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# CELEBRATING 100 YEARS

# the Hebrew Watchman

1925-2025

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## Judy Royal Wins Trustee of the Year Award from National Association AJAS



*Judy Royal.*

*By Baylee Less*

Judy Royal has been selected as the 2026 Trustee of the Year by the Association of Jewish Aging Services (AJAS). This award is given out annually from a pool of leaders from across the United States and Canada and is presented to an outstanding trustee or lay leader. The trustee must demonstrate a significant contribution to enriching the lives and well-being of older adults, display a personal commitment to the life of the organization, and provide outstanding leadership to the organization, its senior leadership, and the community at large.

Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab (MJHR) nominated Royal for this award as a small token of gratitude for her 40+ years (and counting) of service to the organization.

Royal was surprised with the an-

nouncement via a phone call from Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab Executive Director Bobby G. Meadows and Director of Development Baylee Less-Eiseman. Her shock was obvious when she quickly replied, "I had no idea I was even nominated! But Baylee knows me well because if she had asked, I would have told her to nominate someone else."

Royal serves our community quietly and behind the scenes, asks for nothing in return and for no fanfare. That is part of the reason Less-Eiseman nominated her. "If there's one word that could describe Judy, it truly is extraordinary. She is faithful, kind, reliable, whip-smart, and exceedingly generous with her time, money, and talent. Above all, Judy lives and breathes the ideal of honoring our fathers and mothers. For Judy, this work is personal, this work is holy, and this work cannot be pushed off for later."

Royal has been involved with MJHR since the 1980s when she started volunteering in the gift shop and driving residents across town on field trips. She was elected to the board in 1989 and has served in some capacity ever since. The residents are always top of mind for her, and she has spearheaded several programs and projects to improve the quality of life of our seniors.

One example includes Friendly Faces, a resident visiting program aimed to improve resident socialization and reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness. Residents and community members are paired up based on interests and backgrounds, and volunteers visit them once every two weeks.



*Judy attends the annual MJHR Rosh Hashanah Party alongside her friends, Alice and Michael.*

When asked about what this award means to her, Royal replied, "It's just a true privilege to serve, I love it. The Home is a place – when you're here – you are brightening someone's day, someone's life. It's a joy, it's beautiful, it's a wonderful place to be, and I've always felt that."

Royal will officially accept the award with the team from Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab at the AJAS Annual Conference in March in San Francisco, California.

The Association of Jewish Aging Services was founded in 1960 as the North American Association of Jewish Homes and Housing for the Aging (NAJHHA). It was created and continues to function

as the central coordinator for homes and residential facilities for Jewish elderly in North America. AJAS is a unique forum that promotes and supports elder services in the context of Jewish values through education, professional development, and advocacy and community relationships.

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

## Bondi Chabad Rabbi: Antisemitism Must Not Become What Defines Us



*Lighting candles in Tel Aviv in memory of the victims of the mass shooting on Bondi Beach that targeted the Jewish community during Chanukah celebrations, Dec. 14, 2025. Credit: Erik Marmor/Flash90.*

*By Etgar Lefkovits*

(JNS) – An unabashedly strong and robust Judaism that is intrinsically connected to the heritage of the nation is the answer to the antisemitism around the globe, director of Chabad of Bondi in Sydney, Australia said last Tuesday at an event in Israel.

"For us, antisemitism is not a theory. It is not a policy debate. It is not a headline," Rabbi Yoram Ulman said in an address to the International Conference on Combating Antisemitism in Jerusalem. "It is an empty seat at the Shabbat table. It is a voice that will never be heard again."

Ulman's son-in-law, Rabbi Eli Schlanger, was among the 15 people killed in the Chanukah Bondi Beach attack, the most lethal assault on Jews since the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas-led massacre.

"When we speak of antisemitism, it is not academic; it is painfully and unavoidably real," he added.

The Leningrad-born Chabad Rabbi said that "more Judaism, not less" was the answer to terrorism and hatred, despite the tendency, when hunted, is to "hide, blend in and become less visible" out of fear.

At the same time, he said, Jewish identity must focus on the positive, noting that antisemitism cannot be defeated with diplomacy alone.

"If Jewish identity is built only on shared trauma, then we hand our children a burden, not a gift," he said. "Antisemitism must never be what defines us, [but rather] a positive Jewish identity."

Steering clear of politics in his address, he added: "Dignity attracts respect; fear attracts disdain."

"I carry a grief that does not fade. But grief must not become our identity," he said. "When we live our truth without apology, darkness retreats and light wins." **HW**

# Young Israel Helps Restock Memphis FJFS's Kosher Food Pantry



## By Rabbi Akiva Males

In the weeks between Thanksgiving and January 1, Young Israel of Memphis proudly ran a very successful campaign to help restock the Kosher Food Pantry at the Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman Jewish Family Service (FJFS). It was inspiring to see how generously the Shul responded to this important cause.

Young Israel extends a hearty Yasher

Koach to everyone who participated in this great mitzvah!

An appreciative note from Rashki Osina, FJFS Director of Social Services, can be read below:

Dear Young Israel of Memphis, On behalf of Wendy and Avron B. Fogelman Jewish Family Service I want to thank you for your very generous donation for the Peggy E. & L.R. Jalenak, Jr. Kosher Food Pantry.

Young Israel has always been such a vital partner in stocking our food pantry. It is because of this type of generosity that we are able to serve those individuals in need of assistance. Each week we have the privilege of providing pantry bags with shelf stable food for our clients. In 2025, Fogelman JFS distributed close to 4,000 pantry bags. We are only able to provide this service, due to donations like yours!

Thank you for partnering with Fogelman JFS to meet the needs of so many.

Sincerely,  
Rashki Osina  
Fogelman JFS Director of Social Services

Young Israel's Rabbi Akiva Males can be reached at rabbi@yiom.org **HW**

# North Carolina Governor Commits to Combating Antisemitism, Other Hatred



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

(JNS) – North Carolina Gov. Josh Stein marked International Holocaust Remembrance Day on Jan. 27 with a commitment to combating “antisemi-

tism and other forms of hate,” and by illuminating the State Capitol Building with yellow lights.

“Antisemitic attacks, currently on the

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## Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. Feb. 6, 2026 / 19 Shevat, 5786 .....5:15 p.m.  
Havdalah, Sat. Feb. 7, 2026 / 20 Shevat, 5786 ..... 6:13 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Yitro

rise, are an assault on the humanity of all people,” the governor’s proclamation stated. “We should always take time to remember the millions of men, women and children who were killed simply because of their beliefs and their heritage; and we must avow that the atrocities and genocide of the Holocaust never be repeated.”

“Today, we recommit ourselves to

never forgetting one of the darkest chapters in world history, when the Nazis killed 6 million Jews and millions more Slavs, Roma, and disabled and LGBTQ people,” said Stein, who is Jewish.

“This day reminds us to stand up for our neighbors, condemn all acts of hatred in our communities, and do everything in our power to keep this awful history from repeating itself. In their memory, let us resolve to combat antisemitism and other forms of hate wherever we see them,” he added.

