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# Hebrew Watchman

**SERVING THE MEMPHIS JEWISH COMMUNITY SINCE 1925** 

HEBREWWATCHMAN.COM 15 SHEVAT, 5784 JANUARY 25, 2024 VOL. 102, NO. 19

# The Journey of the Ronna K. Newburger Adult Day Center Has Officially Begun



Rabbi Levi Klein and the Newburger family share the tradition of hanging the mezuzah at the entrance of the Adult Day Center.

#### By Jasmine Williams • Photos by Paige Miller

On Thursday, January 11, 2024, Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab celebrated the grand opening of the Ronna K. Newburger Adult Day Center. After nearly a year of research and planning – and three months of construction – the center is now ready to open its doors and serve the community. Dozens attended the opening to celebrate the new program and this lasting tribute to Ron-

na's memory.

The celebration began with conversations and light refreshments, but the main event was the ribbon-cutting ceremony, which included many sentimental speeches from Executive Director Bobby Meadows, the Newburger family, and Rabbi Levi Klein from Chabad of Memphis. Hal Newburger spoke on his partnership with Meadows and the



The Newburger family stands with the butterfly sculpture donated by Iris Harkavy to the Adult Day Center.

Home's staff, how they worked together to develop a program that is safe and stimulating, yet creative. Rabbi Klein affixed a beautiful mezuzah to the entrance and, along with Ronna and Hal's four children, said the traditional blessing for the ritual.

After the ribbon cutting, everyone was able to view the facility, which features a kitchen and dining space, relaxation lounge, beauty salon, outdoor

garden area, and gathering spaces for socializing and activities. Nicki Newburger spoke alongside her siblings, Marty, Nat, and Dina, about the importance of adult day services and how confident the family is in their partnership with MJHR.

"It is truly uplifting to see this program launch. So many people will receive the

(See Newburger Page 2)

# JHSMM Excited about Memphis Jewish Community Film Project



Jonathan Epstein

What has made the relationship of Jews in Memphis to the city so special? What have been their unique contributions to its history? What's going on in community today? What will be important to keep younger members actively involved going forward? These are some of the questions the Jewish Historical Society of Memphis and the Mid-South



Rob Cooper

(JHSMM) is looking to find answers to through their involvement in an exciting new project envisioned by filmmakers Rob and Pam Cooper of Verissima Productions. By partnering with Jonathan Epstein of Running Pony Productions, and with the support of the Society, they have been putting the pieces in place to produce a documentary film – working



Pam Cooper

title "Jews in Memphis" – that will tell the story of the Memphis Jewish community in a fresh new way.

"The goal of this project will be to pull together all segments of the Jewish community in Memphis to celebrate the rich history of Jews in Memphis, document the vibrant activities of the various congregations, and examine how to help ensure that the community will remain vital and growing for years to come," said filmmaker and former Memphian Rob Cooper. "We want to capture and preserve the memories of long-term members but also show the dynamic involvement of younger members of the community "he added.

This new documentary would serve as follow-up to Rob and Pam's "The Jews of Memphis," which they produced in 1999 in collaboration with the JSHMM. The film was based on (former President of JHSMM) Dr. Selma Lewis' iconic book, "A Biblical People in the Bible Belt: The Jewish Community of Memphis, Tennessee." It has since been broadcast several times by WKNO-TV.

"Over 20 years later, now is the time to create a new documentary film that

(See JHSMM Page 2)

# 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.



#### Newburger...

(Continued From Page 1)



The Newburger family and Bobby Meadows cut the ribbon to the Adult Day Center.

help they need. The individualized assessments and quality of attention will be life-changing. We wish our mother could have benefited, but we know her legacy will have a great impact."

Nicki added, "In this way, our parents remain the amazing team they always were together. We are proud of our father's loving contribution to the community and the team carrying out the mission is outstanding."

The Adult Day Center will be a great addition to the variety of services that the Home offers and aligns with their vision of creating an environment that celebrates the changing face of aging and focuses on life, not disability. MJHR is excited to soon begin admitting participants and establish another safe space for seniors and adults in our community.

The Newburger family closed, "Our family is confident that Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab will lead a sustainable, loving, meaningful, and joyful program."

More information regarding the Center can be found on the Home's website at: www.memphisjewishhome. org/services/adult-day.

Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab is a not-for-profit nursing home, Jewish in character and environment, dedicated to providing the highest level of care possible with dignity, compassion, and professionalism. Only through the help of generous donors is the organization able to care for those in need. Find more information at www. memphisjewishhome.org/giving. HW

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#### JHSMM...

(Continued From Page 1)

showcases how our community has grown and changed, looking at the strengths of our past and present and reflecting on our challenges for the future," said JHSMM President Greg Siskind. "Everyone is invited to become part of this project and to contribute to the Film Fund that has been established so that this will become a reality."

Rob Cooper has been producing and directing films and broadcast documentaries for over 40 years, including "Good Mornin' Blues" (hosted by B.B. King), which won a CINE International Golden Eagle. As a producer at WBZ-TV in Boston, he won two New England 'Emmys.' His recently completed "Space Torah" about Jewish astronaut Jeffrey Hoffman has been screened internationally, appearing in over 40 film festivals and winning six awards, including "Audience Choice" at the Atlanta Jewish Film Festival.

Pam Cooper has 30 years of experience as a therapist, researcher, oral historian, and interviewer. She holds a M. Ed. from Harvard and a certificate in Genealogical Research from Boston

# Hebrew<sup>†</sup>

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## Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. Jan. 26, 2024 / 16 Shevat, 5784...... 5:03 p.m. Havdalah, Sat. Jan. 27, 2024 / 17 Shevat, 5784...... 6:02 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Beshalach

University. Over the 25 years since Pam and Rob founded Verissima Productions, they have collaborated on a variety of Memphis-based productions, including Video Biographies for Dick Lightman, Honey Scheidt and Max Notowitz, as well the as award-winning "Citizens not Subjects!" which was broadcast statewide on PBS.

Jonathan Epstein is co-founder and managing partner of Running Pony Productions, the pre-eminent Production Company in the Mid-South, which has created award-winning videos for major clients across the country, and has won awards for his documentaries, including "I AM a MAN," which tells the story of the sanitation workers' strike of 1968 that brought Martin Luther King, Jr. to Memphis. Jonathan is also president of the Anshei Sphard - Beth El Emeth Cemetery and Charitable Foun-

For more information about how to support this special project, please email mjhspresident@gmail.com. HW



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# 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.

Classes Restarting at the MJCC **Beginning Mah-Jongg Lessons with Melanie Mann** 

January 25 through February 20 • Thursdays, 6-8 p.m.

Because of the demand, we have started a second Beginning Mah Jongg class on Thursday Nights! Melanie has been teaching this class for quite a while at the MJCC as well as other places around town. Her other class filled up so quickly, you'll need to call the MJCC front desk ASAP at 901-761-0810 to register. The new class number is 10417. Cost is \$72 for members and \$80 for non-members. Bring your friends and learn a new

Wednesday January 24 **Speaker: Mitchell Lansky** Topic: "Legal Facts for Seniors!"

Mitchell comes from a long line of Memphians dedicated to serving people. In addition to a Law degree, Mitchell has a Masters in Tax Law and is a member of Lawyers with Purpose - a group that specializes in Estate Planning. With 30 years of experience in this field, Mitchell's mind and passion are aligned for details and problem-solving.

Mr. Lansky's talk will center on the problems seniors deal with on a regular basis. The talk is free and open to the public. Come enjoy lunch and stay for this informative talk.

Please 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 Adult Services Coordinator Steve Kaplan at 901-259-9220 or stevekaplan@jccmemphis.org, or by calling the front desk at 901-761-0810. **HW** 

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# Camp Scholarship Fund for **Memphis Campers**

Chabad Center for Jewish Life is happy to announce the administration of a camp scholarship fund for Jewish children in Memphis attending any Jewish summer overnight camps in 2024. Thanks to the generosity of local benefactors, limited scholarships are now available for those who need help paying for Jewish summer overnight camp.

