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Tennessee Deepens Ties with Israel Through New Bipartisan Caucus



Memphis Jewish Federation’s Community Relations Manager Sara First joined other professionals and lay leaders from Federations in Nashville, Knoxville and Chattanooga at the launch of the Tennessee-Israel Caucus.

Nashville lawmakers from across the aisle forged a new alliance this winter, to bolster trade, culture and innovation. Memphis Jewish Federation participated in the historic launch of the bipartisan effort, which signals a commitment to collaboration that transcends political

boundaries.

The Jewish Federation of Greater Nashville and the Israeli Consulate in Atlanta hosted a state-wide reception at the Capitol in Nashville, where caucus co-chairs State Senator Mark Pody, Memphis’s own State Representative

Torrey Harris, and State Representative Scott Cepicky gathered alongside other distinguished guests. Sara First, Federation’s Community Relations manager, represented Memphis Jewish Federation joining other professionals and lay leaders from Federations in Nashville,

Knoxville and Chattanooga. The caucus is the brainchild of Consul General Anat Sultan-Dadon. It follows other, similar recently established caucuses in Mississippi and Alabama, and is part of Sultan-Dadon’s larger work to strengthen relations between Israel and the seven U.S. states covered by the Consulate General of Israel to the Southeast. “This partnership is not new,” Sultan-Dadon said. “It has been cultivated over decades. It’s an exciting and significant milestone in the enduring relationship between the state of Tennessee and the state of Israel.”

Memphians in attendance at the launch of the Caucus were pleased to hear from their own Rep. Torrey Harris (D-Shelby County), whose caucus leadership follows a transformative week-long trip to Israel with Rep. Cepicky (R-Maury County) and other southern lawmakers. He shared his shock at the destruction in southern Israel, his hope and optimism for the country’s innovative sector and future partnership opportunities between Tennessee and Israel.

This is a bipartisan effort, Rep. Harris said, an example of politics not “getting

(See **Caucus** Page 3)

Memphis Jewish Federation Shares Purim Joy Across Communities



Memphis Jewish Federation’s Community Relations Council member Jill Shanker delivers Purim gift bags to Memphis-area faith-based community organizations.

Embracing the tradition of mishloach manot, members of the Memphis Jewish Federation’s Community Relations Council (CRC) spread Purim joy by delivering food and gift bags to leaders and representatives of civic and faith-based organizations across Shelby County.

The initiative, spearheaded by CRC Engagement Co-chair Marla Shainberg, aimed to share Jewish traditions while strengthening intercommunity bonds. Co-chairs Janet Shipman and Shainberg and CRC members Rachel

Shankman and Jill Shanker personally delivered baskets to organizations such as the Memphis Chinese Community Center, the National Civil Rights Museum, Memphis NAACP, Memphis Urban League, Memphis Junior League and other religious and civic organizations on the 14th of Adar (March 14).

Each gift package contained traditional Purim items – a grogger and hamantaschen – along with Jewish and Israeli foods including Bissli, a small Ricki’s challah roll, and kosher grape juice, plus



Memphis Jewish Federation’s Community Relations Council Engagement Co-chair Marla Shainberg delivers Purim gift bags to the Memphis Chinese Community Center.

educational information about the holiday’s significance and customs.

The response from recipients was overwhelmingly positive. CRC volunteers reported meaningful connections made during their deliveries, with many opportunities for future collaboration emerging from these brief encounters.

“It was truly a remarkable day filled with friendly faces and good vibes,” shared Shainberg, who delivered packages to several locations including the Community Foundation of Greater Memphis and the Chinese Community Center. Her visits revealed unexpected connections, including discovering that Community Foundation President Bob Fockler’s mother had been her teacher

at Lausanne.

At the Memphis Chinese Community Center, volunteers were greeted warmly by staff and volunteers there, who expressed interest in future joint activities and potential avenues for collaboration between the two communities.

Janet Shipman found similar enthusiasm at the NAACP, where she found Executive Director Vickie Terry “surprised and pleased” by the gift and eager to discuss building bridges between community organizations.

The Community Relations Council plans to build on these connections in the coming months, with follow-up meetings already being scheduled to explore additional opportunities for collaboration and mutual support.

“We wanted to share this bit of our tradition with others,” explained Sara First, Community Relations manager at Memphis Jewish Federation. “The spirit of Purim is one of joy, community building and resilience – values that resonate across all cultures.

“We would love to strengthen our partnerships across the community,” First emphasized, encouraging those interested in further engagement to reach out to the Federation.

The success of this year’s outreach has already inspired plans to make it an annual tradition. As Shainberg enthusiastically concluded, “I vote to repeat this event next year!” **HW**

My Teen Israel Experience



Akiva Wogan climbing Masada.

Akiva Wogan, son of Sarah and Jonathan Wogan, is a junior at the Missouri Torah Institute. Memphis Jewish Federation’s Lemsky Endowment Fund provided him with a Teen Israel Experience grant to help offset the cost of his NCSY Kollel Israel trip last summer. All rising high school juniors and seniors in the Memphis Jewish community are eligible for grants of up to \$3,000 to attend a summer program, semester in Israel, or any organized Israel program providing a meaningful experience. Teen Israel Experience applications for 2025 are open and can be accessed at Lemsky Endowment Fund | Jewish Community Partners (jcpmemphis.org).

