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Jimmy Ringel Assumes Chairmanship of Memphis Jewish Federation in its 90th Year



Memphis Jewish Federation's new board chair, Jimmy Ringel.

Memphis Jewish Federation is proud to announce that Jimmy Ringel has been elected to a two-year term as Board chair beginning July 1, 2025.

Jimmy steps into this leadership role at a pivotal time, as the Federation celebrates 90 years of impact, building on its core pillars that ensure the Memphis Jewish community is cared for, connected, and engaged.

Jimmy's commitment to the Jewish community is deeply personal, stemming from formative experiences in his

youth. "I often think of the path that led me here, and I am now able to track the course of my Jewish journey," he shares.

Growing up in Memphis and living through events like the dedication of the Holocaust memorial, the Munich Olympics massacre, and the Yom Kippur War instilled in him a profound understanding of Jewish vulnerability and the strength of communal support.

He further commented, "This incredible communal support remains vital today, as evidenced by the overwhelming local financial response and increase in Jewish engagement that followed the Oct. 7 attacks.

"The lessons I learned then – 50 years ago – still resonate today in our families, in the Memphis Jewish community, and abroad," he states.

He also cherishes memories of joyful Passover celebrations, his mother's work assisting Vietnamese refugees and his father's extensive experience in chairing the boards of Jewish institutions such as Temple Israel and the Jewish Foundation of Memphis. These examples over many decades taught him the importance of giving back to both Jewish and wider communities.

Looking to the future, Jimmy aims to build on this strong foundation.

"The Memphis Jewish community that impacted my formative years is just as active today. In fact, most of the local agencies and institutions have impacted my family throughout our entire life cycle," he notes.

Jimmy and his wife, Janice, have two grown sons: Brad, and his wife, Rebecca, and Brian, who will be married to local Memphian Betsy Rose Besser at Temple Israel this fall.

"Ultimately, it's up to us to protect our community so that it's here for the next generation of Jewish Memphians to experience these same benefits," he said.

Under Jimmy's leadership, the Federation will continue its unwavering commitment to its vital mission, structured around key pillars:

- Improving Lives: Providing essential services like kosher meals, care visits, and support for vulnerable Jewish communities locally and globally.
- Sustaining Jewish Community: Strengthening Jewish life in Memphis through educational programming, holiday celebrations, and community relations efforts.
- Promoting Jewish Continuity: Nurturing the next generation through Jewish education grants, scholarships, and programs like PJ Library.

- Connecting to Israel and the World: Fostering the relationship between Memphis Jews and Israel, and supporting Jewish communities worldwide.

Jimmy's extensive professional background in real estate and management uniquely positions him to lead the Federation's diverse operations. As chief operating officer, he coordinates all property management functions for Makowsky Ringel Greenberg, LLC's apartment portfolio and serves as the company's director of marketing. A certified property manager, Jimmy is a past president of the Memphis Apartment Association and the local chapter of the Institute of Real Estate Management (IREM). He also served a two-year term as president of Plough Towers.

"We are incredibly fortunate to have Jimmy Ringel step into the role of Federation chair," says Laura Linder, president and CEO of Jewish Community Partners. "His lifelong dedication to the Memphis Jewish community, coupled with his exceptional professional leadership and deep understanding of our mission, makes him the perfect person to guide us forward. Jimmy's passion for ensuring our community is strong, vibrant, and secure, particularly as we approach our 90th anniversary, will be invaluable." **HW**

Beth Sholom Launches Ein-STEAM, an Innovative Hands-On Approach to K-5 Religious School Education



A student learns about viscosity by testing honey in water.

Next month, Beth Sholom will unveil Ein-STEAM, a bold new approach to Jewish education designed to captivate students through experience and inquiry. This curriculum combines tradition with modern pedagogic practice, placing Jewish learning at the intersection of Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Math, or STEAM.

Ein-STEAM transforms conventional lessons into immersive weekly activities, encouraging students to explore Jewish customs, traditions and holidays through hands-on experimentation.

"As part of their study of the lunar cal-



Students with Rachael Rovner, who combines songs and core-enhancing body movements to enrich learning.

endar, students will create illuminated blacklight videos of the moon's phases – connecting both science and spirituality through art," explains Beth Sholom Director of Education Rachael Rovner. "While learning about the meaning and traditions of Rosh Hashanah, students will enjoy investigating the viscosity of honey while discussing the significance of pairing it with apples."

Ein-STEAM is designed to make the study of Judaism even more relevant and engaging.



Students will learn Hebrew letters through movement and games such as Battleship.

Artifacts and engineering will play an integral role throughout the year. Children will disassemble old electronics and repurpose parts to construct usable menorahs, a backdrop to learning the chanukiyah blessings and the history and meaning of the holiday. During a unit on *Bikur Cholim* (visiting the sick), students will study classical Jewish sources and craft one-of-a-kind get-well cards by using hairdryers to melt crayon shavings, introducing concepts of chesed, mitzvot and the Jewish val-

ue of "love your neighbor as yourself" (*v'ahavta l'reicha c'mocha*).

"Each week's classes are rooted in both Jewish text and intentionally experiential, making traditions tangible, memorable, and fun!" emphasized Rovner.

The curriculum also explores surprising facets of Jewish life and law. Students will make real mezuzot, engaging with source material about the diagonal placement of the mezuzah (a rare compromise between opposing rabbinic opinions) and delving into the Shema's meaning and significance. During their study of the Hebrew calendar, they will learn about the blessing said once every 28 years to mark the sun's precise return to its original position as it was at the time of creation. Even the use of *b'samim* (spices) during Havdalah will be traced back to its first historical appearance in the 12th century. By creating their own *b'samim*, students will learn about the multi-sensory Havdalah ritual, the symbolic transition from Shabbat into a new week and the beautiful Havdalah blessings.

Ein-STEAM also includes Hebrew language instruction. The lessons are

(See **Ein-STEAM** Page 2)

The Theatre Conservatory at the J Announces New Associate Conservatory Artistic Director



Rose Blakeman

Rose Blakeman, Memphis-based choreographer and performer, has been the choreographer for The Theatre Conservatory @ The J's The Show program for the last year and now joins the staff in August as Associate Conservatory Artistic Director. In addition to continuing with The Show, Rose will teach Acting ages 5-7, Dramatic Play for ages 3&4, Homeschool Theatre, and more.

The Conservatory is grateful for the opportunity to have served over 150 students during its first year, and we look forward to all the new and returning faces we will see in the coming months.

The fall will bring with it another fully realized production along with the return of many educational opportunities including the performance-based musical theatre triple-threat program, The Show. The Conservatory will also continue to offer technique-based acting. Both of these classes are open to those ages 5-18.

Dramatic Play, the conservatory's 3-4-year-old preschool class will also be retuning. This class introduces acting by exploring using the body, facial expressions and emotions.