Stein said the Capitol will be lit with yellow lights as a symbol of the state’s “commitment to rooting out antisemitism and preserving history.”

The proclamation noted that “as of August 2024, 35 U.S. states plus the District of Columbia have adopted a non-legally binding ‘working definition’ of antisemitism,” referring to North Carolina’s adoption of the IHRA definition of antisemitism. **HW**

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# US Missile Destroyer Docks Near Eilat Amid Iran Tensions

By JNS Staff

(JNS) – A U.S. guided-missile destroyer docked near Israel’s southern port city of Eilat last Friday, as Washington continues to reposition military assets across the region amid rising tensions with Iran.

The IDF said the arrival of the USS Delbert D. Black was pre-planned and part of ongoing cooperation between the Israel Defense Forces and the United States military.

U.S. warships routinely operate in the Red Sea, though port calls in Eilat are relatively rare and typically reflect heightened coordination between the two allies.

In recent weeks, Washington has increased the movement of military assets into the Middle East, expanding both defensive and offensive capabilities. The deployments provide U.S. President Donald Trump with additional options should Washington decide to take direct action against Tehran.

The USS Abraham Lincoln and its carrier strike group entered the Middle East region [last] Monday “to promote regional security and stability,” U.S. Central Command stated.

Israeli broadcaster Kan News, citing an unnamed security source, reported

that the aircraft carrier’s arrival is part of broader U.S.-Israeli security coordination, including expanded naval presence and elevated readiness levels in anticipation of possible regional escalation.

According to the report, Israel’s security establishment is closely monitoring U.S. military movements amid assessments that the coming period could include decisive steps related to Iran, with concerns about possible regional spillover.

Israeli security agencies are also increasing readiness levels in case of a U.S. decision to act militarily against Iran, the report said.

Among the issues under review is ensuring sufficient early-warning capabilities for Israeli civilians in the event of an Iranian attack.

The Iran issue was discussed during the IDF’s weekly security assessment last Thursday at military headquarters in Tel Aviv, attended by senior commanders and security officials. Similar discussions have taken place in recent weeks as regional tensions have risen. **HW**

# The MJCC Larisa and Ben Baer Senior Adult Club Happenings

Lunch is served at 11:30 a.m., and speakers and entertainment start at noon.

Wednesday, February 4

**Speaker: Sarah Cavanaugh with The Avaline at River Oaks**

**Sarah’s topic will be A More Healthy You.**

She will be joined by an occupational therapist from Fox Therapy. They will focus on things seniors can do to remain in their home and mobile. The last session with Fox Therapy was full of practical tips everyone in the room was happy to hear. Come have a good kosher lunch and learn some useful information at the same time. Dessert will be served following the talk.

Monday, February 9

**Speaker: Kristen Miller with Mid-South Aging Consultants**

**Kristin’s topic will be The Agony of De-Sleep.**

As we get older, sometimes a good night’s sleep gets to be more and more of an issue. Come hear some ideas to get that restful sleep we all need. Reservations are only needed for the lunch.

Wednesday, February 11

**Field Trip Tour of Dixon Gallery**

The Dixon has a new Interactive Gallery called Meet the Dixons. If you have wondered about who created the original home that became Dixon Gallery and Gardens, come see this interesting exhibit that talks about Margaret and Hugo Dixon. Their dream of creating a place to celebrate art, nature and beauty became a reality in 1976 with the opening of Dixon Gallery and Gardens. There is no charge for the Dixon Gallery tour. Only \$2 for the roundtrip bus from the MJCC to Dixon. Reservations are limited so please call by the day before.

**SPECIAL! Every Tuesday and Thursday there will be an Ice Cream Social** following the Senior Lunch at no additional charge! A Parve Ice Cream Treat will be served.

Please join us Monday through Friday for a delicious kosher lunch prepared by the kitchens at the Memphis Jewish Home. The cost is only \$2 for seniors. Reservations are required by 1 p.m. the day before attendance.

To make a reservation, contact: Steve Kaplan, Adult Services Coordinator 901-259-9220 • [stevekaplan@jccmemphis.org](mailto:stevekaplan@jccmemphis.org)

Steve’s hours are Monday–Thursday, 9:30 a.m.–2:30 p.m.

Reservations may also be made through the MJCC front desk at 901-761-0810. **HW**

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Commentary

# Remembrance, Responsibility, and the Survivors Among Us

By Amy Israel-Pregulman and Talia Kaplan

From California to Connecticut, from Florida to Illinois, from Colorado to New York, the stories we hear are similar.

A Chicago-based Holocaust Survivor and her husband were experiencing a time of unexpected hardship. When their modest state cash benefit was abruptly discontinued for several months without explanation, the couple struggled to afford groceries. They received food support “just at the moment it was most needed” when she was unsure how they would manage day-to-day, and it “relieved the anxiety” from the hunger they experienced as children in ghettos and concentration camps.

In Miami, an 88-year-old Holocaust Survivor recalls fleeing on foot at just four-years-old with his mother and brother to a train station, where they were forced into cattle cars and sent to Siberia. His childhood memories of hunger and fear are resurfacing as he is alone, trying to care for himself. He says the help he depends on allows him “to survive” even though the struggles remind him of his youth.

One Survivor, who lived alone in Rochester, New York, had a very active life until she had a medical emergency. For the first time since her childhood, she found herself worrying about basic expenses and needed to ask for help. She shared how the food assistance she received gave her “a feeling of comfort and safety.”

Many Russian-speaking Survivors in Hartford, Connecticut, remember experiencing “extreme hunger in the concentration camps” and share that the

food pantry and its dedicated appointment slots reduce wait times and allowing them to stock their freezers “just in case” gives them great reassurance as they recall extreme food shortages and long lines for scraps of food as children.

Today, 31,000 Holocaust Survivors are still alive in the United States. And shockingly, our data shows that more than one-third of them live in poverty and struggle to meet their most basic needs, including food, medicine, and rent. This past fall, the issue was exacerbated by the lapse in SNAP benefits during the government shutdown. For Survivors who were forced into starvation under Nazi rule, food insecurity is more than economic hardship, it is a psychological wound reopened.

On January 27, the world will pause to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the 81st anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau. We will recite familiar words – never again, never forget, remember the six million. Ceremonies will be held, candles lit, names read aloud. Of course, these rituals matter, but when our remembrance stops at symbolism, it risks becoming hollow.

We have the profound responsibility to listen, to honor, to lift up, and to care for Holocaust Survivors while they are still with us. Our Survivors are living reminders that a society is defined by how it treats its most vulnerable members.

During a single day of the SNAP benefits lapse, KAVOD Survivors of the Holocaust Emergency Fund (SHEF) received \$30,000 in requests for food

assistance alone. Today, months later, nearly half of all requests are still for food. Survivors who endured ghettos, camps, and years in hiding as children are now forced to make impossible choices between groceries and medical care in the final years of their lives. That reality should stop us cold.

The Survivors among us are living witnesses. Their bodies carry the scars of starvation, forced labor, and trauma. They deserve to age with the knowledge that their next meal is coming, that they will be able to get to the doctor safely, and that their home is outfitted to meet their needs.

