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THE Hebrew Watchman

SERVING THE MEMPHIS JEWISH COMMUNITY SINCE 1925

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Federation Launches 15th Annual Holocaust Art and Essay Competition

Memphis Jewish Federation is now accepting entries for its 15th annual Holocaust Art and Essay Competition. Students in grades 6-12, in Tennessee and the Midsouth, are invited to submit art or essay entries for this year's theme, "From Generation to Generation."

Students in grades 6-8 can submit artwork, and students in grades 9-12 can submit essays. Cash prizes for the top winners are made possible by the Kethe Mela Family Memorial Fund of the Jewish Foundation of Memphis.

Student competitors will explore the idea of what it means to live in the shadow of the Holocaust.

Questions to consider include:

- If you are not the descendant of a Holocaust survivor, are you responsible for telling the story?
- How does sharing stories from generation to generation help us retain our shared humanity and empathy?
- What is your place in this story?
- How will you carry the story forward?

"We are confident this year's competition theme, 'From Generation to Generation,' will speak to students in the Jewish and broader communities, and generate greater awareness of the Holocaust," said Bluma Zuckerbrot-Finkelstein, Executive Vice President of Memphis Jewish Federation. "With antisemitism on the rise, this competition is more relevant than ever."

As in previous years, all artwork entered into the competition will be displayed in the lobby of the Memphis Jewish Community Center. Competition winners will be recognized at the 62nd annual Yom HaShoah Community Commemoration on Sunday, May 5, 2024. The event will feature one of the youngest survivors of Auschwitz, Michael Bornstein. Mr. Bornstein and his daughter, Debbie Bornstein-Holinstat, are the authors of "Survivors Club," which is available for purchase at Novel bookstore.

The first-place essay will be published

in the program booklet and the first-place artwork will adorn the cover of the program booklet. The winning essay will also be published in The Hebrew Watchman, in the community weekly e-newsletter, and shared on social media.

All entries will be judged according to the following criteria: creativity, passion, and relevance to the topic. Full guidelines and resources for entrants are available at jcpmemphis.org/holocaustartandessay and should be carefully reviewed before submission.

Students should email their essays to HolocaustEssayMJF@gmail.com. Artwork should be dropped off at the Memphis Jewish Federation, and should follow the published guidelines, including photo of artwork and attachment emailed to HolocaustArtContest@gmail.com. All entries are due by the close of business on Monday, April 1, 2024.

Please include entrants' name, grade, school, and contact information.



The 2023 Federation Holocaust Art and Essay Competition winning art entry was created by Kayla Lam, a student at Colonial Middle School.

For more information, please contact Lorraine Wolf at lwolf@jcpmemphis.org. **HW**

Jason Caplan Films ULR Documentary in Israel, Promotes Healing & Bridge-Building



Jason held a ULR session with a group of middle school students at a Bedouin village in Zar Zhir Zar.

By Shoshana Center

The Jewish global response to the attacks of Oct. 7 have given all of us hope and strength. And because two things can be true at the same time, we are right in the midst of this long horrifying battle against terror. It certainly hit Jason Caplan, founder of the Bridge Institute and Universal Language Room (ULR), hard.

"The shock on Oct. 7 was really in my body and soul, and I couldn't focus at work or home," he shared. "I needed to buy a ticket and be in Israel to show my support, love, and commitment."

So, Jason embarked on a special mis-

sion with the goal of showing the world that Israel is a thriving democracy – a Jewish state and a state for all citizens. He and his partners designed the trip to meet with Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Bedouin, secular, and religious citizens across the country. When chatting with Rabbi Michael Beyo of the East Valley JCC and the Six Million Voices project, the two entered into a strategic partnership.

"The first project of our new strategic partnership was to fund the filming of the Universal Language Room and Beit Abulafia in Israel," explained Jason.



Jason with the film crew.

"Rabbi Beyo is an innovative CEO of the EV JCC, directing his own unique projects such as the Six Million Voices and looking to support developing projects that are about to expand. I'm very grateful for his partnership."

Jason had previously met an Israeli film crew, including Ori Lazerouitch, on its trip to Memphis awhile back and stayed in touch with them. Thankfully their schedules aligned, so they set up the filming plans. Jason noted that the key to the trip was meeting up with Shai Ben Harosh, a Torah MiTzion shaliach in Memphis in 2017. Jason and Shai have stayed in touch over the years, and Shai picked Jason up from the airport,

and together they drove all across Israel.

"I enjoy going around with a camera to film music events. My brothers and I grew up with a camcorder, filming skits and shows, so it was very natural. It was similar to a live documentary, where the cameras are rolling in all situations. The film crew, Dollhaus Productions, is a very professional, creative group, and we got along so well in setting up the scenes, improvising, and going with the flow. I enjoyed every second of working with producers Avi Berne and Yohanan Doran," said Jason of the documentary. "Mainly, I just went and met with people

(See ULR Page 5)

My Teen Israel Experience



Abe Friedman wrapping tefillin at the Western Wall.

By Abe Friedman

The three weeks I spent this summer in Israel with BBYO Israel Journey were truly unforgettable. I made so many new friends and experienced many new things.

We began our journey in Jerusalem where we said the Shehecheyanu prayer at the Haas Promenade and wrote a letter to ourselves of what we hoped to get out of the trip, to be opened at the end of the trip.

My group spent the next two days in Jerusalem where we visited the Old City and the Western Wall. I wrapped tefillin for the first time and took in a spot so important to the Jewish people. Near the Western Wall were the Hezekiah Tunnels where I saw the foundations of Jerusalem dating back to King David's time. From Jerusalem, we drove north to the Sea of Galilee for our Shabbat in the Holy Land on a kibbutz.

In this beautiful part of the country, we hiked Mount Arbel, biked along Hula Lake, and rafted down the Jordan River. Tsfat was another stop in the region where we learned about Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism) and spoke with an artist. We also learned about Druze culture and food. From there, my group headed to Haifa where we walked down the Bahai Temple Gardens and visited a mosque.

Tel Aviv was our next destination, where we enjoyed a wide variety of activities in the city including open markets, going to the beach, and visiting the ANU Museum of Jewish Peoplehood.

My group then headed south towards the Negev desert visiting communities that have adapted to being near the Gaza strip and farms that have learned to prosper despite being in the desert, such as the Salad Trail. Also in the south were beautiful views of the Ramon Crater and the Kasui sand dunes.

At the southernmost tip of the county was Eilat and the Red Sea. I had the opportunity to see the fish and coral reefs while snorkeling and enjoyed a cruise on the Red Sea. From the Red Sea, we headed back north to float on the Dead Sea. That night, my group slept in the Bedouin tents and learned about their lifestyle and food. We woke up early the following morning to climb Masada and witness the beautiful sunrise. I then learned the history of the Masada fortress and hiked back down.

For the end of the trip, we headed back to Jerusalem having gone full circle around the Holy Land. Back in Jerusalem, we learned more about the geological complexity of the city, then visited the Ma'ale Film School. For our last Shabbat in Israel, we experienced Kabbalat Shabbat services at the Kotel and spent Saturday in the park at Gan Sacher.

Our final day in Jerusalem included a visit to the West Bank to learn of Arab-Israeli relations and a meaningful visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum. My final day in Israel in Tel Aviv consisted of volunteering at Save

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Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. Feb. 9, 2024 / 30 Shevat, 5784 5:18 p.m.
Havdalah, Sat. Feb. 10, 2024 / 1 Adar 1, 5784 6:15 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Mishpatim

a Child's Heart and visiting Kfar Macabiah's World Jewish Sports Museum.