By Akiva Wogan

This past summer, I had an unforgettable experience in Israel. We did many significant things, like praying at the top of a mountain and visiting the city of Sderot. I want to focus on our visit to Sderot, located on the border of the Gaza Strip. It is not a wealthy area, and they have faced many challenges due to their proximity to Gaza. Because they are so close to the border, they are frequently targeted by missiles. The city was hit hard on October 7. While we were there, we visited the October 7th Museum. A man shared his

personal story about what happened to him that day. He explained how his son, who serves in the army, had chosen not to bring his rifle that day. When terrorists attacked, they stormed his synagogue. He and a friend engaged in a gunfight with two terrorists. Without his rifle, he had only a pistol to defend himself. Although they could not kill the terrorists, they managed to hold them off for about 20 minutes without being injured. The man continued, sharing his own terrifying experience. He had been outside when he saw a terrorist carrying a huge gun. Suddenly, the terrorist started shouting in Arabic. At that moment, the man ran for his life, but he was shot in the lung. Despite the injury, he made it back home. His wife called for an ambulance but was told that no help could come to that area. Hours later, someone approached their door and started helping them, using items from their home to treat the injury. This person had heard the call at the station and spent the entire day saving lives. By the end of the day, he had saved 20 people, but tragically, he lost his own life after all his heroic efforts. After hearing this story, we watched a video of the gunfight at the local police station. The fight happened outside, and we saw people hiding behind walls to avoid being hit. Many brave people

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Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. March 28, 2025 / 28 Adar, 57857:00 p.m.
Havdalah, Sat. March 29, 2025 / 29 Adar, 5785 7:57 p.m.
Weekly Torah Portion: Pekudei

sacrificed their lives to protect others. The fight reminded us of the deep sense of community and how much Jews care for each other, like family. After the museum, we went to a look-out point that overlooks the Gaza border. Our tour guide shared the story of the 2014 conflict and the soldiers honored by the memorial we visited.

We also supported local businesses by purchasing challah and candy from a nearby bakery. We ended the meaningful day playing basketball on the courts in Sderot. Thank you to Memphis Jewish Federation’s Lemsky Endowment Fund for helping to make my NCSY Kollel trip possible. HW

John Cleese To Perform in Israel in June

(JNS) – Legendary British comedian and actor John Cleese, 85, is set to return to Israel for three performances this

June in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem. Famous as a member of Monty Python and for his roles in “Fawlty Towers” and

“A Fish Called Wanda,” Cleese’s new show, “An Evening with John Cleese,” will reflect on key moments from his

life and career, while also addressing current events, including local topics, “Ynet” reported last Wednesday. Ticket prices range from 289 to 549 shekels (about \$80-\$150). Cleese previously performed in Israel in 2019 with his show “Last Chance to See Me Before I Die.” HW

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Work on ‘Golden Dome’ Underway, Says U.S. Defense Department



Iron Dome system intercepts rockets launched from Gaza Strip aimed at the city of Ashdod, on July 8, 2014. Credit: Israel Defense Forces via Wikimedia Commons.

(JNS) – The U.S. Department of Defense announced that development on an American Iron Dome-like missile defense system, now known as the “Golden Dome,” is currently underway.

“Consistent with protecting the homeland and per President Trump’s [executive order], we’re working with the industrial base and [through] supply chain challenges associated with standing up the Golden Dome,” said Steven Morani, acting undersecretary of defense for acquisition and sustainment, at the McAleese Defense Programs Conference in Washington, D.C., last Wednesday.

Morani added that U.S. Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth is examining the current military budget to divert funding to items “that support the president’s

priorities for national defense.”

While this task is a “formidable” challenge that will “require a lot of teamwork,” Morani said, they are “wasting no time in moving out and taking this new direction by the president and the secretary.” This includes working with partner agencies, shifting resources and “removing some red tape.”

U.S. President Donald Trump signed an executive order for the system’s development.

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 also voiced interest in purchasing the Israeli missile defense system. **HW**

The MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Happenings

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

Monday, March 31
Team Trivia Pursuit

Last time we tied and had to go extra rounds to crown the winning team! Besides the usual group of players, we are expecting one of the current City Council people to join us on one of the teams. Everyone is invited to join whether you have played before or not. The questions are asked from the Trivial Pursuit regular edition and the Boomer edition. One of our best players in one of the games said before we started, that she never got the answers right. Then she answered about 4 or 5 questions right for her team! Come join us and see how much you know.

Wednesday, April 2
Rabbi Talk with Rabbi Abe Schacter-Gampel
Topic: Preparing for Passover

Rabbi Abe always brings a unique twist to all his talks and is very entertaining. Since Passover this year is unusual as it starts on a Saturday night, this should be a more-interesting-than-usual talk. Please make reservations at the MJCC front desk as Rabbi Abe’s talk always draw a good crowd. Hope to see you there!



Rabbi Abe Schacter-Gampel

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 or by calling the front desk at 901-761-0810. Steve works Monday thru Thursday 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. **HW**

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Caucus...

(Continued From Page 1)

in the way of doing actual good work.”

Referring to Jewish Memphians at the event, Rep. Harris said, “I’m so happy to see some of my constituents here, from my district, who this actually matters to, to know that somebody actually cares about their safety, their security and economic growth.”

As a member of the Transportation Committee, Rep. Harris said he enjoyed learning about popular traffic navigation app Waze and other innovations in Israel that can benefit Memphis. He plans to return to Israel in October.

Rep. Cepicky, who represents a district south of Nashville, underscored the significance of the initiative, stating, “The Tennessee-Israel Caucus will foster an environment of collaboration and create incredible opportunities for the exchange of ideas to improve life for both Tennesseans and Israelis.”