"We are very happy to administer this fund, which is sure to help bring a Jewish experience closer to the reach of those who most desperately need it," said Rabbi Levi Klein, executive director of Chabad.

A 2008 study by the Foundation for

Jewish Camp found that going to camp is an indicator for Jews to be more involved in an array of Jewish experiences. Adults who attended Jewish camps as children were more likely to go to synagogue, marry a Jew, donate to a Jewish charity, light Shabbat candles and feel attached to Israel.

Funds are limited and will be distributed via lottery, based on the number of applicants. An application can be found at www.JewishMemphis. com/scholarship if you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Rabbi Klein at Chabad 901-754-0404 or Rabbi@JewishMemphis.com. HW

## Baron Hirsch Synagogue February 7, 2024, Kol Rena SoShuls Luncheon

Baron Hirsch Synagogue will host the February Kol Rena SoShuls Luncheon at noon on Wednesday, February

SoShuls luncheons are for people who are ages 64 and older and 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 luncheon cost is \$5 per person. Bingo games follow the luncheon.

The SoShuls Luncheons are just plain fun, and they offer a welcoming setting, with a delicious meal and good entertainment. The February meal will be a winter warm-up lunch, with vegetable soup, turkey sandwiches, cornbread muffins, and cookies for dessert. What a cozy way to enjoy one another's com-

The musical group, Side Show, will provide the luncheon entertainment, courtesy of Creative Aging.

You are invited to join the fun at the February SoShuls Luncheon at noon on Wednesday, February 7, 2024, at Baron Hirsch Synagogue. There was a large crowd in January, and we want to be certain to prepare enough food for everyone. Please make your reservations early 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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# U.K. to Ban Islamist Group that Urges Jihad Against Israel



A Hizb ut-Tahrir protest in Britain. Source: X.

#### By Georgia L. Gilholy

(JNS) – The British government has unveiled plans to proscribe Hizb ut-Tahrir ("Party of Liberation"), an Islamist group that recently held a string of demonstrations calling for jihad against Israel.

The ban will designate the group as a terrorist organization and prohibit its activities. This move positions the U.K. in line with other Western and Arab nations that have already proscribed Hizb ut-Tahrir, emphasizing the government's commitment to addressing the threat posed by the organization.

Home Secretary James Cleverly, in justifying the decision, highlighted the group's vocal support for Hamas's Oct. 7 attack on Israel, labeling Hizb ut-Tahrir an "antisemitic organization that actively promotes and encourages terrorism." If approved, this ban will align the treatment of the group with other globally outlawed entities such as Al-Qaeda and Islamic State.

Under the planned ban, set to be enforced on Jan. 19 pending parliamentary approval, people found guilty of backing the group will risk up to 14 years in jail.

Founded in the 1950s with its headquarters in Lebanon, Hizb ut-Tahrir has operated in at least 32 countries, including the U.K., U.S., Canada and Australia. The group's primary objective is the establishment of a caliphate governed by Islamic law. Notably, it has faced bans in various Arab nations, Germany and China.

The group has been active in Britain since the 1980s and has routinely courted controversy.

In 1994, the "Guardian" reported on a Hizb ut-Tahrir Britain pamphlet that urged Muslims to "throw a stone, trigger a bomb, plant mine, hijack a plane, do not ask how," and to "fight the Jews & kill them."

The prospective ban comes amid growing concerns about the group's activities, with Hizb ut-Tahrir organizing rallies in London alongside pro-Palestinian marches.

Conservative Party MP Bob Blackman previously called for the deportation of Abdul Wahid, the leader of the U.K. arm of the group, asserting that he should lose his "right to be in this country."

The decision to ban Hizb ut-Tahrir has garnered support from various quarters, including former Home Secretary Suella Braverman and Labour's Shadow Home Secretary Yvette Cooper.

However, the group has staunchly denied allegations of antisemitism and terrorism, vowing to challenge the proposed ban through all available legal means. **HW** 

# Ritchie Torres: Anti-Israel Protesters Celebrating Oct. 7 are Like White People Who Cheered Lynchings



Rep. Ritchie Torres, a New York Democrat, speaks onstage at the March For Israel at the National Mall, Nov. 14, 2023. Credit: Noam Galai/Getty Images

#### By Ron Kampeas

(JTA) – In a speech marking Martin Luther King Jr. Day weekend, Rep. Ritchie Torres likened protesters who have celebrated Hamas' Oct. 7 massacres to white people in the Jim Crow era who celebrated after the lynching of Black people.

"I was profoundly shaken not only by Oct. 7, but by the aftermath," Torres, a Black Bronx Democrat, said last Friday in a speech at Central Synagogue, a prominent Reform congregation in midtown Manhattan. "I found it utterly horrifying. To see fellow Americans openly cheering and celebrating the deadliest massacre of Jews since the Holocaust. And for me, the aftermath of Oct. 7 revealed a barbarity of the American heart that reminded me of an earlier and darker time in our nation's history, a time when the public mobs of Jim Crow would openly celebrate the lynching of African Americans."

Protests have proliferated since Oct. 7, when Hamas terrorists murdered some 1,200 people and brutalized thousands more in an invasion from Gaza. They have grown as Israel has waged a war in Gaza to eliminate the terror group, and especially as casualties mounted: So far, more than 23,000 Palestinians have been killed, according to the Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry.

A number of the protests have decried the Oct. 7 violence on Israelis, but others have skated over the initial massacres or have embraced Hamas and described its atrocities as resistance.

Torres, a member of the progressive caucus in Congress, has garnered a reputation as an unstinting supporter of Israel. He has duked it out online with fellow progressives in debates over Israel, a dynamic that has only intensified since Oct. 7. Torres is heavily funded

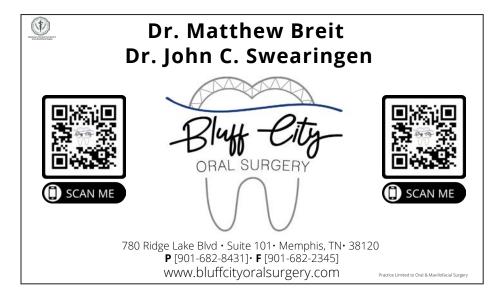
by AIPAC and donors aligned with the pro-Israel lobby, and spoke at a massive rally for Israel in Washington, D.C. on Nov. 14.

In his speech, Torres alluded to the controversies that assailed elite universities after the presidents of Harvard, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the University of Pennsylvania told Congress that calls to commit genocide against Jews did not necessarily violate the schools' codes of conduct. The ensuing uproar drove Harvard's and Penn's presidents to resign.

"What we've seen in the aftermath of October 7, is appalling silence and indifference and cowardice from so called leaders in our society from institutions that we once respected and admired," he said. "And if we as a society cannot bring ourselves to condemn the murder of innocents with moral clarity, then we must ask, what are we becoming as a society? What does that reveal about the depths of antisemitism in the American soul?"

Central is a locus for some of the city's wealthiest liberal Jewish families, many of whom are also firm supporters of Israel. Dr. Shonni Silverberg, the synagogue president, introduced Torres as a champion of progressive priorities as well as an advocate for Israel, and noted that he is the first openly LGBTQ representative elected from the Bronx.

"Ritchie remains steadfastly focused on the priorities of his South Bronx constituents, expanding access to safe and affordable housing, rebuilding New York economically and ensuring that no child goes hungry and that all receive a good education," she said. "But he has also shown himself both in and out of Congress to be a great friend of the American Jewish community and Israel." HW



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# Hamas to Take 1,000 Boxes of Medicine for Every One Going to Hostages



One of 197 humanitarian aid trucks entering the Gaza Strip on Dec. 12, 2023. Source: X

(JNS) – Medicines destined for Israeli hostages, but most of which will end up serving the Hamas terrorist organization, entered the Gaza Strip from Egypt, "Ynet" reported last Wednesday night.

