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Hebrew Watchman

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HEBREWWATCHMAN.COM 17 KISLEV, 5784 NOVEMBER 30, 2023 VOL. 102, NO. 11

First 13 Israeli Hostages Released after Seven Weeks in Hamas Captivity



Israeli security forces stand next to ambulances waiting outside the helipad of Tel Aviv's Schneider medical center, as they prepare to receive hostages released from Gaza, Nov. 24, 2023. Credit: Fadel Senna/AFP via Getty Images

By Gabe Friedman

This is a developing story. Parts of this story have been edited by The Hebrew Watchman to reflect updated information obtained and reported by JNS. Saturday and Sunday updates on page 9.

(JTA and JNS) – Hamas released 13 Israeli hostages into Egypt on Friday, [Nov. 24,] a sign that the four-day cease-fire brokered between Israel and the terror group that runs Gaza was holding.

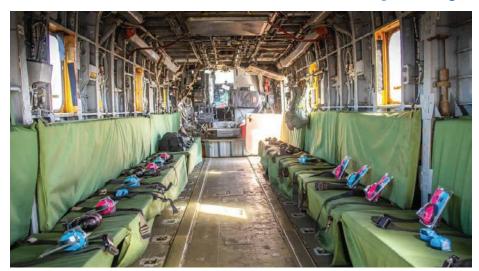
Ten Thai nationals and one Filipino national were also released in a surprise additional deal that Egyptian officials said they had brokered. Thirty-nine Palestinian prisoners were released from

Israel as part of the agreement, and multiple tankers of humanitarian aid entered the Gaza Strip.

According to JNS, they headed into Israel after being driven to Egypt by the International Committee of the Red Cross via the Rafah border crossing.

The group, which consisted of women and children, was set to return home by Israel Air Force helicopter, which the military outfitted with special blue and pink noise-canceling headphones.

The Israeli government released the names of those released: Yaffa Adar, 85; Chana Peri, 79; Margalit Mozes, 77; Ruth Mundar, 78, Keren Mundar, 54,



Israel Air Force helicopters prepare to take hostages released from the Gaza Strip, Nov. 24, 2023. Credit: IDF Spokesperson's Unit.

and Ohad Mundar, 9; Chana Katzir, 76; Adina Moshe, 72; Danielle Aloni, 45, and Emilia Aloni, 5; Doron Katz-Asher, 34, and her children Rav Asher, 4, and Aviv Asher, 2.

According to JNS, "We have a great privilege to be here at this significant moment," Lt. Col. 'Yud,' commander of 118 Squadron, said ahead of the rescue flight. "Today marks the beginning of the light at the end of the tunnel."

After arriving at the base, the hostages were set to speak by phone with their families before being transferred to hospitals for medical exams and monitoring. There, they will be reunited with loved ones.

The Health Ministry instructed phy-

sicians to carry out exams "sensitively" and document signs of torture, rape or other crimes.

The IDF spokesperson called on the Israeli public to show "patience and sensitivity" and to respect the privacy of the freed captives and their families.

Hamas released the hostages at around 4 p.m., just minutes before Shabbat began at sundown.

According to reports, at least some of the hostages are not aware that they had family members killed on Oct. 7.

The temporary truce agreed upon earlier [last] week looked like it could have hit a snag, as the Israeli Defense Forc-

(See **Hostages** Page 3)

'Magical Evening' at Baron Hirsch Marks Installation of Rabbi Ian and Katie Lichter, Demonstrates Support for Israel



Katie and Rabbi lan Lichter (second and third from left) with Magical Evening co-chairs Penina Wender and David Cooper.

By Amara Levine-Reich Photos by Rivka Braverman

Nearly 350 members and friends of Baron Hirsch filled the synagogue's social hall on Sunday, Nov. 12 for a "Magical Evening" of fine dining, prayer, camaraderie, entertainment and solidarity with Israel and to formally install Rabbi Ian and Rebbetzin Katie Lichter as spiritual leaders of the congregation.

The Lichters relocated to Memphis from Long Island, New York – where they previously served as assistant rabbi and rebbetzin of Great Neck Synagogue – during the summer of 2022. Since joining Baron Hirsch, they have brought

new life to the congregation's spiritual, educational and social program offerings and worked tirelessly to engage community members of all ages.

"That we sold out of dinner reservations shows the extent to which Rabbi Lichter and Katie have forged meaningful connections in just one year," said David Cooper, Baron Hirsch's gabbai rishon and co-chair of both the rabbinic search committee and the Magical Evening. "As more of our members get to know the Lichters through their caring and compassionate guidance in moments of celebration and times of

(See Magical Page 7)

We Stand with Israel.

There is still so much to be done to help the Israeli people, and Federation is here to help shine a light, provide resources and foster hope. Donate using the QR code. You can also send a message to our brothers and sisters in Shoham, our Israeli sister city by emailing shoham@jcpmemphis.org, and visit our office to pick up campaign yard signs, yahrzeit candles, We Stand with Israel bracelets, and blue ribbons.



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Generous Donor Helps to Refurbish Holocaust Memorial at MJCC



Thank you to Jonathan Hackmeyer and his wife, Angie, (not pictured) for generously donating to have our Holocaust Memorial refurbished to look as good as new for years to come. Pictured from right to left: Jonathan Hackmeyer, Lyla Cenker, Akiva Cenker, Jack Cohen (Holocaust survivor), Sarah Beth Cohen-Wilcox, Aidan Cenker, and Shoshana Cenker (Holocaust Committee member).

A Jewish Family Owned the Monticello Estate Longer than Thomas Jefferson Did. a Documentary Tells their Story.



Members of the Levy family-owned Monticello for 89 years, longer than Thomas Jefferson and his descendants. Credit: Courtesy of PerlePress Productions

By Jacob Gurvis

(JTA) - As an early champion of religious freedom in the United States, Thomas Jefferson's regard for and relationship with Jews has been well-documented. But the Jewish history of Jefferson's famous Monticello home is less

Enter the documentary "The Levys of Monticello," which hit streaming platforms last Friday and tells the story of the Jewish family that owned the estate

for 89 years - longer than Jefferson did himself.

From Menemsha Films, the documentary chronicles Uriah Phillips Levy and his nephew, Jefferson Monroe Levy, descendants of Sephardic Jews who fled Portugal during the Inquisition. The elder Levy served in the Navy and was the first Jew to achieve the rank of commodore when he fought in the War of 1812.

In 1834, Levy bought Monticello

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Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. Dec. 1, 2023 / 18 Kislev, 5784....... 4:30 p.m. Havdalah, Sat. Dec. 2, 2023 / 19 Kislev, 5784...... 5:28 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Vayishlach

for \$2,700 and, along with 20 slaves, worked to repair the house and maintain the grounds. After Levy's death and a legal dispute with the U.S. government, Jefferson Monroe Levy took over. The younger Levy, who would later serve in Congress, became the target of an antisemitic campaign by Maude Littleton, the wife of a congressman who objected to his ownership.

The film premiered at the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival in February 2022, where it won a jury prize, and has won awards at other Jewish film festivals in Washington, D.C. and Philadelphia. The

director, Steven Pressman, is an Emmy-nominated filmmaker whose first two films focused on the Holocaust.

"As I was working on the film, when I would tell people about the Levys, a lot of them said, 'You gotta be kidding,'" Pressman told "J." The Jewish News of Northern California. "I enjoy telling Jewish stories that are new to audienc-

The film will be available for streaming on Apple TV+ and Amazon Prime Video, plus the Jewish streaming site ChaiFlicks and a number of cable providers.

