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# Hebrew Watchman

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS  
1925-2025

HEBREWWATCHMAN.COM

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## Planting Creativity in Celebrating Tu B'Shevat



As Tu B'Shevat – the Jewish New Year of the Trees – approaches, the Memphis Jewish Community Center invites our community to celebrate growth, creativity, and connection to the land in multiple ways.

First, since many children love to draw colorful trees, fruit, and all kinds of happy scenes, here's another great opportunity for them to do so. The Memphis JCC is excited to announce our first **Tu B'Shevat Youth Art Contest**, inviting all kids in Grades K-4 to submit an original piece of artwork created by them, inspired by Tu B'Shevat, which

starts the night of February 1. We encourage young artists to explore the festival through their own creative lens—whether that means drawing a sturdy tree with deep roots, imagining a greener future, or expressing what caring for the Earth means to them. Winners will receive a certificate of their achievement, and winning pieces (among other notable mentions) will be displayed in the MJCC Lobby, but the true goal of the contest is to give young people a meaningful opportunity to express their voice, imagination, and Jewish values. Submissions are due by Friday, Janu-

ary 23. Full details with guidelines and printable submission form can be found at [jccmemphis.org/JewishLife](http://jccmemphis.org/JewishLife).

Next, **SAVE THE DATE** on your calendars for the **MJCC Tu B'Shevat Family Celebration happening on Sunday, February 1, 2026, from 1-3 p.m.** There will be something for everyone! Learn about the trees around our campus on guided walks along the MJCC trail. The kids will enjoy story times and building edible trees. You can also take home a free tree sapling for planting.

**WHAT IS TU B'SHEVAT?** This Jewish festival is celebrated on the 15th of Shevat on the Hebrew calendar. Jewish law prohibits eating the fruit of a tree in Israel in its first three years. This law, as well as other guidelines around tithing and the lifecycle of a tree, raised the question of how farmers were to mark the "birthday" of a tree. The rabbis in ancient times established this date as a general birthday for all trees, regardless of when they were actually planted. The fertile soil in mid-January/mid-February after Israel's rainy season is in an opportune condition to plant tree seeds,

and it also marks the time when sap begins to rise in trees, signifying the start of their growing season.

Tu B'Shevat commemorations typically include joyful celebration integrating agricultural products from Israel – the "seven species" – namely wheat, barley, grapes, figs, pomegranates, olives, and dates. Over the past 100+ years, Jewish communities outside of Israel have adopted Tu B'Shevat as a Jewish Arbor Day, making it an occasion to plant trees in their own communities or to give donations to plant trees in Israel.

Please encourage your children to participate in our **Tu B'Shevat Art Contest**. By encouraging our youth to create, reflect, and share their vision, we are planting seeds of creativity that will continue to grow long after the holiday has passed. We look forward to showing off their colorful creations, proudly displaying their artistic works upon the walls of the MJCC Lobby. This Tu B'Shevat, let's celebrate not only the trees we plant in the ground, but the creativity we nurture in our children. **HW**

## Chabad Chanukah Menorah Lighting Draws Hundreds



*Hundreds came to celebrate the kindling of the Giant Ice-Carved Menorah at Chabad on the 1st night of Chanukah, on the heels of the terrorist attack at the menorah lighting celebration at Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia. Despite freezing temperatures, they came together as a community to show solidarity, that we will not give in to terror, and to share the spirit of Chanukah – to add light during these dark times to bring goodness and kindness to the world.*

## Trump's New White House Ballroom Architect is a Jewish Immigrant Who has Advocated for Refugees

By Philissa Cramer

(JTA) – After parting ways with the first architect hired to carry out his vision for the White House's East Wing, President Donald Trump has picked a replacement – turning to a firm run by prominent Jewish architect who once called on Trump to keep the country's doors open to refugees and immigrants.

Shalom Baranes was born soon after his parents fled Libya amid antisemitic sentiment there, coming to the United

States as a child with the help of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, now known as HIAS. He rose to prominence as an architect in Washington, D.C., where he has designed and renovated both private and government buildings, including the post-9/11 Pentagon, that trend toward the modern.

The White House confirmed last Fri-

(See Ballroom Page 3)



*An excavator works to clear rubble after the East Wing of the White House was demolished on Oct. 23, 2025. Credit: Eric Lee/ Getty Images; Shalom Baranes, inset, has been chosen to lead the reconstruction. Credit: Shalom Baranes Associates*

## Manischewitz is Taking Suggestions for Its Next Matzah-Box Cover Athlete



The winners of the search for America's "best Jewish college athlete" will be announced in March 2026. Photo at center courtesy Manischewitz; JTA illustration

By Joseph Strauss

(JTA) – Manischewitz is thinking outside the box – literally.

The iconic Jewish food company has it all figured out when it comes to things like making matzah and selling kosher wine. Now, it's asking America to help solve a different, non-food-related mystery: Who is the best Jewish college athlete in the country?

The company is calling it the quest for the "L'Cheisman" trophy, a play on NCAA football's Heisman Trophy. And the two winners of the quest will receive a distinctly Jewish honor: their photograph displayed on boxes of Manischewitz matzah.

"This is the official SEARCH FOR THE BEST JEWISH COLLEGE ATHLETES IN AMERICA, a national competition celebrating the grit, talent, spirit, and pride amongst Jewish NCAA athletes across the country," the quest's website reads.

Manischewitz, which was founded in Cincinnati in 1888 before relocating to the New York metropolitan area, first dipped its toes in student athlete partnerships last year, when then-Brigham Young University quarterback Jake Retzlaff (the "B-Y-Jew") was featured on a set of matzah boxes. (Retzlaff has since transferred to Tulane University.)