Rep. Cepicky has expressed admiration for Israeli scientific innovation on water use and medical care and believes the Tennessee-Israel partnership can benefit medical upskilling and technology development for both regions.

Senator Pody (R-Davidson and Wilson Counties) added, “This caucus will be able to strengthen that relationship between Tennessee and Israel. Israel has been one of the absolute strongest allies that Tennessee and our nation has.”

First said the event was inspiring. “It was gratifying to see Tennessee Democrats and Republicans come together to protect the U.S.’s longstanding, mutually positive relationship with Israel. We have so much to learn from one another.” **HW**

Luminaries, Much Support, Protests at Gal Gadot Hollywood Star Ceremony



Protesters outside the El Capitan Theatre on Hollywood Boulevard during a ceremony in which Gal Gadot became the first Israeli actress to earn a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame, Los Angeles, March 18, 2025. Credit: Ryan Torok.

By Ryan Torok

(JNS) – Gal Gadot joined luminaries like William Shatner, Jodie Foster and even Godzilla when she was honored last Tuesday with a star on the iconic Hollywood Walk of Fame – a first for an Israeli actress.

The mood at the tented, star-studded ceremony, held on Hollywood Boule-

vard outside of the El Capitan Theatre, was celebratory, and Hollywood icons heaped praise on her.

Vin Diesel, who co-starred with Gadot in several “Fast & Furious” franchise films, spoke during the ceremony of her “strength and empathy.”

“I just love her so much,” the action

star said.

Hollywood director Patty Jenkins, who captured the actress from behind the camera in Gadot’s breakthrough film “Wonder Woman,” said that the Israeli star, and people like she, “have left an indelible mark on the artform.

“Not only have we worked together hundreds of days, but we’ve also become super-close family friends,” Jenkins said. “We’ve been through all kinds of high, lows. It’s been absolute bliss.”

Gadot was the “most loving, most heroic person on the set,” the director said.

Steve Nissen, president and CEO of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce, told attendees that Gadot is “one of Hollywood’s most engaging and sought after talents.”

The ceremony took place three days before the release of the much-anticipated film “Snow White,” a live-action musical remake of the Disney animated 1937 classic. Gadot plays the Evil Queen in the new film, which opens in theaters on March 21.

Marc Webb, who directed the new film, and Marc Platt, who produced it, attended the ceremony, as did Israeli actress Shira Haas and Sarah Zurell, chair of the Hollywood Chamber of Commerce.

As colleagues and others fawned over Gadot, protesters could be heard from across the street, and a small, yet loud and rowdy, group of anti-Israel protesters could be heard from the north side of Hollywood Boulevard, expressing its displeasure that the city was recognizing an Israeli.

Some controversy has surrounded the Disney film ahead of its release, with reported “tension” between Gadot and Rachel Zegler, who plays Snow White in the film and who has advocated often for a “free Palestine.”

Gadot attended the last Tuesday ceremony with her husband, Jaron “Yaron” Varsano, and their four daughters. (It was, she noted in her remarks, her daughter Maya’s 8th birthday.)

She didn’t address her Jewish identity in her remarks but spoke warmly about her upbringing in Israel.

“To all the young women out there, especially young girls watching, if a girl from Rosh Ha’ayin can get a star on the Hollywood Boulevard,” Gadot said, “anything is possible.”

Across the street, protestors mingled with a costumed Spiderman, a man dressed like Jesus and gentlemen in top hats selling star maps – typical fare for the intersection of Hollywood Boulevard and Highland Avenue on a weekday afternoon.

There were also peaceful onlookers hoping to catch a glimpse of Gadot from across the street, where a heavy police presence on a closed-down Hollywood Boulevard monitored demonstrators.

At one point, a fight broke out, and police officers chased some of the demonstrators.

Gadot, 39, was born in Petah Tikva and served in the Israel Defense Forces. The former Miss Israel winner became a Hollywood star and household name after portraying Diana Prince, “Wonder Woman,” in the 2017 hit superhero film.

Alongside her successful movie career, she has been an unofficial ambassador for the State of Israel. In the aftermath of Oct. 7, she has spoken out in support of the release of the hostages and raising awareness about a film showing Hamas’s atrocities.

“I am proud to be Jewish and an Israeli,” she said at the Anti-Defamation League “Never is Now” gathering in New York City this month. **HW**

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Israel Threatens to Annex Parts of Gaza Unless Hamas Frees Hostages

By JNS Staff

(JNS) – Defense Minister Israel Katz last Friday threatened to annex parts of the Gaza Strip unless Hamas releases the 59 hostages still being held in the Palestinian enclave.

“If the Hamas terror organization continues to refuse to release the captives, I instructed the IDF to capture additional areas, evacuate the population and expand the security zone around Gaza for the protection of Israeli communities through a permanent hold of the area,” according to a statement by Katz’s office.

“As long as Hamas continues its refusal, it will lose more and more land to Israel,” he added.

Katz also said that the IDF will “intensify” its military campaign in Gaza “through the expansion of the ground maneuver until the hostages are released and Hamas is defeated.”

Israel will use “all military and civilian pressure” to achieve its goals, including the “implementation of U.S President Donald Trump’s voluntary migration plan for Gaza residents,” concluded Katz.

The warning comes after the IDF last Thursday began conducting ground operations to dismantle terror infrastructure in southern Gaza’s Rafah. Simultaneously, troops continued ground activity in the northern and central Strip, as the Israeli Air Force struck terrorists

and their assets across the enclave.