Experiencing Israel for the first time with a group of teens my age was truly a once-in-a-lifetime experience that I will never forget. It allowed me to visit places I had learned about my whole life going to a Jewish day school and at Shul and gave me a better outlook on what Judaism means to me.

Thank you to Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemsky Endowment Fund for helping make my BBYO in Israel program possible for me.

Abe Friedman, son of Susan and Ed-

ward Friedman, is a junior at Memphis University School.

Memphis Jewish Federation's Lemsky Endowment Fund provided him with a Teen Israel Experience grant to offset the costs of his 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 – contact crichardson@jcpmemphis.org for more information.

Note: This essay was written before the horrific events of October 7. 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. Monthly Luncheon is at noon.

Monday, February 12
Team Trivial Pursuit

We will split the room up into teams and see who the champions of Trivia are! Questions come from the authorized edition of Trivial Pursuit, with most questions coming from their Boomer edition. Come test your knowledge!

Wednesday, February 14

Speaker: Rabbi Sarit Horwitz, Beth Sholom Synagogue

Topic: The Poetry of Yehudah Amichgi!

The seniors always look forward to Rabbi Sarit's talks. An open question and answer session will follow.

Monday, February 19

Field Trip: Tour of Old Jewish Memphis led by Steve Kaplan

Visit Downtown and Mid-Town. Reservations need to be made early as the Bus only holds 14! Please call the MJCC Front desk to make reservations for the trip and lunch. Cost is only \$2 for the trip, plus the usual \$2 for lunch.

Wednesday, February 21

Big MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Monthly Luncheon at noon

Featuring music by Brad Birkedahl! Brad is best known for his work with rockabilly trio The Dempseys. Today Birkedahl has expanded his rock n' roll repertoire with a powerhouse stage show. From presidents to prime ministers, Brad has entertained audiences around the world. In 2015 he was hon-



Brad Birkedahl will provide entertainment for the monthly luncheon on Feb. 21.

ored with a brass note on historic Beale Street in downtown Memphis. The cost is only \$5 for our lunch and entertainment! Entertainment provided by Creative Aging and lunch sponsored by Hope Hospice and Palliative Care.

We will also be honoring one of our regulars, Otto, who celebrated his 100th birthday this past January! Please call the MJCC front desk at 901-761-0810 to make your reservations for this wonderful event!

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 either 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**

Moms Demand Action Joins Temple Israel for Safe Gun Storage Program

Temple Israel will host a Safe Gun Storage program in collaboration with Moms Demand Action on Sunday, February 25, 2023, at 10 a.m.

This program is sponsored by the Gun Violence Prevention Tribe at Temple Israel in partnership with Moms Demand Action's 'Be SMART' campaign, launched in 2015 to promote responsible gun ownership to reduce the deaths, injuries, and trauma that can result when a child or teen can access a gun.

The Gun Violence Prevention Tribe at Temple Israel was established last year to help reduce gun violence in the Memphis community. The Tribe partners with organizations in Memphis that aim to prevent gun violence by supporting youth (mentoring, school supplies, or toy drives), participating in community events to raise awareness, and contacting area leaders to advocate for ways to stop the killing. The Tribe is led by Rochelle Fenton and Susanne Landau.

"We are a group of Temple Israel members who are responding to the ancient wisdom of our sages who taught that to save one life is to save a world," says Susanne Landau. "Our members include gun owners and non-gun owners, and our goal is to do what we can to prevent injury and death caused by gun violence."

Attendees will discover the keys to responsible firearm storage, learn practical strategies, explore secure storage options, and gain confidence in discussing this crucial topic with family members and people in the community.

This important training is for any-



one, but especially for those who have children or grandchildren in the home. A 2018 study found that about 4.6 million U.S. children lived in a home with at least one loaded and unlocked gun. At the end of the program, participants will receive a free gun lock. No guns will be present at this program and no firearms are permitted.

"We are thrilled to have experienced trainers from Moms Demand Action who will present the nationally recognized 'Be SMART' program to the Memphis Jewish community to detail the best practices of keeping guns secured in your home or car," shares Susanne.

All adults are welcome, especially parents whose children may find themselves in a home or vehicle where there is a gun present. Attendees will learn how to best store a weapon at home, and also how to talk about safety concerns with other parents or family members whose homes may have a gun present.

Coffee and bagels will be served at 9:30 a.m. and the training will begin promptly at 10 a.m. To register for this free program, visit timemphis.org/event/safe-gun-storage-workshop/. Questions? Call 901.761.3130. **HW**

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Know a Teen Writer Passionate about Judaism, Feminism, and Social Justice?

JWA is accepting applications for the 2024-2025 Rising Voices Fellowship!

The Jewish Women's Archive provides a platform for young Jewish women and non-binary teens* to amplify their voices through the Rising Voices Fellowship, a leadership development program for teens who have a passion for writing and a strong interest in feminism and Judaism – particularly as they relate to social justice.

This 10-month program offers a unique curriculum exploring Jewish women's history and identity, giving Fellows the tools to use their voices for social change.

As we seek to build a pluralistic and representative community of Rising Voices Fellows, we strongly encourage applications from LGBTQ+ teens, teens of color, teens with disabilities, and Mizrahi and Sephardi teens.

*JWA embraces expansive understandings of what it means to be Jewish and a woman. Learn more at jwa.org/risingvoices/faq. Submit by April 1, 2024 **HW**

House Hears Testimony on UNRWA 'Horror Show,' Hamas Links



Palestinians collect drinking water from the UNRWA in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Jan. 29, 2024. Credit: Abed Rahim Khatib/Flash90

By Andrew Bernard

(JNS) – Members of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs heard expert testimony last Tuesday about the links between Hamas and the primary U.N. aid organization for the Palestinians in Gaza.

Last Friday, it was revealed that a dozen employees of the U.N. Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East may have participated directly in Hamas's Oct. 7 terror attacks on Israel. The United States and 16 other countries and the European Union have cut off aid to the U.N. agency.

U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken called the allegations "highly, highly credible" last Monday, but Richard Goldberg, a senior advisor at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, told members of Congress last Tuesday that the allegations are merely the tip of the iceberg.

"UNRWA is a horror show that is decades in the making, co-produced by the U.S. taxpayer," Goldberg testified, during a hearing that ran about three hours and, initially, was disrupted frequently by protesters. "Terrorism support and subsidy, for UNRWA, is a feature not a bug."

At the hearing, the Democratic witness, Mara Rudman, a University of Virginia professor and former official in the Obama and Clinton administrations, was asked about reports that as many as 15% of UNRWA employees in Gaza might be members of Hamas and other terror groups. Rudman testified that those figures likely reflect wider Gazan support for terrorism.

"Press reports have indicated that the percentages of UNRWA staff that may be affiliated in some way with Hamas are roughly similar to the percentages in

the general population that are thought to be affiliated, so between 10% and 15%," she said. "If they employ 13,000 people in the population, the single biggest employer, it would not be surprising if the percentages are roughly that of the general population."

The other witnesses at last Tuesday's hearing, Marcus Sheff, CEO of IMPACT-se, and Hillel Neuer, executive director of U.N. Watch, testified about bias against Israel in UNRWA's school curricula and in the wider U.N. system respectively.

Congressional reaction

Republicans on the committee generally signaled that they would support ending U.S. funding to UNRWA permanently. But many Democrats said they only support the Biden administration's funding pause on a temporary basis and would like to see Palestinian aid restored as soon as possible.

