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Young Israel and Baron Hirsch’s Communal Kumzitz



Right to left: Rabbi Ian Lichter, Rabbi Akiva Males, Rabbi Yehoshua Nissan, Cantor Ricky Kampf, Eitan Selter, and Rabbi Yaakov Gelb leading the Kumzitz.

By Rabbi Akiva Males

On Saturday night, August 17, 2024, Young Israel of Memphis was proud to partner together with Baron Hirsch Congregation for a beautiful community-wide Kumzitz. For those unfamiliar with the term, here’s how Wikipedia explains it:

“Kumzits is used to describe a musical gathering that Jews partake in. Everyone sits together, be it on the floor or on chairs, and sings spiritually moving songs. To establish a certain ambiance the lighting is often low . . . It is a compound word in Yiddish composed of ‘Kum’ (come) and ‘Zits’ (sit) . . .”

This meaningful program was the

brainchild of Rabbi Yehoshua Nissan of the Memphis Kollel. In the days leading up to the mournful day of Tisha B’Av, Rabbi Nissan was thinking of ways to help bring our community together. It hit him that Motzei Shabbos Nachamu (the first Saturday night, which immediately follows Tisha B’Av) would be the perfect opportunity for this. He reached out to me and Rabbi Lichter, and we excitedly began planning an inter-congregational communal Kumzitz.

The evening that came together exceeded our greatest expectations. On Motzei Shabbos Nachamu, over 100 men, women and children gathered in Young Israel’s Moss Grand Foyer. Af-



A full crowd enjoyed the evening and sang their hearts out at the Kumzitz.

ter finding our seats, the lights were dimmed, and Rabbi Nissan – accompanied by Cantor Ricky Kampf, Eitan Selter and Rabbi Yaakov Gelb – led us through a well-organized program of spiritually uplifting songs. Everyone in attendance joined in the singing, and several in the crowd enhanced the experience with the musical instruments they had brought along with them.

I offered some brief welcoming remarks, and Rabbi Ian Lichter shared beautiful Torah thoughts, which resonated with all in attendance. The participation of Rabbi Joel Finkelstein greatly enhanced the evening as well. The moving songs, which were sung ranged in speed and tempo – and at several points,

circles of joyous dancing spontaneously erupted. Numerous community members commented to me that this Kumzitz was exactly what their Neshamos (souls) needed. I couldn’t agree more.

Partnering with Baron Hirsch for this Motzei Shabbos Nachamu Kumzitz was a wonderful experience on so many levels. I know I speak for us all when I say that Klal Yisrael has spent too many Tisha B’Avs in mourning. May we commemorate next year’s Tisha B’Av in a celebratory manner – resembling the communal Kumzitz we recently shared together.

Young Israel of Memphis’ Rabbi Akiva Males can be reached at rabbia@yiom.org [HW](#)

Big Changes Come to Bornblum Middle



Bornblum Jewish Community School

After spending more than a year taking a deep dive into best practices for middle schools, Bornblum Jewish Community School has implemented a number of new programs and structures for the 2024-2025 school year.

“Bornblum’s middle school program has always prepared our students well for the high school years. But over the last year, we took on the challenge of how to make Bornblum Middle even better. Many of the changes implemented this year are the result of this work,”

says Daniel R. Weiss, head of school at Bornblum.

Perhaps the biggest change implemented for this school year relates to class schedules. Bornblum Middle now operates on a six-day rotation of classes, rather than a traditional model where students have the same classes each day. According to Jill Cross, the school’s Director of Curriculum and Instruction, “The rotating schedule with longer class periods, allows students focused learning time in the core general and Jewish

studies classes over the course of the year. Plus, with the rotating schedule, students are not always missing the same classes when the school has days off for holidays and half days.”

In addition to increasing focused learning time, Bornblum Middle has increased experiential learning, whether in core general studies subjects like science, or in other areas of the curriculum. “It is widely believed in education today, that we are preparing students for jobs that have not yet been invented. This requires not only knowledge in traditional subjects, but a new emphasis on soft skills like collaboration, communication, adaptability and conflict resolution. Having this toolbox will help our students to succeed in any situation, including in those jobs not yet invented,” says Weiss.

In an effort to build these soft skills, Thursdays are outside the schedule rotation at Bornblum Middle, and are dedicated to experiential, hands-on learning. Students have advisory and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) classes, which focus on student development. In middle school, SEL centers around a curriculum called #winatsocial, which helps

parents and students navigate social media safely. Additionally, every Thursday, students have LOFT (Launching Our Future Thinking), which offers a new focus each quarter, with students engaging with Facing History and Ourselves, Digital Citizenship, Echoes, which is a study of Jewish leadership, and work with artist-in-residence, Ephraim Urevvu, on Jewish contributions to the Civil Rights Movement through an art-based project called “Tiles of Unity: Shared Stories of Solidarity.”

Thursdays are also dedicated to Design Thinking where students develop empathy by examining challenges that others face and designing solutions to those problems.

“There is an empathy crisis in our country. Statistics show a more than 40 percent drop in empathy among our youth. Design Thinking teaches students to solve problems, but more importantly, it teaches students to approach the world with empathy and to experience life’s challenges from the perspective of others,” says Sally Baer, Bornblum’s director of Student Services and assistant

(See Bornblum Page 3)

Josh Shapiro Says Antisemitism Played 'No Role' in His Not Getting Picked as Kamala Harris' Running Mate



U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, a Florida Democrat, chats with Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro at the Florida delegation breakfast at the Democratic National Convention, Chicago, Aug. 19, 2024.

Credit: Ron Kampeas

By Ron Kampeas

(JTA) – August 19, 2024 – CHICAGO – Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro said antisemitism played “no role” in Vice President Kamala Harris’ opting against him as a running mate, and blamed Donald Trump for spreading that allegation.

Shapiro, who is Jewish, made the remark in an interview on the first day of the Democratic National Convention, as he was making the rounds between meetings of state delegations. Shapiro had been considered a leading contender in Harris’ veepstakes and faced a progressive campaign to tank his chances over his support for Israel.

Critics of the effort called it antisemitic, but Shapiro told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency that antisemitism was not a factor in Harris’ decision to choose Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz over him.

“I want to make sure you hear this from me: Antisemitism played no role in the dialogue I had with the vice president. None,” he told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency in response to a question about whether the progressive left was making it harder for Jews to succeed in the Democratic Party.

“It is true that there is antisemitism in this country, along with racism and Islamophobia and homophobia, and we need to stand up and condemn all of it,” he added moments later. “There is no place for it in the Democratic Party, and there is no place for it in our country.”

The Harris campaign has also forcefully denied that the left-wing campaign against Shapiro played any role in Harris’ decision, calling the claim “ridiculous and offensive.” Last Monday, a campaign spokesman said it was not

known yet whether Shapiro would get a spot on the main convention stage.

Reports have said Harris clicked more with Walz than Shapiro, and that Shapiro, who has been governor for less than two years, wanted to finish his term before contemplating a run for higher office.

Trump has weighed in on the Shapiro discourse, saying at a campaign rally in Pennsylvania over the weekend that, “They turned him down because he’s Jewish.” But the former president and Republican nominee has also said that Shapiro is a “terrible guy” and “not very popular with anybody,” even though polls show that most Pennsylvanians approve of his performance as governor.