Early last Tuesday morning, the IDF launched “extensive” strikes against Hamas terrorist targets in the Gaza Strip. The renewed Israeli military campaign has been officially named “Operation Strength and Sword.”

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s office said the military was acting after Hamas terrorists rebuffed several proposals by U.S. Middle East envoy Steven Witkoff to extend the first phase of the Gaza truce through Ramadan and Passover.

Netanyahu said last Tuesday that Hamas has “already felt our strength” since the military returned to fighting, warning that future ceasefire negotiations with the terror group “will only take place under fire.”

Last Wednesday, Katz warned Gazans of “total destruction.”

“If all the Israeli hostages are not released and Hamas is not removed from Gaza, Israel will act with forces you have never encountered before,” said the defense minister.

“Take the advice of the U.S. president. Return the hostages, remove Hamas and other options will be open to you – including leaving to other places in the world for those who wish.

“The alternative is total destruction and devastation,” vowed Katz. **HW**

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How Estate Planning Can Help Individuals Afford Long-Term Care

By Benjamin I. Wachtel, Esq. and David L. Mendelson, Esq.

Approximately seventy percent (70%) of Americans who reach the age of sixty-five (65) will need some form of long-term care during their lives. In Tennessee, nursing home costs vary widely, influenced by factors such as location, quality of facility, and level of care. On average, the cost of a private room in a Tennessee nursing

home is around seven thousand dollars (\$7,000) per month, while a semi-private room averages around six thousand dollars (\$6,000) monthly. This equates to an average annual expense of eighty four thousand dollars (\$84,000) for a private room, reaching an estimated four hundred twenty thousand dollars (\$420,000) over five years and a stag-

gering eight hundred forty thousand dollars (\$840,000) over a decade – figures that leave many residents concerned about funding long-term care should the need arise.

For those who are Medicaid-eligible, Medicaid covers most, if not all, of long-term care expenses. Medicaid is a government-funded program that assists




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with medical costs, including long-term care, but it has strict eligibility requirements, such as income and asset limits. In Tennessee, individuals with assets above the Medicaid limit must first “spend down” their assets before becoming eligible.

This is where proactive planning can be invaluable in preserving assets. One effective tool for many families in Tennessee is the Medicaid Asset Protection Trust (MAPT), a special type of trust that allows individuals to transfer assets while retaining some control, ultimately enabling them to qualify for Medicaid when the need for long-term care arises. By setting up and properly funding a MAPT, individuals can protect their assets from Medicaid’s spend-down requirements, ensuring these assets remain preserved for family beneficiaries.

A MAPT trust agreement should clearly define how assets within the trust are managed and who the designated beneficiaries are. To be Medicaid-compliant, a MAPT must meet specific requirements, such as being irrevocable, meaning the trust’s creator cannot alter or cancel it once established.

For many Memphians, long-term care planning is essential, and a Medicaid Asset Protection Trust, or MAPT, can be a powerful tool for protecting family assets while leveraging Medicaid benefits for long-term care costs. Future articles will delve further into Medicaid planning, emphasizing the importance of structuring a MAPT correctly to meet all legal and regulatory standards. **HW**





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NJ Woman Admits to Stealing \$350,000 from Synagogue

(JNS) – Stacy Margaritondo, 52, of Scotch Plains, N.J., pleaded guilty in U.S. district court to stealing about \$350,000 from a local synagogue, the U.S. Attorney’s Office for the District of New Jersey stated last Thursday.

From December 2019 until May 2023, Margaritondo – who began working at the synagogue in Union County, N.J., in 2010 and was promoted to office manager and bookkeeper in July 2020 “abused this position of trust by engaging in a fraudulent scheme to misappropriate approximately \$350,000 from the synagogue’s accounts,” per the Justice Department.

She “routinely issued unauthorized checks made payable to herself drawn on the synagogue’s bank accounts” and “obtained unauthorized additional funds to conceal the embezzlement scheme by fraudulently using the synagogue’s name, bank statements and balance sheet to obtain short-term financing from at least three cash advance companies,” the department stated.

Margaritondo also kept inaccurate records deliberately and “altered bank statements that she provided to the board of directors to conceal her scheme,” it added.

She faces up to 20 years in prison and a fine of \$250,000 “or twice the gross gain or loss from the offense,” per the Justice Department. She is due to be sentenced on July 22. **HW**



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Memphis Kollel’s Megillah Rush Expands to Communities Across America



Ethan VanderWalde concluding the siyum learning.

On the night before Purim, an extraordinary event took place in Memphis – and in Jewish communities across the country. The Megillah Rush, a program that began six years ago as a local initiative has now grown into a multi-city movement, bringing together Jews from all backgrounds in an inspiring night of Talmud study, connection and unity.

The Megillah Rush, hosted by the Memphis Kollel on March 12, saw a beautiful crowd from across the city gather to study Talmud together in the Cooper Beit Midrash. (Amazingly, exactly 127 participants joined this year – perfectly echoing the 127 provinces of King Achashverosh’s empire, a central theme of the Purim story!)

But this year’s Megillah Rush was even more special. Communities in Tampa, Rochester, Dallas, Houston, Atlanta and Plano ran their own Megillah Rush programs, all modeled after the Memphis initiative. Through a live stream, different cities connected with one another, sharing the excitement and energy of the night in real time.

