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Federation's Shoham Delegation Visit Leaves Lasting Impression in Community



Greg Landau, Or Ly Lahat, Naam Samet Rubinstein, Peter Felsenthal and Amir Sela.

When eight guests from Shoham visited Memphis in February, their presence and stories left an imprint on the hearts and minds of both Jewish and non-Jewish Memphians.

Peter Felsenthal, principal at Lift Insight & Capital Partners, and former CEO of Whitmor, hosted a Shoham presentation for 25 of his clients and colleagues from greater Memphis. Guests heard from Naama Samet Rubenstein, who shared a candid and painful perspective on her job of identifying bodies after the October 7 massacre. Naama's presentation was "very personal and emotional," said Peter. "Naama has a straightforward and honest demeanor and did not hold back on the details she considers when identifying someone who is deceased. I sensed a shift in the room among the guests. Hearing from Naama put the October 7 attack in a new light and gave guests a distinct perspective on living in the aftermath of the attack."

Guests also heard from Or Ly Lahat, who served in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) for several decades. Or Ly, now in his 70s, spoke on what it means personally for Israelis to serve in the IDF, and how the massacre is affecting those in service now. Shoham guest Amir Sela's presentation provided historical context on Israel, Hamas and Gaza, and how that history is influencing the war and Israeli lives now.

"This event was extremely well received," remarked Peter. "The presentations were both informative and very intimate. Everyone left the event hungry to learn more, and my gut tells me they will be following events in Israel more closely from now on."

The Shoham delegates shared stories and built deeper bonds with the Memphis Jewish community during visits to Jewish day schools, Beth Sholom Synagogue, Baron Hirsch and Temple Israel. Many Jewish community members made sure the Shoham visitors had time to relax, socialize and rest. Stuart and Debbie Lazarov hosted a Super Bowl party for Memphis and Shoham friends to share a night of fun and festivity.

Community members who spent time with Shoham guests spoke about the significance of this visit and what it meant to have in-person interactions, especially in the wake of October 7.

As Debbie explained, "We always look forward to our Shoham family visiting Memphis, but this visit was bittersweet. We mourned together over the loss of so many families and listened to horrific, heartbreaking stories. We experienced our Shoham family's grief firsthand. Even in the sadness and loss, we



Artwork by Hila Shimony and Shoham visitors.

still celebrated being together."

"We had such a meaningful visit with our partners from Shoham," said Marci Hirsh, who serves on Federation's Memphis-Shoham Steering Committee. "It meant so much for us to hear their stories and understand what is happening in Israel. I know they were deeply touched by the support they felt from the community, and it gave them hope."

An event hosted by Hila Shimony, who also serves on the Steering Committee, fostered the creation of unique artwork capturing the emotions and ties shared between Memphis and Shoham friends.

"The connections between Memphis and Shoham were at their peak during the wonderful visit," Hila said. "The artwork we created together reflects the strong bond between our communities." **HW**

Jewish Community Tackles Food Instability at Baron Hirsch's Great Big Sandwich Make



Hundreds of volunteers gathered at Baron Hirsch's eighth annual Great Big Sandwich Make.

By Amara Levine-Reich

Community service and Baron Hirsch go together like peanut butter and jelly.

That was on full display Tuesday evening, Feb. 13, as hundreds came together at Baron Hirsch's eighth annual Great Big Sandwich Make to spread love across the Memphis area and feed local families in need.

The familiar aroma of peanut butter

and jelly filled the air at Baron Hirsch as volunteers of all ages devoted several hours to assembling and packaging more than 5,000 classic PBJ sandwiches. The fruits of their labor were donated to multiple service organizations helping local residents, including St. Mary's Soup Kitchen, the Hospitality Hub, the Memphis Union Mission, the Salvation tional Center.

"Tzedakah (Hebrew for charity) is a foundational value in Judaism," said Rabbi Ian Lichter, spiritual leader of Baron Hirsch. *"Thousands of families* across our metropolitan area face food instability, and Baron Hirsch's annual Sandwich Make offers our congregants and the Jewish community at-large an opportunity to assist in addressing this pressing issue. We've learned over the years that PBJ sandwiches freeze quite well, so the positive impact of our collective efforts can be felt throughout the city for several months."

Army and the Barron Heights Transi-

The volunteer sandwich makers represented Memphis's broad spectrum of Jewish institutions, including Baron Hirsch and event partners Bornblum Jewish Community School, Chabad Lubavitch of Tennessee, Margolin Hebrew Academy/Feinstone Yeshiva of the South, Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab, Jewish Community Partners, Young Israel of Memphis.

"At a time when anti-Semitism is on the rise and Israel remains at war, it is ever more important that we create opportunities for Jewish unity and perform acts of *chesed* (Hebrew for loving-kindness)," Rabbi Lichter said.

Plough Towers, Temple Israel and

Longtime Baron Hirsch members Eileen and Irv Cherny were among those who volunteered at the Great Big Sandwich Make.

"Being a part of this program allows us to, even in a small way, give assistance to those less fortunate than us," Eileen Cherny said. "It was also wonderful to see people of all backgrounds participating in this event. The Great Big Sandwich Make is a valuable opportunity to strengthen our relationships with other synagogues and local Jewish institutions."

The beneficiary organizations were

(See Sandwich Page 2)

Sandwich... (Continued From Page 1)



Robert Schneider, executive director of Baron Hirsch, and his wife, Havah, dressed for the occasion at the Feb. 13 Great Big Sandwich Make.

very grateful to receive the sandwiches and provide them to individuals in need.

"Thank you and your congregation for the wonderful donations of sandwiches," wrote Aaron Keegan, executive director of development for the Salvation Army of Memphis, in a note of gratitude to Baron Hirsch. "Your gift was truly appreciated by our kitchen staff and residents."

Baron Hirsch is a modern Orthodox Zionist congregation that seeks to engage its members in all aspects of Jewish life. To learn more, visit www. baronhirsch.org or contact the shul at 901-683-7485.

Tax-deductible contributions to go toward the cost of Great Big Sandwich Make supplies can be made online baronhirsch.shulcloud.com/form/ at PBJ2024. HW

Baron Hirsch Hosts Iron Dome Expert Ari Sacher as Scholar in Residence March 15-16



Dr. Ari Sacher

By Amara Levine-Reich

The idiom "it's not rocket science" has been used many times – but not in reference to the vital work of Dr. Ari Sacher.

Baron Hirsch Congregation will host the noted Israeli rocket scientist, missile defense expert and Torah educator as its scholar in residence March 15-16. Memphians will have multiple opportunities to hear from Sacher during his visit to Baron Hirsch.

He will deliver his first keynote presentation, "The best offense: why only our forefather Jacob could have designed the Iron Dome," following a March 16 Shabbat luncheon for families.

(Childcare will be provided during

the lecture.) His second keynote talk, "The Miracle of the Iron Dome," will be later that day at 5:45 p.m.

Sacher will also address the congregation during Kabbalat Shabbat services on Friday evening, March 15, as well as following the early Shacharit minyan in the morning and during Seudah Shlishit in the early evening on March 16.

A graduate of the Technion/Israel Institute of Technology, Sacher has worked in the design and development of missile defense systems for nearly three decades. He has briefed hundreds of members of U.S. Congress on Israeli missile defense and conducted three briefings on Capitol Hill at the invitation of the House majority leader.

Sacher works in the land and naval warfare division at Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, one of the primary developers of the Iron Dome. The air defense system has intercepted thousands of short-range rockets fired toward Israel, with a 90% rate of effectiveness in preventing serious property damage and saving civilian lives.

Since 2000, Sacher has published a weekly article on the parsha (Torah portion of the week) that is enjoyed by readers around the world. He made aliyah to Israel from the U.S. in 1982 and lives in Moreshet, in the western Galilee, with his wife and eight children.

"Ari Sacher is a highly requested speaker who is well-known for using his experience in the defense industry to explain Jewish concepts in entertaining and approachable ways," said Rabbi Ian Lichter, spiritual leader of Baron

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info@hebrewwatchman.com

Susan C. Nieman **Editor and Publisher**

Larry Nieman **Advertising Sales Director**

Toni Nieman **Office Manager & Subscriptions** toni@hebrewwatchman.com

> Rebecca Miller Schudel **Social Media Director** Web Development

Herman I. Goldberger **Editor and Publisher Emeritus**

Barbara B. Goldberger **Editor and Publisher Emeritus**

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Erev Shabbat, Fri. March 8, 2024 / 28 Adar 1, 5784...... 5:44 p.m. Havdalah, Sat. March 9, 2024 / 29 Adar 1, 5784...... 6:40 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Vayakhel Shekalim

Hirsch. "We are privileged to bring a Torah scholar and defense expert of his caliber to Memphis and look forward to Dr. Sacher's enlightening presentations on the wonders of the Iron Dome.