"We were blown away by the untold story of the Levy family," Menemsha Films founder Neil Friedman said in a press release. "We are very confident that a wider audience will be quite eager to discover this fascinating chapter of American history which still resonates to this day." HW



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Hostages...

(Continued From Page 1)

es shelled parts of Gaza into the early hours of last Friday morning and shot at Gazans attempting to return to the northern part of the coastal enclave. But Israeli military and Hamas forces held off from fighting at the agreed upon time last Friday morning, as did the Hezbollah terror group on Israel's border with Lebanon.

Last Tuesday, Israel and Hamas agreed to a temporary ceasefire that involves, over the course of four days, the release of around 50 of the over 200 Israelis who have been captured in Gaza since Oct. 7. Afterward, Hamas can extend the truce by releasing an additional 10 hostages a day. Along the way, Israel will release three Palestinian prisoners for every released hostage.

It is as of now unclear what happens after the first four days of the truce. As the hostages were en route to Israel, Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh said, "Hamas will pursue its effort to halt the Israeli assault on Gaza" and "complete the prisoner exchange."

According to JNS, the IDF will refrain from using surveillance drones in Gaza for six hours each day of the ceasefire. Israel will also allow fuel to enter the Strip during that time and dramatically increase the volume of goods permitted into the enclave.

Israel also agreed to commute the sentences of at least 150 female and teenage Palestinian security prisoners, or three terrorists for every hostage that is released. The Palestinian terrorists – many of whom are affiliated with Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine – will be allowed to return to their previous places of residence in Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria.

Hamas had previously released four hostages for what it said were "human-

itarian reasons." Judith Raanan, 59, and her 17-year-old daughter Natalie were freed on Oct. 20. Nurit Cooper, 79, and Yocheved Lifshitz, 85, were let go three days later.

IDF special forces late last month also rescued Pvt. Ori Megidish from the Gaza Strip.

Last week, IDF soldiers operating in the vicinity of Shifa Hospital in Gaza City recovered the bodies of Cpl. Noa Marciano, 19, and Yehudit Weiss, 65. Both women were murdered during their captivity.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant told troops last Thursday that the Jewish state would "complete the victory and create the impetus for the next groups of hostages, who will only come back as a result of pressure.

"I estimate that in the next month or two, at least in December and January, and perhaps longer, there will be intense fighting of the kind we're currently seeing, and in some places even more," he said during a visit with the navy's Shayetet 13 commando unit.

Gallant's remarks echoed those of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who addressed the nation last Wednesday night and vowed to "continue until we achieve all our objectives."

President Joe Biden called a press conference to address the hostage release, noting that he was very involved in conversations with Israeli, Qatari and Egyptian officials in the lead-up to last Friday. He also called on the Israeli military to work to avoid further Palestinian casualties in Gaza and emphasized his continued push for a two-state solution.

"My expectation and hope is that as we move forward, the rest of the Arab world and the region is also putting pressure on all sides to slow this down, to bring this to an end as quickly as we can," Biden said. **HW**

The MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Happenings

Lunch is Monday—Friday at 11:30 a.m. All programs start at 12:15 p.m. Monthly Luncheon is at noon.

Monday, December 4

Speaker: Rabbi Abe Schacter-Gampel, MJCC Director for the Center of Jewish Life and Learning.

Topic: "Israel Update."

With everything going on in the Middle East, this is a good time to learn from Rabbi Abe. Please call the front desk, 901-761-0810, to make your reservations for the lunch and learn session.

Wednesday, December 6

Speaker: Rabbi Jeff Dreifus, Assistant Rabbi at Temple Israel

Topic: "Finding you Inner Light." Rabbi Dreifus always finds entertain-

ing ways to teach us. Please come join with us.

Monday, December 11

Speaker: Rabbi Ian Lichter, head rabbi of Baron Hirsch Synagogue.

Topic: "The Incredible History of Chanukah!" Chanukah Starts Thursday Evening December 7 and ends the evening of Friday December 15. Please join us for this historical perspective.

Wednesday December 13 December Monthly Luncheon!

This fun event will feature Hank and Stan! Hank Sable moved to Memphis in 1993 to open a vintage guitar store across from the Peabody Hotel. He met Memphis musicians and began performing regularly. Hank has been a member of the Joyce Cobb band for 15 years, playing every Sunday for the Boscos' brunch. Hank also performs with Nora Tucker, at the River Inn, and at Paulette's. A long-time Creative Aging musician, Hank plays guitar and violin.

Memphis-born Woodwinds Master Stan Jackson was exposed to music at an early age. He plays flute, percussion and keyboards. Stan has worked with music industry notables Quincy Jones, Jackson Brown and Kirk Whalum. He performed frequently in the cast of Puccini's "La Boheme" with the Los Angeles Opera. Stan successfully built and ran a stateof-the-art Music Multi-Media Center at the Magnet School, Washington Prep Music Academy, in South Central Los Angeles. Since moving back to Memphis, Stan has performed with Joyce Cobb on Sundays at Boscos' brunch and with Hank Sable. Hank and Stan come to the Luncheon through the help from Creative Aging. Transportation is available to those that live near the MJCC for only \$2 roundtrip. Call Steve Kaplan at 901-259-9220 for more information. Please call the MJCC Front desk at 901-761-0810 and Make your Reservation!! The cost of the Lunch is only \$5.

Please come join us from Monday through Friday for a delicious Kosher lunch from the Kitchens at the Memphis Jewish Home. The cost is only \$2 for seniors.

Reservations are required the day before by 1 p.m. by contacting Steve Kaplan, Adult Services Coordinator, at 901-259-9220 or stevekaplan@jccmemphis.org, or by calling the front desk at 901-761-0810. **HW**

Baron Hirsch Synagogue December Kol Rena So-Shuls Luncheon

Baron Hirsch Synagogue will host the December Kol Rena SoShuls Luncheon at noon on Wed., December 6, 2023.

SoShuls luncheons are a great way to join friends for lunch and to meet new people. You do not have to be a synagogue member to attend.

The SoShuls luncheons are for people who are ages 64 and older, and the luncheon cost is \$5.00 per person. Bingo games will follow the luncheon.

The SoShuls Luncheons offer a welcoming setting, with a delicious meal and entertainment. December's luncheon menu will have salmon croquettes, potato latkes, green beans and ice cream with toppings.

December's entertainment features the Double D Band, courtesy of Creative Aging. The Double D Band plays a wide range of music, including music from the '50s. The band previously appeared on MTV and BBC, and they were part of the music scenes in London, England, and New York City.

You are invited to join the fun at the December SoShuls Luncheon at noon on Wednesday, December 6, 2023, at Baron Hirsch Synagogue.

Please make your reservations with Gwen Moody at gwen@baronhirsch.org or call 901-683-7485.

Come have lunch with the Baron Hirsch SoShuls and its many attractions. We look forward to seeing you there! **HW**

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It's Only a Start, But so Far, it's Gone Well,' Biden Says of Hostage Deal

JNS – U.S. President Joe Biden spoke for about 10 minutes last Friday from Nantucket, Mass., about the release of hostages from the Gaza Strip.

"It's only a start, but so far, it's gone well," he said, hours after 13 hostages were released from nearly 50 days of captivity in Gaza by the Hamas terrorist organization. "This is the beginning of a long journey of healing for them."

Speaking after 2:15 p.m. local time, Biden added that Washington won't stop until all the hostages are released. Teddy bears waiting for some of the youngest hostages "are a stark reminder of the trauma these children have been through at such a very young age," he

Biden said that he and his staff worked hard to help negotiate the hostage deal, and he thanked Egyptian and Qatari leaders, as well as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

"I've consistently pressed for a pause in the fighting for two reasons: to accelerate and expand the humanitarian assistance going into Gaza, and two, to facilitate the release of hostages," Biden

"Hamas doesn't give a damn about them," he said of "innocent Palestinians" who need humanitarian aid.

