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# *the* Hebrew Watchman

1925-2025

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## Reserve Your Spot at the 2025 JCP Annual Meeting: Celebrating Local Jewish Community Achievements and Charting Future Course



Attendees at last year's Annual Meeting honored the past year of achievements in the Memphis Jewish community while also holding space for the hostages taken in Gaza.

Jewish Community Partners (JCP), Memphis Jewish Federation (MJF), and the Jewish Foundation of Memphis (JFOM) are pleased to announce their Combined Annual Meeting, set to take place on June 11 at 5:45 p.m. at the MJCC Belz Social Hall. This annual gathering is a pivotal opportunity for the community to celebrate collective achievements, reaffirm shared missions, and look ahead at strategic priorities for sustaining and strengthening Jewish life both locally and globally. All members of the community are invited to attend.

The evening will be a testament to dedicated leadership and unwavering commitment. It will honor outgoing Board chairs Marty Kelman of Jewish Community Partners and Scott Noto-wich of the Memphis Jewish Federation for their exceptional service. The event will also welcome incoming chairs Charles Jalenak for JCP and Jimmy Ringel for MJF, as they step into their new roles. A special highlight of the evening will be the celebration of Sheri Gadberry, executive vice president of the Jewish Foundation of Memphis, for 25

years of service and profound commitment to the Foundation.

“Any time we can step back as a community and honor the incredible, dedicated leaders powering the Memphis Jewish community is time worth spending,” said Laura Linder, president and CEO of JCP. “This has been a remarkable year filled with successes of all kinds, and we wouldn’t have seen such tremendous growth and success over the past year without their leadership.”

Memphis Jewish Federation and the Jewish Foundation of Memphis have made significant impacts in the past 12 months. As the central convening, planning and fundraising arm of the Memphis Jewish community, the Federation, through its Annual Campaign and ongoing initiatives, has continued to be a critical lifeline for Jewish organizations and individuals in Memphis.

The Federation has enabled robust programming, essential social services and educational opportunities, fostering a vibrant and resilient Jewish community. These include supporting local day schools and synagogues, providing assistance for those in need, sending 30 kids to Jewish overnight camps through our needs-based camp scholarship program, raising \$4.1 million for the Israel Emergency Campaign, providing security-related training sessions for nearly 200 community members, and sending Holocaust survivors, second and

third-generation survivors to present to 2300 Memphis school students.

The Jewish Foundation of Memphis, currently celebrating its 30th anniversary, has also demonstrated its enduring impact over the past year, empowering individuals and families to create lasting legacies through philanthropic giving. The Foundation’s assets have grown tremendously, reaching \$200 million in the first quarter of 2025. This means grant-making has also grown: throughout its 30-year history, more than \$160 million has been granted to local, national and international organizations. By managing and distributing charitable funds, the Foundation has strengthened the long-term financial stability of numerous Jewish organizations and causes.

The past year has also included special programming and events designed to help donors create a charitable legacy. Through the Foundation’s work, 400+ fund holders have been able to channel their generosity into meaningful contributions totaling over \$12 million that will benefit Jewish life in Memphis and beyond for years to come.

“This has been an incredible year for Memphis Jewish Federation and the Jewish Foundation of Memphis both, and we can’t wait to reflect on it – from record-breaking grantmaking to our lively, meaningful event series,” said Linder.

(See **Annual Meeting** Page 2)

## Creating Memories and Moments in this Tapestry Called Life



The Home hosted a cookout at the pavilion with staff, residents and families.

By **Jasmine Williams**

The week of May 11-17, Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab celebrated National Skilled Nursing Home Care Week. The Home is so grateful to have amazing staff who care so deeply for the residents, and there is no better time than this special week in May for MJHR

to show their gratitude. This year’s theme, Tapestry of Life, showcased the connections to the most loved people and memories woven together to create a beautiful tapestry.

The Home started the week with a Disney Day, where the staff dressed as their favorite Disney character. The day was filled with laughs, friendly compe-

tition, games, trivia and of course, prizes. Family Feud, hosted by the Home welcomed fun competition and laughs from everyone, with the team definitely needing their thinking caps for trivia. Ending this fun-filled, sunny day on the patio, everyone enjoyed a sweet ice cream treat.

The next few days were filled with themes of Twin Day, Sports Day and Color Wars. Twin Day had residents matching their peanut butter shirts to staff’s grape jelly shirts. Other twins opted for the simpler option of headbands or tutus. During games of bingo, UNO, and Deal or No Deal, the residents and staff won an assortment of prizes like hammock chairs, heavy-duty blankets and cozy pajamas. There was never a dull moment the entire week!

To finish the week, the Home hosted a cookout at the pavilion with staff, residents and families. What better way to end the week of fun and community with grilling, dancing and singing with the people who are a part of our tapestries of life. Though this week is filled

with fun games, strategy planning in Escape Rooms, or receiving candygrams, let’s not neglect the true reason for it all. National Skilled Nursing Home Care Week is an essential time to recognize people in healthcare who fiercely impact and deeply care for the senior citizens in the community.

Tapestry of Life is the perfect theme to show the significance of the memories and moments woven together, which make up a part of our lives. MJHR hopes that everyone can see how necessary it is to be intentional with the seniors in our community; we are all a part of a tapestry of life. What memories and moments are we adding to it?

Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab is a not-for-profit nursing home, Jewish in character and environment, dedicated to providing the highest level of care possible with dignity, compassion, and professionalism. Only through the help of generous donors is the organization able to care for those in need. For more information, please go to: [www.memphisjewishhome.org/giving](http://www.memphisjewishhome.org/giving). **HW**



# Jewish Federation Introduces Mayor Young to Memphis Jewish Community



Mayor Paul Young joins Federation's Executive Committee and Community Relations Council for intimate conversation.

Early in May, Mayor Paul Young joined Federation's Executive Committee and Community Relations Council for an intimate conversation that introduced Mayor Young to the Jewish Federation and the wider Memphis Jewish community.

Mayor Young spoke with attendees about security, crime reduction efforts,

community partnerships and highlighted Federation's participation in his Multicultural Advisory Board. The group discussed how Jewish Memphians can work together with elected leaders to lift up the city and improve the narrative around Memphis.

Thank you to Amy and John Pregulman for hosting. [HW](#)



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## Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. May 30, 2025 / 3 Sivan, 5785.....7:50 p.m.  
Havdalah, Sat. May 31, 2025 / 4 Sivan, 5785 ..... 8:52 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Bamidbar

### Annual Meeting... (Continued From Page 1)

"Despite – or perhaps, in response to – so many global challenges for the Jewish people, our amazing donors and lay leaders have uniquely stepped up, responding to the community's needs over the past year and solidifying our thriving local Jewish community."

The evening's program will include comprehensive organizational updates, reflections on key milestones and discussions on the challenges faced, offering a transparent look at the collective journey. Featured guest speaker Michael

Masters, national director and CEO of Secure Community Network (SCN), will deliver a timely and critical presentation, "Securing Jewish Communities in an Era of Escalating Hate," addressing the urgent challenges of rising antisemitism and providing insights into how communities can remain safe and resilient. As a leading expert in homeland security, Mr. Masters oversees nationwide efforts to protect Jewish institutions across North America from various threats and antisemitic violence.

