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# Hebrew Watchman

**SERVING THE MEMPHIS JEWISH COMMUNITY SINCE 1925** 

HEBREWWATCHMAN.COM 22 SHEVAT, 5784 FEBRUARY 1, 2024 VOL. 102, NO. 20

# Fourteen Ambulances Donated to Israel by Samaritan's Purse, U.S.-Based Evangelical Christian Humanitarian-Aid Organization, Dedicated By Magen David Adom



CEO American Friends of Magen David Adom Catherine Reed and President, Samaritan's Purse Rev. Franklin Graham at the dedication ceremony for 14 ambulances donated by the American Evangelical humanitarian aid organization. Credit: Eastside Studio

Jerusalem (January 23, 2024) – Just months after 14 of Magen David Adom's ambulances were destroyed in the October 7 terrorist attacks on southern Israel, replacement vehicles donat-

ed by Samaritan's Purse, the American evangelical humanitarian-aid organization, were dedicated on Jan. 23 in a moving ceremony in Jerusalem.

For Magen David Adom (MDA), the

ceremony also served to commemorate even more devastating losses the organization incurred during the terrorist attacks, when four of MDA's medics were killed while actively treating patients or en route to the scene in an ambulance. Another 15 MDA medics have subsequently been killed in the war, mostly while serving in roles as medics for the Israel Defense Forces.

Parked at the plaza at the National Library of Israel, each of the 14 ambulances was dedicated in memory of an MDA medic killed in action. One by one, the inscriptions on the ambulances were unveiled, as family and friends got the chance to see and touch their loved one's memorial ambulance for the first time.

"I've had the opportunity to see for myself how the men and women of MDA are risking their lives for others when I visited several of the communities in Israel that were brutally attacked," said Franklin Graham, the president and CEO of Samaritan's Purse.

"At Samaritan's Purse, we need to

have the necessary equipment to do our work around the world, and MDA has to have the right equipment to do its work to save lives here in Israel. This is why we want to give MDA this gift to save lives," he said. "It is an honor to dedicate these ambulances today, and I'm grateful for this opportunity to help MDA continue its heroic and exceptional work."

In addition to the 14 ambulances dedicated today, Samaritan's Purse is donating seven armored ambulances to MDA, which are still in production and will be dedicated sometime this spring.

MDA Director General, Eli Bin: "I thank the members of "Samaritan's Purse" as well as their President Franklin Graham, for their generous donation of ambulances, which will help save many lives across the State of Israel during routine and emergency times. We thank them for their further donations towards the sacred cause of saving lives."

(See Ambulances Page 3)

## 'Extremely Troubled' by Allegations 12 UNRWA Staff Took Part in Oct. 7 Attack, U.S. Suspends Funding

(JNS) – The United States is suspending additional funding to the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East temporarily as it reviews charges that 12 UNRWA employees took part in Hamas's Oct. 7 terror attack on Israel.

"The United States is extremely troubled by the allegations," stated Matthew Miller, the U.S. State Department spokesman. Miller added that the United States is reviewing "the steps the United Nations is taking to address them."

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken spoke with António Guterres, U.N. secretary-general, on Jan. 25 "to emphasize the necessity of a thorough and swift investigation of this matter," Miller stated last Friday.

"We welcome the decision to conduct such an investigation and Secretary General Guterres's pledge to take decisive action to respond, should the allegations prove accurate," Miller said. "We also welcome the U.N.'s announcement of a 'comprehensive and independent' review of UNRWA."

"There must be complete accountability for anyone who participated in the heinous attacks of Oct. 7," Miller added.

Washington has also contacted the Israeli government "to seek more information about these allegations" and has briefed members of Congress. "We will remain in close contact with the United Nations and government of Israel regarding this matter," Miller said.

He added that UNRWA "plays a critical role in providing lifesaving assistance to Palestinians, including essential food, medicine, shelter and other vital humanitarian support."

UNRWA has long been accused of antisemitism, including that its teachers

glorify Hamas's Oct. 7 attack, that aid is passing through its hands to Hamas and that Hamas terrorists hide in its schools.

"The Israeli authorities have provided UNRWA with information about the alleged involvement of several UNRWA employees in the horrific attacks on Israel on Oct. 7," stated Philippe Lazzarini, UNRWA commissioner-general.

"To protect the agency's ability to deliver humanitarian assistance, I have taken the decision to immediately terminate the contracts of these staff members and launch an investigation in order to establish the truth without delay," Lazzarini said. "Any UNRWA employee who was involved in acts of terror will be held accountable, including through criminal prosecution."

"UNRWA reiterates its condemnation in the strongest possible terms of the abhorrent attacks of Oct. 7 and calls for the immediate and unconditional release of all Israeli hostages and their safe return to their families," he added. "These shocking allegations come as more than 2 million people in Gaza depend on lifesaving assistance that the agency has been providing since the war began. Anyone who betrays the fundamental values of the United Nations also betrays those whom we serve in Gaza, across the region and elsewhere around the world."

Rep. Chris Smith (R-N.J.), chair of the House Global Human Rights and International Organizations Subcommittee, referred to the Biden administration's decision to suspend funding for UNRWA temporarily as "long overdue and still a feeble response to the massive and irrefutable evidence of UNR-

(See UNRWA Page 3)

# 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.



### My Teen Israel Experience





Rebecca Goldin at The Western Wall and in front of the Bhai Gardens in



Rebecca overlooking Jerusalem By Rebecca Goldin

Israel is the land of milk and honey, but it's also so much more. It's full of life and music, mountains, and beautiful views with so many diverse cultures and communities. The people of Israel all share one common thing, the land. The people have made their shared land their history and their home. They live quite different lives, yet they live so close together. Israel is a place where many diverse cultures and religions can call home. It is a place I'm truly glad to call my home away from home.

My most memorable experience from my trip was my first step off the plane and the magical feeling. I felt like I was walking into the land of my dreams. Just looking out the window was an experience. Another memorable moment was going to the Western Wall, which had been my dream since I was a little girl. I was so excited and visibly shaken when I was outside the Wall. It was beautiful looking up at the stones that were once the foundation of the Second Temple. The Wall holds a special place in my heart not just for its beauty but for its history and it is where my parents became engaged.

The beauty of Israel is so vast; it is a small place but it's full of so many wonders.

From the top of Masada to the Dead Sea, Israel's beauty spreads wide and far. From the top of Masada, you can see the sun rise and reflect over the sea and breathe and feel the fresh air against your face and in the middle of it all is the Galilee area. The beauty of a natural waterfall is unmatched and feeling it fall on you and spray your skin is a feeling like no other. At the bottom of it all is the Dead Sea where floating is so effortless, and it feels like you're flying. It is as if the world is your bed, and you are lying on top of it. From the top to the bottom, Israel is full of beauty.

Although Israel is full of so many different people and places, I felt a sense of belonging. I felt like I was related to everyone and everything around me with a special connection. The power of belonging is so strong that I almost didn't want to leave. As a Jew I believe everyone has a right to visit the land of Israel no matter what religion or background. It is an absolutely gorgeous land that should be shared with everyone.

Thank you to the Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemsky Endowment Fund for making my BBYO Israel trip possible.

Rebecca Goldin, daughter of Nadine and Joshua Goldin, is a senior at Houston High School. Memphis Jewish

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### Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. Feb. 2, 2024 / 23 Shevat, 5784 ...... 5:11 p.m. Havdalah, Sat. Feb. 3, 2024 / 24 Shevat, 5784 ...... 6:09 p.m.

**Weekly Torah Portion: Yitro** 

Federation's Lemsky Endowment Fund provided her with a Teen Israel Experience grant to offset the costs of her BBYO Israel Journey program. All rising juniors and seniors are eligible for grants of up to \$3,000 to attend a recognized teen summer or semester program in Israel. Teen Israel Experience applications for Summer 2024 are open and available at jcpmemphis.org/ lemsky-endowment-fund.

Note: This essay was written before the horrific events of October 7. HW

### Harvard Employee Emails Student, Seeks 'Debate' on 9/11 **Conspiracy Theories** (JNS) - Shabbos Kestenbaum, a Har-

vard University student who has filed a lawsuit with other students against the academic institution, says that he received antisemitic harassment from a Harvard employee.

Gustavo Espada, a 1996 graduate who works as the financial and systems coordinator for Harvard's Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, sent Kestenbaum an email on Jan. 25 with an invitation to debate the "Israeli role in 9/11."