"I have very real concerns about the security impact and the moral implications if we do not find quickly a way to resume some funding and allow that aid to move forward expeditiously," said Rep. Jason Crow (D-Colo.). "The horrifying and inexcusable actions of roughly a dozen people should not speak for the over 13,000 UNRWA employees in Gaza."

But some pro-Israel Democrats said last Tuesday that the U.N. agency had proven itself unfit to fulfill its mission, while noting that they would support aid to the Palestinians from other agencies.

"We have to replace UNRWA with something else," said Rep. Brad Schneider (D-Ill.). "I support getting rid of UNRWA."

"UNRWA, long funded by your tax dollars, has been governing Gaza at the behest of Hamas so that Hamas, which sees governing as a distraction, could dedicate itself to murdering Jews in Israel," Rep. Ritchie Torres (D-N.Y.) posted on social media last Tuesday.

Torres also co-signed a bipartisan letter, led by Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-N.J.), last Tuesday that calls on U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres and UNRWA Commissioner-General

Philippe Lazzarini to resign.

"The U.N. and UNRWA can no longer be trusted to operate as the unbiased liaison to the Palestinian people," per the letter, addressed to the U.S. secretary of state. "It is unacceptable that U.S. tax dollars, allocated to assist innocent Palestinians, instead funded tunnels under UNRWA buildings and paid for terrorists to murder, rape, kidnap and hold innocent civilians hostage."

The letter, which Rep. Claudia Tenney (R-N.Y.) co-signed, is circulating on the Hill for additional signatories.

Despite losing, at least temporarily, the support of 12 of UNRWA's 15 largest donors, a senior U.N. official claimed last Tuesday that the United Nations had already taken "swift action" to address the allegations against UNRWA and said they did not believe UNRWA could be replaced.

"There is no substitution for the humanitarian role that is played in Gaza," said Sigrid Kaag, the UN's senior humanitarian and reconstruction coordinator for Gaza, during a press stakeout at the U.N. Security Council.

"Beyond political decisions, which are General Assembly bound, there is no way any organization can replace or substitute the tremendous capacity, the fabric of UNRWA," she said. **HW**

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ULR...
(Continued From Page 1)



Jason and Shai (far right) visit Kli Shir in Maaleh Adumim (where they bought the instruments for the music mission) with owner Shlomi Kohen and friend Michael.

and pretended the camera wasn't there. I wasn't really paying much attention to it, only when we did interviews, of course. Once I start leading a ULR, I am really not aware of much, other than the people who I am helping to make music."

Each location of shooting was unique and enlightening on how ULR and Beit Abulafia could show the beauty of dialogue through musical instruments and note permutations, bringing participants to live in the moment and enjoy the sharing of ideas and thoughts. Jason demonstrated the ways to apply this experience in all kinds of situations.

Take for instance, Jason and the crew meeting with an interfaith group in Jerusalem. He invited Muslim, Christians, and Jews to all pick up xylophones and start playing. "It was so funny and awkward at first," he said with a smile, "and slowly but surely the magic of the ULR took place and the bridges began to be built."

They also met with a group of middle school students at a Bedouin village in Zar Zhir. The super-sweet kids giggled a lot, loved the music, and said they couldn't wait for Jason to come back. That fascinating program was coordinated with the Jane Goodall Institute of Israel. Jason and his team also traveled to Tel Aviv and Pardes Chana, the Swedish Theological Institute, renowned Ben Yehuda Street, Israeli military outposts, and more.

"Participating in the ULR program was wonderful!" shared Shai Ben Harosh, who happens to be a skilled guitarist. "That's the beauty of ULR – it's not a performance, it's an interaction. Instead of just playing music to people, you converse with them by handing out instruments and teaching them a new language. And it's always fun hanging out with Jason. We met all sorts of people along the way – from the vegan rabbi to Aramaic-speaking Christians."

Other highlights of Jason's trip included spending Shabbat with Rabbi Wende, his wife, Chaya Sara, and their children. They previously served as the head of the Memphis Torah MiTzion Kollel. Jason especially loved their beautiful Maale Adumim neighborhood, in the desert next to Jerusalem, where they shared Torah ideas, ate amazing food, and Jason had the opportunity to see Rabbi Wende leading his congregation, all of which was "very special."

"I felt so many emotional highs and lows, but always within the framework of the holiness of Eretz Yisrael. I felt hope, strength, and unlimited resilience. To think that the Jewish people are facing an evil worse than the Nazis – that most of the world is quiet about it or actively supporting – and you realize, we only have Hashem," Jason said. "Everyone in Israel is profoundly grateful to the United States for support. That is very clear. At the same time, we know that we only have Hashem. The realization

of so many Israelis, that we need to be Am Yisrael, united together, and rely on Hashem together, to me, was so clear.

"I cried davening at the Kotel, I could feel the events of Oct. 7, I am not sure why," he continued. "The pain is unbearable, and I can't even begin to imagine what it's like for the people going through it or [their] family members. We must keep up the pressure and bring the hostages home. We experienced firing at us from the enemy, which may be in the documentary, so I was closer to the war than I was aware of at one point. It's a wakeup call to actually be in a war situation with an enemy who wants to commit genocide, and then uses its own citizens as shields and casualties to accuse Israel of genocide. That the world repeats their lies is the depth of moral depravity. The world is much more morally backward than any of us realized. You feel the challenge of this in Israel, but you also see the bravery of every citizen to fight back."

Jason and the documentary team are working on the first iteration of the film, which will be seven to 10 minutes. They'll show it at film festivals and to funders, as they look to bring in funds to create the extended 30-minute film and eventually an hour show. Jason expects the film to be ready in mid- or late February.

"Am Yisrael Chai, my love for Israel and the Jewish people grew by leaps and bounds and continues to grow," Jason expressed. "We can all do one more thing today for Israel and the Jewish people." **HW**

Federation Celebrates Success of Yoga for Israel: A Day of Healing



Event chairs Kimberlee Strome and Jeri Moskovitz.

Yoga for Israel, chaired by Kimberlee Strome and Jeri Moskovitz, and in partnership with Memphis Jewish Community Center was an incredibly impactful

event that brought together more than 70 community members and raised almost \$2,500 for the Memphis Stands with Israel campaign. **HW**



Class in MJCC lobby.



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BBYO Spring Kickoff at the New Topgolf Memphis



More than 60 Memphis teens enjoyed playing golf, eating and hanging with friends at Topgolf for their spring kickoff. Memphis also officially welcomed 8th graders to join BBYO! Everyone is ready and excited to have a great spring term and to recruit new members to their

chapters for a calendar full of events. We can't wait for more events together and to get as many Jewish teens involved as possible. Contact Zoë at zgoldberg@bbyo.org if your teen is interested in joining the fun! **HW**



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.



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B'nai Mitzvah



Kivi and Aiden Cenker

Aiden and Akiva “Kivi” Cenker, twin sons of Dovid Cenker and Shoshana Cenker, are delighted to celebrate their b’nai mitzvah on Shabbos Rosh Chodesh, February 10, at Baron Hirsch Congregation. Kivi will lead Hallel, read from the Torah, and recite the Haftorah, while Aiden will also read from the Torah and lead Mussaf. Both young men will share a D’var Torah about their parsha, Mishpatim, after services.