Student athlete deals had previously been off the table until 2021, when the NCAA implemented new rules allowing players to profit off their name, image and likeness. Seidman said the success of last year's promotion convinced Manischewitz to expand the process.

"We knew we tapped into something big, and we wanted to continue," Shani Seidman, Manischewitz's chief marketing officer, said in an interview.

Now, throughout December and Janu-

ary, Manischewitz has an open nomination form to which anybody can submit their choice, for both a men's and women's division. The form asks not only what sport and school the athlete participates in, but also the question, "Why are they a great representative of the Jewish community?"

In February, finalists will be revealed and the decision will be put to a vote on social media; the voting results will be decided by the general public, as well as a weighted vote by a "team of experts" on the Manischewitz side, and the winner announced in March.

Seidman said the voting criteria include how much the nominee "excels" in their sport, as well as what Manischewitz is calling their "mensch meter."

That "mensch meter" means looking for a winner "who is part of the community, has a strong Jewish identity, and contributes to their community," Seidman said. "We want to spotlight Jewish excellence in all of these areas."

Seidman said last year's Retzlaff matzah boxes sparked an "outpouring" of excitement, with numerous Jewish athletes and teams reaching out about potential partnerships. Manischewitz sponsored and designed the bright orange jerseys of a Jewish youth Idaho ice hockey team called the Flying Latkes, Seidman said.

This coming spring, the two winners of Manischewitz's search will be awarded by having their face printed on limited-edition matzah boxes, as well as with a \$10,000 cash prize and recognition from the International Jewish Sports Hall of Fame.

While the winners will come away from the search with unleavened glory, the social media voting process itself

# THE Hebrew Watchman

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12/25/2025

## Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. Dec. 26, 2025 / 6 Tevet, 5786 ..... 4:36 p.m.  
Havdalah, Sat. Dec. 27, 2025 / 7 Tevet, 5786 ..... 5:37 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Vayigash

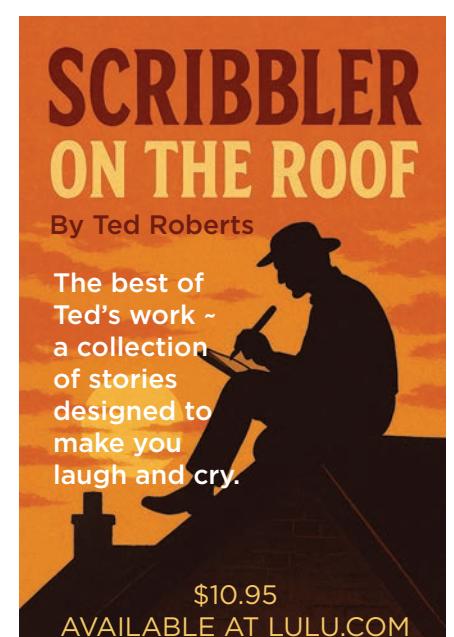
will be "a great platform to celebrate" and introduce Jewish student athletes from around the country to a larger, more national audience, Seidman said.

In a release about the initiative, Manischewitz pointed to Jewish student athletes as not only high achievers, but also some of the most visible Jewish figures on campus.

"For years, Jewish college athletes have been breaking stereotypes, smashing expectations, and dominating across every sport in the NCAA. What people don't realize is that these athletes are often the most prominent Jewish representatives on campus," the

press release reads.

"Manischewitz wants to give these athletes the recognition they deserve." HW



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# The MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Happenings

Our regular kosher lunch program begins at 11:30 a.m., followed by speaker and entertainment programs at noon, unless otherwise noted.

## Monday, December 29

We are honored to welcome Tal Nezry, MJCC Community Shilcha from the Center of Jewish Life & Learning.

Tal has just returned from a meaningful trip to Israel, and her presentation, "Light in Dark Times," promises to be both timely and inspiring. Anyone who has had the privilege of hearing Tal speak knows how special her presentations are, and her recent visit to Eretz Israel will add even greater depth.

Reservations are required for the 11:30 a.m. lunch. Reservations are requested for the noon talk.

## Wednesday, December 31

We will wrap up the year with our End-of-Year Bingo Celebration!

Enjoy special games, fun prizes, and a delicious kosher lunch. Come celebrate and have some fun with friends!

## Thursday, January 1, 2026 – New Year's Day & Friday, January 2, 2026

There will be no Senior Adult lunch programs on these two days.

Happy New Year! Enjoy the holiday.

## Monday, January 5, 2026

Our speaker will be Sgt. Keisha Scott of the Shelby County Sheriff's Office.

Her topic, "Safety and Security," is especially important given current concerns. Sgt. Scott serves as a Deputy Sheriff Sergeant overseeing four

deputies in the Facility Security Unit. She holds a Master of Science in Leadership from Belhaven University and a Bachelor of Arts in Applied Psychology with a minor in Criminal Justice from Christian Brothers University. Lunch begins at 11:30 a.m., followed by the talk at noon. Reservations are required for lunch.

## Wednesday, January 7, 2026

Sarah Cavanaugh from The Avaline will speak about "Preventing Falls in the Home." Falls are a leading reason seniors require hospitalization or home health care, making this an important topic not only for seniors but also for family members and caregivers. The program will include an open question-and-answer session and is open to the community.

## Join Us for Daily Kosher Lunches

The Senior Adult Club invites all seniors to enjoy a delicious kosher lunch prepared by Memphis Jewish Home, Monday through Friday, for only \$2.