Espada wrote, "I invite you to debate me today at the Cambridge Street overpass 12-1, don't miss it!" He warned that failure to attend would result in "a puppet or potted plant to represent you!"

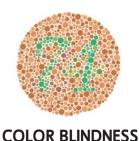
The systems coordinator wrote a postscript, stating, "Stop saying I hate Jews unless that is something you want. I hate Israel and Zionism with a passion, and you know full well they are two different things."

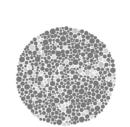
Kestenbaum told "The Daily Wire," "It would stand to reason that someone this hateful would have attended, and continue to work, at Harvard."

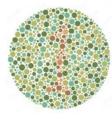
He added that the school "has yet to introduce or enforce a concrete plan of action pertaining to their dismantling of antisemitism on campus." HW



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### The MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Happenings

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

Lunch is Monday-Friday at 11:30 a.m. All programs start at 12:15 p.m.

Monday, February 5

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

**Topic: The Story of a Zionist Hero!** 

Rabbi Abe's talks are always enjoyed by a wide range of seniors. Come and enjoy the lunch and hear Rabbi Abe afterward!

Wednesday, February 7 Field Trip

Baron Hirsch Synagogue Big **Monthly Luncheon** 

This will be the second time the MJCC Seniors will join Baron Hirsch for this event.

Attendees must make a reservation by Wednesday, January 31, by all the Baron Hirsch office at 901-683-7485. MJCC seniors will go to and from on the Center bus.

at 901-761-0810. HW

Monday, February 12 **Team Trivial Pursuit** 

As before we will split the room into teams and see who the champions of Trivia are! Questions come from the Authorized Edition of Trivial Pursuit, most of which are from their Boomer Edition. Come test your knowledge.

Wednesday, February 14 Speaker: Rabbi Sarit Horwitz, Beth Sholom Synagogue

Topic: The Poetry of Yehudah Amchgi

Sarit's talks. An open question and answer session will follow.

Seniors always look forward to Rabbi

Ambulances...

(Continued From Page 1)

"At a time when the Israeli people and Jews around the world - are feeling alone, this donation is so meaningful," said Catherine L. Reed, CEO of American Friends of Magen David Adom, MDA's U.S.-based marketing and development arm. "It's a testament to the fact that amid all the protests and the increase in anti-Semitism, the people of Israel and the worldwide Jewish community have friends they can count on."

Rev. Graham in November first announced that Samaritan's Purse would donate 21 ambulances, including the 14 dedicated in the day's ceremony, after seeing the devastation that occurred in Kibbutz Be'eri, a cooperative community near the Gaza border, in which 100 residents were brutally murdered by Hamas terrorists.

more information, samaritanspurse.org and afmda.org HW

Birth

Jordanna and Brandon Denson of Sandy Springs Ga., are the proud parents of a son, Raphael Kisber Denson, born on January 20, 2024.

Grandparents are Jolie and Michael Kisber and great-grandmother Janet Kisber, all of Memphis.

Welcoming them home are brothers, Solomon Jonah and Jeremy Reuben. HW

#### UNRWA...

(Continued From Page 1)

WA's extensive and long-term connivance, complicity, and even cooperation in Hamas's terror campaign."

"When faced with the mountain of information, president [Donald] Trump suspended all U.S. funding to UNRWA, but tragically, the Biden administration resumed support for UNRWA," Smith stated. "Now, in view of public pressure motivated by explosive new evidence of UNRWA's involvement in the Oct. 7 terror attack, the Biden administration has announced a review of the limited allegations relating to Oct. 7."

"That's totally insufficient," he added. "What we need is a comprehensive, fact-based approach to UNRWA that stops all funding and conditions future funding on a complete head-to-toe reform and restructuring of UNRWA."

#### Cesspool of antisemitic hate

Pastor John Hagee, founder and chairman of Christians United for Israel, stated that he is "appalled, but I am not surprised."

"The U.N. is a cesspool of anti-Israel hatred, and UNRWA is one of the primary [organizations] associated with normalizing and institutionalizing international antisemitism," he added. "Reinstating funding for UNRWA was a mistake. We knew UNRWA was complicit in Hamas's antisemitic indoctrination of generations of Gazans, but it's clear they've taken the next logical step: joining Hamas's terrorist ranks."

"While we welcome the decision to stop funding UNRWA, the Biden administration should make this temporary pause permanent," added Sandra Parker, chair of CUFI Action Fund.

"Unfortunately, the State Department's action in this context is typical of their too little, too late approach to the Middle East. No U.S. taxpayer dollars should've been flowing to UNRWA, just as no sanctions relief should've been provided [to] Iran," Parker added. "I'd love to believe the Biden administration has learned its lesson, but how much time do we really believe will pass before the White House turns the spigot back on?"

Mark Mellman, president and CEO of the Democratic Majority for Israel, welcomed the State Department's announcement.

"U.N. employees are required to be neutral in politics and to avoid criminal activity. UNRWA and its employees have long violated those principles. That UNRWA employees actively participated in savage terrorism is a deplorable and permanent stain on the U.N. and on UNRWA," Mellman said. "Providing humanitarian aid to Palestinians is a vital objective, but it must be done in a way that doesn't support terrorism."

Democratic Majority for Israel has called regularly for UNRWA, which "has long incited hatred and violence," to be reformed.

"Through its statements and actions, UNRWA has become a serious obstacle to peace. We now find that its employees also participate in mass murder, torture, and kidnapping. Donors must insist on a complete overhaul and reform of UNRWA," Mellman said. "We urge the administration to make the current pause the beginning of that root-andbranch remaking of this agency which is badly off track." HW

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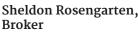
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# Unprecedented Demographic Report on Holocaust Survivors Indicates Approximately 245,000 Jewish Survivors Alive Globally

On January 23, 2024, the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference) released the Global Demographic Report on Jewish Holocaust Survivors, a demographic study on Jewish Holocaust survivors living around the world. The study reveals approximately 245,000 Holocaust survivors are still living across more than 90 countries.

"The data we have amassed, not only tells us how many and where survivors are, it clearly indicates that most survivors are at a period of life where their need for care and services is growing," said Gideon Taylor, president of the Claims Conference. "Now is the time to double down on our attention on this waning population. Now is when they need us the most."

Since its founding in 1951, the Claims Conference has been dedicated to securing a measure of justice for Jewish survivors of the Holocaust. As a result of ongoing negotiations with the German government, the Claims Conference has achieved and administers several compensation programs that provide direct payments to survivors globally, provides grants to over 300 social service agencies worldwide and ensures survivors receive much-needed services such as home care, food, medicine, transportation and socialization.

The facilitation of these programs, funding and services has led to a global compilation of information on Jewish Holocaust survivors. This information, while not the only resource, served as a foundation of the Global Demographic Report on Jewish Holocaust Survivors. The report summarizes data on the demographic composition of Jewish Holocaust survivors worldwide, outlining country of birth as well as current country of residence, age, sex and what percentage of survivors are receiving various compensations and services.

"This report are interesting, but it is also important to look past the numbers to see the individuals they represent," said Greg Schneider, executive vice president of the Claims Conference. "These are Jews who were born into a world that wanted to see them murdered. They endured the atrocities of the Holocaust in their youth and were forced to rebuild an entire life out of the ashes of the camps and ghettos that ended their families and communities. The data forces us to accept the reality that Holocaust survivors won't be with us forever, indeed, we have already lost most survivors."

The Global Demographic Report on Jewish Holocaust Survivors identifies survivors living in more than 90 countries. Nearly half (49 percent) of all Jewish Holocaust survivors live in Israel, with an additional 18 percent in North America and 18 percent in Western Europe. At the time of publication, the median age of survivors is 86; ages range from 77 years to over 100, with birthdates reaching back as far as 1912.

Holocaust survivor, Reha Bennicasa, daughter of Rose Girone, the oldest living Holocaust survivor in the world said, "As a survivor and daughter of a survivor, I cannot stress enough how important it is to share our testimonies. Personally, I am pleased that my mother has reached 112 years of age, and to learn that she is the oldest Holocaust survivor. My mother and I survived German and then Japanese oppression. Her strength throughout this horror and in all other facets of her life are amazing. She is a wonderful example to me and, hopefully, to the world. Given the declining survivor population and the rise in antisemitism, we need to encourage the world to learn about our collective history so that the Holocaust will never happen again."