On the other end of the educational spectrum from preschool programming, the Conservatory is bringing back its BFA Audition Prep program. This six-week course will help prepare high school juniors and seniors who are interested in studying theatre in college prepare for their rapidly approaching college BFA auditions.

Also coming back is the Conservatory's successful Homeschool Theatre program. This class is open to all school age students and meets 20 times during the year providing an opportunity for a theatrical education elective for those who choose to home educate.

The Conservatory, a new program unveiling this fall, is a performance-based, musical theatre vocal ensemble, Conservatory Singers. This class will be open to those ages 8-18.

For more information check out the website jccmemphis.org/theatre or contact Conservatory Artistic Director Jonathan McCarter at 901.259.9248 or theatre@jccmemphis.org. [HW](#)

Ein-STEAM...

(Continued From Page 1)

paced individually, game-centered, and built around weekly assessments. Personalized student progress plans will be updated after each session to promote measurable growth in Hebrew reading.

Shabbat mornings will reflect the Ein-STEAM program by engaging the K-5 students in hands-on learning, Torah study, song and fun.

Later in the year, students will participate in a Spring Shabbaton – a week-end retreat that fosters meaningful connection, Jewish identity and lasting friendships.

For middle- and high-school students, Beth Sholom will continue its popular T3

(Teen, Talmud, Torah) program. Middle school students will examine topics such as faith and Jewish identity through the lens of Torah and Talmudic sources and will also explore issues facing modern Israeli society. The high school students will learn with Rabbi Sammy Rosenbaum in his office each week. Their focus will be on *Middot* (Jewish character traits), lessons from the Talmud and Jewish and Israeli history.

T3 offers discussion-based learning, giving students the opportunity to exchange opinions and ideas and develop their own views. Each T3 session will kick off with dinner, providing students

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THE HEBREW WATCHMAN
PO Box 770846
Memphis, TN 38177-0846
Office: 901.763.2215
Direct: 901.827.7244
info@HebrewWatchman.com

Susan C. Nieman
Editor and Publisher
Larry Nieman
Advertising Sales Director
Toni Nieman
Office Manager & Subscriptions
toni@HebrewWatchman.com

Rebecca Schudel
Social Media Director
Web Development
Herman I. Goldberger
Editor and Publisher Emeritus
Barbara B. Goldberger
Editor and Publisher Emeritus

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Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. Aug. 1, 2025 / 7 Av, 5785.....7:44 p.m.
Havdalah, Sat. Aug. 2, 2025 / 8 Av, 5785 8:43 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Devarim

with time to socialize and connect with each other.

"With Rachael Rovner at the helm, we are excited for our Beth Sholom youth to engage in the innovative Ein-STEAM curriculum," said Rabbi Rosenbaum. "It will enrich their knowledge of our tradition through hands-on experience, fun, and social opportunities.

"The high-school students will learn about Jewish values, history, Israel and difficult topics in our tradition by exploring them together in conversation," Rabbi Sammy continued. "I will bring texts and ask questions that will lead to expansive thinking, disagreements,

laughter and deeper understanding. It is going to be a lot of fun!"

Beth Sholom's religious school will take place on Wednesdays beginning on August 13. Ein-STEAM will occur from 4:30 to 5:45 p.m., followed by differentiated Hebrew learning from 5:45 to 6:30 p.m. The T3 program is scheduled from 6:15 to 8:00 p.m. (dinner from 6:15 to 6:45 p.m., and class from 6:45 to 8 p.m.).

To learn more about Beth Sholom's religious school programs or to register your child, please call the Beth Sholom main office at 901-683-3591 or contact Rachael Rovner at rachael@bsholom.org. [HW](#)



Brian Lurie

Broker, Vice-President, GRI, RENE, MMDC, CRS

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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, July 28
Special Edition of Team Trivial Pursuit with host Josh Goldin

The last session was one of the largest we’ve had and the room was full! Several newcomers stated they had a great time. Come test your memory and your knowledge of past events. Prizes will be given to both the winning team and the other team. Please make your reservations early as space is limited.

Wednesday, July 30
Speaker: Lisa Shurden
Topic: Great Life Experiences

This is an interactive talk with those in the group sharing the different experiences they’ve had in their life, along with some of the incredible stories that Lisa will share. The last time she visited was one of the most uplifting times the seniors had. Come have fun and share some of your own Life Experiences. Reservations are required for the lunch.

Monday, August 4
Rabbi Talk with Baron Hirsch Synagogue Senior Rabbi Ian Lichter
Topic: Why does the Torah have Two Sets of Ten Commandments

Rabbi Lichter’s talks are always some of the most interesting and lead to good discussions. There is a question-and-answer period that follows. Rabbi Lichter is always open to questions that are off-topic also! If you have any questions about Judaism that you were interested in getting answers too, bring them to the discussion. Come have a nice lunch and enjoy a learning experience after.



Rabbi Ian Lichter

Wednesday, August 6
Speaker, Jonathan McCarter, MAT
Jonathan McCarter is the new Cultural Arts Director & Conservatory Artistic Director at the MJCC. He will discuss “Why is Thornton Wilder Interesting?” This is a departure from some of the usual talks following the senior lunch. This should give everyone a different perspective on Theatre and plays in general. Come have some fun and learn some new ideas from this talented gentleman.

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 through Thursday 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. **HW**

Jewish Quarterback Jake Retzlaff Will Play at Tulane After Leaving BYU Following Suspension



BYU quarterback Jake Retzlaff reached a sponsorship deal with Jewish food brand Manischewitz. (Courtesy of Manischewitz)

By Philissa Cramer

(JTA) – The first athlete to notch a Manischewitz endorsement is transferring from a university with just a handful of Jewish students to a school with one of the highest proportions of Jewish students in the United States.

Jake Retzlaff will play for Tulane University, according to reports in sports media. Neither Retzlaff nor Tulane has confirmed the move, but Retzlaff retweeted an article about it.

Retzlaff announced earlier this month that he would leave Brigham Young University, the Mormon flagship where he was a star quarterback but also drew a suspension for violating the school’s famously strict honor code. The suspension followed allegations of sexual assault in a civil lawsuit that was later dismissed and Retzlaff’s admission that he had engaged

in premarital sex, which BYU prohibits. Tulane vetted the allegations against Retzlaff thoroughly before inviting him to join its team, according to ESPN. He’ll be one of multiple quarterbacks vying to fill the starting role vacated when a Tulane player was arrested and left the school last year.

The move is meant to keep Retzlaff on the field despite his stumbles at BYU. But it also represents a dramatic shift in the Jewish character of his schools for Retzlaff, who grew up attending a Reform synagogue in Pomona, California.

He was one of just three Jewish students at BYU, where he embraced the nickname “BY-Jew.” At Tulane, in contrast, there are so many Jewish students – about 37%, the most at any non-Jewish university – that the school is known colloquially (and sometimes with annoyance) as “Jewlane.”