The Annual Meeting is an opportunity to reflect on shared history, honor the invaluable contributions of organizational leaders and staff, and collectively look ahead to a future of continued strength and growth. To register for the Annual Meeting, visit: [jcpmemphis.org/annual-meeting](http://jcpmemphis.org/annual-meeting). [HW](#)



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# Top BBC Sportscaster to Exit Amid Allegations of Antisemitism Over Anti-Israel Social Media Post



Gary Lineker looks on during the Emirates FA Cup Final match on May 17, 2025, in London, England. Credit: Michael Regan - The FA/The FA via Getty Images

By Grace Gilson

(JTA) – Gary Lineker, the former soccer star and long-time sportscaster for the BBC, is leaving the broadcaster amid backlash after reposting an Instagram story about Zionism that featured a rat emoji.

Lineker announced his resignation last Monday, six days after a British antisemitism watchdog called for him to be dismissed over the post.

“Perhaps Mr Lineker is not as naive or accident-prone as he might like us to believe,” the Campaign Against Antisemitism said on X. “As the BBC’s highest-paid presenter and owner of a major media enterprise, maybe he

knows exactly what he’s doing.”

Lineker had previously apologized for the post, which was originally from the account Palestine Lobby and included the words “Zionism explained in less than 2 mins” along with an emoji of a rat, a historically antisemitic symbol for the Jews that was commonly used in Nazi Germany propaganda.

In a video posted on his Instagram, Lineker apologized for the post and said that he “did not see” the rat emoji, and that if he had he would “never ever have shared it.”

“I would like once again to say I’m sorry unreservedly for the hurt and up-

# 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, June 2 & Tuesday, June 3**  
The MJCC is closed for the Jewish holiday, Shavuot!  
Have a good Yom Tov!

**Wednesday, June 4**  
**Special Game of Team Trivial Pursuit**  
These questions will mainly center on the 50s and 60s. Special prizes will be awarded for both the winning teams and the other team! Plus, we’ll have a drawing for a special prize amongst all the players. Come have fun, test your knowledge and win a nice prize to take home! Reservations are only required for the lunch.

**Monday, June 9**  
**Rabbi Talk with Rabbi Ian Lichter, Senior Rabbi of Baron Hirsch Congregation**  
**Topic: The Radical Parshiyot Testing Moshe’s Leadership**  
His talks are always thought provoking and filled with humor regardless of the topic. You can come for the lunch preceding the talk or just for the talk as well. Reservations are not needed if you just want to hear this interesting topic.

**Wednesday, June 11**  
**Rabbi Talk with Rabbi Joel Finklestein**  
**Topic: The Jewish Mandate to Learn**  
You can come for the lunch preceding the talk or just for the talk as well. Reservations are not needed if you just want to hear this interesting topic.

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

set caused, it was a genuine mistake and oversight, but I should have been more diligent, I know that,” said Lineker in the video apology.

“I’ve stood up for minorities and humanitarian issues and against all forms of racism all of my life, including of course antisemitism which I absolutely abhor. There’s no place for it and never

should be,” Lineker continued.

Phil Rosenberg, president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, said Lineker’s “empty and belated apology is the first after years of baiting the Jewish community, just as levels of antisemitism soar.” He also called for Lineker’s dismissal.

The Instagram account Palestine Lobby reposted the video with a new caption last Monday, saying that it had also not inserted the emoji and suggesting that Lineker was being punished for his views.

“We did not add the ‘emoji’ or even notice it FFS, someone was just upset that the message is getting out there and decided to use it to get a good man in trouble...we stand with @garylineker and against anti\$emitism #freepalestine.”

The BBC announced Lineker’s departure in a press release last Monday, writing that he would not return to his show, “Match of the Day,” for next year’s coverage. The sportscaster’s final episode will air this week.

“Gary has acknowledged the mistake he made. Accordingly, we have agreed he will step back from further presenting after this season,” said Tim Davie, the BBC’s director-general, in a statement.

“Gary has been a defining voice in football coverage for the BBC for over two decades,” Davie continued. “His passion and knowledge have shaped our sports journalism and earned him the respect of sports fans across the UK and beyond. We want to thank him for the contribution he has made.”

This is not the first time that Lineker has been criticized for social media posts that some have denounced as antisemitic. In 2023, the BBC briefly suspended Lineker after he posted on X comparing British immigration policy to Nazi Germany, saying that he had violated the network’s political impartiality policy.

Lineker was also one of the 500 signatories of a letter to the BBC calling on them to “stop censorship on Palestine” after it removed the documentary “Gaza: How to Survive a Warzone.” The documentary was pulled from distribution amid revelations that the 13-year-old narrator was the son of a Hamas official. **HW**

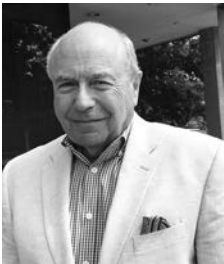
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# Adobe Recognizes Jewish Employee Resource Group in Landmark Move

Washington, D.C., May 21, 2025 — Kenneth L. Marcus, chairman and CEO of the Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law, today issued the following statement congratulating Jewish employees at Adobe on the official recognition of a Jewish Employee Resource Group (ERG) – a major milestone in fighting rising workplace antisemitism and supporting equal treatment of Jews:

“The Brandeis Center applauds Adobe’s Jewish employees on the establishment of an officially recognized ERG – the Jewish Employee Network – joining Adobe’s other ethnicity-based ERGs. Adobe is to be commended for acknowledging that Jewish identity is not limited to religious beliefs but, like other ethnic groups, is rooted in shared ancestry, culture, history, and language.

“We are proud to have supported Adobe employees in securing this important recognition and grateful to see a major global company do right by its Jewish workforce. Ensuring that all employees receive equal access to the benefits of ERG participation is both a legal obligation and the right thing to do.”

The Brandeis Center advised and worked closely with Adobe’s Jewish employees throughout this effort, led by Rory Lancman, the Brandeis Center’s director of Corporate Initiatives and Senior Counsel.

This recognition comes amid growing national attention on whether major employers are complying with federal anti-discrimination laws by offering equal treatment to Jewish employees.

ERGs – company-sponsored groups organized around shared characteristics such as race, ethnicity, gender, or sexual orientation – provide significant

employment benefits in the workplace. Denying Jewish employees access to the same resources on the grounds that Judaism is only a religion, and not also an ethnicity, constitutes unlawful discrimination under federal law.

To reinforce its legal advocacy, the Brandeis Center recently launched the Center for Legal Innovation (CLI) – a first-of-its-kind public interest litigation unit dedicated to fighting antisemitism across all sectors, including employment, housing, healthcare, education and public services.

CLI’s advisory board includes prominent legal figures such as former U.S. Attorney General William Barr, former Solicitor General Paul Clement, and leading litigators Davida Brook, Brad Karp, Thomas McCarthy, Jason Torchinsky and Erik Jaffe.