"I would like to express my heart-

felt gratitude to the Claims Conference for compiling this crucial report about Holocaust survivors today," said Dani Dayan, Yad Vashem chairman. "This demographic study is a warning to me, highlighting the current demographic state of Holocaust survivors globally. It underlines the urgency of our work to continue gathering and researching the testimonies and names of these remarkable individuals before the survivor generation disappears. May their presence continue to strengthen our resolve to shape a better future."

In terms of compensation and services, nearly half (40 percent) of Holocaust survivors worldwide - all of whom receive, have received or qualify for Holocaust-related compensation are provided social welfare services that are subsidized by the Claims Conference. About 17 percent of these survivors receive Claims Conference's Article 2 and Central and Eastern European Fund (CEEF) – programs established to provide monthly "pension" payments for survivors who were incarcerated in camps, ghettos or who lived in hiding or under false identity - and nearly twothirds (62 percent) have received at least one payment under the Hardship Fund Supplemental Payment program, a payment for survivors who do not receive a monthly pension payment through one of the other programs.

"This clear and comprehensive report highlights important data analysis across many disparate compensation and social welfare programs as only the Claims Conference can do," said Michael Berenbaum, Distinguished Professor of Jewish Studies at American Jewish University. "It also demonstrates that even as the number of survivors decreases day by day, the needs of those who are still alive only increases. At the same time, it illustrates that we have many countries with only a handful of these extraordinary individuals still gracing our world, underscoring the urgency of learning from their survival and resilience. This is it, this is our last chance to recognize them, to celebrate them and to learn from them. We should all be asking ourselves what we are doing to make that happen before it is too late."

#### **Key Findings**

Claims Conference Global Demographic Report on Jewish Holocaust Survivors key findings include:

- There are an estimated 245,000 Jewish Holocaust survivors globally, living across more than 90 countries.
- Nearly half (49 percent) of all survivors reside in Israel; 18 percent reside in Western Europe and 18 percent reside in North America, with 16 percent of all survivors worldwide residing in the United States. Approximately 12 percent reside in countries of the former Soviet Union (FSU).
- The median age of Jewish Holocaust survivors is 86. The population of survivors at the time of this report ranges in age from 77 to over 100 years of age and are born between the years of 1912 and 1946.
- The majority of Jewish Holocaust survivors (95 percent) are "child survivors" who were born between 1928 and 1946
- 20 percent of Jewish Holocaust survivors are over the age of 90. This is a period of life characterized by an increased need for care and services.
- The majority of Jewish Holocaust survivors are female (61 percent) as only 39 percent of the population are male.
- Nearly 40 percent of survivors receive monthly payments through

Claims Conference programs negotiated with Germany, while the remaining population are eligible for one-time or annual payments.

• Forty percent of survivors are currently receiving or have received in the past year social welfare services provided by over 300 agencies that receive grants administered by the Claims Conference. Services include homecare, food, medicine, transportation socialization and other services specific to the individual needs of survivors.

To read the demographic report in its entirety, please visit: www.Claimscon. org/demographics

#### Research Methodology

Over 70 years, the Claims Conference has established an unprecedented worldwide database of Jewish Holocaust survivors. As a result of compensation programs and social welfare services facilitated by the Claims Conference, most survivors are known. The newly negotiated Hardship Fund Supplemental payments have been instrumental in establishing updated information for survivors globally who had received onetime payments in the past but have not had ongoing communication with the Claims Conference. For those survivors who did not respond to outreach efforts, LexisNexis searches were conducted.

Additionally, Claims Conference data were combined with published reports on the number of survivors who receive compensation from sources that are administered by the governments of Israel, Germany and Austria. Together these sources of data provide a comprehensive assessment of the current population of known Holocaust survivors.

Despite all efforts to locate survivors, there are those who may choose not to be identified. While new applications for compensation continue to be submitted, they are few in number (<0.1% of the total population) and would not change the overall landscape of the survivor population, notably given that new cases unfortunately are offset by deaths. The Claims Conference will continue to reach out to all who can be identified.

The full methodological notes for this demographic study can be found on pages 25 through 27 of the report.

About the Claims Conference: The Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany (Claims Conference), a nonprofit organization with offices in New York, Israel, Germany and Austria, secures material compensation for Holocaust survivors around the world. Founded in 1951 by representatives of 23 major international Jewish organizations, the Claims Conference negotiates for and disburses funds to individuals and organizations and seeks the return of Jewish property stolen during the Holocaust. As a result of negotiations with the Claims Conference since 1952, the German government has paid more than \$90 billion in indemnification to individuals for suffering and losses resulting from persecution by the Nazis. In 2023, the Claims Conference distributed over \$560 million in compensation to over 200,000 survivors in 83 countries and allocate over \$750 million in grants to over 300 social service agencies worldwide that provide vital services for Holocaust survivors, such as home care, food and medicine. For 2024, the Claims Conference successfully negotiated approximately \$535 million in compensation for survivors globally and \$888 million for survivors' home health care needs.

For more information, please visit: www.claimscon.org **HW** 

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# Jewish Community Organizations Collectively Release Climate Action Plans on Tu B'Shvat

This Tu B'Shvat marks a major milestone for Adamah's Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition. Since launching with 20 founding partners in September 2022, the Coalition has doubled its first year, now engaging 280 Jewish organizations in climate action. Coalition members come from across North America and beyond, including federations, JCCs, day schools, camps, Hillels, rabbinical schools, social service agencies, congregations, and many more.

Coalition members collectively released their climate action plans on Tu B'Shvat, the new year of the trees according to the Jewish calendar. These plans record climate action taken to date and set goals for the coming year. Adamah's Climate Action team supports members in articulating and achieving their plans through weekly office hours, monthly webinars, quarterly communities of practice, and financing through the Adamah Climate Action Fund.

The Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition represents an unprecedented environmental mobilization across the Jewish world, empowering Jewish leaders and organizations to respond to the climate crisis. Thanks to Coalition partners, the organization now has important data reflecting both individual and aggregate successes, challenges, and lessons learned as Jewish communities everywhere reduce emissions and multiply the impact by engaging networks to undertake climate action alongside them.

Data points pulled from this year's collective Climate Action Plan submissions:

- 4,900+ kW of renewable energy infrastructure has already been installed at Jewish community organizations
- 67,000+ community members were engaged in climate-focused programming in 2023
- 97% of Coalition members with facilities that have reduced emissions in their buildings, or plan to do so next year
- 61% of Coalition members are taking steps to electrify their facilities
- 89% of organizations that serve food made sure to offer a plant-based option

last year

The group is also celebrating that in 2023, Adamah's Climate Action Fund distributed

\$450,000 in matching grants and interest-free loans to 16 American Jewish organizations, leveraging three-times that amount in government and private funding in order to build over \$2 million in new sustainable infrastructure projects that will reduce emissions by over 900 metric tons each year and result in over \$410,000 annual savings – almost a one-year payback horizon.

"The exponential growth and immediate impact of the Jewish Climate Leadership Coalition has far exceeded our expectations," said Adamah CEO Jakir Manela. "Thanks to our founding partners, our outstanding climate action team, our members, and our climate action fund, we have quickly established consensus on this issue across hundreds of Jewish communities. This powerful communal response represents an inflection point, building a new pillar of

Jewish life grounded in the most ancient Jewish wisdom: that Adam and Adamah – people and planet – are one."

Cumulatively, these Climate Action Plans are both telling the story of the slow and steady work that has been happening at Jewish community institutions over the last many years, as well as how Jewish organizations are identifying and deepening their climate action priorities for the year ahead.

"The story being revealed through these Climate Action Plans is one of commitment, progress, and hope," said Adamah Deputy Climate Action Director Liore Milgrom Gartner. "We are seeing the myriad of ways that Jewish community organizations in the Coalition are setting ambitious but attainable climate action goals, both to reduce institutional greenhouse gas emissions and to expand our collective impact by engaging our networks to undertake climate action alongside us."

Visit adamah.org/coalition to learn more. **HW** 

# Hamas Banks Up to \$12 Million a Month Through Online Donations



The IDF found more than \$1 million in the home of a senior Hamas terrorist in Judea and Samaria in December. Credit: Israeli Defense Ministry.

(JNS) – Hamas has been receiving \$8 million-\$12 million per month through online donations since its bloody Oct. 7 assault on Israel, "Bloomberg" reported last Wednesday.

