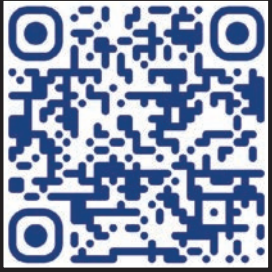


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The Original 10 Commandments (from the Movie) to Highlight Shavuot Ice Cream Party at Chabad



Rabbi Klein with the tablets that will be on display at Chabad’s Shavuot Ice Cream Party.

Chabad of Tennessee will host a “Shavuot Ice Cream Party” on the first day of Shavuot, Friday, May 22, at 11 a.m. at the Chabad Center for Jewish

Life, 2570 Kirby Parkway.

“Here’s the scoop,” said Rabbi Levi Klein. “When the Jewish people stood at the foot of Mount Sinai 3,338 years ago and received the Torah from G-d, they proclaimed together, ‘We will do and we will listen.’”

“Each year on the holiday of Shavuot,” he continued, “we relive this historic event as we recommit ourselves anew to the Torah and its teachings.”

Rabbi Klein explained that the central mitzvah of Shavuot is to hear the reading of the Ten Commandments from a Torah scroll. “Since it is also customary to enjoy dairy foods on Shavuot, Chabad will once again host its annual ‘Shavuot Ice Cream Party and Dairy Buffet,’ complete with an ice cream bar, cheesecake, blintzes, lasagna and more.”

“Adults and children are all welcome,” added Mrs. Rivky Klein, co-director of Chabad. “There will also be special activities for the kids.”

“This year,” Rabbi Klein added, “the community will have a unique opportunity to see one of the most iconic artifacts in film history – the original tablets used in the movie ‘The Ten Commandments.’”

“Cecil B. DeMille, the film’s legendary director and producer, was known for his attention to detail,” explained Rabbi Klein. “The tablets were carved from red granite quarried from the slopes of Mount Sinai and inscribed in ancient Canaanite script. However, the granite tablets, weighing over 60 pounds, proved too heavy for Charlton Heston, who portrayed Moses, to carry throughout filming, so a fiberglass replica was created for the movie as well.”

“Thanks to the generosity of Larry and Judy Moss, who own the tablets as part of their extensive memorabilia collection, both the original granite tablets and the fiberglass replicas will be on display at Chabad’s Ten Commandments Ice Cream Party,” Rabbi Klein said. “Mr. Moss will also share the fascinating history behind these remarkable pieces. It is truly an opportunity not to be missed.”

Rabbi Klein also noted that, according to Jewish tradition, the Torah was given at daybreak. “Our sages teach that the Jewish people overslept on the morning of the giving of the Torah and had to be awakened by G-d Himself. To rectify that, it has become customary to stay up throughout the first night of Shavuot studying Torah. This tradition is known as *Tikkun Leil Shavuot*.”

On Thursday night, May 21, Chabad

(See Shavuot Page 2)

Yom HaZikaron, Yom Ha’atzma’ut and Balance



Rabbi Males with Shimon Zweig at the MHA Yom Ha’atzma’ut parade. By Rabbi Akiva Males

We all need a healthy sense of balance in our lives. Without finding reasons to celebrate, we’d be overwhelmed by the somber occasions which come our way.

I experienced this in a most profound way while accompanying the students on the MHA’s recent joy-filled Yom Ha’atzma’ut parade.

On Yom HaZikaron – just one day earlier – I introduced my CYHSB class-

es to Michael Levin, z”l. While living in Pennsylvania (2007-2016), Layala and I got to know Michael’s family. Michael was a native of Philadelphia who moved to Israel and became a paratrooper in Israel’s Defense Forces.

Twenty years ago (in the summer of 2006), he was visiting his family in the U.S. when war broke out with Hezbollah in Lebanon. Leaving the safety of

his home, Michael chose to return to his IDF unit. Tragically, he fell in battle on August 1, 2006, at the young age of 22. In another few months, his family will commemorate his 20th Yahrtzeit.

Michael’s parents – Harriet and Mark Levin – founded The Lone Soldier Center in Israel in their son’s memory.

The previous week, Michael Levin, z”l, had been on my mind for two reasons. A) Yom HaZikaron – when we solemnly remember Israel’s fallen soldiers – was just around the corner. B) Michael fell during the Battle of Bint Jbeil in Southern Lebanon.

Over the course of that week, the name of that town – a Hezbollah stronghold – had been back in the news. After 20 years, the IDF’s brave soldiers returned to Bint Jbeil and successfully eliminated many threats to Northern Israel’s citizens. In a sense, the IDF was working hard to complete the vital task which young Michael Levin had begun in 2006.

I am certain that Harriet and Mark Levin also noticed that Bint Jbeil had been back in the news. One can only imagine the feelings that must have been going through their minds that week. I reached out to them and let them know that I would do my best to keep the memory of Michael Levin, z”l, alive in my classroom.