The boys have spent the past year-plus learning how to lein and daven with their Zaydie Butch Yaffe, a master Ba’al Koreh with 60-plus years of leining experience. They studied their parsha to prepare their words of Torah with Rabbi Ian Lichter, as well as Rabbi Joel Finkelstein, who also taught them about Tefillin.

Aiden and Kivi are 7th graders at the Margolin Hebrew Academy. They enjoy summer camp at Ramah Darom, outside of Atlanta. Aiden loves playing basketball for MHA and just about anything athletic, and caring for his pet lizard, Spike; pups, Memphis and Piper; and cat, Felix. Kivi, who wants to become a computer engineer, also plays basketball

for MHA and loves figuring out how machines and technology work. The brothers make sure to include their sister, Lyla, whose bat mitzvah is this coming November, in lots of fun activities.

The boys have been collecting items for their mitzvah projects – Aiden’s is Hebrew books for Israeli kids and English books for local shelters; Kivi’s is dental supplies for Israel and local shelters. Their dad already took a large shipment of donated items to Israel, which were swiftly distributed to those in need. Aiden and Kivi will bring the rest of the donated items to Israel, when they visit on a family trip, G-d willing, this summer.

The Cenker family has received tremendous support and love from the Memphis community and is grateful to everyone who helped prepare for their special weekend. The family is thrilled to have many out-of-town family and friends join in as well.

Aiden and Kivi are the grandsons of Michael and Betsy Cenker of Atlanta, Dr. Butch and Pat Yaffe of Memphis, and Dina Romeo of Memphis. Mazel Tov! **HW**



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SECURE 2.0 Provides New Retirement Savings Options in 2024

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

The SECURE 2.0 Act, passed in December 2022, made wide-ranging changes to U.S. tax laws related to retirement savings. While some provisions were effective in 2023, others did not take effect until 2024. Here is an overview of some important changes for this year.

Matching student loan payments

Employees who make student loan repayments may receive matching employer contributions to a workplace retirement plan as if the repayments were employee contributions to the plan. This applies to 401(k), 403(b), and government 457(b) plans and SIMPLE IRAs. Employers are not required to make matching contributions in any situation, but this provision allows them to offer student loan repayment matching as an additional benefit to help address the fact that people paying off student loans may struggle to save for retirement.

New early withdrawal exceptions

Withdrawals before age 59½ from tax-deferred accounts, such as IRAs and 401(k) plans, may be subject to a 10% early distribution penalty on top of ordinary income tax. There is a long list of exceptions to this penalty, including two new ones for 2024.

Emergency expenses – one penalty-free distribution of up to \$1,000 is allowed in a calendar year for personal or family emergency expenses; no further emergency distributions are allowed during a three-year period unless funds are repaid or new contributions are made that are at least equal to the withdrawal.

Domestic abuse – a penalty-free withdrawal equal to the lesser of \$10,000 (indexed for inflation) or 50% of the account value is allowed for an account holder who certifies that he or she has been the victim of domestic abuse during the preceding one-year period.

Emergency savings accounts

Employers can create an emergency savings account linked to a workplace retirement plan for non-highly compensated employees. Employee contributions are after-tax and can be no more than 3% of salary, up to an account cap of \$2,500 (or lower as set by the employer). Employers can match contributions up to the cap, but any matching funds go into the employee's workplace retirement account.

Clarification for RMD ages

SECURE 2.0 raised the initial age for required minimum distributions (RMDs) from traditional IRAs and most workplace plans from 72 to 73 beginning in 2023 and 75 beginning in 2033. However, the language of the law was confusing. Congress has clarified that age 73 initial RMDs apply to those born from 1951 to 1959, and age 75 applies to those born in 1960 or later. This clarification will be made official in a law correcting a number of technical errors, expected to be passed in early 2024.

No more RMDs from Roth workplace accounts

Under previous law, RMDs did not apply to original owners of Roth IRAs, but they were required from designated Roth accounts in workplace retirement

plans. This requirement is eliminated beginning in 2024.

Transfers from a 529 college savings account to a Roth IRA

Beneficiaries of 529 college savings accounts are sometimes “stuck” with excess funds that they did not use for qualified education expenses. Beginning in 2024, a beneficiary can execute a direct trustee-to-trustee transfer from any 529 account in the beneficiary's name to a Roth IRA, up to a lifetime limit of \$35,000. The 529 account must have been open for more than 15 years. These transfers are subject to Roth IRA annual contribution limits, so it would require multiple transfers to use the \$35,000 limit.

Increased limits for SIMPLE plans

Employers with SIMPLE IRA or SIMPLE 401(k) plans can now make additional nonelective contributions up to the lesser of \$5,000 or 10% of an employee's compensation, provided the contributions are made to each eligible employee in a uniform manner. The limits for elective deferrals and catch-up contributions, which are \$16,000 and \$3,500 respectively in 2024, may be increased an additional 10% for a plan offered by an employer with no more than 25 employees. An employer with 26 to 100 employees may allow higher limits as long as it provides either a 4% match or a 3% nonelective contribution.

Inflation indexing for QCDs

Qualified charitable distributions (QCDs) allow a taxpayer who is age 70½ or older to distribute up to \$100,000 annually from a traditional IRA to a qualified public charity. Such a distribution is not taxable and can be used in lieu of all or part of an RMD. Beginning in 2024, the QCD amount is indexed for inflation, and the 2024 limit is \$105,000.

SECURE 2.0 created an opportunity (effective 2023) to use up to \$50,000 of one year's QCD (i.e., one time only) to fund a charitable gift annuity or charita-

ble remainder trust. This amount is also indexed to inflation beginning in 2024, and the limit is \$53,000.

Catch-up contributions: indexing, delay, and correction

Beginning in 2024, the limit for catch-up contributions to an IRA for people ages 50 and older will be indexed to inflation, which could provide additional saving opportunities in future years. However, the limit did not change for 2024 and remains \$1,000. (The catch-up contribution limit for 401(k)s and similar employer plans was already indexed and is \$7,500 in 2024.)

The SECURE 2.0 Act includes a provision – originally effective in 2024 – requiring that catch-up contributions to workplace plans for employees earning more than \$145,000 annually must be made on a Roth basis. In August 2023, the IRS announced a two-year “administrative transition period” that effectively delays this provision until 2026. In the same announcement, the IRS affirmed that catch-up contributions in general will be allowed in 2024, despite a change related to this provision that could be interpreted to disallow such contributions. The error will be corrected in the 2024 technical legislation.

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WKNO February Art Exhibit A Memphis of Hope Art Show



There's no place like home... There's no place like Memphis and the people who are proud to call this place home.

WKNO will display a very special Gallery Ten Ninety-One art exhibition in February called A Memphis of Hope Art Show. The exhibit provides an opportunity for Memphis artists of diverse ages, cultures, and backgrounds to share through their art a message of hope, love, harmony, peace, unity, and solidarity for the city at a time when the brightness here is being dimmed and challenged with senseless crime.

The artwork that is featured in A Memphis of Hope Art Show has been created by each artist to inspire hope, love, unity, and peace for the city. The hope is that this coming together through art will send an impactful message to others and an assurance that there is still good coming out of Memphis. There is still



a hope in its people, in its celebration of unity, in its camaraderie of kindness, and in the hearts of its artists. The exhibition showcases works of paintings, photography, pottery, quilting, sculptures, jewelry, or metal ornaments.

This project opens in honor of Black History Month and will be open to the public for viewing beginning February 5, 2024, until February 29, 2024.

