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# Revolutionizing Jewish Learning: Wendy & Avron Fogelman Religious School Brings Fun to Sunday Mornings



Students encounter the Torah with Rabbi Ross Levy.

It's always Sunday Funday at the Wendy & Avron Fogelman Religious School! Sunday mornings aren't just for learning; they are for connecting. Instead of rows of students in a traditional classroom setting, you might find kids whipping up challah in the kitchen, strumming guitars to Jewish melodies, or even engaging in a lively debate Dungeons & Dragons style.

The school is pioneering a new approach to Jewish education, reimagining how children learn about their heritage, values and traditions. While Hebrew,

Torah and holidays remain at the core of the curriculum, students engage with these topics through chugim or interest-based electives, making learning more relevant and exciting.

Students develop a meaningful connection to Judaism and their peers in a way that speaks to them by integrating their passions into their education. Jewish learning is more personal, engaging and fun. Elective-style programs allow students to explore Jewish themes through hands-on, immersive experiences. Students who enjoy storytelling and fanta-



Students beautify the building by making art out of Jewish music.

sy can join in on Gimels and Golems, a creative take on Jewish texts that blends Dungeons & Dragons with Midrashic debate. Those who love to cook learn about Jewish holidays by preparing traditional foods. Learn to crochet Jewish symbols while discovering their history and significance. Musical talents learn to play Jewish songs on guitar, culminating in a live performance at our TIMPO Fest.

Beyond the classroom, the program fosters a Jewish community where students form friendships that extend

beyond Sunday school. By learning together in smaller groups and connecting through shared interests, students aren't just gaining knowledge but building lasting relationships and a deeper connection to Jewish life.

This innovative approach redefines religious education by shifting the focus from passive learning to active engagement. The goal is to create lifelong learners who feel connected to their Jewish identity and each other – not just on Sundays but in their everyday lives. **HW**

# Israelis Respond to Trump's Gaza Takeover with Shock, Dismay, Elation and Dark Humor



A large billboard posted by the Ayalon highway in Tel Aviv, in support of U.S. President Donald Trump, Feb. 5, 2025. Credit: Miriam Alster/Flash90

By Deborah Danan

(JTA) – TEL AVIV – Last Wednesday morning, cars driving down Tel Aviv's main freeway were greeted with a new set of giant billboards bearing American flags, a photo of Donald Trump and a message, in English: "Thank you, Mr. President."

The billboards, erected by Republicans

Overseas Israel, did not say why they were thanking the president. But by the time Israelis embarked on their morning commutes, many of them could guess: Just hours earlier, in Washington, D.C., the president had declared that "all" Palestinians would leave Gaza – and that the United States would "take over."

It was a shocking promise – one that would fulfill the wildest dreams of the Israeli far right and offer an unexpected answer to who would govern Gaza after the war. But notwithstanding the billboards, Israelis reacted with a range of emotions. Some were elated. But others were skeptical, confounded – or horrified.

"I woke up in total shock. I always think, that's it, we've reached the bottom of the bottom, but then I'm shocked anew," said Orian Canetti, sitting in a Jaffa coffee shop across the street from the bilingual Hebrew-Arabic school her children attend. "I want to imagine that he has a plan, but I just don't have the tools to even begin to understand him. What he said just doesn't compute."

Barak Moore, who hails from the West Bank settlement bloc of Gush Etzion, also had reservations about the plan – but only because the Bible says the land of Israel belongs to the Jews, not the United States.

"This is terrific news other than the part about America taking ownership of the land that God gave to the Jewish

people," he said. "Having said that, if President Trump is able to dismantle the Hamas death cult and set free the many Gazans who are desperate to flee from it, it would be among the greatest political achievements ever."

Ever since the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack that launched the war, Israelis have wrangled with each other, and with international interlocutors, over what will happen next with Gaza. The government hasn't released a "day-after" plan, and surveys show that Israelis remain split on the question. But nearly all of them agree on one thing – Hamas cannot be allowed to retake power in Gaza – and for some, Trump's bombshell proposal guaranteed that would never come to pass.

"We woke up in Israel to wonderful news!" said Adalia Citron, from the central Israeli city of Beit Shemesh. "Obviously Trump will not have to 'own Gaza,' but he means business and is sending out a clear and strong message that we will no longer allow history to

(See Gaza Page 4)



My Teen Israel Experience



Jack at the site of the Nova Musical Festival

Jack Kampf, son of Cantor Ricky Kampf and Anat Kampf, 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 NCSY Kollel program. All rising juniors and seniors are eligible for grants of up to \$3,000 to attend a recognized teen program in Israel. Teen Israel Experience applications for 2025 are open and can be accessed at Lemsky Endowment Fund Jewish Community Partners (jcpmemphis.org)

By Jack Kampf

Personal growth and connection to my people are two things I experienced this past summer on NCSY Kollel. The summer not only exceeded my expectations but also had a profound impact on my personal development and spiritual journey. I can say that the summer I had, which was full of fun, learning, and connecting with the land of Israel would not have been possible without financial support provided by my parents and a grant from Memphis Jewish Federation’s Lemsky Endowment Fund. NCSY Kollel is known for its learning, programming, crazy sports activities and great trips. Every day was filled with learning, fun and adventures. The mornings began with classes led by impressive teachers, who during the school year teach in various Yeshivot throughout Israel. These sessions were interesting discussions that challenged me to think deeply about the material. The curric-

ulum was thoughtfully created to increase my understanding of Jewish texts and to inspire a connection to my faith and traditions. Beyond the classroom, the program had many opportunities for personal growth and making new lifelong friends. I participated in group discussions, volunteer projects and social activities that showed a powerful sense of togetherness. The friendships I formed were not just connections, but actual relationships built on shared values and experiences. I know many of the friends I made over the summer were not just temporary friends, but friends that will last my whole life. This sense of togetherness was one of my favorite parts of my summer. It was so awesome to be part of a group of Jewish teens who all got along with each other. Despite the current challenging environment, the program was able to continue offering special trips. Our trip to Eilat will be forever etched in my mind. We were on a party boat not too far from the border with Egypt, when police boats surrounded our boat. It seems a signal from our cell phones led the security forces to think we were coming into Israel from Egypt, and it set off an alarm. The police checked us out and saw we were not terrorists, and let us continue our way, but it was quite intense there for a period of time, and I was relieved it ended well. The grant awarded provided financial assistance to enable this program possible for me. My parents knew this was the program I had my heart set on, and they

