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# Young Israel of Memphis to Host Second World Renowned Speaker in its 2024-25 Scholar-In-Residence Series



Charlene Aminoff

The Adult Programming Committee of the Young Israel of Memphis is pleased to announce that this coming Shabbos, January 24-26, the Congregation will host Charlene and Jonathan

Aminoff for its second Scholar-In-Residence weekend of the 2024-25 season. Charlene is a dynamic speaker, lifestyle/Emunah influencer, wife and mother of five who travels the world captivating audiences with her inspiring stories and messages. In her presentations, Charlene delves into the challenges of life, joys of motherhood, faith in Hashem, and everything in between. Charlene, founder & CEO of Gali's Couture Wigs, is a fashion designer, Israeli cosmetics creator, writer and teen mentor.

There are several interactive presentations scheduled over the course of the weekend. On Friday evening, beginning at 8:15 p.m., Charlene and her husband, Jonathan, will present special sessions tailored to men and women. Charlene's presentation for women entitled "*Hang in there...Mashiach is SOOO close!*"

will take place in Young Israel's Kahane Sanctuary.

Jonathan's discussion for men entitled "*From Hedge Funds to Hatzalah: Leading a Meaningful Life*" will be held in the Greenblatt Beis Medrash at Young Israel.

On Shabbos afternoon at 4:10 p.m., Charlene will lead an afternoon class for ladies entitled, "*The Key to Blessings is Gratitude*." The class will be at Young Israel.

The weekend culminates Saturday evening with a community-wide event, hosted by the Margolin Hebrew Academy in its Irby and Bernice Cooper Beit Midrash. Beginning at 8:15 p.m., Charlene will tell "*The Story of Gali Aminoff*" – the miraculous story of Charlene's daughter that has captivated tens of thousands around the globe and cat-

apulted Charlene to international fame.

"Young Israel is privileged to be able to bring Charlene and Jonathan to Memphis. They are a couple who have touched the lives of Jews across the world, from all backgrounds and levels of observance," explained Noam Davidovics, president of Young Israel. "Our weekend with the Aminoffs will certainly be one that is uplifting and inspiring."

All presentations being offered over the course of the weekend are open to the public and free of charge.

Details on the other weekends planned as part of the Scholar-In-Residence Series will be announced in the coming months. For more information about Young Israel's 2024-25 Scholar-In Residence Series, please contact the shul office at 901-761-6060. **HW**

# Bornblum Middle Hits the Road for a Civil Rights Trip to Birmingham



Bornblum Middle School students visit an interactive civil rights exhibit at Temple Beth El in Birmingham, Ala. Credit: Zack Orsborn.

On January 16, as part of their year-long study of Jewish contributions to the Civil Rights Movement, students from Bornblum Middle hit the road for a day in Birmingham, Alabama. While there, students visited Temple Beth El, the 16th Street Baptist Church, the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, and Kelly Ingram Park.

The idea to include the Birmingham trip in the year-long exploration came after staff read an article in "The New York Times" featuring an interactive civil rights exhibit at Temple Beth El. According to Jill Cross, Bornblum's director of curriculum and instruction, "After reading the article, I had a chance

to be in Birmingham where I previewed the exhibit. I knew a visit to the Temple Beth El Civil Rights Experience, which explores Jewish figures and their connection to the Civil Rights Movement at the site of an attempted bombing in 1958, would compliment our curriculum and expose our students to the broader quest for social justice."

Bornblum Middle's year-long exploration is part of a Prizmah Diversity Grant, which is funding an artist-in-residence program with Memphis artist Ephraim Urevbu. During the fourth quarter of the year, students will culminate their learning by creating art tiles with Mr. Urevbu that tell the stories of

Jews who were part of the struggle for civil rights.

Commenting on the Temple Beth El exhibit, Bornblum 8th grader Jacob Phelps, said, "Hearing all of the stories of the different people who were active in the civil rights movement inspired me to want to help others as well."

According to Cross, a museum educator, the article in "The New York Times" was right in recommending the tour at Temple Beth El. "The immersive nature of the exhibition space along with the interactive elements and analysis of primary sources provided an engaging experience that went beyond a typical gallery museum visit. Anyone who can get to Birmingham to see the exhibit should take the time to do it!"

After Temple Beth El, students visited the 16th Street Baptist Church, where a docent walked them through the exhibit and explained the history of the church, which was bombed in 1963 killing four young girls, a critical turning point in the struggle for civil rights in Birmingham and throughout the South.

According to Lillian Wells, a Bornblum 6th grade student, "Learning about what happened at the Church was very scary, but also interesting. It made me nervous, because it made me think about whether it could happen again."

Finally, students visited the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, a museum similar to the National Civil Rights Museum, which the students visited earlier in the year, and Kelly

*"Learning about what happened at the Church was very scary, but also interesting. It made me nervous, because it made me think about whether it could happen again."*

*~Lillian Wells, Bornblum 6th grade student*

Ingram Park where students explored monuments depicting the struggle for civil rights, especially those by young people.

"It was amazing to see these fearless acts of selflessness by kids around my age who were working for the betterment of everyone," said Bornblum 7th grader Eitan Kaminsky.

Throughout the day, students worked with Zack Orsborn, Bornblum's director of marketing and communications, who attended the trip to help document the day, taking over the school's social media and posting real-time videos about the sites they visited.

"Our students have so much to share, and the social media takeover was not only a great way to show the world what Bornblum Middle was up to, but to help the students process what were intense learning experiences about topics that really hit home," said Orsborn. **HW**



My Teen Israel Experience



Benjamin Freiden on a Camel at the Bedouin tents.

By Benjamin Freiden

This past summer in Israel was especially significant, as it was filled with influential experiences and memorable adventures that were profoundly meaningful spiritually and emotionally to me due to the current situation in Israel.

In Israel I made new friends from various regions across America while participating in B’nai Akiva’s Mach Hach B’Aretz program with 450 teens who were divided into 11 buses, each carrying 40 to 50 participants. We started in Hostage Square hearing from a woman whose husband died fighting in Gaza. Also, we had the pleasure of helping arrange a barbecue for Israeli soldiers. I enjoyed traveling around Israel, visiting diverse locations such as Haifa, Tiberias, Eilat, Tel Aviv, and Jerusalem, hiking in many places, and meeting several familiar faces.

Upon arrival in Israel, the entire Mach Hach program went straight to the Kotel. Everyone was thrilled to be there, cheering, singing, and dancing. We spent our first Shabbat in Jerusalem. This was where our bus[es] first came together, and we started meeting each other. For every Shabbat, we would go to a scenic location right before sunset and sing Zemirot (songs). We sang with a view of the Kotel in the background, which was the highlight of my week, and I eagerly anticipated it every Shabbat.

The following week, we started in Haifa, where we hiked and kayaked. After a few nights, we drove to Eilat staying in the Bedouin tents on the way. We rode camels and enjoyed a night in the

desert. We woke up at 4 a.m. the next day to hike Masada. It was a long hike but inspiring as we davened on the top. (Also, I want to briefly mention how excellent the food was. Everywhere we went, there were more and more restaurants.)

We then began the long trip to Eilat stopping at an army base on the way, hearing soldiers talk about their experiences during the war and learning Krav Maga. We spent three nights in Eilat snorkeling and boating. At Har Tzfacho, a mountain in the south, we did a 4 a.m. hike and could see Israel, Jordan, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia from this mountain. We then traveled back north and spent a calm and meaningful Shabbat in Mitzpe Ramon and had a boat ride to visit Rabbi Akiva’s grave in Teveria (Tiberias).