Last year, the Tulane Green Wave went 9-5 in its first season under a new coach, finishing second in its American Athletic Conference. It lost to the Florida Gators in the Gasparilla Bowl 33-8. **HW**

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Chicago Police Report Five Incidents of Antisemitic Vandalism in One Week

(JNS) – The Chicago Police Department issued a community alert last Monday regarding a string of antisemitic, “hate crime-related” damages to property over one week at the end of June.

Between June 23 and June 30, “unknown offender(s)” placed stickers and tagged locations with graffiti depicting antisemitic phrases, with damaged property including a mailbox, a stop sign and an emergency bell.

All incidents occurred in the Hyde Park neighborhood, which has a substantial Jewish presence.

JNS contacted the police department for incident reports.

Recent statistics released by the city of Chicago showed that antisemitic hate crimes “surged” by 58% in 2024, and account for 37.6% of all reported hate crimes in the city.

“This is part of a national increase in anti-Jewish hate crimes but is especially troubling given that Jewish residents represent just 3% of Chicago’s population,” according to the office of Mayor Brandon Johnson. **HW**

A Weekly Word of Torah for Devarim: Kachem: Like You, But Better

My wife and I have become loyal watchers of Israeli television, courtesy of the streaming platform ChaiFlix. Every few nights, once the kids are asleep and the dishes done, we settle in for another round of “Shtisel” spin-offs, IDF dramas, or quirky legal comedies that only a country like Israel could produce.

There are two distinct pleasures to watching Israeli TV. The first is the game of “actor bingo.” Is the scruffy mechanic in this series the same guy who played the Hasidic great-grandfather in the film we saw last week? Wasn’t that Tel Aviv prosecutor also the soldier’s father in “Fauda?” The Israeli acting pool is approximately three minyanim large, and that brings a kind of familiar joy – a reminder that this is a small country telling big stories.

The second delight is subtler: Israeli shows often offer a critique of Israeli society. It’s rarely didactic or preachy. The critique hums just beneath the surface – pointing out inequality, questioning the power structures, gently satirizing sacred institutions. It doesn’t shame or cancel; it nudges. It assumes the viewer loves the country enough to handle discomfort.

This restrained but principled mode of critique feels deeply Jewish – and deeply rooted in Moshe Rabbeinu’s final speeches in *Parshat Devarim*. As he prepares to leave the world, Moshe reviews the long journey through the wilderness. He could have delivered a fiery, detailed rebuke. But instead, his tone is one of balance. He alludes to past failures – sometimes in searing language, sometimes in veiled hints – but couches them in layers of encouragement.

Instead of only listing the people’s mistakes, Moshe blesses them: “May Hashem, the God of your fathers, increase you a thousandfold like you

(*kachem*)” (Devarim 1:11). The word *kachem* – “like you” – is telling. Moshe isn’t rebuking from a place of disappointment. He’s reminding them of who they already are, of their intrinsic worth. Moshe builds their self-esteem even as he calls them higher. He speaks to the wise, discerning parts of them – because that is who they are at their core.

The Shelah HaKadosh, Rabbi Isaiah Horowitz, explains that rebuke only works when it is given with respect. Citing Mishlei (Proverbs 9:8), “Do not reprove a scoffer, for he will hate you; reprove a wise man and he will love you,” he argues that *if* the person giving rebuke sees the other as a scoffer, the words will fail. But if you already regard them as wise, discerning, and worthy – even when they have fallen – the rebuke may land.

This is the spirit of *Pirkei Avot* (6:6), which lists 48 ways to acquire Torah. Among them: *ohev et hatochachot* – “loving rebuke.” But love can only enter when rebuke is delivered with dignity. Otherwise, the heart closes.

There’s a model here – for parents, teachers, leaders, friends. It is all too easy to let critique bleed into rejection. To let feedback feel like abandonment. But Moshe shows us a different path: to speak truth while affirming worth. To hold people accountable not because we’ve given up on them – but because we believe in them.

In a way, the best Israeli television has learned the same lesson. It challenges its audience without turning on it. It prods with care. Because critique that grows out of love – like Moshe’s words, like the best art – isn’t an attack. It’s a kind of embrace.

R. Dr. Gavriel Brown is the Head of School of Margolin Hebrew Academy - Feinstone Yeshiva of the South HW

OPINION

North Carolina Democrats Break with a Proud Tradition of Support for Israel



North Carolina State Capitol in Raleigh, N.C. Credit: Wikimedia Commons.

By Stephen M. Flatow

(JNS) – The North Carolina Democratic Party’s recent call for an arms embargo against Israel isn’t just a reckless policy misstep – it’s a betrayal of decades of Democratic leadership that has stood firmly beside America’s most reliable ally in the Middle East.

From President Harry Truman’s recognition of Israel in 1948 to the strategic military and diplomatic support provided by Presidents Bill Clinton, Barack Obama and Joe Biden, Democrats have long championed Israel’s right to defend itself against terrorism and aggression. The resolution adopted by the party’s executive committee throws aside that proud tradition. It undermines U.S. credibility, alienates a vital segment of the Democratic base, and signals to both friends and foes that one of our closest allies may no longer count on bipartisan support from the party that helped shape that very alliance.

American Jews remain overwhelmingly Democratic and supportive of Israel. A 2019 Gallup poll found that while 90% of U.S. Jews lean Democratic, an overwhelming 95% also have favorable views of Israel, while only 10% expressed favorable views of the Palestinian Authority. This resolution flies in the face of that reality and risks alienating one of the party’s most steadfast constituencies.

Under Biden, U.S. military aid to Israel was both swift and substantial. After Hamas launched its brutal assault on Israeli civilians on Oct. 7, 2023, Biden responded by greenlighting more than 100 arms transfers and spearheading more than \$12 billion in emergency military assistance. This included thousands of precision-guided munitions, artillery shells and critical interceptors for the Iron Dome missile-defense system. In an extraordinary step, Washington even leased two of its Iron Dome batteries back to Israel to help meet immediate defense needs.

Beyond crisis response, Biden faithfully upheld the Obama-era memorandum that provides \$3.8 billion annually in defense aid to Israel. He also advanced a major sale of up to 50 F-15 fighter jets – worth nearly \$18 billion – and continued robust funding for missile-defense systems like David’s Sling and the Arrow defense system.

Obama signed the largest military aid package in U.S. history for any foreign country when, in 2016, he finalized a \$38 billion Memorandum of Understanding to cover 2019 to 2028. This included \$33 billion in Foreign Military Financing and

\$5 billion specifically for missile defense – a clear affirmation of Israel’s right to defend itself in a volatile region. Under Obama, Israel became the first foreign country to receive the advanced F-35 fighter jet, and U.S. contributions to Iron Dome exceeded \$1.3 billion.

While critics sometimes remember tensions between Obama and Israel’s leadership, they often overlook the concrete ways that his administration advanced Israel’s security infrastructure at every level.