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Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. Feb. 14, 2025 / 16 Shevat, 5785 .....5:23 p.m.  
Havdalah, Sat. Feb. 14, 2025 / 17 Shevat, 5785 ..... 6:21 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Yitro

did everything in their power to make it happen for me. The grant ensured that I could immerse myself completely in the learning and communal activities, without my parents having to worry about the logistics and expenses that often accompany such programs. It was generosity that went beyond mere monetary support; it was an investment in my personal and spiritual development. The impact of the grant also enabled me to participate in all aspects of the program, from intensive study sessions to enriching extracurricular activities. It also allowed me to engage more fully in communal life, where every moment

was an opportunity for growth, learning and connection. Freedom from financial worry meant that I could approach each day with enthusiasm and openness, embracing every opportunity for learning and personal development. As I look back on my summer with NCSY Kollel, I am filled with gratitude for the experiences I had and the growth I achieved. The knowledge I gained, the relationships I built, and the personal insights I achieved are invaluable and left a lasting impact on my life and continue to influence my personal and spiritual journey. In conclusion, my summer at NCSY Kollel was a deeply meaningful and special experience, giving me the opportunity to immerse myself in an environment of learning and community. It has been life changing.

Thank you to Memphis Jewish Federation’s Lemsky Endowment Fund for making my incredible NCSY Kollel experience possible. HW



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## Gaza... (Continued From Page 1)

repeat itself. Gazans have proven decade after decade that the billions of dollars received in aid was used for weapons and terror tunnels, jihadist training and terrorism. This will no longer be an option for them.”

The news dominated Israeli social media as well, where one meme showed a map of Gaza renamed the “Maga-za Strip,” a mashup featuring Trump’s trademark MAGA slogan. Another superimposed the Trump International Hotel in Las Vegas onto a scene of northern Gazans returning to their homes amid a landscape of rubble –] a visual that evokes a “Wall Street Journal” report that said Trump had urged Netanyahu last summer to “think about what kinds of hotels could be built there.”

One Israeli-American quipped on Facebook, “Ooh, can we bring Target? And Starbucks and Sephora?” to which another replied, “Let’s dream big: Nordstrom.”

By late last Wednesday, the White House was backtracking on Trump’s comments, saying that Trump does not intend to supply U.S. money or troops to aid in rebuilding and that any resettlement would be temporary, not permanent. But Trump was also drawing

kudos for injecting a radical new idea into a dynamic that has long been stuck.

Yovav Kalifon, from Tel Aviv, said the radical plan clashed with the reputation Netanyahu has gained in Israel for being risk-averse. Still, he said, using the prime minister’s nickname, “Bibi’s pledge to topple Hamas and restart Gaza is aligned with Trump’s declaration. Israel’s military liberates Gaza from Hamas, then we look for entities to manage that territory. The USA is one such entity.”

But others said the plan displayed ignorance about Palestinians’ ironclad connections to their land. Huda, an Arab mother who was sitting alongside Canetti in the Jaffa cafe and did not disclose her last name, said that Trump had no understanding of the Palestinian people and their “unmovable faith in God to continue to fight for their basic rights and their ties to the land.”

She added, “They would rather live in a hut in Gaza than any luxury place Trump could offer them.”

Not far from Huda, Avner Goren, an employee at the cafe, was unsure what to think.

“Trump is so unpredictable but still,

I was so shocked to hear it,” he said. “And because of that, I haven’t yet formed an opinion. That’s probably the most important thing I’ll say. People are always so quick to form opinions.”

He continued, using the Arabic term that describes the mass displacement of Palestinians during Israel’s founding, “But I’ll tell you one thing. The Nakba is the biggest founding stories of the Palestinians. I don’t know how that can be overcome.”

Others said they didn’t trust the United States to manage the massive undertaking of moving Gaza’s entire population, clearing out its many tons of rubble and building it anew.

“I’m nervous that it will create much more mess,” said Shlomi Ben Shimol, who was evacuated from his home near Israel’s northern border because of Israel’s war with Hezbollah. “Every place we’ve seen the Americans try and control ends up worse.”

Daniel Ohana, a fellow evacuee from the north, said, “If Trump would manage to get 20% of the population of Gaza out, I’d consider that a success.”

Matthew Kalman, a Jerusalem-based journalist, described the idea as delu-

sional.

“Yes, Hamas is evil and has no right to govern anything,” he said. “Yes, Oct. 7 was a horrific, murderous turning point whose brutal lessons cannot be ignored. But real problems cannot be solved through magical thinking. Trump and Psycho-Bibi have stepped through the looking glass and are lost in space.”

Some were more confident. Michael Bassin, an American-Israeli, echoed Trump’s own reasoning – that decades of violence demanded out-of-the-box solutions.

“Resettling Gazans in surrounding countries will be good for Gazans and good for us,” he said. “Refugee resettlement is nothing new and happens all the time. Rebuilding Gaza into something positive is a great idea. I don’t know if it’s realistic or not, but it’s new thinking and that’s just what we need. We need to do away with what has not worked in the past and move forward towards something new.”

In the Jaffa coffeehouse, Canetti was resigned – and invoked another territory Trump has vowed to conquer.

