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Hebrew Watchman

SERVING THE MEMPHIS JEWISH COMMUNITY SINCE 1925

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Israel Solidarity Mission Reflections from Bluma Zuckerbrot-Finkelstein



Scott Notowich, Federation Board Chair, presents a "Memphis Stands with Israel" T-shirt to released Shoham hostage Mia Schem.

Recently, Memphis Jewish Federation (Federation) traveled with 20 members of the Memphis Jewish community on its Israel Solidarity Mission. Bluma Zuckerbrot-Finkelstein, Federation Executive Vice-President, shares her personal reflections from the Mission.

I remember visiting Auschwitz on a cold day in October. There was a light snowfall, and we were shivering despite our winter wear. The frigid and dank day was fitting for a visit to the infamous Nazi extermination camp.

I was expecting, almost hoping, for a similarly dark and cold day to greet us at Netiv HaAsara, the nearest Israeli community to Gaza, which we visited on Memphis Jewish Federation's recent Israel Solidarity Mission. How could that



Rabbi Sarit Horwitz with member of Amigour Groveman/Belz Choir.

community, or for that matter, the entire "Gaza Envelope" region, be anything but cold, dark and ugly given the unspeakable atrocities that took place there?

Yet, everything is blooming in Israel, and the lush greenery and vibrant, multicolored flowers bursting forth from the ground seemed out of place, incongruous, almost inappropriate, given the atrocities of October 7.

"We were lucky," said our guide, who grew up in the farming community. "We had only 20 residents murdered, and no hostages taken." He took us house to house to bear witness to what happened there and in all the communities brutally attacked by Hamas.

How do we bear witness and document when no words feel sufficient to convey the horror of that day? As with the Holocaust, we need to focus on individual stories as the gateway to the

larger, unfathomable story.

"Ata Mishelanu?" – "Are you one of us," asked a 4-year-old girl from one of the attacked kibbutzim to a ZAKA search and rescue first responder on October 7. She was hiding in the back-seat of a car with her murdered parents slumped over in the front. When he answered yes, the girl asked for a sign as many of the terrorists were wearing stolen IDF uniforms and speaking Hebrew. He recited the Shema Yisrael for her, and she came out.

At the new, state-of-the-art Magen David Adom (Israel's emergency ambulance, "911" service) subterranean blood center in Ramla, we heard the recording of a 5-year-old boy who had the wherewithal to call the emergency service while hiding under a pile of clothes with his slaughtered parents nearby. Explaining that he is now the "adult," the phone operator was a source of calm and comfort and gave him instructions to stay quietly in place until help arrived.

Memphians Nathan and Alla Lubin, grandparents of fallen Israeli soldier Rose Lubin, of Blessed Memory, joined us on the mission. We were given a glimpse into the life of a lone soldier by spending time on Rose's home-awayfrom-home, Kibbutz Saad, in the Gaza envelope. Rose stood guard for hours on that ghastly and chaotic day at a kibbutz gate that was targeted to be breached according to discovered Hamas maps. A warning of the impending violence from a wounded Israeli soldier making his way to the kibbutz from Kfar Aza enabled Saad's security team to erect a roadblock, shielding the kibbutz from terrorist penetration. And the kibbutz provided shelter to 150 young adults fleeing the Nova Festival massacre who were flocking in from the opposite direction.

As we solemnly gathered at Rose's fresh grave at Mt. Herzl military cemetery the next day, her aunt – her immediate family contact in Israel – poignantly described how she received the dreaded "knock at the door" notification of Rose's stabbing death at the Old City's Damascus Gate.

Adjacent to Rose were too many fresh graves of fallen soldiers, including soldiers from our partner city of Shoham. Stopping in Shoham at the beginning of our trip to express our solidarity, we visited the memorials at Shoham High School for those graduates killed on October 7 and in the ensuing war.

Evocative art installations and hostage family tents dot Hostage Square, a public plaza outside the Tel Aviv Museum of Art aimed at supporting the hostage families and raising awareness of the plight of those still in captivity. I walked through a makeshift tunnel, meant to invoke the experience of being a hostage. Suddenly, I found it difficult to breathe.

Thousands of volunteers have been mobilized by the ad hoc Hostages and Missing Families Forum to advocate worldwide for the hostages and to provide meals and social services to their distressed and traumatized families.

But the story is not only one of a crisis of mass proportions that will reverberate for years to come. Parallel to that reality

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In State of the Union, Biden Tells Israel that Humanitarian Aid is Not a 'Bargaining Chip'



U.S. President Joe Biden delivers the State of the Union address during a joint meeting of Congress in the House chamber at the U.S. Capitol, March 07, 2024. Credit: Chip Somodevilla/Getty Images

By Ron Kampeas

WASHINGTON (JTA) – President Joe Biden used his State of the Union speech to call on Israel to allow more humanitarian aid into the Gaza Strip, saying that it must not be used as lever-

"Israel must do its part. Israel must allow more aid into Gaza and ensure humanitarian workers aren't caught in the crossfire," Biden said last Thursday night. "To the leadership of Israel I say this: Humanitarian assistance cannot be a secondary consideration or a bargaining chip. Protecting and saving innocent lives has to be a priority."

The segment of the hour-plus speech devoted to the Israel-Hamas war came near the end, was lengthy and included statements supportive of Israel in its war with Hamas, as well as a call on Hamas to release the Israeli hostages it is holding, and a condemnation of sexual violence committed in the terror group's Oct. 7 invasion of Israel.

"Here in the chamber tonight are American families whose loved ones are still being held by Hamas," Biden said, earning the one of the few standing ovations from lawmakers of both parties of the evening. "I pledge to all the families that we will not rest until we bring every one of your loved ones home."

But Biden's rebuke of Israel regarding humanitarian aid was his strongest so far, suggesting that Prime Minister Benjamin's government wasn't doing

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Mission...

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is the story of a country and a people rising above the horror with strength, support, kindness and determination.

We were privileged to sit in Hostage Headquarters, a building donated to the Hostage Families Forum by an Israeli for-profit business; attend an inspiring performance of the Jewish Agency for Israel Amigour senior housing choir; meet with displaced, elderly women from Kiryat Shmona receiving basic social services from JDC; hear from Magen David Adom about the over-thetop quantity of blood donated from all sectors of Israeli society who lined up for hours on October 7; and tour Shamir Medical Center to witness the cutting edge research and treatment for those suffering with PTSD.

Yes, there's a tremendous amount of healing that needs to take place. Yes, there is deep trauma, personal and national. But the two mantras we repeatedly heard are "Israel will transform this crisis into an opportunity" and "Am Yisrael Chai" (The Jewish People Live).

Although we came to bear witness and offer our support and solidarity, everyone we encountered expressed concern for us about the rise in antisemitism and the shocking lack of understanding

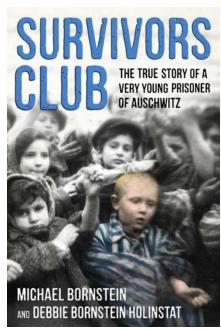


One of the destroyed houses in Netiv HaAsara.

regarding Israel's war of self-defense.

Maybe the sumptuous greenery and radiant flowers that struck me as incongruous are symbolic of Israel's resilience. The memorial at the Nova Festival site includes fledgling trees planted in memory of each victim of the massacre. When our enemies and haters try to bring us down, we plant, grow and rebuild. May our people and state emerge from this agonizing time healed and fortified to face the challenges that undoubtedly lie ahead. HW

Memphis Jewish Federation's 62nd Annual Yom HaShoah Commemoration Scheduled for Sunday, May 5



"Survivors Club: The True Story of a Very Young Prisoner of Auschwitz" was written by Michael Bornstein and Debbie Bornstein Holinstat, keynote speakers for Yom HaShoah. Memphis Jewish Federation's 62nd annual Yom HaShoah Commemoration will be held Sunday, May 5, at 4 p.m. in the Memphis Jewish Community Center Belz Social Hall. This event is open to the community and advance registration is required – visit tinyurl. com/YHregistration.