“Donald Trump has tried to stoke a lot of this,” Shapiro said. He raised longstanding criticisms of Trump, including of his response to the 2017 far-right rally in Charlottesville, Virginia.

“Donald Trump is the least credible person when it comes to speaking out against antisemitism, hatred, bigotry,” Shapiro added. “This is a guy who saw people in Charlottesville chanting, ‘Jews will not replace us’, and said there were good people on both sides. This is a guy who continually pits Americans against one another and acts divisive every single day. He is not a word of authority when it comes to condemning hate. Leaders have a responsibility to speak and act with moral clarity. Donald Trump doesn’t do that.”

More broadly, tensions over the Israel-Hamas war have been a specter [during] the convention, which began [last week] in Chicago. Pro-Palestinian marchers plan[ned] to turn out in the tens of thousands later last Monday, and 30 or so convention delegates, out of

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about 4,000 total, are affiliated with the pro-Palestinian “Uncommitted” movement. Last Sunday afternoon, the convention greenlighted two official panels related to the war at the convention – one on Palestinian human rights, the other on antisemitism in the United States following the outbreak of the fighting on Oct. 7.

Both Uncommitted and groups representing the families of Israelis held hostage by Hamas have requested spots on the main convention stage, but neither group has yet received an answer.

Shapiro was one of a number of high-profile Democratic governors to address state delegations staying at the his-

toric Palm Royal hotel, including groups from Florida, Arkansas and Pennsylvania. The delegations also heard from Michigan’s Gretchen Whitmer and Illinois’ J.B. Pritzker, who is also Jewish.

Shapiro was among the most well-received speakers, getting whoops and cheers with his signature line, “We get s— done,” and grinning afterward when a reporter told him she had heard other Democrats adopt the expression. Shapiro is credited for rapidly repairing infrastructure in the state since assuming office.

Pritzker was the only one to mention his Jewish identity in his speech, describing how his family fled antisemitism and pogroms in Europe and found a home in America. He also made a self-deprecating joke about skepticism in the party when he first ran for governor in 2018.

“The Democratic Party was not crying out for white Ukrainian American Jewish billionaires,” said the scion of a hotel empire. “I get it.” HW



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Bornblum...
(Continued From Page 1)

head of school. “It teaches dedication to helping others and to being a force for good in the world.”

Design Thinking at Bornblum Middle is more than just another class. Students in middle school create an individual Capstone project using the Design Thinking model. Now in its second year, the Capstone program gives students the opportunity to explore their individual passions.

“Our Bornblum Middle School students will dedicate this entire year as a force of good for others using their individual passions to spark innovation. Our Design Thinking faculty, school leadership team, and community volunteers will support students as they research and identify needs within their field of interest and as they develop viable solutions to help others.” says Samantha Schmidt, a Design Thinking teacher at Bornblum.

“This year our focus is helping our students take their Capstone projects closer to producing prototypes and even final products that solve problems for others. We have a really impressive bank of tools for our students to use, whether it is our giant Thunder Laser cutter, our new resin 3D printer, or the many other design tools like Cricut cutters, a sound studio, a sewing and fabric arts center, or our green screen video production area. Students will each get hands-on experience using these tools to design and produce their solutions,” says Cross. “And each student will graduate Bornblum with a portfolio of three Capstone projects that will be impressive to the many selective high schools where our students seek admission.”

Reflecting on the changes to Bornblum Middle, Weiss shared, “We know


our innovative scheduling and refined programs will be a transition for our middle school students, but our incredible faculty and administration are committed to supporting our students and their families as they adapt to these changes. We believe deeply in the changes we have made, because they are based on a deep examination of student needs in the middle school years. We are confident that Bornblum Middle will produce more well-rounded, adaptive and resilient students who will be prepared for the unknown world in which they will live. Our students will be prepared to succeed wherever they end up. If we can create a generation of students who look critically at the world around them and use their talents to figure out how they can make their world a better place for everyone to live, then we will have created something unique and lasting at Bornblum Middle.” HW

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Shaq Recorded a Video in Hebrew for Israeli Kids Whose Relatives Were Killed or Captured on Oct. 7



Shaquille O’Neal ahead of the Formula 1 Las Vegas Grand Prix, Nov. 18, 2023, in Las Vegas. Credit: Jakub Porzycki/NurPhoto via Getty Images

By Jacob Gurvis

(JTA) – NBA great Shaquille O’Neal recorded a message for Israeli children whose relatives were killed or taken hostage in Hamas’ Oct. 7 attack, telling them “I love you” and speaking in Hebrew.

Shaq recorded the video for children at Camp Timberlane, a summer camp in Haliburton, Canada, that, in partnership with the Israeli organization OneFamily, runs a program for “Israeli youth who have been directly affected by terror and war.”

The recording came about when Chen Kraunik – a OneFamily employee and former Israeli professional basketball

player whose father, Arik, was murdered on Oct. 7 in Kibbutz Be’eri – FaceTimed with O’Neal, the organization said in a Instagram post that it later deleted. (A representative for OneFamily said the group took the video off social media because “it’s actually not ours to share. We didn’t take it.”)

“Camp Timberlane! Hello! Shalom! This is Shaquille O’Neal,” the retired hall-of-fame center says in the video, which the camp posted on Instagram last week before also deleting it. “I just wanted to give you guys a shoutout and let you know I love you.”

O’Neal continued, “To all the amazing children from the OneFamily, I know you came from far, far away. Hope you’re having a good time. We love you so very much. Thank you for coming. And we’ll talk to you soon.”

He concluded with a string of Hebrew messages one right after the other: “Shalom,” “Baruch Hashem,” which translates roughly to “God bless,” “L’shana tova” (“Happy new year”) and “Shabbat Shalom.”

According to the “Canadian Jewish News,” Timberlane welcomed 39 campers and staff from Israel this summer, including children whose family members were killed or taken hostage on Oct. 7. A 16-year-old named Niv, also from Kibbutz Be’eri, lost his grandmother and brother in the attack. Another brother was killed in captivity.

O’Neal, 52, is regarded as one of the greatest basketball players in history. In his 19-year NBA career, the 7-foot-1 center won four NBA titles while earning the 2000 NBA MVP award and 15 All-Star selections. His jersey number is retired by three teams.

O’Neal, who was raised by a Baptist mother and a Muslim stepfather, has expressed interest in Judaism and Jewish culture numerous times, both throughout his playing career and in his current role as a TV analyst on TNT.

O’Neal has danced the hora at a Jewish wedding, spoken Hebrew with Jon Stewart and explained that Sukkot is his favorite Jewish holiday – because “sukkah” translates to “shack.” He also recently struck up a friendship with Jewish NHL star Zach Hyman, whom he calls “Shaq Hyman.” O’Neal’s ex-wife Shaunie Henderson also explored the tradition of hosting a Shabbat dinner with one of their children on her VH1 reality show “Shaunie’s Home Court.”

“Fact is I’m Muslim, I’m Jewish, I’m Buddhist, I’m everybody ‘cause I’m a people person,” O’Neal said in a 2011 interview with PR.com. HW

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CAMERA Yields its Most Corrections at Once from Wire Story, after ‘AP’ Emends Gazan Death Toll

(JNS) – When the Associated Press published an article about top presidential race issues upon which U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump are “worlds apart” on Aug. 18, the more than 175-year-old wire service stated that “the civilian death toll has now exceeded 40,000” in Gaza.