Reservations are required the day before by 1 p.m.

To reserve:

- Call Steve Kaplan, Adult Services Coordinator, at 901-259-9220
- Email [stevekaplan@jccmemphis.org](mailto:stevekaplan@jccmemphis.org)
- Or contact the MJCC Front Desk at 901-761-0810

Steve Kaplan is available Monday–Thursday, 9:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m. **HW**

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

day that it had chosen his firm, Shalom Baranes Associates, to continue the East Wing project, centered around the ballroom that Trump wishes to construct. Trump clashed with the first architect on the job over the ballroom's size.

"Shalom is an accomplished architect whose work has shaped the architectural identity of our nation's capital for decades, and his experience will be a great asset to the completion of this project," a White House spokesman, Davis Ingle, said in a statement last Friday.

The firm did not immediately publicly confirm its attachment to the project, and Baranes did not reply to a Jewish Telegraphic Agency request for comment.

Baranes' selection stands out in an administration that has typically favored partisan and ideological loyalists. Baranes is a repeated donor to Democratic candidates who has openly advocated against one of Trump's signature policies, his efforts to limit refugee admissions.

In 2017, two months into Trump's first term, Baranes penned an op-ed for the Washington Post about the new president's travel ban. Trump had declared a ban on migrants from seven mostly Muslim countries and refugees from around the world soon after taking office, igniting wide opposition including from Jewish groups.

"The anti-immigrant sentiment I feel today is nothing new to me," he wrote. "When my Jewish parents arrived in the United States just a few years after fleeing persecution in an Arab regime, it was as difficult for them to be accepted here as it is for Muslims now."

Baranes laid out his criticism gingerly while saying he hoped the travel ban would be short-lived.

"As I watch the news and see families struggling to leave their countries and escape tyranny, I wonder who among them will make it to our shores and become part of the next generation of researchers, teachers, inventors, real estate developers and, yes, architects," he wrote. "My hope is that the Trump administration will take actions to ensure that the travel ban is indeed temporary, so that good, hard-working individuals fleeing tyranny can find a new home as I did – and that each of them will be given the same opportunity to help build this great nation that I had."

Among the Jewish groups to lobby against Trump's travel ban was HIAS, the organization that had helped Baranes and his family come to the United States. HIAS declined to comment on his selection as White House architect but said through a spokesperson that the organization was working to respond to Trump's crackdown on refugees, which the president renewed last week after an Afghan refugee shot and killed a member of the National Guard in Washington.

To those who are familiar with Baranes' style, he is a surprising pick for more than just because of his personal politics. His designs typically trend toward the modern, not the gilded classical style that Trump favors. He also has said he prefers to think carefully before tackling a project – an impossibility when it comes to the White House ballroom, which is already mid-construction.

"You have to wonder why he would risk a stellar career and near pristine reputation for a project that could possibly end up in disaster. He could be publicly fired and castigated by the developer-in-chief or ostracized among his colleagues and clients," wrote Douglas Freuhling, the editor in chief of the Washington Business Journal, last Friday.

But Freuhling noted that a successful build at the White House – one that balances Trump's tastes with the gravitas of the White House – would be a defining capstone for any architect's career. "He may just be the perfect architect for the job. For his sake, I hope it turns out that way," he wrote of Baranes.

Baranes' portfolio includes multiple synagogue renovations. He donated his services to restore the interior of Sixth & I, the Jewish center in downtown Washington, D.C., when it was reconstructed just over two decades ago. **HW**

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# In New Change, Main Wikipedia 'Israel' Entry Says Jewish State Committing 'Genocide'

By Aaron Bandler

(JNS) – It takes Wikipedia nearly 7,500 words into its main entry on China to mention the word “genocide,” tucked in a section on “sociopolitical issues and human rights,” and even then, the crowdsourced online encyclopedia hedges.

“Since 2017, the Chinese government has been engaged in a harsh crackdown in Xinjiang, with around one million Uyghurs and other ethnic and religion minorities being detained in internment camps aimed at changing the political thinking of detainees, their identities and their religious beliefs, in what some described as a genocide or crimes against humanity,” Wikipedia states.

As of Dec. 11, Wikipedia states as a matter of fact, just some 425 words into its main page on Israel, that “following the Oct. 7 attacks in 2023, Israel began committing genocide against Palestinians in Gaza.”

Prior to Dec. 11, the Wikipedia entry had stated that there were “accusations that it has committed war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide against

the Palestinians in Gaza.”

The crowdsourced encyclopedia is reportedly one of the main sources upon which artificial intelligence “feeds.”

Deborah Lipstadt, former U.S. special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism and professor of modern Jewish history and Holocaust studies at Emory University, recently told JNS that she had “pretty much lost faith in Wikipedia as anything resembling a neutral source” and that it was “pretty close to, but not yet identical with, the BBC.”

JNS asked her about the new change to the main “Israel” page.

Lipstadt said her views on Wikipedia may have changed “a little” since she last discussed it with JNS. “I said Wikipedia was almost as bad as the BBC,” she said. “Maybe I’d leave out the ‘almost’ this time.”

Rafael Medoff, founding director of the David Wyman Institute for Holocaust Studies, told JNS that Wikipedia “sometimes includes blatantly false information, such as the lie that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza.”

“By publishing such malicious Ho-

locaust-inversion, Wikipedia is earning for itself a reputation as an untrustworthy source,” he said.

There are other “falsehoods and distortions” on the main Wikipedia entry for Israel, according to Medoff.