About WKNO

WKNO is a non-profit, private foundation serving the Mid-South for more than 67 years. An important community resource, WKNO uses the power of non-commercial public broadcasting to provide the Mid-South with quality educational and cultural programs that inform, entertain, and inspire. For more information: www.wkno.org **HW**

Georgia Governor Signs Bill Using IHRA to Define Jew-Hatred



Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp signs an antisemitism bill, HB 30, on Jan. 31, 2024. Credit: Georgia governor's office.

(JNS) – Georgia Gov. Brian Kemp signed a bill that uses the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)'s working definition of antisemitism to define Jew-hatred in state law.

Jenny Sividya, who survived Hamas's Oct. 7 terrorist attack on Israel, joined the Republican governor as he signed the bill. "Thank you for being here," Kemp told her. "We are honored by your presence."

"There has been a troubling rise in antisemitism across our nation in recent years, especially following the horrific terrorist attacks in Israel on Oct. 7 that claimed the lives of over 1,200 Israelis," he said. "These acts of hatred have taken on many forms, including harassment, intimidation, and even violence. Georgia has not been immune to that horrible reality."

Jewish citizens "have experienced hate in the form of antisemitic flyers spread across neighborhoods, messages on social media calling for the death of Jews in Israel and around the world and even hateful gatherings outside synagogues," Kemp added.

The legislation, which Kemp signed last Wednesday, had passed the state Senate 44-6 and the state House 129-5.

Kemp, who visited Israel for the first time last year, had said he would sign the bill because it "builds on our commitment to protect Georgians from criminal acts, including those based on hate."

Georgia state representatives Esther Panitch, a Democrat, and John Carson, a Republican, led the legislation, which calls on state agencies to define Jew-hatred "as provided for in the working definition of antisemitism and the contemporary examples of antisemitism

adopted by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance."

"I am overwhelmed with gratitude to my colleagues and leaders, who listened to the Jewish community about what we were being subjected to with antisemitism and took action," Panitch, the only Jewish member of the Georgia state legislature, told JNS after the bill passed the state Senate.

"We applaud Gov. Kemp and the Georgia Legislature for taking a bold stand against antisemitic and national origin discrimination," stated Shawn Evenhaim, board chair of the Israeli-American Coalition for Action. "By acting today, Georgia is protecting their citizens against anti-Jewish bias and hatred, which has been at crisis levels since Oct. 7."

Chris Carr, the attorney general of Georgia, wrote that HB30 is important amid rising antisemitism. "In Georgia, we continue to push back against these acts of evil and in support of our Jewish friends and neighbors," he stated. "We're thankful to our General Assembly for sending a message that antisemitism has no place in our state."

Rabbi Ari Weisenfeld, associate national director of state relations for Agudah Israel of America, encouraged other states to follow suit.

"Agudath Israel is especially grateful to Representatives Panich and Carson for championing the bill last year and for continuing to advocate for it this year," he stated. "We also thank Senate President Pro Tempore John Kennedy for sponsoring the bill in the Senate."

Carson, who sponsored the bill, noted the efforts of attorney Joe Sabag, "who helped lead the formation of Georgia's anti-BDS law in 2016 and developed this IHRA bill" and also thanked Naty Saidoff, chair emeritus of the Israeli-American Coalition, for affording him "the opportunity to visit Israel and learn more about the problem of global antisemitism. (BDS is to the anti-Israel boycott, divestment and sanctions movement.)"

Sabag, executive director of the Israeli-American Coalition for Action, called the bill "a major step forward for equal protection for Jewish Georgians."

"Without the IHRA definition, our community was suffering a civil rights deficit, where perpetrators of antisemitic crime and discrimination would target Jews and Jewish institutions and then hide behind the false pretense that they were motivated by anti-Israel politics and not anti-Jewish bigotry," he said. "Today's ratification of HB30 is a great step forward for Georgia."

Jordan Cope, policy education director at StandWithUs, attended the Senate vote. "With antisemitism having exploded worldwide post-Oct. 7, the IHRA definition remains a tool of paramount importance for helping identify and quell the mounting tide of antisemitism," he stated.

"Georgia's moral clarity on this matter sets a clear example from which other states ought to draw inspiration as Jews around the world desperately seek assurances of their own safety," he added. **HW**

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Former 'Jewish Press' Editor Pleads Guilty to Jan. 6 Felony



The U.S. Capitol in Washington during the Jan. 6, 2021, attack on the building. Credit: Tyler Merbler via Wikimedia Commons.

(JNS) – Elliot Resnick "disrupted a joint session of the U.S. Congress" to determine the outcome of the 2020 election, the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia says.

When Resnick's name first appeared in the news in connection with the Jan. 6 riot in the U.S. Capitol, "The Jewish Press," where he was a top editor, initially said he was on assignment. It later parted ways with Resnick.

Resnick, 40, pleaded guilty on Jan. 30 to a felony, obstructing law enforcement during a civil disorder.

"His actions and the actions of others disrupted a joint session of the U.S. Congress convened to ascertain and count the electoral votes related to the 2020 presidential election," the U.S. At-

Elliot Resnick spent some 50 minutes in the Capitol building during the 2021 riot.

torney's Office stated.

It added that Resnick grabbed a police officer's arm to prevent him from using pepper spray on rioters and also encouraged others to enter the Capitol during the approximately 50 minutes he spent in the building.

Sentencing is scheduled for June 12. A plea deal recommends eight-14 months in jail and between \$4,000 and \$40,000 in fines. **HW**

Lyft Lets Go of Driver Who Allegedly Assaulted a DC Rabbi and Chabad Scion

By Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA) – Lyft has let go of a driver who allegedly assaulted the scion of a prominent Chabad rabbinical family who had used the rideshare app.

"Lyft unequivocally condemns this behavior," a spokesperson told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency last Monday. "Upon learning of this incident, we deactivated the driver and we've been in touch with the rider. We encourage riders and drivers to report harassment, discrimination, or safety concerns in the Lyft app."

The police are investigating the incident but have not classified it as a hate crime.

Rabbi Menachem Shemtov, the director of Chabad at Georgetown University, ordered a Lyft last Sunday midmorning on Connecticut Avenue in Washington D.C.'s northwest quarter.

In an interview, Shemtov said he entered and asked the driver to turn down the music, which was very loud. The driver complied but also said that Shemtov could have asked in the app for no music, which Shemtov acknowledged.

Less than a minute later, the driver stopped and told Shemtov to get out of the car, saying he didn't like his "energy," Shemtov said.

"I told him, you know, I wish him well, I hope he finds peace and happiness, and this is the most aggressive thing that's happened to me, and I get out of the car," Shemtov said. "And then he gets out of the car and chases me up the block and starts swearing at me like with the F-word and you know, I said,

like, 'Don't touch me, I'll call the cops if you hit me,' or something like that. And he then he punched me in my face."

Shemtov said the driver punched him again after he tried to stop the driver from leaving.

Shemtov, who was treated at a clinic for a gash to his face, showed JTA video of the driver punching him in the face with his car key sticking out of his hand. He was treated at a clinic for a gash to his face. According to the police report, which quoted Shemtov and a witness, the alleged assailant shouted, "Why'd you slam my door?" as he pursued Shemtov.

In an entry on the charging document marked "suspected hate crime," the investigating officer checked "No."

The police report did not name the assailant. Shemtov said he was not the driver whose name appeared on his app. He shared a screenshot of the driver's cancellation notice, and the driver photo did not resemble the man in the video he shared.