The following day, the AP emended the piece “to correct the reference to the civilian death toll from the war in Gaza, which is unknown.”

“The Hamas-controlled Health Ministry says more than 40,000 Palestinians have been killed in the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, but it does not distinguish between militants and civilians in its

count,” the wire stated.

The Committee for Accuracy in Middle East Reporting and Analysis, which contacted the AP about the statistic, stated that the 83 subsequent corrections to the story – which it said ran in outlets including “Seattle Times,” Yahoo, MSN and many CBS, ABC, NBC, and Fox affiliates – are “the most that CAMERA has prompted at once from a single wire service story.”

It calls the AP decision “a rare correction.”

The media watchdog “pointed out to AP editors that not even Hamas has alleged that more than 40,000 Palestinian civilians in Gaza have been killed in the war between Israel and the terror orga-

nization,” it stated.

“While the Hamas-controlled Ministry of Health in Gaza has reported over 40,000 total deaths among Gaza’s residents, its data does not distinguish between civilians and combatants,” it added. “Israeli sources, meanwhile, estimate that over 17,000 of those killed are Hamas combatants.”

“AP’s grossly inflated and unfounded civilian casualty figure fuels pernicious false narratives accusing Israel of genocide, further inflaming the conflict,” stated Tamar Sternthal, the media watchdog’s Israel office director.

Sternthal added that the wire’s “mis-reporting has an immeasurable impact. One AP error can distort public under-

The “Associated Press” changed its story “to correct the reference to the civilian death toll from the war in Gaza, which is unknown.”

standing globally and contribute to an escalation of hostilities.

“We are pleased that AP corrected so promptly and responsibly, and are cheered by the vast and speedy dissemination of the correction,” she stated. “But we are also deeply concerned that such a basic error got past editors in the first place.” **HW**

Mass Bomb Threat Sent to Dozens of Jewish Institutions Across Canada

By Jackie Hajdenberg

(JTA) – Multiple synagogues, Jewish community centers, and hospitals in Toronto, Montreal, and Ottawa were targeted with an emailed bomb threat early last Wednesday morning.

In response to the threat, sent in one mass email to dozens of institutions, Toronto Police evacuated buildings near an intersection in a heavily Jewish neighborhood.

A Jewish organization said that the threat is not credible, though it is still being investigated by Toronto, Montreal, and Royal Canadian Mounted Police. It comes just a few months after shots were fired at a Chabad-Lubavitch girls’ school in Toronto. Soon afterward, a synagogue in Vancouver was attacked. In November, shots were fired at two Orthodox Jewish day schools in Montreal. No injuries were reported in any

of the attacks.

The emailed threat, which was obtained by the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, claimed that “many explosives” had been placed in black backpacks and were “set to go off in a few hours.” The email does not specify whom it was targeting.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police are leading the investigation and told JTA in a statement that they are working with local law enforcement.

“The RCMP is aware of threats made today to a number of institutions, including Synagogues and hospitals, across Canada,” RCMP said in a statement. “Law enforcement is also engaging with faith-based leaders to ensure they have the information and support they need. We want to reassure the public that the safety and security of Canadians is our

top priority. The RCMP can confirm that the Federal Policing National Security Program is investigating the source of the threats.”

A representative from the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs, an affiliate of the Jewish Federations of Canada-UIA, told JTA in an email that “all indications point to these threats being nuisance emails designed to disrupt lives. There is no imminent threat.”

Identical emails had been sent en masse across India last Tuesday, reaching hospitals and shopping malls.

“Jewish Canadians will not be intimidated – we will continue to take part in Jewish life,” CIJA said in a statement on X. “We will stay vigilant, but we will never be intimidated.”

In a statement on X, Jewish advocacy group B’nai Brith Canada said the email

was “not just an attack on our safety – it’s an attack on the fabric of Canadian society.”

Michael Levitt, president and CEO of the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center, which combats antisemitism, called the threat “absolutely chilling” and said officials needed to take action.

“For many, many months, Canada’s Jewish community has raised alarm bells about the escalation of rampant Jew-hatred, as incitement and hateful rhetoric have become normalized online, on our city streets and on our university and college campuses,” he said in a statement. “Repeated calls for violence against Jews and Jewish institutions are a stark reminder that extremism and radicalization are thriving in Canada and must be confronted before it’s too late.” **HW**

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Gallant: Hamas’s Rafah Brigade has Been Defeated

(JNS) – Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant declared last Wednesday during a visit to the Gaza-Egypt border that the IDF has achieved victory over Hamas’s Rafah brigade.

“I came here first and foremost to express my appreciation [to the soldiers]. The Rafah brigade was defeated by the IDF’s Division 162,” Gallant said at the Philadelphi Corridor, the 9.7-mile-long buffer zone captured by Israeli forces in May.

Since taking control of the area, the IDF has located and destroyed 150 terror tunnels, and Gallant instructed the forces to finish the destruction of the remaining tunnels, which Hamas used to smuggle weapons and materials from Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula into the Gaza Strip.

“Out of the 150 tunnels that were destroyed, around 100 tunnels are in fact trenches dug using engineering tools above ground and then covered with a meter or two of dirt,” the minister said.

“I gave an immediate directive to the IDF to destroy remaining tunnels. It is critical to remember the goals of the war and to achieve them – regarding Hamas, regarding the hostages [held by Hamas], and we also understand why we are looking toward the north,” Gallant continued.

The Rafah brigade and its four bat-

talions – Yabna (south), east Rafah, Tel Sultan (west) and Shaboura (north) – was the terror group’s final functioning brigade, according to Israel military assessments.

Its defeat marks a major milestone in the war that began on Oct. 7 with Hamas’s mass invasion of southern Israel.

The Rafah effort was led by the 162nd Division, under the command of Brig. Gen. Itzik Cohen.

IDF troops have killed more than 17,000 terrorists in the Gaza Strip since the beginning of the war, IDF Spokesperson Rear Adm. Daniel Hagari revealed on Aug. 15.

“IDF forces continue to fight in Gaza – maneuvering in Rafah, Khan Yunis, the central Strip and are attacking everywhere,” Hagari told reporters at a briefing. “So far, we have eliminated more than 17,000 terrorists. The significant combat and the ensuing high accomplishments impede Hamas’s ability to raise its head again and rebuild itself, and we are determined to keep this up,” the military spokesman added.

IDF forces entered Gaza on Oct. 27 after weeks of airstrikes in response to the Oct. 7 attacks, in which terrorists murdered some 1,200 people, wounded thousands more and abducted more than 250 others to Gaza. **HW**

Multimedia Tunnel Exhibit in Boston Offers 'Glimpse' of Experiences of Hostages in Gaza



A B'nai B'rith International-sponsored exhibition in Boston simulating the experiences of hostages in Gazan tunnels in August 2024. Credit: B'nai B'rith.

By David Swindle

(JNS) – Some 1,200 people signed up to visit a multimedia tunnel exhibition on City Hall Plaza in Boston that simulates the experiences of hostages whom Hamas continues to hold underground in Gaza.

The exhibit, which ran for three days earlier this week and which B'nai B'rith International sponsored, was previously presented in Washington, D.C., and across Europe. Organizers plan to bring it to other cities.