"Especially in the aftermath of the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks, it's critical that American Jews remain connected with our brothers and sisters in Israel," said Rabbi Lichter. "Dr. Sacher's visit to Baron Hirsch will ensure we have a deep understanding of the security situation they navigate each day."

Advance registration is required to

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participate in the March 16 luncheon, though anyone may attend the lecture to follow. The cost for lunch is \$36 for adults/teens and \$10 for kids under 12; children younger than 3 are free. To register, RSVP online by March 12 at baronhirsch.shulcloud.com/form/ arisacher or call the synagogue office at 901-683-7485.

Baron Hirsch is a modern Orthodox Zionist congregation that seeks to engage members in all aspects of Jewish life. To learn more, contact the shul by phone or visit baronhirsch.org. HW



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Baron Hirsch Synagogue March 6, 2024, Kol Rena SoShuls Luncheon

On Wednesday, March 6, 2024, the Kol Rena SoShuls Luncheon at Baron Hirsch Synagogue promises to be another good time for people who are 64 years or older to have a delicious lunch and enjoy lively musical entertainment. Luncheon guests get the opportunity to see friends and make new acquaintances.

The time of the March luncheon is noon, and the cost is \$5.00 per person. Bingo games and lots of fun will follow the luncheon. You do not have to be a synagogue member to attend.

Local musician, Rob Haynes, will

perform during the noon luncheon. His appearance is courtesy of Creative Aging.

The March SoShuls luncheon menu includes homemade Salisbury steak, green beans, noodle kugel, and, of course, Purim Hamantaschen for dessert. Food, fun and friendship make a great combination for all our luncheon guests.

Please make your reservation now by calling 901-683-7485 or by email to gwen@baronhirsch.org. We look forward to having you join us! HW

Rubio Commemorates Victims of 1994 Antisemitic Terror Attack in Argentina

(JNS) - Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) visited the Asociación Mutual Israelita Argentina (AMIA) building in Buenos Aires to honor the deaths of the 85 people who were killed when Iranian-backed Hezbollah terrorists bombed the Jewish community center in the summer of 1994.

Rubio also memorialized prosecutor Alberto Nisman, the Argentine attorney and chief investigator of the terrorist attack, who was found dead at his home in Buenos Aires in 2015, reportedly murdered, before he could reveal his findings.

"This year marks the 30th anniversary of the brutal terrorist attack against the AMIA. I'm humbled to visit this site and

commemorate the 85 lives lost, as well as Argentine prosecutor Alberto Nisman who investigated this brutal attack and paid the ultimate price for simply doing his job," Rubio said.

The legislator called for continuing "to advocate for justice and accountability."

He said that "at a time when antisemitism is on the rise around the world, it is our moral duty to stand in support of the Jewish community."

In December, the U.S. Department of Justice indicted Samuel Salman El Reda for his alleged role in the 1994 attack. El Reda is accused of helping plan and execute the bombing; he faces 45 years in prison. HW

The MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Happenings

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

Monday, March 11

Field Trip to Baskin Robbins for an Ice Cream Social

With the terrific selection at Baskin Robbins, the seniors are assured of getting exactly what they want. Come join them for a nice afternoon social following the Senior Lunch.

Wednesday, March 13

Field Trip to Temple Israel for a Tour led by Rabbi Jeff Dreifus, assistant Rabbi at Temple Israel

Rabbi Dreifus will give a terrific tour of the beautiful building and grounds. Temple Israel is a sanctuary for prayer and inspiration, a vibrant center for Jewish learning and a congregational home for living Torah. Temple Israel is located on a 30-acre wooded campus in the heart of East Memphis at 1376 East Massey Road. Please call the MJCC front desk at 901-761-0810 to make a reservation for this wonderful tour. Please call Steve Kaplan with any questions.

Monday, March 18 Speaker: Rabbi Ian Lichter, Senior **Rabbi of Baron Hirsch Synagogue**

Topic: "Seeing Esther and Mordechi's Salvation Through the Prism of Israel!"

Rabbi Ian Lichter joined Baron Hirsch Congregation in August 2022. Previously he served as the assistant rabbi at the Great Neck Synagogue in Long Island, New York, for 12 years. He received his rabbinic ordination from the Rabbi Isaac Elchanan Theological Seminary of Yeshiva University and earned his master's degree in education and administration from Azrieli Graduate School. Rabbi Lichter strives to provide for a diverse and vibrant community by fully immersing himself in the spiritual and physical well-being of the congregation. Rabbi Lichter's talks are always enjoyed. A question-and-answer period will follow.

Wednesday, March 20 **MJCC** Larisa and Ben Baer Senior **Adult Club Monthly Luncheon**

Featuring Lisa Nabumato, Jazz vocalist! 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 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!

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

Actress Arrested at Anti-Israel **Rally Against** Biden's 'Late Night' Appearance

(JNS) - The New York City Police Department arrested dozens of activists last Monday at NBC's headquarters at Rockefeller Center for their efforts to disrupt an appearance by U.S. President Joe Biden on "Late Night with Seth Meyers."

Among them was Hunter Schafer, 25, an actor from the TV show "Euphoria" and the film "The Hunger Games: The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes (2023)."



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Jewish Voice for Peace had organized the demonstration. It also announced Schafer's arrest and commended her for "her commitment to Palestinian freedom and to a future of justice for everyone."

Photos from the protest show Schafer wearing a "ceasefire now" shirt and a black facemask. Video posted by JVP shows her alongside other protesters chanting, "No more weapons, no more war, ceasefire's what we're fighting for" and "Joe Biden, we know you are here. You are not welcome in our city."

Schafer held a banner with others that read "Jews to Biden - stop arming genocide."

JVP claims that Schafer and 50 other activists were arrested; however, the NYPD told "USA Today" that 30 people were taken into custody and issued summons for trespassing. HW

Dozens Die in Gaza Aid Stampede as War-Induced Humanitarian Crisis Worsens



Palestinians wait in queues for several hours to receive food from charity organizations as they struggle to find food amid Israeli attacks in Deir al-Balah, Gaza, Feb. 27, 2024. Credit: Ashraf Amra/Anadolu via Getty Images

By Philissa Cramer

(JTA) – Dozens of Palestinians died during a stampede to access aid in Gaza City last Thursday, a tally that Hamas said numbered 104.

Hundreds of people were injured in the incident, including 10 whom the Israel Defense Forces said its soldiers had shot. The incident is the most dramatic marker yet of a humanitarian crisis inside Gaza that is jeopardizing the lives of Palestinians, U.S.-Israel relations and a possible deal to free more of the Israelis who have been held hostage for nearly five months. The stampede took place as an Israeli aid convoy reached Gaza City, according to Israeli media reports citing an initial IDF probe. About 300,000 people remain in the city months after the Israeli military completed its major operations there, a battle that sent most residents fleeing to the south.

The incident also took place just hours after the top administrator for the United States' international development organization, Samantha Power, visited a Gaza border crossing to press for more aid to be distributed to Palestinians inside the territory. Israel placed Gaza under siege after Hamas, which has governed the territory since 2006, attacked Israel on Oct. 7, killing about 1,200 and taking more than 250 hostages.

Hamas and the Palestinian Authority both denounced the stampede, with PA President Mahmoud Abbas' office calling it "an ugly massacre." Hamas warned that it could lead to the failure of ongoing negotiations toward a ceasefire and hostage deal, which have progressed in recent days.

The Biden administration has for

months expressed frustration with the amount of aid that Israel has let into Gaza and is reportedly exploring dropping aid into Gaza by air. The number of trucks entering the territory has declined in recent weeks. Israel says it would distribute more aid but cannot rely on the nonprofits tasked with delivering it. Israeli protesters pushing for harsher tactics in Gaza have also sought to prevent aid trucks from entering Gaza.

The interception of aid trucks has been an ongoing issue in Gaza. Reports suggest that Hamas members have sought to intercept aid and have also killed others who have done so.

United Nations officials said this week that nearly 600,000 Palestinians in Gaza are on the verge of famine and that nearly everyone in the territory is going without adequate food. Some children have starved to death, according to the Hamas-run health ministry and an essay in the "New York Times" last Thursday. Disease is also rampant in the tent cities that have sprung up to accommodate a population that has almost entirely been displaced from their homes. **HW**

One Third of Americans are Reluctant to Vote for a Pro-Israel Politician, ADL Survey Finds



Anti-Israel stickers in midtown Manhattan, Nov. 30, 2023. Credit: Luke Tress By Luke Tress

(JTA) – More than a third of Americans would be reluctant to vote for a pro-Israel politician. One fifth are uncomfortable buying products from Israel. More than 40% at least somewhat agreed that Israel intends to cause as much Palestinian suffering as possible.