Biden called for "two states for two

peoples." He added that "Hamas fears Israelis and Palestinians living side by side in peace."

"Today, let's continue to be thankful for all the families that are now and will soon be brought together again," he

In response to a question from a reporter, Biden said: "I don't trust Hamas to do anything. I only trust Hamas to respond to pressure."

He said of Netanyahu: "I've encouraged the prime minister to focus on trying to reduce the number of casualties while he is attempting to eliminate Hamas, which is a legitimate objective he has."

The president mentioned that he couldn't prove it, but he thinks that Hamas attacked Israel when it did because the United States was working closely with Saudi Arabia to recognize

Last month, Rep. Jim Banks (R-Ind.) told JNS that Hamas's attack was an effort to stymie Saudi-Israeli normalization. "Iran and Hamas knew their vicious attack would help prevent that from happening. President Biden must give up on his failed strategy of appeasement and start holding the Iranian regime accountable for its crimes," he said. HW

Have a Simcha? share with The Hebrew Watchman readers 901.763.2215 info@hebrewwatchman.com

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The family of Alvin A. Gordon invites you to a memorial celebration. Bring your stories!

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Help Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman Jewish Family Service Collect 400 Items in 40 Days!

So far in 2023, Fogelman JFS has distributed 2,560 pantry bags to individuals who are struggling with food insecurity.

In November 2022, Fogelman JFS collected 1,987 items for our Peggy E. & L.R. Jalenak, Jr. Food and Baby Pantry during the annual food drive. That is ALL from community donations! Get involved and help us reach our goal this year as we begin our annual food drive from Thanksgiving to New Years! We are able to provide this service because of generous community donations.

Items needed include pasta and rice, tuna fish, juice, peanut butter, canned fruits and vegetables, full-sized hygiene items, size 4/5 diapers, cereals and snacks. Please make sure all items are certified Kosher.

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To learn more about Fogelman Jewish Family Service programs, please call 901-767-8511. **HW**

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'BBC': Not Impartial to Rally VS. Jew-Hatred, Palestinian Flag on Macy's Parade Float



An individual member of the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe of American Indians displays a Palestinian flag at the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in Manhattan on Nov. 23, 2023. Source: YouTube/"CBS" Boston

By Menachem Wecker

(JNS) - "We want to make it very clear that the tribe takes no stance on the conflicts overseas," stated the Mashpee Wampanoag, after a member displayed a Palestinian flag on the American Indian tribe's float. "It's unfortunate that we are not focused on the beautiful display of our culture and history at the Macy's Day Parade but rather on the actions of an individual tribal citizen."

The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) had thanked the tribe "for showing solidarity with the Palestinian people," and Rep. Cori Bush (D-Mo.), a member of the "Squad," wrote: "This is what solidarity looks like."

Anti-Israel protesters disrupted the parade, with some gluing themselves to the ground along the parade route.

The BBC has reportedly told news staff that attending a march against antisemitism would be seen as "controversial" and a violation of the company's policy on impartiality. "Many people here have been to the pro-Palestine marches and are happy to talk about it at work. People here seem to think Zionists are evil. One colleague said I was OK because I wasn't 'a proper Zionist," one source told the "Daily Mail Online." "They don't have a clue."

Three British police forces are investigating antisemitic hate speech at local mosques after "footage of preachers calling for Jews to be slaughtered and Israel to be destroyed has been handed to detectives at West Midlands Police, Scotland Yard and Northamptonshire Police," the "Daily Mail" reported. "Oh God, limit their number. Kill them indiscriminately and do not leave any of them alive," one reportedly said. "Oh God, our Lord. Disperse them. Weaken their strength, shake the ground beneath their feet and freeze the blood in their veins. Make them captive to the Muslims."

From Oct. 7 to Nov. 20, Toronto experienced a 192% increase in reported antisemitic incidents compared to that span last year (38 anti-Jewish hate crimes compared to 13), per Myron Demkiw, the city's police chief. "The numbers are deeply unsettling but not surprising," said Michael Levitt, president and CEO of the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center for Holocaust Studies, which has been fielding reports of daily antisemitism from Toronto Jews. (In the same spans, there were 17 anti-Muslim incidents reported in 2023, compared to one in 2022 – a 1,600% increase.)

At least 85 Jewish graves were desecrated in Belgium. "The chosen location and the theft of numerous Stars of David leave little doubt about the antisemitic nature of the intentions, wrote Paul Magnette, mayor of the nearby city of Charleroi, in French. "I strongly condemn these despicable actions. ... Antisemitism is an evil that we must continue to fight with all our strength."

Protesters reportedly lit smoke bombs, spilled red paint and chanted that Michael Tuchin was a baby killer outside a home belonging to the AIPAC leader in Los Angeles. StopAntisemitism shared video footage on social media and wrote: "What's next? The burning of Synagogues and schools like in 1939 Germany?" **HW**

Family of Alvin A. Gordon Sends Invitation to Celebrate and Share Stories



Elaine and Alvin Gordon

The family of Alvin A. Gordon will remember and celebrate his life on December 3, 2023, at Chabad Memphis at 2570 Kirby Parkway.

Please join Alvin's family: wife, Elaine, son Baruch (Bruce) and his wife, Anat, from Israel, and Memphians Robert and his wife, Tara.

Alvin nourished many communities and interacted with a wide range of people. The family invites them all to come remember their friend, his quick wit, his insight, his kindness. After a few words from the family, anyone with a good story will be invited to speak. Please share your memories! Desserts and I'chayims will be served. HW

Fogelman JFS Gleaning Partnership 2023

Begun in spring 2017, the Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman Jewish Family Service (Fogelman JFS) gleaning program with Beth Sholom synagogue continues to be one of our most impactful community partnerships. Throughout the spring and summer, the Beth Sholom Tikkun Olam Committee organizes congregational volunteers to collect (or "glean") donated fresh produce from vendors at the Agricenter. These volunteers then sort the produce with Fogelman JFS staff for distribution to clients in the agency's Finestone Family Home Delivered Meals and Peggy E. and L.R. Jalenak, Jr. Food Pantry.

Excess or over-ripe produce is shared with a newer partner, the Church of the Holy Communion. Their volunteers cook and process the produce for other area food programs for those in need.

Over the summer of 2023, about a dozen Beth Sholom volunteers (including two enthusiastic pre-teens) heroically gleaned every Wednesday afternoon despite the stunning heat. They gleaned an amazing amount of food – almost a TON (1978 pounds!) – a wide variety of fruit and vegetables from seven different vendors. Over the fall and winter months, Beth Sholom members faithfully continue to support the Fogelman JFS food programs through purchasing and donating fresh fruit each week.

Fogelman Jewish Family Service is so very grateful for this continuing mitzvah of support that helps so many community residents get fresh, healthy food! For more information about the gleaning program, contact Fogelman JFS at 901.767-8511. **HW**



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Eli Ostrow Joins 300,000 in March for Israel



Eli Ostrow meets Representative David Kustoff

Eli Ostrow

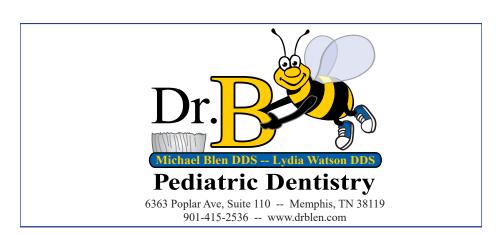
On November 14, 2023, I, along with three fellow University of Memphis students, had the honor of representing our institution amidst a group of nearly 200 Jewish individuals from Memphis at the March for Israel in Washington, D.C. From the moment our plane touched down in the nation's capital, a wave of unprecedented pride overcame me, as I knew I soon would be part of an event of historic magnitude.

