless, aggregate and begin to migrate. However, the causes for this behavior remain largely unknown, and an effective solution is yet to be found."

Although the researchers stressed that their work does not prove unequivocally that the Weissella bacteria are responsible for the swarming and migration of locusts, "the results do however suggest a high probability that the bacteria play an important role in inducing this behavior - a new hypothesis never previously proposed," said Ayali.

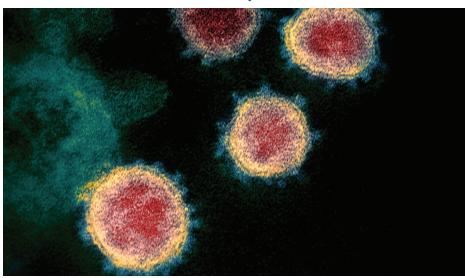
To test their hypothesis, the researchers examined the gut microbiomes of locusts in their lab. They found that the change in Weissella bacteria levels occurred when a solitary locust joined a large group of about 200 others.

They then developed a mathematical model that was used for analyzing the conditions under which induction of locust aggregation produces significant evolutionary advantages for Weissella, allowing these bacteria to spread to numerous other hosts, a release explained.

Based on these results, the researchers hypothesize that the bacteria may in some way encourage their hosts to change their behavior and become more "sociable."

"We hope that this new understanding will drive the development of new means for combating locust outbreaks still a major threat to countless people, animals, and plants all over the globe," concluded Ayali. HW

Israeli Study: Antibodies Perform Best after COVID Infection, Not Vaccine



This transmission electron microscope image shows SARS-CoV-2 – also known as 2019-nCoV, the virus that causes COVID-19 – isolated from a patient in the United States. Credit: NIAID-RML via Wikimedia Commons.

By Abigail Klein Leichman

(Israel21c via JNS) - Over time, the number of SARS-CoV-2 antibodies falls in both previously infected and vaccinated people, but the performance of antibodies improves only after previous infection and not vaccination.

This groundbreaking finding, led by Dr. Carmit Cohen of Israel's Sheba Medical Center, will be presented at the European Congress of Clinical Microbiology and Infectious Diseases in April.

Cohen and her colleagues analyzed antibody-induced immune response in 130 recovered individuals for up to a year and compared it to 402 matched individuals who were double-vaccinated with the Pfizer vaccine but never had COVID-19.

The researchers found that the number of antibodies present a month after vaccination was higher than in patients who had recovered from COVID-19. However, these numbers declined more steeply in the vaccinated group.

While the avidity (antibody performance quality) index was higher in vaccinated individuals than in recovered patients initially, avidity did not significantly change over time in vaccinated individuals but increased gradually in recovered patients.

This could explain why double-vaccinated individuals who never contracted COVID-19 are more likely to experience infection after six months.

The study also found that, contrary to expectations, antibodies of recovered patients with a body-mass index of 30 or higher (in the obese range) were higher at all time points when compared with those with a BMI under 30 (overweight to normal weight range). The obese people who had been previously infected were therefore better protected against future infection.

Of all recovered patients, 42 (36%) experienced long COVID, including mental health (5%), neurological (9%), cardiovascular (5%) and respiratory (31%) symptoms.

The authors conclude: "While the number of antibodies decreases with time in both COVID-19 recovered patients and vaccinated individuals, the quality of antibodies increases following infection but not after vaccination. These results provide specific characteristics of the immune response that may explain the differential protection against COVID-19 in previously infected and vaccinated individuals."

This article was first published by Israel21c HW



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401(k) and IRA: A Combined Savings Strategy

Provided by Mike Stein, Managing Director - Investments, Wells Fargo Advisors... Call Mike with investment questions at 901.761.8151

Contributing to an employer-sponsored retirement plan or an IRA is a big step on the road to retirement, but contributing to both can significantly boost your retirement assets. A recent study found that, on average, individuals who owned both a 401(k) and an IRA at some point during the six-year period of the study had combined balances about 2.5 times higher than those who owned only a 401(k) or an IRA. And people who owned both types of accounts consistently over the period had even higher balances.1

Here is how the two types of plans can work together in your retirement savings strategy.