"A senior Hamas official said that for every box provided for the hostages, 1,000 boxes would be sent in for Palestinians," per AP.

As part of an agreement brokered by France and Qatar, Israel also agreed to allow more aid trucks into Gaza.

The terms of the deal were mired in controversy after it became clear Israel initially agreed to allow the shipment to pass into the coastal enclave without IDF inspection.

According to Channel 12, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said that he didn't deal with the inspection arrangements, pointing to the army as the authority responsible for overseeing the shipment.

"The prime minister instructed that medicine be delivered to the hostages but did not deal at all with the inspection arrangements for their entry, which are determined by the IDF and the security forces," according to the Prime Minister's Office.

However, the IDF denied that it had been asked for its opinion on the matter, saying it only learned of the deal from remarks by senior Hamas official Musa Abu Marzouk.

Queried on the issue by JNS last Wednesday, Prime Minister's Office Spokesman Eylon Levy said that he couldn't comment on the "specific modalities" of how the aid would enter Gaza.

The issue was eventually resolved, with "Ynet" reporting that five trucks passed a security check at the Kerem Shalom Crossing on the Israel-Gaza border.

Under the deal brokered by Qatar and France, two Qatari military planes delivered the aid to Egypt's El Arish airport near the Rafah border crossing with Gaza

Qatar said its representatives would personally accompany the shipment to its "final destination" in the Strip, according to the Prime Minister's Office.

"Israel insists that all the medicines reach their destination," the statement added.

France sent the medicines to Qatar after an agreement with Doha was reached late last week.

French President Emmanuel Macron ordered the foreign ministry in Paris to make a list of medicines for 45 captives who need them and who have been hostages for more than 100 days. They were purchased and delivered to Doha last Saturday.

The Hostages and Missing Families Forum, a group representing relatives of

the captives, has said it would demand "visual proof" that the medicine had reached the hostages.

Last Saturday, Osama Hamdan, a Hamas terrorist leader in Lebanon, told the "France 24" broadcaster that only "some medicine will be used to treat Israeli prisoners."

According to official figures in Israel, around 136 hostages remain in Gaza, although dozens are believed to be dead. Many of the captives are in desperate need of medical attention.

Mor Hershkovitz, the head of data operations with the Hostages and Missing Families Forum's medical team, previously told JNS that many were in critical condition or might already be dead.

"Some suffer from serious heart and kidney conditions and should be taking blood-thinning medication. Others were wounded during their brutal kidnapping," said Hershkovitz. Some of these wounds could lead to death within hours or even minutes, she added.

International law explicitly stipulates the obligation of participants in armed conflict to allow impartial humanitarian bodies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross access to hostages.

According to Fabrizio Carboni, Red Cross regional director for the Near and Middle East, the organization has yet to receive clearance from Hamas to visit the Israeli hostages. **HW** 

# 'Nothing Further from Truth,' Erdan Says of UN Claim to be Unaware of Hamas Tunnels



A Hamas tunnel destroyed by the Israel Defense Forces on Dec. 8, 2023. Credit: Adansijav Official/Shutterstock.

#### By Mike Wagenheim

(JNS) – Israel's envoy to the United Nations is crying foul over a claim from a spokesman for the U.N. chief that the global body didn't know about Hamas's web of terror tunnels beneath Gaza.

Stephane Dujarric, a spokesman for U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres, was asked last Wednesday whether, given the sizable U.N. presence amid a multitude of Gazan agencies, the organization had any indication tunnels were being constructed.

"No is clearly the answer for that," Dujarric said. "It seems to me that all this infrastructure was built in a highly secretive way."

Gilad Erdan, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, rejected those claims in a post late last Thursday on social media.

"Watch the U.N. secretary-general's spokesperson say the U.N. didn't know about Hamas terror tunnels in Gaza! Nothing can be further from the truth," Erdan posted. "The secretary-general himself received four detailed letters from me in the past two years reporting on Hamas tunnels built under Gaza's civilian infrastructure including under U.N. facilities."

Erdan attached screen captures of two of those letters – one dated Aug. 11,

2021, and the other July 29, 2022 – to his post. The former informed Guterres that Hamas was denying a U.N. agency an opportunity to inspect a pair of Gazan schools run by the international body, underneath both of which the Israel Defense Forces had discovered tunnels.

The following year, Erdan wrote to Guterres and enclosed detailed proof of the "deliberately close proximity" that Hamas digs terror tunnels to schools, mosques and weapons storehouses.

"But wait: there's more!" Erdan add-

ed in his post.

The Israeli envoy cited a 2022 statement by UNRWA, the Palestinian-only, perpetual U.N. agency for refugees and their descendants, condemning the presence of a "man-made cavity" beneath one of its Gazan schools as a breach of neutrality and international law.

Erdan claimed he briefed UNRWA Commissioner-General Phillipe Lazzarini on the tunnels in 2021.

"The digging was not secretive. The U.N. knew about it for years but be-

cause of its bias, refused to report on it and became an accomplice to Hamas's crimes," he wrote. "Beyond Shameful!"

Still, Dujarric insisted last Wednesday that the United Nations was unaware of the sophisticated labyrinth of tunnels being dug and fortified throughout Gaza.

"I mean, just to see it as an observer, to think that the U.N. had any understanding of what was," he said, "any information about those operations, I think, is: No is clearly the answer for that." HW



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# Launch of Memphis Jewish Experience



Rabbi Noach and Miriam, with their seven children at the Memphis Zoo

On January 1, 2024, the Memphis Jewish Experience (MJX) formally launched as the community's newest Jewish organization. Founded as a project of the Memphis Kollel and under the direction of Rabbi Noach and Miriam Karp, MJX is a resource dedicated to creating formal and informal Jewish programming, events, and learning opportunities, for all members of the Jewish community regardless of age, background or affiliation. "Our singular goal," noted Rabbi Karp, is "to create a safe space where Jews can come to explore, discover and strengthen their own Jewish identities."

Rabbi and Mrs. Karp, and their seven children, moved to Memphis this past August from Providence, Rhode Island, where they had been actively involved in Jewish engagement for more than 11 years. Rabbi Karp was the program director of Project Shoresh, an organization focused on Jewish education and engagement. In that role, he planned and executed a wide variety of programming including events for Jewish Young Professionals, holiday-themed events for young families, Jewish Student Union groups for teens, quarterly shabbatonim and Momentum Dads trips to Israel. Rabbi Karp is a Torah teacher and mentor to many of those with whom he develops relationships, conducting one-on-one learning sessions, weekly classes and offering counseling to those in need.

Aside from running programs and teaching, Rabbi Karp is a running and training enthusiast.

Known as the "Spartan Rabbi" by some in the Rhode Island Jewish community, Rabbi Karp uses his passion for fitness to build meaningful relationships with community members.

In Rhode Island, Mrs. Karp worked side-by-side with her husband in Project Shoresh. Aside from regularly entertaining and hosting community members at their Shabbat table, she planned and executed a variety of women's programs and learning opportunities and was a sought-after mentor and teacher to many.

Since their arrival in Memphis, the Karps have hit the ground running, building on their years of experience in Jewish communal work and preparing for the launch of MJX. "I had the pleasure of first meeting Rabbi Noach in 2022 on a Momentum's Men's program in Israel," remarked community member Bill Naids. "He was especially kind, enthusiastic, and knowledgeable, and we spoke of him often during our posttrip gatherings. Imagine how astonished and excited we all were to find out that Noach and his beautiful family were relocating to Memphis! Since they have arrived, he has quickly become an asset to the community, and a dear friend."

Mrs. Karp commented, "In just a few short months we have been able to experience the amazing warmth and vibrancy of the Memphis community and its institutions. We feel blessed to have met so many wonderful people from all parts of the community and have them in our lives. Our family is looking forward to putting down roots here and playing a part in building vibrant, unified Jewish life here in Memphis."