The funding, mostly from organizations posing as charities to assist Gaza civilians, represents a "multi-fold increase" over what the terrorist group was getting before the massacre, officials at the National Bureau for Counter Terror Financing of Israel told the news agency.

Washington is aware of the online donations and is assisting Jerusalem in halting what Hamas political bureau chief Ismail Haniyeh called in a speech earlier this month "financial jihad," a senior U.S. official said.

Since Oct. 7, the U.S. Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control has imposed four rounds of financial sanctions on Hamas.

Israel and the United States are part of a 16-member task force established since the start of the war to counter fundraising by the Gaza-based terrorist group, which includes Canada, Germany, the Netherlands and the U.K.

"There is no question that there is a sharp increase in legitimate and illegitimate charitable giving to Palestinians in wake of the Gaza hostilities," Matthew Levitt, a fellow at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, told "Bloomberg."

"An uptick in the interest to donate gives increased cover for Hamas. I've seen charities that were previously designated [for sanctions] by the U.S. popping up, some under new names, but there are also lots of new ones," the an-

alyst continued.

Additionally, Hamas has been receiving around \$30 million a month from its patron, Qatar, with Israeli approval, along with funds from the Palestinian Authority and local tax revenues. According to Israeli intelligence, Iran gives more than \$100 million for Hamas's "military." Other income streams come from foreign investments and donations. **HW** 

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# Special Olympics February Polar Bear Plunge



David Ross takes the plunge in 2023.

For the 15th consecutive year, David Ross will be participating in the Special Olympics Polar Bear Plunge. The event will be on Saturday, February 17 on the grounds of the Simmons Bank Liberty Bowl. Funds will be used to support programs such as the King Pins Bowling League founded in 1999 by David and Jane, o.b.m. The league gives the opportunity for athletes with intellectual disabilities to participate in a sport and also enjoy social interaction with their friends. The athletes bowl each Monday afternoon through

May 6.

If you would like to support David, you may do so at his website: www. classy.org/fundraiser/5148236. Or a check can be made to Special Olympics and mailed to David at 985 Village Oak Cove, Memphis TN 38120.

David and Rose are also looking for volunteers, either high school students or adults (especially those that have retired) who would like to attend and cheer on the athletes. If interested, please call David at 901-483-4017 or email davidross5147@gmail.com. HW

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# Hungry Jordanians Flock to New 'October 7' Restaurant



King Abdullah II of Jordan. Credit: Gevorg Ghazaryan/Shutterstock.

#### By Charles Bybelezer

(JNS) – A new eatery in Jordan that celebrates Hamas's massacre of 1,200 people in Israel has gone viral on social media, eliciting praise in Arab circles.

According to Jordanian media, the "October 7" restaurant opened in Karak Governorate, located southwest of the capital Amman, offering pizza and two types of shawarma to hungry Jordanians.

Video posted online showed eager diners lining up outside.

One social media user noted that the "Gosta Coffee" shop in the Jordanian city of Zarka serves up a drink coined "Hola Gosta," an homage to the Nazi genocide.

"The disgraceful glorification of October 7th has to stop. The incitement and hatred against Israel breed the terrorism and extremism which led to the brutal massacre," Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid said last Thursday.

In an interview with CNN in October, Queen Rania of Jordan, who is of Palestinian descent, cast doubt on Hamas's atrocities, including beheadings of children, and accused the world of a "double standard" on Palestinian deaths in Gaza.

A recent survey of 8,000 Arabs across 16 Middle East and North African nations, including Jordan, showed overwhelming support for Hamas's Oct. 7 massacre. Around two-thirds of respondents said the terror attacks in southern Israel were a "legitimate resistance operation;" 19% said that the massacre

was a "somewhat flawed but legitimate resistance operation."

The massacre received the highest support in Libya, Jordan, Tunisia, Morocco and among Palestinians, with a staggering 0% of Judea and Samaria residents agreeing that the atrocities of Oct. 7, which also included beheadings, rape and other sexual offenses, were illegitimate.

Hamas last Sunday released a statement denying its members committed atrocities on Oct. 7.

"Avoiding harm to civilians, especially children, women and elderly people, is a religious and moral commitment by all the Al-Qassam Brigades' fighters," Hamas stated in the 16-page document, claiming it only targeted Israeli military sites. (The Al-Qassam Brigades is Hamas's so-called military wing.)

"We reiterate that the Palestinian resistance was fully disciplined and committed to the Islamic values during the operation and that the Palestinian fighters only targeted the occupation soldiers and those who carried weapons against our people," it added, saying that its members were "keen to avoid harming civilians" and that any such targeting was by accident.

The denial is a complete reversal for the terrorist group and a total disavowal of its own footage; it had supplied GoPro cameras to its operatives so that they could capture their horrific deeds on that day for posterity. **HW** 

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



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# Knesset Caucus Hears Testimony on Hamas's Brutal Sexual Violence



A stone with the name Shani Louk. She was last seen in a video on Oct. 7, being paraded naked through the streets of Gaza by Hamas terrorists. Credit: Batya Sharabi/TPS.

#### By Sveta Listratov

(JNS) - "There will be some difficult things to digest here, so take a deep breath."

The Knesset Caucus for Female Victims of Sexual and Gender Violence in the Swords of Iron War opened last Tuesday's meeting with a trigger warning, accompanied by continuous weeping among the participants.

"I myself don't want to believe what happened," said Haim Otmazgin, a volunteer from the ZAKA emergency response organization who was in charge of a team recovering corpses from the scene of the massacre at the Supernova music festival after the Oct. 7 massacre. "When I hear someone questioning what happened there, I stand up and say, 'My eyes have seen it, and it's all on my cell phone."

His harsh descriptions of the massacre scene are paramount to the goal of the caucus - to spread awareness of Hamas's brutal sexual violence that day.

"My eyes saw the women stripped of their clothes; you can see someone struggled with them to undress them from the state we found them," he recalled.

Otmazgin described the way his team worked like a machine, in order to rescue as many bodies as fast as possible while the army was still fighting terrorists close to them and there was a threat of corpses being taken to Gaza.

"Another woman is cuffed, another one is stripped, another one has her body parts cut off. It's like a series of pictures being repeated again and again. We saw the same things at [Kibbutz] Re'im and later in [other] kibbutzim."

"In a house at a kibbutz, we found a mother with handcuffs on her hands and next to her daughter in a safe room. In another room next to it, we found a young girl, on the bed, clothes rolled up, shot in the head and her throat split. Her pants rolled down, without underwear on her. There are too many instances like these, and no, we don't have the video footage to see what was done to these women, but the pictures we saw tell a story that cannot be interpreted in any other way."

One released hostage, Chen Goldstein Almog, expressed concern for the women still held in captivity.

"There are girls there who have not had their periods for some time, perhaps because of the conditions of captivity, and this is the thought that crosses our minds, that maybe at least this way they will not get pregnant while they might be raped in captivity."

#### Turn them into puppets

Aviva Siegal, whom the terrorists released during the ceasefire in November, told lawmakers it wasn't easy for her to attend the parliamentary meeting, but she felt it was her duty.

"The terrorists bring 'doll clothes,' inappropriate attire for those girls, as they turn them into puppets on a string; they do whatever they want to them, whenever they want to. And it must be said that the boys also go through what the girls go through. They don't get pregnant, but they are also a puppet on a string. There was not a minute that we were not abused in every possible way, and those girls are still there," she recalled as people in the audience sobbed.

"My heart is still there, and it explodes," Siegal added. "I can't understand that the world is silent."

As time passed and international women's organizations ignored or denied the sexual abuse Israeli women suffered, the government formed an independent commission tasked with documenting the sexual violence, raising awareness and pursuing justice for the victims.

Dr. Cochav Elkayam-Levy, a law professor chairing the commission, told the legislators, "In light of the international silence, we understand that we have a

historic task. The failure of the international organizations, their silence that causes our demonization in the world - if the international community is not willing to speak up, we will do it for ourselves."

The full scope of the rapes may never be known, because most of the victims and witnesses were killed. Around 1,200 people were murdered in Hamas's attacks on Israeli communities near the Gaza border on Oct. 7. Several female hostages released during the November ceasefire have already described being sexually abused while in captivity.

"As we sit here, there is a girl who is stuck in a tunnel and being raped, and it should be told!" Shir Siegel told the Knesset members, sitting beside her mother, Aviva. "Enough talking about it politely while drinking water. Everyone in the world should think about it. You should go to bed like it is your daughter and ask yourself if you did enough for

MK Tsega Melaku described some of the propaganda that prompted her to cofound the caucus.