Since its founding in 2019, KAVOD SHEF has fulfilled more than 156,000 requests for emergency assistance – for groceries, rent, utilities, medical equipment, and home care. Demand has increased every year. Today, hundreds of requests come in daily through our national network of Jewish Federations and Jewish Family Service agencies partnering in more than 40 communities across the country.

These are not problems that any one organization or community can solve alone. It requires coordinated philanthropy and sustained public investment. It requires recognizing that honoring Survivors does not end with commemorative speeches or museum exhibits. It continues with grocery deliveries, home care visits, rent assistance, and policies that protect our most vulnerable.

International Holocaust Remembrance Day was created not only to honor the dead, but to safeguard the living and to confront the consequences of indifference. The promise of “never again” was never meant to apply only to mass extermination. It was also meant to prevent the slow erosion of dignity that comes when societies dehumanize

and look away from suffering they find inconvenient.

On International Holocaust Remembrance Day, we should certainly mourn all of those we lost. But we should also ask ourselves: What does remembrance demand of us now?

In 1975, Professor Elie Wiesel z”l called the global community to account in his Plea for the Survivors, “They told themselves that if by some miracle they survived, people would go out of their way to give them back their taste for life... They were convinced that, to make amends and clear their conscience, people everywhere would treat them as important visitors, guests of honor. That they would try to console them, heap kindness on them.” He continues, “The disappointment came almost at once. As they reentered the world, they found themselves in another kind of exile, another kind of prison. People welcomed them with tears and sobs, then turned away.”

Like a shofar’s cry echoing across time, more than 50 years later, Professor Wiesel’s words jolt our conscience and call us to action. They remind us of our sacred responsibility to honor, to care for, and to respect our Survivors. We cannot and must not ignore what they lived through, nor what their needs are today. This is our moral obligation.

If we allow Survivors to live their final years in poverty and fear, then remembrance becomes performance rather than principle. The true measure of our commitment to Holocaust memory is not only how eloquently we speak about the past, but how urgently we act in the present.

Amy Israel-Pregulman is the co-founder and executive director of KAVOD.

Talia Kaplan is the executive director of Seed the Dream Foundation. **HW**

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## Emory No Longer Employs Daughter of Sanctioned Iranian Official

By Mike Wagenheim

(JNS) – The daughter of a U.S.-sanctioned Iranian official is no longer an employee of Emory University following a public outcry.

Sandra Wong, dean of the private university’s highly ranked medical school in Atlanta, wrote to the faculty last Saturday that a “physician, who is the daughter of a senior Iranian government official,” is no longer an employee.

Wong didn’t name Dr. Fatemeh Ardeshir-Larijani, an oncologist, whom a Georgia congressman asked the university to fire. The doctor’s faculty webpage and Emory Healthcare page were no longer available as of last Saturday.

Ardeshir-Larijani was an assistant professor in the department of hematology and medical oncology at the medical school.

Her father is Ali Larijani, secretary of Iran’s Supreme Council for National Security, who has served as a top nuclear deal negotiator with Washington. The Trump administration sanctioned him, deeming him an “architect” of brutal crackdowns on protesters in Iran this month, which have reportedly left thousands, if not tens of thousands, dead.

Iranian-Americans held a silent protest outside Emory’s Winship Cancer Institute [week before last] to bring atten-

tion to Ardeshir-Larijani’s employment.

Rep. Buddy Carter (R-Ga.) wrote to Emory officials [week before last], urging them to fire Ardeshir-Larijani and for the state medical board to revoke her license.

“Her father has recently and publicly advocated violence against Americans and U.S. allies,” Carter wrote. “In light of these facts, Dr. Ardeshir-Larijani’s continued role treating American patients at a major U.S. medical institution is unacceptable.”

Wong wrote that the issue was a “personnel matter,” and the school would not say more. The Winship Cancer Institute issued a similar statement.

“Emory is committed to advancing patient care, research and education,” wrote Andrea Clement, the institute’s associate director of public relations. “Our employees are hired in full compliance with state and federal laws and other applicable requirements.”

Ardeshir-Larijani has reportedly studied and worked in the United States for years, receiving a green card in 2021.

The Iranian regime calls for death to America, but its leaders have repeatedly sent their children to study in the United States, including the son of then-foreign minister Javad Zarif. **HW**

# Netanyahu Alleges That Israeli Soldiers Died Because US Arms 'Embargo' Meant They 'Didn't Have Enough Ammunition'



Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaks during the funeral of Ran Gvili, the final Israeli hostage in Gaza, Jan. 28, 2026. Credit: Ilia Yefimovich / AFP via Getty Images

By Philissa Cramer

(JTA) – Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu alleged in comments last Tuesday that Israeli soldiers died during the war in Gaza because of a Biden-era “embargo” on weaponry.

“We paid a very heavy price in the war,” Netanyahu said during an appearance in Jerusalem. “Part of it is that at a certain point, we simply didn’t have enough ammunition, and people fell, heroes fell. Part of the loss of ammunition was also a result of the embargo.”

The Biden administration held back some heavy arms from Israel in mid-2024 in an effort to pressure Netanyahu not to enter the southern Gaza city of Rafah. It pledged to continue supplying other weapons.

Both Netanyahu and President Donald Trump, who resumed sending the heavy weapons in March 2025, have said the Biden-era restrictions amounted to an “embargo” and have charged that the Biden administration held back more arms than it said.

Biden administration officials immediately decried the comments, saying that Netanyahu was lying and emphasizing Biden’s personal and political support for Israel.

“Netanyahu is both not telling the truth and ungrateful to a president that literally saved Israel at its most vulnerable moment,” Amos Hochstein, whom Biden appointed as a Middle East envoy during the Gaza war, told Axios, in one example. He reiterated the point on X, where he noted that the Biden administration sent \$20 billion in military aid to Israel and also participated twice in deflecting Iranian missile attacks.

The comments come at a delicate time for Netanyahu. The retrieval earlier last week of Ran Gvili, the last Israeli hostage in Gaza, adds pressure for him to support a new phase in the Gaza ceasefire which has the potential to become a wedge between him and Trump.

At the same time, the prime minister is facing potential political turmoil at home, with elections required before the end of the year and a budget process getting underway (last) Wednesday that could trigger earlier elections if lawmakers cannot reach a deal over haredi Orthodox army enlistment.

The comments also come as Netanyahu has recently said he wants to “taper” U.S. military aid to zero over the next decade and instead position Israel to fund its own defense. A top Republican lawmaker, Sen. Lindsey Graham, said he thought the shift should come sooner. **HW**



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# Meet Mitchell Lansky

*In 2027, Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab (MJHR) will celebrate 100 years of serving patients. In honor of this accomplishment and all the people who made it possible, we are telling 100 of their stories.*

*Over the next two years, we will publish 100 Stories for 100 Years – a weekly column spotlighting resident, staff, and lay leader stories with the Home from throughout our history. This week, we are sharing words from our current Board President, Mitchell Lansky.*



**Mitchell Lansky.**

*By Shoshana Center*

**MJHR: Tell us about yourself (hometown, education, family, hobbies, career).**

I'm an attorney and have been practicing estate planning and elder law for about 40 years. I earned my bachelor's degree from the University of Florida, my law degree from Cumberland School of Law in Birmingham, and then I got a master's in tax at Washington University. I'm married to Joyce, we have three

grown children, two of whom are married, and we have three grandchildren. We're fortunate to have two of our children living in town.