Memphis Jewish Experience events and programs are being scheduled for 2024. For more information or to get involved, please reach out to Rabbi Noach Karp at rabbinoach@memphisjx.org or Miriam Karp at mkarp@memphisjx.org. Find them on the web at memphisjx.org. HW



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# Eritrean Migrants Barbeque for Israeli Soldiers Near Gaza Border



Eritrean volunteers prepare the feast near the Gaza border, Jan. 16, 2024. Credit: Rina Castelnuovo.

#### By Etgar Lefkovits, Kibbutz Be'eri

(JNS) – Dozens of Eritrean migrants hosted IDF soldiers serving on the border with Gaza to a festive barbecue dinner last Tuesday, showing support for the country where they have sought shelter.

The extraordinary event saw the workers-cum-asylum seekers and an IDF artillery unit stationed on the outskirts of this southern kibbutz, which was hard-hit in the Hamas invasion, break bread together.

"We feel that this is our country, and what happened on October 7 happened to us as well," said 36-year-old Yhselu Gebrem.

Gebrem, who has lived in Israel for 12 years, noted that this was the fourth

time their group of Christian Orthodox Eritreans who oppose the totalitarian government that has ruled Eritrea for the last three decades, ever since their country's independence from Ethiopia, had come to volunteer on the Gaza-border, including previously offering a helping hand to farmers.

"We came to support the people of Israel during their difficult hour and to be at your side," said Michael Russoi, 30, who came to Israel 14 years ago and works in a supermarket in Ashdod. "We saw what happened on [Oct. 7] and there are simply no words to describe it. Your enemy is the enemy of us all."

#### A full spread

As a thunderous explosion of artil-

lery pierced the air, the volunteers, who had funded the 24,000 shekels (\$6,350) kosher catered barbeque event for hundreds of soldiers, manned the tables set up under a star-studded sky, working the grill of steaks, hamburgers, hot dogs, chicken and kebab that along with salads galore would be soon devoured by a hungry army of soldiers, used to mostly packaged foods.

"It really is heartwarming to see all the civilians who are coming here to be with us, and I am enjoying every moment of it," said reserve soldier Amir Alfedi, 23, from the town of Gan Yavne, near Ashdod. "It warms our hearts and our stomachs."

Bashar, a Druze soldier, tersely said, "We have no other country," and was then embraced by his fellow soldier.

More than half a dozen languages could be heard mixing in the crowd, including Hebrew, English, French, Russian, Arabic and Tigrinya.

"We came to say we are with you," offered Teshema Kiflon, 33, who came to Israel from Eritrea 13 years ago and now lives in Tel Aviv.

#### Unity with the people's army

The bonding on a chilly winter evening offered a stark contrast with the pre-Oct. 7 bitter polarization that rocked Israeli society last year over judicial reform, and the internecine turmoil within the Eritrean community between supporters and opponents of the Eritrean government that erupted into open violence in Tel Aviv in September.

For now, at least, the war has changed

all that and the brotherhood that is near-omnipresent nationwide grew even wider at the event to include the Eritrean community.

#### A 'tiny minority' in a troubled region About 17,000 Eritreans live in Israel.

Amid uncertainty over their future, most of the Eritreans in the country are viewed as economic migrants and get their visas renewed every six months and are not recognized as refugees.

Migrants' supporters say Israel, a country founded upon the ashes of the Holocaust and built up by Jewish refugees, should welcome those seeking asylum. Opponents claim the migrants have brought crime to the poor south Tel Aviv neighborhoods where many have settled.

The debate over their future was not in evidence last Tuesday as the now-Hebrew speakers blended in with the crowd.

"We are a tiny minority in the region which share the same destiny," said Habtom Ghebrezghiabher, 42, who lives with his wife and three children in Jerusalem after coming to Israel over a decade and a half ago and has been granted refugee status. "We share the same culture based on shared Judeo-Christian values."

"Israelis pride themselves on being reasonable, logical and liberal people," said Tesfazion Berhe Gerhelase, an Eritrean opposition figure who has been living in exile in London for the last 25 years and who came to Israel for the event. "People don't understand that there is no such thing here in this region. **HW** 

# U.S. Working on Grand Regional Bargain to End Israel-Hamas War



U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken holds a press conference in Tel Aviv on Jan. 9. 2024. Credit: Chuck Kennedy/U.S. State Department.

#### By Ariel Kahana

(JNS) – An Israeli source confirmed last Thursday that the Biden administration was currently working on a regional grand bargain that comprises several tenets aimed at long-term stability as part of a post-war reality.

Apart from ending the current hostilities in Gaza it also envisions normalization between Israel and the Arab world, the release of captives and a new regime in Gaza.

The plan appears to be part of what U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken referred to when he said in Davos last week that Israel needed to make tough decisions. The plan is still in a very preliminary stage, and it is unclear how much of it has been formulated into actual text or formulas that could see the war end and a political process replace it.

Earlier last Thursday the U.K. newspaper "Financial Times" reported that Arab countries are working on an initiative to secure a ceasefire and release of captives from Gaza as part of a broader normalization plan between Saudi Arabia and Israel – if Jerusalem agreed to "irreversible" steps towards establishing a Palestinian state.

The Saudi "Al-Hadath" network re-

ported from its sources that recently there was a meeting between senior Israelis, senior Americans and senior Palestinians. According to the report, the discussions aimed at determining who would govern the Gaza Strip after the war and transferring the management of its affairs to the Palestinian Authority.

According to "Financial Times," a senior Arab official said they hope to present the plan, which would include establishing relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia, within a few weeks, to end the war against Hamas and prevent the conflict from expanding in the Middle East.

Arab sources discussed the plan with their counterparts in the U.S. and Europe. According to the report, it will include agreement by Arab states to formally recognize a Palestinian state, or support the Palestinians, who will receive full U.N. membership.

One official said, "The real issue is that there needs to be hope for the Palestinians, it cannot just be economic benefits or removal of occupation symbols."

The initiative comes as Israel faces growing international pressure to end the war against Hamas.

Originally published by "Israel Hayom." **HW** 



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# HDHP/HSA Pairing May Help Control Medical Costs

Provided by Mike Stein, Managing Director - Investments, Wells Fargo Advisors

Questions for Mike? You can reach him at 901.761.8151 or Michael.Stein@WellsFargoAdvisors.com • fa.wellsfargoadvisors.com/michael-stein

If your employer offers health insurance benefits, one of your options may be a high-deductible health plan (HDHP) with eligibility for a health savings account (HSA). These plans offer potential savings by encouraging you to make cost-effective choices in your medical spending. If you do not have employer-sponsored health coverage, you can choose from a variety of individual HDHPs, including plans through state or federal health insurance exchanges.

#### Lower premiums, higher deductibles

Premiums for HDHP coverage are generally lower than for traditional preferred provider organization (PPO) coverage. In exchange, you pay a larger annual deductible before the plan begins to cover a percentage of expenses.

Certain types of preventive care, such as annual physicals, health screenings, and selected medications, may be covered without a deductible (in some cases, provided at no cost). HDHPs can also offer telehealth and other remote health-care services without a deductible through 2024. Regardless of the deductible, the costs for medical services may be reduced through the insurer's negotiated rate.

To protect consumers from catastrophic expenses, most health insurance plans have an annual out-of-pocket maximum above which the insurer pays all medical expenses. HDHP maximums are generally higher than those of traditional plans. But if you reach the annual maximum, your total cost for that year

would typically be lower for an HDHP, with the up-front savings on premiums. If you have low medical costs, the lower premiums also will generally make an HDHP more cost-effective. For other scenarios, the cost-effectiveness of an HDHP may vary with your situation. Although an HDHP might save money over the course of a year, some consumers could be hesitant to obtain appropriate care because of the higher out-of-pocket expense at the time of service.