Dorothy Kelman Goldwin and Michelle Goldwin Kaufman, co-chairs of Federation's Holocaust Memorial Committee, are proud to announce Michael Bornstein and his daughter, Debbie Bornstein Holinstat, as this year's Yom HaShoah keynote speakers. Michael and his daughter, Debbie, a TV producer, are co-authors of "Survivors Club: The True Story of a Very Young Prisoner of Auschwitz." The book is available at Novel Memphis.

Michael Bornstein is one of the youngest child survivors of the Auschwitz death camp. At age four, he managed to stay hidden and evade murder in the most notorious death camp in history, where the average lifespan of a child

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Memphis Candlelighting Time

Weekly Torah Portion: Pekudei

was just two weeks.

Photos of Michael's liberation by Soviet soldiers at the camp have appeared on museum walls, book covers, and in film clips around the world, but he waited more than 70 years to step forward and share his story.

When reflecting on the importance of Yom HaShoah, Michelle Goldwin Kaufman said, "In the post-October 7 world, it is vital to come together and remember those who lost their lives and those affected by the Holocaust. When we gather in May, we will honor with reverence the Jewish people's history of

unimaginable suffering and give thanks for our indomitable resilience."

In addition to speaking for Yom HaShoah, Michael and Debbie will share their story with the greater Memphis community.

"We thought after the Holocaust that 'Never Again' was real. For this generation in Israel and for Jews everywhere, October 7 is the day that revived the Holocaust. The parallels are haunting. Now, more than ever before, the Jewish people must come together to build a stronger Jewish world," said Dorothy Goldwin.

For more information about the program, contact Lorraine Wolf at 901.767.7100 or at lwolf@jcpmemphis. org. **HW**

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Union...

(Continued From Page 1)

enough to protect civilian lives. It was a signal of Biden's increasing impatience with Israel as Gaza verges on starvation after months of war, and his need to placate his party's restive left wing, which opposes his staunch support of Israel's war effort.

Biden formally announced what his top aides had told reporters earlier in the day: a plan to build a temporary pier on the Gaza coast to deliver emergency aid to the Palestinians. He also repeated his call for a six-week ceasefire that would include the release of some of the hostages still held by Hamas and a massive influx of humanitarian assistance.

"Israel also has a fundamental responsibility, though, to protect innocent civilians in Gaza. This war has taken a greater toll on innocent civilians than all previous wars in Gaza combined," he said. "It's heartbreaking."

Biden's remarks about the plight of the Gaza Palestinians earned nods from the Squad, the small group of progressive Democrats who have been most critical of Israel and who wore Palestinian symbology, including keffiyehs and flag pins, to the State of the Union. Michigan Rep. Rashida Tlaib, who is Palestinian-American, raised a paddle that said, "Lasting ceasefire now."

Dozens of lawmakers wore stickers saying "153," the number of days Hamas has held more than 130 people hostage, around 100 of whom are presumed to be alive. Family members of hostages held in the Gaza Strip, and Israelis formerly held hostage, were in the room as guests of lawmakers of both parties, including

the Congressional leadership.

In the same segment of the speech, Biden said he would work to free Evan Gershkovich, the Jewish "Wall Street Journal" reporter being held in Russia on trumped up charges. Gershkovich's parents were the guests of the Republican Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, Mike Johnson of Louisiana.

Another Johnson guest was Talia Khan, a Jewish MIT graduate student who has advocated against antisemitic behavior and rhetoric on her campus.

Biden said Hamas was principally to blame for the war in Gaza, and said the group "could end this conflict today by releasing the hostages, laying down arms, and surrendering those responsible for Oct. 7th."

The speech came days after both Biden and former President Donald Trump became the presumptive nominees of their parties in November's presidential election. Throughout the speech, Biden was unrelenting in his attacks on Trump, referring to him as "my predecessor" and depicting him - and some of the Republicans in the chamber - as threats to democracy and the world order.

Alabama Sen. Katie Britt delivered the Republican rebuttal from her kitchen, where she referred to the Gaza war, and accused Biden of abandoning Israel.

"Iran's terrorist proxies have slaughtered Israeli Jews and American citizens," she said, speaking in impassioned tones. "We all recall when presidents faced national security threats with strength and resolve. That seems like ancient history right now." HW

"Purim in Israel" with Israeli Entertainer at Chabad's annual "Purim Around the World" dinner.

Chabad will be having their annual "Purim Around the World" Dinner on Sunday, March 24 at the Chabad Center for Jewish Life. This year's celebration will be "Purim in Israel" in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Israel. The program will start with the reading of the Megillah accompanied by a multimedia show at 5 p.m. followed by a full "Purim Buffet Dinner" at 5:30 p.m.

Participants will enjoy a delicious Israeli Purim Dinner with Shwarma, Shnitzel, Falafel, Pitas, Chumus, salads and much more. The Chabad Center will be decked out to feel like you are in Israel, and you will get to enjoy snacks and desserts in the Shuk, create edible sand art in the Negev desert, wine and I'chaim for the adults in the Galilee. Take your picture at the Kotel and face-painting in Tzfat. Write cards to the IDF soldiers in Sederot and hear the Megillah in Jerusalem.

Masquerade in your favorite Purim costume or come as you are. Another highlight of the evening will be a performance by international Israeli singer and entertainer Benji Rafaeli.

"In keeping with Chabad's track record of Great Purim Dinners, this year's Purim Dinner & Party promises to be another great celebration" said Rivky Klein, coordinator of the event. "So sign up while we still have space, and we look forward to welcoming you."

The cost is \$25 for adults and \$15 per child (12 and under) and sponsors of \$360 or more receive a reserved table for 10. Reservations are required by Wednesday, March 20 and are on a first-come first-serve basis. For more information and reservations, visit www. JewishMemphis.com/purimdinner call Chabad at 901-754-0404. **HW**

The MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Happenings

MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Monthly Luncheon!

Wednesday, March 20

MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Monthly Luncheon, featuring Lisa Nabumato, jazz vocalist provided by Creative Aging! Dive into the vibe of a refreshing hot multi-jazz vocalist Lisa Nobumoto ~ the new and inviting authentic be-bop, blues and ballads singer with adult contemporary



Lisa Nabumato

jazz song highlights. Lisa exudes an inspiring, joyful and hope-filled sound full of an era mixed with past and present-day nuances. Lisa presents a strong repertoire with incredible vocal power and mastery, mixing the sound of today with the wisdom of yesterday. A song stylist who delicately blends sensitive and assuring, dynamic and captivating music, she wows her audiences. Lisa Nobumoto was born to entertain! The March luncheon is sponsored by Town Village.

Please call the MJCC front desk, 901-761-0810 to make reservations for this terrific lunch and entertainment. Cost is only \$5!