Clinton was instrumental in deepening U.S.-Israel security ties during the post-Cold War transition. In 1996 and again in 1999, his administration expanded U.S. aid packages and joint military planning efforts. He approved \$1.2 billion in aid for Israel’s defense needs – from helicopters to counter-missile systems – and helped create bilateral policy forums to align both countries on threats like terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

He also provided critical support for the Arrow missile-defense system, authorizing funds for Israel’s acquisition of a third Arrow battery – one of the most advanced anti-ballistic missile programs at the time.

Today’s calls for an arms embargo, especially during active conflict, send a dangerous signal. The North Carolina Democratic Party’s resolution arrives in the wake of the most traumatic attack on Jews since the Holocaust. To respond not with solidarity but with sanctions is both immoral and strategically unwise. U.S.-Israel military cooperation is not blind allegiance; it is a proven partnership that has saved lives on both sides of the world and advanced American security interests in the most volatile region on Earth.

Instead of promoting boycotts or embargoes, Democrats should uphold the values of past leaders: promoting peace through strength, accountability through partnership and security through shared democratic values.

There’s a better path than abandoning a key ally. Democrats at every level should reaffirm their support for Israel’s right to defend itself under international law and the continuation of conditional, monitored U.S. military aid for defensive systems like Iron Dome.

The Democratic Party has always been strongest when it remembers its roots – justice, security and solidarity with fellow democracies. North Carolina’s resolution forgets that legacy. It should be reconsidered and reversed. **HW**

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Trump Again Opts to Withdraw United States from UNESCO



UNESCO headquarters in Paris, France. Credit: Albertus Teolog via Wikimedia Commons.

By Mike Wagenheim

(JNS) – The Trump administration told Audrey Azoulay, director-general of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, last Tuesday that Washington is withdrawing from the U.N. agency.

“Continued involvement in UNESCO is not in the national interest of the United States,” the U.S. State Department stated.

“UNESCO works to advance divisive social and cultural causes and maintains an outsized focus on the U.N.’s Sustainable Development Goals, a globalist, ideological agenda for international development at odds with our America First foreign policy,” Tammy Bruce, the department spokeswoman, stated.

“UNESCO’s decision to admit the ‘State of Palestine’ as a member state is

highly problematic, contrary to U.S. policy and contributed to the proliferation of anti-Israel rhetoric within the organization,” Bruce stated. “Continued U.S. participation in international organizations will focus on advancing American interests with clarity and conviction.”

Bruce said that Washington will withdraw on Dec. 31. “The United States will remain a full member of UNESCO until that time,” Bruce stated.

Anna Kelly, deputy White House spokeswoman, told the New York Post that UNESCO “supports woke, divisive cultural and social causes that are totally out-of-step with the commonsense policies that Americans voted for in November.”

U.S. President Donald Trump called for a 90-day review of UNESCO in February, including probing “antisemitism or anti-Israel sentiment within the organization.”

In 2017, Trump withdrew the United States from UNESCO due to the U.N. agency’s anti-Israel bias. U.S. President Joe Biden brought the country back into UNESCO in 2023 and pledged to pay more than \$600 million in past membership dues.

The United States stopped paying into UNESCO in 2011 after the U.N. agency admitted “Palestine” as a member.

Washington has entered and exited the organization several times.

“We welcome the U.S. administration’s decision to withdraw from UNESCO,” Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa’ar stated. “This is a necessary step, designed to promote justice and Israel’s right for fair treatment in the U.N. system, a right which has often been trampled due to politicization in this arena.”

The Paris-based U.N. agency was founded after World War II, ostensibly to promote peace through international cooperation in education, science and culture. Washington currently pays approximately 8% of the UNESCO budget. It paid closer to 20% at the beginning of Trump’s first presidency.

Danny Danon, the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, stated that Washington’s decision “is a fitting response to the consistent misguided anti-Israel bias of UNESCO, an organization that has lost its way.”

“The United States continues to demonstrate moral clarity in the international arena and when it comes to its involvement in international organizations, and makes it clear that it is unwilling to support entities that promote hatred, historical revisionism and political divisiveness over advancing shared universal values,” Danon stated. **HW**

Ms. Rachel Joins Forces with Palestinian Journalist ‘Genocide Survivor’

By Or Shaked

(Israel Hayom via JNS) – “Ms. Rachel,” one of America’s leading children’s stars who was previously dubbed the “Beyoncé of toddlers,” continues to shake up the internet, this time following a video she published with a Palestinian journalist who supports terrorism.

This week, Rachel Anne Accurso, known to her approximately 16 million YouTube followers as “Ms. Rachel,” published a video on social media with her “friend,” photojournalist Motaz Azaiza.

Azaiza, considered one of the voices most identifiable with Hamas in the digital arena, defines himself as a “genocide survivor.” After the Oct. 7, 2023, massacres, he called to support Palestinian “resistance” and praised then-Hamas “military” wing leader Yahya Sinwar. In

another instance, he refused to condemn the massacres.

The responses were quick to come. “Elmo’s account was hacked (referring to antisemitic posts distributed on the hacked X account of the “Sesame Street” character). What’s Ms. Rachel’s excuse?” wondered Hen Mazzig, one of the prominent pro-Israel advocacy activists in the U.S.

The current affair joins a series of controversies surrounding Ms. Rachel’s activities since the outbreak of the war in Gaza. This spring, Accurso published content that presented Israel as the aggressor, relying on data from Hamas’s health ministry that does not distinguish between civilians and Hamas terrorists.

She shared photos of injured or hungry children without noting that, in

some cases, these were children suffering from complex genetic diseases.

‘Evil propaganda against Israel’

Following her previous statements, the StopAntisemitism organization appealed to the U.S. Justice Department in April, demanding it open an investigation into whether Accurso effectively serves as a paid propaganda agent. The NGO declared that Accurso “spreads evil propaganda against the State of Israel to more than 20 million followers through multiple accounts, more than the entire population of Jews and Israelis in the world.”

She previously justified her activity and said she “works for all children, regardless of religion, nationality or geographic location.” In May, she raised more than \$50,000 for the Save

the Children organization operating in the Gaza Strip but emphasized that the organization does not operate in Israel because it is a wealthy country.

Accurso, 42 and mother of two, is considered a beloved figure among the parent community in the U.S. Her videos, accompanied by songs and simple language, are designed to help toddlers acquire basic speech skills and are considered a key tool for children with developmental delays.

But now, the internet is boiling, voices of boycott are strengthening, and parents are required to ask themselves whether it is possible to separate the educator on the screen from the activist on Instagram.

Originally published by Israel Hayom. **HW**


Forces Arrest Suspect in Car-Ramming that Hurt Eight in Central Israel


(JNS) – Israeli forces last Saturday evening arrested the suspect in this week’s car-ramming attack at the entrance to Kfar Yona in central Israel.

Arkan Khaled, 27, from the Arab-Israeli city of Tayibe, was apprehended during a search at a construction site in the area, according to a police statement.