Convenience vs. Control

Employer-sponsored plans such as 401(k), 403(b), and 457(b) plans offer a convenient way to save through pre-tax salary deferrals, and contribution limits are high: \$20,500 in 2022 (\$19,500 in 2021) and an additional \$6,500 if age 50 or older. Although the costs for investments offered in the plan may be lower than those offered in an IRA, these plans typically offer limited investment choices and have restrictions on control over the account.

IRA contribution limits are much lower: \$6,000 in 2021 and 2022 (\$7,000 if age 50 or older). But you can usually choose from a wide variety of investments, and the account is yours to control and keep regardless of your employment situation. If you leave your job, you can roll any assets in your employer plan into your IRA.2 Whereas contributions to an employer plan generally must be made by December 31, you can contribute to an IRA up to the April tax filing deadline.

Matching and Diversification

Many employer plans match a percentage of your contributions. If your employer offers this program, it would be wise to contribute at least enough to receive the full match. Contributing more would be better, but you also might consider funding your IRA, especially if the contributions are deductible

Along with the flexibility and control offered by the IRA, holding assets in both types of accounts, with different underlying investments, could help diversify your portfolio. Diversification is a method used to help manage investment risk; it does not guarantee a

(see below).

profit or protect against investment loss.

Rules and Limits

Although annual contribution limits for employer plans and IRAs are separate, your ability to deduct traditional IRA contributions phases out at higher income levels if you are covered by a workplace plan: modified adjusted gross income (MAGI) of \$68,000 to \$78,000 for single filers and \$109,000 to \$129,000 for joint filers in 2022 (\$66,000 to \$76,000 and \$105,000 to \$125,000 in 2021).3 You can make nondeductible contributions to a traditional IRA regardless of income.

Eligibility to contribute to a Roth IRA phases out at higher income levels regardless of coverage by a workplace plan: MAGI of \$129,000 to \$144,000 for single filers and \$204,000 to \$214,000 for joint filers in 2022 (\$125,000 to \$140,000 and \$198,000 to \$208,000 in 2021).

Contributions to employer-sponsored plans and traditional IRAs are generally made on a pre-tax or tax-deductible basis and accumulate tax deferred. Distributions are taxed as ordinary income and may be subject to a 10% federal income tax penalty if withdrawn prior to age 59½ (with certain exceptions). Nondeductible contributions to a traditional IRA are not taxable when withdrawn, but any earnings are subject to ordinary income tax. Required minimum distributions (RMDs) from employer-sponsored plans and traditional IRAs must begin for the year you reach age 72 (70½ if you were born before July 1, 1949). However, you are generally not required to take distributions from an employer plan as long as you still work for that employer.

Roth IRA contributions are not deductible, but they can be withdrawn at any time without penalty or taxes. To qualify for the tax-free and penalty-free withdrawal of earnings, Roth IRA dis-

tributions must meet a five-year holding requirement and take place after age 59½ (with certain exceptions). Original owners of Roth IRAs are exempt from RMDs. Beneficiaries of all IRAs and employer plans must take RMDs based on their age and relationship to the original owner.

1) Employee Benefit Research Institute, 2020

²⁾ Other options when separating from an employer include leaving the assets in your former employer's plan (if allowed), rolling them into a new employer's plan, or cashing out (usually not wise).

3) If you are not covered by a workplace plan but your spouse is covered, eligibility phases out at MAGI of \$204,000 to \$214,000 for joint filers in 2022 (\$198,000 to \$208,000 in 2021).

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Two May Be Better Than One

Nearly one-third of U.S. households have an IRA and an employer-sponsored retirement plan.