In the Kfar Kedem tourist center in Israel, which reconstructs everyday life in the Galilee 2000 years ago, during the Mishna period, we rode donkeys, visited Aqua Kef (floating park on the Sea of Galilee) and experienced inflatables in the Dead Sea. We then returned to Jerusalem for Shabbat Mac Hach, a Shabbat with the whole program.

The evening before Shabbat we had a surprise Ishay Ribo concert. Shabbat was fun and crazy and went by extremely fast. The following Sunday was a meaningful day as we went to the Holocaust Museum, Yad Vashem and Har Herzl. On the 17th of Tammuz fast, we had a meaningful slow shira (sing-along) with the whole camp.

While in Jerusalem for the week, I had

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Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. Jan. 24, 2025 / 24 Tevet, 5785 .....5:02 p.m.  
Havdalah, Sat. Jan. 25, 2025 / 25 Tevet, 5785 ..... 6:01 p.m.  
Weekly Torah Portion: Va’eira

the chance to go to the Kotel tunnels and a mud cave. On my “off Shabbat” I had the opportunity to visit my great-grandmother in Jerusalem and stayed at my friend’s home in Ra’anana. This was the first Shabbat where I felt like a part of the Israeli community, even though Ra’anana is very American.

Our last week was an adventure week with many options on exploring aspects of Israel. There were options for the army, Chesed (volunteering), culture, sports, and Yam L’Yam (Sea to Sea Hike.) I chose the culture track, in which we ate a lot of food, went on

tours, and enjoyed numerous museums. Before our last Shabbat in Jerusalem, we visited Hostage Square again and the Museum for the Deaf in Tel Aviv, which were great experiences. During our last Shabbat we had our final shira (singing) and went to the City of David and enjoyed a big feast before heading home.

Thank you to Memphis Jewish Federation’s Lemsky Endowment Fund for making my incredible B’nai Akiva’s Mach Hach B’Aretz experience possible.

Benjamin Freiden, son of Yoni and Aviva Freiden, is a junior at the Cooper Yeshiva High School for Boys. Memphis Jewish Federation’s Lemsky Endowment Fund provided him with a Teen Israel Experience grant to offset the costs of his B’nai Akiva’s Mach Hach B’Aretz program in Israel.

All rising juniors and seniors are eligible for grants of up to \$3,000 to attend a recognized teen summer or high school program in Israel. Teen Israel Experience applications for Summer 2025 are open and can be accessed at jcpmemphis.org/lemsky-endowment-fund. HW



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# Open Enrollment for Bernstein Scholarship Fund 2025

Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman Jewish Family Service (Fogelman JFS) at the Memphis Jewish Community Center is now accepting applications for the Bernstein Scholarship Fund.

In 2001, Nate and Minnie Bernstein set up the scholarship fund to assist Jewish students with educational expenses. Fogelman JFS has been administering the fund since its inception.

Once again there will be an open enrollment period beginning January 1 and ending March 31, 2025, during which time Fogelman JFS will be accepting applications for the fund.

If selected, recipients will be notified

in May of the amount of their award and the awards will be paid to the applicant's identified school. To be eligible, applicants must be Jewish and must reside in the Memphis area. Also, the funds must be used for educational expenses, and recipients of other scholarship funds administered by Jewish Community Partners are ineligible for this fund.

All disbursement checks will be made out to the educational institution that the student will be attending.

For more information about the Bernstein Scholarship Fund, please contact Fogelman JFS at 901-767-8511. **HW**

# Congressman Cohen Applauds Biden Decision to Lift State Sponsor of Terrorism Designation for Cuba

WASHINGTON – Congressman Steve Cohen (TN-9), who has long admired the Cuban people and has advocated for improved relations with the island nation, today applauded President Biden's decision to lift its "state sponsor of terrorism" designation applied by Donald Trump in early 2021.

Congressman Cohen made the following statement:

"I applaud President Biden's decision to lift the 'state sponsor of terrorism' designation from Cuba and hope it leads to improved relations between

our countries. The Castros are gone, and it's well past time to allow the Cuban economy to recover and also to allow American companies to do business in Cuba and for travel to resume for American citizens. Trump's punitive decision in 2021 didn't make sense, and I hope it will not be reinstated. I agree with the Biden administration that there is 'no credible evidence' Cuba is currently supporting international terrorism. It's time to reestablish the healthy relationship begun during the Obama administration." **HW**

# Israeli Leaders Approve Ceasefire Deal after Day of Delays



The Israeli security cabinet meets to approve the hostage and ceasefire deal on Jan. 17, 2025. Credit: Koby Gideon/Israeli Government Press Office

By Ben Sales

(JTA) – After more than a day of delays, Israel's security cabinet has approved an agreement to stop the fighting in Gaza, paving the way for hostages to be released beginning last Sunday.

Last Friday, the full Israeli government assembled to approve the deal, which negotiators reached earlier this week. Despite opposition from far-right factions in the coalition, the agreement is expected to pass.

"Following an evaluation of all diplomatic, security and humanitarian aspects, and while understanding that the

proposed deal supports the achievement of the objectives of the war, the Security Cabinet has recommended that the Government approve the proposed framework," read a statement from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office.

The Israeli approval is coming one day later than expected. Last Thursday, Netanyahu faced pressure from the far-right parties in his government to spike the deal. One of the parties, led by National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, has vowed to leave the government if the deal moves forward. If the other party, Religious Zionism, also leaves, Netanyahu will lose his parliamentary majority.

Netanyahu also blamed Hamas for renegeing on parts of the deal, but the government later announced that all issues had been resolved. Last Thursday, the Israeli military announced it had begun preparations to receive the freed hostages, signaling that the deal was moving forward.

The deal, which was agreed to earlier this week after months of halting talks followed by a marathon round of negotiations, will begin with an initial six-week stage in which the fighting will pause and the Israeli military will begin its withdrawal from Gaza. Over the course of that period, 33 hostages held by Hamas will be freed in groups that are released roughly once a week. In exchange, Israel will release hundreds of Palestinian prisoners convicted on security offenses.

A second stage of the deal, which has yet to be fully negotiated, would see a further Israeli military withdrawal and permanent end to the fighting in exchange for the release of the remaining living hostages. In a third phase, the military withdrawal will be complete, and reconstruction of Gaza would begin, as the bodies of deceased hostages are returned to Israel. In each stage, hostages will be freed in exchange for a much larger number of Palestinian security prisoners.

"The Prime Minister has also directed the Coordinator for the Hostages and the Missing to coordinate the preparations to receive the hostages upon their return to Israel," Netanyahu's office said. "The State of Israel is committed to achieving all of the objectives of the war including the return of all of our hostages, the living and the deceased."

Netanyahu has long said the two main objectives of the war are defeating Hamas and freeing the hostages. His statements last Friday did not mention Hamas. **HW**

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# Congressman Cohen Introduces Measure to Prohibit Federal Funds Being Spent at Trump Properties

(Jan. 16, 20205) WASHINGTON – Congressman Steve Cohen, a senior member of the Judiciary Committee, today introduced the Constitutional Emoluments Protection of American Interests Act, a measure to prohibit federal funds being used at any property owned, managed by, or under the control of former and future President Donald J. Trump.

As early as November 2017, Congressman Cohen cited violations of the emoluments clauses in his articles of

impeachment against Trump. In April 2019, Congressman Cohen led a letter with 40 House members asking Appropriations Committee members to include language prohibiting the use of federal funds at businesses owned by Trump. Legislatively, starting in 2017, and continuing through Trump’s first term in office, Congressman Cohen offered amendments to appropriations bills blocking federal funds from going to Trump Organization properties.