The show was developed in “close coordination” with the Hostages and Missing Families Forum and hostages released from Gaza in November. It “aimed to raise awareness of the suffering of the 109 who still remain in captivity, including eight Americans,” according to B'nai B'rith.

“The hostages were quickly forgotten. The posters of these hostages were quickly torn down as soon as they were put up,” said Daniel Mariaschin, CEO of B'nai B'rith whose cousin was kidnapped from Kibbutz Nir Oz by Hamas, at the exhibit opening. “These hostages have been held in unimaginable deplorable conditions.”

“The objective of Hamas is to destroy the State of Israel,” Mariaschin added. “That glimpse that we had in the beginning on Oct. 7, similar to what was seen every day for six years in the Holocaust, was indeed reminiscent of all the other attempts in history that have been made to erase our people and to erase the State of Israel.”

“We wanted to increase awareness and amplify visibility of the hostages,”

Douglas Hauer-Gilad, an organizer of the exhibit, told JNS.

“Time is of the essence,” the Boston lawyer added. “We need to bring the hostages home now.”

The exhibit includes audio footage from body cameras worn by Hamas terrorists.

“Visitors were given a glimpse of the roughly 300 miles of underground tunnels beneath Gaza and gained insight into the horrors of Hamas captivity,” per B'nai B'rith. “For a moment, they experienced the terror that hostages have endured over the past 10 months.”

Ed Flynn, a member of the Boston City Council, recognized the exhibit's significance in a resolution, and Latvian, German, Japanese and Israeli diplomats and Boston Jewish and Catholic leaders visited the show. **HW**

Gunshot Evidence Found in Bodies of Hostages Recovered from Gaza



The six hostages kidnapped on Oct. 7, 2023, by Hamas terrorists and who were murdered in Gaza. Their bodies were recovered by the IDF in a tunnel in Khan Yunis on Aug. 20, 2024. Credit: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Israel.

(Israel Hayom via JNS) – Bullet fragments were discovered in at least some of the corpses of six Israeli hostages retrieved from Khan Yunis in Gaza last week, according to information shared with their families.

This finding lends credence to the theory that some hostages were killed by their captors shortly before an aerial assault that preceded last Monday's IDF and Israel Security Agency (Shin Bet) rescue operation.

Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant called it a “daring and dangerous operation in the Hamas tunnels in Khan Yunis.”

Haim Peri, Yagev Buchshtab, Avraham Munder, Yoram Metzger, Nadav Popplewell and Alexander Dancyg were all killed in captivity. The IDF announced the deaths of five of them several weeks ago, with Munder presumed alive until last Tuesday (although it is unclear if his death was known to officials who chose not to share it with the public).

The families confirmed that bullet fragments were indeed found in and near the bodies of their relatives. However, they have not yet received the final ballistics report with comprehensive details.

Munder, 79, was kidnapped from Kibbutz Nir Oz along with his wife, Ruthi, their daughter Keren and 9-year-old grandson Ohad. Ruthi, Keren and Ohad were released in the November hostage deal. Their son, Roi, was murdered during the Hamas-led massacre on Oct. 7 along with some 1,200 others.

Metzger, 80, also a member of Nir Oz, was kidnapped alive and the IDF announced his death about two months ago. His wife, Tamar, who was also kidnapped to Gaza, was released in November.

Peri, 80, was also kidnapped from Nir Oz, of which he was a member.

Dancyg, 76, was kidnapped from Kibbutz Nir Oz. The IDF announced his death in late July, along with that of Buchshtab.

Popplewell's death was announced on June 3. The 51-year-old British Israeli was taken from his home in Kibbutz Nirim by Hamas terrorists. His mother, Channah Peri, 79, was released in November.

The total number of hostages remaining in the hands of Hamas in Gaza now stands at 109.

Originally published by Israel Hayom. **HW**


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Chabad of Poland Hosts Summer Retreat for 200 Jewish Ukrainian Refugees



Chabad of Poland Zoo trip for Ukrainian Refugees. Credit: R. Vilenskiy/Chabad of Poland

WARSAW – As the war in Ukraine continues into its third summer, Chabad of Poland has hosted more than 200 Jewish Ukrainians, hailing from five communities, for a two-week summer experience focused on allowing children and their parents a break from life in a warzone. The retreat began on August 15 and runs through August 27.

Participants came from Kamianske, Sumy, Kremenchuk, Dnipro and Kyiv. The program this year was led by Rabbi Levi and Dina Stambler of Chabad of Kamianske in close collaboration with Rabbi Levi's brothers, Rabbi Sholom Ber and Rabbi Mayer Stambler of Chabad of Poland. Rabbi Yechiel and Rochi Levitansky of Chabad of Sumy also participated alongside members of their community.

The camp includes specialized ac-

tivities and psycho-trauma counseling designed to support attendees as they navigate their challenging circumstances. Daily activities range from field trips and arts and crafts to music and baking classes, all within a spiritually enriching environment. The program is staffed by educational and recreational staff all fluent in Ukrainian.

"Ukrainian refugees still face enormous day-to-day challenges. The summer is particularly difficult because there without school in session, there is little structure to the day for children, and a working parent has the challenge of how to keep their child occupied with a meaningful experience. The camp experience we provide these families not only meets their spiritual and communal needs, but gives them important respite from their daily challenge," said Chabad

of Poland Director Rabbi Sholom Ber Stambler.

"Growing up, summer was our chance to escape the routine of the rest of the year and dive into sports, fun and lasting friendships. For our children, summer offers a special opportunity to engage in informal education that emphasizes Jewish identity, heritage, values and customs in a more engaging and comprehensive way," he added.

One-third of this year's program is funded by Mosaic United, a global non-profit that supports initiatives strengthening young Jews' connections to their Jewish identities and Israel, in partnership with Israel's Ministry of Diaspora Affairs. Chabad of Poland is covering the remaining two-thirds of the program's costs through its network of partners.

"We are deeply grateful to our generous supporters, hundreds of individuals and families from around the Jewish world for their support of our summer program for Ukrainian Jewish refugees," said Chabad of Poland Co-Director Rabbi Mayer Stambler. "Our goal is to offer these children a sense of normalcy and emotional comfort this summer, within a fun and uplifting environment."

Since the start of the Russian incursion into Ukraine, Chabad of Poland based in Warsaw has opened its doors to Ukraine's Jewish community offering refuge, transportation, kosher food, medical aid, financial and material assistance, childcare, educational and social services, communal activities, and administrative and legal aid to tens of thousands displaced by the conflict. Since the start of the war, Chabad in Poland has seen its expenses rise by more than US\$2.5 million. For more information or to contribute to relief efforts, please visit: www.saveajew.org. **HW**

Report: Hostage Families Receive Threatening Calls from Captives' Phones

One message sent to hostage families read, "If you don't fight, you won't see your loved ones return," according to the report.

(JNS) – Families of Israeli hostages held captive by Hamas in Gaza have received threatening messages and calls, including some that originated from the phones of their loved ones, Israel's Channel 12 reported last Tuesday.

One message sent to hostage families read, "If you don't fight, you won't see your loved ones return," according to the report. Messages were also said to have contained ransom requests, claiming that without payment, the families wouldn't receive signs of life from their loved ones.

The report claimed that many families of hostages have contacted Israel's Defense Ministry and the Israel Defense Forces in recent weeks regarding the anonymous telephone threats.