Upon reaching the Capitol Mall for the rally, the sheer size of the crowd left me in awe. The atmosphere of the rally was intense and emotionally charged, as numerous participants displayed a range of emo-

tions – smiles, tears, shouts and reflective silence. Many were bearing signs with statements such as "Let My People Go" and "Never Again means Never Again." The organizers of the rally were distributing large posters with the pictures, names and stories of the hostages currently being held captive by Hamas. Every few minutes another chant would break out with the crowd screaming "bring them home" or "Am Yisrael Chai."

Following the rally, the Memphis delegation proceeded to the House of Representatives for meetings with Representatives David Kustoff and Steve Cohen, along with Senators Marsha Blackburn and Bill Hagerty. During these sessions, congressional leaders shared insights into their experiences in the House since the tragic events of October 7. They also reassured us of their unwavering commitment to championing Israel on the legislative floor.

Departing from the hallowed halls of the House of Representatives, our group returned to the airport. As I left Washington, D.C., I carried with me a revitalized sense of pride in my Jewish identity and an empowered hope for a swift resolution to the ongoing conflict. The trip proved to be a transformative experience, amplifying my dedication to advocating against antisemitism and fostering a lasting commitment to the cause. **HW**





MHA Students Travel to Washington Rally



MHA boys stop to daven along route to Washington rally

By Ethan VanderWalde

Two weeks ago on Tuesday, the Margolin Hebrew Academy left on what would turn into the trip of a lifetime. At 5 in the afternoon, we left Memphis to represent our school at the D.C. Israel rally, an event that took place in the National Mall at our nation's capital.

Hundreds of thousands of Jews from across the country came to support Israel and stand against antisemitism, and we were very lucky to be counted among those who spoke out for truth. However, it was definitely not easy to take part in this historic event coming all the way from Memphis. Our school drove on two buses for 16 hours to Washington, making an overnight trip both ways. We drove across the country, making stops at gas stations along the way to refuel and stretch our legs. We davened Maariv (evening prayers) in front of a gas station in the middle of the night, and when the sun rose, we stopped at a rest stop in Virginia to daven Shacharit (morning prayers) in the freezing cold. It was during these times that I really felt lucky to be able to exercise my right to freedom of religion in the U.S, by praying in literally the most random places in the country.

About an hour after stopping in Virginia we finally arrived at our destination, a parking lot near the D.C. metro. With numerous Israeli flags in hand, we walked among hundreds of other students and teachers to the metro line, which we took to the National Mall.

We first went to the big green field in front of the National Museum of Natural History, where throngs of students from schools around North America were gathered for the "pre-rally." It was pretty amazing to see so many Jewish teenagers in one place, but what really impressed me was the rally near the Capitol building.

When we got inside, it was so crowded that we could barely move. It felt like there were a million people there, but we kept bumping into Jews we knew from other cities, as if a game of Jewish geography met with ping-pong.

When we finally found a spot to settle down, we got the opportunity to hear



from amazing people such as former Soviet dissident Natan Sharansky and Israeli President Issac Herzog.

There were also speakers who shared their personal experiences with the tragedies of October 7, including the mother of one of the Hamas-held hostages in Gaza. It was really inspiring to see her stand up and speak to so many in her current situation, and I can't even begin to imagine the pain and anxiety she is going through not knowing if her son is okay or not.

After the rally ended, we felt like we had accomplished something significant, and we were proud that we had made the trip to be a part of it. Before driving back to Memphis, we stopped at Berman Hebrew Academy in Silver Spring to eat dinner and rest for a little bit before driving another 16 hours. When we finally got on the bus, we were all so tired that most of us fell asleep right away, and only woke up when the sun rose again.

We arrived back in Memphis at around noon on Thursday, about 43 hours after we left. We hopped off the bus and went back to our homes, feeling proud and connected to something that was bigger than ourselves (but mostly we felt exhausted from our 32-hour, there-and-back, overnight bus experience). HW



Magical...

(Continued From Page 1)



Magical Evening co-chair David Cooper presented a \$40,000 contribution from Baron Hirsch to Bluma Zuckerbrot-Finkelstein, chief impact officer and executive vice president of Memphis Jewish Federation, for the organization's emergency Israel campaign.

sorrow, our congregation's appreciation and admiration of this wonderful couple continue to grow."

Plans were underway for the Lichters' Nov. 12 installation dinner months before Hamas attacked Israel on Simchat Torah, killing more than 1,200 civilians and kidnapping more than 200 hostages.

"In light of the terrible tragedy of Oct. 7 and the ongoing war in our beloved state of Israel, we decided to shift the focus of the evening to recognize that we cannot fully celebrate when Jewish lives are taken and continue to be in peril," said Penina Wender, first vice president of Baron Hirsch and Magical Evening co-chair.

During the event's cocktail hour, at-



A table displaying the names of the Israeli hostages remained empty throughout the Magical Evening.

tendees recorded video messages of appreciation and support for members of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The dinner program began with the recitation of four chapters of Tehillim (Psalms) and prayers for the state of Israel, IDF and hostages in captivity; simultaneously, a slideshow displayed photos of 32 IDF soldiers with ties to Memphis serving on the front lines of the war with Hamas.

"It was an incredibly powerful moment that reinforced the deep connection between the Memphis Jewish community and the state of Israel," Wender said.

Baron Hirsch announced prior to the event that, once the synagogue's fundraising goal was met, all additional monies would be donated to Memphis Jewish Federation's \$3 million emergency campaign for Israel. Thanks to the generous support of hundreds of congregants, Baron Hirsch was able to contribute \$40,000 to the community-wide effort.

"This is a proud testament to Baron Hirsch's firm commitment to the people and state of Israel and the great work of Memphis Jewish Federation," Wender said.

Prior to the installation ceremony, guests enjoyed remarks from Rabbi Menachem Penner, dean of Yeshiva University's Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary, from which Rabbi Lichter received his ordination. Rabbi Penner was an early career mentor to both Rabbi and Rebbetzin Lichter and remains a close friend of the family. He congratulated Baron Hirsch on their excellent choice of rabbi and rebbetzin in the Lichters.

"It brings me great nachas (pride) to see my students rise to such prominent positions," Rabbi Penner said.

For the first time in the congregation's 161-year history, Baron Hirsch included the installation of the rebbetzin, in addition to the rabbi, as part of the ceremony. "Katie is a true partner in leading this congregation," Wender said.

Accepting the formal charge from the congregation, Rabbi Lichter said, "I welcome this appointment of being your rabbi. Katie and I are thrilled to be part of such a historic and warm synagogue family. We are filled with a true sense of gratitude to G-d and the membership of Baron Hirsch who have facilitated such a smooth transition for us."

Dramatic black, white and gold décor



Magician Jason Ladanye (center) invited (from left) Matt Moss, Rabbi lan and Katie Lichter, and Jade Moss on stage to participate in a card trick during his performance.

throughout the social hall set the tone for the evening's "magical" theme. Guests were treated to kosher catering by premier Memphis chef Erling Jensen, as well as signature cocktails named the "Cosmic Katie" and the "Ianstallation" in honor of the Lichters.

To conclude the evening, attendees were regaled with sleight-of-hand card tricks by award-winning magician Jason Ladanye. His performance was generously sponsored by Judy and Larry Moss.

In a meaningful display of solidarity, Ladanye proclaimed his steadfast support for Israel and gave a portion of his honorarium to Federation's emergency campaign. (More on the community-wide effort can be found online at tinyurl.com/givetoisrael2023.) The gesture was met with a standing ovation.