In October of last year, Congressman Cohen endorsed the conclusion of the House Oversight Committee that Trump violated the emoluments clauses by receiving “ethically suspect payments” through his lease of the Trump International Hotel on Pennsylvania Avenue. Trump no longer leases the facility.

Congressman Cohen made the following statement:

“Our recently minted felon-in-chief was already a grifter during his first term

and clearly violated the Constitution’s emoluments clauses. Some mechanism needs to be in place to prohibit his continued scoffing at Constitutional provisions designed to prevent corruption and self-dealing. This measure should place in check the future president’s misuse of his office for private gain at least in the realm of federal funding at his properties. It’s unfortunate that such a measure is necessary, but we’ve had our eyes opened by this self-serving man.” **HW**

## Kustoff Op-Ed: One Bill Can Make America Great Again

WASHINGTON, D.C. — Congressman David Kustoff (R-TN) published an op-ed in the “Washington Examiner” titled, “One bill can make America great again.” In the op-ed, Congressman Kustoff highlights the urgent need for Congress to pass one bill through reconciliation that delivers on President Donald Trump’s agenda.

“The first step toward making America great again is passing one reconciliation bill that will secure the border, restore American energy dominance, and thwart the looming threat of historic tax hikes,” wrote Congressman Kustoff. “Time is of the essence. The U.S.’s economic stability, national security, and global standing cannot afford delayed action.”

**One bill can make America great again**  
Congressman David Kustoff  
This appeared in the “Washington

**Examiner”**  
*In November 2024, people demanded change by electing President-elect Donald Trump to a second term in the White House. After four years of devastating inflation, a wide-open southern border, and failure after failure on the world stage, voters made clear that they have had enough. Trump’s promises to secure the border, lower prices for everyday goods and services, and reinstate the United States’s standing as the leader of the free world led to a historic governing mandate.*  
*It is incumbent upon Republicans in Congress to recognize this mandate. We can start by writing one bill to help Trump advance his “America First” agenda and deliver on his promises to the people.*  
*Congress can do its part by passing a single bill through a process known as reconciliation, an expedited legislative procedure that allows lawmakers*

*to enact policy quickly and with narrow majorities. A single reconciliation package will ensure Trump’s priorities move swiftly through Congress and are implemented almost immediately.*  
*There is no question that we need to secure our border and stop the flow of illegal immigrants into our country. Essential to that is providing our Border Patrol and immigration officers with the resources they need to do their jobs. Reconciliation legislation that includes robust immigration security measures will be the most effective way to get our southern border under control, reclaim U.S. sovereignty, and keep our communities safe.*

*Another stepping stone toward bolstering our national security and strengthening our economy is unleashing domestic energy production. President Joe Biden’s all-out war on American energy producers has made us reliant on foreign energy sources. As a result, families are being forced to pay high prices simply to heat their homes and put gas in their cars. By including an all-of-the-above energy approach in reconciliation legislation, we can increase energy production here at home, lower costs for people, and become energy independent once again.*  
*Additionally, of great importance to any reconciliation legislation aimed at helping people is extending the key provisions of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017. One of the hallmarks of Trump’s first administration, the TCJA was the first major reform to the federal tax code in over 30 years. It changed individual income rates, the corporate tax rate,*

*rules for estate and retirement planning, and taxes for small businesses.*  
*The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act ignited an economic fire that ushered in one of the strongest economies in U.S. history. However, at the end of 2025, many TCJA provisions are set to expire.*  
*If the TCJA expires, it will have devastating effects on everyone. In my home state of Tennessee, the estimated annual tax increase would be roughly \$3,000 for the average household. While people grapple with the rampant inflation and high prices of Biden’s economy, a tax hike of this magnitude would be disastrous.*  
*As a member of the House Ways and Means Committee, the chief tax-writing committee in Congress, I am laser-focused on extending these important provisions and implementing Trump’s tax priorities. The U.S. must have a pro-growth tax code that benefits workers, families, farmers, and small businesses.*  
*Extending these tax cuts is the cornerstone of Trump’s “America First” agenda. People remember the stability and prosperity of his first administration and are expecting the same during his second term. It is the responsibility of Congress to codify the president-elect’s legislative priorities.*  
*The first step toward making America great again is passing one reconciliation bill that will secure the border, restore American energy dominance, and thwart the looming threat of historic tax hikes. Time is of the essence. The U.S.’s economic stability, national security, and global standing cannot afford delayed action.* **HW**

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## Los Angeles Looks Like Gaza a ‘War-Torn’ Country, Jamie Lee Curtis Says

By Alex Welz

(JNS) – Star actress Jamie Lee Curtis compared the destruction of the California blazes to that of the Gaza Strip last week, drawing criticism.

“The entire City of Angels is on fire – everywhere, everywhere,” she said. “The entire Pacific Palisades looks like, unfortunately, Gaza or one of these war-torn countries where terrible things have happened.”

Joel Petlin, superintendent of the Kiryas Joel School District, wrote that “many Palestinian accounts are celebrating the wildfires in Los Angeles. This Hollywood celebrity should probably rethink her comparison.”

Curtis, whose father is the late Jewish actor Tony Curtis – who starred with Marilyn Monroe in “Some Like It Hot” in 1959 – has sided publicly with Israel since Hamas’s Oct. 7, 2023, attacks.

She and more than 700 others from the entertainment industry signed an open letter in support of the Jewish state following the attack. “This is terrorism. This is evil. There is no justification or rationalization for Hamas’s actions,” the letter stated.

“These are barbaric acts of terrorism that must be called out by everyone. They are a terrorist organization whose leaders call for the murder of Jews everywhere,” it added.

In recent days, an adviser to the United Nations and Code Pink were criticized for comparing California wildfires and Gaza.

Curtis has been using her social media accounts to raise money for those affected by the California wildfires and to call attention to the efforts of fire fighters and others who are fighting those fires and aiding victims. **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.



## MJCC Seniors work on a Flower Vase Art Project

**Monday, January 27**  
**Special Art Project with Mid-South Hobbies**

In the art room, next to the senior lunch room, Mid-South Hobbies will bring an art project for each person to do on their own! The last 2 projects everyone really enjoyed. They were a Pop-Up Flower Vase complete with Butterflies and a Wooden Snowflake Garland! Each of these projects came with their own color markers. If the people did not finish the project at the MJCC, they took them home, with the markers, to finish. It was really an enjoyable time. Please make a reservation for lunch and the Art Project so that we will have enough projects for everyone. Call the front desk at 901-761-0810 to reserve your spot. There is no charge for the Art Project.

**Wednesday, January 29**  
**Rabbi Talk**  
**Rabbi Abe Schacter-Gampel, Director for the Center of Jewish Life and Learning at the Memphis Jewish Community Center**

**Topic: “Exploring Exodus”**  
Rabbi Abe always has a unique way of looking at any subject. We usually have a larger-than-normal turnout, so be sure and make your reservations early.

Please join us Monday through Friday for a delicious kosher lunch from the kitchens at Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab. The cost is only \$2 for seniors. Reservations are required the day before by 1 p.m. by contacting Steve Kaplan, Adult Services Coordinator, at 901-259-9220 or [stevekaplan@jccmemphis.org](mailto:stevekaplan@jccmemphis.org) or by calling the front desk at 901-761-0810. Steve works Monday thru Thursday 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. [HW](#)

**Monday, February 3**  
**Speaker: Sherry Harbur**  
**Topic: Senior Fraud in Today’s Time**

Sherry Harbur will talk about this very pertinent subject. She previously spoke about Senior Scams, which was quite informative and well-received. With all the frauds that are targeted toward seniors, you or any child of a senior won’t want to miss this. Please call the MJCC front desk to make a reservation. The number is 901-761-0810.