Last Thursday, eight IDF soldiers were wounded in a car-ramming attack at the Beit Lid/Hasharon Junction. The terrorist struck troops waiting at a bus stop on Route 57 at the entrance to Kfar Yona, located between Netanya and Tulkarem.

Khaled fled immediately after the crash, leading security forces to launch a days-long manhunt. **HW**





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Sugar in Soft Drinks Triggers Genetic Shifts in Gut Microbes, Altering Immune Responses



The effect of a sweetened beverage on bacterial function, a demonstration of functional plasticity. Credit: Created by AI and inspired by an illustration by Tom Blum, a student in the research group.

(JNS) – The consumption of soft drinks, supplemented with white sugar, alters the DNA of gut bacteria and affects the host immune system. The good news? These effects are reversible.

Findings by researchers from the Ruth and Bruce Rappaport Faculty of Medicine at the Technion-Israel Institute of Technology – Professor Naama Geva-Zatorsky, Ph.D. student Noa Gal-Mandelbaum and other members of the Geva-Zatorsky team – were recently published in Nature Communications. Tamar Ziv and the Smoler Proteomics Center at the Technion assisted with the research.

Gut bacteria are important members of the microbial community within the human body, i.e., the microbiome. These bacteria, which have co-evolved with humans for generations, are so essential to human health and the development of the immune system that human beings cannot function without them.

The human gut is constantly influenced by changes in the environment. To keep up, gut bacteria must adapt quickly. They do this through a process called functional plasticity, which allows them to change their behavior and functions in response to factors like nearby microbes, health status and what individuals eat.

A previous study by the Geva-Zatorsky lab discovered that one way gut bacteria adapt to environmental changes is through DNA inversions – rapid genetic switches that help them respond and defend themselves.

In their current study, published on May 28, the researchers investigated how these DNA inversions occur in re-

sponse to dietary factors. They found that consuming soft drinks, which contain white sugar, can alter the DNA of gut bacteria and, in turn, impact the host’s immune system.

The study focused on Bacteroides thetaiotaomicron – a prominent gut member that takes part in preventing gut inflammation, preserving the gut mucus layer and protecting the host from pathogen invasion.

The team members examined the effects of consuming different dietary components on the DNA inversion profile of these bacteria – in vitro, in mice and in humans. They discovered that white sugar consumption causes DNA inversions in these bacteria, which led to changes in inflammatory markers of the immune system, including ones in T-cell populations, cytokine secretion and gut permeability.

The good news is that these effects are reversible; once mice stopped consuming white sugar, the bacterial DNA inversion state reverted, and the immune system’s state returned to normal.

The study stresses the importance of studying complex effects of nutrition on the microbiome, assessing that it will allow tailored dietary recommendations for humans to improve their immune system’s state and health in general.

The research was supported by the Technion President’s Fund; RTICC–The Rappaport Technion Integrated Cancer Research Center; the Alon Fellowship for Outstanding New Faculty; the Seerave Foundation; CIFAR (Canadian Institute for Advanced Research); and the European Research Council. **HW**



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New Israeli Agricultural High School to Open Near the Border with Lebanon



From left: Ma'ayan Schwartz, Yizhar Barak, the principal of the new agricultural school at Kibbutz Yiron, and Asaf Schwartz, July 2025. Credit: Natalie Gattegno.

By Etgar Lefkovits

(JNS) – Kibbutz Yiron, Israel – In an Israeli farming community in the Upper Galilee adjacent to the border with Lebanon, a new Israeli agricultural boarding school is opening this fall, combining education through agriculture and breathing new life into a battered region following the war with Hezbollah.

The strategic educational venture, which seems like a blast from the past in the 21st-century world of high-tech and artificial intelligence, will be the seventh in a network of agricultural high schools to have opened in the last decade nationwide. Two locations near the Israeli border with Gaza were inaugurated following the Hamas-led terrorist attacks in the south on Oct. 7, 2023, after a generation when it seemed like old-fashioned agricultural work was

quickly going out of vogue.

“We are bringing back the spirit and the meaning of the pioneers,” Yizhar Barak, 50, a farmer turned educator who will serve as the principal of the Adam V’Adama (Hebrew for “Leaders of the Land”) School at Kibbutz Yiron, told JNS. “We are revitalizing this border region.”

How to raise our children here’

The Israeli agricultural community, just half a mile from Lebanon, where the new agricultural boarding school will be inaugurated in September, was evacuated for nearly a year and a half after Oct. 8, the day after the atrocities in the south and when Hezbollah to the north bombarded Israel with rockets and missiles for more than a year.

A ceasefire went into effect on Nov. 27, 2024, and life for northern Israelis

became much calmer. The vast majority of its 400 residents returned to their homes in March.

“It was very clear that we would be back, although there was a discussion about how to raise our children here,” said Yitav Schwartz, 48, a mother of four whose grandparents were among the founding members of the kibbutz from the Palmach. That elite strike force associated with the Haganah – the pre-state underground defense organization that became the Israel Defense Forces – established the borderline farming community in 1949.

Schwartz’s teenage son, Ma’ayan, is studying in one of the agricultural schools in the Galilee, which she deems crucial for the revitalization of the area after the war. “I felt that I was going back to the period of my grandmother and grandfather who fought for their land,” she said.

‘Hubs of resilience’

The network of agricultural schools – some in borderline communities from the Golan Heights on Israel’s northern front to the Gaza border and Arava Desert in the south – now encompasses 400 students in ninth through 12th grade. It is run under the aegis of the Israeli non-profit HaShomer HaChadash (Hebrew for “The New Guardian”), which works to buttress Israeli farming communities.

The teenagers come from a mix of staunchly secular and religious backgrounds. They work in agriculture for five hours in the morning before three hours of afternoon classes for matricu-

lation examinations, followed by early evening extracurricular activities.

“These are more than schools; they are hubs of resilience, hope and renewal,” said Talia Tzour Avner, chief Israel officer of the Jewish National Fund-USA, which has contributed more than \$4 million for the schools. “Here, high school students live with purpose.”

“The combination of agriculture and studies works best for me because I use up my energies working the fields in the morning,” said Ma’ayan Schwartz, an 11th-grader from Kibbutz Yiron who studied last year at the agricultural school in the Central Galilee.

The 15-year-old worked the avocado, grapefruit, orange, lemon and olive fields in the morning. “I’ve also learned a lot about different sectors in Israel, and you don’t feel that difference because we are all friends,” he said.

The new agricultural boarding school on the tip of the Israeli-Lebanon border will begin with 20 10th-graders, most without any background in working the land. It aims to expand each year to 12th grade.

Its emergence not only follows the war, but also a period of concern over the continuity of young Israelis working in agriculture, even as agro-tech has become a new, productive trend.