But nearly all U.S. adults believe Jews have the right to an independent country.

Those are some of the results of a survey published last Thursday by the Anti-Defamation League, measuring antisemitism and anti-Israel views across the United States. The survey found that antisemitic views had increased since the ADL's last such study, taken prior to Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel and the with a 1.5% margin of error.

As it has for decades, the ADL presented respondents with a list of 11 antisemitic tropes – such as "Jews are more loyal to Israel than to America," and "Jews have too much power" – and found that nearly 24% of respondents believed in six or more of them, an increase of four percentage points since 2022.

When it came to Israel, the survey's authors said the overall number of respondents who held anti-Israel positions had not drastically changed since Oct. 7, based on a survey taken last summer. But the group found that views had become more polarized, with more respondents saying they "strongly" agreed toward Palestinians, with 43% agreeing strongly or somewhat that Israelis intend to cause Palestinians as much suffering as possible. A similar proportion said Israelis were indifferent to Palestinian suffering.

Nearly 36% agreed to some extent with the statement, "If Israelis had their way, they would live in a world where all Palestinians were killed."

One fifth supported, strongly or somewhat, the removal of Israeli products from grocery stores. And more than a third agreed to some extent with the statement, "I would not consider voting for a pro-Israel politician." (Whether that finding bears out in the upcoming presidential election remains to be seen. While they disagree on Israel policy, all major candidates say they are supporters of Israel.)

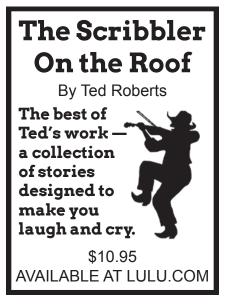
In some cases, criticism of Israel overlapped with age-old antisemitic conspiracies. The survey found that 30% of respondents agreed in some measure that supporters of Israel control the media. And one third somewhat or strongly agreed that "Israeli operatives are secretly manipulating U.S. national policy through [the pro-Israel lobby] AIPAC or other influence tools."

Despite the findings regarding anti-Israel beliefs, the overwhelming majority of respondents - 88.8% – said Jews had the right to an independent country.

Anti-Israel views were more wide-

Many respondents, especially younger Americans, expressed at least some degree of comfort with supporting Hamas. Slightly more than half of Gen Z respondents said they would be comfortable having a friendship with a supporter of the terror group. Twenty-seven percent of all respondents said it would be acceptable for a close family member to support Hamas.

Twenty-four percent of all respondents said they have a close friend or family member who dislikes Jews. Younger respondents were more likely to hold antisemitic beliefs, the poll found. Millennials agreed with the most antisemitic tropes, on average, followed by Gen Z. ADL polling showed that belief in the tropes generally declined between 1964 until 2014, when the numbers started trending upward. **HW**



ensuing war, though anti-Israel views had not.

Last Thursday's survey polled more than 4,000 U.S. adults in mid-January,

or disagreed with negative statements about Israel.

The poll found that many respondents viewed Israelis as callous or malicious

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spread among young people and correlated with antisemitism, the poll found. Surveys taken since Oct. 7 have consistently found lower levels of support for Israel among young adults.



Bornblum Students Participate in International Design Challenge



Pictured are 2024 Make the Change Challenge finalists from Bornblum with their teachers.

Over the last few months, students in Bornblum Jewish Community School's fourth and fifth grades have been busy preparing innovative designs to compete in the 2024 Make the Change Challenge. This international design challenge, sponsored by Ali Negev-Nahalat Eran in Israel, focuses on creating solutions to challenges faced by people with disabilities.

Open to students in grades 4-12 in Adi's partner schools in North America, the Make the Change Challenge seeks innovative designs for people with persistent accessibility problems. "We are a design thinking school and solving problems faced by others is an essential part of a Bornblum education. The Make the Change Challenge was an incredible opportunity for our students to participate in an authentic design experience, creating solutions for people with real-world challenges," according to Bornblum Head of School Daniel R. Weiss.

Under the guidance of their teachers, Nathan Collier and Cindy VanGunda, fourth and fifth grade students at Bornblum worked in pairs to research and create solutions for the challenges faced by those with persistent disabilities. They used the design thinking process to engage with the challenge. Design thinking is a five-step learning process that begins with an empathy interview to understand the needs of the eventual user of the project. Students then define the problem and ideate to come up with potential solutions. This is followed by the creation of prototypes, which are presented to an authentic audience for assessment and eventual refinement.

"Bornblum is in its fourth year of design thinking, and it has really taken hold at every grade level and in every subject area. The Make the Change Challenge presented an opportunity to bring design thinking outside the walls of the school to apply it to real-world problems for real people," said Jill Cross, Bornblum's director of Curriculum and Instruction.

Fourth grader Sammie Sheyn, daughter of Ali Kaplan and Dr. Anthony Sheyn, and fifth grader Graham Weiskopf, son of Jana Weiskopf and Dr. Scott Weiskopf, worked together to create The Helmet Pillow, a helmet with sensors that deploy airbag-like inflatables when a user is in the process of falling. The students were inspired after learning about challenges faced by those with Muscular Dystrophy, including frequent falling and difficulty standing up.

Sheyn and Weiskopf submitted their

invention to the Make the Change Challenge and received an email asking questions and requesting some revisions. After more work, the students submitted their final prototype and learned that they were top five finalists out of more than 250 submissions from around North America.

"We are so proud of Sammie and Graham. It was inspiring to watch them work together and engage with the Challenge. I was so impressed with the depth of their research and their willingness to take feedback and revise their design," said Samantha Schmidt, a member of Bornblum's design thinking faculty.

Their teacher, Mr. Collier praised their, "ingenuity, hard work, and dedication to making the world a better place through design thinking."

Each of the five finalists and their teachers and school administrators participated in a live Zoom broadcast on Sunday, February 25 where Sammie and Graham answered questions about their invention and the winner was announced.

"Although they did not win the Challenge, the fact Sammie and Graham were top five finalists in a design competition with 250 middle and high school students from much larger schools around North America says something very special about these students, their families and our school," said Dr. Weiss. **HW**

Memphian Natalie Mashinsky Volunteers in Israel



Natalie Mashinsky. Credit: Meir Pavlovsky Natalie Mashinsky of Memphis vol-



Federation Accepting Grant Applications for Antisemitism Microgrants

In response to the alarming surge in antisemitism, Memphis Jewish Federation remains committed to supporting community-wide efforts to address antisemitism prevention and eradication. Federation antisemitism microgrants, ranging from \$500-\$3,000, are available. Submit grant applications at tinyurl.com/mjfmicrogrant.

Microgrants will be awarded to community initiatives addressing antisemitism through:

• Raising awareness about the history

and/or current state of antisemitism

• Education and training in best practices/effective methods of response

Advocacy efforts

• Educating the broader Memphis community about Jews and Judaism to dispel antisemitic myths and tropes

• Exploring how antisemitism manifests as anti-Zionism

For more information on Federation's antisemitism microgrants and other antisemitism initiatives, contact crichardson@jcpmemphis.org. **HW**





unteered to pack up mishloach manot packages for the victims of Oct. 7 and their families together with other students studying with her this year at Midreshet Moriah Seminary in Jerusalem.

Natalie, a graduate of the Goldie Margolin School for Girls, joined hundreds of volunteers to pack mishloach manot at the OneFamily headquarters in Jerusalem to be delivered to over 2500 families who have lost loved ones on or since Oct. 7 in cooperation with the Israel Police Force since the families are spread out in locations all across the country.

OneFamily was just announced as one of five recipients of this year's prestigious Genesis Prize.

"It's very important to let people in Israel know that we care about them, we're thinking of them and they're not alone," Natalie said. "OneFamily is an amazing organization, and I have so much love for them." **HW**

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U.S. Blocks UN Security Council Resolution Blaming Israel for Dozens of Deaths During Humanitarian Aid Delivery



The funeral of Palestinians are brought from the Kamal Adwan hospital in Gaza City, Gaza, Feb. 29, 2024. Credit: Mahmud Isa/Anadolu via Getty Images

By Ron Kampeas

(JTA) – The United States blocked consideration of a United Nations Security Council resolution blaming Israel for the dozens of deaths that occurred during the delivery of humanitarian assistance in northern Gaza last Thursday, as world leaders stepped up their calls for a ceasefire.

The Associated Press reported that 14 of the 15 members of the Security Council favored approving the resolution, drafted by Algeria, but that the United States, one of five permanent members of the council with veto power, blocked it, seeking more information about the incident. The text of the draft resolution was not available.