"There is a clip of a man protesting in Britain, claiming there could be no sexual violence on behalf of Hamas terrorists as they are Muslims and Islam prohibits sex outside of marriage. That's how much propaganda we see," the Likud lawmaker said. "But is there anyone to counter that? Even some world leaders' wives deny it happened. Where are the women's organizations?" HW

### At Teach-In, NYU Professor Denies Hamas Sexual Violence on Oct. 7

(JNS) – In a speech to students, Amin Husain, a longtime anti-Israel activist organizer and adjunct professor for New York University's Gallatin School of Individualized Study, made numerous false statements and glorified his description as an antisemite.

Husain, 48, told the audience at a Dec. 5 teach-in: "They're trying to say ... 'Oh my God, you support rapists and people that behead babies,' both of which, whatever, we know it's not true."

The teacher of an "Art, Activism and Beyond" class that ran from 2016 through 2022 called New York a "Zionist city" and sprinkled expletives throughout his discourse.

"I have a petition going around, right, because I'm antisemitic. I won the honors of 'antisemitic' multiple times," he said before calling his profile on the site of Canary Mission, the anti-Israel academia watchdog, "one of the best biographies I have."

The site notes Husain's claims to have participated in the first intifada and met with a Palestinian Islamic Jihad leader. HW



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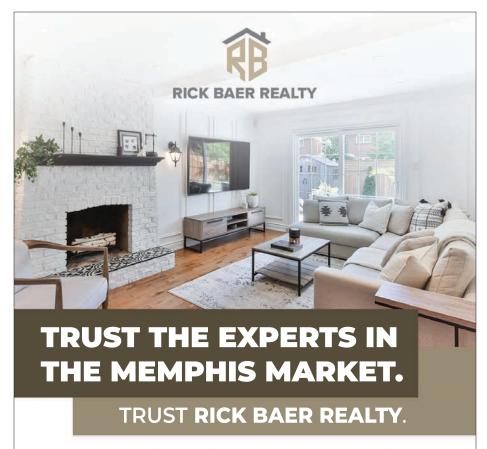
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# How to Kill Your Zombie Subscriptions

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

In a 2022 survey, consumers were first asked to quickly estimate how much they spend on subscription services each month, then a while later, they were directed to break down and itemize their monthly payments. On average, the consumers' actual spending was \$219 per month, about 2.5 times as much as the \$86 they originally guessed.<sup>1</sup>

Zombie subscriptions are auto-renewing services that people sign up for then forget about or rarely use. Some common examples include mobile phone and internet plans, television, music, and game streaming services, news subscriptions, meal delivery, language courses, and health/fitness memberships (digital and in person).

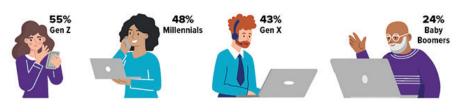
New types of services are rolling out every day, which is just one reason why subscription costs can creep up on you. But with inflation cutting into your purchasing power, getting rid of a few unnecessary recurring charges could help balance your household budget.

Conduct an audit. Some subscriptions are billed annually, so you may need to scrutinize a full year's worth of credit card statements. Plus, if you purchased a subscription through an app store on your smartphone, the name of the service won't be specified. So when you notice a recurring charge that you can't identify, try looking for a list of subscriptions in your device's settings.

Use an app. One in 10 consumers said

they rely on banking and personal finance apps to track their spending on subscription services. There are several popular services that can be used to scan account statements for recurring costs and remind you to cancel unwanted subscriptions before they renew automatically – if you are comfortable sharing your financial information.

Share of consumers who forgot about subscriptions but still paid for them, by age group



Source: C+R Research, 2022

Some companies make it difficult to cancel unwanted subscriptions by requiring a call, hiding the phone number, and/or forcing customers to wait to speak to a representative. If you find this practice frustrating, help may be on the way. The Federal Trade Commission has proposed a new rule that requires merchants to make it just as easy to cancel a subscription as it is to sign up.

1) C+R Research, 2022

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### Gaza Children Protest Against Hamas



Several dozen Palestinians demonstrate in Deir al-Balah, the central Gaza, calling on Hamas to free all Israeli captives and end the war so they can return to their homes, Jan. 24, 2024. Credit: Majdi Fathi/TPS.

#### By Pesach Benson

(JNS) – Dozens of Palestinian children in the central Gaza city of Deir al-Balah held a rare protest against Hamas last Wednesday, calling on the terrorist organization to release Israeli hostages and end the war so they can return to their homes.

Outside Deir al-Balah's al-Aqsa Martyrs Hospital, the children held white pieces of paper reading, "Yes to giving back the prisoners" and expressing wishes to return to homes in Jabalia and Beit Lahiya, in the northern Gaza Strip.

"Will these cries and demands reach the hideouts of Hamas leaders?" Lt. Col. Avichay Adraee, the Israel Defense Forces' Arabic spokesman, asked on X.

The protest came one day after another small demonstration against Hamas in the southern Gaza city of Rafah. Videos circulating on social media featured Palestinians cursing Hamas and Gaza strongman Yahye Sinwar, who masterminded the Oct. 7 massacre of Israelis living near the Gaza border.

There is no organized opposition to Hamas in Gaza.

Around 1,200 people were killed in Hamas's attacks on Israeli communities near the Gaza border on Oct. 7. Hamas currently holds 136 men, women and children captive in the Strip. Some people remain unaccounted for as Israeli authorities continue to identify bodies and search for human remains. HW





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#### **OBITUARIES**



Bernard "Zayda" Freiden

Bernard Freiden, affectionately known as "Zayda" to his entire family, entered this world on Dec. 26, 1928, at St Joseph's Hospital in Memphis, Tenn. He peacefully departed in his sleep on December 20, 2023, just six days before his 95th birthday. His legacy is one of unwavering dedication to family, a strong work ethic, and a profound commitment to community.

#### ...... Israel Charles Katz

Israel Charles Katz passed away after a short illness on Thursday night, January 18, 2024, at Baptist Hospital. He was 96 years old. Mr. Katz was born in Memphis on September 21, 1927, and was married on August 14, 1949, to Pearl Cetner. Prior to that Mr. Katz served in the U.S. Armed Forces stationed in San Francisco.

His parents were Polish immigrants from Wislica, Poland, part of a large wave of Eastern European Jews who fled to America due to economic hardship and rising antisemitism in the early 20th Century.

Mr. Katz served as one of the founders and treasurer of the Memphis Hebrew Academy and was a lifelong supporter of Memphis Jewish institutions.

Born to Harry and Bernice Freiden, who had relocated from Chicago, Bernard grew up in a home that doubled as both a family residence and his father's grocery store on the corner of 5th and Auction. Subsequent generations of Freidens would be raised on stories about Harry's interactions with his customers, stories about kindness, compassion, and the value of a strong work ethic. Those ideals would define Bernard for the rest of his life.

Upon graduation from Humes High School in 1947, Bernard immediately embarked on a lifelong career as, in his own words, "a consummate salesman." Drafted during the Korean Conflict, he met his future wife, Noreen Barrach, at a dance organized for Jewish servicemen. Their love story unfolded swiftly, leading to marriage. Following his Army discharge, Bernard, inspired by his father, opened "Square Deal Grocery" on Beale Street. His entrepreneurial spirit later led him to venture into the jewelry business, eventually establishing his

He was a Certified Public Accountant in private practice for over 60 years and graduated from Southern Law University in June 1960.

Izzy is survived by his children, Allan J. Katz (Esther), Karen Rubenstein (Marvin), Ronnie Katz and Marc Katz (Susan Turow). He is also survived by 16 grandchildren, 34 great-grandchildren and four great-great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents, wife, Pearl Katz, brother Harold Katz and sister Dorothy (Dubbie) Abrams. The burial was held at the Anshei Sphard Cemetery in Memphis on

The family asks that any charitable contributions be made to the Margolin Hebrew Academy, Young Israel of Memphis or the charity of your choice. **HW** 

### At Sundance, Noa Tishby Shows Protester Ignorance of Mideast Geography

(JNS) - At the Sundance Film Festival in Utah, actor, author and activist Noa Tishby chose some revealing questions to ask anti-Israel protesters waving flags and holding banners outside of the entertainment-oriented event that annually draws more than 100,000 people, including its fair share of celebrities. This year, it takes place from Jan. 18 to

A young man wearing gold sunglasses offered the "from the river to the sea" chant, prompting Tishby to ask what river he meant. Caught off-guard, he says, "Um, uhh. I forgot the river's name."