Please join us Monday through Friday for a delicious kosher lunch from the Kitchens at the Memphis Jewish Home. The cost is only \$2 for seniors. Reservations are required the day before by 1 p.m. by contacting Steve Kaplan, Adult Services Coordinator, at 901-259-9220 or stevekaplan@jccmemphis.org or by calling the front desk at 901-761-0810. HW

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Brandeis Center/ADL/StandWithUs Launch Pro Bono K-12 Antisemitism Helpline

Washington, D.C., Feb. 29, 2024: The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law, ADL (the Anti-Defamation League), and StandWithUs, along with three leading law firms, today announced a new pilot helpline to provide pro bono legal assistance to parents whose children are experiencing antisemitism in California's K-12 schools. The pilot program selected California as the first state given a series of troubling incidents of antisemitism in the state's K-12 schools.

Dozens of Jewish families have requested transfers out of California school districts because of severe and persistent anti-Semitic bullying. Earlier this week, the Brandeis Center and ADL filed a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights against the Berkeley Unified School District for its failure to address severe and persistent bullying and harassment of Jewish students by peers and teachers. Jewish students report being worried about mob violence, including being "jumped" at school. Many have said they remove their Stars of David and no longer wear Jewish camp T-shirts, and that they are learning to keep their heads down and hide their Judaism while they move through their school days in fear.

In the three months after the Oct. 7 Hamas massacre, ADL recorded a total of 256 antisemitic incidents in U.S. elementary, middle and high schools. This represents a more than 140 percent increase from the 105 incidents reported during the same time period the previous year.

Parents and other interested adults in California can go to the Legal Protection K-12 Helpline to report incidents of anti-Semitic discrimination, intimidation, harassment, vandalism or violence that may necessitate legal action. Lawyers will conduct in-depth information-gathering interviews with persons who file reports. In some cases, they

may provide pro bono representation on behalf of victims and provide referrals to organizations that can provide non-legal assistance. The lawyers will also, with permission of the individuals involved, use the data they obtain to better understand the scope of the problem and report it to officials responsible for ensuring the laws are followed. If officials do not take action, they will be held accountable.

"Frankly, school principals and administrators should themselves be cracking down on the surge in anti-Jewish bullying we are witnessing. That is what the law requires," stated Kenneth L. Marcus, founder and chairman of the Brandeis Center and the former U.S. Assistant Secretary of Education for the George W. Bush and Donald Trump administrations. "However, far too many are failing in their legal responsibilities and choosing to sweep escalating antisemitism under the rug. Our legal team stands ready to step into this gap and demand the protections Jewish students are guaranteed under the law."

"With reports of antisemitism in K-12 schools rising significantly since the Oct. 7 massacre in Israel, we wanted to ensure that parents and students have a place to turn to for legal help when they need it," said Jonathan Greenblatt, ADL CEO. "If this pilot helpline is successful in California, ADL and our partners will look toward expanding it to other states where antisemitism in schools is surging."

"Spikes in antisemitic incidents in the K-12 schools, coupled with the failure of administrators to respond with meaningful corrective action, has created the need for a more unified and coordinated educational and legal response," said Carly Gammill, director of legal strategy at the StandWithUs Saidoff Legal Department. "All students deserve an educational environment free from discrimination and harassment based on their protected identities. StandWithUs is proud to partner with this coalition

to achieve this goal and further protect Jewish and other Zionist students."

The law firms that have stepped up to assist the Jewish organizations in providing pro bono legal protections are Covington & Burling, Dechert LLP, and Akin.

In November 2023, Brandeis and ADL, along with Hillel International, Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher LLP, and other leading law firms, launched the Campus Antisemitism Legal Line (CALL), a helpline to assist students and faculty experiencing antisemitism on college campuses.

More than 400 college students and faculty have reached out to report incidents and request assistance. And the Brandeis Center, ADL, AJC, the Potomac Law Group, and Covington & Burling filed a lawsuit in September 2023 challenging the Santa Ana Unified School District (SAUSD) on grounds that it failed to abide by the open meeting laws in order to introduce courses with anti-Semitic content into its ethnic studies curriculum.

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits educational institutions that receive federal funding from discriminating against, or allowing others to discriminate against, students on the basis of actual or perceived race, color, and national origin. Title VI protects Jews based on their shared ancestral and ethnic identity. The Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights recognizes that harassing, marginalizing, demonizing, and excluding Jewish students based on the Zionist component of their Jewish identity is unlawful under Title VI.

The Department of Education is currently investigating Brandeis Center complaints filed against Wellesley, SUNY New Paltz, the University of Southern California (USC), Brooklyn College, and the University of Illinois, and the Brandeis Center recently filed federal complaints against American

University and the University of California for antisemitism on UC Berkeley's campus.

The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law is an independent, unaffiliated, nonprofit corporation established to advance the civil and human rights of the Jewish people and promote justice for all. LDB engages in research, education, and legal advocacy to combat the resurgence of antisemitism on college and university campuses, in the workplace, and elsewhere. It empowers students by training them to understand their legal rights and educates administrators and employers on best practices to combat racism and anti-Semitism.

ADL is the leading anti-hate organization in the world. Founded in 1913, its timeless mission is "to stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all." Today, ADL continues to fight all forms of antisemitism and bias, using innovation and partnerships to drive impact. A global leader in combating antisemitism, countering extremism and battling bigotry wherever and whenever it happens, ADL works to protect democracy and ensure a just and inclusive society for all. More at www.adl.org.

StandWithUs is an international, nonprofit, and non-partisan Israel education organization that works to inspire and educate people of all ages about Israel, as well as challenge misinformation and fight against antisemitism. Through university fellowships, high school internships, middle school curricula, conferences, materials, social media and missions to Israel, Stand-WithUs supports people around the world who want to educate their schools and communities about Israel. Founded in 2001 and headquartered in Los Angeles, the organization has chapters and programs throughout the U.S., Israel, the UK, Canada, South Africa, Brazil, Australia and the Netherlands. HW

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Your Health Overwhelmed with Stress?

By Cindy Katz, Nurse Practitioner

Are you overwhelmed by the stress we have been currently facing with the hostage crisis in Israel, increased gun violence and the anticipation of the upcoming election?

What is it doing to our minds and bodies? Handling stress is different for everyone. Stress can be acute or chronic. Acute stress is something that occurs and resolves naturally. Chronic stress is when the stressors don't regress.

Over time, chronic stress can negatively impact your mental health with feelings of depression and/or anxiety, trouble sleeping and concentration impairment. Stress can effect your physical health with symptoms such as headaches, stomach issues, muscle pain and weight gain.

Picture yourself carrying a backpack. The backpack is where you have the stressors in your life. When stress begins to add up, the backpack becomes heavy. Carrying around that load of stress all day can make you tired, your back and neck hurt and drain your energy or interest in other activities due to the physical and mental distraction it causes.

Begin to work at handling your stress

differently and lighten that backpack!

- Identify the stress. What is it? Can you change it? Learn how to walk away and take a moment to regroup before lashing out or worsening a situation.
- Find support from a fellow employee, best friend, or family member and discuss it. Getting input from someone you respect can help put things in a different light and add a perspective you might not have contemplated.
- Self-meditate or think of the things that make you happy. Focus on working through the stressor.
- Work on lifestyle modification. Choose a healthy diet rich in nutrients that are good for your body. Limit alcohol or stop altogether. Find an exercise outlet that interests you.

Lighten the load of your backpack and stay focused on protecting your health. Make choices and changes that motivate you to keep you mentally and physically fit.

When you need help, seek it out. See your health care provider and get a referral to a clinician that specializes in mental health and reduce the risk of what chronic stress can do to your body. **HW**

'I Heard Gunfire a Lot,' Says U.S. Civilian Embedded in Khan Yunis for a Day



U.S. citizen Gabriel Boxer with the Israel Defense Forces in the Gaza Strip in February 2024. Credit: Courtesy.