“What does it matter anyway?” she said. “I’m moving to Greenland.” **HW**

# Lessons in Advocacy: Memphis Jewish Leaders Champion School Choice – and Open Dialogue



***Pictured in no order with Govenor Bill Lee: Margolin Hebrew Academy Head of School Rabbi Dr. Gavriel Brown, Memphis Kollel Rosh Kollel and Director of Operations Rabbi Yosef Braha, Wogan Group CEO Jonathan Wogan and MHA parent Shira Harary traveled to Nashville to support a new school choice bill.***

In the marbled halls of Tennessee’s State Capitol, where a hard-fought school choice bill just secured its path forward, a Memphis Jewish delegation arrived with a mission – and left with something deeper: a glimpse of the intricate choreography of democracy and the power of open dialogue.

The group, composed of Rabbi Dr. Gavriel Brown, head of school at Margolin Hebrew Academy, Rabbi Yosef Braha, Rosh Kollel and director of operations at Memphis Kollel, Jonathan Wogan, CEO of Wogan Group, and Shira Harary, a Hebrew Academy parent, traveled to Nashville on Wednesday, January 29. Their goal: support Governor Bill Lee’s Education Freedom Act of 2025 (EFA), a school choice bill under consideration during a special session of the Tennessee General Assembly.

The EFA, which was passed on Thursday, January 30, expands on the existing school choice pilot program by making 20,000 scholarships available in the 2025-26 school year, with priority for low-income students, students with disabilities, and those already participating.

“This is a game-changing piece of legislation for our community in Memphis,” said Rabbi Brown. “It puts the power of school choice in parents’ hands; they can choose to send their child to the school that is the best fit for them.

“We anticipate that this bill will allow the Hebrew Academy to welcome

more students for whom finances were a barrier, while simultaneously easing the financial burden on our current parent body. And it will likely also help grow our Jewish community.”

Due to the special session disrupting legislators’ schedules, only a handful of meetings could be arranged in advance. The delegation was thrilled to catch the tail end of Senate deliberations on another current bill and get a close-up view of legislative proceedings. And then the group, guided by Rabbi Ari Weisenfeld of Agudath Israel of America and Claudia Rehg of Parthenon Strategies, took an unconventional approach.

“Why would I only want to meet with people I agree with?” Rabbi Brown asked. “Let’s also talk to – and learn from – legislators on the other side.” The opposition was easy to find, as their office doors were plastered with anti-voucher posters; it was precisely those legislators that the group chose to engage. This bold strategy led to substantive conversations with both supporters and opponents of the bill.

In Representative Gloria Johnson’s office, where a PBS documentary crew captured the 25-minute discussion, the exchange centered on public education funding. Johnson, a 27-year veteran public school educator, argued that Tennessee – which ranks 45th in education spending nationwide – should be spending more on strengthening public



schools. Despite her belief that public funds should never be used for private institutions – even though public funds are dispersed to private entities through programs like Medicaid, Pell Grants and Food Stamps – Johnson listened intently to the challenges faced by parents of children with diverse educational needs in districts like Shelby County.

Representative Ronnie Glynn of Montgomery County, a staunch public education advocate with deep roots in Tennessee’s school system, expressed concern about the bill’s potential financial impact. He argued passionately that the voucher program would drain crucial funding from already-struggling public schools. Representative Justin Jones of Nashville pressed a critical point: even with vouchers, would private schools remain out of reach for Tennessee’s most economically vulnerable families? The delegation explained how private school affordability remains a communal responsibility among the Jewish community, and how similar financial assistance models are likely already in place in existing private schools.

The delegation found common ground with Representative Kevin Vaughan of Collierville, who, despite his public school advocacy, supported the bill through a pragmatic lens. Sometimes progress requires compromise, Vaughan noted, highlighting how the bill secured additional public school funding.

It was heartening for the group to connect with Memphis Representative John

Gillespie, to thank him for his service to the community and hear his perspective. Gillespie countered many of the opponents’ objections to the bill, emphasizing that it explicitly protects funding for public schools. Both public and private schools stand to benefit from this legislation, he asserted.

Representative Ron Gant of District 94 (Fayette, McNairy, and part of Hardeman counties) also found a few minutes to meet with the Memphis group.

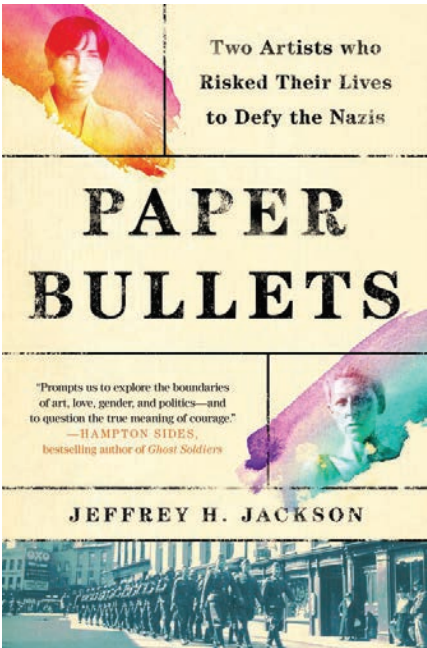
The highlight of the trip was a 30-minute sit-down with Governor Bill Lee. After warmly welcoming the group, the Governor reaffirmed his support for the Jewish community and Israel, referencing his visit to the Hebrew Academy after October 7, 2023. The Jewish delegation was grateful to be able to express their appreciation to the Governor for continued security funding that protects Memphis Jewish institutions.

Governor Lee also shared his passion and personal motivation for the school choice bill, stemming from his experience early on in inner city schools and his desire to help those struggling students. The Governor reiterated that public schools will not lose out because of the legislation. The language of the bill is complex, Governor Lee explained, which can lead to confusion.