He then states: "But the sea is the Red Sea."

He also tells her that "the occupation is illegal. Even chocolate is not allowed. Wedding dresses are not allowed" (eliciting an eye roll from Tishby). "It's been that way for 15 years."

Tishby poses the same question to a young woman in a hooded red coat and a keffiyeh. "So where is the river and the sea that everyone's chanting about?"

Carrying a sign with a watermelon on it, she responds: "I think it's the Black Sea and the river on the other side of Gaza." She acknowledges that she got the poster from someone else.

"Do you know what it means?" asks Tishby. "No," she says.

Tishby served as special envoy for combating antisemitism and the delegitimization of Israel until she was removed in April 2023 after just a year in the role.

She interviews a young woman in a

Friday, January 19.

purple parka who proclaims that "the Palestinian genocide," it's "just awful." Then Tishby asks her about the hostages kidnapped by Hamas. "Unfortunately, I'm not that educated about that part," responds the protester.

An older woman insists that Hamas wasn't in the Gaza Strip. When Tishby asks her if there are hostages in Gaza, she replies: "Oh, I don't know," and looks away.

Tishby's findings align with recent research that showed only 47% of students who supported the protest slogan could identify which river and sea it referenced. HW

own fine jewelry wholesale company, The Freiden Company.

A pivotal moment came when Bernard and Noreen adopted an Orthodox lifestyle, deeply engaging in the Memphis Orthodox Jewish community. Bernard's dedication manifested in various roles, from serving on the board and as president of both the Anshei Sphard Beth El Emeth Synagogue and the then-Memphis Hebrew Academy, to active participation in the Memphis Chevra Kadisha.

Bernard's love for travel took him to places like Greece, Italy, England, France, and Egypt – after which he loved bragging about having jogged around the pyramids in Giza - but he took particular pride in his experiences volunteering in Israel with "Volunteers for Israel." His vibrant artistic side emerged in his 70s, as he created beautiful, energetic artwork, leaving a lasting legacy on the walls of his extended family.

Yet, Bernard's true purpose was loving and caring for his beloved wife of 68 years, Noreen, until her passing in July 2022. Wherever they went, they went hand in hand. Everything he did, he did after discussing it with her. Evidently, a year and a half without her proved too much for him.

Bernard was preceded in death by his sister, Celia Levy, and his wife, Noreen (Barrach). Known to his progeny simply as "Zayda," he is survived by his children: Dr Jeffrey Freiden (Pam), Dr. Denis Freiden (April), Hugh Gordon (Deborah), Brad Freiden (Dena), Melissa Friedman (Lt Col, Rabbi Joseph). He also leaves behind 24 grandchildren, 32 great-grandchildren and one greatgreat-grandchild.

The family requests that memorial donations be sent to the Memphis Jewish Home, expressing their gratitude for their exceptional care they provided for both Bernard and Noreen.

Bernard Freiden will be remembered for his enduring love, his strong values, and the colorful strokes he added not only to the canvas of his life, but those of his entire family. **HW** 

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### Plant Don't Talk on Tu B'Shevat



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** 

It is a remarkable phenomenon that the divine and human authors of our bible possessed a vision that pierced the darkness of the future like the halogen headlights on your car light up the highway. They foresaw most of today's topical issues; ecology (ever hear of the Sabbatical of the land?) Terrorism (Amalekites were charter members of the Axis of Evil), even Sex in the City (how 'bout scummy Sodom and Gomorrah).

Ecology – the land and its fruit – gets detailed treatment in the Torah. Naturally, in an agricultural society you need rules governing man's relationship with the good earth that feeds him. There are rules about the land lying fallow. And there are rules about not touching the fruit of the tree for three full years. The original purpose of Tu B'Shevat was to help measure off those first three years.

Oh, if only we had been given Torah in the Garden of Eden and if only that ethically challenged, but bilingual snake had read it to Eve. She would not have touched that Tree of Knowledge. She would have ignored those underaged apples. We would all be driving Cadillacs, playing tennis, and napping in the afternoon instead of earning our bread with the sweat of our brow.

Strange how many crucial scenes in the Jewish drama feature trees; the one in Eden that grew the fateful apple, the Terebinths of Mamre where the covenant was struck. The tree that sweetened the waters of Marah. The Cedars of Lebanon that supported the Temple. And more mundane, but equally important, the Ol-

ive and Fig trees that nourished our ancestors in a rocky and inhospitable "land of milk and honey." And when Abraham strikes his compact with Avimelech, how does he seal the deal? Not with a deed. Instead, he plants a Tamarisk tree; as though the divinity inherent in the tree reminds both parties of HE who witnessed their agreement. (As a non-Jewish, but spiritual Joyce Kilmer famously put it, "poems are made by fools like me, but only G-d can make a tree."

With all those leafy characters in our book, Tu B'Shevat was as predictable as rain. A tree is not just a decoration, but a hospitable haven in a barren land baking under a blazing sun. Sooner or later there had to be a holiday honoring trees.

Tu B'Shevat is a great time to instruct the hearts and minds of kids with the power of our Creator. Our Tanach is packed with inspirational stories for youngsters, but some, if told honestly and literally, can shake the young mind. "You mean the plague killed even the Egyptian babies!" Hard for the rabbi, the biblical scholar, and certainly the story-telling parent to handle. And if your kids are as skeptical as mine, they interrupt with pointed questions like: Were you there? Who told you? Did you see it? Why don't things like that happen today? And worse.

But still "music has charms to soothe the savage breast" says the poet. And so does our Book of Books. And it works wonders with kids. When it comes to pacifying their savage breasts, go light on the Ritalin, but heavy on tales of our biblical forbears.

Storytelling works great for Pesach and Purim, but it is not at all necessary on Tu B'Shevat. Sometimes it's easier to show His power than to tell old stories describing it.

And your backyard will work just fine. Backyards are full of miracles for childish eyes. In my parenting days, I used to walk the kids around the backyard. (And not just on Tu B'Shevat.) I'd show

them the vine that sprung up a couple of feet from the fence that assures his survival. He's looking for the sun. But lo and behold, that dumb vine – beneath the intelligence level of a cockroach always seems to grow toward the fence; and with its specially adapted tendrils, grabs hold of the wire. Then it climbs to the sun. "A miracle," I'd solemnly and truthfully announce to my three short listeners. It is impossible for even the botanist with a PhD in Vine Behavior to explain the force that wraps the grasping tendrils around the fence post. The botanist will use many long and hard to spell scientific terms to explain the energy and purpose of the plant. But still, something unexplainable remains. Much like the word "instinct," which basically means; we don't understand what's going on, we can only name it.

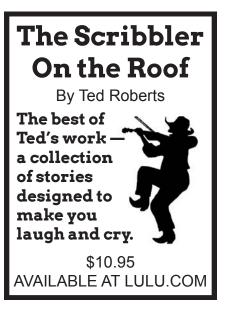
And a few sentences back, notice I referred to the vine as a "He." An inaccurate figure of speech since some vines are both sexes in the same plant. Not a bad survival mechanism for a vine with no other vines in his neighborhood and no chance of meeting one in a friendly backyard. This is even harder to explain to kids; but give it a try.

Something beyond our understanding is at work here: no less awesome than the parting of the Red Sea. Kids understand this as well as adults.

And they love to see the principle in action far better than listening to lectures. Often on this Holiday of Trees – we do the obvious – plant a tree; usually an Oak or a Maple seed. I favor the Maple, a highly intelligent voyager. She's winged so the wind can carry her far from her competitive parent that sucks up the rain and sun. The kids love her antics on a windy day.

Befitting the patriarch, I supervise while the kids dig the hole. And since I am not the shoveler, I encourage the digging crew to make the bed for the new seed plenty wide and plenty deep.

"Don't want to cramp his little roots,"



I shout from the back porch as I sip a hot tea. The diggers must follow up with watering and weeding, too. It is no small deal to plant a tree.

And I remind the diggers that nature extravagantly provides the mama Salmon with 100,000 eggs so she'll have five or six kids to gladden her old age. It's the same with Oak trees. So, plant a bunch of acorns. Maybe two or three will sprout in spring.

If you've properly inspired them, they'll sit by the den window and watch for the seedlings like poverty-stricken writers wait for the mailman with the check from the "New Yorker."