By Alan Zeitlin

(JNS) – Gabriel Boxer of Long Island, N.Y., never expected that a joke would result in his spending a day in Khan Yunis this month in the central Gaza Strip.

The 43-year-old had made several trips to Israel to bring in supplies since the Hamas terrorist attacks in southern Israel on Oct. 7. In his capacity working with the American Friends of Judea and Samaria raising funds for surveillance drones, he was talking to Yigal Dilmoni, CEO of the Yesha Council.

"As a joke, I said: 'You should bring someone in to see how everything is working to raise money for more of them," he told JNS.

Boxer, who also blogs online as the

"Kosher Guru," was surprised that he

subsequently got permission to em-

bed with the Israel Defense Forces – a

highly unusual, if not unprecedented,

arrangement for a civilian.

"It took over a month and a half to get final approval," he told JNS. "I heard there was a lot of back and forth behind the scenes."

He figures a sticking point was how bad it would look if a U.S. civilian was harmed.

"I was told not to leave the side of the commander because I was not dressed as an Israeli soldier, and if I didn't follow that, they would not be responsible if anything happened," he told JNS.

In fact, during the more than five hours he went through Khan Yunis on a Humvee, Boxer told JNS that there were some tense moments, including when Israeli soldiers ahead of him fired at four Hamas terrorists.

"I heard gunfire a lot of the time," he told JNS.

Wasn't thinking about it'

A husband and father, Boxer told JNS that he didn't sleep much a few nights before his trip.

"I told my wife and children what was going to happen, but I didn't tell my parents until after. I didn't want them to worry," he said. "I was definitely concerned."

Boxer had faith that God would protect him while he was there. "I wasn't thinking about it so much," he said. "I was thinking about the bravery of the Israeli soldiers and how it is tragic that things have to be this way because of Hamas."

An Orthodox Jew who wears a yarmulke, Boxer told JNS that Israeli soldiers showed him photographs from a school in Gaza where painted images show an exploding Israeli Egged bus.

"When we saw video and read about Oct. 7, we wondered how human beings could do such things," Boxer said. "Part of it is the indoctrination in schools where, from a young age, there are years of radicalization."

"This has to be addressed if there is any future hope for peace," he said.

Wardrobe mishap

In Gaza, Boxer wore a helmet and bul-

A husband and father, Gabriel Boxer told JNS that he didn't sleep much a few nights before his stint in the Gaza Strip.

letproof vest. But there was a miscommunication on his attire with Dilmoni.

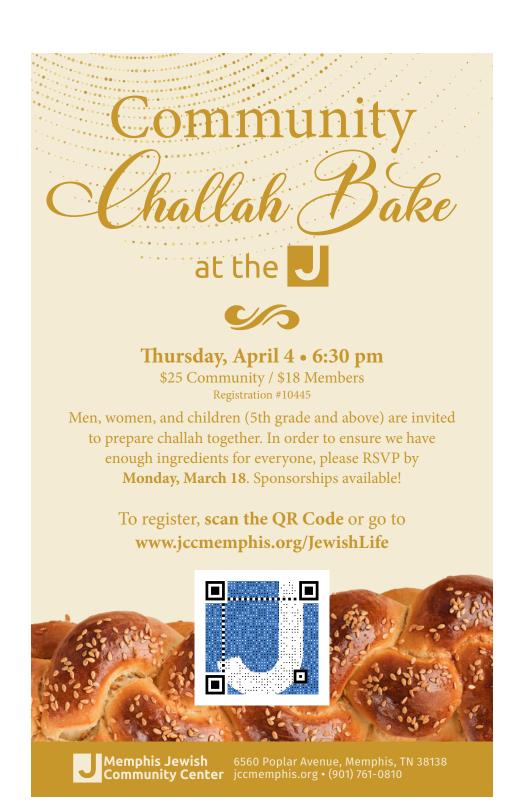
"Before I went, I asked what I should wear, and he said to wear black," Boxer said. "So, I wore jeans and a black shirt. He said I looked like Hamas. So, he said I should stay close to him."

Generally, only certain journalists for top news organizations are given permission to embed with the Israeli army. When asked how unusual it was for a person like Boxer to do so, an IDF media representative told JNS that it frequently gives journalists a chance to embed, though did not elaborate on civilians.

Boxer told JNS that he thinks the IDF needed donations of drones to quickly avoid bureaucratic red tape.

His sense after spending time on the ground is that Israeli soldiers are up to the task, although the fighting is intricate and difficult.

"The morale is high," he said. "The feeling is we are winning. But it isn't easy." **HW**





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Oh, Say, Can She Sing ...



By Bill Motchan

(JNS) – The national anthem is considered one of the most difficult songs to perform live since it calls for a very wide vocal range. It helps if the singer is a seasoned performer like Abbie Strauss, cantor at Temple Judea in Palm Beach Gardens, Fla.

On March 5, Strauss belted out "The Star-Spangled Banner" with no issues at Roger Dean Stadium in Jupiter, Fla., just a few miles from her congregation.

For Strauss, the experience was extra special because it preceded a spring training home game with the St. Louis Cardinals – her favorite team – as they beat the Minnesota Twins 5-4. Strauss lived in St. Louis earlier in her career, before a cantorial stint in Memphis and now Florida.

"I auditioned near the stadium and was chosen to sing," she said. "I chose only Cardinals games and was assigned this wonderful date – and I was so honored. I have sung at an NBA game but never a baseball game. The echo made it very difficult for me, but it was fun being around such incredible fans in such a special setting. Spring training is such an amazing time, and as a huge Cardinals fan, there is nothing like being close to the players and seeing them in this laid-back setting."

Cantor Abbie Strauss sings "The Star-Spangled Banner" at a baseball game between the Minnesota Twins and the St. Louis Cardinals in Jupiter, Fla., on March 5, 2024. Source: Screenshot.

Strauss is a member of the Temple Judea clergy, where her husband, Feivel Strauss, is associate rabbi. She is also the founder of the Institute of Jewish Rock and a featured performer on Jewish Rock Radio. She also practices "Judaism: Inside Out," a musical philosophy she founded that engages the mind, body and soul; it grew out of a music program she implemented for children at Temple Israel in Memphis, Tenn.

"All of a sudden, it went from about eight kids that would come hang out to over 30 kids," she said. "I realized kids wanted to rock, so I partnered with Jewish Rock Radio and the School of Rock in Memphis, and I created a program that was similar to the School of Rock program. The main difference was we focused on Jewish artists."

This story originally appeared in the St. Louis Jewish Light. **HW**



Cantor Abbie Strauss. Credit Bill Motchan

Hamas Elite Smuggled to Egypt as Average Gazans Stuck in Strip



Gazans cross into Egypt after Hamas tore down the border wall in 2008. The man on the right is an aid worker from the Turkish group IHH, the organization responsible for the Gaza protest flotilla two years later. Credit: JCPA

(JNS) – With Gazans earning an average monthly after-tax salary of \$346, the \$6,000 to \$7,000 smuggling fee per head to escape across Egypt's tightly sealed border puts such a prospect out of reach for most people living in the Strip.

But money isn't a problem for the families of Hamas officials, who have been sending their families across Gaza's southern border to safety, Channel 12 reported last Wednesday.

According to a list obtained by the news outlet, the fortunate few include five members of the "Mahmoud" family, who are none other than the nephews of Yahya Sinwar, Hamas's leader in the Gaza Strip.

Two children of Hamas police spokesman Ayman Albatanji also escaped across the border.