I'm active in a few different agencies that are important to me. Of course, the Memphis Jewish Home & Rehab (MJHR), where I serve as president of the board. I'm also involved in the Wolf River Conservancy. And I'm a cyclist and runner.

**MJHR: How did you become connected to MJHR?**

Since my background is in estate planning, elder law, and probate, I deal with nursing homes and similar agencies. I was invited to the board, I believe, by Howard Hayden, a past president. My father was at MJHR for rehabilitation many years ago, so I was very familiar with the Home.

**MJHR: Share your favorite MJHR story.**

I have quite a few. One of the funniest was when my dad was at the Home for rehab. He was older and having some memory issues then. I was getting a little bit aggravated, because every time



**Mitchell at the 2025 MJHR Annual Meeting alongside new board members and Executive Director, Bobby Meadows.**

I'd go in his room, his stuff was messy. But my dad was very neat and organized and had everything the way he liked it. I couldn't understand what was happening. Then we learned: Even though he wasn't working anymore, every morning when he got up, he packed up his stuff in his bag and tried to go to work at Mr. Hats, his store!

I've met several of the residents who've been there a long time. We call it their home, and they consider it their home — they are very comfortable and very proud of it. I've visited other Jewish Homes in other cities — what we have at MJHR, the programs, our staff, our facility, we're second to none in the whole country. It's such an honor to be involved with MJHR.

**MJHR: What do you wish for the future 100 years of the organization?**

Well, that's one of my goals as I've been the president this past couple of years: to make sure that we're around for many, many years. Unfortunately, the industry is changing. A lot of institutions are becoming for-profit throughout the country, but we like the nonprofit model we have at MJHR. We want to make sure we don't sit on our laurels, and we're always looking to the future and making sure we address the needs of our community.

In addition to our skilled nursing, adult daycare, and rehabilitation, at

some point, I'd like to see assisted living offered, maybe even independent living. That's my goal and vision for the Home in the future, and for it to be around in 100 years. I want our 100th celebration to be a big celebration!

**MJHR: What makes you love serving on the board of the Home?**

Serving on the board is an honor, but it's also one of the easiest things I've done, because we have such an incredible staff. If you look at different skilled nursing facilities throughout the country, especially in Memphis, you notice that there's a lot of turnover. We have so many people at the Memphis Jewish Home that have been there for many, many years. Even our administrator, Bobby Meadows, has been there for almost 13 years. He is an amazing person. There are a lot of staff who have been there longer too. All of our staff love what they do. They're there to serve the residents, and they really do that. I think the residents feel that way.

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

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# Your Best Self

A monthly column by **Greg Graber** (Graber Performance Coaching LLC)

## A Life of Worry

If ever I write my autobiography, I think I have a good name for it. I would consider calling it “A Life of Worry.” It is in my nature to worry a lot. While all of us worry, some of us are wired to worry more than others. Other factors, like the ways in which we were raised, impact our frequency to worry as well. I learned to worry honestly, as both of my parents were world-class worriers.

I am under the strong conviction that we often worry about things we can’t control, because we aren’t comfortable with change and uncertainty. However, if you think about it, two of the only constants in our lives are change and uncertainty. We can count on them. They aren’t ever going away. Worrying about things we can’t control only intensifies our suffering.

As a look back on my life of worry, I now realize that most of the things I catastrophized in my mind through worry never actually came to fruition. I look back on this, and I lament all of the time I wasted trying to replay the past and obsessing about the future in my mind. Over the years, through my mindfulness

practice, I now realize that the present moment is the only reality we have, as the past is dead, and the future is typically just fantasy. It is helpful to remind myself of this often when I start mentally “time travelling” to the past or the future.

My mindfulness practice over the years has helped me to not worry as much. I often tell my clients that we can never totally do away with our worries, but with practice, we can learn how to respond in ways that are more helpful in terms of cutting off the downward spiral of obsessive worry in a quicker manner, before it gets out of hand. From a mindfulness perspective, the worse thing we can do is to mentally resist what we are worrying about. Trying to push it away or ignoring it only makes the worry stronger. Instead, we can bring our awareness to what we are worrying about. Once we do this, we should label what we are worrying about. There’s an old saying, “If you can name it, you can tame it.” This helps.

Having a mantra (a short phrase) when you catch yourself worrying about things you have no control over

can be helpful. Next time when you find yourself fretting over something and it seems hopeless, ask yourself “Is this helpful?” It is a rhetorical question that you already know the answer to, but it will help bring you out of that annoying worry loop.

This day and age, many people worry so much that they often get worried about how much they are worrying. Our worries never go away, but the good news is that we can learn how to deal with them in healthy ways by learning new skills and techniques. **HW**



**—GRABER—**  
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**Greg Graber, the author of *Slow Your Roll-Mindfulness for Fast Times*, is an internationally respected coach who helps teams, schools, organizations and individuals thrive. From NBA coaches to soccer moms, he offers mental performance coaching, wellness counseling and executive coaching. For more information (and *The Hebrew Watchman* discount), email Greg at [info@greggraber.com](mailto:info@greggraber.com), or visit his website at [www.greggraber.com](http://www.greggraber.com).**



## World Landmarks Lit Up for Holocaust Remembrance

By **JNS Staff**

(JNS) – Landmarks across Israel and around the world were illuminated in yellow and emblazoned with the hashtag #WeRemember to mark International Holocaust Remembrance Day last Tuesday, part of a global campaign by the World Jewish Congress.

Buildings from the Reichstag and Brandenburg Gate in Berlin to the Azrieli Towers, Knesset and Ben Gurion Air-

port in Israel glowed in solidarity with Holocaust victims and survivors. Other sites in Europe, including in the Czech Republic, Moldova, Greece, Brussels and Geneva, also joined the initiative.

In Germany, hundreds of bus stops displayed images of Holocaust survivors and public figures holding “We Remember” signs, while Bundesliga soccer clubs displayed banners before matches.

“Eighty-one years ago today, Auschwitz-Birkenau was liberated,” said WJC President Ronald S. Lauder. “We are grateful to have committed allies in our fight to remember the six million and to build a more secure world.”

Launched nearly a decade ago, the

#WeRemember campaign has become the world’s largest digital effort for Holocaust remembrance, supported by UNESCO, Meta and TikTok. The platforms direct users to [aboutholocaust.org](http://aboutholocaust.org), an educational resource that reached more than 4 million people last year. **HW**

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# Five Important Estate Planning Documents To Consider

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.wellsfargo.com/michael-stein

There is a common misconception that we can safely put off estate planning until our health starts failing or someone close to us dies. In reality, everyone already has an estate plan — the only question is whether it is your own or your state’s plan for you. A good estate plan identifies whom you want to:

- Inherit your assets, such as bank, retirement, and investment accounts
- Take care of your minor children
- Make legal and/or health care decisions for you if you become ill and incapacitated

Developing an estate plan is about taking control. You are controlling how assets are managed and distributed along with who will handle these tasks when you are unable to do so.