"Baron Hirsch plays a unique role in the Memphis Jewish community," Rabbi Lichter said. "Katie and I will continue working to ensure that all Jews can view it as a spiritual home for their family. May G-d's blessings for the Jewish people include our community, and may our gratitude for those blessings be evident in everything we do together." **HW**



Yeshiva University's Rabbi Menachem Penner, mentor to Rabbi and Rebbetzin Lichter, addressed a sold-out Magical Evening crowd.



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THE HEBREW WATCHMAN | hebrewwatchman.com PAGE 8 | NOVEMBER 30, 2023

U.S. Economy: Soft Landing or Delayed Recession?

Provided by Mike Stein, Managing Director - Investments, Wells Fargo Advisors Ouestions for Mike? You can reach him at 901.761.8151 or Michael.Stein@WellsFargoAdvisors.com • fa.wellsfargoadvisors.com/michael-stein

Economists have been predicting a recession for the U.S. economy ever since the Federal Reserve began aggressively raising interest rates in 2022. This is Econ 101. High interest rates, which make it more expensive to borrow, are intended to tame inflation by slowing business and consumer spending. A rapid and extreme increase in rates, as the Fed has carried out over the last year and a half, can be expected to slam the economy into reverse. The classic example is the early 1980s, when the Fed pushed the economy into a deep recession in order to stop runaway double-digit inflation.¹

So far, the economy is proving resilient in the face of interest-rate pressure. Inflation, as measured by the 12-month change in the consumer price index (CPI), dropped from a high of 9.1% in June 2022 to 3.2% in July 2023. Growth in real gross domestic product (GDP) was a solid 2.1% in Q2 2023, and the August unemployment rate was 3.8%, up from 3.5% in July but still near a 50year low.^{2–3} These "headline" numbers suggest an economy coming in for a "soft landing" - a term for controlling inflation without serious economic damage. As with most headlines, however, the full story is more complex.

Long-term Inflation Prospects

Although consumers may notice the ups and downs of prices, the Fed is primarily concerned with controlling the longer-term inflationary trend. Its preferred measure is the price index for personal consumption expenditures (PCE), which captures a wider range of spending than the CPI, and the target for a healthy economy is PCE inflation of 2.0%. The 12-month change in the PCE price index was 3.3% in July 2023, down from a high of 7.0% in June 2022. The Fed also looks closely at "core" PCE, which excludes volatile food and energy prices and ran at a 4.2% 12-month rate in July. These numbers have trended downward over the last year, but they ticked upward in July and are still above the Fed's target. It remains to be seen whether further increases in interest rates will be necessary.4

A Slower but Sound Labor Market

Despite rising rates and predictions of a recession, businesses have continued to hire workers at a solid pace. The 187,000 jobs added in August was slower than post-pandemic job growth (over 200,000 jobs for 29 months) but a solid bounceback from lows of 105,000 in June and 157,000 in July.5 Unlike typical recessions, when lower-paid workers are often the first to go, recent layoffs have tended to be in industries like finance and tech, where higher-paid workers typically have other job prospects and savings to maintain financial stability. Some analysts have called this a "richcession" (though the workers are hardly rich), and it may be dampening the effects of a jobs slowdown on the broader economy.6

Strong Spending by Businesses and Consumers

Steady hiring is one indication that businesses are continuing to spend and expand. The Q2 GDP report also showed increased investments in equipment, nonresidential structures, and intellectual property.7 All of these point to expectations of business growth. Many companies restructured their debt when interest rates were low, which has delayed the impact of higher borrowing costs, and may put off widespread effects for some time.8

Consumer spending accounts for twothirds of GDP, and increased spending was a key contributor to Q2 GDP growth. Spending accelerated even further in July, increasing 0.8% over June – the largest month-over-month increase since January.9 Like businesses, many consumers still carry debt with low interest rates, providing more discretionary income.¹⁰ Spending may slow as pandemic-era savings dwindle and student loan payments resume, but a strong job market could help maintain consumer momentum.11

Expectations and the Wage-Price Spiral

Two factors that can drive inflation are consumer expectations and the socalled wage-price spiral - when rapidly rising wages push demand and a willingness to pay higher prices, which leads to higher wages and more demand. Both of these seem to be settling. In a July 2023 survey, consumer expectations for inflation in one year dropped to 3.5% - the lowest since April 2021 – while expectations for three and five years dropped to 2.9%. 12 Average hourly wages increased 4.3% for the 12-month period ending August 2023, higher than the rate of inflation but down from 5.4% a year earlier.13

Signs of Trouble Remain

Although most current data indicates that inflation is cooling with a modest economic slowdown, it takes time for interest rate changes to work their way through the economy. Pessimists point to measures that suggest a recession may still be on the way. The Conference Board Leading Economic Index, a suite of 10 statistics that tend to rise and fall ahead of the broader economy, fell for the 16th straight month in July 2023.¹⁴ The yield curve (yields of U.S. Treasury securities by maturity date) has been inverted since mid 2022, and the disparity between the 2-year and 10-year Treasuries - traditionally a sign of a coming recession - reached its most extreme inversion since 1981 in early July.15

More optimistic analysts suggest that these indicators may not apply to the current situation: a strong economy briefly derailed by the pandemic, with a big, fast bounceback and inflation due to supply-chain disruptions and pent-up demand. In this view, the economy is finding its footing after these extremes and may be poised for extended growth. Time will tell, but for now the predicted recession seems hard to find.

U.S. Treasury securities are guaranteed by the federal government as to the timely payment of principal and interest, but their principal value fluctuates with market conditions. If not held to maturity, they could be worth more or less than the original amount paid. Forecasts are based on current conditions, are subject to change, and may not come to pass.

- 1, 10) The Wall Street Journal, July 27, 2023
- 2, 5, 13) U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023 3-4, 7, 9) U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis,
- 6) Associated Press, July 29, 2023
- 8) Insider, July 21, 2023
- 11) Reuters, August 15, 2023
- 12) Federal Reserve Bank of New York, August 14, 2023
 - 14) The Conference Board, August 17, 2023

15) CNBC, July 7, 2023 This information is not intended as tax, legal,

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Disgraced Hollywood Director Brett Ratner Immigrates to Israel

By Ron Kampeas

(JTA) – Brett Ratner, the director and producer of Hollywood blockbusters who is seeking a comeback from allegations of sexual misconduct, has emigrated to Israel.

Ratner posted an Instagram story [last month] showing the passbook that Israel issues to new immigrants, granting them tax breaks and other benefits. He captioned it in Hebrew, "Brett Shai Ratner." He appears to have posted more recent Instagram stories from Israel, according to a report in Walla.

The Instagram posts came just a week after he published a photo of himself, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Sara Netanyahu and pro-Israel figure Alan Dershowitz together at the United Nations. Ratner and Dershowitz were special guests of Netanyahu at his speech to the body. The director was for a time a business partner of James Packer, the Australian media mogul who is close to the Netanyahu family.

Ratner - who directed blockbusters, including the "Rush Hour" series, and produced others, including "Horrible Bosses" - was swept up in the early wave of "#MeToo" allegations about powerful Hollywood figures. In 2017, six women accused Ratner of sexual harassment and misconduct. He denied all charges, but major studios cut ties with

In 2021, Hollywood media reported that Ratner hoped for a comeback and was signed on to direct a biopic about Milli Vanilli, the early 1990s R&B duo who were revealed to be lip-syncing their songs. Pushback from women's defense groups that arose out of the #MeToo movement led the production company to nix the project.