#### Triple tax advantage

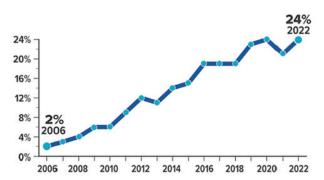
You must be enrolled in a high-deductible health plan to establish and contribute to a health savings account, which allows investments within the account and offers three powerful tax advantages: (1) contributions are deducted from your adjusted gross income, (2) investment earnings compound tax-free inside the HSA, and (3) withdrawals are tax-free if the money is spent on qualified medical expenses (including dental and vision expenses). Note that some states do not follow federal tax rules on HSAs.

HSA contributions are typically made through payroll deductions, but in most cases, they can also be made directly to the HSA provider. In 2023, contribution limits are \$3,850 for an individual and \$7,750 for a family (\$4,150/\$8,300 in 2024), plus an additional \$1,000 if the account holder is age 55 or older. Although 2023 payroll contributions must be made by December 31, you can make direct contributions for 2023 up to the April 2024 tax deadline. Some employ-

ers contribute to an employee's HSA, and any employer contributions would be considered in the annual contribution limit.

#### **Growing Trend**

Percentage of covered workers enrolled in an HSA-eligible high-deductible health plan



Source: Kaiser Family Foundation, 2022

#### Saving for the long run

Many people use HSAs to pay health-care expenses as they go, but there are advantages to paying from other funds and allowing the HSA to accumulate and pursue tax-deferred growth over time. Assets in an HSA belong to the contributor, so they can be retained in the account or rolled over to a new HSA if you change employers or retire. Unspent HSA balances can be used to help meet health-care needs in future years whether or not you are enrolled in an HDHP; however, you must be enrolled in an HDHP to contribute to an HSA.

Although HSA funds cannot be used to pay regular health insurance premiums, they can be used to pay Medicare premiums and long-term care costs, which could make an HSA an excellent vehicle to help fund retirement expenses. After you enroll in Medicare, you can no longer contribute to an HSA (because Medicare is not an HDHP), but you can continue to use the HSA funds tax-free for qualified expenses. After age 65, you can withdraw HSA funds for any purpose without paying the 20% penalty that typically applies to those under age 65. But you would pay ordinary income taxes, similar to a withdrawal from a traditional IRA, if the funds are not used for qualified medical expenses.

All investing involves risk, including the possible loss of principal, and there is no guarantee that any investment strategy will be successful.

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# Publishers, Hollywood Seem Ready to Bid Millions for Claudine Gay Story

(JNS) – Claudine Gay reportedly has a \$900,000 annual salary as a Harvard University professor, even after she resigned as the school's president in the wake of charges that she plagiarized and after she testified before a House committee that calling for genocide against Jews doesn't necessarily violate the institution's policies.

There might be a lot more money coming her way to tell her story, from book publishers and Hollywood, according to an exclusive report in the "Daily Mail."

At least three New York publishers, "desperate for a huge blockbuster best-selling memoir," are prepared to offer an advance up to \$15 million for Gay's exclusive memoir, per the "Daily Mail," citing anonymous sources in the publishing industry.

"The Claudine Gay Story can be this era's 'Roots,'" an unnamed "powerful" producer told "Daily Mail." The source added that Halle Berry, Kerry Washington, Zoe Kravitz and Beyoncé are being considered to portray the embattled former Harvard president. HW



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## Gaza Photojournalists Accused of Oct. 7 War Crimes



A press photographer covers an IDF exercise in northern Israel, Jan. 4, 2024. Credit: Yoav Dudkevitch/TPS.

#### By Pesach Benson

(JNS) – Two Gaza-based Palestinian photojournalists who infiltrated Israel on Oct. 7 during Hamas's massacres committed war crimes, experts say.

"I believe that this is clearly an incidence that would come under and be covered by both the convention that we talked about in the [International Criminal Court], of the [Convention on the] Prevention and Punishment of [the Crime of] Genocide, and under the Israeli law regarding the commission of and the prevention of genocide, and its prosecution," Maurice Hirsch said.

Hirsch, the former chief military prosecutor for Judea and Samaria, is now director of the Initiative for Palestinian Authority Accountability and Reform in the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs.

He was commenting on a recent report by HonestReporting, a Jerusalem-based media watchdog, which found that freelance photographers Mohammed Fayq Abu Mostafa and Ashraf Amra infiltrated Israel to photograph the attacks. They then returned to Khan Yunis in Gaza and went on Amra's Instagram Live account and excitedly shared a video of a mob pulling an Israeli soldier out of a tank and urged Palestinians to join the attack.

"You can go to Khuza'a [an area of southern Gaza near the border]. You park your motorbike there, OK. Or your jeep. And you enter inside. You will return back with a jeep, motorbike or bicycle, or anything," Mostafa says in the video. Later, he adds, "Advice: Whoever can go – go. It is a one-time event that will not happen again."

Amra affirms: "Really, it will not repeat itself."

Mostafa is a freelance photographer associated with "Reuters," which published his photos of the soldier being lynched.

Amra is also a freelancer whose photo of a bulldozer breaking down a section of the Gaza border fence was published with the credit: "Ashraf Amra/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images.'

#### Incitement to genocide

"Having been witness to the crimes themselves, and what was going on, and being witness to the genocide, to then be a party to this open public call to go and participate, to invade Israel, that is something which is at least incitement to commit the crime of genocide," Hirsch said.

He stressed that both photographers could be prosecuted in Israel under the Laws of the Prevention of Genocide and its Punishment. "If they are arrested alive, they could be indicted for a crime which carries a death sentence," Hirsch explained.

He drew a distinction between legitimate journalism and the photographs Mostafa and Amra took that day.

"I don't think it's legitimate journalism to join in and commit a genocidal act. It's all a question of intent," Hirsch said. "If your purpose is to then report on those committing the genocide and expose committing the genocide, that's one thing. But if the intent is to glorify the actions of those committing genocide, you're not fulfilling your journalistic function. You are acting as a propaganda branch of genocidal terrorists. That's not journalism at all."

Gil Hoffman, HonestReporting's executive director, said his researchers didn't find any indication that Mostafa and Amra had personally attacked Israelis.

"I think they would've bragged about it if they did. Not that I know of," Hoffman said.

He added that he is more outraged by the fact that "Reuters" and "Anadolu" continue to maintain their relationship with the photographers. "The people who mock 1,200 murdered are being treated as professionals by mainstream news organizations," Hoffman said.

#### Fruit of the poisonous tree

According to Professor Eytan Gilboa, who teaches international communications at Bar-Ilan University in Ramat Gan, Hamas benefited by having images of the violence broadcast far and wide.

"This is why they took pictures and videos. They transmitted videos to people inside Hamas headquarters from the atrocities to be broadcast on "Al Jazeera" and especially Muslim and Arab television networks," Gilboa said. "To call these people 'journalists' and 'photographers' is a joke."

Gilboa described Amra and Mostafa as "propagandists working in the service of Hamas," and stressed that many other Palestinian photographers and writers share that character, even if they didn't cross the border on Oct. 7.

"There's no freedom of expression in Gaza, no freedom of media. Western news services do not acknowledge to their audiences the conditions in which these Palestinians work."

Hoffman called on Western news services to do a better job of vetting the Palestinians they employ. In past Gaza conflicts, Israel gave foreign reporters access to Gaza, but not this time, "mostly to protect them," Hoffman explained, adding, "We don't need to have more Shireen Abu Aklehs," in reference to an "Al Jazeera" reported killed during a firefight between IDF soldiers and terrorists in Jenin in May 2022.

But that means news services are relying on Palestinian journalists who, at best, self-censor for fear of Hamas, and at worst, openly sympathize with Palestinian terrorist groups like Hamas, which is why vetting them is crucial, Hoffman said.

Another issue raised is what to do with the photographs Mostafa and Amra took that day.