Shemtov's father is Rabbi Levi Shemtov, who heads American Friends of Lubavitch (Chabad). He was leaving the movement's Washington headquarters after attending services with his father when the alleged assault occurred.

His grandfather is Rabbi Abraham Shemtov, who was close to the movement's best-known rebbe, the late Menachem Mendel Schneerson. Abraham Shemtov founded the Washington office and instituted the lighting of a massive Hanukkah menorah on the Ellipse, an event that now draws prominent figures of the administration in power. **HW**

Michael Solomonov's Famous – and Controversial – Zahav Hummus Now Available at Whole Foods



The Zahav hummus recipe, now available at 150 Whole Foods locations, contains just six ingredients: tehina, chickpeas, lemon juice, salt, cumin and garlic. Credit: Michael Persico

By Jackie Hajdenberg

(JTA) – Israeli-American celebrity chef Michael Solomonov's renowned hummus has only been available in his Philadelphia and New York City restaurants – until now.

Hummus using the recipe from Zahav, Solomonov's flagship Philadelphia restaurant, is now available at over 150 Whole Foods stores. The packaged hummus, like that at Zahav, doesn't use oil – just a lot of tahini. Unlike the hummus at Zahav, however, it is certified ko-

sher, bringing the recipe to a new cohort of customers.

The Whole Foods expansion comes at a tense time for Israeli food, with fights spurred by the Israel-Hamas war that have ensnared both hummus and Solomonov in multiple ways.

Last month, one of the James Beard Award-winning chef's kosher falafel restaurants, Goldie, was targeted by pro-Palestinian activists in Philadelphia. Protesters chanted, "Goldie, Goldie, you

can't hide, we charge you with genocide." Protest organizers said they were targeting the restaurant over its \$100,000 donation to the Israeli emergency medical organization United Hatzalah. Their critics, who included Jewish leaders in Philadelphia, said the protest inappropriately targeted an Israeli over the actions of the Israeli government.

A fracture in Solomonov's longtime friendship with the Palestinian chef Reem Kassis had already become public. Kassis, who also lives in Philadelphia, told the "New York Times" that she and Solomonov were no longer speaking several weeks into Israel's war in Gaza.

"My experience of late has confirmed for me that food diplomacy does not work and that you cannot solve problems like the Israeli occupation of Palestine over the proverbial plate of hummus," Kassis told the newspaper. (Solomonov did not comment for the story.)

And Sabra-brand hummus products were reportedly vandalized in suburban Philadelphia supermarkets last month, with stickers advising shoppers to boycott Israeli products placed on their packages.

The vandalism came amid renewed allegations that Israel has culturally appropriated hummus and other foods that

are Palestinian in origin – including in a 1,000-signatory petition by food industry professionals.

For Solomonov, hummus is personal. He decided to focus his culinary career on Israeli and Jewish food after his brother was killed while serving in the Israeli army. David Solomonov volunteered to swap shifts with another soldier who wanted to attend synagogue on Yom Kippur in 2003; he was shot to death by a sniper.

Solomonov co-founded Zahav, the restaurant known for its hummus, salads, and skewers, with entrepreneur Steve Cook in 2008. They are the co-owners of CookNSolo Group, which also owns Goldie, Laser Wolf, Merkaz and K'Far.

While Zahav is not kosher-certified, the restaurant does not mix meat and dairy and does not serve pork or shellfish, in keeping with traditional Jewish dietary customs. Its hummus is one of its specialties.

"It's the dish that brings people to the restaurant in the first place," Solomonov said in a statement on Instagram, of hummus. "And more often than not, it is what brings people back. There's something transcendent about the perfect bowl of hummus that tells our guests they're in the right place." **HW**

Israeli Fencer Yuval Freilich Wins Gold Medal in Qatar, Home to Hamas' Leadership



Yuval Freilich celebrates after a victory during the 2019 European Fencing Championships in Germany. Credit: Federico Gambarini/Getty Images

By Jacob Gurvis

(JTA) – Israeli fencer Yuval Freilich won a gold medal at the 2024 Qatar Grand Prix last Wednesday, becoming a champion in a country that is home to the leadership of Hamas.

Freilich, 29, won the epee title in Doha while wearing a uniform with an Israeli flag and the message "Am Israel Chai," Hebrew for "the people of Isra-

el lives," written on his shoulder. As in previous times of crisis, the phrase has become a rallying cry for Israel in its war with Hamas.

After Freilich's victory, the Israeli national anthem was played in the arena during the podium ceremony – a rarity in a country with no official diplomatic ties to Israel.

The win moves Freilich closer to qualifying for the 2024 Paris Olympics.

"The win in Qatar and waving the Israeli flag in times like these on this unique stage is Israeli pride at its peak," said Gili Lustig, the CEO of Israel's Olympic Committee, according to the "Times of Israel."

Despite its lack of formal relations with Israel, Qatar has become a central interlocutor in ceasefire negotiations between Israel and Hamas owing to its unique position: In addition to hosting Hamas' political leadership, and funding the group, Qatar is also home to a U.S. military base.

And at the 2022 FIFA World Cup, which Qatar hosted, Israeli fans were allowed to attend – though Israeli officials warned them to "downplay" their "Israeli identity."

Freilich, who began fencing at five years old, is currently ranked No. 8 in the world in senior men's individual epee. He won Israel's first European fencing title in the men's individual epee tournament at the 2019 European Fencing Championships in Germany.

Born to Australian immigrant parents, Freilich is an observant Jew who in 2008 sued the Israel Fencing Association to

prevent it from holding competitions on Shabbat. Freilich lost the lawsuit and began competing on Saturdays.

In 2011, Freilich won the European Cadet Championship, and the following year, he won the men's epee World Cadet and Junior Fencing Championship, becoming the top-ranked epee cadet in the world. He also won the European Men's Epee Junior Championships in both 2014 and 2015.

Freilich's gold medal in Qatar is a rare bright spot for Israeli athletes following the outbreak of the war after Hamas' Oct. 7 invasion. Israeli athletes and teams in other international sports competitions have faced consequences on and off the field due to anti-Israel protests or their own public support of their country.

An Israeli national hockey team was recently temporarily banned from a youth world championship, before being re-invited to the tournament and ultimately winning a gold medal. Last month in Turkey, an Israeli soccer player was briefly detained for writing a message on his wrist marking 100 days since Oct. 7. And in South Africa, a Jewish cricket star was stripped of his captaincy of a national team due to fears of anti-Israel demonstrations. **HW**

IRGC Pulls Officers from Syria after Israeli-Attributed Strikes



Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps with a billboard of Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in the background. Source: Wikimedia Commons.

(JNS) – Tehran has removed senior officers of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps from Syria following a series of deadly aerial attacks attributed to Israel, "Reuters" reported last Thursday, citing five sources familiar with the matter.

Instead, the IRGC will manage its Syria operations remotely along with the assistance of its Lebanese terror proxy, Hezbollah, three sources said. One source, described by the news agency as "a senior regional security official briefed by Tehran," said that senior Iranian commanders and dozens of mid-ranking officers left Syria in a "downsizing of the presence."

Another source said that "the Iranians

won't abandon Syria, but they reduced their presence and movements to the greatest extent."

However, the Hezbollah-affiliated Lebanese "Al Mayadeen" news channel denied the "Reuters" report, quoting "reliable sources" saying that Iranian "advisers" have been asked to stay in Syria, but without their families.