Michael Levin, z”l

After sharing Michael’s story with my classes, we studied Torah in his merit – and in the merit of all Israel’s fallen soldiers. Although meaningful, the day felt quite heavy.

For me, the next day’s spirited MHA Yom Ha’atzma’ut parade – complete with a smiling young Shimon Zweig perched on my shoulders – could not have come at a more perfect moment.

May G-d share His complete blessings of comfort and redemption with Israel and all the Jewish people speedily in our days!

Young Israel of Memphis’ Rabbi Akiva Males can be reached at rabbi@yiom.org [HW](https://www.yiom.org)

My Teen Israel Experience



Dotan Weiss at the Kotel with Yonatan Newman, Hila Loeser, Micah Lembeck and Hannah Skydell.

Dotan Weiss, son of Jessica and Dr. Daniel Weiss, is a junior at the Cooper Yeshiva High School for Boys. Memphis Jewish Federation’s Lemsky Endowment Fund provided him with a Teen Israel Experience grant to offset the costs of his NCSY Next Step Internship Israel program. All rising juniors and seniors are eligible for grants of up to \$3,000 to attend a recognized teen summer or semester program in Israel. Teen Israel Experience applications for Summer 2026 are open and can be accessed at Lemsky Endowment Fund | Jewish Community Partners (jcpmemphis.org)

By Dotan Weiss

The focus of the NCSY Next Step Internship summer Israel program is working Sunday through Thursday at an internship in and around Jerusalem. My internship was with a video production company called Jerusalem Media Group. During the day we worked and, in the evenings, we participated in programs and visited sites in Israel. We also spent the first few days in northern Israel getting to know each other and the last few days traveling the country. I had the opportunity to visit Israel with Bornblum School at the end of my eighth grade with help from Memphis Jewish Federation’s Lemsky Endowment Fund and again with Baron Hirsch Youth on a volunteer trip in the ninth grade. During this past summer, I experienced many things but one thing that I have reflected on is how small the Jewish World is.

Before I went on my summer trip, I knew only one person who was going on this program, and she was from Memphis. Throughout the trip, I learned that I had connections with many of the other participants. Although some people had connections because they went to the same school or were related, my connections were not like that. I was on my own. One connection I found was someone from Columbus, Ohio. We determined that our grandmothers are close friends and celebrate Shabbat often, and he knows many of my friends from that area. Another connection that I had was with someone whose cousins are friends with my older brother and attend the same yeshiva in Modiin.

One day, when we were visiting the Kotel, we went on a tour of the tunnels. After the tour, we were standing up above a deck that you can look out from and see the whole Kotel and more. While I was looking out at the Kotel, I saw familiar faces. Eitan and Dina Selter had just moved back to Israel after working in Memphis for four years. When I saw them, it dawned on me how small the Jewish world is and how lucky we are as Jews. As Jews, we can talk to someone we have never met before but still have a connection with them.

On our last day of the trip, we went to Just One Chesed (an organization that provides educational resources, hands-on opportunities and the technological tools that empower people to make “Chesed” (kindness) a driving force in

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Memphis Candlelighting Time

Erev Shabbat, Fri. May 22, 2026 / 6 Sivan, 5786.....7:44 p.m.
Havdalah, Sat. May 23, 2026 / 7 Sivan, 5786 8:46 p.m.

Weekly Torah Portion: Shavuot

their lives) and split into distinct groups. Some people were making pizzas for soldiers, coloring pizza boxes for the pizzas, making cards for the soldiers, or making beds for children who do not have beds. I was in the group making the beds.
In this group we sanded wood, colored wood, and connected all the frames

together. One of the workers at Just One Chesed was Uriya Ben David who used to be part of the Kollel Torah Mitzion three years ago in Memphis.

Going on this trip showed me how small the Jewish world is and how all Jews are connected, even if they do not realize it.

Thank you to the Memphis Jewish Federation’s Lemsky Endowment Fund for enabling me to have an impactful summer with NCSY Next Step: Internships, and for letting me reflect on how everyone is related to each other in some way or another. **HW**

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Shavuot...
(Continued From Page 1)
will host a *Tikkun Leil Shavuot* learning session with the rabbi on the topic of “Heaven, Hell or Reincarnation – What Happens When We Die?” from 10:30 p.m. until midnight at the Chabad Center for Jewish Life, at 2570 Kirby Parkway, refreshments and drinks will be served.
For more information, or if you have any questions about the Shavuot programs and events, please contact Chabad at 901-754-0404. **HW**

Rubio Rejects Claims Trump Acted Against Iran for Israel’s Benefit



U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio and U.S. President Donald Trump and their Chinese counterparts at the Great Hall of People, in Beijing, China, on May 14, 2026. Credit: U.S. Department of State.