Percentage of U.S. households with tax-advantaged retirement savings accounts



Source: Investment Company Institute, 2021

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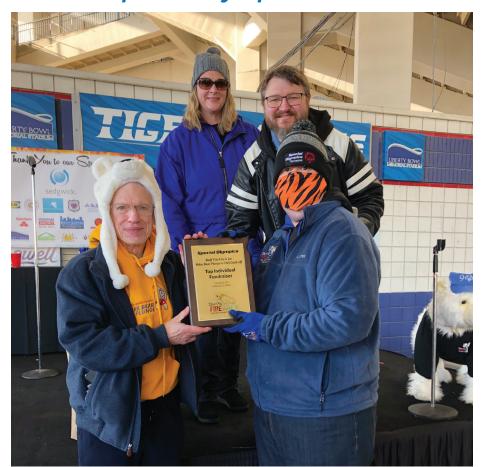
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David Ross Takes the Coldest Plunge To-**Date for Special Olympics**



Presenting David Ross (in Polar Bear Hat) with the Top Individual Fundraiser award is West TN Regional Director of Special Olympics Lisa Taylor (wearing mask) with Ron Roberts and event emcee Brodee Scott

David Ross expresses his thanks to everyone for their support at the Special Olympics Polar Bear Plunge held on February 5, 2022.

This was the 10th year in a row that David received the award for the most funds raised for Special Olympics at this event.

"The water was the coldest of all the years I have participated in this event," David confirmed.

Donations are still being accepted at www.classy.org/fundraiser/3619900. HW

British Jews Record 2,255 Antisemitic Incidents Last Year – the Highest Tally in Europe



People stage a Together Against Antisemitism rally in London, Dec. 8, 2019. Credit: Matthew Chattle/Barcroft Media via Getty Images

By Cnaan Liphshiz

(JTA) – British Jews and authorities have recorded 2,255 antisemitic incidents in the United Kingdom in 2021 – the highest total in recent years anywhere in Europe.

It is also the highest total ever reported in a single calendar year by the Community Security Trust, British Jewry's antisemitism watchdog.

The CST report published last Wednesday found an increase of antisemitic incidents of 34%, up from 1,684 incidents recorded in 2020. The 2021 tally is 24% higher than the previous record of 1,813 incidents reported in 2019

The United Kingdom has a Jewish population of 292,000. In France, with a Jewish population of 446,000, the main watchdog group recorded 589 hate crimes against Jews in 2021.

Of the 2021 tally in the U.K., 871 incidents happened in May and June, close to when Israel and Hamas were exchanging fire and when Israeli Arabs and Jews were clashing in Israel's "mixed cities."

"It is no exaggeration to say that the landscape of UK-based antisemitism in 2021 is largely defined by responses to conflict in Israel and Palestine, as indeed is the unprecedented annual figure," CST wrote in the report.

Assaults accounted for 176, or nearly 8% of the tally, including three incidents that involved "extreme violence," as CST termed it.

In one violent incident from October, a group of teenage girls riding on scooters in north London mobbed two Jewish girls, shouting "dirty Jews" at them. At least two of the alleged attackers choked

one of the Jewish girls and slammed her against a brick wall.

Seven assaults involved the offender stripping the victim of religious clothes or accessories. In six instances, a vehicle was used with the intention of causing harm to pedestrians, the report said.

But the incidents with the largest footprint in the media and public discourse featured milder violence and more intimidation.

In December, Jews celebrating Hanukkah on a bus in London were harassed by a group of men. The BBC coverage of the Oxford Street incident, in which the broadcaster insisted based on disputed evidence that the assaulted Jews may have used an anti-Muslim slur against their attackers, triggered frustration among Jewish readers and sparked an internal probe that led the BBC to slightly revise its claim.

Another incident that many British Jews view as traumatic happened in May and was nonviolent.

A motorcade of cars displaying Palestinian flags drove across the United Kingdom; in heavily Jewish neighborhoods of London, several of the dozens of people in the cars shouted obscenities through loudspeakers, including, "f—the Jews, rape their daughters."