Hirsch was unequivocal. "Borrowing from a legal term, [their photos and footage] would all be fruit of the poisonous tree," he insisted. "It's the equivalent of buying pictures from [Nazi propaganda chief] Joseph Goebbels." HW

#### **OBITUARIES**



Raymond Buring, 80, born April 6, 1943, in Memphis, Tenn., died January 11, 2014.

His Hebrew name was Reuven (named for Aunt Ruth Abraham). His father was Nat (Hebrew name, Naach) and his mother was Sylvia Stark Buring, Hebrew name, Shashana.

He graduated from Central High School and University of Memphis. He was Human Resource Manager for Bu-

ring Food Group for 20 years. Owner and manager of Eastgate Cleaners for 14 years. He was a retired Dry Cleaner and retired Professional Caregiver. Past Board Member of Jewish Community Center, Riverview Kansas Community Day Care Center, Alzheimer Day Care, Paul & Leslie Belz B'Nai Brith. He was a volunteer at Memphis Botanic Garden, Temple Israel's God's Unfinished Business, Synergy Foundation, Lifeblood, 24-gallon donor and Collierville Literacy Council.

He is survived by his children, Melissa B. McKessy, and her fiancé, Barney Pepper, Major Jonas L. (Natalie) Buring, USMC retired, and Emily B. Vander Wert; and his long-time girlfriend/companion, Theresa Balestrino. He was predeceased by his brother, Jerry Buring and is survived by his brother, Arthur (Mickey) Buring. He is also survived by his grandchildren, Stark and Quint Miller, Chloe and Josh McKessy, Riley and Isabelle Buring and Sofie Vander Wert.

The funeral was held January 16, 2024, at The Levy-Cooper Chapel in Temple Cemetery. The family requests memorials be sent to Anshei Sphard Synagogue or Temple Israel. HW

### Philly Man Dumps Trash at Holocaust Memorial Days after Swastika Vandalism

(JNS) - Eszter Kutas, the executive director of the Philadelphia Holocaust Remembrance Foundation, said she suspects that the man who dumped four bags of garbage on Jan. 16 at around 11:30 a.m. at the foot of the statue in the Horowitz-Wasserman Holocaust Memorial Plaza is a repeat

"We may have seen this person before causing similar incidents at the Holocaust Memorial Plaza," she said.

Video shows a man believed to be homeless wearing a brown jacket, red shirt and jeans dragging bags of trash, which he then dumps around the statue in the memorial plaza.

The incident comes three days after police discovered green swastika vandalism, sprayed by a masked individual. The two crimes are not believed to be related, unless, Kutas said, "we think about the larger ... context in which we see rising antisemitism affecting the American community."

David Adelman, whose grandfather's name appears on the memorial, has announced a \$25,000 award for information that leads to an arrest of the swastika vandal. HW

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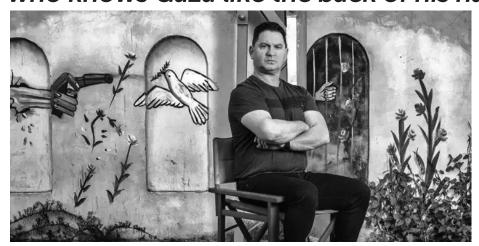
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## 'Israelis Refused to See the Truth about the Palestinians' An interview with Tomer Tzaban, a former undercover special forces soldier who knows Gaza like the back of his hand.



Tomer Tzaban. Credit: Yehoshua Yosef.

#### By Ran Puni

(JNS) – Tomer Tzaban fought terrorists in the IDF's Shimshon Unit, which focused on undercover operations in the Gaza Strip before it was disbanded in 1996 following the Oslo Accords. He is the author of the new book "In the Heart of Gaza" and the bestseller "Undercover in Gaza" (Kinneret Zmora-Bitan). Today, he is a diamantaire.

Q: Do you remember your last time in Gaza?

"When I left Gaza, only a few cells had weapons, very different from the situation today. Even if our cover was burned, we didn't find ourselves facing terrorists with assault rifles and RPGs from every corner. In most cases, it was fauda [Arabic for chaos, and a word Israeli undercover teams use when their mission has been compromised] with knives, sometimes handguns, and rifles.

"My last memory of Gaza is a thought: I'm leaving the place, and I really don't know what the future will bring to the place. I understand that this is a place we have no interest in controlling, and on the other hand, every area we withdraw from will lead to a nest of terror. Gaza will not change. They don't want to build, develop, prosper. I find it hard to understand that mindset."

Q: From your fieldwork did you manage to understand how Gazans differ from us?

"Once, I witnessed terrorists interrogating a collaborator, and in the end stabbing and killing him. What changed my understanding of them was what happened next – they mutilated him, and they cut off his legs, hands and genitals. They took a sadistic pleasure that I couldn't understand.

"This was the first time I realized that

they were not like us in any way. I realized that we had failed to understand something very fundamental about them, so what we saw and heard on October 7, unfortunately, didn't surprise me."

Q: Things had been boiling under the surface for years, and on Oct. 7 we saw everything erupt.

"Israelis refused to see the truth. We had a mirror held up in front of us, and we refused to look at it. Lately, the penny has dropped for me: People ask me: 'Is there no hope after all?' What we can see from this question is that many people are willing to ignore the truth; they fall for the illusion that there is a future for us with these people. We insist on finding something, which in my experience doesn't exist. ... There are people here who want to take our place. We have to understand that."

Q: What particularly worries you right now?

"I believe that the tunnels were built over the years to create a fortress, waiting for the day when we would move in. The IDF works smart, but it's hard work. As long as we are on the move, we are in good shape. If we are stationary that is when we will have problems; that's why undercover units were established and this is why the Shimshon unit needs to be re-established – it knows how to go inside, do what needs to be done, and leave secretly."

Q: Was Shimshon substantially different from the Duvdevan undercover unit?

"No, but our specialization in Gaza was unique. Duvdevan operated in Judea and Samaria. In Judea and Samaria, you dress up as a school principal or a businessman. In Gaza, you disguise yourself as a worker. In Judea and Samaria, the population is more intelligent; Gaza is the pits. As time passes, people with money leave Gaza and what's left is the worst of the worst. In Judea and Samaria, people use perfume; in Gaza not. We didn't shower for days so we would be filthy. Imagine washing your hair with scented shampoo and then going out on an undercover mission. You would become a target straight away.

"The closure of the Shimshon Unit was another measure that reduced our human intelligence in Gaza. It is impossible to compare the number of collaborators before and after we left Gaza. In Judea and Samaria, the Palestinians say that whoever dreams of carrying out an attack at night, gets up in the morning and the Shin Bet arrests him. This is not the case now in Gaza. We saw evidence of this with the failure of the elite Sayeret Matkal [the General Staff Reconnaissance Unit] operation there two years ago. It's like entering an enemy country like Syria or Lebanon."

Q: From your deep knowledge of Gaza, what do you think will happen there in the short term, even before "the day after"?

"If people are hungry, more and more terrorists will turn to the Shin Bet and Unit 504 [a secretive IDF intelligence unit that operates agents and interrogates prisoners] and provide information in exchange for aid. It's already happening. Gaza will descend into chaos. For us, this may be an advantage, because it will allow us to gather better intelligence."

Q: What should "the day after" look like?

"For years, wealthy people left Gaza. They paid to leave. We need to encourage them to leave."

Q: Assuming that there will be countries willing to take them in.

"The problem, and other countries understand this, is that they [Palestinians] have no ambition to be a prosperous people. In 1970, during Black September, they tried to assassinate the king of Jordan. They tried to turn Jordan into a terrorist state and were expelled after a year of fighting.

"Lebanon, a prosperous country, deteriorated into a civil war after they [the Palestinians] built up Fatahland. In Kuwait, the emir expelled them to Judea and Samaria. And since their only aspi-

ration is to eliminate us, in Gaza they will always return to their ways."

Q: Things are heating up in the north. What lessons can we draw from Gaza when it comes to Lebanon?