For more information – or to learn more about how your child’s education may be impacted by this legislation – visit the Governor’s informative EFA site: <https://tneducationfreedom.com/> **HW**



The Author of Paper Bullets: Two Artists Who Risked Their Lives to Defy the Nazis to speak at Beth Sholom’s Lehrhaus Lecture Series on Feb. 19



Paper Bullets, written by Lehrhaus lecturer Jeffrey H. Jackson, is a “Nazi resistance story like none you’ve ever heard or read,” says Hampton Sides, bestselling author of “In the Kingdom of Ice.”

Lucy Schwob and Suzanne Malherbe were Parisienne avant-garde artists, lovers, and Nazi resisters who used their literary skills to demoralize German soldiers during WWII. Their remarkable, but overlooked, story has told by History Professor Jeffrey H. Jackson of Rhodes College in his book, “Paper Bullets: Two Artists Who Risked Their Lives to Defy the Nazis.”

Dr. Jackson will discuss the couple’s effort to wage psychological warfare against Nazi soldiers, as well as their life as trailblazing lesbian partners, in a special lecture at Beth Sholom Synagogue’s Lehrhaus Speaker Series on

Wednesday, February 19 at 7 p.m. The lecture is hosted by Beth Sholom’s Lifelong Jewish Learning Committee.

“Paper Bullets” is a compelling World War II story about the galvanizing power of art, and of resistance. The book recounts how Lucy Schwob, who was half Jewish, and Suzanne Malherbe wrote and disseminated “paper bullets” – wicked insults against Hitler, calls to rebel, and subversive fictional dialogue – by slipping notes into soldiers’ pockets and magazines on newsstands. Today, the women are primarily known by their artist names, Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore.

In 1944, the women were betrayed to the secret police and were imprisoned by the Germans, who sentenced the couple to death. But their story did not end there. Dr. Jackson will describe what happened next in his lecture, which is free and open to the community.

Jeffrey H. Jackson is professor of history at Rhodes College, where he teaches European history and environmental studies. In 2011, Dr. Jackson won the prestigious Clarence Day Award for Outstanding Research, Rhodes’ highest honor for faculty. He is also the author of “Paris Under Water: How the City of Light Survived the Great Flood of 1910” and “Making Jazz French: Music and Modern Life in Interwar Paris.” “Paper Bullets” is a Stonewall Honors Book. He received his B.S. in history from Vanderbilt University in 1993 and a Ph.D. in history from the University of Rochester in 1999.

Lehrhaus at Beth Sholom takes its inspiration from The Free Jewish House of Learning, the school for Jewish studies and adult education founded by Franz Rosenzweig in Frankfurt in 1920. [HW](#)



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# New Community Relations Manager Sara First Represents Federation at State of the City



Sara First and Barry Lichterman

Memphis Jewish Federation’s Community Relations Council member Barry Lichterman joined Federation’s new Community Relations Manager, Sara First, at Mayor Paul Young’s State of the City Address on January 30. From their seats with the Memphis Multicultural Advisory Board, they heard City Council Chairman J. Ford Canale outline policy priorities and witnessed Mayor Young challenge Memphians to “Say Yes!” to opportunity in our city. [HW](#)



Connecting at the State of the City Address – Federation’s Sara First and Barry Lichterman engage with community leaders as Memphis embraces Mayor Paul Young’s call to ‘Say Yes!’ to opportunity.

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# Trump Orders Development of ‘American Iron Dome’



An Iron Dome battery in Ashkelon fires an interceptor missile at rockets fired from the Gaza Strip on Aug. 7, 2022. Credit: Yonatan Sindel/Flash90.

By JNS Staff

(JNS) – U.S. President Donald Trump last Monday signed an executive order for the development of an Iron Dome-like missile defense shield for the United States.

Trump called to “immediately begin the construction of a state-of-the-art Iron Dome missile defense shield, which will be able to protect Americans,” according to ABC News.

The “American Iron Dome” will be a “comprehensive missile defense shield to [safeguard] the American homeland,” the report quoted White House staff secretary Will Scharf as saying.

Earlier this month, the Israeli Defense Ministry and Haifa-based Rafael Ad-

vanced Defense Systems signed a contract to expand the production of Iron Dome interceptors, marking the first procurement under a U.S. aid package worth \$8.7 billion.

The aid, approved in April 2024, includes \$5.2 billion for strengthening Israel’s missile defense systems.

In November, Reuters reported that Greece was negotiating with Israel to develop a 2 billion euro (\$2.11 billion) anti-aircraft and missile defense system similar to the Iron Dome.

Several additional countries have voiced interest in purchasing the Israeli missile defense system, which has won international accolades for its perfor-

mance during Israel’s war against Hamas in Gaza and Hezbollah in Lebanon.

In February 2007, Israel’s then-Defense Minister Amir Peretz selected Iron Dome as the country’s defense system against the short-range rocket threat from Gaza.

Unlike other systems, Iron Dome was developed in its entirety using Israeli funds, but when the Defense Ministry and Rafael went into mass production, U.S. funding was used as well. In return, Israel undertook to produce 50% of the system’s components in the United States. The various parts are manufactured in 22 U.S. states, then shipped to Israel for assembly. [HW](#)

## Memphis Jewish Federation Jewish Camp Scholarships

2025 Camp Scholarship Applications Now Online!

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For more information contact Carolyn Pruitt at [cpruitt@jcpmemphis.org](mailto:cpruitt@jcpmemphis.org) or 901-767-7100.