“The war was the trigger, but I believe that this would have happened here anyway,” the school principal states with confidence. “This is the right time. Something in the state of mind has changed.” **HW**

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The Hebrew Watchman has been the go-to site for the latest news about Jewish Memphis for 100 years. It has proudly carried all the latest information about our synagogues and civic organizations. It also featured reports on bar and bat mitzvahs, weddings and, sadly, obituaries.

Sam Schloss Lodge #35 of B’nai B’rith extends its congratulations and best wishes for the next century.

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Keys to Helping Improve Finances for Single Parents

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
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Single parents often face unique challenges, not just raising kids, but also creating a financial path toward success. With the cost of health care, food, school, and more ever increasing, being successful on one income is a huge barrier for more than 37 million parents – or roughly 30% of households in the United States.¹

While many moms and dads report struggles with finances, there are ways to help improve your finances and be proactive with your financial future in the short- and long-term.

Live within your means

No one really enjoys creating a budget, but it can help you manage your current situation with recurring expenses as well as plan ahead for unexpected costs or emergencies. Creating a budget can be stressful, but when you have one, it can help minimize stress over time.

Start with your monthly income, after tax, then plan for your essentials like groceries, gas, mortgage/rent, and utilities. Don’t forget any spousal support, child support payments, or other sources of income. Once you have those covered, branch out and look at things you want to do within your budget, like eating out, taking a trip, or buying gifts.

Make sure your budget allows for saving. Rainy days will come as well as eventual retirement down the road.

Along with budgeting, consider applying for a credit card to help establish a credit history.

Create a wealth management plan

Another key to your financial health is creating a plan to manage some of the risk and uncertainty about the challenges ahead. Start with goals, short-, medium-, and long-term. One-third of single parents don’t have life insurance or disability insurance.² These products help protect your loved ones and provide comfort should the unexpected happen.

Don’t be afraid to ask for help. Single parents may feel they have to go it alone, but financial professionals are here to help. We can help assess your en-

tire financial situation and help provide a roadmap toward achieving your goals, even starting small with savings and investments that may grow over time.

Take time for yourself

One of the biggest keys to your financial well-being is your own mental health. Investing in yourself can be incredibly important as you invest in your family. Don’t be afraid to set aside time from work and family commitments for some “you” time. Even an hour a day, reading a book, taking a walk, or doing something you love, can pay dividends now and in the future. Taking steps over time with self-care, budgeting, and talking with a financial professional can help put you on a path toward your financial goals.

All investing involves risk, including the possible loss of principal.

¹ U.S. Census Data. November 2022. <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2022/americas-families-and-living-arrangements.html>

² Guardian Life Insurance Company of America, “12 Annual Workplace Benefits Study, 2023.”

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American Jewish Committee Provides Grant to Help Texas Flood Recovery Efforts

(JNS) – The American Jewish Committee announced that it is providing a grant to support relief efforts following the severe flooding along the Guadalupe River in Texas on July 4.

“We are accustomed to storms in Texas, but the magnitude of the flooding in Kerr County is still hard to comprehend,” said Rachel Schneider, director of AJC Houston. “AJC is standing with our fellow Texans during this moment of incredible heartbreak and grief. Contributing to this relief fund is one way for us to show our support for the Texas Hill Country community.”

The funds will be donated to the Community Foundation of the Texas Hill Country, which created the Kerr County

Flood Relief Fund shortly after the devastating flash floods. The grant funding will support nonprofit organizations, first responder agencies and local governments involved in recovery efforts.

Kerr County was hit the hardest during the floods, leaving at least 106 dead, including 36 children, according to AJC.

As of July 15, the total estimated death toll is 134, with some 100 people still unaccounted for, according to ABC News.

The day after the floods began, Israeli officials – including Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israeli President Isaac Herzog – offered condolences to the people of Texas. **HW**

Voices from the Trenches. Honoring Service of Chaplains on the 250th Birthday of the United States Army Chaplains Corps



The voices of the survivors tell the story. And they speak out to commemorate those chaplains who made the ultimate sacrifice.

“As we celebrate the 250th Anniversary of the Army Chaplain Corps on July 29, 2025, we uplift the legacy of military chaplains providing compassionate pastoral care, spiritual guidance and an unwavering calming presence often in the face of danger and uncertainty,” asserted Rev. Renée L. Owen, Master of Divinity, National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF) Executive Committee, Chair.

She added, “The National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces is honored to represent ecclesiastical endorsers in supporting religious ministry professionals living out their calling to chaplaincy ministry within the Armed Forces while advocating for the religious freedom of all service men and women and their families. In naming those chaplains who died during times

of war, we keep their stories alive.”

Dr. Greg Tardieu, ANC Chaplain Hill Committee Historian noted “One of George Washington’s first requests as Commander-in-Chief was the creation of the Chaplain Corps. Since 1775, over 400 chaplains have died in war, armed only with their faith.”

Chaplains from a wide background of faith groups have served the soldiers of the U.S. Army since Day 1 in 1775. They have been in the trenches and on the battlefields alongside the soldiers they served at every step of the fight.

Capt. (Ret) Doyle Dunn USN, Executive Director, National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF), observes, “As we commemorate the 250th birthday of the United States Army, I call on President Trump to approve the long-overdue update to the Chaplains Hill monuments at Arlington National Cemetery, so we can add names of chaplains who died in Korea, Vietnam, Cold War, Iraq and Afghani-

stan not already presented.”

Dunn continued, “This will stand as a meaningful and powerful tribute honoring the legacy of chaplains across generations, from all branches of our military – those who faithfully served both God and country, those who gave their lives in that sacred service.”

A long-standing effort to add 81 names to the Protestant and Catholic Memorials on Chaplains Hill on Section 2 of Arlington National Cemetery led by NCMAF has been endorsed by many national veterans and military support organizations. NCMAF’s membership is comprised of nearly 150 religious organizations who endorse military and Veterans Affairs chaplains.

Captain Dunn noted, “This is a non-partisan and interfaith project with bipartisan support and two Congressional legislative actions calling for it to be done. It is time for the President to approve this tribute slated for Arlington National Cemetery.”

The enhancement of the Chaplains Hill Memorials has been endorsed by the American Legion Executive Committee, the Association of the U.S. Army, the Vietnam Veterans of America, the Navy League Council of NY.

Congress included specific direction in the National Defense Authorization Acts of 2021 and 2022 signed by the President to update the Chaplains Hill monuments. This legislation received staunch support from both sides of the aisle. The bills provided authority for NCMAF to upgrade these monuments.

In 2011, the National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF) led the effort to obtain Congressional approval to erect a monument for Jewish chaplains at Arlington National Cemetery, section two, dedicated on Oct. 24th with nearly 1000 on hand for the dedication.

NCMAF then similarly proposed to upgrade the Protestant Memorial with a granite headstone, replacing a crumbling concrete headstone and making a new bronze plaque including chaplains’ names who died in service not already named.

Several names of Catholic chaplains who died in service during Iraq and Afghanistan conflicts are also proposed to be added to the Catholic Chaplains Monument.