"We don't have all the facts on the ground – that's the problem," The AP quoted the deputy U.S. ambassador,

Robert Wood, as saying.

Israeli officials said troops were escorting trucks delivering aid to Gaza City last Thursday when hundreds of Palestinians, who global health officials say are on the verge of a famine caused by the Israel-Hamas war, rushed toward the aid.

Hamas officials said that more than 100 Palestinians were killed in the ensuing melee, and blamed Israeli gunfire. Israeli officials say scant gunfire fired as warnings were responsible for 10 Palestinian casualties but said the vast majority of the deaths happened because of a chaotic stampede that they could not easily control.

The incident came as the Palestinian death toll topped 30,000 in the war launched when Hamas terrorists mas-



Serving our community for decades with a broad range of Personal and Business Legal Services including Real Estate, Business Transactions, Wills, Trusts and Estate Planning and sacred approximately 1,200 Israelis on Oct. 7, and took more than 250 hostage. U.S. President Joe Biden and Middle Eastern countries are working to bring about a temporary ceasefire to free more than 130 hostages still held by Hamas in exchange for Palestinian security prisoners, and to facilitate the delivery of much needed relief to the strip.

World leaders stepped up their calls for a ceasefire in the wake of the mass deaths, with some blaming Israel for what happened.

"Deep indignation at the images coming from Gaza where civilians have been targeted by Israeli soldiers," French President Emmanuel Macron, who had initially been strongly supportive of Israel in the war, said on social media. "I express my strongest condemnation of these shootings and call for truth, justice, and respect for international law."

"Deeply disturbed by images from Gaza," Ursula von der Leyen, the European Commission president, said on social media. "Every effort must be made to investigate what happened and ensure transparency. Humanitarian aid is a lifeline for those in need and access to it must be ensured. We stand by civilians, urging their protection in line with international law."

Even if Israel releases persuasive evidence that most of the deaths were the result of a stampede and not gunfire, the incident is likely to step up calls on Israel to allow in more efforts to secure Gaza Palestinians.

Israel has emphasized the chaos the soldiers faced, releasing drone footage of people rushing toward the food delivery.

Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari, the IDF spokesman, released an impassioned five-minute address in English arguing that the IDF troops were dedicated to the humanitarian aim of safely delivering the relief.

"The Israel Defense Forces operate according to the rules of engagement and the international law," he said. "No IDF strike was conducted towards the aid convoy. I want to repeat that: No IDF strike was conducted towards the aid convoy. On the contrary, the IDF was there conducting a humanitarian operation to secure the humanitarian corridor and allow the aid convoy to reach its designated distribution point so that the humanitarian aid could reach Gazan civilians in the north that are in need." **HW**

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'Definitely Antisemitic' Amy Winehouse Statue Vandalism in London



Amy Winehouse sculpture at Camden Market in London. Source: Google Street View.

(JNS) – A sculpture of Amy Winehouse in the town of Camden, in northern London, was defaced over last weekend with a Palestinian flag sticker the life-sized work was unveiled on what would have been the artist's 31st birthday.

The memorial is located in the Stables

Litigation in State and Federal Courts.

Attorneys

Michael D. Kaplan Neil Harkavy Jason D. Salomon Jason M. Goldstein Laura Kessler Mason Hillary Weiss Samuels Jeremiah McGuire Sorrelle Dattel Senior Counsel Teresa M. Bernhardt

> Of Counsel Laurie A. Cooper Steve R. Graber Alan L. Kosten

Ronald M. Harkavy (Retired) Raymond Shainberg (1930-2018) Allen Dunstan (1948-2017)

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901.761.1263 6060 Poplar Ave STE 140, Memphis, TN 38119 www.harkavyshainberg.com covering the late Jewish singer's Star of David necklace.

"This is disgusting. Amy Winehouse was a famous Jewish singer who was proud of her Jewish heritage," wrote the National Jewish Assembly in the United Kingdom. "To put a Palestine sticker over her Star of David is definitely antisemitic."

"Now people might understand why Jews are skeptical and worried [about] wearing their Star of David in public," the group added.

The Campaign Against Antisemitism wrote that it had contacted Camden Market, the site of the statue, and was told the sticker would be removed.

"When your movement goes after Jewish symbols and tries to erase Jews, maybe you should ask yourself: What are you actually supporting?" wrote StandWithUs.

The artist who made the sculpture, Scott Eaton, notes on his website that Market in Camden, London, - Amy's home for many years," according to the artist's site. "The piece was commissioned by Mitch Winehouse, and I hope is a fitting tribute from a father to his daughter. I have immense respect for Amy as an artist and wish she was still making music."

Winehouse (1983-2011) "skyrocketed to fame as a result of the critically acclaimed multiple Grammy Award-winning album Back to Black (2006)," per Britannica. The singer's "tempestuous love life, erratic behavior and substance-abuse problems stalled her recording career even as they made her a favorite subject of tabloid journalism."

"They admire the Jews so much that they are trying to claim that they are Palestinians," wrote Avi Nir-Feldklein, Israeli ambassador to Norway and Iceland. "First, they turned Jesus to be a Palestinian, now Amy Winehouse. Who should be next? Albert Einstein?" **HW**

Security Council Members Agree Gazans are Malnourished, Disagree on Blame



The Security Council Chamber, Nov. 16, 2023. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

By Mike Wagenheim

(JNS) – While a senior U.N. aid official said last Tuesday that a quarter of the Gazan population is one step away from famine, Israel and the United States laid blame at the feet of the United Nations and Hamas, respectively.

The U.N. Security Council met last Tuesday afternoon to discuss food insecurity in Gaza. Much of the enclave's agricultural and food production infrastructure has been severely impacted by the war between Israel and Hamas.

But Robert Wood, the U.S. deputy ambassador to the United Nations, told reporters that ultimately, Hamas is responsible for the suffering in Gaza.

"It lies with Hamas because Hamas started this on Oct. 7 in its invasion," said Wood. "Now we have to deal with the aftermath of that. And the important thing, as we've said over and over again, is getting assistance scaled up."

But Ramesh Rajasingham, coordination director of the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, told the council that, "Very little will be possible while hostilities continue and while there is a risk that they will spread into the overcrowded areas in the south of Gaza.

We therefore reiterate our call for a ceasefire."

Israel, though, claimed the main barrier to scaled-up aid is the United Nations itself.

Jonathan Miller, Israel's U.N. deputy ambassador, told the Security Council that his delegation is fully committed to ramping up the flow and delivery of humanitarian assistance in Gaza, including the easing of the entry of aid at the Kerem Shalom and Rafah crossings.

He also said that the opening of additional border crossings is under discussion – something Washington is pushing for, according to Wood.

"Simply put, Israel must do more," Wood told the council. "We continue to call on Israel to improve deconfliction procedures to ensure aid can move safely and securely."

Miller pushed back on assertions by U.N. officials and some member states that Israel is choking off the food supply to Gazans, describing them as attempts to spread Hamas lies and shift the blame onto Israel for inefficient distribution methods.

"Israel has been clear in its policies. There is absolutely no limit, and I repeat, there is no limit to the amount of humanitarian aid that can be sent to the civilian population of Gaza," said Miller, adding that Israel approves most aid requests.

"These are the facts. No one can claim otherwise," said Miller, pointing to some 20 bakeries in Gaza that he said are currently producing more than two million pita breads a day.

Miller was adamant that Israel is not the entity holding up the lines of trucks waiting at Gaza's borders with Egypt and Israel, pointing to the U.N.'s inefficiencies in routing the deliveries and the diversion of aid into the hands of Hamas.

Vassily Nebenzia, Moscow's U.N. envoy, told the Security Council that "it is high time" to impose sanctions on Israel for obstructing the delivery of humanitarian aid. Nebenzia also blasted a U.S.-circulated draft resolution calling for a ceasefire once a diplomatic agreement is reached, and in tandem with the release of hostages held in Gaza.

According to Nebenzia, the text provides "another 'license to kill' Palestinian civilians, which the United States intends to issue to Israel under UNSC authority."

Wood countered that Russia is in a poor position to speak while its assault on Ukraine continues. Wood told reporters that the U.S. mission is holding discussions about the feedback it has received from council members on its draft resolution and that there is no time frame for bringing it up for a vote.

"We're going to work to find some common language that everyone can support," said Wood, who, with the U.S. mission, has vetoed three Security Council resolutions that would have imposed a ceasefire on Israel.

In response to a question from JNS, Slovenia's U.N. ambassador said that while he would leave discussions on specific areas of disagreement for the council chambers, there are "a few areas" where he thinks the council will "need to have additional work on the technical" aspects of the U.S. draft resolution.