The four children of Sameh Elsraj, a member of Hamas's political bureau, also successfully crossed into Egypt. Elseraj, however, has not been seen since the war's start, suggesting he may have been died in an Israeli strike. Senior Hamas official Akil Alhindi

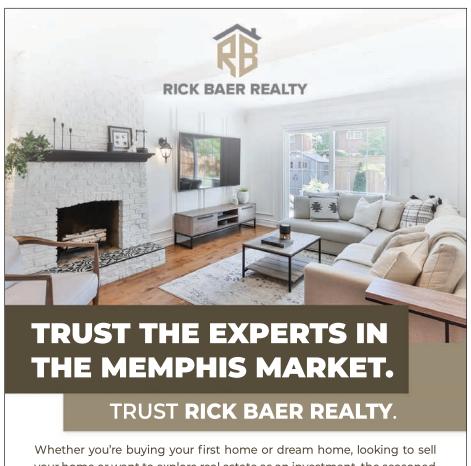
and the daughter of the Hamas health minister also appeared on the list.

Every few days more names of Hamas

Every few days, more names of Hamas family members who managed to escape appear on the list, Channel 12 reported.

Egypt has refused to open its borders to refugees for political reasons, with President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi arguing that letting them in would hurt the Palestinian cause.

Although Egypt on the whole has escaped international opprobrium for its decision, with the onus for the humanitarian situation in Gaza falling mainly on Israel, some legal observers have noted that Egypt is in violation of international law, having been a signatory to a number of refugee conventions that explicitly require it not to reject refugees at its borders who are seeking to escape war-torn areas. HW



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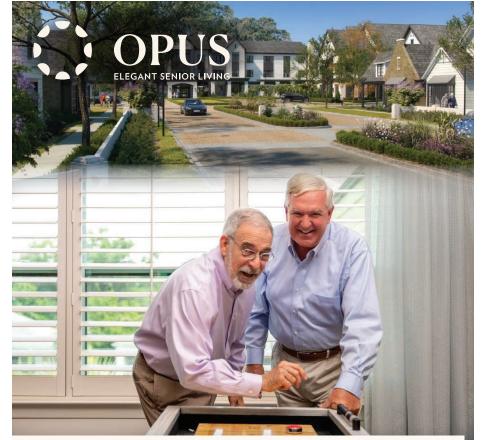
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Megillah Rush: A Tradition of Learning and Celebration with the Memphis Kollel



A packed Cooper Beis Medrash of learners.

As the joyous holiday of Purim approaches, the Memphis Kollel is gearing up for its annual event, Megillah Rush. This year marks the sixth installment of this highly anticipated program, which has become a highlight in the Kollel's event calendar. Scheduled this year for March 20, 7:50 p.m., Megillah Rush promises to be a night filled with camaraderie, learning and celebration.

From its beginning in 2019, Megillah Rush has been a resounding success, drawing on men and boys of all ages. Partnering with students of the Cooper Yeshiva High School for Boys (CYHSB), the event has grown in both size and spirit since its inception. What sets Megillah Rush apart is its unique format, where participants collectively study Gemara Maseches Megillah, dividing the text into manageable portions. The program culminates with a siyum led by the boys of the CYHSB followed by joyous dancing and a delicious celebratory spread.

For fathers, Megillah Rush holds a special significance as they sit alongside their sons, united in the study of Torah.

"It brings me immense joy to see my son excited about learning and to be able to share this experience with him," shared one father.

The success of Megillah Rush is a testament to the vibrant spirit of Torah learning within our community. With over 120 participants filling the Beis Medrash, the atmosphere is one of unity and enthusiasm leaving participants feeling uplifted and inspired.

"The invitation is extended to all men and high school-aged boys to join us for this year's Megillah Rush. Whether you're a seasoned scholar or new to Gemara study, there's a page of Gemara waiting for you!" said Rabbi Yosef Braha.

For more information and to participate in the Rush, reach out to Rabbi Yosef Braha at rabbibraha@memphiskollel.org. **HW**

Anti-Jewish Activists Mob Pro-Israel Students at University of Exeter



University of Exeter business forum, June 2016. Credit: Wikimedia Commons

(JNS) – As many as 100 anti-Israel students descended on the table where six Jewish students representing CAM-ERA on Campus at the University of Exeter in England, were distributing their group's literature, forcing them to end their event early to escape potential violence.

Video captured the altercation, showing one student yelling at the CAMERA

members that they were akin to white supremacists. The university needed to pay for taxis to provide a safe exit for the students.

Christina Jones, communications associate for CAMERA on Campus UK, said "disturbingly, university staff stood by without intervention, claiming there was no breach of law, even after a drink was thrown at the students."

In a statement, CAMERA on Campus said the students involved "have been encouraged to provide all available evidence, including video footage, voice recordings and written statements to support any potential legal action."

The group noted that such evidence "will be crucial in building a comprehensive case that reveals the toxic antisemitism prevailing on Exeter's campus." HW





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Who Descended on Diners in Italy Praising Hitler, Mussolini
The advocacy of racism and fascism is

Investigation Continues on Men

(JNS) – A group of 24 men reportedly in their 20s and 30s wore orange, prison-style jumpsuits to a restaurant in the Jewish part of the northern Italian city of Ferrara on Dec. 20 to proclaim the value of totalitarian leaders, distributing propaganda that praised Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini.

illegal in the country.

They also mocked the young, German-born Jewish diarist Anne Frank, who died in 1945 in the Bergern-Belson concentration camp in the last months of World War II and the Holocaust.

When diners opposed their rantings, the group made death threats against them, continuing even after police demanded that they stop.

Investigators have since conducted search warrants against the men's homes – all in Ferrara, according to police – and have seized weapons, documents and electronics. In Italy, advocacy of racism and fascism is illegal.

One group tracking antisemitic incidents in Italy found an increase from 241 in 2022 to 454 in 2023. Italy's interior minister reported that the government had seen 135 incidents from Oct. 7 through Dec. 31. HW



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Will You Work Beyond Traditional Retirement Age?

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

More than seven out of 10 current workers in a recent survey said they expect a paycheck to play a role in their income strategy beyond traditional retirement age. In fact, 33% expect to retire at age 70 or older, or

If you expect to continue working during your 60s, 70s, or beyond, consider the advantages and disadvantages carefully. Although working can enhance your retirement years in many ways, you may also face unexpected consequences, particularly when it comes to Social Security.

Advantages

not at all.1

There are many reasons why you may want to work during retirement. First and perhaps most obvious, a job offers a predictable source of income that can help pay for basic necessities, such as food, housing, and utilities.

Working may also allow you to continue saving on a tax-deferred basis through a work-based retirement savings plan or IRA. Traditional retirement accounts generally require you to take minimum distributions (RMDs) after you reach age 73 or 75, depending on your year of birth; however, if you continue working past RMD age, you can typically delay RMDs from a current employer's plan until after you retire,

as long as you don't own more than 5% of the company. (Roth IRAs and, beginning in 2024, work-based Roth accounts do not impose RMDs during the account owner's lifetime.)

Moreover, employment can benefit your overall well-being through social engagement with colleagues, intellectual stimulation, and, if you're employed in a field that requires exertion and movement, mobility and fitness.

Working may also provide access to valuable health insurance coverage, which can supplement Medicare after the age of 65. Keep in mind that balancing work-sponsored health insurance and Medicare can be complicated, so be sure to seek guidance from a qualified professional.

A paycheck might also allow you to delay receiving Social Security benefits up to age 70. This will not only increase your monthly benefit amount beyond what you'd receive at early or full retirement age, it will add years of earnings to your Social Security record, which could further enhance your future payments.

If one of your financial goals is to leave a legacy, working longer can help you continue to build your net worth and preserve assets for future generations and causes.