The project will be entirely paid for by private sources. The Dignity Memorial Company has agreed to donate the new granite monument and provide installation.

This committee has diligently, respectfully, and repeatedly presented plans to Arlington National Cemetery officials, without receiving approval to proceed. No action has been taken to update the monuments.

The National Conference on Ministry to the Armed Forces (NCMAF) is the umbrella organization for 150 U.S. faith groups and the professional clergy representatives who endorse Military and V.A. chaplains. For more information about NCMAF, visit <https://www.ncmaf.com/arlington-national-cemetery>. **HW**

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In Washington, Anti-Israel Activist Khalil Meets with Bernie Sanders

(JNS) – Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) met with Mahmoud Khalil in Washington, less than a month after the anti-Israel activist was released from detention.

Sanders, who posted a photo of himself last Tuesday with his hand around Khalil, who wore a Palestinian flag pin on his lapel, wrote that the “Palestinian student at Columbia University” was “imprisoned for 104 days by the Trump administration for opposing Netanyahu’s illegal and horrific war in Gaza. Outrageous.”

“We must not allow Trump to destroy the First Amendment and freedom to dissent,” the Jewish senator stated.

Earlier in the day, CNN aired an interview with Khalil, during which he refused to condemn Hamas.

“Mahmoud Khalil refuses to condemn Hamas because he is a terrorist sympathizer not because DHS ‘painted’ him as one. He ‘branded’ himself as antisemite through his own hateful behavior and rhetoric,” the U.S. Department of Homeland Security stated.

“It is a privilege to be granted a visa or green card to live and study in the United

The leader of antisemitic protests at Columbia University refused to denounce Hamas during a “CNN” interview earlier in the day.

States of America,” it added. “The Trump administration acted well within its statutory and constitutional authority to detain Khalil, as it does with any alien who advocates for violence, glorifies and supports terrorists, harasses Jews and damages property.”

The recent Columbia graduate and U.S. permanent resident remained in custody until June 20, when a federal judge ordered his release on bail. He is suing the Trump administration for \$20 million, alleging wrongful detention and prosecution over his support for Palestinians. **HW**

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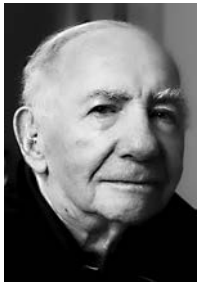
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Midrash



*Editor’s note:
This story is being
reprinted in memory
of Ted Roberts in
appreciation of his
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By Ted Roberts

Let’s get it straight. A midrash is a midrash and the Humash is the Humash, given on Mount Sinai by the Ruler of earth, sky, heaven and man. There is a difference in their origin, though some rabbis/scholars – maybe two or three – will lecture you that Midrashim are a part of the Oral Law, which they also contend came from Sinai. This is debatable depending on which club of Judaism you belong to – and your level of credibility.

I always get in trouble at our study group because as the rabbi expounds on

Humash, he suddenly says something like, “So, Isaac turns to Rebecca and says, ‘I’d like fried chicken for supper tonight. . . But make sure Esau only gets the neck, but give Jacob the drumstick.’”

I gently interrupt. “Rabbi, I don’t remember that in the Humash. What’s the reference?”

“Oh, it’s a midrash that shows Isaac’s favoritism toward Jacob.”

I hate to argue with our rabbi – a learned and gentle teacher – but I have to point out that he’s stewed a broth of mythical meat and artificial onions. The story of Isaac’s partiality and similar tales come from the Torah – our divine guide. Isaac’s feelings toward Esau (father of Edomites, not Jews) came from some 8th Century rabbi who had a viewpoint to sell and is nowhere validated, except by the mouth of the rabbi.

But understand. This seeker of truth has nothing against a Midrash as long as it is identified as midrash and not misla-

beled as Humash – like slapping a triple A rating on a junk bond.


Midrash has its value. It illustrates; it clarifies like a metaphor in a narrative. Sometimes it is poetic and illustrates the beauty of the biblical event. All I ask is that it is identified as the myth, interpretation, rabbinic interpretation that it is – not the voice of the Almighty, who spoke to Moses on the mountaintop.

Further complicating the issue is the habit of some rabbis to include the midrashim in the Oral Law given by G-d at Sinai – implying that the King and Creator of all languages couldn’t express himself in Torah and decided on an appendix passed down from Moses that elaborates, clarifies Torah. It was codified about 200A.D. into the Talmud. The scholarly language discussing this issue is so confounded that it’s difficult to precisely express (to the major three branches of Judaism) the relationship of Torah, Oral Law, Talmud and Midrashim. I suggest a simple solution sure

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By Ted Roberts

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to arouse rabbinic rebellion. Torah came from G-d; Midrashim came from men.

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

Trump Says Hamas Didn’t Want Ceasefire Deal After U.S., Israel Pull Out of Negotiations: ‘I Think They Want to Die’

(JTA) – President Donald Trump signaled last Friday to reporters that Israel should escalate its offensive in Gaza, accusing Hamas of not wanting a ceasefire deal following months of negotiations.

“Hamas didn’t really want to make a deal,” Trump told reporters at the White House last Friday. “I think they want to die, and it’s very, very bad, and it got to a point where they’re going to have to finish the job.”

Trump’s comments come one day after Israel and the United States withdrew their delegations from ceasefire talks in Qatar, hours after Hamas submitted its response to a truce proposal.

“While the mediators have made a great effort, Hamas does not appear to be coordinated or acting in good faith,”

U.S. envoy Steve Witkoff said in a statement. “We will now consider alternative options to bring the hostages home and try to create a more stable environment for the people of Gaza.”

In a post on X last Friday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Witkoff “got it right,” adding that “Hamas is the obstacle to a hostage release deal.”

“Together with our U.S. allies, we are now considering alternative options to bring our hostages home, end Hamas’s terror rule, and secure lasting peace for Israel and our region,” the post continued.

When asked by reporters what the “alternative methods” were to bring the hostages home, Trump replied, “I’ve always said those last 10 or 20 are go-

ing to be the toughest, because Hamas knows what happens when they don’t have any bargaining chip.”

He continued, “I don’t think Hamas is going to make a deal, because that means they have no protection, and basically, that’s what happened. I think what’s going to happen is they’re going to be hunted down.”

The breakdown of negotiation efforts with Hamas comes amid widening international calls for relief in Gaza, where reports of starvation and killings of civilians seeking aid have drawn widespread outcry.

Last Thursday, French President Emmanuel Macron said that France plans to recognize a Palestinian state during his appearance at the United Nations’ Gen-

eral Assembly in September.

Responding to reporter’s questions about Macron’s announcement, Trump brushed them off, replying that “the statement doesn’t carry any weight.”

Trump also addressed questions from reporters about speaking to Netanyahu about allowing aid drops in Gaza from Arab countries, telling them that his conversation with Netanyahu about the potential for aid was “sort of disappointing.”