Victims of antisemitic discrimination seeking pro bono legal assistance may contact David Dince, director of Litigation, at [ddince@brandeiscenter.com](mailto:ddince@brandeiscenter.com), or by phone at 917-509-1203 (mobile) or 202-559-9296 (office).

The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law (LDB) is an independent, unaffiliated, nonprofit corporation established to advance the civil and human rights of the Jewish people and promote justice for all. LDB engages in research, education and legal advocacy to combat the resurgence of antisemitism on college and university campuses, in the workplace and elsewhere. It empowers students by training them to understand their legal rights and educates administrators and employers on best practices to combat racism and antisemitism. More at [www.brandeiscenter.com](http://www.brandeiscenter.com) **HW**

# Ben Cohen of Ben & Jerry’s is Arrested for Disrupting RFK Jr. Senate Testimony with Gaza War Protest



**Ben Cohen, co-founder of Ben & Jerry’s, is detained by U.S. Capitol Police for disrupting proceedings during a hearing with U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services Robert F. Kennedy Jr., May 14, 2025, in Washington, D.C Credit: Samuel Corum/Getty Images**

**By Ben Sales**

(JTA) – Ben Cohen, one of the founders of Ben & Jerry’s, was arrested for protesting at a Senate committee hearing against American funding for Israel’s war in Gaza.

Cohen, who has long been a vocal progressive activist and lately a harsh critic of Israel, was part of a group that interrupted testimony last Wednesday by Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., the secretary of health and human services. Other protesters called out Kennedy, but Cohen yelled, “Congress pays for bombs that kill children in Gaza” before being removed by Capitol Police.

As he was being escorted out with his hands bound behind his back, Cohen extended his criticism of U.S. military assistance for Israel’s war against Hamas in Gaza, connecting it to health care in the United States.

Congress kills poor kids in Gaza by buying bombs and pays for it by kicking kids off Medicaid in the U.S.,” he said. “They need to let food into Gaza. They need to let food in to starving kids.”

Humanitarian groups are raising alarm about encroaching famine in Gaza, where Israel has obstructed the entry of aid for two months. It is on the

verge of launching a new, controversial U.S.-approved plan to distribute food there.

Domestically, Republicans in Congress are advancing a bill that would cut Medicaid funding. A bipartisan bill that provided billions in military aid to Israel passed under the Biden administration, before the much larger Medicaid cuts were on the table.

Ben & Jerry’s drew backlash from a range of Jewish groups in 2021 when it announced it would stop selling its ice cream in what it termed “occupied Palestinian territory.” Cohen and his co-founder Jerry Greenfield, who no longer control the company, supported the decision, citing their Jewish identities. Unilever, Ben & Jerry’s parent company, later effectively reversed the decision.

Cohen has since escalated his criticism of Israel, and recently was a guest on the talk show of far-right commentator Tucker Carlson, where he spoke out against American militarism and said, “There seems to be some kind of strange relationship between Israel and the U.S., where, I don’t know, Israel now has the U.S. supplying weapons for its genocide.” **HW**

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# Canada, England and France Vow ‘Concrete Actions’ Over Israel’s Gaza War Expansion and Blockade

By Philissa Cramer

(JTA) – The leaders of Canada, the United Kingdom and France have condemned Israel’s expanded war in Gaza and vowed to penalize Israel if the war – and its months-long blockade on humanitarian aid – continues.

“We have always supported Israel’s right to defend Israelis against terrorism. But this escalation is wholly disproportionate,” the leaders – Canada’s Mark Carney, Britain’s Keir Starmer and France’s Emmanuel Macron – said in a joint statement.

“We will not stand by while the Netanyahu Government pursues these egregious actions,” they added. “If Israel does not cease the renewed military offensive and lift its restrictions on humanitarian aid, we will take further concrete actions in response.”

The statement, which also called on Hamas to release the Israeli hostages “they have so cruelly held,” did not offer specifics about what actions the countries might take. The Netherlands is urging European countries to reconsider their relationships with Israel, and Macron and Starmer are both reportedly considering unilaterally recognizing an independent Palestinian state.

The statement represents a sharp escalation by three allies of Israel at a time when the Israeli government is facing steep pressure to end its 19-month war against Hamas, which began when Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, 2023. The leaders noted that members of the Israeli government have said they hope that Gazans will seek to leave, adding, “Permanent forced displacement is a breach of international humanitarian law.”

Last Monday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he would allow “a basic quantity of food” into Gaza for the first time in months, in an announcement that the leaders called “wholly inadequate.” Five trucks – far short of what is understood to be needed – reportedly entered the territory, though it was unclear whether any aid reached civilians there.

Netanyahu lashed out against the world leaders’ statement after it was issued last Monday, saying that the three countries had handed “a huge prize” to Hamas and vowing to continue the war until Hamas is defeated.

“By asking Israel to end a defensive war for our survival before Hamas terrorists on our border are destroyed and by demanding a Palestinian state, the leaders in London, Ottawa and Paris are offering a huge prize for the genocidal attack on Israel on October 7 while inviting more such atrocities,” he said in a statement.

The three leaders also said they could impose further targeted sanctions if Israel does not halt building settlements in the West Bank. Each of the countries has already sanctioned some settlers and settler groups in an attempt to stem violence against Palestinians there. **HW**

# Estate Planning Federal Estate Tax Update: Where We Stand and Why You Should Care

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

## The Federal Estate Tax: Current Status and Congressional Plans

As of 2025, the federal estate tax exemption (meaning if the estate is worth less than the exemption, the tax does not apply) stands at \$13.99 million per individual and \$27.98 million per married couple, a significant increase from previous years. However, this elevated exemption is set to “sunset” or expire this year on December 31, 2025, unless Congress enacts new legislation. Without intervention, the exemption is scheduled to revert to approximately \$7 million per individual, adjusted for inflation, under the provisions of the 2017 Tax Cuts and Jobs Act (TCJA) and approximately \$14 million per married couple. Why should you care? Because for estates where this federal estate tax does apply, the tax is a whopping forty percent (40%).

### Congressional Action and Proposals

In response to the impending sunset, Congress is actively considering various measures to address the future of the estate tax exemption. One notable proposal is the “Death Tax Repeal Act of 2025,”



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introduced by Senator John Thune of South Dakota and Representative Randy Feenstra of Iowa. This legislation aims to completely eliminate the federal estate tax for all estates, regardless of the estate’s size or value. While the bill has garnered support from some lawmakers, its passage faces significant challenges, particularly in the Senate, where a supermajority of sixty (60) votes is required. If the bill were to become the law of the land, it would simplify estate planning for larger estates. Many complex strategies designed specifically to minimize estate tax exposure – like certain types of trusts, family limited partnerships, or life insurance arrangements – might become unnecessary.