Linzi Pinto, a Jewish mother of two from northern London, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency shortly after the incident: "It's the mobilization, the impunity, the scale, the sheer misogyny and the violence that's so shocking this time around. It's the worst it's been. It's terrifying and we're definitely questioning our future here. We're fortunate to be able to leave." **HW**

Tlaib Paid \$170,000 to Firm Run by Activist Who Accuses Israel of Ethnic Cleansing

(JNS) – The campaign of Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.) has given \$170,000 to a political consulting and advocacy firm run by an anti-Israel activist who called Israel an "apartheid state," reported Fox News.

Unbought Power LLC is led by Rasha Mubarak, who describes herself as a "Palestinian Muslim American community activist."

The firm has received \$147,000 from Tlaib's campaign since March 2020 and another \$23,000 from her leadership PAC since October 2020, according to Federal Elections Commission (FEC) filings. Mubarak is also listed as the "treasurer" of the leadership PAC called "Rooted in Community Leadership."

In May 2021, amid 11 days of violence between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza

Strip, Mubarak tweeted: "These aren't clashes – it's an ongoing occupation. These aren't evictions – they are forced expulsions. This isn't a conflict – it's settler colonialism, it's ethnic cleansing, it's oppression, it's apartheid."

She also attacked Rep. Ted Deutch (D-Fla.), who is Jewish, on Twitter in September after he criticized Tlaib for calling Israel an "apartheid state."

"Oh look it's [Deutch] throwing another tantrum," tweeted Mubarak. "He used his time to attack [Tlaib] for underscoring facts also made by Human Rights Watch [and B'Tselem] – Israel is indeed an apartheid state. He's flustered [because] how else does one rebuttal the truth? Bullying [and] disparagement."

Mubarak has also publicly called for defunding the police multiple times, according to Fox News. **HW**

NYPD: Nearly 300 Percent Increase in Anti-Semitic Crimes in January From 2021



An NYPD police cruiser. Credit: Marco Curaba/Shutterstock

(JNS) – Anti-Semitic crimes in New York City were nearly 300 percent higher in January when compared to the same month in previous years, according to NYPD statistics reported by Fox News.

A total of 15 hate crimes targeting Jewish people were reported in January – a 275 percent increase compared to the four incidents in January 2021, stated the report.

The number of incidents continues to rise in February with the swastika vandalism of yeshivah school buses and an attack on a Jewish man, which both took place on Jan. 4 in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn. The NYPD Hate Crime Task Force said it is investigating the separate attacks.

"The Jewish community is on the extreme edge and this violence has got to stop," said Scott Richman, regional director of the Anti-Defamation League of New York and New Jersey, last Sunday. "It is becoming normalized, and we

simply cannot accept that as the state of affairs."

The ADL is offering a \$7,500 reward for any information that leads to an arrest and the conviction of those responsible for the two crimes last Friday. A second assault against a visibly Jewish person reportedly took place also in the same area last Friday but few details are known about the attack, according to the

In 2020 during the coronavirus pandemic, 116 complaints about hate crimes against Jews were reported, and of the 93 people arrested for hate crimes that year, 25 of them allegedly targeted Jewish people, the NYPD statistics also revealed.

In comparison, 242 complaints involving hate crimes against Jewish people were recorded in 2019. Of the 133 people arrested for hate crimes that year, 47 allegedly committed them against Jews. **HW**

Gazpacho or Gestapo? Marjorie Taylor Greene Delivered Up a Word Salad and Jewish Liberals Gag

By Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA) – If Marjorie Taylor Greene sets out for another repentant trip to the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, she might want to stop by a Spanish restaurant on the way.

That way the Georgia Republican congresswoman can figure out the difference between the Gestapo, Hitler's atrocity-committing shock troops, and gazpacho, the yummy Spanish cold soun

In an interview on the pro-Trump One America News Network, Taylor Green laced into investigations by a special House committee into the violent Jan. 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol using the mangled kind of Nazi comparisons that Jewish groups have implored her to avoid.