**Wednesday, February 5**  
**Field Trip to Baron Hirsch Monthly Luncheon**

The group will go to Baron Hirsch Synagogue for their Monthly Luncheon. Everyone enjoyed their last Luncheon with great food, terrific entertainment by Creative Aging and a lively BINGO game that followed! You can ride the Senior Bus from the MJCC, be picked up if you are in the area, or meet us at Baron Hirsch. Reservations can be called in direct to the office at the Baron Hirsch 901-683-7485 or call the front desk of the MJCC to be put on the list.

# Fogelman Jewish Family Service Annual Thanksgiving to New Year’s Food Drive Reaches Goal



**Rabbi Akiva Males and several students from Young Israel of Memphis delivered items collected for the Peggy E. & L.R. Jalenak, Jr. Kosher Food and Baby Pantry.**

Dear Community Members,  
In November, Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman Jewish Family Service kicked off our annual Thanksgiving to New Year’s food drive for the Peggy E. & L.R. Jalenak, Jr. Kosher Food and Baby Pantry. I want to thank you all for your very generous donations! In just 40 days, Fogelman JFS received 4,006 items. We reached our goal!

It is because of this type of generosity that we are able to serve those individuals in need of assistance. Each week we have the privilege of providing pantry bags with shelf-stable food for our clients. In 2024, Fogelman JFS distribut-

ed close to 4,000 pantry bags. Almost 1,000 more than in 2023! We can only provide this service due to donations like yours!

Thank you for partnering with Fogelman JFS to meet the needs of so many. If you, or someone you know would benefit from the Peggy E. & L.R. Jalenak, Jr. Kosher Food and Baby Pantry, please never hesitate to reach out. We are here to help and only a phone call away: 901.767-8511.

Sincerely,  
*Rashki Osina, LCSW*  
*Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman JFS*  
*Director of Social Services*

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# Nearly Half the Globe has ‘Elevated Levels’ of Antisemitic Beliefs, ADL Survey Finds



Antisemitic graffiti painted in a fenced-off area of Temple De Hirsch Sinai in Seattle, Washington, on April 16, 2023. Courtesy of Rabbi Daniel Weiner By Asaf Elia-Shalev

(JTA) – Nearly half of adults around the world have “elevated levels of antisemitic attitudes,” the Anti-Defamation League reported in its latest global survey of anti-Jewish beliefs.

In addition, the survey found that one-fifth of the world has not heard of the Holocaust. About half accept the Holocaust’s historical truth.

Known as the Global 100, the survey represents 94% of the world’s population through responses from a sample of more than 58,000 adults across 103 countries and territories.

As it has in its previous surveys, the ADL determined levels of antisemitism by posing 11 antisemitic statements to each respondent and asking how many they agreed with. The group said that 46% of respondents agreed with most of the stereotypes tested, which include statements like “Jews have too much

control over global affairs” and “Jews don’t care about what happens to anyone but their own kind.”

By that measure, the level of global antisemitism documented by the ADL appears to have sharply increased from 2014, when the group first did such a survey and found that 26% of adults were “deeply infected with anti-Semitic attitudes.”

The comparison isn’t perfect because that study contained a slightly different list of questions, asking if Jews have too much power in international financial markets (that question was replaced by asking if Jews have “a lot of irritating faults”). The 2014 survey also covered less of the world, but the total number of people estimated to have such beliefs doubled from 1.1 billion to 2.2 billion adults. Over that time, according to the United Nations, the global population increased

by about 1 billion, from 7.2 billion to 8.2 billion.

According to the survey, awareness of the Holocaust and acceptance of its historical truth are much higher. In 2014, about half of respondents said they hadn’t heard of the Holocaust versus 20% in the new edition of the survey. Back then, a third said they had both heard of the Holocaust and believed historical accounts were accurate. Today, that figure stands at 48%, though it dips to 39% for those ages 18-34.

The ADL’s findings are the latest evidence suggesting a surge in antisemitism around the world in recent years and following Hamas’ Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel and the outbreak of the war in Gaza.

“Antisemitism is nothing short of a global emergency, especially in a post-October 7 world,” ADL CEO Jonathan A. Greenblatt said in a statement. “We are seeing these trends play out from the Middle East to Asia, from Europe to North and South America.”

Greenblatt’s tone reflects an alarm about antisemitism that wasn’t as widely shared when the group released the previous edition of the survey in 2014. Several commentators took issue with the survey’s methodology and conclusions. Abe Foxman, the head of the ADL at the time, for example, fended off allegations that the ADL was hyping up the problem.

“We frequently get accused of seeing anti-Semitism everywhere, and we’re very conscious about the credibility,” Foxman said at the time. “We were cautious, we were conservative, to understate rather than overstate.”

In a press briefing, Greenblatt highlighted as especially troubling that antisemitic attitudes are increasingly prevalent among young people. The survey found that half of respondents ages 18 to 35 revealed heightened levels of antisemitic sentiments, which is 13% higher than the figure for those over 50.

He blamed the problem on a number of factors including the workings of social media, where some limits on hate speech were recently lifted, and on what he characterized as a “nonstop fountain of antisemitism” emanating from the Qatari-owned broadcast network Al Jazeera. He also said that antisemitism was being normalized through some left-wing professors who allegedly camouflage their bigotry using scholarly rhetoric. Larger historical trends are also at fault for people’s negative attitudes about Jews, according to Greenblatt.

“The rise of conspiracism and populism and polarization has created a climate that’s fertile for scapegoating,” he said. “We have seen this throughout history, and we are seeing it now.”

The countries and territories that scored highest on the ADL’s index of antisemitism were the West Bank and Gaza – where Israel is currently fighting a multi-front war with terror groups that has a mounting death toll – Kuwait and Indonesia, where at least 96% harbor high levels of anti-Jewish sentiment. The index score for the Middle East and North Africa as a whole was 76%.

The countries with the lowest levels of antisemitism were Sweden, Norway, Canada and the Netherlands, which all scored 8% or lower. **HW**

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**We Are Here! We are Alive!** is the English translation of the Italian memoir *Siamo Qui, Siamo Vivi* (San Paolo Press, 2017).

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# Alamo Drafthouse Employees Petition to Scrap Screenings of 1972 Munich Film ‘September 5’



The cast of September 5, a control room thriller about the 1972 Munich massacre. Credit: ©2024 Paramount Pictures

By PJ Grisar

This originally appeared in Forward, reprinted with permission.

Employees for New York City locations of dine-in theater Alamo Drafthouse are calling on the business to stop screenings of a film about the 1972 massacre of Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics that they are calling “Zionist propaganda.”

The petition, which has collected nearly 1,000 signatures, posted Jan. 1 to the NYC Alamo United union’s Instagram account, states that the Downtown Brooklyn location was only supposed to host a “one-off private screening” of Tim Fehlbaum’s “September 5” on Nov. 22, 2024, and that, after employees expressed their outrage, management assured them there would be no further screenings. (NYC Alamo United could not be reached for comment on Insta-

gram or X; Alamo Drafthouse did not immediately respond to a request for comment.)

“Last minute, it was quietly added to our schedule,” the petition said. “Sony-owned Alamo would rather make a quick buck off the plight of Palestinians than listen to their workers, urging them to ‘Give a Shit’ about anything besides the size of their coffers.”

The employees described the film, which was nominated for a Golden Globe award, and follows the ABC sports teams’ live coverage of the unfolding hostage crisis in the Olympic village “an ahistorical and dehumanizing dramatization of Operation Iqrit and Biram” orchestrated by Black September. Black September was a militant breakaway group of the Palestinian political group Fatah; on Sept. 5, 1972, it

killed 11 Israelis, including athletes and coaches, after demanding Israeli return over 200 Palestinian prisoners.