An initial investigation by the Israel Security Agency confirmed that the messages were sent by "hostile elements" with links to Iran or Hamas, the broadcaster added.

One hundred and nine hostages, both living and dead, remain captive in Gaza, 320 days after the Hamas-led Oct. 7 terror invasion. Dozens are believed to be alive, an official involved in the talks revealed in June. **HW**



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Email resumes to rosina@jccmemphis.org [HW](#)

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Can Home Improvements Lower Your Tax Bill? It Depends

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

Most home improvements are not tax deductible – with one possible exception. In certain situations, you may be able to deduct improvements deemed necessary for medical reasons (not just beneficial to general health). If you itemize instead of taking the standard deduction, you can deduct unreimbursed medical expenses that exceed 7.5% of your adjusted gross income, so the tax savings could be significant if a costly home improvement pushes your total medical expenses above that threshold. Installing air conditioning to help treat asthma or modifying a home to make it wheelchair accessible are common examples of qualifying expenses.

Here are two more ways that improving your home could potentially reduce your tax burden.

Capital improvements

Projects that add to the value of your home, prolong its life, or adapt it to new uses are considered capital improvements. When you sell your home in the future, you can add the cost of capital improvements to your initial basis (what you paid for it originally), reducing your capital gain and potentially the amount you might pay in taxes.

Some examples of capital improvements include remodeling the kitchen, replacing all your home’s windows, adding a bathroom, or installing a new roof. Repairs that keep your home in good condition (such as repainting, replacing a broken door or window, or fixing a leak) don’t count as capital improvements. However, an entire repair job may be considered an improvement if it’s done as part of an extensive remodel or restoration.

Energy-saving tax credits

The Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 reconfigured two nonrefundable tax credits for home improvements that save energy. Unlike a deduction, which reduces your taxable income, a tax credit lowers your tax bill dollar for dollar. Both credits are available only for the installation of new products that meet specific energy efficiency requirements.

Breaking Down Your Home Energy Bill

The typical U.S. household consumed \$1,884 worth of home energy in 2020.

Average household energy costs in 2020, by end use

*Per household that used energy for this purpose

	Space heating	\$519
	Air conditioning*	\$299
	Water heating	\$287
	Electric vehicle charging*	\$280
	Refrigerators	\$116
	Lighting	\$89

Source: 2020 Residential Energy Consumption Survey, U.S. Energy Information Administration, 2023 (most recent data available)

The energy efficient home improvement credit is equal to 30% of qualified expenditures for an existing home (not new construction). A \$3,200 maximum annual credit is available through 2032. A \$2,000 limit (30% of all costs, including labor) applies to electric or natural gas heat pumps, heat pump water heaters, and biomass stoves and boilers. A separate \$1,200 limit applies to home energy audits and building envelope components (such as exterior doors, windows, skylights, and insulation) and energy property (including central air conditioners).

The residential clean energy property credit is a 30% tax credit available for qualifying expenditures for clean energy property (and related labor costs) such as solar panels, solar water heaters, geothermal heat pumps, wind turbines, fuel cells, and battery storage for an existing or newly constructed home. The credit shrinks to 26% for property placed in service in 2033, 22% in 2034, and is eliminated thereafter.

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Halevi: IDF Determined to Return All Hostages, ‘Alive Whenever Possible’

(JNS) – Israel Defense Forces troops will continue to put military pressure on the Hamas terrorist organization to release the remaining 109 hostages held in Gaza, IDF Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi stated last Tuesday.

“We have a firm determination to fight Hamas, a firm determination to return all the hostages – alive whenever possible – and we will also be very, very determined and persist in bringing the fallen back to a kever Yisrael [Jewish burial],” Halevi told commanders and soldiers of the Netzah Yehuda Battalion during a tour of the coastal enclave.

Halevi’s remarks came amid ongoing indirect negotiations in Doha, Qatar for a hostage release and ceasefire agreement with Hamas.

He spoke just hours after the IDF recovered the bodies of six Israeli hostages who were kidnapped alive on Oct. 7, from a Hamas tunnel in southern Gaza’s Khan Younis area.

“Last night, in an operation that did not happen by chance, based on intelligence that was followed for a very long time and was developing, we had information about the location of our fallen hostages,” he said.

IDF soldiers “went to bring them out, 10 meters underground, to reach, dig, locate the tunnel, enter and bring back our people, that we would very much have liked to have brought back alive, but even bringing a body to a Jewish burial is a very, very important task,” Halevi stated.

The top military leader visited Gaza last Tuesday together with IDF Southern Command head Maj. Gen. Yaron Finkelmann and Brig. Gen. Avi Rosenfeld, the outgoing commander of the army’s Gaza Division.

During a separate visit to Gaza last Tuesday, Deputy Chief of Staff Maj. Gen. Amir Baram toured the enclave alongside Brig. Gen. Guy Levy – who was appointed head of the IDF’s 98th Division earlier this month – and Lt. Col. Ami Biton, commander of the IDF’s Paratroopers Brigade.

As part of the visit, Baram met with troops of the Paratroopers Brigade, the Yahalom Combat Engineering Unit, and the 7th Brigade. In an exchange with soldiers, Baram expressed his “great appreciation” to all who participated in the operation to retrieve the bodies of the captives.

Baram noted that the operation to rescue the bodies was “a complex, multi-organizational effort, combining various units that together – out of a sense of urgency during the war and when each unit knows how to bring its relative advantage – brought extraordinary operational output.

“We will continue to operate in all areas of the Gaza Strip, above ground and underground, to defeat Hamas and return our hostages,” he added.

Forces of the 162nd Division continue to operate in the Tel Sultan area of Rafah, Gaza’s southernmost city, the military said last Wednesday.

The troops “eliminated dozens of armed terrorists, destroyed terrorist infrastructure and located many weapons including explosives, grenades, Kalashnikov-type rifles and more,” the IDF stated.

Meanwhile, the 98th Division worked in conjunction with the Israeli Air Force to knock down infrastructure, including rocket launchers that were used to target civilian towns in southern Israel, and kill gunmen.

The 252nd Division attacked Hamas buildings that were used to carry out attacks against IDF ground forces in Gaza.

Throughout the day last Tuesday, IAF fighter jets attacked some 30 targets in the Strip, including infrastructure, terror squads, rocket launchers, tunnels and an observation post, the military announced.

IDF forces entered Gaza on Oct. 27 following a weeks-long air campaign in response to the Hamas-led Oct. 7 massacre in southern Israel, in which some 1,200 people, primarily Jewish civilians, were murdered.

Jerusalem’s stated goals for the ongoing campaign are to destroy Hamas as a military and governing force in the Gaza Strip, ensure that the terror group cannot threaten the Jewish state again and return all hostages. [HW](#)

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OBITUARIES



Seth Feibelman

Beloved husband, father, son, brother and friend, Seth Feibelman, passed away peacefully in his home surrounded by family and friends on August 13 at the age of 45, after a long and fierce battle with cancer.

He is survived by his wife, Sylwia, and their children, Konrad and Karmen.

He was born in Memphis, Tenn., on October 30, 1978. In his youth, he loved racing go-karts, watching sci-fi movies, cooking with his grandmother, and became an Eagle Scout at the age of 16. Seth loved to be outside, whether working in his yard, camping with his family, or hiking the mountains at the boy scout ranch in New Mexico. Though Seth had multiple hobbies and jobs throughout his life, his passion was in the food industry. He graduated from Johnson and Wales University in both Providence, R.I., and Charleston, S.C.