Ratner was well known as a supporter of Jewish and Israeli organizations and has been honored for his Jewish philanthropy and other humanitarian efforts.

In June, "Variety" reported that Bryan Singer – who directed big budget superhero films such as "X-Men" and who was also disgraced by #MeToo allegations – has been living in Israel in recent years and similarly seeking to revive his career. HW

After Delay, 13 more Israelis Freed on 2nd Day of Truce with Hamas



Ohad Monder, 9, reunites with his father and brother after 49 days in Hamas captivity in the Gaza Strip, Nov. 25, 2023. Credit: Schneider Children's Hospital.

By Charles Bybelezer, Adam Haskel

(JNS) – Thirteen Israeli hostages were freed from Hamas captivity last Saturday night, in the second such exchange since a four-day truce took effect in the Gaza Strip the previous day.

Hamas had delayed the release for seven hours after accusing Israel of violating the terms of the ceasefire deal.

A senior official in Jerusalem had attributed the hold-up to a "technical matter" but security sources later said the IDF's ground offensive in Gaza would

recommence if the captives were not freed by midnight.

Red Cross representatives were bringing the 13 Israelis from Gaza to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula through the Rafah bor-

The hostages were set to be met by Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) agents in Egypt and then taken by IDF soldiers in an operation dubbed "Heaven's Door" into southern Israel via the Kerem Shalom crossing.

They were then slated to head to Hatzerim Airbase near Beersheba for an initial physical and mental checkup before being flown by helicopter or taken by ambulance to medical centers across Israel to be reunited with their relatives.

In a separate deal, Qatar announced last Saturday that at least four foreign nationals were also released from captivity. A day earlier, Egypt had successfully negotiated the release of 10 Thai nationals and one Filipino who were abducted during Hamas's Oct. 7 onslaught.

Meanwhile, the Israel Prison Service said last Saturday it would release 39 Palestinian security prisoners in accordance with the deal. The terrorists were slated to be moved to Ofer Prison for medical checks by the International Red Cross, ahead of their release to Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria.

The same process took place last Friday when another 39 Palestinian terrorists were freed as part of the truce agreement.

Palestinian Islamic Jihad (PIJ), which holds some of the hostages in the Gaza Strip, previously announced that Katzir, from Kibbutz Nir Oz, had died in captivity. Katzir had appeared in a propaganda video circulated by the Iranian-backed terrorist group.

Last Saturday, the freed captives continued to be reunited with their families. In a video released by the Schneider Children's Medical Center of Israel in Petach Tikvah, Ohad Monder is seen running towards his father and being swept up into his arms. Ohad turned 9 years old while held in Gaza.

As part of the ceasefire agreement approved by the Israeli Cabinet last Wednesday, Hamas will release 12 to 13 hostages each day of the four-day truce. The release of every additional 10 hostages will result in one additional day in the pause in combat.

Over the past two days, some 200 trucks carrying humanitarian aid have entered Gaza from Sinai, with more than 50 of them designated for the northern part of the Strip.

Last Saturday, the UN delivered over 50 trucks containing humanitarian aid (food, water, shelter and medical supplies) to the northern Gaza Strip and to shelters that have not yet been evacuated.

The aid is delivered through the evacuation corridor in coordination with Israel.

On Saturday, the Israel Defense Ministry's Coordinator for Government Activities in the Territories (COGAT) unit announced that four tankers of fuel and four tankers of cooking gas had entered Gaza from Egypt through the Rafah

Last Saturday night, tens of thousands of Israelis participated in a rally in Tel Aviv calling for the return of every hostage being held by Palestinian terror groups in Gaza.

White House National Security Council spokesperson Adrienne Watson said in a statement last Saturday that U.S. President Joe Biden was briefed on developments throughout the day.

Biden also phoned Qatari Emir Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to discuss the delay in the implementation of the hostage deal.

Earlier, U.S. Ambassador to Israel Jack Lew expressed relief that hostages were reuniting with their loved ones, adding that Washington "won't rest until everyone comes home."

In a statement last Friday following the release of the first 13 Israeli hostages, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said, "We just completed the return of the first of our hostages: children, their mothers and additional women. Each of them is an entire world.

"But I emphasize to you, the families, and to you, citizens of Israel: We are committed to returning all the hostages. This is one of the aims of the war and we are committed to achieving all the aims of the war."

Last Saturday, Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant vowed during a tour of the Gaza Strip that IDF troops would not leave the enclave until all of the estimated remaining 225 captives are returned.

"As soon as the military pressure is on, they [Hamas] want a break. When you increase the pressure, they want another break. When you increase more, they are ready to come with an offer, and when you increase even more, they come with an offer that can be accepted," said Gallant.

"We cannot stop the war until we reach a situation in which we bring all the hostages back," he said, adding: "Any further negotiations will be under fire. If Hamas wants to discuss another deal, it will be while bombs fall." **HW**

lege, and Vanderbilt Law School. She was also passionate about classical music and reading the classics. She instilled this love in her children. Raquel was an accomplished pianist at an early age and was fortunate enough to study with the acclaimed pianist and composer Mischa Feibish. She saw to it that her daughters had both piano and violin lessons and played in the Memphis Youth Symphony. Raquel served on the board of the Youth Symphony. Volunteering to help support Brandeis University's library was another cause she was passionate about, and she served in leadership roles on the board of the Brandeis

OBITUARIES Raquel Scheuner Hammer

Raquel Scheuner Hammer, a successful business woman devoted to, and much loved by, her family, passed away on Oc-

tober 24, 2023 in Memphis, Tennessee, at

the age of 87, after a long battle with Par-

kinson's. The funeral was held at the Bar-

on Hirsch Cemetery on October 25, 2023.

New York, and came from humble be-

ginnings. She was driven to build a bet-

ter life for her family and herself. After

graduating from Treadwell High School

and attending Memphis State, where she

majored in Child Psychology, she met

Herman Hammer (d. 1986), may his

memory be a blessing. They were mar-

ried in 1955 by Rabbi Nathan Greenblatt.

Raquel parlayed her fascination with

investing into a career as a stockbroker

and, with her husband, built a portfolio

of commercial real estate investments.

She pursued both of these to be able to

provide her daughters the best possible

educations and lives, and worked hard to

come up with the money for them to both

graduate from St. Mary's, Rhodes Col-

Raquel was born in 1936 in Brooklyn,

Raquel Scheuner Hammer was smart, a savvy investor, and a devoted mother and grandmother. She will be greatly missed by the many people whose lives she impacted. She is survived by her daughters, Karen Hammer and Sharon Hammer, and her granddaughter, Alexandra Hammer-Greenberg (Bailey Ehrenpreis). The family requests that any memorials be sent to Baron Hirsch Synagogue. HW

Women's organization.

Poll: More than a Third of Jewish Students Hide their Identity at College

(JNS) - New research shows the extent to which the war provoked by Hamas's Oct. 7 terrorist attack has spilled over to university campuses.

Hillel International commissioned the Benenson Strategy Group to poll 300 Jewish college students between Nov. 14-15.

They found that a broad majority -84% – said the war was affecting them, with 68% describing themselves as sad and 54% as scared.

Statistics on Jewish students feeling a need to hide their identity (37%) correlate closely with those saying they know about acts of hate or violence on their campus (35%).

"The hate that fueled Hamas's attack on Israel has rapidly spread to college campuses, leaving Jewish students feeling both unsupported and unsafe," said Adam Lehman, president and CEO of Hillel International. "The data show that it's getting worse."