The petition, signed “101 members of the NYC Alamo United,” takes issue with the characters in the newsroom, played by actors including John Magaro and Peter Sarsgaard, “not hesitating to call the militants ‘terrorists’ and ‘A-rabs.’” (In the film, ABC correspondent Peter Jennings cautions the team from using the word “terrorists” – the man who derisively refers to Black September as “A-rabs” is called out by an Algerian colleague.)

The Alamo petition contextualizes the hostage situation by saying it came “a mere five years after the Six Day War,” which led to the Israeli occupation and 25 years after the Nakba (“catastrophe”), the word Palestinians use for mass displacement after the founding of Israel in 1948. The petition doesn’t at any point state the specifics of Black September’s operation or the bloody outcome but called the Israeli hunt for the culprits as a “wanton assassination of Palestinian activists.”

Characterizing the film as “yet another attempt by the Western media to push its imperialist and racist agenda, manufacturing consent for the continued genocide and cultural decimation of Palestine and its peoples,” the petition writers accused it of “quintessential Orientalism” for its depiction of Arabs and brown people as “evil, antisemitic terrorists.”

Fehlbaum’s film’s depictions of Black September are dictated by the actual television footage of the day. The film almost never leaves the studio, and ev-

The petition calls the film ‘Zionist propaganda’

ery image of both the Israelis and the Palestinians is taken from the ABC broadcast.

In the petition, the union said it condemned “the Alamo’s willingness to profit off the genocide in Palestine” and called on others to demand “they immediately stop platforming film and media industry companies that spread genocidal rhetoric” and that the petition would be presented during the union’s bargaining session this month. Many of the names on the petition are not full names.

In an interview with the “Forward” in November, Fehlbaum, a Germany-based director from Switzerland, said that the film was not meant to comment on the current war in Gaza, but “a very specific moment in history and in media history,” where live broadcasts of tragedies, and 24 hour news cycles, began.

“What we hope is that we can provide a way for the audience to engage with questions about our complex media environment through that historical lens,” he said.

The current Alamo Drafthouse website says “September 5” is screening until Jan. 15 at the Downtown Brooklyn location. The site’s description says the film “provides a fresh perspective on the live broadcast seen globally by an estimated one billion people at the time.” HW

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# If You Don't Have a Will Yet, Why Not?

*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*

A will is a fundamental estate planning document. It outlines how you wish your property to be distributed, who should handle matters related to settling your estate, and who you want to care for your children after you pass, among other things.

If you don't yet have a will, you're not alone. According to a recent survey by Caring.com, 64% of Americans think having a will is important, but only 32% have one.<sup>1</sup> There are many reasons people put off drafting a will — here are four that you might relate to.

**1. Just haven't gotten around to it**

It's easy to procrastinate when it comes to drafting a will. Even if it's something you think you should do, it's probably not high on the list of things you want to do. Perhaps you're uncomfortable thinking about your own mortality, or maybe you're worried about how complicated or costly the process will be.

Focusing on some of the benefits of having a will might give you the motivation you need to get started. A will is a way to make sure your loved ones are cared for and that your last wishes are honored. A legally binding will gives you more control over what happens to your property and helps ensure that your treasured possessions end up in the right hands. You can name an executor or personal representative who you believe will responsibly handle the details of settling your estate. And having a will is especially important if you have minor children and want to protect them by naming a guardian who will best be

able to handle the responsibility of raising them.

If making these decisions sounds daunting, there's help available. An estate planning attorney can help address your concerns and guide you through the process.

**2. It's not the right time**

Too young? Not married? Childless? In good health? Not wealthy enough? People often think it's not the right time to draft a will, but there's no better time than now. Most adults have money or possessions that they would like to leave to someone, and waiting until the circumstances seem perfect is risky. Health problems may come on suddenly, and trying to draft a will at that time can be stressful. Even worse, if you suddenly become incapacitated, it may be too late.

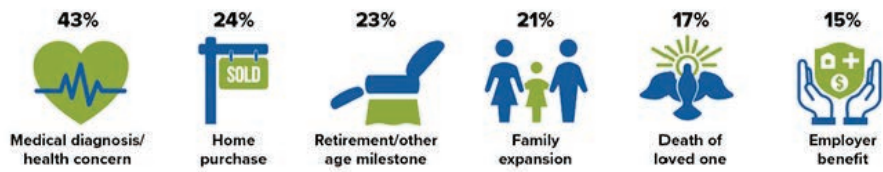
Your life will inevitably change as the years pass, and any will drafted now can (and should) be reviewed and revised occasionally to account for family and financial changes.

**3. Don't think it's important**

Unless you have personal experience with settling an estate, you may underestimate the consequences of dying without a will (called dying intestate). Decisions will be made by the court on your behalf, and your property will be distributed according to the laws of your state. Who is entitled to your assets will depend on those laws, and handling that when there is no will can be especially complicated, time-consuming, stressful, and expensive for your family.

**Motivating Situations**

Almost one out of four Americans without a will say that nothing would motivate them to get one. Here are the percentages of those without a will who say these situations would motivate them.



Source: 2024 Wills and Estate Planning Study, Caring.com (multiple responses allowed)

**4. Family dynamics are complex**

Putting off drafting a will might seem logical when you are facing deep-rooted family issues or complicated situations. Why not just leave it to others to sort out after you're gone?

Unfortunately, not having a legal document that outlines your specific intentions can make an already difficult situation worse. Leaving the disposition of your assets up to the court to decide may have unintended consequences for family members and lead to irreparable rifts or even litigation.

**A will is only part of an estate plan**

Finally, as important as a will is, it's just one component of your estate plan. You may need other legal documents such as trusts, powers of attorney, and advance medical directives to fully address your needs. Ask an estate planning attorney to evaluate your individual situation and help you put a plan in place.

1) 2024 Wills and Estate Planning Study, Caring.com

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# Hostages Emily Damari, Romi Gonen, Doron Steinbrecher Released as Israel-Hamas Ceasefire Sets In



Posters of hostages Emily Damari and Romi Gonen, two of the first hostages Hamas said it would release from Gaza, are displayed at Tel Aviv’s Hostage Square, Jan. 16, 2025. Credit: Noam Galai/Getty Images

By Philissa Cramer

(JTA) – Three women whom Hamas held hostage in Gaza for more than 470 days are returning to Israel as a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war went into effect Sunday morning.

The women were all alive and exited on their own from a Hamas vehicle, according to footage streamed from Gaza. Representatives of the Red Cross met them there in preparation for returning them to Israel, where their families and medical professionals are waiting.

The women, civilians abducted when Hamas terrorists invaded southern Israel, were the first hostages freed from among 33 set for release over six weeks, according to a ceasefire deal struck last week. They are:

Emily Damari: The only British citizen to remain in Gaza, Damari, 27, was shot on Oct. 7 but seen alive in Gaza by other hostages who returned. She was abducted from Kibbutz Kfar Aza.

Romi Gonen: Taken hostage from the Nova music festival, Gonen, 24, was shot on Oct. 7 but seen alive in Gaza by other hostages who returned.

Doron Steinbrecher: Taken hostage from her home at Kibbutz Kfar Aza, Steinbrecher appeared alive in a video released by Hamas in January 2024.

No official announcement was made about their condition before their release, but Romi Gonen’s father told an Israeli radio station that he understood that his daughter would be returning alive. Their mothers were called to Reim, near to the site of the Nova massacre, to be reunited with the women.

Israeli authorities have prepared to provide medical and psychological treatments to hostages as they return. There remain 98 hostages, of whom 33 will be released over six weeks during the first phase of a ceasefire deal, from more than 250 taken on Oct. 7.