The format is both ambitious and exhilarating: In just 45 minutes, boys

from the Cooper Yeshiva High School and community members pair up and divide Tractate Megillah of the Talmud, with each group studying a portion independently. At the end of the session, the group has collectively completed the entire tractate – a remarkable accomplishment that fills the study hall with a sense of achievement and excitement for Talmud study.

“When we launched this initiative in Memphis in 2019, we had no idea of how successful it would be,” remarked Rabbi Yosef Braha, Rosh Kollel of the Memphis Kollel. “The Memphis community looks forward to the Megillah Rush every year. Recently, we pitched the idea of joining the Rush to a number of communities and their participation has made the experience even more powerful!”

The impact of Megillah Rush is felt deeply by all who participate. One father, who attended with his high school son, shared: “There’s something incredible about learning together, side by side, knowing that we are part of something bigger. Seeing my son excited about studying a page of Talmud – it’s an experience I’ll never forget.”



Participants enjoying the RUSH.



Celebrating the accomplishment.

A high school student reflected on the energy of the evening: “The room was buzzing with learning. It was amazing to be part of a city-wide effort and know that other communities across the country were doing the same thing.”

Megillah Rush is more than just a study event – it is a celebration of Jewish learning, community and shared

purpose. As the initiative continues to spread to more cities, it serves as a powerful reminder that Torah study is a unifying force, bringing Jews together in a way that transcends geography.

For more information on upcoming Memphis Kollel programs, please contact Rabbi Yosef Braha at rabbibraha@memphiskollel.org. [HW](#)

Benjamin Netanyahu Gives Silver-Plated Beeper to John Fetterman, Who Praised Lebanon Pager Operation

By Ben Sales

(JTA) – When Sen. John Fetterman said he loved the Israeli operation that sent exploding pagers to members of Hezbollah, he probably never expected that Israel would give him a beeper, too.

But that’s what happened last week, when Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed Fetterman, an outspokenly pro-Israeli Democratic lawmaker, to his office in Jerusalem.

The beeper handover took place during an exchange of gifts. The Pennsylvania senator gave Netanyahu a framed news article about an effort to memorialize Netanyahu’s brother, the fallen Israeli soldier Yoni Netanyahu, in Philadelphia – where Netanyahu lived as a teenager.

Netanyahu’s gift was smaller – and didn’t explode.

“What can I give a man who has everything? How about giving him a beeper?” Netanyahu said, handing over a small silver box to Fetterman. “This is a silver-plated beeper. The real beeper is, like, one-tenth the weight. It’s nothing,

but it changes history.”

Fetterman responded, “When that story broke, I was like, ‘Oh, I love it, I love it.’ And now, it’s like, thank you for this.”

Pagers belonging to Hezbollah members exploded across Lebanon in September, wounding and killing many, in addition to a number of civilians, in a long-planned Israeli operation. The operation came 10 days before Israel killed Hassan Nasrallah, Hezbollah’s leader, in an airstrike and two weeks ahead of an Israeli ground invasion of Lebanon targeting Hezbollah. That conflict ended in a ceasefire in late November.

Fetterman has praised the beeper operation before, including in comments to a representative of the militant right-wing pro-Israel group Betar US.

And Netanyahu has gifted a pager to a U.S. official before. In a visit to the White House last month, he gave one to President Donald Trump. That one was plated with gold. [HW](#)

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Phased Retirement Can Help Smooth the Transition

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

In a recent survey, 52% of workers said they would prefer to gradually decrease their hours as they transition to retirement. The percentages were even higher for Gen X (67%) and millennials (56%).¹

The federal government has offered a formal phased retirement program since 2014, allowing eligible full-time employees to collect half their pensions while working half time. Typically, at least 20% of their remaining work hours must be spent mentoring younger workers. And their pensions continue to grow based on part-time work.²

Private industry has been slower to adopt formal programs, with only 16% of employers – mostly larger companies – having regular phased retirement programs. However, 61% of companies have some experience with phased retirement, and – with strong employee interest – it’s likely that more will adopt formal programs.³

Win-win-win solution

A phased retirement program can be a positive experience for employees, employers, and customers.

For older employees, a reduced schedule offers a more gradual financial transition, maintaining a steady, if reduced, income that can help delay taking Social Security benefits and/or tapping retirement savings. Trying to live on 80% of salary, for example, might also be good practice for retirement budget management. And staying engaged in the workplace can offer mental and psychological benefits.

For employers, older workers provide experience and institutional knowledge that can help maintain and improve current quality while mentoring younger workers to help ensure a smoother transition to the next generation.

Contrary to stereotypes that older workers are less productive, recent research found no correlation between age and productivity but a strong positive correlation between job tenure and productivity.⁴

For customers, older workers can provide dependability and continuity. In some cases, customers are also older, and long-time relationships can help maintain customer comfort levels.

Valuing Older Employees

Percentage of employers who agree completely or somewhat with the following statements.

- 77% Older employees’ company knowledge is crucial to our business’s success.
- 69% We want to keep good employees as long as possible but struggle to find ways to continually advance their career path.
- 67% We have plans for how employees nearing retirement can transfer knowledge to our business before they leave.
- 62% We are concerned with our employees’ career development.
- 55% We have hired people who had previously retired from another company.
- 55% We have asked employees who want to retire from full-time work to stay on part time.
- 47% We have asked employees who have retired from our business to come back for a specific need (temporary work).
- 44% We have asked employees who have retired to come back on a full- or part-time basis for the long term.