Lehman noted that "when Jewish students need to feel safe, supported and protected by university presidents and administrations more than they ever have before, Hillel International is working day and night to ensure universities are taking concrete actions to protect Jewish communities on campuses." HW

17 Additional Hostages Released

By Ben Sales

November 26, 2023 (JTA) - Hamas has released 17 more hostages - 14 Israelis, including one U.S. citizen, and three foreign nationals - to the Red Cross as part of its agreement with Israel to pause the fighting in the Gaza Strip.

In total, the terror group has now released 40 Israeli hostages, nearly all of them women and children, to Israel as part of an agreement that includes a ceasefire in Gaza and the release of some 150 Palestinians in Israeli prison on security offenses. According to the deal, Hamas will release 50 Israeli hos-

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tages in exchange for a four-day pause in the fighting, but that truce could extend: Israel will continue the ceasefire for one additional day for every 10 hostages Hamas releases.

Hamas has released a total of 18 foreign hostages, nearly all of them Thai, under a separate agreement reached by the Thai government via Iran.

Sunday's release, for the first time, included a younger Israeli man. According to the Israeli publication "Ynet," the Israeli hostages released Sunday include:

Abigail Mor Idan, 3, an American-Israeli citizen.

Hagar Brodutch and her children Ofri, 10, Yuval 8, and Uriyah, 4. Sisters Dafna and Ela Elyakim, 15

and 8. Chen Almog-Goldstein, 48, and her

children Agam, 17, Gal, 11, and Tal, 9. Their husband and father, Nadav, was killed in the massacre, as was another

Aviva Siegel, 62, who immigrated to Israel from South Africa. Her American husband, Keith, is still being held hostage.

Alma Avraham, 84.

Roni Krivoi, 25.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed to continue the fighting after the ceasefire ends, with the aim of deposing Hamas in Gaza. He visited Israeli troops in the Gaza Strip on Sunday. HW

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The Day My Son Killed The Lion



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

Ted Roberts

Deep in the Northern Malaysian Jungles where ant hills outnumber synagogues, there's a maturity rite in which the young Malaysian male must track down and kill by hand the giant non-kosher Poison Quilled Porcupine, an irritable creature cursed by nature with a one-day mating season. And the ceremonial hunt must take place on that day. A period of intense concentration for the Poison Quilled Porcupine, for sure.

Sociologists tell us that this custom only exists among the tribes of the Northwest. Further South they do the "Lion Thing." Armed only with his 6-foot spear, the candidate must bring home a lion skin. And it better not have a price tag from one of those tourist shops.

Of course, we Jews have the Bar Mitzvah Ceremony – the gateway to adult status for the Jewish male. Not that there's any comparison, of course. But how clever of us! No need of a \$1,500 flight to Kenya, a trek into the interior fording streams full of antisemitic crocodiles and then a gory contest with a lion who views a 12-year-old, plump Jewish kid like we see a bread-

ed veal chop. And have you ever seen the laundry bill for a two-week safari? Know what it costs to fuel and maintain a Land Rover?

Believe me – even a Mariott Bar Mitzvah with five carving stations, salad, sorbet and a Peking duck entree is

"So, Teddy," my friends said. "Today, young Joseph is a man – whatta Bar Mitzvah. Those chopped liver statues of Joe – and you and Shirley – all three of you with hard boiled eggs for eyes and an orange carrot nose! So beautiful. It almost made us forget the stale bagels you served with the entree."

"Thank you, thank you," I mutter modestly. Yes, the Bar Mitzvah is the conventional measure of manhood. But in my book, there's one more wicket to maturity. Bar Mitzvahs are a religious milestone, OK, but listen, even after the kid's so called "maturation" he's an economic dependent. Right? I'm waiting for the Second Maturation rite; the big day when the economic liability you've borne for a couple of decades turns to his patient papa and says the four magic words –"POP IT'S ON ME!"

For years, you're the paymaster, you know how it goes. You sit at the head of a large table at the ritziest restaurant in town. It's a food orgy scene out of a Fellini movie and you're buying the grapes and wine and roasted exotic fowl.

Glasses full of cola and unidentifiable but expensive Liquids crowd the table. Is that 7-Up in front of my oldest grandson or a triple champagne cocktail? MINE contains water, which I flush

down aspirins between each course. Nobody's paying attention to the right side of the menu.

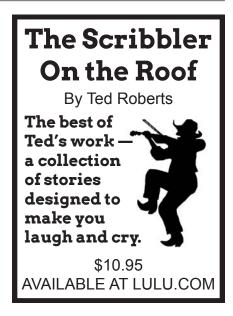
But everybody's talking. Ordering, or even worse, replenishing their initial order with seconds. But when the check arrives – as thick as a paperback of Gone With The Wind – a hush falls over the room. Even the waitress, who lugs in the book with both hands is reverentially silent. But her eyes say: "Here you are, Sucker."

It's that final dramatic moment of the auction when chatter and sneezes and coughs stop – for fear that any sound can mean "over here."

So, my smiling messenger of financial death brings the bill to me. How strangely this circus contrasts with the last meal I enjoyed with my oldest son. I'll never forget that shining occasion – the Post Bar Mitzvah Maturation rite.

The stage for our father-son drama was an elegant establishment with a menu full of dazzling poetic descriptions. We were having a great time reading the menu ("Bo Peep Lamb Chops grazed on Devonshire Clover") when finally we were aware of the waitress awaiting our pleasure. I hope she's rude, I was thinking. There's nothing like a shrew of a waitress to make a man feel good about a lousy tip.

We were at a trendy new restaurant he had chosen. My son and his new wife ordered first. And with abandon – unlike their usual modest taste and tender concern for my retirement years. Then when I ordered – he even urged upgrading. And his thoughtful wife, when the



meal was over, suggested a cordial for her loving and long-suffering father-inlaw. (Why hadn't I noticed before how beautiful she was? A splendid addition to our family.)

It was only then, that I noticed the strange new light in my son's eyes. The day had come – it was time for the ceremony. The maturity rites – the Lion hunt – the dive into the blue lagoon seeking the perfect pearl. It was graduation day, and he was valedictorian of the wallet.

As the waitress approached with the check, I kept both hands on the table. The check – a document of many pages – came to my son. He had pre-instructed the waitress.

Somewhere over the chatter of the dining room conversation, I could hear a lion roar – mortally wounded.

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**

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ISRAEL INSIGHTS Much Pain, Some Relief

By Howard Weisband

I am writing on November 22. Israel's Government agreed earlier today to the terms of a hostage deal with the terrorist entity Hamas, brokered by the United States and Qatar, that will allow for the return of 50 of our people, women and children, held in Gaza since that horrid October 7. In return we will release from our jails 150 Palestinian women and minors who had been convicted of acts of terror, none of murder but some who had attempted murder. In addition, we agreed to a four-day pause in the war that will begin tomorrow.

We feel relief and joy for those families who will be reunited with their children, in some cases their mothers, and some wives as well.

President Isaac Herzog released a statement expressing support for the hostage agreement, while acknowledging "the understandable, painful and difficult misgivings. It is a moral and ethical duty that correctly expresses the Jewish and Israeli value of redeeming captives, and I hope that it will be a significant first step for bringing all the captives home."

President Herzog shares a sense of the very mixed feelings we all have at this time

Frankly, the pain outstrips the joy and relief

There may be almost another 200 hostages still being held by Hamas and Islamic Jihad terrorists in various underground locations in Gaza, in unsanitary, unhealthy conditions.

50 innocent civilians, their state of health unknown, will be released for 150 individuals convicted of acts of terrorism, in good health, well fed and well looked after in sanitary Israeli prisons.

Avi Mayer, chief editor of the "Jerusalem Post," tweeted in X: "There is no equivalence. None."