ф

Why Retirees Work

When asked why they continue to work for pay, retirees often cited positive reasons.



Source: Employee Benefit Research Institute, 2023 (multiple responses allowed)

Disadvantages

There are some possible drawbacks to working during retirement, especially regarding Social Security. For instance, if you earn a paycheck and receive Social Security retirement benefits before reaching your full retirement age (66–67, depending on your year of birth), part of your Social Security benefit will be withheld if you earn more than the annual Social Security earnings limit. However, the reduction is not permanent; in fact, you'll likely receive a higher monthly benefit later. That's because the Social Security Administration recalculates your benefit when you reach full retirement age and omits the months in which your benefit was reduced.

After reaching full retirement age, your paycheck will no longer affect your benefit amount. But if your combined income (as defined by Social Security) exceeds certain limits, it could result in federal taxation of up to 85% of your Social Security benefits.

Perhaps the biggest disadvantage to working during retirement is... working during retirement. In other words, you're not completely free to do whatever you want, whenever you want, which is often what people most look forward to at this stage of life.

Finally, a word of caution: Despite your best planning and efforts, you may find that you're unable to work even if you want to. Consider that nearly half of today's retirees left the workforce earlier than planned, with two-thirds saying they did so because of a health problem or other hardship (35%) or changes at their company (31%).²

For these reasons, it may be best to focus on accumulating assets as you plan for retirement, viewing work as a possible option rather than a viable source of income.

1–2) Employee Benefit Research Institute, 2023

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Crew Members Killed in First Deadly Houthi Attack on Civilian Ship in Red Sea



The "USS Carter Hall" dock landing ship and "USS Bataan" amphibious assault ship in the Bab al-Mandeb strait, which connects the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden, Aug. 29, 2023. Credit: Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Moises Sandoval/U.S. Navy.

By Akiva Van Koningsveld

(JNS) – A Houthi ballistic-missile attack on a commercial vessel in the Gulf of Aden, off the coast of Yemen, killed two crew members last Wednesday. It was the Iranian terror proxy's first deadly attack since it joined the war against Israel in support of the Hamas terrorist group in the Gaza Strip, CNN reported, citing U.S. officials.

At least six other sailors were wounded aboard the M/V True Confidence, identified by the outlet as a Barbados-flagged, Liberian-owned bulk carrier, one of the officials said. The sinking ship was abandoned, and coalition forces arrived in the area to assess the situation.

The Houthis launched their attack around 11:30 a.m. Sana'a time, or around 3:30 a.m. on the East Coast in the United States, per CNN.

"At least two innocent sailors have died. This was the sad but inevitable consequence of the Houthis recklessly firing missiles at international shipping," wrote the British embassy in Sana'a, the Yemeni capital. "They must stop."

Pentagon press secretary Air Force Brig. Gen. Pat Ryder was asked about the attack during the Pentagon's press briefing last Tuesday. Does the U.S. Department of Defense "assess that what they are doing in the region is enough?" a reporter asked. "Is there a need in the Pentagon's assessment for additional resources in the region to try to safeguard ships?"

"We have a significant amount of capability already in the region, but it's not just about the U.S.," Ryder said. "We will continue to work with allies and partners. And as we continue to need more, we'll certainly work with them, and certainly are willing to take any and all helpers on that front."

Matthew Miller, the U.S. State Department spokesman, called the deaths "sadly inevitable" during the department's press briefing last Wednesday.

"The Houthis have continued to launch these reckless attacks with no regard for the well-being of innocent civilians who are transiting through the Red Sea, and now they have unfortunately and tragically killed innocent civilians," Miller said.

Also last Wednesday, Washington sanctioned two ship owners and two vessels tied to Sa'id al-Jamal, an "Iranbased, Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps-Qods Force-backed Houthi financial facilitator."

"Revenue generated through al-Jamal's network enables Houthi militant efforts, including ongoing attacks on international maritime commerce in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden," Miller stated.

"The consequences of these attacks are felt far beyond the region, and the United States will continue to use all available measures to disrupt the funding streams that enable these destabilizing activities," Miller said. **HW**

OBITUARIES

Charles Marc Levin

On February 28, 2024, Marc Levin passed away peacefully at the age of 77. Beloved husband of Dora Binder Levin; devoted father of Shaena (Alex) Levin, Alicia (Daniel) Stern, and David (Ilana) Prager; cherished grandfather of Charlotte, Jaymes, Mayer, Parker, Ephraim, Maddox, Braiden, Hadas, Spencer and Adira; loving brother of Michelle (Lee) Christides; caring uncle to a host of nieces and nephews.

Marc worked for 42 years at Maybelline and made many lifelong friends. He was on the board of Agudath Achim in Little Rock and active in the Leisure World community.

Marc was an avid sports enthusiast. He ran track for East High, swam on the MJCC swim team, and played a myriad of sports growing up. Marc was on the MJCC and other intramural softball leagues all his life. He played water volleyball and ping pong regularly. He also played Pickleball and was a lifetime member of the Leisure World Pickleball League.

Graveside Funeral Services were held March 1, 2024, at Judean Memorial Gardens in Olney, Md. Memorial contributions may be made to The Michael J. Fox Foundation – Donate to Critical Research (give.michaeljfox.org). **HW**

Michael Hundley, PhD, to Speak About Monsters in the Hebrew Bible at Beth Sholom Lehrhaus March 19



Dr. Michael Hundley is an assistant professor of teaching in the Department of Religious Studies and the Borblum Judaic Studies Program at the University of Memphis.

Most assume that gods and monsters are mortal enemies. However, in the ancient Middle East, people believed gods often surrounded themselves with monsters who served either as servants, pets or children. It may surprise you that we can find monsters in the Hebrew Bible, too, according to Michael Hundley, Ph.D., assistant professor of teaching in the Department of Religious Studies and the Borblum Judaic Studies Program at the University of Memphis. Dr. Hundley will discuss G-d and His Monsters at the Beth Sholom Lehrhaus lecture on Tuesday, March 19 at 7 p.m.

In his presentation, Dr. Hundley will talk about the Bible's classic monsters, Leviathan and Behemoth, as well as seemingly benign figures like angels, cherubim and seraphim and the enigmatic Satan.

Michael Hundley earned a Bachelor of Arts from Amherst College and a Ph.D. from the University of Cambridge, followed by a two-year Alexander von Humboldt Postdoctoral Research Fellowship at the University of Munich (LMU). He is the author of three books with a fourth under contract and is currently working on another book on ancient gods and monsters. He teaches at the University of Memphis and is a part-time instructor of Religious Studies at Rhodes College.

Lehrhaus at Beth Sholom takes its inspiration from the Free Jewish House of Learning, the school for Jewish studies and adult education founded by Franz Rosenzweig in Frankfurt in 1920. Lectures in this series are free and open to the general public. **HW**

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When Me and Sophie Met Isaiah



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

There's never been a teacher who didn't loudly declare that he learns from his students - a slogan of our profession; a pious protestation that advertises our humility - our open mindedness. And occasionally, it's true. We Bar Mitzvah teachers have said it for years - a half truth. But I did learn from Betsy Silverstein – at our lunch lesson – that mustard on a Swiss cheese sandwich wasn't half bad. Her mama had run out of mayo. She also taught me that the Haftorah blessing could be sung to the tune of G-d Bless America and nobody but the rabbi and Irving Berlin, spinning in his grave, noticed.

But that's before I met Sophie, the student you dream of when your real-life student tells you he's converting to Buddhism because his folks have agreed to sponsor a three-month vacation in Tibet and Buddhists have no Haftorah requirement.