Source: The Principal Financial Well-Being Index, 2024 (survey conducted November 6–13, 2023)

Build your own program

If your company does not offer such a program, you might suggest an arrangement. Emphasize what you can continue to contribute and how it could help the company in the present and the future. But also be sure that the program will work for you. Here are some ideas to keep in mind.

- Make sure you understand the effect of reduced hours on your benefits, such as health insurance and employer pension or retirement plan contributions.
- Whereas the federal program includes a half pension with part-time wages, pensions are less common in private industry. If you cannot live on your reduced wages, you may have to use other sources of income, but you probably would not have to tap them as much as if you retired completely.
- One of the greatest benefits of phased retirement is that you could delay claiming Social Security, with your benefit increasing 8% annually after full retirement age (FRA), up to age 70. However, if you do claim Social Security before FRA and continue to work, you will receive a permanently reduced benefit for claiming early and be subject to the retirement earnings test, which may temporarily reduce your benefit payments until you reach FRA. Once you have reached FRA, the lost benefits from the earnings test will be added to your benefit amount.

If you phase out of your current job, make sure you don’t end up trying to do all of your former work in fewer hours. This could be especially problematic for salaried workers in project-oriented positions. Be sure you and your supervisor are clear on the requirements of your reduced workload.

- 1) Benefits Pro, March 22, 2024
- 2) U.S. Office of Personnel Management, August 7, 2014
- 3) Fortune, March 22, 2024
- 4) Mercer, 2024

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OBITUARIES



Sarah Lazarus Lewis

Sarah Lazarus Lewis, 51, passed away on March 18, 2025, after a short and valiant battle with cancer. Surviving her are her husband of 29 years, Jeff Lewis; her three children Jessica, Rebecca, and Eli; her parents Vicki and Edward Lazarus; her mother-in-law, Kaye Lewis; sister Ellen Lazarus Golden (Philip); and sister-in-law Laurie Lewis Shapiro (Jonathan). She also leaves behind numerous cousins, nieces, and nephews.

Predeceasing her were her paternal grandparents, Carolyn and Wilbur Lazarus; her maternal grandparents, Lora and Dale Blanchard; and her father-in-law, Don Lewis. Although born in Denver, Sarah grew up in New Orleans, her father’s hometown. She loved all things New Orleans: the food (especially Po’ Boys and Doberge cake), Mardi Gras parades, and City Park. She attended the Isidore Newman School and then college at Tufts University. She excelled academically at both schools. She was the glue that held everything and everyone together. Family, friends, and organizations relied on her. Once Sarah made a commitment, she kept her word, did it excellently, and did it on time. She could multi-task like no one else. Simply put, she wanted to stay busy and make lives around her better. She easily made friends wherever she went. Once Sarah befriended you, you were a friend for life. She valued every friendship, extending her kindness, wisdom, love, and sometimes even unwarranted organizing advice. She was the epitome of an amazing friend and outstanding community member. This love even extended to animals.

She had a soft spot for rescues, much to Jeff’s dismay! Over the years, she volunteered to foster several litters of puppies as they waited to find their forever homes, one of which did with Jessica. We always joked that our dogs were at the top of her totem pole. Sarah’s first passion was her family. If the kids had an activity, Sarah was involved. She was on several PTA boards (MJCC, Grahamwood, and Riverdale), a team manager for multiple soccer teams, and served on the Purple Rain Soccer Club board. Nights and weekends were spent on the soccer fields or at the horse stables. She could be counted on to bake her famous chocolate chip or forgotten cookies for any gathering. The family holiday cards and calendar only happened because of her. As the kids went to college, she became an avid supporter of UNC and Alabama sports. But it was also important to her and Jeff that the family eat dinner together every evening – no matter the craziness of everyone’s schedule. Sarah’s second passion was organizing: Everything had a place, and every event had a plan. No trip happened without a detailed itinerary down to the minute. She loved to label, put items in

bins, and color code. She parlayed this skill into her business “Organized by Sarah,” where she helped numerous clients for 15 years. But these clients were more than clients; they became family, speaking to the true nature of her heart. She was deeply committed to the wider Jewish community. She served on the Jewish Community Partners and Memphis Jewish Federation boards, most recently as the vice chair of community impact. She loved Israel, having studied there in college and visiting most recently on a Federation trip. She was also active at Temple Israel. Sarah’s happiest place was Henry S. Jacobs Camp. She went for numerous summers as both a camper and staff member. Her oldest friend group, affectionately known as the “Camp Girls,” formed there. Jeff and Sarah met there in the summer of 1991. All three kids continued the tradition by attending and serving on staff. She went every summer for two weeks to organize and was on the Camp Committee. She loved hanging with friends, Shabbat song session, and watching the sun set over the chapel. In lieu of flowers, donations may be sent to the Henry S. Jacobs Camp or to the charity of one’s choice. **HW**

IDF: ‘ABC’ Report on ‘Harrowing’ Gaza Leaflets is Fake News

By Neta Bar

(Israel Hayom via JNS) – The Israel Defense Forces issued a categorical denial regarding a report published by U.S. television network ABC last Wednesday, which claimed that Israel had dropped leaflets over Gaza stating that “the world map will not change if all the people of Gaza vanish.” The report was featured in an ABC story focused on the war in the Gaza Strip. The alleged message, which ABC characterized as “harrowing,” reportedly contained statements including “Trump’s Gaza plan – which will impose your forced displacement whether you like it or not.” The purported leaflet also stated, “We have decided to make a final appeal to those who wish to receive aid in exchange for cooperating with us.” According to ABC, the leaflet concluded with the statement: “No one will feel for you, and no one will ask about you. You are left alone to face your inevitable fate.” The network failed to provide any verified evidence of the leaflet’s veracity. The outlet later deleted the claim, adding an editor’s note last Thursday that read: “An earlier version of this