Those include “whitewashing the Palestinian Arab atrocities against Jews in 1920 and 1921 as simply ‘the Palestine riots,’ and omitting any mention of the Palestinian Arab pogroms against Jews in Hebron and elsewhere in 1929,” he told JNS.

“Nor is there any mention of the substantial illegal Arab immigration into British Mandatory Palestine in the 1920s and 1930s,” he said. “This pattern of bias suggests that some of the authors of the entry had a partisan agenda.”

## Tirade

Archives of discussions on the “talk” pages for the Wikipedia main entries on Israel and China suggest that editors on the site, who are often anonymous and unpaid volunteers, approached the two countries very differently.

On the China page, editors rejected the view that the article should state

high up that the country is committing genocide against the Uyghurs. One editor said that such an insertion would be “recentism” and “contentious.” Another editor said that “describing a country usually doesn’t include the crimes it’s committed. The lead is for the straight basics about the country, not going on a tirade about its controversial policies.”

Wikipedia also renamed its page that used to be on “Uyghur genocide” to “Persecution of Uyghurs in China” in February 2024, after editors said there weren’t enough sources describing it as a genocide. Wikipedia lists both that page on the Uyghurs and a page on the “Gaza genocide” in its “list of genocides.”

When it came to stating high up in the Israel page that the Jewish state was guilty of “genocide,” Wikipedia editors appeared to be evenly split on whether to make that statement, so a “closer” was brought in to render a verdict.

The person, who is supposed to be uninvolved in the matter, decided that the yeas rather than the nays had it, so it was added. That ruling is being challenged, as of publication time. **HW**

# 'Free Palestine' Note Found in Chanukah Gift Order from Bloomingdale's

By Jessica Russak-Hoffman

(JNS) – What was meant to be a holiday gift from Bloomingdale's instead sparked outrage online after a customer alleged a store employee placed a handwritten “free Palestine” note into the package of Chanukah pajamas, prompting an internal investigation by the retailer.

“Yesterday, on the first night of Cha-

nukah, my boyfriend gave me a gift he ordered from Bloomingdale's. Holiday pajamas covered in Jewish stars from P.J. Salvage,” Arielle Harris said in a social media video shared on Dec. 15. The note, seemingly written on a store-branded card, was tucked into the clothing on top of a receipt, she said.

“This never should have happened, and Bloomingdale's needs to answer for their employees,” Harris said.

She added that her boyfriend, Andrew Jones, had not opened the package before giving it to her.

“Craziest part is how many commenters think I faked this,” Jones wrote. “Typical denials of antisemitism. My heart dropped when this happened. Totally twisted a nice night of celebrating.”

Jones and Harris told JNS that a senior Bloomingdale's executive contacted them with a “preliminary apology” and invited the couple to speak further.

Jennifer Chadroff, director of brand communications for Bloomingdale's, confirmed that the brand had connected with the customers and that the “matter is currently under investigation.”

“This was an unauthorized and unacceptable act,” she told JNS.

“Antisemitism, or discrimination in any form, has absolutely no place in our business and does not align with our values or our care for our customers,” Chadroff said. “Please know we are treating this with the utmost seriousness.”

Jewish leaders condemned the alleged incident after it spread online.

“A ‘free Palestine’ note in a Bloomingdale's Chanukah gift. No limits. No shame,” stated Deborah Lipstadt, former U.S. special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism.

Joan Leslie McGill, executive director of the U.S. Israel Education Association, stated, “Jewish identity does not require permission, and it will not be intimidated.” **HW**

# 'No Matter What, Go Bills,' Schumer Says Before Addressing Sydney Attack

(JNS) – Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) is facing backlash for misplaced comments he made about the Buffalo Bills football team during a news conference last Sunday that addressed increasing gun violence.

“I’m going to say a few words about the terrible shooting in Sydney, Australia, okay?” he said. “First, of course, as I always say, no matter what, go Bills. They beat the Patriots today, it’s a big deal.”

# IDF Troops Fire on Car that Sped at Checkpoint Near Jerusalem

(JNS) – Israeli soldiers opened fire at a vehicle that accelerated toward them after crossing the Beitar checkpoint south of Jerusalem last Wednesday, prompting a manhunt by IDF and police forces after the driver fled, the Israel Defense Forces said.

Troops identified a vehicle carrying Palestinians without entry permits that crossed into Green Line Israel at the checkpoint and then sped toward the

Later in his remarks, Schumer called the Bondi Beach and Brown University shootings “sickening events,” adding, “We must do more to stop gun violence.” (JNS sought comment from Schumer.)

David Harris, author of *Antisemitism: What Everyone Needs to Know*, wrote, “A football game takes precedence over a massacre of Jews? Shameful.”

“Retire. Immediately,” wrote Mike Lawler (R-N.Y.) in response to the video. **HW**

soldiers, who responded by shooting at the car; no injuries were reported. The army said the occupants escaped and transferred the investigation to police. Police said an officer had stopped the Palestinian vehicle for a traffic violation and opened fire after the driver fled when the officer exited his patrol car to carry out an inspection. **HW**

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# Jews 'Own Everything,' Sports Commentators Shannon Sharpe and Chad Ochocinco Claim



Sports commentators Shannon Sharpe (l) and Chad "Ochocinco" Johnson say that Jews "own everything" on their podcast "Night Cap," December 1, 2025. (Screenshot)

By Andrew Lapin

(JTA) — The co-hosts of a popular sports podcast declared on a recent episode that Jews "own everything" and are "the most powerful community in the world."

Shannon Sharpe and Chad "Ochocinco" Johnson, both former National Football League stars, directed the comments at a popular Jewish livestreamer.