Sophie was a whiff of pure oxygen to a fatigued, over-age Bar Mitzvah teacher on his last gasp. Girls are always better students. Rarely do their athletic interests compete with their studies. And they're not strong enough to snap the ropes you've used to bind them to the dining room table with the Haftorah open in front of them. Girls are better. Most young ladies prefer mall to football, which though more expensive

doesn't demand two hours of practice five days a week.

Besides, Sophie had a talent all too rare among teenagers. She was obedient to her teacher as Rabbi Akivah was to Torah. Five lines of her Haftorah by Tuesday? A done deal. You could bet on it.

But her greatest attribute was her birthday, which in the complicated world of synagogue programming, landed her Bat Mitzvah smack on the 7th of August. So what, you ask. Well, the Haftorah for that day is Isaiah 49. So you might say that this 12-year-old, diligent achiever introduced me to Isaiah. Oh, I knew him before, but not as well as Sophie – who due to my insistence – repeated Chapter 49, in Hebrew, 10 times on tape. And obligated by my sense of responsibility, I listened 10 times.

Like I say, after several similar assignments, she knew him better than I. Well, Isaiah is her Haftorah, not mine. Why shouldn't she know him better than me? (Besides, she was nowhere near my level of expertise on Amos and Jeremiah.)

"Ted," she says, "did you see those beautiful metaphors that Isaiah uses?" (I prefer "Ted" to Mr. Roberts, my teacher, persecutor.")

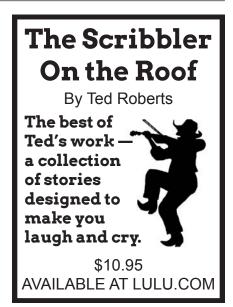
Sophie had an ear for beauty. Isaiah 49:14 makes Wordsworth, Keats and even our own Hayim Bialick sound like jingle writers. The prophet who wrote almost 3,000 years ago (only a heartbeat away considering the breadth of eternity) is as fresh as Krispy Kreme Doughnuts. Naturally, he retains his charm and currency. Why should that be surprising since prophets can see over the rainbow. They know the language of every tomorrow. Shakespeare, Chaucer, even the English sonneteers of the Elizabethan Age sound rusty to our ears, but not his troubadour of Israel who wrote in a

3,000-year-old lingo.

Isaiah speaks to you as though this morning you personally signed the covenant with the G-d whom Isaiah variously symbolizes as Mother, Father, lover bridegroom, Feudal Lord; the awesome, but merciful magistrate that looms over your personal world. He makes the ultimate case for your acquiescence to the covenant, He has a knack for talking solely to you, as though the Book of Isaiah began, "Dear Ted" or "Dear Sophie." The prophet's song reminds us of that old love affair of G-d and Israel; whose Ketubah is the covenant.

I couldn't help but think, why couldn't the liturgy for the Holidays and Sabbath match the inspiration of Isaiah? We all have trouble coping with the length of the services and our short attention span and the dreary repetition (yes, I know it's traditional) of Amidahs, Kaddishes, and other prayers. The Amidah, gray with age; its cluttered and clumsy language has no power after all these years. We've worn it out like a comfortable, but ragged shirt. Likewise, the Kaddish goes flat after three or four recitations. And even if the Mosiach, himself, arrived after the second hour of prayer, we might not notice. Who can stand on spiritual tiptoes after the second hour?

In my humble view, the overwhelming, stifling length of our service is a major attendance wrecker. Even the Baal Shem Tov had to stop his spiritual exaltation to chop wood once in a while. And who knows how many times Maimonides looked up from his prayer book to worry about that patient with the festering wound on his forearm? We are all far too human to spend hours in elevated ecstasy. A conversation with our Creator cannot be measured in earthly minutes. Two hours of prayer may not be as good



as a microflash of heartfelt inspiration.

On a practical level, guess how many more Jews will come home to temple and synagogue if the service is halved?

I know an unconventional rabbi in Memphis, Tennessee, who bows to tradition with a teasingly simple solution to this problem. "Cut nothing," he says. "Don't amputate the service, just jiggle your arrival time." He sees many levels of stamina in his congregation. Some promptly at the beginning and stick it out, with joy. Others straggle in late like reluctant schoolboys. Finally, there's my friend, Herb – an extremist – who shows up about Kiddush time. "I rarely miss Adon Olam," he claims.

I say – give 'em more of Isaiah and his prophetic colleagues instead of repetitive Kaddishes and Amidahs and their like. I know Sophie, even after eight months with the prophet, agrees with me.

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

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ISRAEL INSIGHTS Politics as Unusual

By Howard Weisband

Mr. Gantz goes to Washington.

In Israel, politics usually affect everything on a national level, except generally during war. The aftermath of October 7 proved no different as a National Emergency Government was formed with Benny Gantz, sitting in the opposition as Head of the National Union Party, former IDF (Israel Defense Forces) Chief of Staff, and former Minister of Defense in a previous Government, joined Prime Minister Netanyahu's Government and War Cabinet.

Minister Gantz traveled to the U.S. capital for meetings on March 3-5 with U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris, U.S. National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, and Republican and Democratic members of U.S. Congress among others.

According to the "Times of Israel" on March 3: "Netanyahu was said to have been unaware of the visit until Gantz called him on Friday to let the prime minister know of his plans and to discuss what messages to convey to the Americans. A source close to Netanyahu said the premier made it clear to Minister Gantz that the State of Israel only has one prime minister." The source said the trip was organized without the prime minister's approval and contrary to gov-

ernment regulations that require "every minister to clear travel in advance with the prime minister, including approval of the travel plan."

The Prime Minister went so far as to order the Israel Embassy in Washington not to provide any services to Minister Ganz.

Mr. Gantz went ahead with his trip.

David Jablowitz op ed editor of the "Jerusalem Post," wrote on March 5 more graphically: "From the Israeli perspective, the confrontation between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Minister-without-Portfolio Benny Gantz over the latter's visit to Washington is first and foremost a signal of potentially destructive disunity at the very top of government when heartwarming unity has been so prominent and necessary within society at this crucial time."

Jablowitz continued: "From the White House's vantage point, however, the invitation extended to Gantz is packaged as a strategically timed move to maintain U.S. backing for Israel in the war against Hamas while trying to somehow control the damage done domestically in the U.S. to President Joe Biden. During the current presidential election campaign, criticism of his supportive policy toward Israel is reaching

growing proportions and the political stakes mount."

From Washington, Gantz traveled to London for similar consultations.

It's not a secret that the Prime Minister does not have warm relations, perhaps even trusting relations, with U.S. leadership in the Biden Administration, from the President on down. Gantz has a different personality and seems to have better relations. It is also no secret that U.S. officials read Israeli polls, and therefore know that should elections be held in the near future, Gantz and his party significantly lead Netanyahu and the Likud. They also know that there is not a lot of trust between the two men, that in a previous coalition Netanyahu maneuvered toward new elections rather than honor a rotation agreement that would have allowed Gantz to become Prime Minister.

The Prime Minister has the power to fire a Minister. But Netanyahu at this moment, during a war that requires a decisive victory including the elimination of Hamas, during sensitive negotiations to release hostages, and facing a hot northern front that could soon require troops on the ground in Lebanon, simply cannot afford to utilize that power. Gantz and his party leaving the Govern-

ment may well create reverberations that would cause the Government to quickly fall and bring about new elections.

Frankly, the above describes a political crisis on a personal level that has obvious severe national implications. There are other immediate and important political pressures on Netanyahu and his coalition on a national level that could yet have a huge impact.