The U.S. network claimed Israel distributed pamphlets saying “the world map will not change if all the people of Gaza vanish.”

article said that the IDF had dropped leaflets with disturbing messaging. ABC News has not been able to confirm the authenticity of these leaflets. The IDF denies dropping these leaflets.” Social media platforms circulated what appears to be a fabricated document written in Arabic and bearing an Israeli Security Agency (Shin Bet) logo. This document stands in stark contrast to legitimate communications issued by IDF Arabic spokesperson Col. Avichay Adraee, whose messages have called on Gaza residents to evacuate active combat zones for their safety. The IDF has firmly rejected these reports, emphasizing that the document referenced in the ABC report is entirely fabricated. Originally published by Israel Hayom. **HW**

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A Facebook History Page Noted a Massacre of British Jews. Cue the Laughing Emojis.



A view of Clifford's Tower, the site where an estimated 150 Jews were killed in a medieval pogrom in 1190. Credit: Ian Forsyth/Getty Images

By Grace Gilson

(JTA) – The Facebook page British History has a devoted but not particularly emotive following. Multiple times a day, it posts an image and factoid from, well, British history, to a handful of comments and thumbs-up emojis. But when it showed followers an image of Clifford's Tower in York, England, over the weekend and informed them about an antisemitic massacre of

150 Jews that took place there in 1190, the response was different. More than 1,600 people applied Facebook's "laughing" emoji, signaling that they were making light of one of the starkest instances of antisemitic violence in British history. The massacre took place when an estimated 150 Jews who had taken refuge inside the tower chose to take their own lives rather than

be forcibly converted; a few who sought to escape were murdered. Several commenters rejected the hateful responses. "Disgusting to see so many people laughing at this post. Totally think you're in the wrong group," one wrote. The original poster, British History, replied to another comment decrying the antisemitic reactions saying that they had blocked many of the offenders. But a handful of antisemitic comments remained. When one commenter noted that Jews were later expelled from England and not allowed to return until the 1650s, he got a reply of his own: "Should have kept the law !!" It got 265 approving responses, compared to 100 signaling anger. The proliferation of mocking emojis and antisemitic comments reflects a familiar dynamic for anyone engaging with Jewish content online in recent years, particularly as multiple social media platforms, including Facebook, have recently relaxed their policies against hate speech. Earlier this year, Meta, which owns Facebook, rolled back restrictions on free speech and stopped automating the detection and

removal of hate speech. The British History post about the massacre at Clifford's Tower went up on its 835th anniversary. The same day, members of York's Jewish community and local officials gathered for a memorial service that takes place every year and doubles as a Holocaust memorial ceremony. It was the second ceremony to include Rabbi Elisheva Salamo, the first rabbi to work in York since its Jewish population was wiped out in the massacre. "Helping to rebuild what was once one of England's most vibrant Jewish communities is an honor and a privilege," she told The Guardian when she was hired. At the ceremony, Barbara Boyce, York's former lord mayor who was involved in the decision to memorialize the Holocaust locally, said she feared that contemporary discourse was redolent of the hate espoused before the massacres the ceremony was memorializing. "Social media has become an echo chamber that reinforces people's prejudices," she said. "Opinions, however ill-informed, can be published." **HW**

Joe Rogan Hosts Holocaust Revisionist Darryl Cooper on His Podcast and Complains of 'Paranoid' Jews



Joe Rogan anchors the broadcast during the UFC 281 event at Madison Square Garden in New York City, Nov. 12, 2022. Credit: Chris Unger/Zuffa LLC/Getty Images

By Ben Sales

(JTA) – Joe Rogan, who hosts one of the most popular podcasts in the country, invited a Holocaust revisionist to his studio just over a week after interviewing someone who spreads antisemitic conspiracy theories. Rogan's interview of so-called "historian" Darryl Cooper last Thursday followed his interview of conspiracy theorist Ian Carroll the prior week. In Carroll's interview on March 5, he claimed sex offender Jeffrey Epstein "was clearly a Jewish organization working on behalf of Israel and other groups" and said Israel was founded by

Jewish organized crime figures, according to Jewish Insider. In last week's interview, Rogan gave Cooper free rein to espouse his views, which he praised as "nuanced" and "comprehensive." Rogan also claimed to oppose antisemitism, which he said he saw rise following the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attack, though he added that Jews made too much of it at times. "And then you start thinking the way your paranoid Jewish friends think, that everybody's antisemitic, and you go, well, now I kind of understand why they think that way," he told Cooper at one

point. "So I kind of understand the over-reaction, but it is still an overreaction, and I think what you do is very valuable." The Cooper interview was the second time in recent months that Cooper has been the guest of a commentator with a huge following on the right. In September, he was interviewed by Donald Trump ally Tucker Carlson, who praised his work. In that interview, Cooper falsely suggested that the murder of millions of Jews was an unintended consequence of Hitler's unpreparedness for war, and that the Jews killed in concentration camps "ended up dead there." Cooper promoted similar falsehoods in his Rogan interview and devoted a long segment to explaining – at Rogan's request – Adolf Hitler's antisemitism as borne of battle weariness and economic hardship. He claimed among other things that Hitler opposed the mass 1938 Kristallnacht pogrom, and that Hitler came to be antisemitic from feeling the reason Germans were in a "sorry state" was because "they're being manipulated by the Jews, by the Jewish press, by the Jews who own the theaters and put out the films and whatever else." He added, "I think the thing that gave it emotional valence for him is that his antisemitism is what allowed him to love the German people." Cooper has long drawn condemnation from antisemitism and bigotry watchdogs, as well as actual historians