"Of course, everything starts with a ceasefire. And, of course, we hope that the efforts on the ground will give results so that we have hostages released and we have a ceasefire," said Boštjan Malovrh. "But no matter what happens on the ground, I think we need to try once again before the beginning of Ramadan to pass a resolution." **HW**







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ISM Indexes Watch for Trouble on Both Sides of the Economy

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

Economists and investors pay attention to the Institute for Supply Management (ISM) Manufacturing Purchasing Managers Index (PMI) not only for information about the health of U.S. factories but also for clues about demand in the national economy. A reading below 50% generally means that manufacturing activity is contracting, and a reading below 48.7% indicates that the overall economy is contracting along with it.

In October 2023, the Manufacturing PMI registered a disappointing 46.7%. It was the twelfth consecutive month of contraction.¹ Manufacturers faced pricing pressures due to inflation, while rising borrowing costs cut into customer demand.²

Two types of business activity

The ISM has two different composite indexes (Manufacturing PMI and Services PMI), each calculated from corresponding report data. Both monthly reports are based on recent data from surveys of hundreds of purchasing and supply executives nationwide.

The Manufacturing PMI follows changes in production, new orders, employment, supplier deliveries, and inventories from month to month. It represents current business conditions for the overall manufacturing sector, which ISM breaks down into distinct industries and weights according to their contribution to gross domestic product (GDP). The six largest subsectors are Computer & Electronic Products; Chemical Products; Food, Beverage & Tobacco Products; Transportation Equipment; Machinery; and Petroleum & Coal Products.

The Services PMI tracks business activity, new orders, employment, and supplier deliveries for the service sector. The biggest players among the ISM's service industries are Real Estate, Rental & Leasing; Government; Professional, Scientific & Technical Services; Health Care & Social Assistance; Information; and Finance & Insurance.

Manufacturing contractions have often preceded recessions – but they don't always mean an economic downturn is imminent. There have been times (most recently in 2016 and 2018) when growth in the much-larger services sector has helped the U.S. economy weather periods of weakness in manufacturing. In contrast to the Manufacturing PMI, the Services PMI signaled expansion (51.8%) for the tenth straight month in October 2023.³

Both ISM indexes are widely followed because they are generally considered to be leading economic indicators that can help businesses and investors make more informed decisions. Increases are often regarded as good news because they point to the potential for faster economic growth, larger corporate profits, and higher stock prices, but the reverse is also true for index declines. As a result, the financial markets may overreact to positive or negative reports, especially when the results are surprising.

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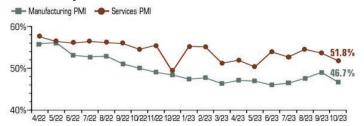
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We are pleased to announce that Mike Stein, Managing Director – Investments was recognized on the 2023 Forbes Best-In-State Wealth Advisors List. This recognition serves as a reminder that we are committed to working every day toward the financial success of our clients.

Let's Connect

Indexes Agree to Disagree on Growth

In 2023, the Manufacturing PMI and Services PMI seemed to predict different fates for the U.S. economy.



Source: Institute for Supply Management, 2023

Supply chain reshoring

Expanding globalization has changed the structure of the U.S. economy since the late 1970s, when manufacturing accounted for about 21% of the U.S. GDP. Factory production is now a smaller part of the U.S. economy – roughly 11% of GDP – and it employs fewer workers than it did in the past.⁴ The number of U.S. manufacturing employees peaked at about 19.5 million in 1979, and decreased to 13 million by the beginning of $2023.^{5}$

The offshoring of production to China and other countries with cheaper labor, and investment in new industrial technology (including automation) are common business practices that reduce the ranks of factory workers in America.

However, the pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in global supply chains, prompting many businesses to move some production back to the United States, a trend called reshoring. And some industries (such as semiconductors and batteries) have been offered federal subsidies to help build costly new facilities in the United States. In 2022, companies were expected to reshore an all-time high of nearly 350,000 jobs, up from 265,000 in 2021 – and more than 50 times the amount (6,000) in 2010.⁶

All investing involves risk, including the possible loss of principal, and there is no guarantee that any investment strategy will be successful. Projections are based on current conditions, are subject to change, and may not come to pass.

1, 3) Institute for Supply Management, 2023

2) Reuters, May 1, 2023

- 4) U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2023
- 5) U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023

6) *The Wall Street Journal*, August 23, 2023

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Jewish Professor Who Quit MIT Over its Handling of Antisemitism Accepts Post at Yeshiva University

By Luke Tress

(New York Jewish Week) – A Jewish professor who resigned from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology over its handling of antisemitism has started teaching at New York's Yeshiva University.

Mauricio Karchmer, a computer scientist, announced last month that he was quitting as an MIT professor after five years. He attributed his decision to the university's response to antisemitism following Hamas' Oct. 7 attack on Israel.

"During a time when the Jewish and Israeli students, staff and faculty were particularly vulnerable, instead of offering the support they needed, the broader MIT community exhibited open hostility towards them," Karchmer wrote in a LinkedIn post announcing his resignation.

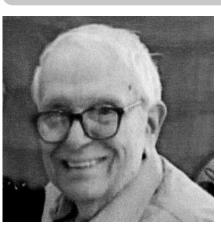
"Some areas of study at MIT seem to prioritize promoting a specific worldview over teaching critical thinking skills. This seems to have been institutionalized in many of MIT's departments and programs," Karchmer added.

Now, weeks later, Karchmer has landed at Y.U., the flagship Modern Orthodox institution located in Manhattan. The move comes as Jewish and Israeli educational institutions have made a play for Jewish students in light of widespread concern about campus antisemitism. Y.U.'s announcement of Karchmer's arrival referred to the school as a "safe haven."

The university said in a statement that the dean of Y.U.'s business school, Noam Wasserman, offered Karchmer a position as a visiting professor immediately after Karchmer resigned from MIT. Karchmer will start teaching two classes this week – portfolio management, and math for computer science.

"It is a privilege to welcome Dr. Karchmer to our faculty," Y.U. President Ari Berman wrote on LinkedIn. "As a top tier professor in his field and a leader who lives his values with integrity and authenticity, he is a role model to us all."

Karchmer's resignation from MIT came weeks after a congressional hearing where MIT President Sally Kornbluth said calling for the genocide of Jews did not necessarily violate campus policies. Writing about his resignation from his "dream job" in the Free Press, Karchmer also listed other factors: He



Joe Aron Goldstein

Joe Aron Goldstein, beloved husband of Judith Goldstein; dear stepfather and father-in-law of Edward Siegel (Rose Rosen), Sandra Weitkamp (Todd) and Michael Siegel (Karen); dear grandfather of Bianca Rogen (Melissa), Tanya Spivey (Olin), Kimberly Weitkamp, Nicole Caruso (Daniel), Ariel Mallett (Seth) and Benjamin Siegel; dear great-grandfather of Emmett Rogen and Benjamin Spivey; dear brother of the late Bennie Avrom Goldstein and late Frances Rae Goldstein; dear brother-inlaw of Richard Caen (Dale); our dear uncle, cousin and friend.

Joe passed away on February 19, 2024, in St. Louis, Mo. A funeral service was held on February 22 at Berger Memorial Chapel with interment at B'nai Amoona Cemetery.

Memorial contributions preferred to Magen David Adom or Stand with Us Israel Defense League. Please visit bergermemorialchapel.com for more information. **HW**

DEADLINES FOR STORIES AND ADS WEDNESDAY AT 5 P.M.

OBITUARIES



Joan Milman

Joan Milman, a pioneering force in the realms of commercial real estate and residential real estate technology, passed away peacefully on February 3, 2024, at Baptist Reynold Hospice House in Collierville, Tenn. She was a beloved wife, mother, grandmother, daughter, sister and friend, leaving behind a legacy of innovation, compassion and love.

Born on November 5, 1947, in Atlantic City, N.J., Joan was the daughter of Simon and Sara Josephson. She was raised in the vibrant atmosphere of Atlantic City and graduated with distinction from Atlantic City High School before pursuing higher education at Goucher College and the University of Pennsylvania, where she excelled academically and developed a passion for entrepreneurship.

Joan's professional journey was marked by groundbreaking achievements. She blazed trails in the commercial real estate sector, demonstrating unparalleled vision and acumen. Her entrepreneurial spirit led her to help cofound an online residential real estate technology platform, revolutionizing the industry with a patented client management system that streamlined processes and enhanced user experiences.

In addition to her remarkable career, Joan cherished her role as a devoted wife to Robert Milman. Their partnership was a testament to enduring love,

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Editor's Note:

Elizabeth Coplon sent this letter to Mayor Young and cc'd news outlets in Memphis. Below is her letter and a reponse from the mayor's office.

Mayor Young,

I am writing to express my deep concern and disappointment regarding the events that unfolded on Saturday evening on one of the major bridges connecting Arkansas and Memphis.