*Bottom line: If you don’t decide, state law has already decided for you.*

### Five important documents

Your situation’s complexity will determine which documents your plan requires; however, these five are often included in an estate plan:

A **will** provides instructions for distributing your assets to your beneficiaries when you die. In it, you name a personal representative (executor) to pay final expenses and taxes and distribute your re-

maining assets. Many wills are drafted to “pour over” into a trust, which can keep your estate from having to be administered through the courts — a long and expensive process called “probate.”

By transferring assets to a **revocable living trust** you can provide for continued management of your assets during your lifetime and after your death — possibly for generations to come.

A **power of attorney** lets you give a trusted individual management power over your assets if you can’t manage them yourself. Powers of attorney can be “general” (which become ineffective upon your incapacity), “durable” (which stay in effect, even during incapacity, until they are revoked), immediately effective, or “springing” (effective only upon a certain event like your incapacity). Each kind is effective only while you’re alive.

A **health care power of attorney** lets you choose someone to make medical decisions for you if you are unable to communicate your wishes or don’t have legal capacity to make treatment decisions for yourself.

A **living will** expresses your intentions regarding the use of life-sustaining measures if you are terminally ill.

It doesn’t give anyone the authority to speak for you.<sup>1</sup>

### If you have an estate plan, remember to review and update it

Remember, establishing a plan is only the beginning. It’s important to review your plan regularly to ensure it continues to meet your needs. Significant life events, such as relocation to a different state, marriage, divorce, or the birth of a child, are likely to call for changes to your plan. You need to consider whether your estate planning documents, asset titling, and beneficiary designations have been coordinated to allow your assets to be distributed according to your wishes. A regular review of whom you have named as agent, executor, guardian for minor children, and trustee is important to ensure those named are still willing and able to serve when needed.

### Turn to a team of professionals

Taking the first steps to create an estate plan can seem intimidating, but it doesn’t have to be. The key is to rely on a team of trusted professionals, including a financial advisor, estate planning attorney, and accountant. They know the questions to ask and can help you avoid potential pitfalls.

If you don’t currently have relationships with these individuals, a financial advisor is a good place to start. He or she can discuss his or her role in the planning process and can refer you to an estate planning attorney who can work with you to draw up the necessary documents.

<sup>1</sup> In states that have adopted the Uni-

form Health Care Decisions Act, like California, health care powers of attorney and living wills are often combined into a single document called an “advance health care directive.”

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# Vance Omits Mention of Jews from Holocaust Remembrance Day Statement, Incensing Jewish Critics on Both Sides of the Aisle

By Andrew Lapin

(JTA) – Vice President JD Vance made a statement marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day that failed to mention either Jews or Nazis, igniting further Jewish criticism of the vice president from both sides of the aisle.

The statement was the latest in a series of comments Vance has made that have triggered concern regarding his hesitancy to call out antisemites in the conservative movement.

“Today we remember the millions of lives lost during the Holocaust, the millions of stories of individual bravery and heroism, and one of the enduring lessons of one of the darkest chapters in human history: that while humans create beautiful things and are full of compassion, we’re also capable of unspeakable brutality,” Vance tweeted last Tuesday. “And we promise never again to go down the darkest path.”

His post included photos of the vice president and his wife, Usha, visiting a Holocaust memorial site, meeting representatives and signing a guestbook. Vance visited Dachau last year.

Tablet, the Jewish digital magazine that promotes conservative ideas but has drawn a line of skepticism around the vice president, swiftly criticized Vance’s comments.

“Thank you Mr. Vice President for this unique commemoration of the Holocaust that manages to avoid mentioning Jews or condemning Nazis,” the site’s Twitter account posted. The post was retweeted by Jews across the political spectrum, including pro-Palestinian activist and former Congressional candidate Cameron Kasky, and its sentiments were echoed by many other Jews.

“It really takes effort on the part of Vice President Vance to issue a Holo-

caust Remembrance Day statement like this without any mention of six million Jews lost, the Jewish people, Nazis, or the issue of antisemitism,” Halie Soifer, CEO of the Jewish Democratic Council of America, tweeted.

“It’s not easy to leave Jews and Antisemitism out of your statement on International Holocaust Remembrance Day. Yet here we are,” wrote Joel Petlin, superintendent of the heavily Hasidic Kiryas Joel school district and conservative political commentator.

Other Trump administration officials, including Secretary of State Marco Rubio as well as the official White House statement, mentioned Jews or antisemitism in their own commemorations of the holiday. Some arms of the government had blasted Democratic Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz the day before the holiday for comparing immigration raids in his state to Anne Frank.

American Jewish groups have anxiously parsed Vance’s approach to antisemitism over the last few months.

The vice president has previously failed to condemn a college student’s antisemitic question; remains close with Tucker Carlson; and has said several times that antisemitism is not a problem in the conservative movement. “We

have far more important work to do than canceling each other,” he said at a Turning Point USA conference in December.

He has also said that stopping immigration is the best way to combat antisemitism. **HW**

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## Crossword: Jewish Athletes