"This is the most powerful community in the world," Sharpe said on a Dec. 1 episode of his podcast "Night Cap." When Ochocinco asked which community Sharpe was referring to, he clarified by describing the Israeli flag: "There's another country that has a white and blue flag with a star on it."

In response, Ochocinco said, "Oh, they own every damn thing," to which Sharpe agreed: "Exactly."

"They own everything. You hear me? Boy, if you were to peel back the layers," Ochocinco continued.

A former tight end, Sharpe had a long career in sports broadcasting following his NFL retirement, with another one of his podcasts, "Club Shay Shay," winning an NAACP Image Award earlier this year. The show frequently goes viral: Sharpe's interview with comedian Katt Williams last year has racked up nearly 100 million views and inspired a "Saturday Night Live" sketch.

ESPN abruptly cut ties with Sharpe

this summer following a sexual assault investigation, but he continues to be a popular internet personality. His podcasts are defined by a loose, freeform approach that uses sports as a jumping-off point for a range of other topics.

The two men were taking on Jewish video-gaming livestreamer Adin Ross, himself a polarizing personality who hosted Donald Trump during the 2024 presidential campaign. Ross has interviewed and/or maintained friendly relationships with openly antisemitic figures including Nick Fuentes, Andrew Tate and fellow livestreamer Sneako. On a recent livestream of his own, Ross had admitted that he sings the N-word when singing along to rap music.

This remark offended Sharpe and Ochocinco, who used their show to claim that public figures refuse to make derogatory comments about Jews in the same way they might use the N-word.

"It's funny how they pick and choose," Sharpe said. "I'm old enough to remember when Jesse Jackson was running for president, and he said something, he called New York, he called it a derogatory term, had to apologize. Michael Jackson used the term once upon a time, had to apologize."

In 1984, Jesse Jackson apologized on the campaign trail after referring to New York as "Hymietown." In 1995, Michael Jackson apologized after releasing a single containing the line, "Jew me, sue me, everybody do me/

Kick me, kike me, don't you black or white me." After initially agreeing to change the lyrics, he later released a music video of the song with the original lyrics, over Jewish groups' objections.

It was initially unclear if Sharpe and Ochocinco were aware that Ross is Jewish, though Sharpe later acknowledged this after reading messages in his chat. The pair did take time to praise "Inglorious Basterds," the Quentin Tarantino movie about Jewish World War II soldiers taking revenge on Hitler, as a "great movie."

On his own stream, Ross briefly took time out from playing video games to laugh off the remarks.

"I'm a fan of you, Shannon. I like you. I think you're a hell of a guy," he said, adding, "Nick Fuentes got something in the air, bro" — referring to the openly antisemitic livestreamer's recent political ascendancy.

Ross disputed Sharpe's claim that Jews aren't subject to antisemitic terms on a regular basis, listing all the derogatory names his own followers routinely call him. As he talked, he repeatedly laughed at his friend Sneako posting antisemitic content in the chat.

"I get called a kike every day," Ross said. "Nobody's safe out here." He concluded by inviting Sharpe and Ochocinco to work with him.

"I want to do a stream with these two guys, bro," he said. "It'd be a fun time." **HW**

## Ben Shapiro Urges Heritage Foundation to Break with Tucker Carlson

(JNS) — Just as countries must have borders to exist, the conservative movement needs to delineate what is beyond the pale, and the latter includes Tucker Carlson, the former Fox News host who has both denounced core conservative tenets of late and given voice to and failed to denounce antisemites and Holocaust deniers.

That was one of the messages Ben Shapiro, a Jewish conservative commentator and Daily Wire cofounder, shared in a Dec. 17 book talk with Kevin Roberts, president of Heritage Foundation.

Roberts has drawn criticism after failing to denounce Carlson, and a panel on Jew-hatred that used to be at the think tank has, at least temporarily, suspended its connection to Heritage, and several board and staff members at the think tank have resigned or left their positions.

Shapiro advised the think tank to part ways with Carlson, whom he called the "elephant in the room." The Jewish commentator was there ostensibly to discuss his new book, *Lions and Scavengers: The True Story of America (and Her Critics)*.

"If Heritage Foundation wishes to retain its status as a leading thought institution in the conservative movement, it must act as ideological border control," Shapiro told attendees. "It must continue to draw the contours of legitimate, real conservatism. This is what the institution exists to do."

Shapiro said conservatism's top priority is "truth, not friendship," calling Carlson "an opponent of conservatism, an outsider masquerading as an insider and destroying the character of the conservative movement in the process."

That call for daylight between Her-

itage and Carlson came as two of the think tank's board members, Shane McCullar and Abby Spencer Moffat, stepped down as trustees after Roberts defended Carlson and his softball interview with Holocaust denier and racist podcaster Nick Fuentes.

McCullar said, "No institution that hesitates to condemn antisemitism and hatred, or that gives a platform to those who spread them, can credibly claim to uphold the vision that once made the Heritage Foundation the world's most

respected conservative think tank," *Mediate* reported.

And Moffat said the think tank had forfeited "the moral authority on which its influence depends," the outlet said.

Shapiro said Carlson "sounds so much" like a socialist, has foreign policy views that are "idiocy" and has "glazed" the Iranian president "repeatedly" in interviews.

Carlson treated Qatar "as America's foremost ally in the Middle East" and has a "peculiar obsession" with Israel,

according to Shapiro, who noted that the podcaster has called Christian Zionism a "heresy."

"He is mostly lying when he says that he is doing all of this in the name of a conservatism that does not resemble conservatism," Shapiro said.