After college, he met his soul mate, Sylwia, while working at Mud Island Riverpark as the Food and Beverage Operational manager. After his time there,

Brenda Yolles Smith

Brenda Yolles Smith, a revered educator, devoted mother, esteemed teacher of midwifery, compassionate nurse, and steadfast friend, passed away peacefully on August 21, 2024, at the age of 83. Born on April 28, 1941, Brenda's life was a testament to her unwavering dedication to nurturing, guiding, and supporting others.

Brenda's impact as an educator spanned decades, during which she shaped the minds and hearts of countless students. Her commitment to teaching was matched only by her passion for empowering those she mentored. As a teacher of midwifery, she shared her extensive knowledge and experience with a new generation of caregivers, helping them to provide the same level of compassionate care that defined her own practice.

Her career as a nurse was marked by exceptional skill and a profound sense of empathy. Brenda's gentle presence and attentive care were a source of comfort to many, and her dedication to her students and patients was evident in every aspect of her work.

Beyond her professional accomplishments, Brenda was a loving mother whose devotion to her children was unwavering. Her home was a place of warmth, love, and guidance, and her influence will continue to be felt through the lives of her family.

To all who knew her, Brenda was a true and loyal friend. Her kindness, generosity, and genuine interest in others made her a cherished confidante and a source of unwavering support. Her friendships were a reflection of her remarkable character, and she will be remembered fondly by all who had the privilege of calling her a friend.

Brenda is survived by her children, Lisa and Stuart, and her many beloved dachshunds; she was preceded in death by her husband, Avron.

A memorial service celebrating her

he worked as the executive chef at Methodist Hospital South, the Memphis Zoo, then Hilton Hotels utilizing his skills in both catering and customer service.

While working at these corporations, Seth also taught at the University of Memphis, Kemmons Wilson Culinary Institute, inspiring students to pursue their careers in the food industry with the same passion and creativity he experienced every day in the kitchen. He also taught vocational culinary classes to inmates at the Shelby County Correctional facility. Through this program, he discovered teaching brought him joy and fulfillment.

Seth participated in the Memphis Kosher BBQ Fest and won multiple awards for his delicious and tasty brisket and beans. He also authored articles for "The Hebrew Watchman" and "Jewish Scene" magazine, sharing his recipes for the community to enjoy.

He leaves behind his wife of 19 years, Sylwia Feibelman; his children, Konrad Feibelman and Karmen Feibelman; his parents, Linde, and Nathan Feibelman; his sister, Amy Wolfe (Noah); nephews Jacob and Luke; his in-laws, Malgorzata and Stanislaw Bialas; sister-in-law Magda Parys, (Maciej) and their children, Olinek and Amelka.

A celebration of Seth's life will occur in the next month. The date and time will be shared once arrangements are confirmed. All friends and family are welcome.

The family asks that donations to the University Middle and High School where both children attend, be made instead of flowers. If you would like to give to the family, gift cards to local restaurants are preferable. **HW**

extraordinary life was held on August 23, 2024, at Temple Israel Cemetery in Memphis, Tenn.

In lieu of flowers, the family requests that donations be made to Temple Israel, The National League of Nursing, or the charity of your chose in Brenda's memory, reflecting her lifelong dedication to serving others.

Brenda Smith's legacy of compassion, wisdom, and friendship will continue to inspire all who had the honor of knowing her. Her spirit will live on in the hearts of her family and friends, a lasting tribute to a life well lived.

The family appreciates all the love and support being shown and we encourage you to send memorials and memories to Brenda's email: blys41@yahoo.com. **HW**

Tehran Signals Attack on Israel May Not Be Imminent

(JNS) – Iranian officials are signaling this week that an attack on Israel may not be imminent, nearly a month after the targeted killing in Tehran of Hamas politburo chief Ismail Haniyeh.

Despite Jerusalem not claiming responsibility, the Islamic Republic vowed to avenge the assassination on its soil with a strong response against Israel. However, "The Washington Post" reported last Wednesday that Tehran is tamping down its urgent rhetoric.

Examples of this potentially different approach cited by the newspaper include a statement last Wednesday by the Iranian mission to the United Nations that any response "must be carefully calibrated" to avoid derailing ongoing Gaza ceasefire talks.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps has also suggested that an attack might not be coming in the near future. "Time is at our disposal," Brig. Gen. Ali Mohammad Naeni, the IRGC spokesman, said last Tuesday, according to local media. "And the waiting period for this response could be long."

Domestic politics could play a role in wanting to avoid a regional war.

President Masoud Pezeshkian, who entered office on July 28, has pleaded with Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei to avoid a direct attack on Israel, warning that it could threaten his presidency and lead to devastation of Iran's infrastructure, energy and economy, the London-based "Iran International" reported earlier this month.

Pezeshkian told the supreme leader that a harsh Israeli counterattack could lead to the collapse of the regime.

Iran's parliament last Wednesday approved Pezeshkian's 19-member Cabinet and he has said one of his aims is to work on improving Iran's economy, which is in shambles.

"We do believe that there is not consensus or unanimity within the Iranian government about what kind of retaliation to do against Israel," a U.S. official told the "Post." "The newly elected Iranian leadership could be playing a role in that."

Iran's mission to the United Nations also suggested that an Iranian attack could take place in a different manner than what is expected. In April, Iran launched some 300 missiles and drones in the first-ever direct attack against the Jewish state.

"Perhaps when their eyes are fixed on the skies and their radar screens, they will be taken by surprise from the ground – or perhaps even by a combination of both," the mission said in its statement.

"The timing, conditions and manner of Iran's response will be meticulously orchestrated to ensure that it occurs at a moment of maximum surprise," the statement said.

Also, Hezbollah in Lebanon could still attack Israel soon in retaliation for the targeted killing of its senior leader Fuad Shukr last month.

"The good news is that Iran seems to have been deterred by a massive American show of force. The bad news is that Tehran is goading its proxy Hezbollah to attack, U.S. officials fear," "Post" columnist David Ignatius wrote last Wednesday.

"What would Hezbollah do? U.S. officials believe that Hassan Nasrallah, the group's leader, might have stepped back from a plan to fire a barrage of missiles at Tel Aviv, which could have triggered a region-wide catastrophe. But Nasrallah has vowed to avenge the Israeli assassination last month of Fuad Shukr, his top military commander. And he has many Israeli targets to choose from," he wrote. **HW**

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Masked Anti-Israel Protesters Disrupt Agudah Event at DNC



New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy speaks at an Agudath Israel of America event on the sidelines of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago on Aug. 20, 2024. Credit: Agudah.

Biden Calls to ‘End this War’ as DNC Opens with Almost No Sparring Over Israel and Gaza



The crowd of pro-Palestinian protesters who demonstrated outside the Democratic National Convention was far smaller than organizers said they expected, Aug. 19, 2024. Credit: Ron Kampeas

By Ron Kampeas

(JTA) – CHICAGO – In a speech on the Democratic convention floor, President Joe Biden vowed to “end this war” in Gaza and free hostages. But he did not mention Israel by name and gave a nod to protesters outside the convention hall, where pro-Palestinian demonstrators had gathered.