The most recent of these that has emerged is that of the newly defined manpower needs within the IDF, resulting in multiple calls within the Defense Ministry and the coalition, as well as from the Israeli public, to seriously increase the drafting of Haredi yeshiva students. A future column may address this critical issue.

Politics as usual, but midst a war rather unusual.

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

Airdropped Aid Kills Five Palestinians, Hamas Says

By Andrew Bernard

(JNS) – Hamas-controlled Gazan health authorities claimed on Friday that five Palestinians were killed by falling humanitarian-aid packages during an airdrop in the northern Gaza Strip.

Unconfirmed videos on social media appear to show some of the aid pallets deployed from a C-17 falling at high speed, their parachutes apparently failing to deploy properly.

One video also seems to show loose aid packets slamming into the ground and entire pallets crashing audibly around a group of buildings.

It's not clear which country dropped the aid, but a United Arab Emirates C-17 was flying over Gaza on Friday, according to open source flight-tracking data. The UAE has previously joined airdrops over Gaza, though it has not issued any statements about delivering aid on Friday.

U.S. Central Command stated on Friday that it had airdropped a mix of Jordanian and American aid from a U.S. plane earlier in the day. A Department of Defense official told "Politico" if civilians were killed, it was not from aid dropped from a U.S. aircraft.

"Our pallets landed successfully, and we will have more to share soon," the official said.

"U.S. Central Command and the Royal Jordanian Air Force conducted a combined humanitarian assistance airdrop into Northern Gaza on March 8, 2024, at approximately 1:30 p.m. (Gaza time) to provide essential relief to civilians in Gaza affected by the ongoing conflict," "CENTCOM" wrote.

"The combined, joint operation in-

cluded Jordanian provided meals and a U.S. Air Force C-130 aircraft," it added. "A U.S. C-130 dropped over 11,500 meal equivalents, providing life-saving humanitarian assistance in Northern Gaza, to enable civilian access to critical aid."

"These airdrops are part of a sustained effort, and we continue to plan follow on aerial deliveries," it added.

CENTCOM's statement did not mention any civilian casualties, and a Pentagon spokesman told "The New York Times" that all of the bundles of aid had landed safely. **HW**



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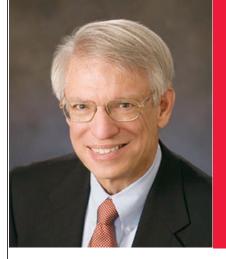
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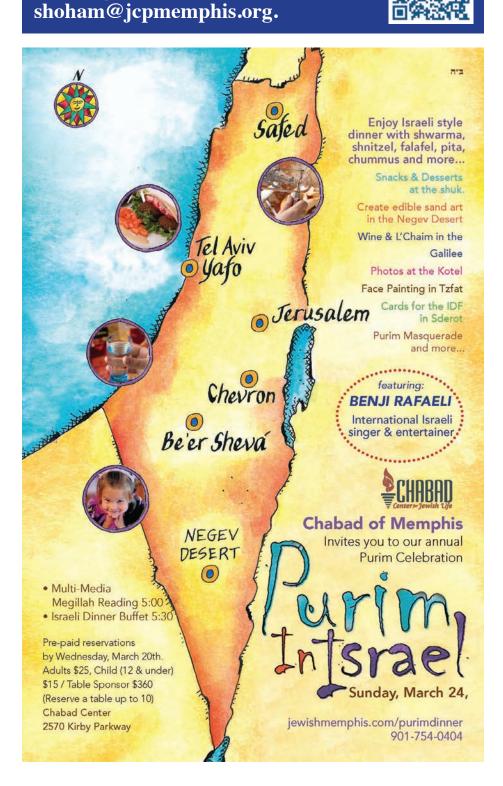
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Palestinian Terror Factions Heading to Moscow for Unity Talks



Hamas political bureau member Mousa Abu Marzouk, June 19, 2022. Source: Hamas.ps/ar

(JNS) – Palestinian terror factions Fatah and Hamas [headed] to Moscow last Thursday for a two-day "national dialogue" on forming a unity government under the auspices of the Russian Foreign Ministry, the "RIA Novosti" state news agency reported last Wednesday.

The Palestinian ambassador to the Russian Federation Abdel Hafiz Nofal and Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov confirmed the Moscow summit.

In addition to discussing political unification and the formation of a new government, the terror representatives will talk about the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip after the end of the war.

Fatah is the Palestinian Authority's ruling faction in Ramallah, led by Mahmoud Abbas, and Jerusalem has clearly stated that it does not want the P.A. to play any part in governing Gaza after Hamas is

defeated, given its support for terrorism.

According to Hamas sources cited by "Ynet," the terrorist group's delegation in Moscow will be led by Musa Abu Marzouk, a member of the Hamas political bureau.

Hamas and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad terror group are demanding participation in the PLO, while the Fatah movement is setting conditions for the establishment of a new government in what the United States has described as a "revitalized" P.A. They include the commitment to the institutions outlined in the Oslo Accords and the unification of laws and governance in Gaza and Judea and Samaria.

Abbas [last] Tuesday accepted the resignation of Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayyeh and his cabinet and requested that he stay on as a caretaker until the appointment of a permanent replacement.

During a Cabinet meeting in Ramallah last Monday, Shtayyeh explained that "this decision comes in light of the political, security and economic developments related to the aggression against Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, and the unprecedented escalation in the West Bank, including the city of Jerusalem," according to the P.A.'s official "Wafa" news agency.

"We will remain in confrontation with the occupation [Israel], and the Palestinian Authority will continue to struggle to establish the state on the lands of Palestine," he continued. "I see that the next stage and its challenges require new governmental and political arrangements that take into account the emerging reality in the Gaza Strip, the national unity talks [with Hamas], and the urgent need for an inter-Palestinian consensus based on a national basis, broad participation, unity of ranks, and the extension of the Palestinian Authority's sovereignty over the entire land of Palestine."

Last Sunday, "Sky News Arabia" reported that top P.A. officials could offer their resignation "within days" to facilitate the swift establishment of a Palestinian "government of technocrats," including Hamas members, whose primary purpose would be the reconstruction of Gaza.

The new government is expected to be headed by Mohammad Mustafa, currently the chairman of the P.A.'s Palestine Investment Fund. It would serve during a "transition period" until elections are held.

"The resignation of Shtayyeh's government only makes sense if it comes within the context of national consensus on arrangements for the next phase," senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri told "Reuters" last Monday.

On Feb. 12, P.A. chief Mahmoud Abbas traveled to Doha at the invitation of

Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani to discuss ways to incorporate Hamas into a P.A.-led body for Judea, Samaria and Gaza.

Following Abbas's trip, Hamas reportedly approved a three-step plan leading to "complete reconciliation [with the Palestinian Authority]" and the terrorist group joining the PLO, which controls the P.A., under a "unified Palestinian-Arab vision."

The United States wants the P.A. to assume control of Gaza after the war against Hamas ends, a move that Israel vehemently rejects because of Ramallah's overt support for terrorism.

On Jan. 27, Abbas's spokesman told "Al Arabiya" television that the P.A. is prepared to hand over the reins to Hamas after the conflict. Ramallah is "prepared to hold general elections, and if Hamas wins, the president will hand over the Authority," spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh said.

The U.S. State Department has refused to rule out Hamas retaining power in Gaza or even joining a P.A.-led governing body that would also have jurisdiction in Judea and Samaria.

According to Palestinian polls, 89% of Palestinians support establishing a government that includes or is led by Hamas. Only around 8.5% said they favor an authority controlled exclusively by Abbas's Fatah faction. **HW**



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