After the speech, Shapiro sat down with Roberts to talk about his book. "We love robust debate," Roberts said, without addressing the institution's support of Carlson directly.

"And surprises," Shapiro quipped. **HW**



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# Giving Well: How Can Philanthropy Be More Focused and Fulfilling?

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

Questions for Mike? You can reach him at 901.761.8151 or Michael.Stein@WellsFargoAdvisors.com • fa.wellsfargoadvisors.com/michael-stein

How much thought do you give your charitable giving? Do you simply write some checks, or do you visit organizations' websites, make donations, and then get on with your day? If so, you're not alone. But is that really the most fulfilling way to do it? Here are some insights from Meredith Camp, philanthropic services senior regional trust manager with Wealth & Investment Management, Wells Fargo Bank, N.A.:

Having supported the philanthropic efforts of many clients over the years, I have seen clients enjoy so many incredible benefits of giving, but not without obstacles that need to be overcome to get the most out of the experience. First the benefits: I have seen first-hand how giving one's time, money, and energy on behalf of others can enrich personal and cultural relationships, enhance well-being, and build stronger, more vibrant communities.

Now the obstacles: Making meaningful decisions about how, when, and how much to give is not always easy. With over 1 million charities in the U.S. and social, environmental, and economic uncertainty, the choices can be overwhelming, even stressful. As a result, I have seen some individuals restrain their charitable activity despite their strong desire to give back. Others I encounter worry that their giving is scattered, often reactive, and as a result, only moderately satisfying.

Fortunately, there are ways to enhance the process of giving so that it's

a more rewarding and joyful experience for both donors and the recipients of their generosity. When my clients ask how to make the most of their charitable giving, I tell them it starts with meaning (not money). Together, we explore their values, passions, and objectives to help bring focus and intention to their philanthropy.

How can you transform your giving into a more meaningful, fulfilling endeavor? Whether giving of time or treasure, a little planning goes a long way. Here are some guidelines to help get you started:

**1. Reflect:** The first thing I encourage clients to do is take a look at past and current practices of generosity. Understanding your past behaviors will help guide your direction forward. As you reflect, consider how much of your giving decisions are based on feelings of obligation, gratitude, impulse, or even guilt. What's the most meaningful gift you've ever given and why?

**2. Identify your values:** Values are the core motivating principles that guide our behavior and shape how we show up in the world. Knowing the principles and characteristics that motivate you is at the heart of meaningful giving. For example, if your core values are creativity, opportunity, and independence, you may approach giving differently than one motivated by tradition, effectiveness, and collaboration. Understanding that philanthropy is as unique as your fingerprint allows authenticity and

meaning to penetrate the choices you make.

**3. Find a focus and write it down:** Intentional philanthropy requires exploring your interests and passions and determining what issues matter most. I suggest choosing two or three areas on which to focus the bulk of your giving. Then write a philanthropic mission statement as a way to clearly express the intent of your generosity. A mission statement answers the questions "What do I stand for and what do I want to do about it?" This focus will help you prioritize opportunities, make meaningful decisions, and even help you say "no" when an opportunity is off-target.

**4. Engage those you love and trust:** Philanthropy as a shared experience fosters a sense of interdependence and cooperation and can drive greater personal and social change than may be achieved alone. Family philanthropy is also an opportunity to connect with one another, define what you stand for as a family, and pass down generational values. Whether giving as a family unit or with a trusted group of individuals, be willing to stretch out of your comfort zone and learn from others and from the communities you choose to serve.

**5. Attend to the details:** It's important to address the practical details of putting your generosity in motion. Establish a budget including charitable dollars and volunteer time, and consider parameters for discretionary and responsive gifts, even for those random acts of kindness.

A budget can aid in planning and decision-making, bringing peace of mind so you can feel good about doing good.

Consider taking time to reflect on how you might find more meaning and fulfillment from your expressions of generosity. Talk to a professional financial advisor if you'd like to learn more about charitable planning and inspired giving.

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## OBITUARIES

**Sara Tupper Wagerman**

Sara Tupper Wagerman, beloved daughter of Bertha and Herman Tupper; devoted wife and soulmate of 72 years to Benjamin Wagerman; cherished mother of Howard (Mindy and Martha z"l) Wagerman and Bari (Rick) Eiseman; loving Mimi to Stacy (Jonah) and Blake (Caleb) Wagerman, and Brad (Sarah) and Scott (Lacey) Eiseman; and treasured great-grandmother to Colton, Axel, and Sloane, passed away peacefully, surrounded by love, on Sunday, December 14, 2025. She was the dear sister of Lois (Raymon) Brooks and Arlene z"l (Donnie) Levine, and a beloved aunt and great-aunt.

Born on July 30, 1933, in Memphis, Tennessee, Sara lived her life guided by kindness, compassion, and empathy. From her earliest days until her final moments, she embodied the Golden Rule – “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you” – and shared that spirit freely with everyone she encountered.

Sara was a proud graduate of Humes High School, where she was a classmate of Elvis Presley. She built a life centered on family, love, and quiet generosity, always putting others before herself and making those around her feel seen, cared for, and deeply loved.

Her absence leaves a space that words cannot fully capture. She will be profoundly missed by all who knew and loved her. It is our prayer that her legacy of love, grace, and selflessness will continue to live on in the hearts and actions of those she touched.

A service was held in Katzman Memorial Chapel on Tuesday, December 16, 2025, at Anshei Sphard Cemetery.