Separately, Israel announced that it had retrieved the remains of Oron Shaul, a soldier who was killed in the 2014 Gaza war and held hostage since then. Shaul is one of 36 people abducted from Israel who are known to be dead; under the terms of the ceasefire, their bodies would be returned only after Israel fully withdraws from Gaza and reconstruction of the territory begins.

The ceasefire began slightly later than planned because of a delay in announcing the names of the hostages to be returned, which Hamas attributed to “technical difficulties” in communicating within the territory.

It also followed Israel’s Supreme Court rejecting petitions from Israelis who oppose the deal, mostly because of the large number of Palestinian security prisoners, including convicted murderers, who will be released under the agreement.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces intense pressure over whether to continue the war after the six-week pause. A crucial right-wing government partner has threatened to exit his coalition if fighting does not resume at that time. But Donald Trump, who is being sworn in Monday as U.S. president, has strongly pressed for a permanent end to the war.

In an extended statement on Saturday, Netanyahu said both Trump and Joe Biden, the outgoing president, had endorsed a resumption in fighting in the future.

Calling the current pause a “temporary ceasefire,” Netanyahu said, “Both President Trump and President Biden have given full backing to Israel’s right to return to the fighting, if Israel reaches the conclusion that the second stage negotiations are ineffectual. I greatly appreciate this.” **HW**

# Hamas Will Never Rule Gaza, Vows U.S. National Security Advisor Designate

(JNS) – Hamas will “never govern Gaza,” President-elect Donald Trump’s incoming national security adviser, Mike Waltz, said on Sunday, ahead of the U.S.-mediated ceasefire between the terrorist group and Israel.

“That is completely unacceptable,” Waltz said during an interview with CBS about the prospect of a Hamas-run Gaza.

On Oct. 7, 2023, about 6,000 Hamas-led terrorists invaded Israel, murdered

some 1,200 people and abducted another 251. Israel launched a campaign whose stated goal was to dismantle Hamas and retrieve the hostages.

Earlier this month, Israel and Hamas agreed to a ceasefire whose first phase features the release of 33 out of 97 hostages still in Gaza in return for more than a thousand Palestinian prisoners; an Israeli redeployment in the Gaza Strip and a 42-day ceasefire. The remaining hostages are

# Hundreds Rally in Jerusalem Against ‘Blasphemous’ Hostage Deal



Empty coffins are seen outside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office in Jerusalem, as part of a protest against the ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas, Jan. 16, 2025. Credit: Yonatan Sindel/Flash90

(JNS) – Hundreds of Israelis, including families of soldiers slain during the war in Gaza, protested at the Knesset in Jerusalem last Thursday ahead of an expected government vote on the ceasefire deal with Hamas terrorists.

Protests were also held outside Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office in the capital.

Eliyahu Libman, one of the founders of the Tikva Forum for Families of Hostages and whose son, Elyakim, was murdered during Hamas’s Oct. 7, 2023, attack, told “Hakol Hayehudi” at the protest, “And Samuel said to him, ‘The Lord has this day torn the kingship over Israel away from you.’ [1 Samuel 15:28]”

“Starting today, you are directly responsible for all the blood that will be shed,” Libman said in remarks addressed to the Israeli government. “For the most terrible national humiliation and encouragement of terrorism! The blasphemy of God cries out to heaven; we will never forgive you.”

Wally Wollfstal, the father of Capt. (res.) Ariel Mordechay Wollfstal, who was killed in central Gaza on Jan. 22, 2024, told Arutz 7: “There will be the

price for this deal: hundreds more dead soldiers. If we return after they released a million people who were in southern Gaza and allow them to return to the northern Strip, we will receive more coffins.

“From the protest camp in Jerusalem, we call on Cabinet members not to approve this reckless deal, which will release thousands of terrorists and cause many more dead IDF soldiers,” added Wollfstal.

Last Thursday night, the Tikva Forum and the Heroism Forum, which represents families of soldiers and security personnel who died in the Swords of Iron war, are planning major protests against the deal at intersections across Israel.

“[President Donald] Trump’s entry [into office] marks the time to move from a slow and faltering war, using failed raids, to victory, decisiveness, the occupation of Gaza and a complete victory over Hamas,” the organizers stated in the announcement. “Now is definitely not the time to surrender to Hamas.

“No to signing a surrender deal – now is the time for victory! It is time to win the war and return all the hostages!” the announcement concludes.

An Israeli Cabinet meeting scheduled for last Thursday morning, in which the agreement was set to be approved, was reportedly postponed after Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich’s Religious Zionism Party signaled it could exit the government in protest of the agreement.

However, according to the Prime Minister’s Office, the Cabinet vote was delayed because Hamas reneged on parts of the deal. “The Israeli Cabinet will not convene until the mediators notify Israel that Hamas has accepted all elements of the agreement,” the PMO stated. **HW**

## OBITUARY



Arlyne Glassberg Schwartz

Arlyne Glassberg Schwartz (1935 - 2025) died on January 16, 2025, leaving behind a legacy of love kindness and optimism. She is survived by her children; Nancy Nash (Randy), Charles Buring (Rebecca), Betsy Buring and Jeanne Wurzburg (Warren). Arlyne’s first child, daughter Leigh Buring, predeceased her at age 10. Arlyne also leaves behind 8 grandchildren and 4 great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her

husband of 14 years, Ben Schwartz. Arlyne was an officer in Central High School’s graduating class of 1953, and she was elected to be Miss Vanderbilt in the late 1950s.

An active and generous volunteer within the Memphis Jewish community, Arylene was instrumental in the creation of the Memphis Jewish Federation’s Lion of Judah program for women philanthropists and endowed a Lion of Judah Pin. She chaired the Temple Israel Mitzvah Day foundation and worked to help organize the Temple’s archives. She served as executive director of the woman’s division of the Memphis Jewish Federation for many years.

Arlyne was a loving mother grandmother, great-grandmother, godmother and friend. Her unwavering devotion will be remembered by all who had the privilege of knowing her. The family requests memorials to be sent to St. Jude Children’s Hospital and Fogelman Jewish Family Service at the Memphis Jewish Community Center.

The funeral service was held on Sunday, Jan. 19, 2025, in the Levy-Cooper Chapel at Temple Israel Cemetery. **HW**

to be released in following phases whose details are yet to be negotiated.

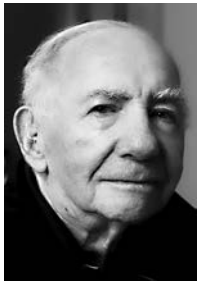
If Hamas violates the deal, the United States will not interfere with Israeli moves to punish Hamas, Waltz indicated. “I want the Israeli people to hear me loud and clear. If Hamas reneges on this deal and Hamas backs out, moves the goalpost, what have you, we will support

Israel in doing what it has to do,” he said.

Waltz was optimistic when asked about the Trump administration’s chances of brokering a normalization deal between Jerusalem and Riyadh as part of the Abraham Accords. “I do think we can expand it, and that will be between Israel and Saudi Arabia, which will be tremendous,” Waltz said. **HW**



# We’re Still Here



*Editor’s note:  
This story is being  
reprinted in memory  
of Ted Roberts in  
appreciation of his  
longtime service  
as a newspaper  
columnist.*

**By Ted Roberts**

I love a Jewish wedding. No, I don’t cry like the old ladies, but my heart warms up and expands like a kneidlach in simmering soup. Why? For the simple reason that we’re still here, and there’s every indication that there’ll be more of us. Our historical survival is one of the proofs that a living G-d rules the world.