Another approach under consideration involves extending the current exemption levels through a legislative process known as “reconciliation,” which allows certain tax-related legislation to pass with a simple majority (fifty-one (51) votes) in the Senate. This method could potentially extend the higher exemption for a specified number of years, which would essentially provide a band aid and kick the ball down the road for future legislators to tackle.

### Implications for Estate Planning

The uncertainty surrounding the federal estate tax exemption necessitates proactive estate planning, particularly for individuals and couples with estates that approach or exceed the current exemption thresholds. While the federal estate tax exemption remains at historically high levels in 2025, as demonstrated in this article, its future is uncertain. Congressional efforts to either extend or repeal the current provisions are ongoing, and individuals and couples affected by these changes should stay informed and consider appropriate planning measures. **HW**

# 1 in 4 American Jewish Adults in the United States Consult Astrology, Survey Says



The Pew survey found that 11% of Jews say they consult tarot cards at least once or twice a year. Credit: Britta Pedersen/picture alliance via Getty Images

By Grace Gilson

(JTA) – Over a quarter of Jewish adults in the United States say they consult astrology or a horoscope at least once or twice a year, according to a new study.

The study by the Pew Research Center survey, published last Wednesday,

surveyed U.S. opinion on astrology, tarot cards and fortune tellers. It found that 18% of American Jews believe in astrology compared to 27% of the overall population.

Astrology is not a central feature of Jewish practice, though elements similar to it do appear in Jewish mystical tradition and ancient rabbinic sources, including references to the constellations of the Zodiac.


Recently, some Jews have explored links between astrology and Judaism: At the Well, a Jewish wellness group, incorporates the Zodiac into its work. J., the Bay area Jewish newspaper, runs a monthly “Astrolojew” column and has featured Jewish tarot card art. Other Jews have also blended witchcraft and Jewish folklore, taking on the title “Jew-itches.”


The Pew survey found that 11% of Jews say they consult tarot cards at least once or twice a year, and 4% say they consult a fortune teller at least once or twice a year.

The survey found that 8% of Jews said that they consult a fortune teller, tarot cards, astrology or a horoscope mostly for helpful insights, while 19% reported they consulted them just for fun.

Just 5% of Jews reported that they relied on insights from fortune tellers, tarot cards or astrology at least “a little” for major life decisions. Zero percent said they relied “a lot” on those practices.

The survey was conducted from Oct. 21 to Oct. 27, 2024, and included 9,593 total respondents, including 388 Jews. The margin of error for the overall survey was 1.3%, while the margin of error for Jewish respondents was 6.5%. **HW**





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# Community Unites for Joyous Lag BaOmer Celebration



The May 15 event, co-hosted by Baron Hirsch Congregation, Young Israel of Memphis, Memphis Torah Mitzion and MJX (Memphis Jewish Experience), brought the community together for the a festive holiday.

The Memphis Jewish community came together for a festive Lag BaOmer celebration last Thursday evening at the welcoming home of Dr. Dan and Jessica Weiss. More than 70 attendees from across the Memphis community gathered to commemorate the ancient holiday with food, music and fellowship.

The May 15 event, co-hosted by Baron Hirsch Congregation, Young Israel of Memphis, Memphis Torah Mitzion and MJX (Memphis Jewish Experience), transformed the Weiss family’s backyard into a vibrant celebration space where community members of all ages shared in the holiday traditions.

Lag BaOmer, the 33rd day of the Omer counting period between Passover and

Shavuot, commemorates Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai, a mystical sage whose teachings form the basis of Kabbalah, and Rabbi Akiva, another revered Torah scholar.

Rabbi Noach Karp of MJX reflected, “The vision behind the event was to bring the community together to tap into the legacies of Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai and Rabbi Akiva and provide a boost to our collective journey towards receiving the Torah on Shavuot,” the upcoming holiday celebrating the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai.

“It was truly a beautiful community unity celebration,” said Sarit Grunwald, one of the organizers from Torah Mitzion. “People came together to sing, be inspired and share both happy and chal-



lenging ideas and thoughts.”

The evening featured a traditional bonfire with guests enjoying hotdogs and s’mores, alongside Torah Mitzion’s famous soups. A variety of refreshments including l’chaims, beers and soft drinks added to the festive atmosphere.

Musical entertainment by Eitan Selter, who “truly uplifted the evening with his voice and strings,” expressed Baruch Reuel Nachman one of the attendees, helped create the joyful ambiance that characterizes Lag BaOmer celebrations worldwide. The kumzitz-style singing, where participants gathered around the fire to share traditional Jewish melodies, added a profound sense of hope and embodied the spirit of “Am Yisrael Chai”

(the Jewish people live) that the community both locally and globally deeply need during these times.

Community leaders noted that the strong turnout and enthusiastic participation reflected the vibrant state of Jewish life in Memphis and the desire for unity during challenging times.

As the evening concluded, many participants remarked on how meaningful it was to celebrate together after recent world events have tested the Jewish community’s resilience.

“Events like this remind us of the strength of our community,” Baruch Reuel Nachman commented as the final embers of the bonfire glowed into the night. **HW**

## Antisemitic Fliers Thrown from Car in Squirrel Hill Neighborhood

By Grace Gilson

(JTA) – Fliers denigrating Jews were strewn around Squirrel Hill, and residents were reportedly targeted with antisemitic epithets, the latest antisemitic incident in the neighborhood that suffered the 2018 Tree of Life synagogue shooting.

The fliers were reportedly thrown from a moving vehicle, according to Pittsburgh Police. Police said the fliers were in clear bags weighed with corn kernels so that they could be thrown effectively.

One of the fliers read, “Every single aspect of the Jewish Talmud is satanic,” according to a photo shared by Corey O’Connor, the county comptroller and a candidate for Pittsburgh mayor.

The flier included quotes cherry-picked from the Talmud – a vast compendium of ancient rabbinic debates over Jewish law and tradition – that aim to show Jewish discrimination against non-Jews. Pulling quotes from the Talmud to depict Jews in a negative light is an age-old antisemitic mainstay.

“Despicable antisemitic acts like those taking place in Squirrel Hill today have no place in our city,” O’Connor tweeted.

The suspects were not immediately identified by police, but the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh attributed the actions to the Goyim Defense League, a white supremacist group. The federation also said the driver hurled antisemitic slurs at local Jews.

“This kind of hate has no place in our neighborhoods,” said Laura Cherner, director of the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh’s Community Relations Council, in a statement. “Our community is strong, united and we will stand together to oppose these vile actions.”

A recent report from the Anti-Defamation League found that the Goyim Defense League was one of three white supremacist groups that were collectively responsible for 94% of all antisemitic

propaganda in 2024.

“Antisemitic materials that were distributed in parts of Squirrel Hill today are reprehensible and have no place in Pittsburgh,” said Pittsburgh Mayor Ed Gainey in a statement. “We will not stand for such hateful acts meant to intimidate our neighbors.”

Distributing fliers has been a common tactic of antisemitic groups in recent years. Shortly after the synagogue shooting in 2018, the deadliest antisemitic attack in American history, Squirrel Hill was hit with antisemitic fliers.