### ACROSS

2 Madcap Maxie, 1934 World Heavyweight boxing champ

4 NBA All-Star, aka Sputnik

6 Sid \_\_\_\_\_, Chicago Bears QB, 1939-1950

8 Hank \_\_\_\_\_, the Hebrew Hammer, Detroit Tigers

9 Zeev \_\_\_\_\_, pro ice hockey player

10 Olympic gymnast, six medals

12 Winner, US and Australian Tennis Opens

13 Yankees pitcher Max \_\_\_\_\_

14 AFL and NFL Hall of Famer

### DOWN

1 Max \_\_\_\_\_, American pro golfer

3 Julian \_\_\_\_\_, Patriots wide receiver

4 Israeli-American WNBA player

5 Kevin \_\_\_\_\_, Red Sox 1st base, Gold Glove Award

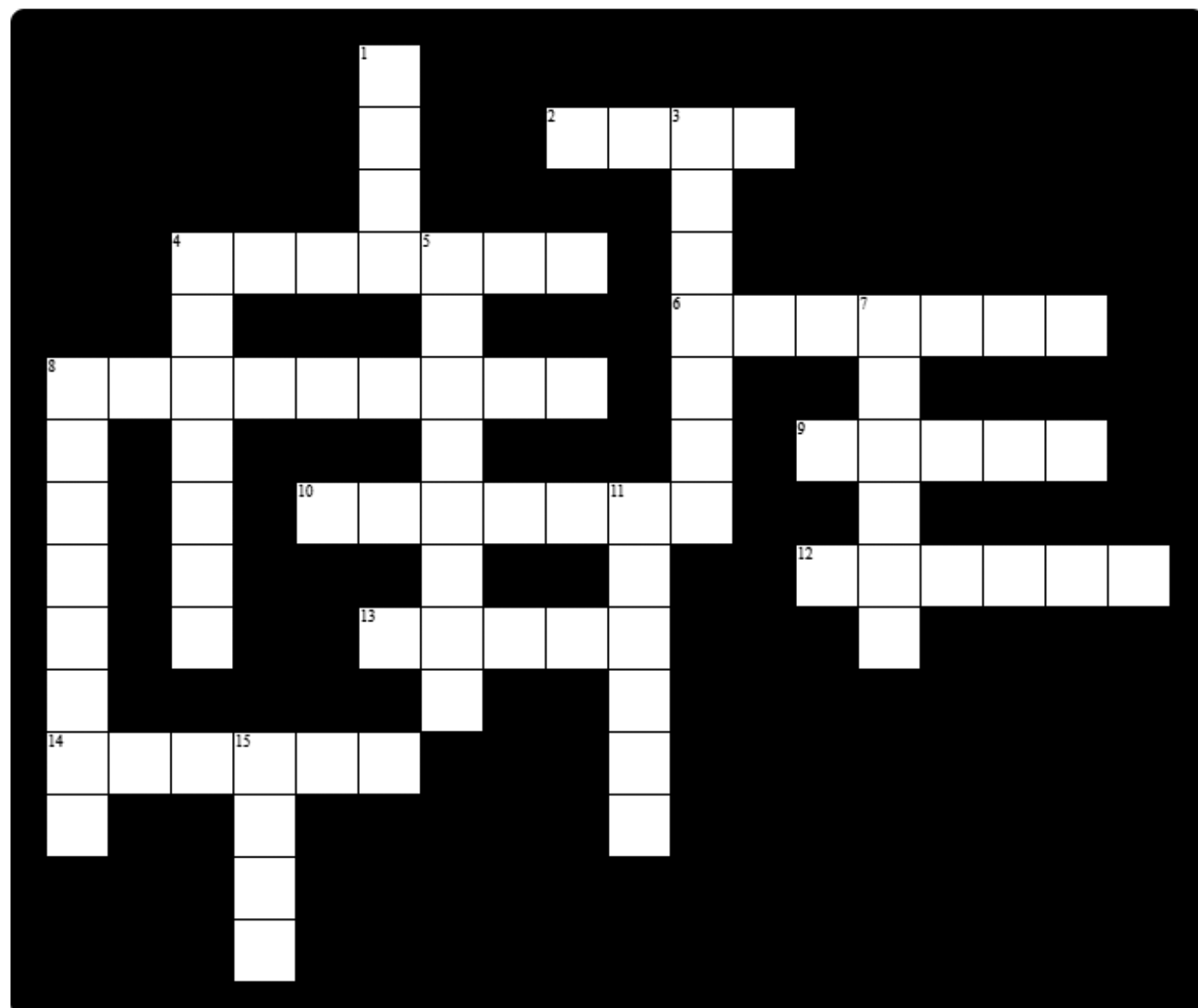
7 Sandy \_\_\_\_\_, Dodgers pitcher

8 wrestler, actor, pro football player

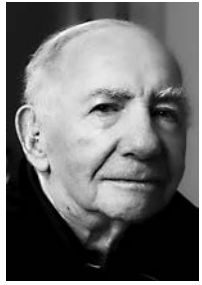
11 Israeli NBA forward

15 \_\_\_\_\_ Spitz, US Olympic swimmer

Answers on page 9



# Tu B'Shevat



*Editor's note: This story is being reprinted in memory of Ted Roberts in appreciation of his longtime service as a newspaper columnist.*

By Ted Roberts

Tu B'Shevat – the 15th of Shevat – is my favorite holiday. My rabbi laughs (he is blessed with great tolerance). He cites Pesach, the High Holidays, etc. I answer with the miracle of nature and the proof certainty of nature as a display of G-d's power. Yes, G-d gave us Torah from a mountaintop in the Sinai Peninsula, so I'm told and so I believe. But there are skeptics who might retain 10% doubt of this miracle. And Clisha restored the dead to life, and the Red Sea split in two to create a passage for our fleeing ancestors. And so forth. Events reported to us in the Humash, which the good Jew

believes. But believing is one thing and seeing is another thing. Nobody has to tell me that a seed becomes a tree. I see it myself. I don't have to rely on holy books or a prophet to tell me. I know a field sown with seed corn will soon be decorated with splashes of green. I can cite 10,000 more examples from the birth of a child from a microscopic speck of sperm to the wings on the back of the Maple seed. I have seen both and they make the parting of the sea a stage set. These are true miracles. Why aren't we impressed with the power of such a Creator? That's why I love Tu B'Shevat – and its celebration of trees. Its proofs lie in my world – observable, tangible, non-disputable. In terms of credibility, it dwarfs all of our holidays.

And how effectively can it be demonstrated to affect the faith of our young ones? Be as dramatic as you choose about the miracle of manna (say it was sugared, lo fat, no cal, and it lowered their cholesterol) and a six-year-old will politely listen and think that's nice. But

show him the Oak tree you planted from an acorn 10 years ago and he'll say, "WOW!! You mean G-d transformed that pea-sized acorn into a condo for squirrels? That's a miracle – that's magic."

Yes, it is and bears witness to the transcendent ability of He who made Oak trees, fathers, and sons, and daughters. An obscure Midrash says that on the 6th day of creation the Holy One practiced his seed-to-human metamorphosis magic with the birth of a Fig tree for those that would follow Adam and Eve.

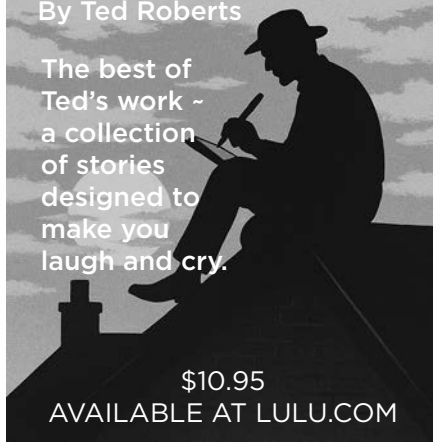
The New Year of Trees, we call it. And if you wandered – only half shod – for 40 years over the hot sands of the Sinai, you'd develop the same love affair with trees that initiated Tu B'Shevat – because a tree meant more than an interruption of a vacant landscape. It meant shade, maybe fruit, and often a well. A prayer for trees would be on your lips when it was only a dot on the horizon.

And you might want to remember that on this modest holiday even the Tsadiks

## SCRIBBLER ON THE ROOF

By Ted Roberts

The best of Ted's work - a collection of stories designed to make you laugh and cry.



put down the Talmud and marvel that the creator put wings on maple seeds.

*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*

# US Ambassador to Israel Suggests He Favors Iran Strike

By Etgar Lefkovits

(JNS) – U.S. Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee suggested last Tuesday that it was better to strike Iran rather than be forced to constantly deal with the Islamic State's terror proxies.

His comments come as the United States is increasing its military presence in the region amid threats to attack Iran in the wake of the violent repression of anti-government protests there.

"Many plates of poison – Hamas, Islamic Jihad, Hezbollah, the Houthis – are being served all out of the same kitchen, Tehran," Huckabee said in conversation with JNS CEO Alex Traiman at the International Conference on Combating Antisemitism in Jerusalem. "You can change the menu; better to burn the kitchen down and not let them serve those plates anymore."