The regime in Tehran has blamed Jerusalem for recent airstrikes that included a missile attack in December south of Damascus that killed Maj. Gen. Razi Mousavi. He was responsible for coordinating the "military" alliance between Iran and Syria and was reportedly involved in Tehran's efforts to supply

its terrorist proxies in the region with weapons, including Hezbollah.

Mousavi was a longtime confidante of Lt. Gen. Qasem Soleimani, the Quds Force commander killed in a U.S. drone strike in Iraq in 2020.

This was followed by another missile strike on a residential building in Damascus in January that killed five IRGC officers. A senior Quds Force intelligence officer in Syria, Brig. Gen. Haj Sadiq (Yusuf Omidzadeh), was killed in the attack, according to reports, along with his adviser and three others.

Israel did not confirm the attacks. Jerusalem rarely takes responsibility for attacks on terrorist elements in Syria. **HW**

IZZY: Israeli Streaming Service Releases 3 New TV Shows + Oct 7 Documentaries



By Shoshana Center

Grab your remote for three exciting new recently released Israeli TV series airing on the streaming service IZZY. “IZZY is a pioneering digital entertainment platform bridging Israeli culture and global audiences,” explains IZZY CEO Nati Dinnar, a prominent figure in the Israeli television industry. “We aim to connect Israel’s rich and diverse talents with an international audience who share a passion for Israeli culture, all without the language barrier. Our bespoke streaming service, meticulously tailored for viewers worldwide, offers a vast array of Israeli content, all localized with English subtitles. This innovation allows international viewers to immerse themselves in Israeli culture effortlessly.”

“Just For Today,” “Who Died,” and “The Chef” just premiered to international audiences outside of Israel and are most likened to the captivating Israeli dramas “Fauda” and “Shtisel.”

In “Just For Today,” a halfway home

for recently released prisoners faces permanent closure, and the former prisoners, a social worker, and the group home manager face a dramatic junction.

“Who Died” focuses on a new couple – each of whom is battling cancer – as they learn to live with and love each other’s idiosyncrasies. Their connection sparks an emotional journey that’s funny, bittersweet, and scary, but mostly full of love and optimism.

“The Chef” centers around an unemployed high-tech worker who starts working in the kitchen of a prestigious restaurant run by a brilliant chef, who’s struggling to stay relevant and at the top of the ultra-competitive gastronomic world. This show has won numerous awards internationally and is aligned with shows such as “The Bear” and “Kitchen Confidential.”

“Our partnership with Yes Studios in Israel has been a cornerstone of our content strategy. Yes Studios is renowned for producing internationally

acclaimed series like “Fauda,” “The Beauty Queen of Jerusalem,” and “Shtisel,” all of which have been successful on Netflix and garnered worldwide audiences,” added Nati. “However, Netflix doesn’t acquire all productions, and not all Israel productions. This gave us a unique opportunity to select additional high-quality original dramas from Yes Studios that haven’t yet been introduced to international audiences.”

The response to the three new shows has been overwhelmingly positive, including a “significant uptick in subscription numbers.” Perhaps they’ll reach the same acclaim as “Shtisel,” which offered, for the first time, an intimate glimpse into the life of a Haredi (ultra-Orthodox Jewish) family in Jerusalem. “The series success is primarily attributed to its stellar cast,” explained Nati, “which brings depth and authenticity to the narrative.”

IZZY’s business model is more than streaming, “it’s about respecting and promoting Israeli creativity globally. We achieve this by licensing original and captivating content directly from Israel, ensuring it reaches a broad audience through our branded applications on various devices,” Nati added. “Financially, IZZY has experienced robust growth. We have amassed over 50,000 subscribers from more than 60 countries. Our revenue model, featuring monthly subscriptions and an annual discounted plan, has ensured our content is accessible to a broad audience. The financial viability of IZZY is further underscored by the \$500,000 in revenue share earned by our network of over 180 filmmakers, content owners, and distributors.”

Launched in August 2020, IZZY has 700+ hours of engaging TV programming, which translates to more than 1,000,000 hours of content viewed. It strives to continue bringing the essence of Israel’s culture to the global stage.

“Our commitment to the creators is

underscored by a revenue-sharing model that ensures content owners receive 20% of our monthly revenue, with payments proportionally allocated based on viewer engagement with their titles,” explained Nati. “This approach fosters a sustainable ecosystem for Israeli talent and empowers them through a transparent and performance-based method.”

Nati and co. are proud of what they’ve achieved and excited for the future, as they continue to bridge cultures and bring the best of Israeli entertainment to the world.

“In these challenging times for Israel and Israelites around the world, we must highlight the heroic stories emerging from Israel, especially in the wake of the Oct. 7 massacre and the ongoing efforts to rescue hostages still held in Gaza by Hamas,” said Nati. “We began addressing this in early October by sharing short clips that shed light on some of the hostages, emphasizing the urgent need to bring them home. In December, we introduced a series titled “Heroes,” consisting of five episodes. Each episode focuses on a different act of heroism during the combat fighting on that tragic day, which we call Black Sabbath.”

IZZY is dedicated to continuing this narrative and plans to release more documentary stories about the war, including in-depth interviews with some returning hostages, providing a more personal and intimate perspective on their experiences. Their goal is to convey the resilience and bravery of those affected, offering viewers a deeper understanding of the situation. Check out IZZY’s compelling offerings here: <https://izzy.streamisrael.tv>

To watch trailers of these shows:
yesstudios.tv/just-for-today
yesstudios.tv/who-died
yesstudios.tv/the-chef
streamisrael.tv/heroes-series

HW

Contemporary Works Reflect the Turbulent Reality of Life in Israel in a New Exhibition



Credit: Elad Sarig

Jerusalem, January 25 – A new exhibition of contemporary art opens at the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem on Friday, February 2. Splinter From the Storm, an exhibition featuring works by 20 artists, juxtaposes the deep historical and aesthetic connections of past and present through the combination of contemporary art and ancient artifacts from the Museum’s permanent collection.

Splinter From the Storm is curated by Noa Arad Yairi and includes more than 40 works of sculpture, ceramics, photography, painting and new media by: Irit Abba, Judith Appleton, Noa Arad Yairi, Shir Ben Elul, Sara Benninga, Yael Boverman-Attas, Miri Garmizon, Chana Goldberg, Loti Gombosh, Carol Greenblatt, Michal Greenboim, Yael Ilan, Yaara Leiter, Shachar Levi, Cecilia Lind, Ariane Littman, Orna Millo, Shani Reches, Marleene Rubenstein and Yuval Yairi. Many of the works were initially displayed at

the Sam Spiegel Artists’ Studios in Jerusalem as part of the Manofim Contemporary Art Festival in 2023.

When the Museum removed its ancient and irreplaceable artifacts from the main gallery for safekeeping after October 7, it quickly pivoted to become a haven for displaced families, offering creative workshops with local artists and musicians as well as a temporary school for special needs children. By the second week of the war, the Museum began a collaboration with artists from the Sam Spiegel Studios who volunteered to run art workshops for evacuees.

“Through this collaboration, I saw the artists’ current works on display at their studio and thought it would be interesting to house these pieces in our empty gallery space,” explained Dr. Risa Levitt, Bible Lands Museum executive director. “In place of those valuable antiquities, many of which came from challenging periods in our ancient history, we now have expressions of our current reality, amplifying the past in the present moment.”

Dispersing contemporary works throughout the Museum’s permanent galleries creates a sudden disruptive ex-

perience for visitors. Among them are Irit Abba’s Black and Red Vase (2023); Cecilia Lind’s Three Ravens (2023); and Shani Reches’ Tzurata sculptures (2022).