More recently, last July, an inverted red triangle, a symbol used by Hamas that has been adopted by pro-Palestinian protesters, was painted on the neighborhood Chabad center, close to the site of the shooting.

Last week, several Jewish organizations in Las Vegas also received threatening, antisemitic letters, sparking safety concerns. The local Jewish federation responded to the letters in a post on Instagram, calling for community members to “stay vigilant with incoming mail.”

One organization that received a letter, Friendship Circle Las Vegas, is a Jewish program that connects volunteers with children and young adults with special needs.

Its executive director, Rabbi Levi Harlig, posted a photo of the letter on Instagram. It read: “To all Zionist Jews stay out of our valley. We will destroy your synagogues Hamas lives on you all burn in hell.”


“The irony of this hateful letter? It was sent to our nonprofit – an organization built on inclusion, love, and friendship,” wrote Harlig in the caption next to the photo. “But we’re not afraid. We won’t be silenced, and we won’t back down. We will double our efforts to spread light, kindness, and unity. Goodness will always be louder than hate. Am Yisrael Chai.” **HW**





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# *Selling Your Business to a Private Equity Group VS. a Strategic Buyer*

*Provided by Mike Stein, Managing Director - Investments  
Wells Fargo Advisors*

***Questions for Mike? You can reach him at 901.761.8151  
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If you own a business, it can be overwhelming to think about selling it. One way to gain some control is to learn about your alternatives to help you better understand what is best for you, your family, and your company. While buyers come in all shapes and sizes, two of the most common are private equity groups (PEGs) and strategic buyers.

**Private equity group**

A PEG is made up of financial professionals who have raised money to buy – and eventually sell – companies.

**Key considerations:** It is important to consider your financial and timing goals to determine if a PEG sale is a fit. Your continued involvement will be based on your current role in the company. Are you comfortable running the company with another majority owner? Traditionally, PEGs target a three-to-five year holding period, after which they attempt a second sale of the company.

**What happens:** As a simple example, assume you sell your company for \$1,000. Assume also that the PEG funds the transaction with \$500 debt and \$500 equity and asks you to roll over (or re-invest) \$100 so that you own a 20% equity interest. Your existing management – and perhaps you – will be tasked with growing the business while paying down the debt.

Now, let's say you double the profits while completely paying off the debt during the PEG hold period. Assuming the same valuation multiple of profit/cash flow, the business would be valued at \$2,000 and you would get 20%, or \$400, for your \$100 investment assuming all debt was paid off.

**Risks:** Of course, there's no guarantee the business will grow while paying down the debt or that it will sell on favorable terms. In the meantime, you will have a majority owner that is looking to exit in a few years, so its goals and culture may not align with yours. When considering a PEG, you want to be comfortable with them and their level of involvement in the running of the company and understand how decisions will be made.

### Strategic buyer

A strategic buyer is usually a company in the same or related industry that has some overlap or synergy that would result in incremental savings or revenue if it bought your company.

**Key considerations:** Your company

may be absorbed, which is important to consider if you value legacy. There may be a heightened risk for job loss, especially among senior leaders, as your team may overlap with that of the buyer. Each strategic buyer is unique as will be their transition of your company. The flip side is you may find it easier to walk from a strategic sale.

**What happens:** Unlike a PEG, you will usually not be asked to reinvest in the company, and depending on your current role, you may be involved in a transition period of only a few months. What happens to your management team and the rest of your workforce depends on the overlap with the buyer and its strategic direction.

**Risks:** If you are paid in the acquiring company's stock, you need to consider the risk of owning that much of one security. If the buyer is a public company, you may be able to sell that stock and diversify over time, but that can be delayed if the stock is restricted. In that case, you can be prohibited from selling until after a vesting period or certain conditions are met.

If the buyer pays with private company stock, you need to know your path to liquidity. Until you do so, you will own shares in a larger company you no longer control, and it likely will represent a large percentage of your personal assets so you need to understand your ownership rights and remedies.

Transitioning your ownership of a company is more complex than a typical retirement, but it can be less daunting if you understand your options.

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A promotional graphic for Dynamic Duo Design. At the top center is the word "Custom" in a large, light green, sans-serif font. Below it is a circular logo with a black and white checkered border. Inside the circle, the letters "DD" are stylized in light blue and light green, with a pink lightning bolt striking between them. Below the letters, the words "dynamic duo" are written in a black, cursive script. To the left of the logo, the words "T-shirts" and "mugs" are stacked vertically in pink and light green sans-serif fonts. To the right, the words "hats" and "koozies" are stacked vertically in light green and pink sans-serif fonts, followed by "and more..." in a smaller black font. At the bottom center, the name "Toni Nieman" is written in a bold black sans-serif font, and below that, the email address "DynamicDuoDesign1@gmail.com" is written in a large black sans-serif font. The entire graphic is enclosed in a dotted green border.



OBITUARIES



Louise Wolf Ellis

Louise Wolf Ellis, 73, of Memphis, Tenn., passed away on Wednesday, May 21, 2025. A devoted wife, mother, grandmother and community leader, Louise will be remembered for her fierce love, sharp wit, joyful spirit and the unwavering strength and commitment she brought to every role she held.

A native Memphian, Louise graduated from White Station High School in 1969, proud to have been a Spartan from first grade through senior year. She went on to attend Memphis State University, where she began what would become a remarkable 48-year career at First Horizon Bank. Starting as a college intern with what was then First National Bank of Memphis, Louise retired as Executive Vice President, having excelled in helping meet her customers’ banking needs with uncommon devotion.

Louise was a lifelong member of Temple Israel and a tireless advocate for her community. She served as president of the Memphis chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women and volunteered in local schools to help children learn to read. Her generosity of spirit extended to numerous causes, but her greatest devotion was always to her family.

She is survived by her beloved husband of over 40 years, Mike Ellis; her children, Zack (Rachel), Caycee, and Josh; her stepson, Justin; her brother, Bert Wolf (Lorraine); and her four cherished grandchildren.

Louise and Mike shared a love story that began with a first date at the old Memphis Night Court and was sustained over their decades of marriage. Together, they built a rich life filled with adventure and laughter: from ballroom dancing and cooking to attending Tiger basketball Final Fours and eventually cheering (somewhat begrudgingly) for the University of Tennessee, where three of their children earned degrees. They recently made new memories at the Houston Rodeo, but perhaps their most enduring joy came from simply being with family; driving kids to practices, hosting gatherings, and always making home a place of warmth and connection.

Louise would tell you that her proudest accomplishment was the closeness and happiness of her family. She was the rock of the household, the editor of last-minute papers, the golf-course companion, the ever-reliable presence. Her joy was most complete when her “babies were all back home” or reunited in D.C., where two of her sons now live.

Louise’s laugh, often paired with tears of joy, will echo in the hearts of those who knew her. She will be remembered for her honesty, her humor, her no-nonsense wisdom and the heroic love she offered to those around her.

She was, in every way, extraordinary. May her memory be a blessing.