Last Friday afternoon, Israel said it would begin to allow airdrops of a limited amount of aid by Jordan and the United Arab Emirates. The drops will begin next week and are not seen as likely to play a major role in mitigating the hunger crisis. HW

ISRAEL INSIGHTS Integrity Matters

By Howard Weisband

News Flash... the Likud party has voted to oust Yuli Edelstein as chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. (July 23).

Truthfully, it did not come as a surprise. The political machinations were unfolding over the last 10 days or so.

While Israel, the IDF and our security agencies, all remain at war in different stages on several fronts: Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Iran, Yemen, with Israeli and U.S. officials in the midst of hostage, ceasefire, and nuclear enrichment negotiations, our “enlightened” politicians chose to reignite their political wars!

The issue behind today’s political warfare is the draft of Haredi, ultra-Orthodox, young men, most of whom are yeshiva students to one extent or another. It is an issue that has the potential to tear the country apart. The society is already severely split between those who feel they have met the extended challenge to defend the country and its people, mainly representing the national religious and secular parts of society, and the faster growing Haredi groupings.

But the issue behind the issue is the immediate “wellbeing” of the coalition and the Government led by Likud and

Prime Minister Netanyahu. Part of the coalition agreement was the promise to the Haredim of a new draft law that would satisfy their demand. It has yet to be delivered.

Some Haredi parties have already withdrawn, others are threatening, and the Prime Minister is doing all he can to maintain the current shaky existence of his coalition and Government. Even if it means sacrificing the leadership position of his own ally in the Knesset, Yuli Edelstein.

The background is that the legislation to allow sweeping deferments for Haredi men in the draft must pass through the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee. Edelstein has insisted that the legislation will include penalties for those who refuse the draft. Both the Attorney General, who the Likud is also working hard to remove from office, and the Supreme Court have insisted that the law must go forward in order to enlist equally all within the society.

It must also be noted that there are existing units in the IDF for Haredi young men that are designed to meet their religious needs in terms of study and prayer, strict kosher regulations, and the ability to serve in all male units, meaning, not alongside women soldiers. In truth, the

army has been most flexible and those Haredi young men who have chosen to serve, often against the personal advice and public statements of their rabbis and Yeshiva heads, have proven to be excellent soldiers. But they are too few.

In an interview with the Hebrew daily Maariv, published in the Jerusalem Post on July 18, Yuli Edelstein said the following:

“I want, wanted, and will want one thing – to bring a real conscription law. Maybe not perfect in everyone’s eyes, but one that addresses the IDF’s needs, with a gradual draft of the ultra-Orthodox. This is a serious law: personal and institutional sanctions, real numbers, and tight oversight. This law ends the phenomenon of pretending to study Torah. To me, that’s a disgrace to the world of Torah.”

Further on, Edelstein, who had asked for meetings with the Haredim but was rebuffed, was questioned: “Did you get any calls from the ultra-Orthodox after the accusations? Maybe they tried to explain or ask for clarifications?” He replied: “No. And I’m not changing my approach. I don’t act out of hatred for the ultra-Orthodox, and I don’t make a living from it. If anyone wants to talk seriously, they’re welcome. There was

a serious proposal. They read it. Want to improve it? They can come up with a counter-proposal. Why leave the government? It’s not clear.”

It’s often said that politics is the art of compromise. Yuli Edelstein has attempted to reach a realistic compromise while maintaining both his own integrity and that of the nation.

Integrity didn’t matter to the Prime Minister and the Likud. What mattered was giving the Haredim all that they demanded in order to maintain the existence of their coalition for the time being. I believe they will further pay for their raw power move during the next elections, which will occur in October 2026 if not before.

I know Yuli Edelstein. He truly is a mensch who believes in doing right for Israel. I applaud his integrity.

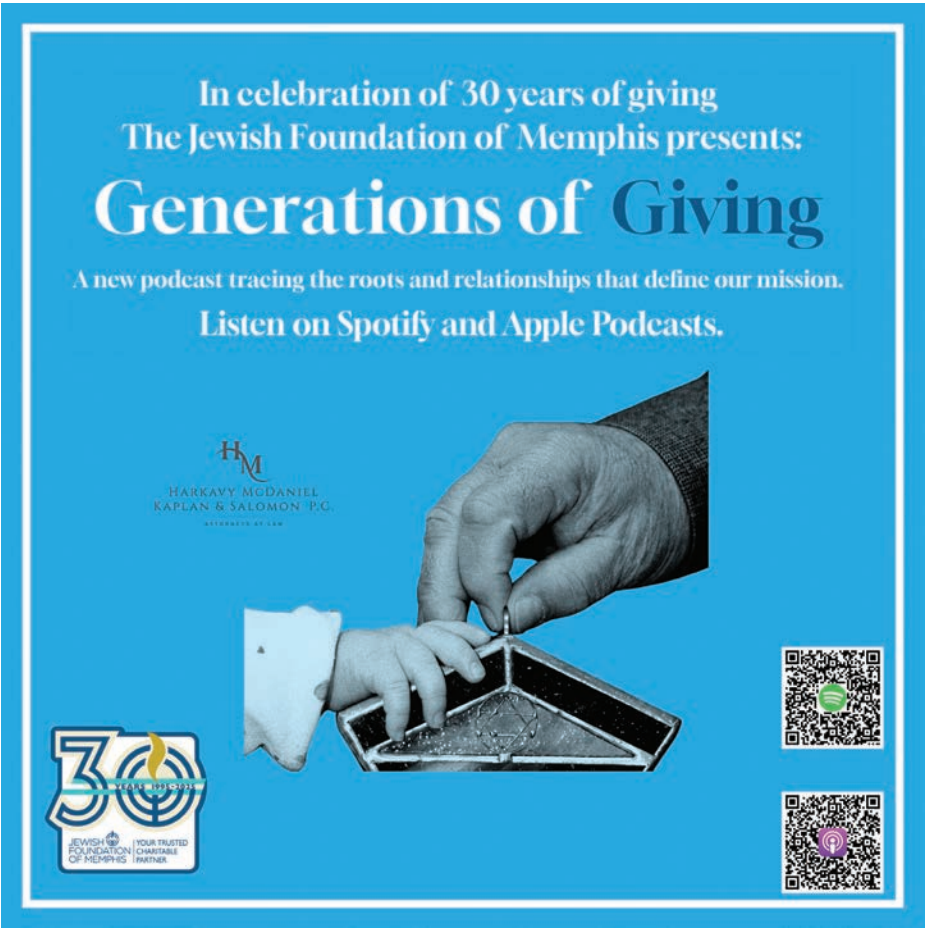
Howard Weisband served as Assistant Executive Director (1975-77) and Executive Director (1977-84) of the Memphis Jewish Federation. Following Aliyah with his family in 1986, he served as Secretary General of the Jewish Agency for Israel through 1997, and then in other senior professional positions in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



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