"Not only do we have the D.C. jail, which is the D.C. Gulag, but now we have Nancy Pelosi's gazpacho police, spying on members of Congress, spying on the legislative work that we do, spying on our staff and spying on American citizens who want to come talk to their representatives," Taylor Greene said.

The Republican Accountability Project, a Twitter feed run by Republicans seeking to purge their party of acolytes of former President Donald Trump, last Wednesday posted a snippet of the interview.

Sarah Longwell, a founder of the group, saw the tweet going viral and

seized an opportunity. "Our team is covering the GOP from soup to nuts," she said.

Jewish liberals shared Taylor Greene's statement with puns, some more digestible than others.

"I join her in her fight against both the Gazpacho police and their collaborationist allies in the Vichyssoise," said lawyer Akiva Cohen, punning on the French collaborationist Vichy regime and another continental cold soup.

"The things the gazpacho police would do to the juice!" said Eric Muller, a Holocaust scholar at the University of North Carolina. "In their tortilla chambers!"

There were plenty of obvious references to a certain Seinfeld episode. "MTG thinks Pelosi is a soup Nazi," said Andy Levy, a podcaster. There were also plenty of regrets that Taylor Greene did not confuse "gulag," the Soviet prison system, with "goulash" – a soup that can be served hot and cold.

On a more serious note, some observers were dismayed that Taylor Greene, despite her visit to the Holocaust Museum and apologizing for using Holocaust analogies, continued the habit.

"Folks, I'm beginning to get the sense that Marjorie Taylor Greene's trip to the Holocaust Museum didn't actually take," tweeted Yair Rosenberg of The Atlantic. **HW**

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The Origins of Valentine's Day



Editor's note: This story is being reprinted in memory of Ted Roberts in appreciation of his longtime service as a newspaper columnist.

By Ted Roberts

It all began in 19th century England. Young Bobby Shaftoe loved – from a distance of course – his schoolmate, Vicki Valentine. Their combined age was 22 and Bobby was 12. So, you can figure out that Mistress Vicki was only 10. But emotionally, physically, and intellectually she was a giantess compared to shy Bob.

He preferred a pounding with a cricket bat to a short conversation with this half-grown schoolgirl. He stuttered, and a rash (which spelled "I LOVE YOU" in blotchy red bumps) decorated his chest. So Bobby – eager to proclaim his emotions – approached his good friend, young Master Hallmark, who had a reputation for courage, a talent for fond phrases, and a need for shillings, pence, and pounds. Bobby Shaftoe begged his pal, Hallmark to deliver a devotional message to Vicki, the playground Queen. "I'll give you a whole handful

of pence, Hallmark."

That very afternoon they held their planning session.

"What thoughts should I convey to Mistress Valentine," began the silver-tongued emissary.

"Well, tell her I think she's cuter than a dish of kidney pie." Bob was fascinated by kidney pie. In fact, the same devotion was applied to anything that came on a plate. Consequently, he was a rounded little fellow.

"I love her yellow hair and I think her eyes are shinier than my finest Aggie marble," said Bobby.

Young Master Hallmark, blessed with a maturity beyond his age, duly took note. "Hair so fine – Eyes that shine – Will you be mine, Valentine?"

The next day young Master Hallmark, note in hand, was waiting by the playground swing for the golden girl. He was idly making a dollar sign in the dust at his feet when he looked up at a pair of emerald green eyes framed by crayon yellow hair. Gad – Bobby Shaftoe should have warned him. Who could look at those eyes and still command brain and tongue to work sensibly together.

He tried, but like his employer, he developed palpitations. And only gibberish fell on the sugar cookie ears of Mistress Vicki Valentine.

The messenger fled, but not before he thrust his notes in Victoria's palm.