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# Honoring Heroes and Building Bonds: A Memphis Experience



**Rabbi Benjy Kwalwasser speaks to a group in Memphis.**  
*By Rabbi Benjy Kwalwasser,*  
*Executive Director, Lev LaChayal & Shiur Bet*

I arrived in Memphis at noon in mid-January, where Dr. Joel Siegel graciously picked me up from the airport. During our ride to his home, he enthusiastically told me about an amazing fair taking place that day at the High School

and asked if I would like to attend. I had come to Memphis with a mission: to garner support for Lev LaChayal, the first-ever yeshiva-based lone soldier center. Joel explained that the fair would be an excellent starting point to meet

people and introduce them to our cause. From my East Coast perspective, I honestly couldn't imagine how I would actually connect with anyone. Surely, everyone would be absorbed in their own lives and daily hustle. But Memphis proved me completely wrong. The warmth and openness I encountered were remarkable. People were not only incredibly friendly but genuinely interested in meeting me, asking insightful questions about our work, and even eager to attend the event that evening featuring Lev LaChayal. I am writing this article to express my deep gratitude to you, the Jewish community of Memphis. You are truly extraordinary, modeling beautiful hachnasat orchim (hospitality) and demonstrating a sincere commitment to national causes. The fair was a testament to your love of Tzionut, your dedication to community, and your creative ap-

proach to spreading positive educational messages. I was simply blown away by the atmosphere, the communal bond and the values that permeated the event. Later that evening, we gathered for a remarkable dinner and presentation, where we introduced Lev LaChayal to your community and paid tribute to local heroes Sgt. B. and Sgt. N. I have given presentations in many places and always enjoy meeting people who are passionate about supporting our soldiers. But the positivity and encouragement I felt in Memphis were on another level. Your genuine expressions of support left a lasting impact on me. A heartfelt thank you to Rabbi Males, the Gabbaim, community activists, parents and students. Thank you, Memphis! I look forward to returning soon and once again drawing inspiration from your incredible community. **HW**

# Khamenei Rejects Idea of Negotiating with U.S.: 'No Problem Will Be Solved'



**Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei delivers an address on Oct. 19, 2022. Source: Channel 1 (Iran) via MEMRI.**  
(JNS) – Negotiating with the United States would be neither “wise, intelligent nor honorable,” Iran’s Supreme

Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 85, said during a meeting with air force members last Friday. “Negotiating with such a government should not be done,” he said, according to “Iran International,” a London-based, anti-regime news outlet. Khamenei added that talks with the U.S. would not solve any of Iran’s outstanding issues. “We must understand this correctly and not be misled into thinking that sitting at the negotiation table with that government will resolve certain matters. No, negotiations with the United States will not solve any problems.”

The Iranian leader spoke after U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order last Tuesday to reimpose “maximum pressure” sanctions on the Islamic Republic. The president said he was “torn” about signing the order. “It’s very tough on Iran,” Trump said. “Hopefully, we are not going to have to use it very much. “I’m unhappy to do it,” he added. Khamenei, in apparent response, said, “They make statements about us, express opinions and issue threats. If they threaten us, we will threaten them.

**The Iranian leader spoke after President Donald Trump signed an executive order to reimpose “maximum pressure” sanctions on Tehran.**

If they act on those threats, we will do the same. If they undermine our nation’s security, we will undoubtedly respond in kind.” **HW**



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# Consider These Three Suggestions if You Inherit a Trust

*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*

David “Chico” Esparza, senior fiduciary strategist with Wells Fargo Wealth & Investment Management, remembers meeting two clients, a brother and sister whose parents had passed away. “Unfortunately, their parents had not discussed their estate plans with the adult children. When the siblings learned they were the beneficiaries of a sizable trust,” Esparza recalls, “they had no idea what to do next.”

The brother and sister had many questions. Who handles the estate? What are the terms of the trust? And what should their next steps be? “The bank was appointed as successor trustee, so we explained the timeline and process for settling the trust estate,” Esparza says. “It helped to ease their minds to know that professionals would be handling the numerous tasks required for an orderly estate settlement.”

As Esparza’s clients found, stepping into the role of beneficiary can feel a bit like stepping into the unknown. Here, Esparza offers three suggestions for those in similar situations.

### 1. Build an advisory team.

A good first step for the beneficiary is to meet with the trustee who is tasked with executing the terms of the trust. It may be an individual, such as a CPA or lawyer, family member, or potentially a corporate trustee such as Wells Fargo Bank.

“There will be a lot of questions, so it’s important to establish a communication plan and outline tasks that need to be accomplished along with a general timeline for how long it will take to settle the estate,” Esparza says.

In some instances, once the estate is

settled, a new trust is funded with the beneficiary’s share of the estate; in other cases, assets will be distributed outright to the beneficiary. If the assets will be retained in trust, the trustee collaborates with an investment advisor to help manage the assets according to the terms of the trust.

“The trustee and investment advisor will create a plan that is based on the terms of the trust and considers the needs of the beneficiary,” Esparza says. “A best practice is for beneficiaries to seek the guidance of a tax advisor regarding tax implications related to trust distribution.”

### 2. Understand the terms of the trust.

One of the first questions a beneficiary might have is, “What benefits do I have under the trust?” Beneficiaries are well served to seek independent counsel for questions regarding interpretation of their interest under the trust.

Esparza explains that a trust can be a useful tool for holding, managing, and distributing property as outlined by the trustor(s) — the creator(s) of the trust — in the trust agreement, but each trust is unique in how assets can be distributed to beneficiaries. Some common areas of discussion include:

**Beneficiary or beneficiaries:** Is there a sole beneficiary or several beneficiaries of the trust? How do the terms address the rights different beneficiaries have to distributions from the trust?

**Age restrictions:** Does the beneficiary have to reach a certain age before accessing some or all of the trust?

**Distribution restrictions:** Can beneficiaries access the principal or just the

income from the trust? Does the beneficiary need to provide the trustee with proof of the beneficiary’s own income and expenses to receive distributions? What categories of expenses can the trust cover for the beneficiary? (Typically, trusts with discretionary provisions have ascertainable standards that can cover health, education, maintenance, and support.) Can distributions be adjusted for inflation?

**Lifetime of the trust:** Does the trust terminate once the beneficiary reaches a certain age, or is it meant to last the beneficiary’s lifetime? Is any portion of the trust designated for future generations?