He said that Christians need to understand that they will be the next target of the Islamists.

"You have been the appetizer; we are the entrée," he said.

**Trump as the 'ultimate pragmatist'**

Huckabee said that he sees U.S. President Donald Trump as the "ultimate pragmatist," who is "always thinking 'will it work?' 'Will it make things better?'"

"He has been the most effective president in my lifetime and the most consequential when it comes to foreign policy," he said.

**Antisemitism on the left**

The staunchly pro-Israel Baptist minister-turned ambassador said that the root of Jew hatred was spiritual at its core.

"If you don't believe there is a God, or that you are your own God, or that the

environment is your God, then your first target is naturally Jews," said Huckabee. "When people hate God, they're naturally going to hate the people who, throughout history, from the time on Mount Moriah right here in Jerusalem, represented those whom God first spoke to in a very personal and real way."

"The root of Jew hatred is not political, not economic, but spiritual," he said.

**Antisemitism on the right**

Huckabee, who has not shied away from denouncing antisemites on his own side of the political spectrum, such as conservative commentator Tucker Carlson, said that antisemitism on the right has "grown very rapidly because it is profitable."

"It doesn't make sense that a man in

his 50s, whom I've known for years with a completely different worldview and base, suddenly flipped," Huckabee said of Carlson. "What happened? I don't know. Is it more profitable for him to do what he's doing now than what he was doing when he was at Fox News? He wouldn't be doing it if it wasn't."

**Unique focus on antisemitism**

No single president, either Democrat or Republican, has focused on antisemitism the way Trump has, said Huckabee, citing both Trump's Jewish daughter and grandchildren and unflinching support for the State of Israel from his first term in office until today.

"Deep down, Trump believes if you bless Israel, you will be blessed; if you curse Israel, you will be cursed," said Huckabee. **HW**

# ISRAEL INSIGHTS

## Home at Last

By Howard Weisband

A gripping few days.

On Monday, January 26, the body of the last remaining hostage, Ran Gvili, z"l, in Gaza was found.

Israel Police Staff Sergeant Major Gvili was returned to Israel, to his family, for burial, 843 days following October 7, 2023.

Ran Gvili, age 24 at the time of his death, was recuperating comfortably from a broken shoulder on that October 7, at his parents' home in Meitar, a community in the Negev near Beersheva, where he grew up. After serving in the IDF, he joined the Israel Police where he quickly rose in rank.

When word came as to what was happening on October 7, Ran did not hesitate. He told his parents that he had to join his comrades, put on his uniform, and showed his father that he could still handle his firearms.

He fought terrorists first at Kibbutz Alumim, then at the Nova Music Festival where he escorted partygoers to safety, then returned to the kibbutz, and ultimately was killed in battle. His body was taken hostage along with others to Gaza.

His remains were found and returned not by Hamas as was required by the ceasefire agreement brokered by the United States, but as a result of an in-

tricate and dedicated, well-planned and executed, operation by the Israel Defense Forces, with some 700 soldiers involved.

As a result of an arrest by the IDF of an Islamic Jihad terrorist in Gaza about a month ago, with professional interrogation conducted by the army, it was learned that Gvili had been buried in a mass grave in a Gaza cemetery.

With bulldozers and shovels, soldiers in battle gear, unearthed some 250 bodies including finally that of Ran Gvili, still in his Israeli police uniform. A team of forensic specialists, including a number of dentists, positively identified Gvili's remains.

In keeping with Jewish practice and the standards of the IDF, all of the Moslem bodies unearthed in the operation were returned for burial in the grave site.

I watched two very emotional clips. The first was that of IDF soldiers, all still in battle gear, surrounding the grave site where their comrade was found, the last of the hostages, singing in Hebrew "Ani Maamin," "I Believe." The second occurred soon thereafter, where our soldiers surrounded Ran Gvili's body, now in a simple wood coffin draped with an Israeli flag, readied to be returned home,

singing together "Hatikvah," "The Hope," Israel's national anthem. (These clips can be found on YouTube.)

Today, January 28, I began writing this column on my laptop with my iPad next to me, as I watched Ran Gvili's funeral taking place in Meitar. His family, mother and father, brother and sister, sister-in-law, and close friends, all spoke lovingly, emotionally.

The backdrop is a large Hebrew sign, which reads in translation: "First to Leave. Last to Return."

Ran's mother Talik: "Wow, I'm the proud mother of Ran Gvili, the last to return. My beloved boy, the hope that you would return on two legs or even one gave us the strength to go through this without you."

Talik Gvili says she imagines her son in heaven, with a tribunal of all the slain heroes. She imagines him with a glass of arak, telling the others to come and listen to his eulogies. "It'll be cool," she imagines her son saying.

The President, Prime Minister, and others spoke as well.

Yes, a gripping few days, encompassed by the return home of Ran Gvili, z"l, our last hostage.

Somehow, too, I read a lot of coverage and commentary.

Daniel Gordis, in his "Israel from the Inside" column said it succinctly and best: "The last hostage is found and brought home; a nation sighs in relief, but with abiding sadness. Many, far too many, did not return alive to their families. Despite the deep relief at the return of Ran Gvili to Israel for burial, the pain of those who lost what was dearest to them did not end."

At the same time, Avi Mayer, former chief editor at the Jerusalem Post, headlined a detailed piece in his Jerusalem Journal that "The War is Over," given that all hostages living or deceased are now home and that Hamas has been decimated.

Respectfully, I disagree along with others. Our enemies have neither surrendered nor disarmed.

Unfortunately, the war is not over.

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**



# What We Know About the Car Ramming at Chabad-Lubavitch Headquarters in Brooklyn



Chabad Lubavitch headquarters in Brooklyn on Jan. 28. Credit: Louis Keene

By Louis Keene and Jacob Kornbluh

January 29, 2026 – (Forward/JTA) CROWN HEIGHTS – A driver crashed a car into an entrance of the Chabad-Lubavitch world headquarters in Brooklyn last Wednesday night, damaging the building on a night thousands had gathered there to celebrate.

Video circulating online and verified by eyewitnesses shows a vehicle repeatedly driving into the building's doors at 770 Eastern Parkway in the Crown Heights neighborhood, the main synagogue of the Chabad movement and one of the most recognized Jewish institutions in the world. One witness said the driver had yelled at bystanders to move out of the way before he drove down a ramp leading to the doors.

Police arrested the driver at the scene, and the building was evacuated as a precaution.

Rabbi Motti Seligson, a spokesperson for the movement, said on X that the ramming “seems intentional, but the motivations are unclear.” The evening’s festivities would carry on elsewhere undeterred, he said. Rabbi Mordechai Lightstone, Chabad’s social media director, said in a post on X that the attack did not appear to be antisemitic.

The incident occurred on a festive evening in the Chabad world – Yud Shevat, the day that Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson took the movement’s reins in 1951. Chabad revelers

from around the globe travel to Crown Heights each year to celebrate the occasion at farbrengens, or toasts, that are spread out in Chabad homes all over the neighborhood. The largest one is held at the movement’s iconic headquarters – Schneerson’s former home – with as many as 3,000 people in attendance.