In lieu of flowers, the family suggests memorial contributions to Plough Towers, Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab or the Memphis Jewish Community Center. **HW**

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# Trump Decries Decline of 'Jewish Lobby' at White House Chanukah Party



**U.S. President Donald Trump participates in a Chanukah reception in the East Wing of the White House, Dec. 16, 2025. Credit: Molly Riley/White House. | Molly Riley/White House**

(JNS) – U.S. President Donald Trump said at the White House Chanukah party last Tuesday that Jewish influence in Washington is on the wane and that lobby groups have failed to stop the rise of anti-Israel members of Congress.

Trump cited the influence of his father, Fred Trump, for inspiring his own philosemitism.

“I’m not Jewish, but my father was very friendly with many, many Jewish people,” Trump said. “He was honored by the Federation. I would go with him to the Federation of Jewish philanthropies, and many other things, and we grew up respecting and loving Jewish people.”

“My father would tell me, the most powerful lobby that there is in this country is the Jewish lobby. It’s the Israeli lobby,” Trump said. “It’s not that way anymore.”

The president pointed to the so-called “Squad” of anti-Israel progressive lawmakers in the House and rising opposition to Israel in Congress.

“There’s a lot of people in Congress that don’t like Israel,” Trump said. “They hate Israel, and if you would have told me 15 years ago that that was possible, I would have said there’s no way.”

Trump opened his remarks with a condemnation of the murder of 15 people at a Chanukah celebration in Sydney.

“Let me take a moment to send the love and prayers of our entire nation to the people of Australia, and especially all those affected by the horrific and antisemitic terrorist attack,” Trump said. “That’s exactly what it is: antisemitic.”

“All nations will stand together against the evil forces of radical Islamic terrorism,” he added.

Much of Trump’s 40-minute speech in the White House East Room was devoted to touting his administration’s accom-

plishments in support of Israel and its work combating antisemitism, including the legal efforts of U.S. Assistant Attorney General Harmeet Dhillon pursuing civil rights claims against universities.

“She sues the ass off of anybody that is antisemitic,” Trump said. “Harvard wished they never heard her name, right?”

Surrounded by Christmas trees and portraits of former presidents and first

ladies, guests at the Chanukah gala included administration officials, Jewish community leaders and some of Trump’s most prominent Jewish supporters in the media and business worlds.

Trump said that Miriam Adelson, whom he called up to the stage as one of the largest financial donors to his re-election campaign, had joked with him about donating another \$250 million if he would run for a third term. That drew some “four more years” chants from the crowd.

Rabbi Levi Shemtov, executive vice president of American Friends of Lubavitch, lit the White House menorah with Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick and two Holocaust survivors, Jerry Warts and Michael Bornstein.

Shemtov addressed Trump. “You know that I’m Jewish. You know that I’m American, but you may not know that a very large part of my family lives in Australia and that includes some of those who had escaped the attack and some of them didn’t,” the rabbi said.

“It is especially in this time when the Jewish people have so much of a burden that we need this light. We need this strength,” he said. “Not only from each other, but from you, Mr. President, who constantly reminds the world that even if they all turn against us, God forbid, you never will.” **HW**

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# By the Thousands, IDF Lone Soldiers Find Support and Services at Unique Tel Aviv Errands Day



Over 4,000 Israeli Lone Soldiers hailing from 70 countries attended a unique Errands Day event in Tel Aviv organized in part by Nefesh B'Nefesh, the immigration-assistance organization co-founded by Tony Gelbart, left center, and Rabbi Yehoshua Fass, right center. The soldiers' faces are blurred to protect their identities. Credit: Yonit Schiller

By Shanna Fuld

(JTA) – TEL AVIV – When A. moved from Florida to Israel after high school and began his mandatory service in the Israel Defense Forces, he knew it would be challenging to serve in a combat unit far from his family.

"Combat service has been very difficult," said A., whose name is being withheld to protect his identity, like those of other soldiers cited in this story. "I've had to face challenges I never could have imagined. But you go through it, and you come out able to handle things – even better than I could have before in my civilian life."

Several months on, however, A., 19, still has trouble handling his civilian To Do list – like getting an Israeli driver's license. He just has no time for it.

So when he heard that the Friends of the IDF-Nefesh B'Nefesh Lone Soldiers Program, in partnership with the Mofet Unit of the IDF Manpower Directorate and the Association for Israel's Soldiers, was organizing an Errands Day event in Tel Aviv for Lone Soldiers – where representatives of banks, government offices, employment organizations, and numerous other service providers would be on hand to ease and expedite errands for soldiers without immediate family in Israel – A. was thrilled.

At the all-day, mid-November event at the Tel Aviv Expo center, which drew over 4,000 Lone Soldiers from 70 different countries, A. went to get his driver's license and was astonished to find more than 70 volunteer driving instructors and 60 certified examiners speeding

soldiers through one of Israel's most notoriously bureaucratic processes. It took A. just minutes to obtain his license, printed by a biometric machine on site.

"It was on the spot!" he marveled. "It was a big thing I needed to do. It's all stuff that is really helping me out."

The mass-scale Yom Siddurim (Errands Day) was the largest ever, and the first to be held since Oct. 7, 2023. Over the last two years of war, holding such an event was impossible because the IDF couldn't spare thousands of soldiers all on the same day during the height of the war, according to Rabbi Yehoshua Fass, co-founder and executive director of Nefesh B'Nefesh. The mission of his organization, which began with a holistic approach to facilitating aliyah (immigration to Israel) from North America, has broadened to encompass supporting Israeli national service, development of the country with a focus on its periphery and Zionist education.

For a day, the Tel Aviv Expo center was turned into a one-stop shop for nearly every bureaucratic, logistical and personal need a Lone Soldier could face.