“We’ll keep working to bring hostages home and end the war in Gaza, and bring peace and security to the Middle East,” he said. “We’re working around the clock – my secretary of state – to prevent a wider war and reunite hostages with their families, and surge humanitarian health and food assistance into Gaza now to end the civilian suffering of the Palestinian people and finally, finally, finally deliver a ceasefire and end this war.”

His message was the same one he’s been delivering for months – that Israel and Hamas must reach a ceasefire that frees the hostages held by the terror group and ends the war that Hamas started on Oct. 7 – but the tone was different in this speech.

For decades, Biden has spoken of his commitment to and support for Israel, even calling himself a Zionist, and he has rebuffed pressure to soften that support since Oct. 7. But last Monday night, as his party prepares to anoint a new leader, he spoke explicitly of the importance of ending Palestinian suffering while referencing Israel only implicitly.

He added, presumably referring to pro-Palestinian demonstrations outside the convention, “Those protesters out in the street, they have a point. A lot of innocent people are being killed, on both sides.”

Biden’s speech came as the first day of a convention meant to showcase Democratic Party unity was marked with only rare moments of discord over the Israel-Hamas war. Pro-Palestinian protests drew a much smaller crowd than expected, and the adoption of the party platform, including a statement of “ironclad” support for Israel, proceeded without incident.

When a protester inside the Democrat-

(JNS) – Organizers didn’t publicize the location of an Agudath Israel of America event on the sidelines of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, but anti-Israel protesters still managed to crash last Tuesday’s event.

“Pro-Hamas protestors stormed Agudah’s event at the DNC,” the Orthodox Jewish group stated. “That these agitators disrupted an event intended to bring awareness to the growing antisemitism against Orthodox Jews in America shows the importance of the event.”

In video footage that Agudah posted on social media, masked protesters yell at those attending the event. Among the things they said was “brick by brick, wall by wall, Zionism has got to fall.”

“Anti-Zionist protesters disrupted an Agudah DNC event about antisemitism in the United States. The event was cer-

tainly not about Zionism,” the Anti-Defamation League said. “This Orthodox Jewish group was simply targeted for being visibly Jewish, and these protesters are simply being antisemitic.”

Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO and national chairman of the ADL, added that “collectively holding all Jews responsible for something that you don’t like in the Middle East is antisemitic.”

“Through their actions and their words, these anti-Zionist protestors just confirmed that anti-Jewish hate in America is a growing, inescapable problem – which was exactly the point of the Agudah event,” he added.

Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Mich.), New Jersey Gov. Phil Murphy and Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-N.J.) reportedly spoke at the event, and Ilan Goldenberg, the Harris campaign’s new Jewish outreach director, was present. **HW**

ic National Convention unfurled a banner reading “Stop Arming Israel” during Biden’s address, the crowd’s reaction was immediate. “We love Joe,” the cheers went up, and attendees held placards bearing that message in front of the banner.

And in speeches preceding Biden’s, a handful of progressive lawmakers made only oblique references to the war, without showing favor for one side.

Ahead of the convention, tens of thousands were expected to turn out for a pro-Palestinian march. But the rally that pro-Palestinian activists organized outside the convention headquarters drew several thousand participants, far fewer than the 20,000 people that organizers had said they thought would attend. A handful of demonstrators were arrested after breaching a security barrier, but an effort to establish an encampment of the type that popped up on college campuses around the country this spring was abandoned under threat of arrest. At the spot where protesters gathered, piles of placards bearing slogans like “Resistance is Justified” lay untouched.

Also last Monday, pro-Palestinian activists convened the first-ever Democratic Party-approved session focused on Palestinian human rights. The event drew a packed room in the convention’s satellite location and had to be moved to a larger space. Panelists related harrowing stories of death and destruction in Gaza and also spoke of the agonies of families of Israelis held hostage by Hamas, as well as the rise of antisemitism since Oct. 7.

Inside the United Center, there was little sign that Israel’s war in Gaza is seen as dividing the Democratic Party. The convention’s unity theme was on full display as speakers – including Kamala Harris, Biden’s vice president and his replacement on the Democratic ticket, in a surprise appearance; Hillary Clinton;

and South Carolina Rep. James Clyburn – exhorted attendees and Americans to work hard to prevent Republican Donald Trump from retaking the presidency.

Until Biden’s speech, the only mentions of the Israel-Hamas war were oblique and brief. The first person to mention the Israel-Hamas war was Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who has been a critic of Israel’s conduct in the war. Among the many contributions she credited to Harris was “working tirelessly to secure a ceasefire in Gaza and bring hostages home.” She did not mention Israel or the Palestinians by name.

Later in the night, when speaking of how neighbors are dependent on each other for their well-being, Georgia Sen. Raphael Warnock listed “the poor children of Israel and the poor children of Gaza ... Israelis and Palestinians” among those who “are all God’s children.” The groups had not been in the prepared comments distributed to press earlier in the evening.

Biden’s speech, the climactic event of the night, reiterated themes from his campaign four years ago and recounted his accomplishments as president.

He repeated that he decided to run for president in 2020 due to the far-right rally in Charlottesville three years earlier and President Donald Trump’s response to it. He recalled the rally-goers “carrying Nazi swastikas and chanting the same exact antisemitic bile that was heard in Germany in the early thirties” and said the far-right activists were “emboldened by a president then in the White House that they saw as an ally.”

He also repeated a line from “American Anthem,” a 1998 song by the Jewish librettist Gene Scheer that Biden popularized when he cited it during his inauguration.

“America,” Biden said, “I gave my best to you.” **HW**

MD County Police Taking ‘Every Investigative Step’ after Antisemitic Vandalism of Schools

(JNS) – Four Montgomery County, Md., public schools were vandalized with antisemitic graffiti on Aug. 19, WJLA-TV reported.

Marc Yamada, chief of the Montgomery County Police Department, stated last Wednesday that “the recent acts of antisemitic and anti-Israel vandalism at our schools and places of worship are unacceptable” and that the department “is taking every investigative step possible to close these cases by arrest.”

“These incidents are not only crimes.

They are hateful actions that seek to divide our community and instill fear in our residents,” Yamada stated. “Let me be clear: every person, faith, culture and religion have the right to feel safe and respected in Montgomery County. These acts of bias and hate will not be tolerated.”

The department “is taking these incidents seriously” and is “committed to conducting thorough investigations to identify and arrest those responsible,” it said.

Guila Franklin Siegel, chief operating officer of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington, stated last Monday that county school buildings had been vandalized for the second consecutive week “by individuals with vitriolic, ill-informed comments directed towards the state of Israel, as well as other antisemitic images.” (Antisemitic graffiti was discovered the prior week at a Bethesda school.)

“It is no accident that the perpetrators

of these incidents have defaced schools that are located in neighborhoods with high concentrations of Jewish residents and have significant numbers of Jewish students and faculty members,” Siegel said. “These schools are also blocks away from multiple synagogues.”

“This pattern of behavior – in impact and almost certainly in design – targets Montgomery County’s Jews,” she added. “In doing so, it causes tremendous harm not only to Israelis and Jews, but to our entire shared community.” **HW**

A Summer to Remember: MJCC Day Camp's Unforgettable Season



As the golden days of summer gently fade into the vibrant hues of fall, we at the MJCC Day Camp find ourselves reflecting on what has been one of our most extraordinary seasons yet, with record breaking camper numbers. This summer, our camp blossomed with new programming, thrilling activities, and an outstanding team of staff members who made every day special.