of World War II and the Holocaust. His prominence – he has hundreds of thousands of followers on X and other platforms – comes as people espousing white supremacist and pro-Hitler rhetoric have found jobs in the Trump administration as well as in traditional media. "Engaging in Holocaust denial and distortion disqualifies you as a credible historian," Jonathan Greenblatt, the CEO of the Anti-Defamation League, tweeted in September about Cooper. Last week, an ADL newsletter on extremism said the series of recent appearances by far-right figures on popular podcasts "underscores a worrying trend: false narratives about Jews and Israel are being normalized." The ADL drew criticism for giving Elon Musk the benefit of the doubt when the Trump backer and White House advisor gave what appeared to be a Nazi salute in January. This week, it criticized Musk, without using his name, after Musk shared a social media post saying that civil servants, not Hitler, were responsible for the murder of the Jews during the Holocaust. (The post was later deleted.) "It is deeply disturbing and irresponsible for someone with a large public platform to elevate the kind of rhetoric that serves to undermine the seriousness of these issues," the group tweeted. **HW**

Hamas Fires 3 Rockets at Tel Aviv Area for the First Time in Months



Contrails of Israeli Iron Dome anti-missile defense system strike Hamas rockets overhead as Hamas militants in Gaza continue fire into Israel, despite being targeted by more than 14,000 strikes during eight weeks of Israeli bombardment and a ground offensive, in Sderot, Israel, Dec. 4, 2023. Credit: Scott Peterson/Getty Images

By Ben Sales

(JTA) – Hamas fired three rockets from the Gaza Strip at the Tel Aviv area,

the first time Israel has had missile fire in months and another sign that the Israel-Hamas war has resumed.

No one was injured by the rockets, which set off warning sirens in several suburbs adjacent to Tel Aviv. One was shot down by Israel's missile defense system and two others fell in open areas. The rockets came days after Israel ended its ceasefire with Hamas, conducting airstrikes targeting the terror group's leaders in the Gaza Strip. And they came hours after a rocket sent by the Houthis terror group in Yemen triggered warning sirens in central Israel and interrupted proceedings at Israel's parliament, the Knesset.

Last Wednesday, Israel also resumed its ground operations in Gaza, retaking parts of the Netzarim corridor, an area previously held by the Israeli military that splits the southern and northern halves of the territory. Last Wednesday morning, mass protests had erupted in Jerusalem over the war's resumption, which protesters said endangered the 59 hostages still held by Hamas in Gaza. Netanyahu cited Hamas' refusal to release the hostages in his announcement that fighting would resume. **HW**

Music in the Meadow

Temple Israel's TIMPO Fest returns for year two



The TI Memphis Jewish Choir was one of a number of local groups who performed at last year's TIMPO Music Fest and are on the schedule for this year's TIMPO Fest.

In April of last year, over 500 members of the Memphis Jewish community were treated to music, food, fun and games in the meadow of Temple Israel at the first annual TIMPO Music Festival.

From kids bouncing in inflatables to adults toasting with signature "TIMPO-Tinis," last year's event truly had something for everyone. The music – a mix of Jewish favorites and beloved classics from artists like Stevie Wonder and The Beatles – brought the community together in a special way. Temple Israel Music Director Emily Groff Heilborn, who founded and leads the TIMPO program, called it "one of her favorite moments at Temple Israel."

Now rebranded as "TIMPO Fest," the event is back for a second year and will hold court in the meadow on April 27 from 11:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. with more live performances, delicious eats and activities for all ages.

Featured acts for TIMPO Fest 2025 include The TI Band, TI Memphis Jewish Choir, TI Staff Band, TI Teen Band and TI Songleaders along with a special reunion performance from the beloved Ruach ensemble. New for this year, the MJCC Theater Conservatory will also join the lineup for a special guest performance. Beyond the music, guests can enjoy a free bar with signature cocktails, three food trucks and Mempops to keep things cool. Kids will love the face painting, balloon animals and inflatables designed for all ages.

TIMPO Fest is made possible thanks to our incredible Community Partners and Sponsors, including Bornblum Jewish Community School, Cub Scout Pack 25, Memphis JCC, PJ Library, Temple Israel Brotherhood, Temple Israel Sisterhood, TI Juniors Troop 13142, Wendy and Avron Fogelman Religious School and the World Zionist Congress: Vote REFORM.

The festival entry is free, but we ask people to register in order to get their wristbands. You'll find the registration

link on Temple Israel's website in the Events Calendar. Once you've signed up, be sure to check your confirmation email for details on when and how to pick up your wristband. Join us for an unforgettable day of music, community, and celebration – we can't wait to see you there! [HW](#)

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BBQ brisket	\$30/lb	(Specify breast or thigh + leg)	
Chicken tenders	\$22/lb	Grilled chicken fillets	\$19/lb
Ground beef eggplant lasagna	\$45/pan	Basil lemon salmon (1/2-lb fillet)	\$13/pc

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Yukon Gold & sweet potato, twice-baked	\$9/ea	Potato kugel	\$34/pan
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All food is prepared in the Baron Hirsch meat kitchen under the supervision of Rabbi Ian Lichter.

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