“Trusts present an opportunity to preserve, accumulate, and transition generational wealth,” Esparza says. “For that reason, the trustee should be prudent and equitable in administering the trust, giving consideration to the current needs of the beneficiary as well as the long-term goals and objectives of the trust.”

### 3. Ask questions before taking distributions.

“Before taking a trust distribution, some beneficiaries find it useful to inquire about the potential tax consequences. That’s where a tax advisor should provide guidance,” Esparza says.

“Beneficiaries also may consider consulting with the trustee and the rest of their advisory team about additional considerations or impacts a trust distribution may have on the investment plan.” In addition, beneficiaries should consult with their own legal counsel if they have specific questions regarding their rights with respect to a trust.

Esparza shares the story of a young

beneficiary who wanted to use her trust fund to purchase a luxury car when she turned 16. “I posed this question: ‘Would a less-expensive car meet your transportation goals and help preserve trust assets for the long term?’” he says. “It is important for beneficiaries to stay connected with the trustee and to ask clarifying questions so they understand the goals and objectives established by the grantor.”

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OBITUARIES

Joel Maury Felt

It is with great sadness that we inform you of the passing of Joel Maury Felt, age 94, on February 1, 2025.

Joe was born in Memphis on March 22, 1930, and proudly lived his whole life rooted in his beloved city. He graduated from Central High School, relishing his accomplishment of winning a city-wide Spanish competition and the resulting prize trip to Cuba. After graduating from the University of Michigan with a degree in English Literature in 1951, he enlisted in the Navy during the Korean war and was a proud veteran.

After his military service, Joe returned to Memphis and took on the management of M.E. Carter & Company, a produce wholesaler, which he ran for many years with his brother, William (Bill) Felt. He founded and managed many other small businesses, including Warehouse Foods in West Memphis. In retirement, he continued to manage investments as an independent financial analyst.

Joe’s deep commitment to the Jewish community included serving as vice president of both the Memphis Jewish Home and the Memphis Jewish Community Center, where he supported the building of the current site. In addition, he chaired an endowment committee at the University of Memphis and was involved in the creation and continuing development of the Loewenberg College of Nursing at the University of Memphis.

An avid reader and deep thinker, Joe was passionate about civic engagement and political discourse. He loved a good conversation, respectfully seeking out other points of view, but always making sure his own voice was heard. Joe took great delight in his family. He was a warm, loving and humble husband, father, uncle, grandfather – and friend to many, including the robust and long-standing ROMEO lunch group he organized.

He is preceded in death by his parents, Jacob Felt and Rosa Felt, his sister, Sureva Stevens, and his brother, William Felt. He is survived by his wife of almost 69 years, Fredrika Loewenberg Felt, children Gwyn Wachtel (Jeff), Ross Felt (Abigail), and Rachel Tasch (Ted), along with nine grandchildren and seven great-grandchildren.

Funeral services were held on Tuesday, February 4, 2025, at the Levy-Cooper Chapel in Temple Israel Cemetery.

In honor of his memory, the family requests that memorial contributions be made to the Fredrika and Joel Felt scholarship fund at the University of Memphis Loewenberg College of Nursing, Temple Israel or a charity of your choice.

May his memory be a blessing to all who knew him. **HW**



Charles A. Rafael

Charles Alvin Rafael, 79, died peacefully in his sleep on Friday, January 31, 2025.

Charles, a lifelong Memphian, graduated from Central High School and Memphis State University, now the University of Memphis. Though he was a retired driver’s education teacher for the Memphis City Schools for 30 years, Charles’s real passion was basketball. For years, he coached teen basketball at the Memphis Jewish Community Center and was the sports and fitness coach at the Margolin Hebrew Academy. Charles was a devoted Memphis Tiger’s basketball fan his entire life and held season tickets contiguously for almost 60 years. He loved to travel to away games and attended all three Final Four appearances. He was seen in many Tiger basketball practices and with his friend, Jim Rothman, he went to many high school basketball games to “scout” for talent.

Charles’s parents, Lou and Esther Rafael, preceded him in death. He is survived by his wife, Rebecca Dinstuhl, his sister, Madelyne Daneman, and children Adam Rafael (Elinor), Andrew Dinstuhl (Sarah Grace), Mark Dinstuhl, and five grandchildren.

His love of family was paramount in his life. His wife, Rebecca, describes him as “unforgettable,” because he made a lasting impression on everyone he met. He will be missed by his many friends and family.

A funeral service was held on Monday, February 3, in the Levy-Cooper Chapel at the Temple Israel Cemetery in Memphis.

Donations in memory of Charles may be made to Temple Israel, Baron Hirsch Synagogue, or a charity of the donor’s choice. **HW**

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social change.

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\*JWA embraces expansive understandings of what it means to be Jewish and a woman. **HW**

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# As Winds Shift Against Immigrants, Refugee Resettlement Advocate Sasha Chanoff Steps Up



**Sasha Chanoff, third from right, with Congolese war refugees seeking safety in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2019. (Courtesy of RefugePoint)**

**By Larry Luxner**

(JTA) – Sasha Chanoff recalls the day he was forced to make one of the most painful decisions of his life.

It was 2000, only six years after the genocide in Rwanda, and Chanoff – a Finnish-born Jew working with the International Organization for Migration – was sent to neighboring Congo on a risky mission: drive to a safe haven about an hour from Kinshasa, the capital, and gather 112 ethnic Tutsi refugees onto the last available evacuation flight out of the country.

The job was especially dangerous because Laurent Kabila, who recently had taken power in Congo, had declared that all Tutsis were enemies to be hunted down and exterminated.

“My boss gave me a list with their names on it and said, ‘No matter what you do, don’t try to include anybody else on your list. If you do, no one will get out,’” Chanoff recalled.