The next day the owner of the emerald eyes and sugar cookie ears coyly approached a trembling Bobby Shaftoe. She wore a modest shawl over her hypnotic hair, and she turned down the volume of those radiating emerald eyes so that Bobby could breathe normally and articulate without slobbering.

It made no difference. But luckily, Victoria opened the conversation with, "Yes, yes, yes, I'll be your Valentine forever. What a loving heart lies in your pudgy chest. And what a poetic soul pulses in your cuddly body. And I'd love to share a plate of kidney pie with you."

The poetic soul moved its head up and down in recognition and gratitude. That's all it could do.

Well, the word soon got around that Hallmark could make a golden cage of phrases that could capture any girlish heart.

"You just give him a few clues," young Vanlandingham told a group of spellbound listeners, "like her hair color and whether she's thick or thin. He makes up a mushy note and takes it to her. Next thing you know – you're sitting in her parents' dining room having fish and chips."

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Business boomed for Young Master Hallmark. He kept that lucky last line that had heralded his new career. With a slight twist it became – "Won't you be MY Valentine." In fact, since all young ladies of 10 have hair so fine and eyes that shine, he used the very same verse for months. It went with everything – like your white socks. His career thrived.

That Hallmark, he was a card!

The syndicated humor of Ted, the Scribbler on the roof, has appeared in newspapers around the U.S., on National Public Radio, and numerous websites. **HW**

INSIGHTS FROM ISRAEL

A Homemade Crisis Slams Israel's Democracy

By Howard Weisband

On February 6, a shocking and frightening headline jumped out at me: "Who is democracy's threat, Netanyahu or the police?"

Writing in the Jerusalem Post, Herb Keinon, a respected reporter and columnist, went on to say: "As Netanyahu was being accused of undermining the rule of law, those charged with preserving that law were breaking it." He was referring to the current charges now being examined in criminal court against the former prime minister.

He continued: "Only 'heaven's grace' saved Israel's democracy from former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, then attorney-general Avichai Mandelblit was quoted in November as saying in a private conversation."

And as Keinon writes: "And all the while, the police – allegedly without a court order – used NSO Group's powerful Pegasus spyware to suck out all the phone contents of certain individuals, including at least one central state's witness in one of the cases against Netanyahu."

Based on earlier and ongoing bombshell reports from Calcalist, an Israeli daily business newspaper and website that broke this story, we've learned that "CEOs of government ministries, journalists, tycoons, corporate executives, mayors, social activists, and even the Prime Minister's relatives, all were police targets, having their phones hacked by NSO's spyware, prior to any investigation even opening and without any judicial authorization."

Pegasus?

From Wikipedia: "Pegasus is spyware developed by the Israeli cyber-arms company NSO Group that can be covertly installed on mobile phones (and other devices) capable of reading text messages, tracking calls, collecting passwords, location tracking, accessing the target device's microphone and camera, and harvesting information from apps. The spyware is named after Pegasus, the winged horse of Greek mythology. It is a Trojan horse computer virus that can be sent 'flying through the air' to infect cell phones."

Irony of all ironies! The Israeli hightech industry is acclaimed as creating many of the most sophisticated consumer oriented, computer, medical, and military products, including the cell phone itself, in use worldwide. As with most of those creations, which have been marketed and sold internationally, the Pegasus spyware was sold abroad to several countries

Now we learn it has been widely used without judicial approval within our own society to intensely spy on Israeli citizens in a fashion that potentially undermines our precious democracy. Some of these individuals were involved in legal proceedings, while many others were not under any suspicion of criminal activity or wrongdoing.

I could not help but think back to that classic novel of George Orwell, "1984," written in 1949, that I read as a teenager, which described a future police state wherein Big Brother is literally watching over all citizens.

Scary.

On the positive side, however, our democratic structure and political system is responding. State investigative committees are already being set up and put into motion. The Jerusalem Post has reported that Prime Minister Bennett has added the Shin Bet and the Mossad to the team probing the police hacking scandal.