Then one day in spring, when you least expect it, a few green shoots will come up to tentatively explore their new world. Go get the kids, promise you their naive eyes will pop wider than the time you uncrated the new video game.

But my seed planting days were long ago. Now, when my 35-year-old son – my youngest – comes home to visit, his first remark on pulling up his emergency brake is: "Hey, Pop, the trees are looking great." Then, with his kids trailing along, we check out the celebration of Tu B'Shevats past.

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** 

# ISRAEL INSIGHTS Genocide Inversion

By Howard Weisband

Israel, the nation state and homeland of the Jewish people, incredibly, is being accused of genocide in an international court of law.

As unbelievable as that seems, it is happening at this moment in the International Court of Justice (ICJ), an organ of the United Nations, that resides in The Hague. Charges have been brought forward by South Africa.

We, the Jewish People, were victims of Nazi genocide during WWII when we lost six million innocents before the allied armies defeated Hitler and his Nazi troops. And today, with many likening Hamas to the Nazis, we are fighting an existential war, which we will win decisively to rid ourselves of Hamas' stated threat to complete a genocide of Israel.

The immoral irony of the South African charges in the ICJ are so apparent that they were perfectly and poignantly labelled as "Genocide Inversion" in a recent "For Heaven's Sake" podcast by Yossi Klein Halevi, who is a Senior Fellow at the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem.

The charges involve additional historical irony. The term "genocide" is relatively new; it did not exist prior to the mid 1940s. It was coined by Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jewish lawyer, who lost much of his family in the Holocaust. He immigrated to the U.S. in 1941 and

served on the law faculties of Duke and Rutgers Universities.

With information culled from the Holocaust Encyclopedia of the U.S. Holocaust Museum and Wikipedia, we learn that: "Lemkin coined genocide in 1943 or 1944 from two words: genos (Greek: family, clan, race) and cide (Latin: killing). The term was included in the 1944 research work 'Axis Rule in Occupied Europe,' wherein Lemkin documented mass-killings of ethnic groups deemed 'untermenschen' (subhuman) by Nazi Germany. In particular, the concept of 'genocide' was defined by Lemkin to refer to the vicious extermination campaign launched by Nazi Germany to wipe out Jews in the Holocaust."

Given that the ICJ is an organ of the UN, it is important to work from a UN definition of genocide. According to unorg: "The definition contained in Article II of the (Genocide) Convention describes genocide as a crime committed with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group, in whole or in part."

That's all background. The essential question today is does the case before the ICJ have merit?

U.K. MP Sir Michael Ellis, a former U.K. Attorney General, posted on January 9 on Instagram, reposted by the Middle East Forum, an excerpt of his

speech in the House of Commons. He states that "the case against Israel is a dangerous political stunt... it has no legal merit whatsoever... Israel's actions are in lawful self-defence."

In a sharp response to its own history, Germany announced on January 12, reported by the "Times of Israel:" "The German government sharply rejected... allegations before the UN's top court that Israel is committing 'genocide' in Gaza and warned against 'political instrumentalization' of the charge, as it announced it would intervene as a third party before the International Court of Justice."

Daniel Pomerantz, an expert in international law at Bar-Ilan and Reichman Universities, bolstered Israel's case in the Jerusalem Post on January 22: "Israel's self-defense does not remotely resemble genocide, given the IDF's herculean efforts to protect civilians in Gaza, and the incredibly small casualty numbers compared to other conflicts in the region, such as in Syria and Yemen."

Furthermore, the motives behind the South African case may well be questioned by a blockbuster, detailed report by Ohad Merlin on January 24 in the "Jerusalem Post," "Major South African banks provide platform to fund Hamas." It opens with the statement: "Research conducted by the "Jerusalem Post" staff

and several sources uncovered what appears to be a network of several South African organizations and straw man companies deeply involved with funding Hamas activities through the Al-Quds Foundation, an international group sanctioned by the U.S. and outlawed by Israel, using accounts registered in major local South African banks."

Earlier on the same day, Reuters reported that an initial ruling from the ICJ may be expected on Friday, January 26. "In the initial ruling, the ICJ will not deal with the main question of whether Israel is committing genocide. The court will just look at possible emergency measures, meant as a kind of restraining order, while the court looks at the full case, which usually takes years."

The ICJ decisions are not binding. But can we expect the court to make its judgments solely on a legal basis, free of South African political motivations?

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

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# Hamas Reportedly Rejects 2-Month Ceasefire as White House, Qatar Say Talks are 'Serious'



Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the National Security Council John Kirby takes questions during the daily press briefing at the White House, Jan. 23, 2024. Credit: Drew Angerer/Getty Images

#### By Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA) – Hamas reportedly rejected an Israeli offer for a two-month ceasefire in exchange for the release of hostages held in Gaza, even as top U.S. and Qatari officials said talks aimed at an extended pause in the war are "serious."

Last Monday, Axios reported that Israel proposed the pause of up to two months, during which it would release Palestinian prisoners held on security offenses and draw down its troop levels in Gaza while Hamas released all 136 hostages it is holding. CNN reported that an offer by Israel would include the

removal of Hamas' leadership, and that of other terror groups, from Gaza.

But subsequent reports quoted officials in Egypt, which is also a party to negotiations, saying Hamas rejected anything less than a permanent ceasefire and the full withdrawal of Israeli troops, and would not countenance the exile of its leadership.

Hamas terrorists invaded Israel on Oct. 7, killing more than 1,200 people, mostly civilians, brutalizing thousands and abducting more than 250. More than 25,000 Palestinians have been killed since Israel launched counterstrikes. Israel says about

a third of the casualties are combatants. More than 200 Israeli soldiers have been killed in the invasion of Gaza.

The war has devastated much of Gaza and displaced the vast majority of its population of 2.3 million people. International health officials say the population is on the verge of starvation. McGurk is also negotiating terms for the entry of increased humanitarian assistance into the strip.

Within Israel, debate over the war effort has grown more heated, especially as 24 soldiers were killed last Monday, the Israeli military's deadliest day since Oct. 7. The relatives of the hostages are leading a protest movement pushing the government to agree to a deal for their release, and some of the relatives interrupted a meeting of lawmakers to demand that the government do more to secure their loved ones' freedom.

Israeli and Hamas officials did not comment on last week's reports, but U.S. and Qatari officials said talks were serious, while declining to address the reports' specifics.

John Kirby, the National Security Council spokesman, said last Tuesday that Brett McGurk, President Joe Biden's Middle East coordinator, is seeking a deal while he tours the region. McGurk is currently in Egypt which, as the only other nation bordering the Gaza Strip, has a key role in bringing together any deal.

"One of the things he's in the region talking about is the potential for another hostage deal, which would require a humanitarian pause of some length to get that done, and that's definitely on the agenda," he said, while declining to confirm the specifics of the reports. "Conversations are very sober and serious about trying to get another hostage deal in place."

Under a deal brokered by Qatar, Egypt and the United States in November, Israel and Hamas ceased fire for about a week, exchanging more than 100 hostages for roughly three times that number of Palestinian prisoners. A handful of hostages were separately released or rescued earlier, and at least three hostages were mistakenly killed by Israeli fire. At least 20 hostages are believed to be dead; the deal Israel proposed would include the return of their bodies.

Majed Al Ansari, the Qatari foreign ministry spokesman, said the talks were advanced enough that he was optimistic. Qatar is one of a handful of countries that has extensive dealings with Hamas, whose political leadership lives in Qatar, and which has funded the movement.

"I can't comment on the specificities of the mediation as it is going on but what I can say is that we are engaged in serious discussions with both sides, we have presented ideas to both sides, we are getting a constant stream of replies from both sides, and that in its own right is a cause for optimism," he said. HW

# A 35-Foot Challah in NYC Attempts to Break a Guinness World Record



The 35-foot-long challah was baked in a tunnel oven at David's Cookies in New Jersey. It was then loaded onto a wooden plank and transported to the Upper West Side where it was unveiled at a day school's Shabbat assembly. Credit: JFNA/Vladimir Kolesnikov

#### By Julia Gergely

(New York Jewish Week) – New York City kitchens are notoriously small. Nonetheless, last Friday Congregation Rodeph Sholom on the Upper West Side unveiled a 35-foot-long challah that they and their partners hope will break a world record.

The gargantuan loaf was made in collaboration with the Jewish Federations of North America and the Orthodox Union with the aim of besting the current record-holder: a challah baked in Australia in 2019 that was just over 32 feet.