But upon arrival, he and a colleague were introduced to an additional 32 widows and orphans, all of whom appeared emaciated and traumatized by what they had been through.

“My colleague leaned over to a child holding a little doll, and all of a sudden, the doll’s eyes opened. It was actually a 9-month-old infant,” he said. “It was clear to us at that moment that if we didn’t include them, some – if not all – would lose their lives.”

Thinking quickly, Chanoff and his colleague registered all the small chil-

dren as being under the age of 2 so they could sit on the laps of other passengers, opening up aircraft space. Traveling by bus under armed escort, the group arrived at the Kinshasa airport and waited as Congolese immigration officials checked their documents.

It appeared that the officials would stop them from boarding the plane, but they finally were allowed to take off for a refugee camp in Cameroon, and from there to the United States.

“That day, my eyes were opened to people who are overlooked and forgotten,” Chanoff said. “Again and again in many places where I worked, I saw people who didn’t have access to the things they needed to survive.”

It’s an experience that defines the essence of RefugePoint, the nonprofit Chanoff established 20 years ago in Nairobi, Kenya. Originally designed to provide lifesaving care to refugees who fall through the cracks of assistance there, RefugePoint has grown into a global organization that has helped more than 170,000 refugees access resettlement, self-reliance opportunities and other pathways to safety.

At a time of rising populism and increasing opposition worldwide to immigration from countries wracked by poverty and civil war, Chanoff says his work is more urgent than ever.

“The number of refugees worldwide could rise significantly with climate change, which is often a trigger to crisis.

Many of them are fleeing war, violence and persecution,” Chanoff said, citing estimates that 1 billion people may be forcibly displaced by 2050 if current trends continue.

Though Chanoff, 54, was born in Finland, he speaks English, Finnish, French, German and Swahili. The descendant of Jewish great-grandparents who escaped pogroms in Russia, Chanoff grew up in the Boston area, earning degrees from Wesleyan University and Tufts University. After college, he worked for Jewish Vocational Service in Boston, helping to resettle newly arrived refugees from war-torn countries such as Bosnia, Iraq and Somalia.

“When I started working with refugees, I was viscerally struck by the idea that if I could play a small role in helping people rebuild their lives here in the U.S., then it was the most important thing I could do in my own life,” he said. “It was my own personal, very Jewish experience that led to this calling.”

Chanoff added, “My great-grandmother arrived as a refugee and raised four children on her own. And my grandfather managed to rise out of poverty and become a successful business leader.”

In 2010, Chanoff won The Charles Bronfman Prize, a \$100,000 award given annually to a Jewish humanitarian under 50 whose innovative work has significantly improved the world. Ellen Bronfman Hauptman and Stephen Bronfman founded the Prize in 2004 along with their spouses, Andrew Hauptman and Claudine Blondin Bronfman, to honor their father on his 70th birthday. Chanoff said The Prize marked a turning point for his organization.

“All of a sudden, it was like we were finally on the global stage. People saw the lifesaving work we do and wanted to help us,” he said. “It dramatically expanded RefugePoint’s ability to reach people.”

With main offices in Boston, Geneva, and Nairobi, RefugePoint has 175 employees and has worked in 73 countries. The vision of the organization has clearly inspired people: The annual budget is \$16.4 million, a significant portion of which comes from individual donors.

“When people see the unique role we play – like reuniting a mother and her

child, for example, or building a new labor mobility program to match refugee skills with companies that can’t find employees – they want to help,” Chanoff said.

The organization is charting a new course for humanitarian action by establishing new legal migration programs, as well as programs that help refugees to become self-reliant in the countries to which they’ve fled.

“We have really good relationships with the UN Refugee Agency, governments, and organizations,” Chanoff said. “These collaborations are critical to our success.”

There is a clear moral component of the work, but Chanoff also highlighted the economic contributions that refugees make: filling jobs and, according to one study, contributing \$124 billion more in U.S. taxes than they consume in services over the course of 15 years.

Chanoff wrote the book “From Crisis to Calling: Finding Your Moral Center in the Toughest Decisions” and long has advocated for establishing lasting solutions for refugees so they can lead productive lives and contribute to their new communities.

With a new president in the White House who has expressed anti-immigrant sentiments and threatened to deport millions of people, Chanoff said the situation is likely to get worse for those seeking refuge around the world.

RefugePoint is poised to fill the gaps that may emerge if the United States limits opportunities for refugees to enter the country. The group works with many other countries that have legal resettlement programs, including Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

“Forced migration will be a headline issue for the rest of our lives,” Chanoff said. “We must find new and creative ways to address refugees’ search for safety and align these with the needs of countries that welcome them.”

This story was sponsored by and produced in partnership with The Charles Bronfman Prize, an annual prize presented to a humanitarian whose innovative work fueled by their Jewish values has significantly improved the world. This article was produced by JTA’s native content team. **HW**

# ‘Slap on Wrist’ for Anti-Israel Protester Who Harassed ‘Zionists’ on NYC Subway

**By David Isaac**

(JNS) – Jewish groups have expressed outrage after a man was sentenced last Wednesday to community service for hassling New York City subway riders last summer.

“A mere four hours of community service and an anti-bias course for blatant antisemitic harassment? This is not justice – it’s a disgrace,” Liora Rez, executive director of StopAntisemitism, a grassroots watchdog organization, told “The New York Post.”

“Anas Saleh’s threats against fellow passengers on the NYC subway warranted real consequences, yet he walks away with a slap on the wrist. This weak response sends a dangerous message: antisemitism is tolerated,” she said.

“We demand accountability, not appeasement,” Rez added.

Anas Saleh, 24, from Staten Island, will have a disorderly conduct charge dropped if he completes community service at a Jewish organization and

attends an anti-bias course, the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office said last Wednesday, according to “The Post.”