That's good, but it also made me step back and think. The Shin Bet, the Mossad, and the police are considered Israel's three security services. Now the former are being assigned to aid in the

investigation of the third!

There undoubtedly will be many twists and turns as this story unfolds and the investigations proceed. I urge you to follow these events through our many credible media sources and analysts.

The bottom line? The strength of Israel's democracy will prevail.

Keinon wrote: "The truth is that neither was truly a threat to democracy: neither Netanyahu nor the police, because Israeli democracy is strong enough and resilient enough — and has enough necessary checks and balances—to fend off genuine threats. Much of the 'threat to democracy' talk is hyperbole. Not everything undemocratic—even if very unseemly—is a mortal threat to democracy itself."

Proudly and firmly, I concur.

Howard Weisband served as Assistant Executive Director (1975-77) and Executive Director (1977-84) of the Memphis Jewish Federation. Following Aliyah with his family in 1986, he served as Secretary General of the Jewish Agency for Israel through 1997, and then in other senior professional positions in Israel. Now retired, he and Kayla live in Jerusalem. He can be reached at hweisband@gmail.com HW

Four Arab Citizens of Israel Suspected of Assaulting Jewish Journalist



Bedouin riot over tree-planting by the Jewish National Fund, outside the village of al-Atrash in the Negev desert, Jan. 13, 2022. Credit: Jamal Awad/Flash90.

(JNS) – Four Arab citizens of Israel suspected of assaulting a Jewish-Israeli journalist in the Negev were detained

last month, the Israeli Security Agency (ISA) and the Israel Police revealed last Thursday.

Maharan Abu Adra, Balil Abu Adra, Kerem al-Kadi and Ismail al-Kadi, all aged 18-19, were held on suspicion of involvement in assaulting Haaretz reporter Nati Yefet and torching his car, in addition to throwing stones at police.

Yefet was attacked after he arrived at the Segev Shalom intersection to cover the violent Bedouin protests against Keren Kayemeth LeIsrael-the Jewish National Fund tree-planting ahead of the Tu B'Shevat holiday. Although Yefet presented his press pass, about 20 Bedouin protesters attacked him, stole his car, then set it on fire. He emerged uninjured after being extricated by police.

According to the ISA, the investigation revealed that the young men had been involved in disturbances in Segev Shalom in the day leading up to the assault and their arrest. Their actions included throwing firebombs at police, burning tires and blocking the access road to the area.

"The ISA and the Israel Police view with utmost gravity any involvement by Israeli citizens in terrorist activity, and will continue to deal with those who harm the security of the citizens and security forces of the state to the fullest extent of the law," the ISA said in a statement.

The suspects' files have been turned over to the Southern District of the State Attorney's office, which is expected to issue serious indictments against them in the Beersheva District Court.

The ISA noted that three of the four were born in Israel, with a parent of one of them having received status in Israel in the framework of "family reunification."

The first reading of an updated Family Reunification Law passed in the Knesset earlier this week. **HW**

A Gay Jewish Liberal (And Rabbi's Husband) Is Running For Congress In Deep-Red West Virginia

supports restarting the Extended Child

Tax Credit, raising the national mini-

mum wage and making sure benefits

are available to miners suffering from

black lung disease. "I am adamantly

The lack of a marquee name on the

Democratic ballot speaks to the party's

weakness in the Mountain State, accord-

ing to John Kilwein, chair of the politi-

cal science department at West Virginia

University. Famously or notoriously,

depending on one's politics, Democratic

Sen. Joe Manchin hangs onto his seat by

"There's a problem with the Demo-

cratic Party when there's not someone

more prominent, maybe a member of

the House of Delegates or [state] Sen-

ate, who's running," Kilwein said. "That

Mr. Wendell is the guy should sound the

alarm bells for the West Virginia Demo-

cratic Party."

frequently parting ways with his party.

pro-choice," he added.