The 35-foot challah – braided in Borough Park and baked in New Jersey before being transported to the Reform synagogue – was made in honor of Shabbat of Love, a JFNA initiative that took place on Jan. 19 across North America. JFNA, OneTable, the Orthodox Union and 250 other partner organizations helped Jews organize and host

thousands of Shabbat dinners.

"We came up with the idea of doing the Shabbat of Love to uplift people and to communicate the idea that you're loved for who you are and you're loved for being Jewish, as opposed to a lot of the messages that I think people are absorbing right now from social media," said Sarah Eisenman, the chief officer of community and Jewish life at JFNA, who spearheaded the initiative alongside the challah-baking effort.

As for the challah, "I was thinking about what could we do that was a record-breaking, feel-good, prideful thing," Eisenman said. She had thought about trying to break a record for the world's largest Shabbat dinner but realized that the challah would be less complicated and easier to measure.

Eisenman said she reached out to the Orthodox Union for help with logistics

and they immediately jumped on board. "They said, 'Let's do it,'" she said. "Without the OU, we wouldn't have been able to do it because they knew who to call right away."

That call was to Strauss Bakery, a kosher bakery in Borough Park, Brooklyn, who pitched in by creating the dough. Said dough weighed in at more than 200 pounds and was mixed and braided at the bakery last Thursday night.

Braiding a 35-foot challah is one thing; baking it is another story: The unbaked challah was then loaded onto an 18-wheeler truck and driven across state lines to a kosher commercial kitchen in New Jersey operated by David's Cookies, which has a 40-foot long tunnel oven – one of the only places in the tri-state area that can fit a challah of that size, according to Eisenman.

Once the challah was baked Thursday night, it was loaded back on the truck and transported to Congregation Rodeph Sholom, where Eisenman's children go to school. There, a crowd of dozens of volunteers showed up to help unload the oversized challah. Some spontaneously broke out into song, singing "Am Yisrael Chai" ("The People of Israel Live") as they maneuvered the challah into the building.

Come Friday morning, the challah was finally revealed at an all-school Shabbat assembly for Rodeph Sholom Day School students and their families. Also in attendance was Manhattan Borough President Mark Levine.

"I was shocked it was edible actually," Eisenman joked, adding that although the bake was "doughy" in parts, community members of all ages were excited to dig in.

Eisenman said the collaboration between the Orthodox Union, the non-de-

nominational JFNA and Rodeph Sholom, a historic Reform congregation with many Israeli members, is "exactly the kind of unifying message we need right now."

The challah measured 35 feet, 2 inches, Eisenman said. The JFNA and the Orthodox Union are sending the measurements and video evidence to the Guinness World Records this week, and they hope to hear a verdict soon after.

If Guinness accepts the measurements, the challah would break – by several feet – the current record set by Grandma Moses Bakery and the Jewish National Fund chapter in New South Wales, Australia.

The New York-based groups also baked a backup challah that turned out even longer than the challah that was unveiled last Friday – Eisenman said it measured roughly 35 feet, 11 inches but, as it happens, was too long to fit on the wooden planks that transported it from the bakery to the truck. The back-up challah remained in New Jersey, where it was cut up into a dozen three-foot long chunks and donated to all the Moishe Houses in New York City, where the communal residences, designed for Jewish 20-somethings, were hosting their own Shabbat of Love dinners.

"Obviously, right now is a kind of a watershed moment around Jewish identity formation. It's going to take a little time for the Jewish world to come to terms with what kind of strategies or new initiatives we might need to respond to the moment," Eisenman said. "In the meantime, we took the approach that we can invest in and create Jewish positive spaces and experiences. We need more of them, and we need them now. That is what this is about – building pride, confidence, unity and community." HW

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# German Protesters Say Meeting by Far-Right Extremists Echoed the Nazis' Notorious 'Wannsee' Conference

By Toby Axelrod

BERLIN (JTA) – As many as 1 million Germans rallied this weekend against far-right extremism after a bombshell report revealed that leaders of a far-right party had secretly discussed plans to deport foreigners, including those who had become German citizens.

The meeting at a lakeside villa, revealed by a public-interest media organization, for many induced painful echoes of the gathering of Nazi leaders at nearby Wannsee in 1942 to devise a plan to deport and then murder Jews. Prominent neo-Nazis attended the November meeting, according to the investigation.

The revelations caused the country's leading Jewish organization to reiterate its longstanding objections to the party, known as Alternative for Germany or AfD.

"Anyone who has ever wondered why the federal office for constitutional protection classifies AfD as a suspected right-wing extremist group now has an answer," Josef Schuster, head of the Central Council of Jews in Germany, said in a statement. "This meeting shows what a great danger the AfD and its supporters pose to our free, democratic society and our peaceful coexistence."

According to the report published by Correctiv, which describes itself as a pro-democracy, public interest media company, prominent right-wing extremists and a handful of mainstream right politicians met secretly to strategize over the deportation – or as they put it, "remigration" – of millions of foreigners and dual-citizens.

Along with the influential AfD members who met in a 1920s-era hotel near Potsdam were neo-Nazis, among them Martin Sellner, former head of the farright Identitarian movement in Austria; right-wing-oriented businesspeople, and two members of Germany's center-right Christian Democratic Party, according to Correctiv.

The gist of the far-right plan, the report concluded, is that "people in Germany should be forcibly extradited if they have the wrong skin color, the wrong parents, or aren't sufficiently 'assimilated' into German culture according to the standards of people like Sellner. Even if they have German citizenship."

The plans drafted at the meeting amount to a "fierce attack on the German constitution," providing "a sinister glimpse into what could happen should the AfD ever come to power," the media organization said in its report.

AfD has tapped into nationalist and anti-immigrant sentiment in Germany to rise in the polls there, sometimes surpassing the popularity of mainstream right-wing parties. Although the party did not win enough votes to gain seats in the country's parliament during the last national elections in 2020, an AfD candidate won a race for regional office for the first time last summer, in rural eastern Germany, and the party is expected to mount a strong showing there in upcoming regional elections next month.

The rallies, which took place in more

than 100 cities and towns over several days, aimed to demonstrate that a significant portion of Germans reject AfD's attitudes. "Fascism isn't an alternative," read signs carried by some rally-goers, who mobilized about a week after the first report of the party's secret meeting to plot a strategy to combat Germany's tolerance of immigration.

The meeting took place at a villa alongside Lake Lehnitz, about 30 miles from the villa where the Nazis' Wannsee Conference to discuss the "final solution" – a euphemism for the genocide of European Jewry – took place in 1942.

"The vocabulary is no different, the place is no different – the only difference is that we have been there before," said Andrea Römmele, a professor at a private Berlin university, told the "New York Times."

Schuster rejected the Holocaust comparison, saying that "the industrial mass murder of European Jews is unique in history in its cold-bloodedness and madness." But some rally-goers carried signs that directly tied the secret meeting to Germany's mass murder of European Jews, including ones reading "Never again is now" and "Now we can see what we would have done in our grandparents' position."

AfD's co-leader Alice Weidel called the Nazi comparisons "unreflective," "excessive" and "a scandalous trivialization of Nazi crimes" – using terms that critics have used to describe statements by fellow AfD leaders, such as former party chief Alexander Gauland, who in 2018 called the Nazi-era a mere "bird s–t" in 1,000 years of German history.

Weidel criticized Correctiv's methods, which reportedly included renting a boat to photograph the meeting from afar and obtaining footage recorded on a digital watch from inside the villa. (The organization also reportedly spoke to people who attended the meeting.)

But she did not deny that a meeting was held; that her personal advisor, former Bundestag member Roland Hartwig, was present alongside prominent right-wing extremists; or that a plan for expulsion of foreigners was discussed. Hartwig has been let go from his position "by mutual agreement."

AfD draws strength from populist resentment against refugees arriving in Germany over the last decade from conflict zones in the Middle and Far East and Africa, and more recently against those fleeing Ukraine. Far-right activists have traditionally prescribed deportation of so-called foreigners as a solution for socioeconomic problems. And the AfD is known to take a Russia-apologetic, NATO-critical stance.

It is maintaining a second-place hold in national polls, running slightly behind the Christian Democratic Union. The centrist governing coalition has fallen to a distant third. Responding to the Correctiv report, Chancellor Olaf Scholz that any plan to expel immigrants or citizens would be "an attack against our democracy, and in turn, on all of us." HW



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