Soldiers renewed their passports, sorted out payments from Israel's National Insurance Institute and got free haircuts from on-site barbers. They lined up at booths to meet with representatives of government ministries, embassies, banks, the Electric Company, the Population Authority, and numerous NGOs. They got a hot lunch and even availed themselves of tailors on site to hem their military-issue pants and skirts.

Though all wearing Israeli army uniforms, the soldiers hailed from all over the globe – including native Israelis considered Lone Soldiers because they don't have immediate family they can rely upon in Israel.

"We know these soldiers come from all over the world to serve," said Roni, a representative of the IDF unit that cares for Lone Soldiers. "Our job is to make sure they know their rights: vacation days, housing assistance, financial benefits, refunds for flights to see their families. We run a 24/7 hotline. Everything we do is so they know they're not alone."

Y., a 25-year-old infantryman from Canada who moved to Israel in August 2023, said the hardest part about being a Lone Soldier is the distance from his family.

"My teammates took me in like brothers," said Y. "They see their parents every few weeks; I don't. I am missing my family and want to see them."

Y. utilized his time at the Yom Siddurim getting his North American undergraduate degree officially recognized so he can enroll in a master's program in Israel after he finishes the army. He also was able to get answers about rent payments and the process for enrolling in ulpan (Hebrew language classes).

A 21-year-old Lone Soldier originally from Russia, D., used the day to take care of paying his municipal taxes, sorting out his electricity bill and getting new national ID cards.

"I need everything," D. said, "and here we can do all of it. The atmosphere is happy. We have presents, food, drinks. And today I'm not in the army," he added with a laugh. "It's a good day."

M., a 24-year-old American woman, moved to Israel after graduating from Georgia Tech with a degree in biochemistry. Through the army's academic track, which deploys degree-holders in technical and relevant positions as officers, M. became a hazardous materials officer for Israel's Home Front Command.

"Oct. 7 happened in the first semester of my senior year. I realized I wanted my life to be meaningful," M. said of her decision to immigrate to Israel. "I wanted to serve the Jewish people."

With an army job focused on keeping factories and citizens safe, she said the Errands Day event was a reminder of how Israel is also taking care of her.

"It's touching," she said. "It shows there is actually infrastructure to help olim [new immigrants] and the citi-

zens."

That's exactly the point, said Nadav Padan, CEO of Friends of the IDF and a major general in the IDF reserves.

"Yom Siddurim is one of the many ways FIDF shows our deep appreciation and support for the young men and women who volunteer to serve in the IDF," Padan said. "We aim to ensure they know they are never alone, and that they have a family of supporters across the United States standing with them. Through comprehensive support that includes financial assistance, housing, flights home, community events and mental health support, FIDF is committed to easing their experience so they can focus fully on their vital mission of protecting the State of Israel."

In addition to service providers of all kinds, Knesset members from across the political spectrum stopped by, including Minister of Aliyah and Integration Ofir Sofer, Likud's Yuli Edelstein and Gadi Eisenkot, a former IDF chief of staff and Knesset member.

"This is our nation," said Nefesh B'Nefesh's co-founder and chairman, Tony Gelbart. "That celebration of unity, with this as the anchor, is uplifting."

Fass said that one of the government ministers on hand was so taken with the event that he wants to re-create it for Israelis displaced by the Oct. 7 war, who despite their return home face all sorts of bureaucratic hurdles ranging from getting compensation for lost income to accessing mental health services.

"I said take it! Copy and paste it. It's modular," Fass said.

"The young men and women who make aliyah, and are required to serve in the IDF, embody an extraordinary commitment to the State of Israel, driven by a strong Zionist spirit and a deep desire to contribute to our nation," Fass and Gelbart said in a joint statement. "This year's Yom Siddurim is a powerful reminder of our responsibility to support these new olim, provide for their needs and demonstrate our gratitude for their ongoing service to the Jewish nation."

This article was sponsored by and produced in partnership with Nefesh B'Nefesh, which in cooperation with Israel's Ministry of Aliyah, The Jewish Agency, KKL and JNF-USA is minimizing the professional, logistical and social obstacles of aliyah, and has brought over 75,000 olim from North America for two decades. This article was produced by JTA's native content team. HW

## Homeland Security Denies Ilhan Omar's Claims Son was Pulled Over by ICE



Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) speaking with supporters of Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) at a town hall at the SEIU Nevada office in Las Vegas, Nev., Feb. 9, 2020. Credit: Gage Skidmore via Creative Commons.

(JNS) – The U.S. Department of Homeland Security denied claims by Rep. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) that Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents pulled over her 20-year-old son to demand proof of U.S. citizenship.

"ICE has absolutely zero record of its officers or agents pulling over Congresswoman Omar's son," DHS stated on Dec. 16. "With no evidence, it is shameful that Congresswoman Omar would level accusations to demonize ICE as part of a PR stunt."

Omar made the allegation in an interview with a CBS News affiliate in Minnesota on Dec. 14. She claimed that the night before, her son "made a stop at Target, he did get pulled over by ICE agents, and once he was able to produce his passport ID, they did let him go."

"They are racially profiling," she said.

**"With no evidence, it is shameful that Congresswoman Omar would level accusations to demonize ICE as part of a PR stunt," the department stated.**

Omar, who came to the United States from Somalia at age 12, said she believes the agency is "looking for young men who look [like] Somali that they think are undocumented."

"Allegations that ICE engages in 'racial profiling' are disgusting, reckless and categorically FALSE," DHS stated. "What makes someone a target for immigration enforcement is if they are illegally in the U.S. – NOT their skin color, race, or ethnicity." HW

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