The display by a group of Hamas supporters on the bridge, a vital intersection for the city, was nothing short of embarrassing. This bridge serves as a critical passage for thousands of people, including those heading to life-saving treatment at LeBonheur and St. Jude Hospital. The disruption caused not only inconvenience but also raised serious safety concerns for both pedestrians and drivers. It is disheartening that our city, already struggling in the fight against crime and facing challenges in the education system, had such a glaring lapse in handling this situation. Governor Sanders of Arkansas took swift action to restore traffic flow, recognizing the urgency of the matter. On our side, the response was far from satisfactory. The presence of pedestrians on the bridge is illegal and poses a significant safety hazard for vehicles. It is perplexing that no immediate arrests were made, allowing the individuals to carry out their actions without consequence. This not only undermined the authority

of law but also portrayed the citizens as vulnerable and the city as unprepared.

This incident marks the second major strike in your second month as mayor. The first was the decision to retain Chief Davis, who, in the eyes of most, has lost the confidence of the city and jeopardized the safety of its citizens. The alarming statistics of 14,000 reported car thefts in a year underscore the urgency of addressing the issues within our law enforcement leadership.

The gravity of the situation is further heightened by the fact that your office was aware of the impending demonstramutual respect and unwavering support. Together, they built a life filled with joy, laughter, and shared dreams.

Joan's greatest source of pride and joy were her two sons, Scott Milman of Greensboro, N.C., and Ken Milman of Memphis, Tenn. She poured her heart and soul into nurturing and guiding them, instilling in them the "Milmanist" values of integrity, resilience and compassion that she held dear. Joan's love extended to her brother, Lawrence Josephson (Jean), of Tampa, Fla., with whom she shared countless cherished memories and a bond that transcended distance and time. She also held a special place in her heart for Ken's wife, Marcy, the daughter she never had.

As a doting grandmother to her beloved granddaughters, Mira, Sarina and Elliana, Joan found immense happiness and fulfillment. She delighted in their laughter and cherished every moment spent in their company. Her grandchildren loved seeing her in attendance at every play, dance recital, cheerleading competition, Thanksgiving meal or other major events in their lives.

A native of Winston-Salem, N.C., Joan Milman's legacy will endure through the lives she touched, the hearts she uplifted, and the contributions she made to her community and industry. Joan was a role model for how to balance success across a career, family and other aspects of her life. She will be deeply missed by all who had the privilege of knowing her, but her spirit will live on in the memories and legacies she leaves behind.

In lieu of flowers, the family kindly requests donations be made to the Memphis Jewish Community Center, or Temple Emanuel of Greensboro, N.C., in Joan's honor.

A celebration of Joan's life will be held at a later date in Winston-Salem, where friends and loved ones will be able to gather to honor her memory and share stories of her remarkable life. **HW**

Jewish community that you'd ensure our safety and keep antisemitism out of our community. Seeing flags depicting the faces of Hamas leaders making a mockery of us serves as a harsh awakening, revealing these promises may have been nothing more than a charade for public approval.

I urge your office to issue a statement acknowledging the seriousness of the situation and committing to a thorough investigation. The involvement of individuals promoting terrorism on our city's infrastructure demands swift and decisive action. We cannot afford the mistakes of a sitting mayor, and it is imperative that immediate steps are taken to address these concerns seriously. *Sincerely, Elizabeth Coplon*

said the university had failed to issue a statement in support of Jews and Israelis after Oct. 7, and did not respond adequately to hardline anti-Israel rhetoric during campus protests.

The week that Karchmer resigned, Kornbluth sent a message to the MIT community promising to improve how the school handled student misconduct allegations. She also vowed to ensure that the school's new Diversity, Equity and Inclusion director addressed antisemitism and Islamophobia and said the administration would ask students "targeted questions" about their experiences with antisemitism. She wrote that she hoped to promote a new "shared understanding of the rights and responsibilities of free expression."

Karchmer taught at MIT from 1989 to 1995, then returned to the university in 2019 after working in the financial sector. He holds a PhD from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. **HW** tion for a week. Allowing a group of individuals to overtake a major bridge, especially after having prior knowledge, raises serious questions about the effectiveness of the city's leadership.

On October 7th, Hamas terrorists, with the help of thousands of Palestinians, invaded Israel to murder, rape, behead, burn, and mutilate as many Israelis as they could. In the process, they took hundreds, including Americans as young as four, hostage back to Gaza. These terrorists filmed it all for the world to see. This event will go down as one of the worst acts of war crimes against humanity in modern history, as it was the single bloodiest day for Jews since the Holocaust.

While comprising only 2% of the U.S. population, the Jewish community disproportionately bears the brunt of hate crimes, accounting for a staggering 60% of such incidents. A few months ago, you and Chief Davis pledged to the In full transparency, I have bcc'd every local news outlet to this email to express my concern and disappointment with the events that unfolded.

From Mayor Young:

We appreciate the quick response by MPD, TN Highway Patrol, Shelby County Sheriff's office, and our Arkansas law enforcement partners in working together to ensure a peaceful resolution and to restore traffic flow.

My concern during this, and any protest, is for the safety of all of our residents - the danger of protesting on any active street or bridge is real. I support peaceful protests in safe spaces.

/staff HW

Birthright Parents: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Embrace My Kid's Wartime Trip to Israel



Gillian Zitrin, top, with a friend at an Israeli farm doing agricultural volunteering on their Birthright Israel trip, January 2024. Courtesy: Gillian Zitrin

By Elana Sztokman

When Gloria Solomon was living in London's suburbs with her husband and four sons, she cautioned her boys against wearing kippahs in the streets.

Their Jewish school bus was being stoned multiple times a week, and by 2005 the antisemitism was so overwhelming that she and her family decided to pick up and move to Florida. They always felt safe in their new U.S. home – until Oct. 7.

Now, she says, "we feel more vulnerable here than we do in Israel."

When Solomon's youngest son, Noah, 25, told his parents of his plans to go on a Birthright Israel trip in January, Solomon's first response was anxiety. But then she reconsidered.

"I said, 'If you want to go, go with my blessing," she recalled.

Despite the apparent dangers of traveling to a country at war, Solomon said she had faith that Birthright – the program that over 23 years has brought more than 850,000 young Jews to Israel on free 10day trips – was doing everything necessary to ensure its trips were safe.

Other parents in her community in Florida expressed misgivings, but Solomon said that being a Jew right now in London or Miami is more dangerous than being in Israel – and that it's important for Diaspora Jews to travel to Israel at this particular difficult moment.

"One of the best experiences my son had was volunteering on a farm," Solomon said about a day her son spent harvesting fruit that had gone unpicked because many of Israel's foreign agricultural laborers left after Oct. 7. "We are all big tree huggers in our family, and he said to me with such a depth of sadness that the fruit was rotting on the ground. He said it was heartbreaking because they don't have the physical manpower to pick it and do what needs to be done. I could see how that affected him. It hit home."

Since Oct. 7, some 500 young adults have gone on Birthright Israel's free group trips to Israel for eligible Jewish 18-26-year-olds, and 500 more are scheduled to arrive in March and April. While some participants have had to lobby their parents for permission to go, many parents say they find their adult children's choice heartening – and that they're seeing them return from their experiences newly motivated and inspired.

Debra Asher-Zitrin, 53, was supportive when her daughter, Gillian, decided to go on a Birthright trip in January. But the mother of three who works as a Jewish educator teaching Holocaust studies at Kol Ami synagogue in White Plains, New York, fielded deep concerns from her own parents. Her mother, a 79-yearold New York City schoolteacher who has never been to Israel and has no ties to Israel or relationships with Israelis, said it was a bad idea.

The family's youngest daughter, Adena, 13, was also concerned. She was in touch with a 13-year-old friend from Kfar Aza, one of the Israeli communities that had been the site of a massacre on Oct. 7, and was frightened by the notion of Gillian traveling to Israel.

Asher-Zitrin talked with Gillian about their concerns. Gillian, a 21-year-old senior at Skidmore College, said she felt uncomfortable on her own campus, where anti-Israel demonstrations by pro-Palestinian groups had left her feeling deflated. That convinced Asher-Zitrin, who threw her weight behind Gillian's decision to fly to Israel.

"We tried to explain to my parents how important it was that Gillian be allowed to go right now," Asher-Zitrin said. "It's very easy to go to Israel when the region is secure. But it's more important as an American Jew to go now when Israel is not being portrayed as the most stable and secure location."

To address parents' concerns, Birthright held a Zoom meeting with parents to discuss security protocols. Most tour highlights are the same as on Birthright trips during regular times, including places like Masada, Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, but the tours now exclude stops in the Golan Heights or anywhere considered unsafe.