This year, we introduced new programs designed to spark creativity, foster teamwork, and enhance the overall camp experience. From innovative arts and crafts projects with our Art Specialist, Lydia, to exciting STEAM activities with Mrs. Lashondra, our campers had the opportunity to dive into fresh and engaging content. Our focus on growth and development for each camper continued with our Sports Specialist Coach

Kyndal, Israeli Scouts Reut and Noa, and our incredible Community Shlichah Maayan. Campers learned new skills in a variety of areas and engaged in fun, age-appropriate activities, promoting both emotional and physical growth and development.

This summer, our schedule was packed with a diverse array of activities that kept our campers enthusiastic and engaged. On-site, we transformed our Belz Social Hall into a mini golf course, our soccer fields into a laser battalion field, and had an incredible Wacky Science show in our Moss Family Pavilion. We even engaged our counselors and staff in new programs such as the Counselor Lip Sync Battle, where campers joined the specialists as the judges in the audience.

Off-site excursions were equally



memorable. Whether it was a trip to the bowling alley, a tour of the Shelby Farms Horse Stables, or a visit to the Fire Museum, each outing was carefully planned to offer pure enjoyment. These experiences not only provided a change of scenery but also allowed campers to explore and grow in new and exciting ways.

At MJCC Day Camp, inclusivity is at the heart of everything we do. This summer, we were proud to expand our inclusion program, ensuring that many campers, regardless of their background or abilities, could participate fully and joyfully in all camp activities.

Our inclusion program was designed to support campers with diverse needs, providing tailored assistance and creating an environment where every child felt comfortable and included. Through individualized support and a collaborative approach with parents and therapists, our staff worked to make sure that all campers could thrive and enjoy the camp experience to the fullest.

The positive feedback from parents and the visible happiness of the campers themselves are testaments to the success of our inclusive efforts. One parent wrote, "As a parent to a child with Autism, the support and communication with staff was more than I could have hoped for. Their openness to inclusion, and their commitment to make camp enjoyable for my whole family was truly a blessing!" We are grateful for the opportunity to support each child's unique

journey and to celebrate the rich diversity of our camp community, and we hope to continue to grow our program as the years progress.

None of this would have been possible without our remarkable summer staff. Our team brought boundless energy, dedication, and warmth to their roles, creating an environment where every camper felt valued and excited to be at camp. Their enthusiasm and commitment to making each day special did not go unnoticed, and their ability to connect with campers on an individual level was truly inspiring.

Our staff members were instrumental in fostering a sense of community and fun, and their contributions played a significant role in making this summer one for the books.

As we bid farewell to this remarkable summer, we carry forward a sense of accomplishment and anticipation for the future. The memories created, the friendships formed, and the growth experienced by our campers and staff alike will continue to inspire us as we plan for the seasons ahead.

Thank you to everyone who made summer 2024 at MJCC Day Camp so incredible. We look forward to seeing you again next year for even more adventures, laughter, and unforgettable moments. We hope you all stay connected with us throughout the year during our different Youth and Camp program offerings such as Kid's Night Out and Camp 365! [HW](#)



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Upstate New York Mosque Issues Apology for Guest Imam’s Anti-Jewish Rant



Entrance sign along westbound New York State Route 340 just after entering Rockland County, N.Y. Credit: Famartin via Wikimedia Commons.
By Faygie Holt

(JNS) – A mosque in Rockland County, N.Y., issued an apology last week after a guest cleric called for Allah to “destroy the Zionist Jews” and “liberate the Al-Aqsa Mosque” in the course of delivering an address earlier this month. The apology came after video clips of the speech were shared on social media, drawing condemnation from local leaders and increased security around houses of worship.

In a statement posted to Facebook late last Sunday, the Islamic Center of Rockland said that “during a sermon at our masjid, a guest imam delivered several hurtful statements that included a prayer to God for the destruction of Zionist Jews as part of the conflict in Gaza. We unequivocally condemn these statements. The Islamic Center of Rockland stands firmly against anti-Semitism and any rhetoric that incites violence or hatred, as

we have for the 35 years we have operated in this county alongside other faiths.”

Historically, the Islamic Center of Rockland, which sits within the boundaries of Clarkstown, N.Y., has enjoyed a congenial relationship with the Jewish community, partnering with local synagogues and Jewish clergy on social initiatives like feeding the homeless on Thanksgiving. All of which, community officials say, made the remarks by the imam puzzling and unexpected.

In the Aug. 9 speech posted on the Islamic Center’s YouTube page and shared online by MEMRI (the Middle East Media Research Institute), the imam said, “Oh Allah, destroy the Zionist Jews. Oh Allah, seize them with a crushing grip, oh Lord of the Universe. Oh Allah, make their plots backfire on them ... liberate the Al-Aqsa Mosque from the plundering Jews, return it to

the fold of the Muslims, and let us pray there, oh Lord of the Universe.”

The imam’s name has not been released.

An estimated 100,000 Jews live in Rockland County, just north of New York City, out of a total county population of 339,000; it is believed to be the highest density of Jewish residents in America.

“While there are no known or credible threats, the Clarkstown Police Department has stepped up patrols around all houses of worship and culturally significant places,” said George Hoehmann, Clarkstown town supervisor. He also said that he does not think that the “extreme rhetoric is not representative of the vast majority of the people at the Islamic Center of Rockland County.”

After Shabbat on Aug. 10, the Jewish Federation of Rockland along with the Rockland Board of Rabbis, the Anti-Defamation League NY/NJ issued a joint statement about the imam’s speech. In it, Federation’s CEO Ari Rosenblum said: “The last 10 months have carried the weight tragedy for all. There is room for critical and constructive conversations between Jewish and Muslim communities. But there is no room for hateful, violent speech like this. It is more than alarming, it is threatening”

The ADL’s regional director Scott Richman said in the same statement that “the Jewish people have learned by terrible example that rhetoric calling for the destruction of Jews – based on dangerous disinformation – not only fuels hatred and divides neighbors but can lead to harmful real-world consequenc-

es.”

Also expressing disappointment in the sermon was Rep. Mike Lawler (R-N.Y.) whose region includes Rockland County. “As someone who has spoken to the Islamic Center on multiple occasions and never encountered such vile hatred, I urge them to swiftly condemn it,” he said in a statement last Sunday, adding that he hoped the incident would serve as a “bridge toward further dialogue, understanding and cooperation between our diverse faith communities.”

Bill Weber (R-38th District), a New York state senator, called for “accountability and consequences for anyone who would speak in such an unacceptable manner within my district”

Speaking to JNS last Monday, Rosenblum said Jewish groups and other stakeholders, including local officials, were working behind the scenes to address their concerns with the Islamic Center and, if necessary, take other action given the “egregious, violent statement with the potential of threat to the Jewish community – and we don’t take that lightly.”

“This is the reality of Jewish life in America after Oct. 7,” he said. “You have to be prepared to reach out on one hand to resolve it, but with the other hand to reach out and rally together with allies in the community,” such as political leaders and local law enforcement, “to confront this kind of threat if need be, and that’s what we were prepared to do.”

He said officials at the center have taken responsibility and “whenever anybody takes responsibility, that is better than not.” **HW**



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