"The most important thing is the images coming out of Gaza. The Middle East understands the language of power and the destruction in Gaza resonates in the Arab world. Even those countries that want to make peace with us, the Saudis, the Emiratis, want to know that they are forming a defense alliance with a strong country. So, what happens in Gaza is clearly heard and seen in Lebanon. [Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan] Nasrallah, unlike [Hamas leader in Gaza Yahya] Sinwar, loves Lebanon, and the [2006] Second Lebanon War left a scar on him. He doesn't want Lebanon to be left in ruins, and that gives us leverage over him."

Q: What do you advise reservists coming out of Gaza today?

"The situation of the soldiers is insane; they can be fighting in Gaza, be given a short break, and within half an hour they can be home. Something about this scenario just doesn't work out. These are powerful experiences and people's realities can get mixed up. These transitions confuse the mind, and people can find themselves loading their weapons in everyday situations because they are still in a state of operational alertness. This is something that is typical of undercover soldiers – one day you are a resident of Gaza, and another day you are an ordinary citizen.

"I remember going out one time during my military service and stopping to fill up with gas. I saw an Arab gas station attendant holding a fueling nozzle, and within a second, I was in another place, seeing a terrorist, a refugee camp, thinking someone was coming to kill us. That's when I realized something was wrong with me.

"I dealt with the trauma by myself for years, so I say to soldiers that they should talk about things, and let things go. For the families, my message is to pay attention to outbursts of violence, nightmares and alienation. Without care and attention, this violence seeps into society. It is important to give people the feeling that they are not alone, and more important, to deal with the whole trauma issue at the state level."

Originally published by Israel Hayom. **HW** 

# Palestinian Attack on Christian Holy Site Raises Concern



A man lights candles inside Jaffa's St. Peter's Russian Orthodox Church as Israel's Orthodox Christian communities celebrate Christmas, Jan. 7, 2024. Credit: Eitan Elhadez-Barak/TPS.

the compound in Balata village, where the well is located.

"Nablus is controlled by the Palestinian Authority, which fails to help the Christian community and stop the disturbing pattern of violence against them," Elias Zarina said.

Zarina is the co-founder and community manager of the Jerusalemite Initiative, a Jerusalem-based nonprofit that encourages Arab Christian integration into Israeli society.

The monastery's keeper, 80-year-old Father Ioustinos of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate, was not hurt, but he was traumatized by the violence.

Christians believe that the biblical Patriarch Jacob purchased the well. The New Testament refers to it as the Well of Sychar. In 1908, work began on a small Christian compound that included a church and monastery. For bureaucratic and financial reasons, construction was only completed in the 1990s.

Local Christian leaders said that Palestinian attacks on their community and holy sites are all too common.

Dr. Naim Khoury, founder of the First Baptist Church in Bethlehem, said, "It's not something special in particular, there are many instances like this everywhere these days, unfortunately, even in Jerusalem. The whole situation is very unstable, and people are frustrated with the situation. People should pay attention and see what's happening. We

know very well that no Christian would abuse a mosque."

Zarina said, "We know of no arrests that are made in such cases, nor do we see the P.A. placing any guards in those sensitive locations that they know are under regular attacks."

Zarina, who has been researching the Holy Land's Christian communities, said their population has been dwindling ever since the Oslo Accords brought the P.A into power.

Citing Bethlehem as an example, he said that in 1993, when the accords were signed, Christians made up 88% of the city's residents. Three decades later, Christians now make up 12% of Bethlehem's population of roughly 29,000. Most Christians have emigrated in the face of Muslim extortion, he said.

"It's not very hard to understand," Zarina said. "In Islam, both Christians and Jews are heretics and need to be dealt with, mostly with violence." **HW** 

#### By Sveta Listratov

(JNS) – A Palestinian mob caused extensive damage to a Christian holy site in Nablus (Shechem) known as Jacob's Well last Sunday night.

Christian sources said that Palestinians from the Balata refugee camp on the outskirts of Nablus armed with guns, firebombs and stones caused widespread damage to a monastery in

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# Bringing Laughter to the War Zone



The Koby
Mandell
Foundation
stages a
'Comedy
for Koby'
performance in
Israel, Jan. 17,
2024. Credit:
Tamar Lustman.

#### By Judy Lash Balint

(JNS) – Graphic designer Kim Glassman's first reaction when she heard of the Koby Mandell Foundation's plan to stage Comedy for Koby performances all over Israel during the war was, "What? Who do you think you are, Bob Hope?" (The comedian famous for entertaining U.S. troops during World War II.)

Glassman has been designing all the publicity material and programs for the popular comedy benefit series on a pro bono basis since its beginning 15 years

After she got over the initial shock at the idea of running a comedy event when Israelis are traumatized, mourning and feeling battered, Glassman told JNS she realized that comedy was exactly the antidote needed right now.

"When you bring joy back into people's lives, they can recover better," she said.

That's the same message foundation director Eliana Mandell Braner is emphasizing these days.

The Comedy for Koby tour brings

By Shira Bartov

coming to TV on May 2.

three well-known American comedians to Israel three times a year, led by Jewish comedian Avi Liberman. The current series, featuring Brian Kiley, Butch Bradley and Peter Berman, ran between Jan. 16-22 in six venues across the country.

The tour benefits the Koby Mandell Foundation, whose mission is to provide comfort and healing to be reaved Israelis, particularly victims of terrorism.

"Comedy for Koby is really what the foundation is all about – taking a tough situation and making it lighter. That's what we do for the families we work with. We need it now more than ever," Braner told INS.

Braner said she has come to realize how important the event is for English-speaking Israelis. "It's one time when they can come and laugh, relax and enjoy themselves while contributing to a very good cause. Especially now with the war that no one knows how long it will last, everybody coming

to the show is somehow going through it and it's important to keep up our morale. Comedy for Koby is an amazing way to do that."

Until now, the foundation has been running retreats, camps for kids, offering creative therapy and support groups for those who have been through or lost a loved one to a terrorist attack. Now it is doubling its programs to reach out to the thousands of Israelis affected by the brutal events of Oct. 7, 2023, and their aftermath

Oct. 7 brought it all back to those who were victims of previous terror attacks, Braner noted. "I couldn't function at first," she admitted.

Braner, now a mother of four whose husband is in the Israel Defense Forces reserves, was 10 years old when her older brother Koby and a friend were murdered by Arab terrorists near their Tekoa home. Immediately after the start of the war, Braner told JNS she deleted her social media accounts so she wouldn't have to see the evidence of Hamas barbarism.

"The people of Israel and bereaved families are going through so much pain," she said. "It's only just beginning. They don't really understand yet what really happened to them and how hard it's going to be, and we just need to shower them with so much love. They've seen so much pain and so much darkness that we have to counter that with so much love. The way to do that is just to be there with them. To sit with them, listen to them and allow them to be together. The foundation gives them the space to sit and talk and be together and heal together."

Because of the massive number of people affected and the fact that Israel is in the middle of an ongoing war, it means that the healing process can't start, Braner explained.

Avi Liberman, the U.S.-based comedian who leads every Comedy for Koby tour and recruits others to join him in events that benefit the foundation, has been in Israel since the war started.

Liberman told JNS he's been staying busy cutting vegetables for meals for soldiers, distributing charity money and polishing his act in front of English-speaking audiences in Tel Aviv. "Unless you're in a tunnel shooting at Hamas terrorists, everyone here feels that they're not doing enough," he said.

Liberman admitted that his ulterior motive with the comedy tour is that the comics come to Israel, have a great time and become emissaries for Israel. "They go back and bust a lot of what you see in the news," he said.

Braner explained that many of the comedians make a strong personal connection when they're in Israel, and they stay in touch. At the beginning of the war several of them sent videos of support. She planned to take the comedians on the current tour to "Hostage Square" in Tel Aviv to meet some of the families of the captives. "These guys are here on purpose because of the war," she said.