"I felt very comfortable once Birthright explained the situation," Asher-Zitrin said. She was in regular contact with her daughter throughout the trip and always knew where the group was and what they were doing. "Gillian kept making me feel more and more comfortable that this was the best decision that we made as a family."

When Zehava Fishman's 23-yearold son, Alon, said he wanted to go on a Birthright trip in January, she was opposed. Zehava, 50, who was born in Israel and moved to New York in 2001 and remembers the feeling of being under rocket attack.

"I was 16 years old during the Gulf War," she recalled, "when we had to run to the safe rooms and then sit there with masks on for hours. It's not good. I didn't want him to experience that."

But Alon's father, Zalman (Eugene) Fishman, felt differently.

"The moment that tragedy happened – I can't talk about it too much because I get very emotional – I told my son that if I were him, I would be there not tomorrow but yesterday," said Zalman, 51, the son of a Holocaust survivor. "There is so much you can do with your heart and your soul, to heal the wounded, to talk to them."

Eventually, he convinced his wife to support Alon's decision. It wasn't until Alon returned from his trip, newly energized about Israel and his Jewish identity, that it was clear to his parents that they'd made the right decision in supporting the trip.

"I see much difference in Alon's behavior and relationship with Judaism since he came back," Zalman said, noting that Alon since has started coming with his father to synagogue on Friday nights. "He came back more Jewishly connected," observed his mother.

Many Birthright participants say that the elements of their trips connected to Israel's current situation are what they've found most meaningful and uplifting. In addition to typical trip activities like hiking, visiting historical sites and swimming in the Dead Sea, groups are meeting with families of Israel's hostages, talking with people affected by the war and volunteering in food rescue.

"The trip was amazing," said Gillian Zitrin. "I loved experiencing Israeli culture – the food, the Kotel, speaking to Israelis."

Her mother noted how Gillian returned from her trip newly motivated to stand up for Israel on campus.

"For Gillian, going to Israel on Birthright has completely empowered her and helped her communicate with people who are not informed about the history of the State of Israel," Asher-Zitrin said. "She feels like she can now have dialogue with people on the other side in a more concrete way and less emotional way."

Solomon said her son, Noah, came back already making preparations for another trip to Israel.

"Every single person I know who went came back with only positive experiences and enjoyed the entire encounter," Zehava Fishman said. "I recommend everyone to go. There is so much to see in Israel, and we have a wonderful country."

This story was sponsored by and produced in partnership with Birthright Israel, which aims to give every young Jewish adult around the world the opportunity to visit Israel on an educational trip. This article was produced by JTA's native content team. **HW**

From Gaza to Jerusalem



the Hostages."

"I'm here ... standing. But my soul is left behind, somewhere among the trees around us that were my hiding place for so many hours," he added.

Cohen came to the Supernova festival with four friends, including Idan Hermati and Ron Zarfati, who were among the 360 revelers murdered by Hamas that day. Evyatar David and Guy Dalal were kidnapped and remain in Gaza 145 days later. participants will stop in communities to take part in a variety of ceremonies.

"We're counting the days, 145 today. And who would have thought Omer, we still haven't succeeded in bringing you back. And we're out of words, out of strength," said Ronen and Orna Neutra, parents of Long Island native Omer Hamas at the cost of what they deem to be excessive concessions, took part in a five-day cross-country march titled "Victory March: Keep Going Until IDF Victory."

The march began at Kibbutz Zikim, outside the northern Gaza Strip, culminated at a rally in Jerusalem, and was organized by Reservists Until Victory (Mahal HaMiluimnikim), a group founded by reserve soldiers released after serving in the Gaza Strip and at Israel's border with Lebanon since Oct. 7. Amid efforts to reach a hostage-release agreement ahead of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, Israel's War Cabinet last Saturday agreed to dispatch a delegation to Doha, Qatar, after "significant progress" was reported at the hostage negotiations in Paris. U.S. President Joe Biden expressed hope this week that a deal with Hamas could be reached within a week. "My national security advisor tells me that we're close. We're close. We're not done yet," said Biden. "My hope is by next Monday, we'll have a ceasefire." However, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu emphasized last week that while Israel was prepared "to go far" to secure the hostages' release, it was not prepared to pay any price. HW

Former captive Sharon Aloni-Cunio. whose husband, David, remains in Gaza, speaks ahead of the march at Kibbutz Re'im, Feb. 28, 2024. Credit: The Hostage and Missing Families Forum.

By Amelie Botbol

(JNS) – Families of hostages held by Hamas in Gaza embarked on a four-day march last Wednesday, from Kibbutz Re'im near the Strip to Jerusalem's Paris Square.

"Right here, where we stand, I survived the Shoah we went through on October 7 at the 'Nova' festival and in the 'Gaza envelope' region," Niv Cohen, a Supernova music festival survivor, said at a press conference in Re'im ahead of the march, being held under the banner of "United for the Release of Former hostage Sharon Aloni-Cunio said, "The previous march was before our release, I didn't get to participate in it. When I returned, they showed me pictures and I was moved to see how much our people rallied around it." She was freed on Nov. 27 as part of a ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas in which 105 hostages were released.

Aloni-Cunio, 34, was released along with her twin daughters, Emma and Yuli, 3, her daughter Emilia, 5, and her sister Danielle Aloni, 44. Aloni-Cunio's husband, David Cunio, 34, remains in Hamas captivity.

"I ask all of Israel to march with me for my husband's release and that of all the hostages," Aloni-Cunio said.

While marching across the country,

Neutra.

"We call on the public, on our families, on our friends, to join us on this march of hope from Gaza to Jerusalem," they said.

The families of the captives will hold a ceremony at the rebuilt police station in Sderot and end Wednesday's leg of the march at Carmim Sports Hall in Kiryat Gat.

"March with us for the hostages. No one should be left behind. The State of Israel cannot be fully restored without securing the release of all the hostages, the living and the murdered," Ronen and Orna Neutra said.

An earlier rally

This cross-country march isn't the first to take place in the months following Hamas's Oct. 7 massacre of some 1,200 people.

Earlier this month, reservist soldiers and families of hostages held in Gaza who oppose reaching an agreement with

Escaping Gaza, for Fun: Israelis Take to 'Escape Rooms' that Mimic War



Arik Turkenich outside his Tel Aviv escape room business. He lets all players win because, he said, Israelis "can't afford losing." Credit: Susan Greene

This originally appeared on Forward, reprinted with permission.

TEL AVIV – You're an Israeli agent blindfolded, hands on the shoulders of a comrade in front of you – who is also blindfolded, hands on the shoulders of the one in front of them.

You shuffle together through a maze of doors until you're allowed to remove the kaffiyehs from your eyes. You find yourselves packed into a dark apartment in Gaza City, a TV blaring news in Arabic.

The Al Jazeera broadcast cuts to a video message from your commander, speaking in Hebrew: You have two minutes to disguise yourselves as Palestinians, he says, then 58 to make your way to Al-Shifa Hospital and through a tunnel beneath it to neutralize a chemical bomb. If you're caught, Israel will deny any connection to you. And if you fail, a terrorist will plant the bomb in Israel.

"God bless," the commander says solemnly. "Come on! Go! Go!"

Welcome to "Fauda: Explosive Lab," an escape room on Tel Aviv's Allenby Street, 45 miles and seemingly a world away from the actual tunnel Israeli forces discovered in November around the real Al-Shifa Hospital.

Arik Turkenich, a businessman, built this live-action role-playing experience back in 2016, shortly after the debut of "Fauda," the hit Netflix show. He consulted with the show's creators on the design, and arranged for its star, Lior Raz, to play the commander.

Business boomed as "Fauda" gained fans in Israel and across the globe. At about \$33 a head, "Fauda: Explosive Lab" was popular for corporate team-building, bachelor parties and tourists alike.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, business flatlined after Oct. 7, as tourism dried up and Israelis were traumatized by Hamas having killed 1,200 people and abducted 250 to Gaza spaces similar to those in Turkenich's escape room.

But a trickle of customers began to filter back in January, and Turkenich said most are choosing the Gaza scenario rather than his other rooms – one based on a J.R.R. Tolkien-style quest and the other on a plane crash in a South American rainforest.

One group that came were evacuees from a community near the Lebanese border. There was a unit of Israeli soldiers who arrived in uniform with their commander. And, to Turkenich's surprise, the wife of a reservist who recently returned from Gaza booked the Fauda room for their first night out together.

"It's funny," he said, in a funny-not-funny sort of way. "I thought at the beginning I should close it. I thought who the hell would want to play 'Fauda' now? But Israelis, you know, they're unpredictable."