On June 10, 2024, Saleh, along with a group of masked anti-Israel activists, jumped onto a subway car at the Union Square Station.

Saleh shouted “Raise your hand if you’re a Zionist,” and then, “This is your chance to get out,” according to a video that circulated on social media.

A photo of Saleh, whose identity was not yet known, was posted online a little more than a week later by the New York Police Department’s chief of transit asking for anyone to report information about him.

Saleh had faced coercion and attempted coercion charges, but those were dismissed by a judge because of “factual insufficiency,” prosecutors said in court.

Saleh would have faced up to a year in prison if he’d been convicted on the coercion charge, according to “The Post.”

The Manhattan DA’s office then gave

Saleh the chance to remove the final charge after “considering the defendant’s lack of a criminal history” and speaking with a complaining witness, “The Post” reported.

Prosecutors also said Saleh had completed “a program mandated by his employer.”

The Community Security Initiative, a program formed to protect Jewish communities and institutions in the New York City metro area, called for the state’s hate crime laws to be beefed up.

“We are deeply concerned that New York’s current hate crime laws do not classify Mr. Saleh’s actions as a hate crime. His conduct was not merely an exercise of constitutionally protected free speech,” the group said in a statement to “The Post.”

“He deliberately used the term ‘Zionist’ in the same way that haters use other prosecutable words of hate. We call on the New York State Legislature to update existing laws to accurately reflect

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**On June 10, 2024, Anas Saleh jumped onto a Manhattan subway car and demanded Zionists identify themselves.**

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the hate involved in such cases and ensure that perpetrators face appropriate consequences,” the statement said.

Mayor Eric Adams also condemned the incident at the time: “Threatening New Yorkers based on their beliefs is not only vile, it’s illegal and will not be tolerated. Let this be a lesson to all those who think they can act illegally and then hide: The NYPD will find you and charge you in accordance with the law.”

Saleh will be performing community service at the Congregation Beit Simchat Torah, a pro-gay Jewish group. **HW**



# SNL has Been Joking about Israel for 50 Years



Leaders of Israel and the state of Georgia sign documents to switch places in a sketch on the first episode of 'Saturday Night Live.' Courtesy of NBC

By Benjamin Cohen

Fifty years before President Donald Trump proposed that the U.S. should take over Gaza, “Saturday Night Live” – in its very first episode on Oct. 11, 1975, – introduced a land swap solution to Middle East peace: The state of Israel and the state of Georgia could switch places.

The swap was the subject of a short film by Albert Brooks that aired on “SNL.” The conceit: A news broadcast airs a press conference with an announcement. Several politicians are seated at a long table, flanked by flags.

“In an unprecedented move to ease world tensions,” a narrator declares, “the country of Israel and the state of Georgia have agreed to change places. “The entire state of Georgia – residents, businesses, all forms of commerce – will relocate in the Middle East on January 1st, 1977. No buildings will be moved. It will be an even property exchange.”

The camera cuts to the Israeli leader: “I hope that New Orleans will be easier to deal with than Cairo,” and the representative from Georgia adds, “I know that my entire state is looking forward to heat without humidity.”

And like so much of Brooks’ work, the brilliance wasn’t just in the premise, but in the delivery: the faux-statesman-like tone, the stentorian voiceover, the poker-faced bureaucrats treating this as a rational solution to a problem that no one in history has yet solved, as if had only someone thought to use a white-board and bullet points, the whole thing would be wrapped up by Purim.

More importantly, the film hinted at something that “SNL” would later become famous for: its ability to poke fun at politics through the language of media itself. The Israel-Georgia switch wasn’t just a surreal premise; it was a spot-on parody of the way major geopolitical crises were often framed in America, as if they were corporate mergers that just needed the right sales pitch.

It was the same logic that would later power hundreds of segments on “Week-end Update” and, decades later, “The Daily Show with Jon Stewart,” which treat real-world insanity with the detached dryness of a Sunday morning talk show.

What Brooks was skewering wasn’t the logistics – it was the American impulse to view the Middle East as a puzzle to be solved in a way that makes sense to us. The joke was the arrogance of thinking a centuries-old conflict could be restructured like a zoning law.

This was the 1970s, after all – just two years after the Yom Kippur War, when the Arab-Israeli conflict was a big deal, but for most Americans, it was also a faraway deal. Something you heard about in short bursts on the evening news between Walter Cronkite segments about gas shortages and Patty Hearst. The humor in Brooks’ bit came from that distance: What if the whole mess could just be relocated, preferably

to the home state of Coca-Cola.

Before “Saturday Night Live” launched, Lorne Michaels, its creative mastermind, had tried to recruit Brooks, a fellow Jew, as a regular performer. Brooks, who was already a rising star in stand-up, turned him down. But he agreed to contribute pre-taped segments, seven of which aired during the show’s first two seasons.

His pieces were some of the strangest things to air on the show in its infancy and didn’t quite fit the energy of the live sketches surrounding them. Eventually, the show moved in a different direction, and Brooks, based across the country in Los Angeles, moved on to making movies.

But his fingerprints left their mark on “SNL.” in the mock seriousness of a well-crafted fake news bit, in the satirical commercials that blur politics with advertising, in the “SNL” digital shorts from “Lonely Island” and “Please Don’t Destroy” and in the persistent idea that some of the funniest material comes from treating the dumbest ideas with absolute sincerity.

And in a way, the fact that the Israel-Georgia joke still resonates 50 years later is proof that Brooks was onto something. The conflicts haven’t changed. The way Americans misunderstand them hasn’t changed. And the idea that someone, somewhere, still thinks this whole situation could be solved with a land swap? Well, that hasn’t changed either.

NBC will re-air the first episode of “Saturday Night Live” on Feb. 15 at 10 p.m. It is also available to stream on Peacock. **HW**



A fake news headline as seen on an early episode of 'Saturday Night Live.' Courtesy of NBC

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