Barry Wendell, a Democratic congressional candidate in West Virginia, is married to Rabbi Joe Hample of Congregation Tree of Life in Morgantown, rear. (Courtesy)

By Lee Chottiner

(JTA) – Barry Wendell hardly fits the mold for a West Virginia politician. Not only is he a liberal Jew in a red state, he's a recent arrival and a gay man married to a rabbi.

Yet Wendell, 72, could still be the Democratic Party's candidate this fall in the state's Second Congressional District.

The retired two-term Morgantown city councilman decided to run for Congress, waiting until the filing deadline to see who else would run to represent the newly redrawn district.

"Somebody had to do it and I just felt like I needed to step in," he said.

He will meet Angela Dwyer of Martinsburg, a political newcomer who is African American, in the May 10 Democratic primary. Wendell knows he would face a quixotic, if not impossible, challenge to win the general election in November. Every county in heavily Republican West Virginia went for former President Donald Trump in the 2020 election, giving him nearly 70% of the state's votes.

West Virginia lost one district in the 2020 census, meaning the Democratic candidate in Wendell's district will likely face one of two Republican incumbents. GOP Reps. David McKinley and Alex Mooney have name recognition and campaign war chests topping \$1 million – an advantage Wendell said he can't match.

"As a Jew, of course I believe in miracles that happen every day," Wendell said. "But it probably would take a miracle"

Wendell wouldn't be running, he said, were it not for his husband, Rabbi Joe Hample of Congregation Tree of Life in Morgantown, the home of West Virginia University and the most Democratic city in the state.

"He really encouraged me to do this," Wendell said. "If he had said, 'I don't think you can do it do this,' I wouldn't have done it."

Hample explained it this way: "Isn't it a Jewish value to stand up and be counted? At the beginning the Book of Numbers, we stand up and we are counted. I think that's huge."

A native of Baltimore, Wendell studied urban affairs at Tulane University before working for the Social Security Administration in Miami for six years. In 1984, he moved to Los Angeles, where he turned to substitute teaching, worked as a cantorial soloist and tutored b'nai mitzvah students. He and Hample married in 2008.

The couple moved to Morgantown, in the northern part of the state, in 2012, and Wendell was elected to the city council in 2017 and 2019.

On his Facebook page, he says he

Though supportive of his husband's campaign, Hample said he will limit his participation during the race.

"I have to be the rabbi of the Democrats and the Republicans," he said. "But I feel like I can stand up strongly for inclusion issues. I believe in a society where everyone is validated, and everyone has dignity, and everyone has rights. I will take a stand on those kinds of issues."

Wendell's campaign comes at a frightening time for American Jews, with the hostage-taking at a synagogue in Colleyville, Texas, and vandalism at Chicago synagogues recently making headlines.

Still, neither man is prepared to let the times muzzle them.

"It's too late for us to die young," Hample said. "People who believe in democracy don't deserve to prevail unless they have the courage of our convictions and the willingness to stand tall."

Wendell simply added, "I personally can't live a fearful life."

Over the coming months, Wendell will learn how local voters will react to a liberal, gay, Jewish candidate, but he believes he may be the kind of person West Virginians need to hear from –locally and in Washington, D.C.

"I get that it's odd," he said, "but maybe it is the ideal candidate, somebody who can come in and say something completely different from what they expect." **HW**

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Rabbi Hayyim Angel is a rabbi, academic, author and editor who is the National Scholar of the Institute for Jewish Ideas and Ideals. Rabbi Angel has taught advanced Tanakh courses to undergraduate, graduate, and rabbinical students at Yeshiva University since 1996, and lectures widely. He also serves as the Tanakh Education Scholar at Yeshivat Ben Porat Yosef school in Paramus, New Jersey. Rabbi Angel previously served as rabbi of Congregation Shearith Israel in New York City, and as rabbinic scholar at Congregation Kehilath Jeshurun in New York.

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