It speaks to me of our continuing Jewish lineage – the futility of those historical Hitlers who tried to obliterate our culture and failed. As the bride circles the groom, and the rabbi recites the age-old blessings (that must have worked because we’re still here) I think of the mighty empires that have crumbled

when they attacked us. I think of Spain and their inquisition – a country now on the critically ill list. I think of the ex Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. (Republics? A blatant lie.) A shadow of its former self. I think of Nazi Germany – those champion Jew killers and their heaven sent (with the aid of the allied Air Forces) blizzard of destruction from the air. Dresden, Cologne, Berlin, Hamburg, Stuttgart – heaps of corpses and ashes. Yes, G-d looked away from the Holocaust, but violently took his revenge on our murderers.

And don’t forget Rome, who destroyed our second Temple and then fell prey to barbarians – the instrument of G-d. For does not the Torah tell us that He will use the sword of nations to impose His punishment? He also tells us that He will curse those that curse us. And bless those that bless us. Witness No. 1, the United States of America.

Not only will Judaism continue to wave its flag of morality but will serve the world as conscience – our usual role that we often pay for in blood.

But again these are somber thoughts.

Why think of winter’s desolation in the rejuvenation of spring? Why think of the icy gales of January when the returning swallows are bursting into a song of homecoming? And spring means weddings!


Like I say, there’s nothing like a Jewish wedding. I’m even a matchmaker (whose services are free). “Sammy,” I say, talking to an old friend. “You know that Greenberg girl is a real prize.” If he picked up a little Yiddish from his grandparents, I might call her a ‘Machayah’ – a phrase that means a cross between a lottery winner and a similar stroke of happiness that falls from the sky. I’ve even got good friends who won’t pick up the phone. Uh oh, it’s Ted – he wants to make his wedding pitch – me and Zelda are just good friends. Don’t answer it – you’ll get a 40-minute speech on my contribution to Jewish survival.”

And I’ve got even more in my bag of tricks when I hear that X and Y are close to legitimizing their dalliance with a formal wedding. I give them both a call. No special topic – “just thinking about you. You and your wedding. And you

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By Ted Roberts

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shouldn’t forget I love weddings, especially when waiters pass through the crowd with those lamb chop appetizers and champagne.” It rarely fails.

Yes, Romans, Spaniards, Russians, and Nazis, we’re still rejoicing over our survival and your dust.

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

## Jewish, Israeli Americans Face ‘Substantial’ Hiring Bias, ADL Finds

(JNS) – Jewish and Israeli Americans face “substantial” discrimination in the labor market, according to a study the Anti-Defamation League published last Wednesday.

Jewish American job seekers needed to send 24% more applications to receive the same number of positive first responses from prospective employers as Americans with Western European backgrounds when applying to the same role, the ADL found. For Israeli Americans, the challenge was even greater, requiring 39% more applications.

“This is groundbreaking evidence of serious antisemitic discrimination

in the labor market,” said Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO of the ADL. “On top of increasing antisemitic incidents and growing antisemitic beliefs, this landmark study illustrates the very real need for employers to take anti-Jewish and anti-Israeli prejudice more seriously to have a workplace that works for everyone.”

The ADL tasked Bryan Tomlin, a labor economist and professor of economics at California State University Channel Islands in Ventura County northwest of Los Angeles, with submitting applications to online administrative assistant job postings using resumés that

were identical except for indicators that the applicant might be Jewish or Israeli.

Tomlin sent 3,000 inquiries to listings across the United States, using identical email text and resumés that differed only in the name of the applicant – selected to sound Jewish, Israeli or Western European – and resumé signals of likely Jewish, Israeli or Western European background.

“Without the benefit of a study of this kind, it is difficult, if not impossible, to prove adverse treatment in the labor market based on one’s religion or cultural identity,” Tomlin said. “This study shows that Jewish and Israeli Americans

may be missing out on job opportunities just because of their identity, not their qualifications, and it provides a start toward quantifying some of these more subtle but still harmful symptoms of antisemitism.”

The study notes that because the applications focused on administrative jobs, “the extent to which these results can be applied to other markets is not known.”

“Given the results of this study, further investigation of potential adverse treatment of these protected groups in other markets (non-labor) is warranted as well,” it concludes. **HW**

## ISRAEL INSIGHTS Shifting Middle East Geopolitical Realities, Part II

**By Howard Weisband**

As I write on the evening of January 15, it has been announced that Israel and Hamas have reached a multi-phase ceasefire agreement that apparently will see 33 hostages released to Israel through the International Red Cross.

Questions abound, some to be determined in the next few days, others in the coming weeks. Most immediate perhaps, assuming that new snags do not disrupt the agreement, how many of the 33 are alive and will be returning to the joy of their families. How many bodies will be in this first exchange, also returning to their families but for proper burial. Hamas within their evil, cynical character has apparently so far refused to say.

The geopolitical question yet to be answered within a later phase of the agreement is what role if any will Hamas play in the immediate and long-term future of Gaza. Will it be able to rearm and rebuild its terrorist units? Further, will Hamas be a part of the political echelon and governance of Gaza? And, what will be Gaza’s relationship to the Palestinian Authority, to the West Bank, and ultimately to Iran?

Moving north to Israel’s northern borders, since my last column Lebanon’s Parliament has elected Joseph Aoun as President of the country. He will step out of his military uniform as head of the

Lebanese army in order to assume his new civilian role. Hizballah has been severely beaten militarily by the IDF, but the jihadist organization remains a part of Lebanon’s political infrastructure.

Will Aoun be able to exert sufficient power for the Lebanese government and army to play the leading role in the country, which would mean holding Hizballah in check including their remaining north of the Litani River as called for in UN resolution 1701?

David Wurmser, a senior policy analyst and advisor based in the U.S., is more than skeptical. In a detailed, lengthy analysis of historical and contemporary currents titled “Lebanon Will Get Worse Before it Gets Better,” his telling sentence is: “The problem is because Lebanon’s instability arises not from the external array of forces, but from the foundations of the Lebanese state, which are then leveraged by external forces.”

Moving on from Lebanon to Syria, the fall of the Assad regime last month to Syrian rebels has important implications for both Israel and Jordan. Syria’s southern border comprises a northern border for each country.

In a December 23 analysis in the “Jerusalem Post,” titled “Jordan outreach to new Syria government is turning point,”

Seth Frantzman reported that the head of the rebel group Ahmed al-Sharaa has been visited by a bevy of foreign representatives including Turkey, Qatar, the UK, France, Germany, and the U.S.

In addition, Frantzman covered in depth the visit of Jordan’s Foreign Minister Ayman Safadi who met with the new Syrian leadership on December 22. A Jordanian Government spokesman said that “the Jordanian position on the recent events in Syria... expresses the sincerity of relations between the two brotherly countries, in addition to its support for achieving security for Syria, the unity of its territories, and the stability of its institutions.”

Frantzman states that “Amman wants to secure its northern border. This is important because the Syrian Civil War led to much uncertainty in Jordan.” He continues his analysis and concludes with the comment: “Both Israel and Jordan are watching southern Syria closely.”

The aforementioned David Wurmser, in a fascinating analysis published on December 1, about a week prior to the fall of the Assad regime, titled: “Prepare for Disintegration of Syria and Rise of Imperial Turkey,” opens with the comment “The desolation wrought on Hizballah by Israel, and the humiliation inflicted on Iran, has not only left the

Iranian axis exposed to Israeli power and further withering. It has altered the strategic tectonics of the Middle East. The story is not just Iran anymore. The region is showing the first signs of tremendous geopolitical change. And the plates are beginning to move.”

Wurmser then defines the agenda: “The removal of the religious-totalitarian tyranny of the Iranian regime remains the greatest strategic imperative in the region for the United States and its allies, foremost among whom stands Israel.... to be clear; Iran remains the central threat. And nothing can be done until it is defeated. But the urgency of ensuring and achieving its defeat is increasing rapidly.”