The funeral service was held on Friday, May 23, 2025, at Levy-Cooper Chapel in the Temple Israel Cemetery. Donations can be made to St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital or the charity of the donor’s choice. **HW**



Lucy Pepper Secher

In Loving Memory of Lucy Pepper Secher

With deep sorrow, we announce the passing of our beloved mother, grandmother, sister, aunt and friend, Leah bat Ariele Leiv v’Sarah, on May 17, 2025, at the age of 86. Lucy, the oldest of six children, was born on March 10, 1939, in Mexico City to her parents of blessed memory, Luis and Consuelo Mostkoff.

She was a woman of deep compassion, elegant style, intellectual wisdom and unwavering devotion to her family and community. Her life was guided by Jewish values, and she brought light and kindness into the world through acts of mitzvot, chesed, and big, juicy kisses – bringing ruach with each embrace.

She is survived by her children from her first husband, Harry (“Skip”) Pepper, of blessed memory: Paula Salky (Randy) of Steamboat Springs, Colo.; Barney Pepper (Melissa) of Memphis, Tenn.; and Sandy Pepper (Fernando Cerezo) of Farmington Hills, Mich. She is also survived by her bonus children from her second husband, Dr. H. Pierre Secher, of blessed memory: Margaret Matthes (Gerald) and Josie Ballin (Steve). She was preceded by Robert M. Secher, OBM).

Lucy leaves behind her loving grandchildren: Miranda Salky (Alex Elliott), Reina Pepper Greenberg (Mason), Eli Pepper, Jennie Pepper, Nathan Cerezo, Claudia Cerezo, Christopher Matthes (Jennie), Lydia Kuivenhoven (Matt), Benji Ballin, Ellie Ballin and Samantha Ballin, as well as five great-grandchildren. She is also survived by her sisters, Anna, Pola and Aida, and her brothers, Moises and Isidoro. She will be remembered by her extended family and the many friends and community members who cherished her deeply.

The funeral was held on Tuesday, May 20 at the Temple Israel Cemetery. Lucy loved her Jewish community and the opera, symphony and fine arts. Please honor her memory with a donation to an arts or service organization such as ArtsMemphis (artsmemphis.org), your local Jewish Family Service or to Rabbi Ross Levy discretionary fund at Temple Israel-Memphis (timemphis.shulcloud.com/payment.php).

May Lucy’s neshama (soul) be bound in the bond of eternal life, and may her memory be a blessing. **HW**

# UN, BBC Walk Back Gaza Infant Death Toll Claim

By Canaan Lidor

(JNS) – The United Nations and the BBC last Wednesday corrected a dramatic claim that 14,000 infants in the Gaza Strip faced death within 48 hours, clarifying that the figure actually refers to children at risk of severe malnutrition over the course of a full year.

U.N. humanitarian chief Tom Fletcher made the claim on BBC Radio 4’s “Today” program, saying: “There are 14,000 babies that will die in the next 48 hours unless we can reach them.” The comment was quickly picked up by national media outlets, cited in U.K. parliamentary debates and referenced in international diplomatic discussions.

After asking the U.N.’s Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs for clarification, the BBC reported that the remarks were based on a report that warned that 14,100 severe cases of acute malnutrition were expected to occur between April 2025 and March 2026 among children aged between six months and five years.

The report by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification said neither that all 14,000 children were infants nor that they were expected to die. Additionally, the timeframe stated was five years, not 48 hours.

BBC News published a correction later that day.

When asked for clarification, Fletcher’s agency – the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) – told the Jewish Chronicle: “We are pointing to the imperative of getting supplies in to save an estimated 14,000 babies suffering from severe acute malnutrition in Gaza. We need to get the supplies in as soon as possible, ideally within the next 48 hours.”

By the time the correction surfaced, the false claim had already been cited by at least nine Members of Parliament in the House of Commons and amplified across U.K. and international media.

The controversy unfolded as the

**A top official had falsely claimed that 14,000 infants faced death within 48 hours.**

United Kingdom escalated pressure on Israel. U.K. Foreign Secretary David Lammy announced last Monday that the United Kingdom was suspending trade negotiations with Israel over what he called “morally unjustifiable” military actions in Gaza. “The Netanyahu government’s actions have made this necessary,” Lammy said, describing Israel’s conduct as “monstrous.”

U.K. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer also weighed in, saying the “horrific situation in Gaza” was “utterly intolerable” and warning, “We cannot allow the people of Gaza to starve.”

Israeli officials have denied accusations of orchestrating food shortages, maintaining that Hamas is responsible for withholding supplies from civilians. Last Tuesday, Israel allowed 93 trucks carrying humanitarian aid – including baby food, medical equipment and pharmaceuticals. **HW**

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By Ted Roberts

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# Israeli Environmentalist Alon Tal: This War is No Excuse for Neglecting the Environment

APRIL 30, 2025 (JTA) – *Alon Tal is one of Israel’s leading environmentalists and a former member of Israel’s parliament, the Knesset. Now the chair of Tel Aviv University’s Department of Public Policy, Tal will be hosting a landmark conference at Stanford University in late May on lessons from Los Angeles and Tel Aviv in climate resilience and local government policy.*

*Tal recently sat down for an interview to discuss Israel’s environmental record, what he learned from his time in government and why young American Jews should consider moving to Israel. The interview has been lightly edited for length and clarity.*

**Is now a time for optimism or despair over Israel’s environmental record?**

These are the worst of times and the best of times. Worst, because there’s a minister of environment who is very weak, and many key environmental protections have been eviscerated by the government. Israel’s performance in climate mitigation, moving to renewable energies, is pitiful – just 12% when some countries are 70%. Biodiversity is losing out as every year 20-30 kilometers of open space is lost to development. This reflects a real failure of political will on environmental issues.

But at the local level we’re seeing real leadership. At the Tel Aviv municipality, over 30 people work on the environment. The city has undertaken a massive tree planting initiative and started to address the specter of mass flooding. Tel Aviv offers a better environment today than in the past, and the city is among the C40 – the 40 cities most ambitious

about climate adaptation.

**Given Israel’s current situation, how can environmental priorities be balanced against security needs?**

Like every other era since Israel’s birth in 1948, there are always immediate exigencies. When I see government budgets inflated with investment in insignificant initiatives like those of the Ministry of Heritage, massive increases in funding for the ultra-Orthodox even though they don’t bear their burden of defense, and subsidies for West Bank settlements, I think we can find more money for the environment. This government has no excuse.

**What gives you hope about Israel’s environmental future?**

I pin my hopes on the younger generation. There has been and still is a small minority that thoughtlessly litters, and they have to be hammered harder than ever with enforcement. But I don’t think that reflects the majority of Israelis. There’s a refreshingly high level of environmental literacy and commitment to doing better.

**There’s a Hebrew aphorism “What you see from here you can’t see from there.” What did you learn from your time as a Knesset member that you hadn’t necessarily realized before?**

First, that the environment in Israel is not a partisan issue, unlike in the United States. When I was in the Knesset, some of my best partners and legislative initiatives were done in full partnership with Likud politicians from the other side of the political spectrum. Ninety percent of Israelis agree about 90% of the challenges. Everybody in Israel loves nature and is proud of the country’s historical

environmental achievements in terms of forestation, water management, etc. Let’s take it to the next level.