We have experienced such deals before. Terrorists don't change their stripes. They will return to terror. On November 21, Herb Keinon in the "Jerusalem Post" wrote an excellent analysis: "Israeli hostage deal: What makes Israel special and vulnerable:"

"Israel released 1,027 security prisoners, including 280 terrorists serving life sentences, for the release of soldier Gilad Shalit in 2011. Their number included those who organized, planned, and took part in the October 7 massacre. Then, too, the country closely identified with the Shalit family during his five years of captivity, seeing him as their own son and willing to pay an exorbitant price for his release."

David Horovitz, founding editor of

the "Times of Israel," wrote today after the Government's approval: "This deal, the ministers were told, was the only hostage-release option currently available. For all the pain over those who will remain captive in Gaza – including many who are elderly and many parents – almost all ministers were persuaded that it was a deal with the devil that nonetheless had to be done."

"A deal with the devil that nonetheless had to be done."

Why? Keinon coincidentally answered the question: "While in certain corners of the globe, sick people are tearing down posters with pictures of those kidnapped, Israelis see the faces on those posters of babies, children, soldiers, mothers, fathers, and grandparents and see their own relatives. They see those faces and whisper to themselves, "There, but for the grace of God, go my kin."

Keinon captures the Israeli sentiment. I have read several articles in "CNN," the "Washington Post," "Foreign Affairs," and others. They are descriptive and analytical of the negotiations of the various players, but understandably do not capture that sentiment.

The Government vote was 35-3 in favor of the deal, overwhelming. Added to that was the approval of the opposi-

tion led by Yair Lapid. Those in favor included all elements in Netanyahu's coalition, even most from the far right. Those who were opposed referred to it as an "immoral decision."

Before the cabinet vote, Prime Minister Netanyahu said that "the war against Hamas will continue until all of Israel's goals are achieved – namely to topple the Gaza-ruling terror group, secure the release of all the hostages, and ensure that there is no further threat from the enclave to Israel's security. We are at war, and the war will continue until all our goals are achieved, adding that the hostages' return was a sacred priority, and I am committed to it."

It was the horrific massacre and hostage taking of October 7 that created the painful inevitability of today's deal with the devil

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

Young Israel Thanks Local Heroes on Thanksgiving



Some of YI's children and adults visiting local firefighters on Thanksgiving Day 2023

fighters and law enforcement agents on Thanksgiving made the day so much more meaningful for everyone involved.

Young Israel thanks everyone who helped sponsor this heart-warming program. YI also thanks the many children and parents who helped us express our appreciation to our community's first responders and our Shul's security professionals.

Young Israel of Memphis' Rabbi Akiva Males can be reached at rabbi@ yiom.org **HW**



YI's Rabbi Akiva Males sharing Shul-made pumpkin pies with members of the Memphis Police Department on Thanksgiving Day

By Rabbi Akiva Males

Thanksgiving is a wonderful and obvious time to stop and say 'Thank You' to some very important people whom we don't often recognize – our local firefighters, police officers, Sheriff's deputies, and our friends at Veterans Security Group. After all, rather than spending Thanksgiving at home with their families, those hard-working heroes spend that day on duty keeping our neighborhoods safe and secure.

Eight years ago, Young Israel (YI) began the beautiful tradition of sharing some Shul-made pies and 'Thank You' posters with our local firefighters on Thanksgiving. This heart-warming program – named 'Pies for Our Guys' – has been very well-received. In 2020, YI added the Memphis Police Department, the Shelby County Sheriff's Office, and Veterans Security Group (VSG) to our list of pie recipients, and we excitedly continued the tradition this year as well.

YI thanks the many children and parents who joined together at Shul on Sunday morning, November 19 to create appreciative posters, and to prepare / bake more than 50 mouth-watering pumpkin pies. Taking part in these activities was also a fun and meaningful activity for everyone involved.

In the days leading up to Thanksgiving, I delivered 20 of the Shul-baked pumpkin pies and some of the 'Thank You' posters to our friends at VSG and the Shelby County Sheriff's Substation in Arlington. (The hard-working team of VSG security personnel help keep Young Israel safe each Shabbos and Yom Tov.) The VSG team members and the Sheriff's deputies were happy to take YI's pies home and enjoy them with their families on Thanksgiving.

On Thanksgiving morning, Thursday, November 23, Young Israel brought dozens of children and adults together to say "Thank You" to our firefighters at Fire Station 21 (located just next to Kroger on S. Mendenhall Road).

The children presented 18 of their pumpkin pies, as well as their hand-crafted Thanksgiving posters to the very appreciative – and noticeably touched – firefighters. The firemen gladly treated our entire group to a tour of their fire-station, gave us a close look at their equipment, and even let the children climb into their ambulance and trucks.

During YI's visit, an actual call came in. Everyone quickly moved out of the way and watched the firefighters hastily gear-up and take off in an ambulance. Seeing our first responders in action on Thanksgiving helped the children gain an even deeper appreciation for our local heroes.

Following the program at the fire station, I presented around a dozen more Shul-made pies and 'Thank You' posters to the appreciative Memphis Police Department officers stationed on Appling Farms Parkway.

Visiting and thanking our local fire-



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American Cowboys Work the Israeli Heartland



American cowboys volunteer in Israel, Nov. 23, 2023. Credit: Courtesy.

By Etgar Lefkovits

(JNS) – MOSHAV SDE UZIYAHU – When the group of four American cowboys with their trademark widebrimmed hats, leather belts with heavy metal buckles, jeans and rugged boots walked up to the security check at the El Al counter at New York's John F. Kenedy International Airport earlier this month, security at first didn't know quite what to make of them.

In an instant, the image of the strapping 20-something cowboys on their way to volunteer in Israel following the Hamas attacks on Oct. 7 went viral, and they became a media sensation in a country at war before they even boarded the plane.

The atypical volunteers from Ameri-

ca's farming heartland were heading to the biblical heartland.

A symbolic lifeline for agriculture

The agricultural warehouse at this farming community just east of the southern Israeli city of Ashdod, which has been repeatedly hit by rocket attacks from Gaza, was buzzing with activity last Wednesday with dozens of volunteers, including both Israelis and Americans, packaging nearly a thousand cartons of just-picked produce from farms near the Gaza Strip for delivery across the country.

But it was the cowboys carting the fresh cherry tomatoes, peppers, parsley, celery and other assorted vegetables who immediately stood out in the crowd.



A group of American cowboys travels to Israel to volunteer their services, Nov. 23, 2023. Credit: Courtesy.

With thousands of Thai agricultural workers who used to work at the farms currently out of the country, Palestinian laborers unavailable for security reasons, and more than 360,000 Israelis called up for military service, local farmers have been seeking any and all assistance so that their crops – their economic lifeline – do not go to waste.

"We are not staying home and doing social media but doing something here that needs to be done," said Tennessee-born Britt Waller, 24, logistics manager of HaYovel, a Christian Zionist group that organized the scores of U.S. volunteers. Every year, the organization, which his father, Tommy, established in 2005, has brought hundreds of people to work the vineyards in the land of the Bible.

"For 2,000 years, Christians thought 'that's it with the Jews,' but now the

question is what is going on with Israel, where prophecies are coming true," Waller told JNS.

When the war broke out, the group launched an emergency campaign for hands-on agricultural helpers among its former volunteers ("people you could trust with your life during wartime") coupled with a fundraising campaign aptly named "Operation Itai" – after the non-Jewish biblical general who joined with King David – for needed equipment that has already brought in \$2.5 million.

"As soon as I heard what had happened in Israel, I felt I needed to be here," said volunteer Samuel Wearp, 27, from Texas, who grew up on a farm and now works in his family's business, Blessed Buy Israel, selling products from the biblical heartland. "I felt that it was my own people that this was happening to." HW



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