“By displaying these new works alongside ancient artifacts, we can perhaps better understand the pain felt by those long ago,” Dr. Levitt explained.

“We asked the artists to contribute pieces that connected to the turmoil and chaotic atmosphere both before and during the war,” explained curator Ms. Arad Yairi. There is an immediacy in terms of subject matter such that artists selected materials that dry quickly – watercolor, acrylic, paper, and largely worked with an absence of color. With a few exceptions, most are done in black and gray, while some have an accent of yellow or red. “So many of the pieces reflect a sense of urgency – there’s simply no time for oil on canvas in this unstable time,” added Ms. Arad Yairi. “After each piece is finished, it’s on to the next one.”

Other pieces clearly reflect the pain of October 7, including the fabric and gauze bandages of Ariane Littman’s Flag, (2023); the graphite drawings of Yael Boverman Attas’ Face of the Earth (2023); and Noa Arad Yairi’s plaster and polymer sculpture, When Home Doesn’t Feel Safe Anymore (2023).

While not all the works were created in reaction to the war, explains Ms. Arad Yairi, even those created before can be

visually influenced in our minds by the traumatic events we have seen; a plaster mold for a ceramic vessel becomes a representation of a cement shelter, and a painting of black walls resembles a burnt room.

“Contemporary art intensifies the voices of antiquity, such that history is not a dusty relic, but a living thread woven into the fabric of now,” noted Dr. Levitt. “The museum can be a bridge across the chasm of time that connect us to our past and helps us understand how to move on into the future.”

Splinter from the Storm opened Friday, February 2 and runs through April 30, 2024.

About the Bible Lands Museum Jerusalem

Since 1992, this captivating museum has emerged as a beacon of cultural and historical understanding, transporting visitors to the heart of the biblical lands – ancient Egypt, Babylon, Canaan, Assyria, Sumer, Persia, Greece and Rome. The permanent collection includes ancient ceramics, exquisite hand-crafted jewelry, artworks from the distant past, sculptures of extraordinary beauty, frescoes, and other priceless treasures that are displayed throughout 20 galleries. The Museum offers a variety of special exhibitions, educational programs, cultural events, tours and lectures, and serves as a space for professional conferences, seminars and private events. HW

BMG Dumps Anti-Israel Musician Roger Waters

(JNS) – Former Pink Floyd frontman Roger Waters, an antisemite and a harsh critic of Israel, has been dropped as a client by Berlin-based music company BMG, “Variety” reported last Tuesday.

Sources told the entertainment trade magazine that the music publisher and record label decided to completely separate from the artist, who has made inflammatory remarks about Israel, Ukraine and the United States.

Waters and BMG signed a publishing agreement in 2016 and were scheduled to release a newly recorded version of the classic 1973 Pink Floyd album “Dark Side of the Moon.” However, CEO Thomas Coesfeld canceled the deal.

BMG declined to comment for the article.

The aging English rocker has posted anti-Israel videos to his X account many times since the Oct. 7 Hamas massacre of 1,200 people in the northwestern Negev, including a rant on Jan. 21 in which he distorts the historical record, calling the Jewish founders of Israel in 1948 “terrorist Zionist gangs” who forcibly drove the Palestinians from their homes, committing “murder, execution, rape.”

Two hotels in Buenos Aires canceled the reservations of Waters and his band in November over his anti-Israel comments related to Hamas’s Oct. 7 attack.

Waters, who was in South America as part of a global tour, blamed the “Israel lobby” for the cancellations.

On the Nov. 1 episode of journalist Glenn Greenwald’s Rumble podcast, “System Update,” Waters suggested that the Hamas attack was an Israeli

“false flag operation” and that there was “something fishy” about the Israelis not knowing an attack was being planned.

The 80-year-old musician, who described himself as “an opponent of the whole Zionist exercise” also said Hamas was “absolutely legally and morally bound to resist.”

I didn’t think Roger Waters could be more disgusting, but here he is justifying Hamas’s Oct 7 massacre, casting doubt on the terrorist’s atrocities, and saying “Israel is making up stories” – Aviva Klompas.

He said the attack was “thrown out of all proportion by the Israelis making up stories about beheading babies.” Photographs and forensic experts confirmed that babies were beheaded during the Oct. 7 attack.

Waters has a long history of making anti-Israel and antisemitic statements. He faced widespread criticism for Holocaust and anti-Israel imagery at his concerts in June of last year.

At Mercedes-Benz Arena in Berlin on May 17, 2023, he dressed up in a costume resembling that of an SS officer and pretended to fire a rifle. Waters also compared the murder of Anne Frank in the Holocaust to the accidental killing in Jenin in May 2022 of Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Akleh.

The U.K.’s Labour and Conservative parties condemned the show, as did the U.S. State Department.

In a 2010 email to his crew, Waters described his idea for an inflatable pig to be floated above his gigs, which would have the words “dirty kyke,” “follow the money” and “Scum” written on it. **HW**

IDF Soldiers Stumble Upon World War I Graveyard in Gaza



IDF soldiers stumbled onto a well-kept graveyard of World War I soldiers. Credit: IDF Brigade 188.

By David Isaac

(JNS) – Israeli soldiers made an unexpected historical detour while fighting in the Gaza Strip when they ran across a well-kept World War I British military cemetery.

Adding to the surprise was that some of the graves were those of Jewish soldiers, signified by Stars of David, “Ynet” reported last Wednesday.

The graves, located in the center of the Gaza Strip near the town of Al-Maazi, were discovered by soldiers of the IDF’s 188th Armored Brigade.

“We found about seven gravestones of Jews out of hundreds. We photographed the names with a description of the gist of the battle in which they fell,” Lt. Col. Oren Schindler, commander of the 118th Brigade’s 74th Battalion, told “Ynet.”

“We returned [to the site] after a few day ... and said kaddish [the Jewish prayer for the dead] on the graves,” he said.

“It was an exciting moment. I told myself it wasn’t just our fight – our war is here, because they also fought here at the beginning of the last century,” he added.

Pictures posted to X of the soldiers holding the Israeli flag next to the graves

have gone viral, with one tweet gaining more than 3.5 million views.

Some claimed the well-kept cemetery showed that Hamas also protected Jewish graves, however, as Oren explained, “This is a facility that is maintained by the British through local authorities in the Gaza Strip.”

“It really is a special place. Amid all this destruction, to find a place that is a piece of heaven, green and clean,” he said. “It amazed us to find such a pure place in this cursed area.”

Oren said that just 100 meters from the spot, his forces fought against Hamas anti-tank squads that had attacked them with RPGs. The soldiers also found a lathe for manufacturing weapons near the cemetery.

“We didn’t check if there was a below-ground route under the cemetery, because we didn’t want to harm its sanctity,” he said. “In other cemeteries, we located combat tunnels that Hamas had built underneath.”

The cemetery was slightly damaged in the fighting, but “it can be restored,” he said.

The cemetery is not the first site of historical Jewish interest that the IDF has come across in Gaza. In November, IDF soldiers prayed at a sixth-century synagogue in the enclave, the first time Jews had prayed there for decades.

Located in the Rimal neighborhood of Gaza City, it was built in 508 C.E. during the Byzantine period.

The site featured a famous mosaic featuring King David with a lyre and his name inscribed in Hebrew. That was transferred to the Israel Museum in Jerusalem after Israel captured the Gaza Strip during the 1967 Six-Day War. **HW**



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