**The solutions to many of the Middle East’s environmental challenges lie in regional cooperation, and this is one area where you’ve built bridges between Israel and its Arab neighbors. How are those relationships weathering the current political climate?**

On the bigger picture, we can be grateful that the many countries who have diplomatic relations with Israel have maintained their relations with us. But there’s no question that since this government came into place, the extraordinary momentum in environmental cooperation has evaporated.

For example, we had agreements to export more water to Jordan and import renewable energy. Since the war began we’ve basically seen that freeze. But the pendulum can swing back.

Regional cooperation makes sense economically and ecologically, but we need a government that is more conscientious in this area and have better relations with Jordan and the Palestinian Authority than the current government has.

**In 2005, you received The Charles Bronfman Prize – awarded annually to a Jewish humanitarian under 50 whose work has benefited humankind. By that point you’d already founded Adam Teva V’Din - the Israel Union for Environmental Defense, the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies, and EcoPeace Middle East. How did winning the prize in 2005 help turbo-charge your work?**

For me, winning the prize constituted huge validation at a relative young age – validation that this complicated dance between academia and civil society, and two decades of efforts to confront foolhardy development, pollution and bad environmental policies, made a difference. The prize winners really do refer to the “Bronfman family,” which has embraced so many of us and our efforts to make the world a better place. It remains a great honor and source of support.

**Tell us a bit about this Tel Aviv-Los Angeles conference, and why you’re doing it now.**

Los Angeles has a history of doing innovative climate initiatives. Tel Aviv is the only Israeli city to have taken the

challenge of climate adaptation seriously. These two cities are natural partners.

After the catastrophic wildfires in Los Angeles, it became clear to me that the issue of climate resilience is one no city can afford to ignore. If there are any takeaways from this terrible and tragic chapter in Los Angeles’ history, it’s that at the end of the day, notwithstanding the goodwill of governments, communities are largely on their own when it comes to helping climate crisis victims.

We wanted to create a conference that would bring together experts from Israel and the United States to discuss a pressing environmental issue, where a mutual exchange of ideas would be beneficial. At the May 29-30 conference, which is open to the public, we’ll talk about challenges like sea level rise, ensuring water supply to a city in times of drought, fire prevention, how to address the likelihood of massive increases in heat waves, climate justice and protecting vulnerable populations.

After last year’s turbulence on campus and efforts to delegitimize Israel, it’ll be nice to have a perfectly normal academic gathering in which Israel shares its experiences and also learns from the work and research taking place in the United States. I feel very privileged that Stanford University’s Center on Democracy, Development and the Rule of Law, which has an emerging Israel Studies program led by Larry Diamond, has allowed me to chair this conference. Their support has been extraordinary.

**Given everything happening these days, would you encourage young Jews to move to Israel on aliyah, as you did?**

Of course! We are privileged to live in an era where there is a Third Jewish Commonwealth. I feel extremely lucky to have been given that opportunity. Israel is a remarkable land of an opportunity; it’s not an ossified place.

Young American Jews need to come and bring their values of environmentalism and commitment to democracy, and they will be welcomed, as I was.

*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*

## Trump Proclaims Jewish American Heritage Month, Says No One has Been a ‘Greater Friend’ to Jews

(JNS) – As he issued a proclamation to commemorate Jewish American Heritage Month, U.S. President Donald Trump stated that “there has never been a greater friend to the Jewish people” than his administration.

Trump’s action followed the passage last week of a House resolution in support of the annual commemoration, which takes place each May.

The president noted the increase in Jew-hatred in the United States since the Hamas-led terror attacks in southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

“Since those horrific attacks, the Jewish community in the United States, and around the world, has faced an incredible trial, though one that was not unfamiliar in Jewish history,” Trump stated. “College campuses and city streets erupted into violence. Blood libels were

displayed proudly at protests. Those wearing yarmulkes were openly assaulted in the streets.

“The America that its Jewish citizens felt that they once knew appeared to have shifted completely,” he added.

The president promised to “use every appropriate legal tool at my disposal to stop antisemitic assaults gripping our universities.

“We will proudly stand with our friend and ally, the State of Israel. I will never waver in my commitment,” he said, noting that Jew-hatred has been “disguised as anti-Zionism, Holocaust denialism and false equivalencies.

“We will never deviate from our conviction that antisemitism has no place in the greatest country in the world,” he stated. **HW**

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Celebrating 30 Years of the Jewish Foundation of Memphis



Cindy and Mark Finestone are donor-advised fundholders and major supporters of the Memphis Jewish community. After moving to Memphis with no local family, they quickly became deeply involved through Jewish Federation and Foundation. Cindy currently serves on the Board of the Jewish Foundation of Memphis and is a past Chair of the Memphis Jewish Federation Board. Listen to an interview with Cindy and Mark on the Foundation’s new podcast, “Generations of Giving,” available on Spotify and Apple Podcasts.

# An Embattled Netanyahu Says ‘Trump Plan’ for Gaza Emigration is a Condition for Ending War

## Israel’s prime minister rebuffed calls to end the war, step down or take responsibility for failing to prevent Hamas’ Oct. 7, 2023, attack

By Ben Sales

(JTA) – Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel is taking complete control of Gaza and that he would not end the war there without the implementation of what he called the “Trump plan” to encourage voluntary migration from the territory.

In his first press conference in months, the Israeli prime minister also said for the second time last week that Israel would allow aid to enter Gaza in order to avert a humanitarian crisis. But he rebuffed calls to end the war, to step down or to take responsibility for failing to prevent Hamas’ Oct. 7, 2023, attack. He denied reports of a split between Israel and the United States, calling such reports “fake” and that the two countries were in “full alignment” on U.S. talks with Iran.

The press conference came as Netanyahu has been buffeted by pressures foreign and domestic. Within Israel, the Supreme Court ruled against the prime minister shortly before he spoke, saying that he had inappropriately fired the head of the Shin Bet security service.

Meanwhile, international anger is increasing over starvation in Gaza, which has grown more dire as Israel blocked the entry of aid for more than two months. U.S. President Donald Trump is reportedly eager for the war to be brought to a close. And polls show that most Israelis want to end the war with a deal that frees the nearly 60 remaining

hostages, of whom at least 20 are alive.

Last week, Netanyahu’s government proceeded in the opposite direction and escalated the war in Gaza, launching an operation to conquer and occupy the enclave. Netanyahu defended the operation, saying it would lead to an Israeli victory.

“At the end of this move, all of the territories of the Gaza strip will be under Israeli security control and Hamas will be completely defeated,” he said.

Netanyahu added that he would agree to a “temporary” ceasefire in order to free some of the hostages. But he said the war could only come to a complete end after a series of conditions were met, many of which Israel has pursued over 19 months of war since the Oct. 7 attack:

- The hostages are released to Israel
- Hamas lays down its weapons and surrenders
- Its leaders are expelled from Gaza
- Gaza is demilitarized
- The “Trump plan” is implemented

“I am ready to end the war with clear conditions that will ensure the security of Israel,” he said, adding that he was under “tremendous pressure” to end the war sooner.