Iran’s defeat ultimately would constitute the most critical geopolitical change in the Middle East, and perhaps for all of the free world.

*Howard Weisband served as Assistant Executive Director (1975-77) and Executive Director (1977-84) of the Memphis Jewish Federation. Following Aliyah with his family in 1986, he served as Secretary General of the Jewish Agency for Israel through 1997, and then in other senior professional positions in Israel. Now retired, he and Kayla live in Jerusalem. He can be reached at hweisband@gmail.com HW*



# Israel’s Friends and Foes Praise Ceasefire-for-Hostages Deal



Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei speaks at the Imam Khomeini Hussainia conference hall in Tehran on July 24, 2015. Credit: Seyd Shahaboddin Vajedi via Wikimedia Commons.

By David Isaac

(JNS) – Whether Israel’s sworn enemies or its staunch allies, the world welcomed the news of the ceasefire deal between Israel and Hamas announced last Wednesday.

Israel’s foes treated the ceasefire as a victory against the Jewish state. Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei last Thursday hailed the “Palestinian resistance for showing fortitude and forcing the Zionist regime to retreat.”

It will be written in books that there was a mob who once killed thousands of children & women in Gaza! Everyone will realize it was the patience of the people & steadfastness of Palestinian Resistance & Resistance Front that forced Zionist regime to retreat. #GazaIsVictorious-Khamenei.ir (@khamenei\_ir) January 16, 2025

Iran’s Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps also praised the agreement.

“Today, the end to the war and the imposition of a ceasefire on the Zionist regime are a clear victory and a big triumph for Palestine and a greater defeat for the demoniacal Zionist regime,” it said in a statement last Thursday.

Hamas was jubilant over the agreement. Senior Hamas official Khalil al-Hayya, in his first public remarks since green-lighting the truce deal, repeated the terrorist group’s commitment to the destruction of Israel last Wednesday night.

Al-Hayya described the Oct. 7, 2023, massacre of some 1,200 people in Israel as a “miraculous” achievement, declaring the atrocities would “remain a source of pride” for Palestinians, “passed down through generations.”

The terrorist attack “struck the heart of the enemy and will lead, Inshallah [‘God willing’], to the restoration of all our rights,” the Hamas leader said.

South Africa, which filed a complaint with the International Court of Justice in the Hague on Oct. 29, 2023, accusing Israel of genocide, praised the ceasefire.

“The ceasefire must lay the basis for a just peace, which should include the establishment of a contiguous, independent and viable Palestinian state,” said South African government spokesman Vincent Magwenya.

Moscow greeted news of an agreement with “cautious optimism,” Russian Presidential Press Secretary Dmitry Peskov told reporters last Thursday, “as the dire humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza continues to worsen. A ceasefire and truce are urgently needed for the residents who remain in Gaza, enduring unimaginable hardships.”

European countries also welcomed news of a cessation of hostilities.

“This is a major, positive breakthrough toward ending the violence,” stated Kaja Kallas, the E.U. high representative for foreign affairs and security policy. “It is now time to deliver this agreement for all hostages and their families, the people of Gaza and the

people of the region.”

Keir Starmer, the British prime minister, paid tribute to “those who won’t make it home – including the British people who were murdered by Hamas.”

London and its allies “will continue to be at the forefront of these crucial efforts to break the cycle of violence and secure long-term peace in the Middle East,” he said.

The German Federal Foreign Office said that “in these hours, there is hope that the hostages will finally be released and that the deaths in Gaza will come to an end. All those who bear responsibility should now ensure that this opportunity is seized.”

Dutch Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp welcomed the “positive news about a ceasefire in Gaza.”

U.S. President Joe Biden said last Wednesday, “This deal will halt the fighting in Gaza, surge much-needed humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians and reunite the hostages with their families after more than 15 months in captivity.”

President-elect Donald Trump said, “This epic ceasefire agreement could have only happened as a result of our historic victory in November, as it signaled to the entire world that my administration would seek peace and negotiate deals to ensure the safety of all Americans and our allies.”

Although Biden ridiculed the idea that Trump had helped with a ceasefire, Netanyahu thanked Trump in a [last] Wednesday call for helping to forge the ceasefire-for-hostages-and-terrorists-release deal with Hamas.

Thirty-three hostages out of the 98 held by Hamas in Gaza are set to be released during the first phase of the deal, in exchange for 1,000 Gazan terrorists.

This includes nine sick and injured captives who are to be exchanged for 110 Palestinians serving life sentences in Israeli prisons, including those with blood on their hands.

Israeli forces are to withdraw from the Philadelphi Corridor along Gaza’s Egyptian border. The withdrawal will begin on the 42nd day of the first phase, after the release of the final hostage for the phase and is to be completed by the 50th day.

The Rafah Crossing to Egypt will be prepared for civilian and medical evacuations immediately after the agreement is signed.

However, Channel 12 News reported last Thursday that according to a “senior government source,” Israel will not withdraw from the Philadelphi Corridor in the first stage, and the second stage will not proceed unless Hamas agrees to relinquish control of Gaza.

A last-minute crisis emerged last Thursday, with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office announcing that “Hamas has reneged on parts of the agreement reached with the mediators and Israel in an effort to extort last-minute concessions.

“The Israeli Cabinet will not convene until the mediators notify Israel that Hamas has accepted all elements of the agreement,” the Prime Minister’s Office said.

Hamas Political Bureau member Ezzat al-Rishq, quoted by Channel 12 News, said in response that “Hamas is committed to the ceasefire agreement announced by the mediators.”

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich’s Religious Zionism Party signaled last Thursday it would likely exit Netanyahu’s coalition over the ceasefire agreement with Hamas. **HW**

## 6 Chabad Tunnel Defendants Plead Guilty



Police block the entrance to the main synagogue at Chabad headquarters due to safety concerns, Jan. 9, 2024. Credit: Luke Tress

By Ben Sales

(New York Jewish Week) – Six men who were arrested in an attempt to dig a tunnel into the Brooklyn headquarters of the Chabad Hasidic movement accepted plea deals last Monday, while four others opted to go to trial.

The guilty pleas were the latest stage in the Chabad tunnel saga, which burst into view one year ago when a fracas broke out at a synagogue in the Chabad-Lubavitch world headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway. A group of men broke down a wall at the synagogue as part of an attempt to tunnel into the building, part of a bid to expand the headquarters. Investigators found that the tunnel stretched 60 feet.

The incident gained international attention and led to more than a dozen arrests and citations, while 770 was closed for days out of structural integrity concerns. Chabad leadership denounced the tunnelers as a fringe group.

Last Monday, six defendants accepted reduced charges of criminal mischief and agreed to pay \$200 as well as refrain from any construction work or alter-


ations at 770 for three years, according to the “New York Post.” If they violate the terms of the plea deal, they face a five-year ban from 770, which served as the office of Chabad’s late leader, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson. Other defendants in the case have previously pled guilty.


But four defendants last Monday opted to go to trial. They face felony criminal mischief charges and a maximum prison sentence of seven years.

The judge also scolded the defendants in the courtroom.

“This is a blemish on the Chabad movement as far as I’m concerned,”

Judge Adam Perlmutter said. Presumably referring to the thousands of Chabad centers across the globe, he added, “They built buildings all over the world. It involves raising money, hiring architects, getting building permits and any rezoning as necessary. It is the only way that it gets done in this town.” **HW**





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*“Hang in there... Mashiach is SOOO close!”*

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*“From Hedge Funds to Hatzalah: Leading a Meaningful Life”*

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