Avrohom Pink, a 19-year-old Chabad yeshiva student, told the Forward that the group had concluded watching videos of the Rebbe for about an hour and were filtering out of the building when the incident occurred.

He and a couple dozen others were standing near the top of a ramp that led down to a pair of doors when a sedan turned into the driveway. Its driver – who Pink said looked like he was in his late twenties or early thirties, with shoulder-length hair – yelled at people to get out of the way.

“He was trying to pull in, yelling at everyone to move out of the way, interestingly – didn’t want to run people over, I guess,” Pink said. “Everyone moved out the way, and then he just drove down the ramp, rammed his car into those doors.”

While the car managed to push in the wooden doors, there was nobody in the anteroom where they led. The approximately 1,000 people Pink estimated were still in the building were behind

another pair of doors on the other side of that room. Over the din of their celebration, they couldn’t hear what was going on, Pink said.

The incident is being investigated as a hate crime by the NYPD Hate Crimes Task Force, Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch said. A bomb squad had found no explosive devices in his car, she said, and her department was increasing patrols outside all houses of worship.

The attack follows a rash of antisemitic incidents across the city. Last Tuesday, a rabbi was verbally harassed and assaulted in Forest Hills, Queens, and the week before, a playground frequented by Orthodox families in the Borough Park neighborhood in Brooklyn was graffitied with swastikas two days in a row. In both incidents, the suspects have been arrested. Antisemitic incidents accounted for 57% of reported hate crimes in 2025, according to the NYPD.

While the driver’s intent remained unclear, condemnation poured in from elected leaders.

City Council Speaker Julie Menin, who is Jewish, called it a “horrifying incident” and a “deeply concerning situation.” New York State Attorney General Letitia James, who has close ties to the community, posted on X, “These acts of violence against our Jewish communities, and any of our communities, need to stop. Now.”

Mayor Zohran Mamdani arrived at the scene about two hours after the incident was reported and denounced the attack. “This is deeply alarming, especially given the deep meaning and history of the institution to so many in New York and around the world,” Mamdani said in a statement, standing alongside Tisch, who is Jewish. “Any threat to a Jewish institution or place of worship must be taken seriously.”

The mayor added that “antisemitism has no place in our city” and expressed solidarity with the Crown Heights Jewish community.

During the election campaign and since taking office, Mamdani has repeatedly said he is committed to protecting Jewish New Yorkers and ensuring security around synagogues and other

houses of worship.

Pink, who lives in Crown Heights but originally hails from England, said he had flown in the previous four years for Yud Shevat celebrations.

On the day of his inauguration 74 years ago, Schneerson gave his speech declaring that the seventh generation of Chabad – his generation – would be the one that brings about the Messiah.

“It’s almost like the Rosh Hashana for us, for Lubavitchers,” Pink said.

His reaction to the crash was less fear than outrage.

“This is one of the holiest shuls in the world,” Pink said, “the shul of the Rebbe, on Yud Shevat, where thousands of people have flown in to be with the Rebbe in the Rebbe’s shul on this special day, and he’s going to drive in and destroy the Rebbe’s shul? How dare he?”

Others were inclined to see the timing as auspicious.

Izzie Gurevich, 21, had walked to the headquarters to take in the scene with two classmates from Machon L’Yahadus, a Chabad women’s yeshiva nearby. The trio were carrying tambourines – a ubiquitous women’s accessory on Yud Shevat that references Miriam the prophetess, who danced with the instrument after the crossing of the Red Sea in the Book of Exodus. Schneerson had implored his followers to prepare their tambourines for the day the Messiah arrives.

Gurevich and her classmates said the crash was a sign of the coming of the Messiah.

“The things that are happening in the world right now – the wars and all the other bad things – we have a lot of prophecies that tell us that before Mashiach comes, that will happen,” said Faiga Banina, her classmate. “Now we see this attack on the Jewish people, and it’s one more sign.”

When Banina told Shirly Grobninski, her roommate, she didn’t trifle with the details. “She came into the room saying, ‘Mashiach is coming, Mashiach is here. The car went into the door, and the door for Mashiach is open,’ Grobninski said. “I said, ‘My bag is packed.’” **HW**

# Border Patrol Commander Gregory Bovino Decries ICE ‘Gestapo’ Comparisons as Critics Target ‘Nazi-Coded’ Coat



US Customs and Border Protection Commander Gregory Bovino (C) stands flanked by fellow federal agents during a protest against ICE outside the Bishop Whipple Federal Building in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on Jan. 15, 2026. Credit: Octavio JONES / AFP

By Grace Gilson

(JTA) – Gregory Bovino, the Border Patrol commander-at-large who has led federal immigration enforcement in Minneapolis, pushed back against critics who compared ICE agents to the Gestapo in Nazi Germany.

“They’re trying to portray Border Patrol agents and ICE agents as Gestapo, Nazi and many other words,” Bovino told CNN last Sunday, pronouncing the word “Gestapo” with a German accent.

At a press conference last Sunday following the killing a day prior of Alex Pretti by Border Patrol agents, Bovino again decried the comparison.

“When politicians, community leaders and some journalists engage in that heated rhetoric we keep talking about, when they make the choice to vilify law enforcement, calling law enforcement names like a Gestapo, or using the term kidnapping, that is a choice that is made,” said Bovino. “There are actions

and consequences that come from those choices.”

Now, Bovino is reportedly leaving Minneapolis amid a backlash over the killings there. After The Atlantic reported last Monday night that Bovino had been demoted to his former post in El Centro, California, Homeland Security spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin wrote in a post on X that Bovino “has NOT been relieved of his duties.”

His exit comes amid pitched debate about the appropriateness of Holocaust analogies in describing ICE’s actions in Minneapolis. Critics of ICE have frequently likened its practices to that of the Nazis, while both defenders of ICE and Jewish voices have decried such comparisons as inappropriate.

A centerpiece of the discourse has been a greatcoat worn by Bovino, which some critics, and German media outlets, have said resembles the uniforms of Nazi soldiers.

“In his coat, Bovino looks like a Nazi officer,” Jörg Häntzschel wrote earlier this month in Süddeutsche Zeitung, a liberal German outlet. “Other countries

also had these coats, but Bovino’s rest of the outfit completes the Nazi look: a closely shaved head, as if he’d gone to the barber with a picture of Ernst Röhm,” a leading Nazi.

Rebutting the critique, Bovino told NewsNation that the coat was “Border Patrol issue” and that he had purchased it in 1999.

Still, the coat has inspired multiple reflections on how Bovino’s sartorial choices might convey, coming as immigration enforcement has grown increasingly militarized and as U.S. government social media accounts have posted apparent white supremacist dogwhistles.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom, a Democratic potential White House contender in 2028, described Bovino’s attire as “S.S. garb” at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, last week after calling the coat “Nazi-coded” on social media.

After news of Bovino’s demotion broke, Newsom wrote in a post on X, “Gestapo Greg is out. Keep the pressure up. It’s working.” **HW**