He said the “Trump plan” was “such a correct plan – and so revolutionary. It says something simple: Residents of Gaza who want to leave can leave.”

In fact, Trump has at various times

called for Gaza to be completely depopulated and for the United States to “take over” the territory. In recent weeks, Trump hasn’t emphasized the plan, instead calling for the war to end and reaching a deal, without Israeli involvement, to free American-Israeli hostage Edan Alexander.

Netanyahu claimed that ending the war now would position Hamas to attack in the future, “in striking distance” of Israel.

“Everyone calling on us to end the fighting before these goals are met is essentially calling to leave Hamas in power,” he said. “And what does that mean? It means all of our achievements and all of the sacrifice of our brave fighters will come to nothing.”

Netanyahu also said his decision to let humanitarian aid into Gaza, after months of shutting it out, was motivated by international pressure and a desire to continue the war.

He outlined a three-part plan that would see aid enter Gaza immediately, followed by a system in which American companies would distribute aid directly to Gaza civilians under Israeli protection. He said Israel would then create a “sterile area” in southern Gaza where civilians could enter and receive full humanitarian assistance.

“In order to maintain our freedom of operation and allow our closest friends

to keep supporting us, we need to prevent a humanitarian crisis,” he said. He said supporters of Israel in the U.S. Senate had encouraged him to continue the war, but added that they said, “We cannot accept a situation of a humanitarian crisis in Gaza.”

Humanitarian groups have criticized the new Israeli aid plan as woefully inadequate to meet the needs of the 2 million residents of Gaza. Three allies of Israel – the United Kingdom, France and Canada – said they would take “concrete actions” if Israel did not start allowing aid into the territory.

Reporters at the press conference quoted back to Netanyahu previous instances when he had said Israel was on the verge of winning the war. The prime minister refused to give a timeline for the end of the war, saying only, “It won’t take a year and a half, I promise you.”

Netanyahu also drew criticism after the press conference for having said that “nothing” had happened on Oct. 7 at Kibbutz Ein Hashlosa, where the IDF was relatively successful in repelling Hamas. Four members of the kibbutz were killed while fighting with terrorists that day, and the kibbutz called for a correction as well as a state inquiry into the events of the day. Netanyahu’s office soon said that he “regrets that his comments regarding Kibbutz Ein Hashlosa were misunderstood.” **HW**



# 2 Israeli Embassy Staffers Shot to Death Outside DC Jewish Museum Event



*A man, standing behind police tape, talks on his cell phone outside the Capital Jewish Museum following a shooting that left two people dead, in Washington, DC, in the early hours of May 22, 2025. Two Israeli embassy staffers were killed in the shooting. Credit: Alex Wroblewski/AFP via Getty Images*

(JTA) – This is a developing story. Two people were shot dead outside the Capital Jewish Museum in Washington, D.C., where the American Jewish Committee was hosting an event. Both of the people killed were staffers at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, according to Jewish and public officials. One was identified as Yaron Lischinsky, a researcher in the embassy’s political department who moved to Israel from Germany as a teenager. The shooting took place after 9 p.m. last Wednesday and the victims were a man and a woman who were about to be engaged, Israeli ambassador Yechiel Leiter said at a press conference last Wednesday night. Police are questioning a suspect they identified as Elias Rodriguez, who they believe was solely responsible. Rodriguez, 30 and a resident of Chicago, approached a group of people and fired shots, according to police. He then entered the museum, where he was detained. Rodriguez chanted, “Free, free Palestine,” after being detained, D.C. Police Chief Pamela Smith said at a press conference. Video from inside the museum showed a handcuffed man shouting the

chant while being led away. Smith said there was no intelligence ahead of the event indicating that there would be an attack. She also said Rodriguez was unknown to D.C. police. The FBI is investigating whether the shooting is a hate crime and an act of terrorism. The event was held by the American Jewish Committee, which had advertised a cocktail event for young Jewish professionals and diplomats last Wednesday. Its website said the location would be provided to those who registered, a practice that many Jewish groups have adopted at a time of high alert, including over the threat of protests against the war Israel is fighting against Hamas in Gaza. “We are devastated that an unspeakable act of violence took place outside the venue,” AJC CEO Ted Deutch said in a statement. “At this moment, as we await more information from the police about exactly what transpired, our attention and our hearts are solely with those who were harmed and their families.” The shooting comes amid reports of surging antisemitism following Hamas’ Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel that initiated the war in Gaza. American Jewish

leaders and Israeli officials connected the shooting to that surge. “People who think that they’re going to address whatever issues they have about Israel through violent behavior directed at Jewish audiences, Jewish people – this is just pure antisemitism,” Eric Fingerhut, the president and CEO of Jewish Federations of North America, said in an interview. “There’s no question that especially since Oct. 7, the outrageous anti-Israel activities that have occurred across this country have contributed to an incitement of antisemitic violence,” Fingerhut added. “This is clearly evidence of it.” The Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, Danny Danon, called the shooting “a depraved act of anti-Semitic terrorism” in a statement. “Harming the Jewish community is crossing a red line,” he said. “We are confident that the U.S. authorities will take strong action against those responsible for this criminal act. Israel will continue to act resolutely to protect its citizens and representatives – everywhere in the world.” The shooting represents the first fatal attack at an American Jewish institution in several years. The worst antisemitic attack in U.S. history occurred in 2018, when a gunman killed 11 Jews in a Pittsburgh synagogue. The following year saw three more fatal attacks on a synagogue in California, a kosher supermarket in New Jersey and a rabbi’s house in New York. Since then, and including over the last 19 months since Oct. 7 and the start of the war in Gaza, Jewish institutions

have bolstered their security. The Capital Jewish Museum, which opened in 2023, had just gotten a security grant from Washington, D.C. last week. Mayor Muriel Bowser said the city would consult with local Jewish institutions to ensure that they are safe after the shooting. Attorney General Pam Bondi tweeted that she was “on the scene of the horrible shooting” along with U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro. The Trump administration has called fighting antisemitism a top priority. “We’ll be doing everything in our power to keep all citizens safe, especially tonight our Jewish community,” Bondi said at the press conference. “We will follow the facts, we will follow the law and this defendant, if charged, will be prosecuted to the full extent of the law.” Fingerhut said his organization would also continue to find ways to strengthen security. “The security of the Jewish community has been and remains the top priority of the Jewish federation system,” he said. “The risks have continued to rise as antisemitism has risen and as anti-Israel behavior in America has risen and our security teams have worked so hard to keep up with that. They obviously didn’t succeed tonight but we will not stop until we’ve ensured the security of our community.” Lischinsky wrote on what appears to be his LinkedIn profile that he supported “expanding the circle of peace with our Arab neighbors” and added, “To this end, I advocate for interfaith dialogue and intercultural understanding.” **HW**

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