Escape rooms started in Japan in 2007, and there are now about 150,000

worldwide. Gai Bosco, an Israeli who has designed about 250 of them, said that a decade ago, Israel had 400 escape rooms, or one for every 20,000 people – the highest per capita ratio in the world. Now there are 186, he said, keeping the country in the top 10.

"They're often targeted to families and we're a family-oriented country," Bosco said by way of explanation. "And, of course, there's a high need here for escapism."

Typically, these role-play rooms challenge groups of up to 20 to "escape" some scenario by solving a series of riddles and puzzles, using props, costumes, lights and effects around a storyline involving, say, aliens, monsters, gangsters or serial killers.

Turkenich is not alone among Israeli operators in also offering closer-tohome scenarios. Karen Almog, who owns escape room complexes in Raanana and Petach Tikva, offers "Behind Enemy Lines," which takes place in Iran and involves a nuclear weapon. She has been soul-searching since the Gaza war started about whether pretending to trap customers in a room under fake duress is an ethical way to eke out a living.

"Of course I want the business back," she said, "but I want the hostages back even more and want to avoid seeming insensitive to the traumas my country is facing."

An escape room in the northern city of Tsfat also has a uniquely Israeli offering – though it has nothing to do with the Palestinian conflict. Instead, it pokes fun at Israel's notoriously opaque bureaucracy: Your friend is out of town, it begins, and needs your help proving to the government that he owns his apartment.

The operators said last summer was their most successful season since opening in 2018. But with Hezbollah, the Lebanese Shiite militia, launching missiles at Israel's north, all groups canceled their bookings between Oct. 7 and the end of November. So they have been selling a series of video games about Israeli history, Judaism and Jewish scripture to make up the income.

Turkenich, too, has pivoted, by re-promoting a play-at-home version of "Fauda – Explosive Lab" he created during the 2020 pandemic lockdown. Online sales of the game rose by about half after Oct. 7.

"I think there are people sitting there feeling angry," he said. "They're wanting to do something to help, they're wanting to kick some Arabs' ass."

"In times of war, you feel like fighting."

He sent a few dozen games to the IDF and got back a plaque showing off-duty soldiers playing the gamified version of the war that has, over the past four months, killed more than 28,000, according to the Gaza healthy ministry.

The unit of uniformed soldiers who came to his Tel Aviv escape room in January found their way to the facsimile of Al-Shifa's emergency room, which the IDF had raided in real life two months earlier. From the fake ER, players have to figure out how to open a trap door to a Hamas command center. They use guns stashed there to kill off a cadre of fighters shooting at them through a window. Then they wind their way through a dark, underground tunnel to dismantle the chemical bomb.

Afterwards, the escape room employees asked the IDF soldiers if they felt afraid entering the hospital.

"They said no," Turkenich recounted, "because they were the ones who already were killing all the terrorists in the hospital and around it."

Last Thursday, IDF forces raided the Nasser Medical Complex in Khan Younis, citing intelligence reports that hostages had been held there.

"We didn't think that in the most extreme scenario, they would use these tunnels to hide our people, our sisters and brothers who are still there," Turkenich said. "I'm sure for many, this place is extremely sensitive and uncomfortable," he added of his escape room. "It's a nightmare come true."

Escape-room experts say participants generally "win" about 30% to 40% of the time. But Turkenich always makes sure his customers complete their mission.

"Everyone in Israel thinks they're so smart and they, you know, blame the operator if they don't win," he said.

"Because of our history, we have to win because we can't afford losing." **HW**

Jewish, Israeli Students Afraid to Go to Berkeley Schools, Federal Complaint Alleges



Jewish and Israeli students are often afraid to go to school," the complaint adds.

"The eruption of antisemitism in

"The eruption of antisemitism in Berkeley's elementary and high schools is like nothing I've ever seen before," said Kenneth Marcus, chairman of the Brandeis Center.

Berkeley High School in Berkeley, Calif. Credit: Coro via Wikimedia Commons.

(JNS) – Enduring "Kill the Jews" statements from peers. Being asked what their number is, "referring to numbers tattooed on Jews during the Holocaust." Teacher-prompted walk-outs in support of Hamas terrorists. A teacher directing second-graders to write, "Stop bombing babies" on sticky notes displayed around the school.

These are some of the allegations against the Berkeley Unified School Dis-

trict in a Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law and Anti-Defamation League complaint filed last Wednesday with the U.S. Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights.

The complaint further alleges that "peer-on-peer antisemitic bullying has escalated, as students are emboldened to emulate their teachers and perpetuate the hostility against their Jewish classmates." The situation "is so bad that Berkeley's elementary and high schools is like nothing I've ever seen before," said Kenneth L. Marcus, chairman of the Brandeis Center.

The California school district, which traces its history back 145 years, serves 9,400 students in 11 public elementary schools, three middle schools and a comprehensive and an alternative high school, per its website. It also operates three preschools and an adult school.

The district states that taking pride in its diversity and treating one another respectfully and acting with integrity are among its values.

The school district is accused of doing the opposite.

"It is dangerous enough to see faculty fanning the flames of antisemitism on college campuses, but to see teachers inciting hate in the youngest of grades while Berkeley administrators sit idly by as it continues to escalate by the day is reprehensible," Marcus said. "Where is the accountability? Where are the people who are supposed to protect and educate students?"

Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO and national director of the ADL, said that there is "no more solemn or basic obligation than protecting our children from the moment when they walk into the doors of their schools.

"To fail so monumentally that children feel forced to hide their Jewish identity for fear of reprisal is downright shocking," he added. "We must demand more from our educational leaders." **HW**

Comedian Richard Lewis, Dark Prince of Jewish Neurosis, Dies at 76



Richard Lewis and Larry David in an episode of "Curb Your Enthusiasm." Credit: HBO

By Andrew Silow-Carroll

(JTA) – Comedian Richard Lewis, who parlayed his neurotic Jewish personality and self-deprecating humor into a 50-year career as a standup and actor, died last Wednesday. He was 76.

Lewis had been in ill health for a number of years and last April announced that he had been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease two years earlier. Although he considered himself retired as a stand-up, he appeared again as a regular in the current season of "Curb Your Enthusiasm," the HBO show created by and starring his childhood friend, Larry David. "Richard and I were born three days apart in the same hospital and for most of my life he's been like a brother to me," David said in a statement released by HBO. "He had that rare combination of being the funniest person and also the sweetest. But today he made me sob and for that I'll never forgive him."

Lewis' sensibility, in clubs and on screen, could be as dark as the funereal suits he often wore. In a signature joke, he spoke about an uncle who was so depressing that he would sit at home listening to the soundtrack of "The Pawnbroker," the grim 1964 film about a Holocaust survivor.

He also is credited with the tagline "from Hell," as in "the ex-wife from Hell." When the "Yale Book of Quotations" gave him credit for the catchphrase in 2022, he tweeted, "Where is my Nobel Prize?"

Lewis also appeared in a number of films, including "Robin Hood: Men in Tights," Mel Brooks' 1993 parody, in which he played an extremely Jewish-seeming Prince John.

Lewis was born in Brooklyn and raised in Englewood, New Jersey, the son of a caterer and an actress in community theater. "My father was so well known as a caterer and so booked up that he was actually booked on the weekend of my bar mitzvah, so I had to have my party on the Tuesday," he once told an interviewer.

After earning a degree in marketing at Ohio State University, he began writing and regularly performing stand-up comedy in 1972. The Jewish comedians Woody Allen and Lenny Bruce were obvious roles models, although Lewis proved influential in his own right: Comedy Central ranked him #45 on its list of "100 Greatest Standups of All Time" in 2004.

In the 1989 sitcom "Anything But Love," which ran for four seasons, Lewis establishes his character as Jewish in the first minutes of the pilot. Lewis told a British weekly, the "Jewish Telegraph," in 2011 that he was not a synagogue-goer but that he consciously infused his Jewish identity into his comedy – and that he viewed comedy as a deeply Jewish act.

"I have a tremendous love affair for being a Jew," he said at the time. "I'm so proud to be part of this people. I wouldn't want to be part of anything else."

He added, "Because of what the Jews have gone through since literally Day One, one of the survival mechanisms was to talk about all the hell that we've been through. It's so much funnier being a Jew than anything else. If we don't find humor, then we're in deep trouble."

Lewis struggled with addiction issues for years, proudly explaining in 2016 that he was "22 years sober" and that he mentored those in the recovery community.

That same year, Lewis acknowledged that his health had taken a toll on his performing, but that he would continue to write, act and do the occasional stand-up gig.

"I've learned to accept the fact that I'm not like I used to be," he said. "I try to stay healthy and sober and to give back. I've received a lot of help. I've lived through a lot of tsuris. The art of aging is being grateful for being alive and having some laughs and helping other people." **HW**





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