Liberman notes that most of the comedic community is pro-Israel and there's not much of an argument with it. "Part of being a comedian is to break down the information and try to find something funny there, so if you break down the information about the war, what are you going to do? Alienate your Hamas fans?" he asked.

Both Braner and Liberman agreed that "this isn't just a regular tour. This is the solidarity tour, a resilience tour. At the end of the day, you've taken something that was a tragedy and turned it into a positive." **HW** 

# Harvey Keitel, Jonah Hauer-King Star in 'The Tattooist of Auschwitz,' A Holocaust Love Story Coming to Peacock



(JTA) - The story of real Auschwitz

survivor Lali Sokolov, a Slovakian Jew

who was forced to tattoo numbers on his fellow inmates and implausibly fell

in love with a girl he was tattooing, is

"The Tattooist of Auschwitz," a six-

part original series based on the bestsell-

ing novel of the same name by Heather

Jonah Hauer-King as Lali Sokolov meets Anna Próchniak as Gita Furman for the first time. Credit: Martin Mlaka / Sky UK

Morris, will air on Peacock in the United States. The show stars Academy Award

nominee Harvey Keitel, renowned for his collaborations with Martin Scorcese, Quentin Tarantino and Wes Anderson, as Sokolov

English actor Jonah Hauer-King of "The Little Mermaid" and Polish actress Anna Próchniak of "Baptiste" star as the younger versions of Sokolov and his eventual wife, Gita Furman, in the drama series, which is executive produced

by Claire Mundel and directed by Tali Shalom-Ezer.

Morris, whose 2018 novel "The Tattooist of Auschwitz" was inspired by interviews with Sokolov before his death in 2006, also appears as a character played by Emmy Award nominee Melanie Lynskey ("The Last of Us," "Yellowjackets").

Despite selling over 12 million copies around the world with the tagline that it was "based on the powerful true story of love and survival," Morris's novel drew criticism for inauthentic portrayals of Auschwitz. A report from Wanda Witek-Malicka of the Auschwitz Memorial Research Centre pointed out several historical inaccuracies in the book, ranging from a sexual relationship between an SS commander and a Jewish prisoner to a storyline about pen-

icillin (which was not widely available at the time) to the incorrect number tattooed on Furman's arm. The book also changed the spelling of Sokolov's first name from Lali to Lale; the movie has changed it back.

The creators of the Peacock series say they made efforts to authentically reproduce a love story in Auschwitz, visiting the death camp to recreate the historical location and casting Jewish actors as

"It was important that both young and old Lali were played authentically by Jewish actors who were able to deliver the part with nuance, empathy, compassion, and the complexity that we need from that character," said Shalom-Ezer.

The series will air on Sky Atlantic in the United Kingdom, Ireland, Italy, Germany, Austria and Switzerland. **HW** 

## Rob Reiner uses Yiddish Word 'Kochleffel' in Emmys Tribute to Jewish Comedy Legend Norman Lear



Rob Reiner and Sally Struthers pay tribute to Norman Lear from a recreated set of "All in the Family" at the 75th Primetime Emmy Awards held at the Peacock Theater on Jan. 15, 2024, in Los Angeles. Credit: Christopher Polk/Variety via Getty Images

#### By Philissa Cramer

(JTA) – To fete the creator of the TV series that made him famous, Jewish actor and director Rob Reiner turned to Yiddish during the Emmys last Monday night.

Reiner was paying tribute to Norman Lear, the Jewish creator of pioneering TV comedies who died last month at 101. Reiner came to prominence for his role as Michael Stivic on "All in the Family," one of the shows that Lear created.

"There's a Yiddish word that describes Norman's genius: It's kochleffel," Reiner said. "For all you non-Jews out there, kochleffel is a ladle, a ladle that stirs the pot. And when Norman the

kochleffel stirred that pot, he wound up changing American culture."

Reiner, 76, is the son of Carl Reiner, a comedy legend who died in 2020. He is a producer on a forthcoming documentary about the rise of Christian nationalism, which he has denounced.

The Emmys were delayed by last year's Hollywood strikes, so some shows that finished airing more than a year ago were up for prizes. Two shows about Jewish families, "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" and "Fleishman is in Trouble," had been nominated for multiple awards but were shut out. **HW** 

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# Senate Declines to Consider Bernie Sanders Bill to Review Whether Israel Follows U.S. Human Rights Law



Bernie Sanders, the Vermont senator who caucuses with Democrats, argues for increased oversight of assistance to Israel, in the U.S. Senate, Jan. 15, 2024. (Screenshot)

#### By Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA) – The U.S. Senate overwhelmingly declined to consider a bill advanced by Sen. Bernie Sanders to assess whether Israel is complying with U.S. human rights laws governing the American military aid it receives.

The Senate voted 72-11 across parties to shelve the bill, which would have required the State Department to report to Congress within 30 days on Israeli compliance with international and U.S. human rights laws. All but one of the votes in favor were Democrats. Rand Paul of Kentucky was the single Republican who supported the measure. The motion to shelve the bill was advanced by Sen. Ben Cardin, the Jewish Maryland Dem-

ocrat who chairs the Foreign Relations Committee.

Sanders, a Jewish Vermonter who caucuses with Democrats and is the unofficial leader of progressives in Congress, spoke passionately last Tuesday for 10 minutes, flanked by two large photos of Palestinian children in Gaza waiting for food. International aid organizations say the coastal enclave is on the verge of starvation after more than 100 days of war between Israel and Hamas.

Sanders pointed to Israel's use of American weapons in its campaign against the terror group.

"Almost 2 million people are trying to survive with an inadequate supply for

food, water, medicine or fuel, and the humanitarian situation is getting worse by the minute," Sanders said. "Hundreds of thousands of beautiful children are facing starvation. Given the scale of the destruction and the extensive use of American armed military equipment in this campaign, Congress must act, and that is why we must have is vital to the resolution. We must ensure that U.S. aid is being used in accordance with international human rights and our own laws."

Israel has said it is not obstructing the entry of aid and blames the slowness of delivery on hapless humanitarian organizations. It also claims Hamas is stealing the aid.

The war began on Oct. 7 when Hamas invaded Israel, killing approximately 1,200 and taking some 250 hostages. More than 23,000 Palestinians have died since Israel launched counterstrikes on Oct. 8, according to the Hamas-run Gaza Health Ministry. Israel has said approximately third of the dead in Gaza are combatants.

Sanders was a vocal defender of Israel's war effort at first but has grown more critical of the campaign.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee lobbied against the bill. "Take 45 seconds to email your Senators and urge them to vote NO on this dangerous resolution," it said in an action alert to its membership. The bill "falsely implies that Israel is committing gross violations of human rights in its effort to defend itself from Hamas'

barbaric terrorist attack," the alert said.

It didn't help Sanders that even among more left-leaning Jewish organizations there was less than full-throated support. Americans for Peace Now, which has called for a ceasefire, backed the bill. But J Street, the larger liberal Israel lobby, said in a statement that while it backed oversight of defense assistance to Israel, it had problems with the bill as written.

"J Street has concerns with specific provisions that have prevented us from offering our full support for this particular resolution, and we have reviewed these concerns with Senator Sanders," but said in a statement. "We look forward to working with him and others in the near future to craft a resolution that we can support to ensure U.S. oversight and enforcement of Israel's compliance with U.S. law in its current war in Gaza."

A spokesman did not answer a query about which "specific provisions" troubled J Street.

Also opposing the bill was the Jewish Democratic Council of America, which, like AIPAC and J Street, fundraises for Democrats. JDCA said the bill could jeopardize aid to Israel.

"The resolution requires the State Department to issue a report on alleged Israeli human rights violations, and if it fails to do so within 30 days, all U.S. security assistance to Israel would be cut," JDCA in a statement. "JDCA and the vast majority – 80% – of Jewish voters support U.S. aid to Israel." HW



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