(JNS) – U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio dismissed claims that U.S. President Donald Trump acted against Iran for the benefit of Israel or Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, saying U.S. policy toward Tehran has remained consistent across administrations.

Speaking with Fox News host Sean Hannity aboard Air Force One en route to China last Wednesday, Rubio said every U.S. president over the past two decades has viewed Iran’s nuclear program as a major threat.

“Every president in the last 20 years has been worried about the Iran nuclear program,” Rubio said, noting that former U.S. President Barack Obama pursued the 2015 nuclear deal with Tehran “because he was worried about Iran.”

“Not a good nuclear deal, but he made one,” Rubio said.

Rubio contrasted Trump’s approach with that of his predecessors, citing the administration’s “maximum pressure” sanctions campaign and the 2020 killing of Iranian Gen. Qassem Soleimani, whom Rubio described as “a threat to the United States.”

He stated that former U.S. President Joe Biden sought to revive the nuclear agreement and pointed to European concerns about Tehran’s activities, noting that countries including France and Germany had imposed sanctions on Iran.

“The whole world has seen Iran was building up a conventional capability where they would have so many missiles and so many drones that they could overwhelm anybody’s defenses,” Rubio said.

He warned that Tehran was nearing the point at which its nuclear program could no longer be stopped militarily.

“They were on the verge, and a year from now they would have been at that point,” he said. “The president said that’s an intolerable risk.”

Rubio said Iran was also seeking to build a missile and drone arsenal large enough to deter any attack on the Islamic Republic, the result of which would have been “catastrophic for the region.”

“Once they had that immunity, then they would break out toward a weapon,” he said. “The president is not going to allow that to happen under his watch.” **HW**

Food, Friends, and Fun at the Larisa and Ben Baer MJCC Senior Adult Club

Monday, May 25
The MJCC Senior Adult Club will be closed in observance of Memorial Day. There will be no senior lunch or program. We wish everyone an enjoyable holiday.

Wednesday, May 27
Ask the Rabbi with Rabbi Levi Klein

The month wraps up with an audience favorite as Rabbi Levi Klein of Chabad Lubavitch of Tennessee returns with his always popular “Ask the Rabbi!” program. Guests are encouraged to bring their biggest, smallest, funniest or most puzzling questions about holidays, Jewish myths, Kashrut and more. Rabbi Klein’s lively and entertaining presentations are always filled with humor, insight and surprises. Guests are welcome to attend the program even if they do not stay for lunch – although the lunch is always worth it!

Monday, June 1
Speaker, Lynn Doyle, M.S.

The group welcomes back Lynn for an informative and inspiring presentation on “Stress Management.” Those who have heard Lynn speak before know that her talks are both practical and uplifting, offering helpful ideas people can immediately use in their everyday lives. After her recent appearance, audience members quickly requested that she return, and the MJCC is delighted to bring her back so soon. There is no charge to attend the program. Reservations are requested, as the senior lunch room seats

only 20 guests. Please come for lunch and stay for this enjoyable and valuable presentation. To reserve a spot, call the front desk at 901-761-0810.

Wednesday, June 3
Speaker, Patrick Twele with the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation

The MJCC will present a very special program featuring Patrick Twele of the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation. His topic, “Safe Seniors: Scam Avoidance,” focuses on the growing number of scams targeting older adults. Patrick previously spoke to the group and was invited back after attendees requested additional time with him. He will discuss some of the latest scams affecting seniors and share important tips on how to avoid becoming a victim. This program is valuable not only for seniors, but also for anyone with older family members. Seating is limited to 20 guests, so early reservations are strongly encouraged.

The Daily Kosher Lunch Program is offered Monday through Friday and features freshly prepared kosher meals from the Memphis Jewish Home kitchens. The cost is just \$2 for seniors. Reservations are required by 1 p.m. the day before.

To make reservations or for more information, contact Steve Kaplan, Adult Services Coordinator, at 901-259-9220 or stevekaplan@jccmemphis.org. Steve is available Monday through Thursday from 9:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Reservations may also be made through the front desk at 901-761-0810. **HW**

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Building Jewish Leadership Worldwide: BBYO Int’l Teen President has Memphis Connections



Adi Shankman. Courtesy of BBYO
By Shoshana Cener

Segments reprinted with permission: www.washingtonjewishweek.com/local-teen-elected-bbyo-international-teen-president/

B’nai B’rith Youth Organization’s (BBYO) newly elected international teen president, Adi Shankman, has a strong family legacy of deep involvement that extends right here to Memphis. His grandmother is Memphis’ well-known Facing History and Ourselves leader, Rachel Shankman, who served as BBYO regional director and met her husband, Steve, through BBYO. Adi’s dad, Brian, and Uncle Brett were both BBYO Delta regional presidents.

A senior at Walt Whitman High School in Bethesda, Maryland, Adi be-

gins his term this summer as the 102nd Grand Aleph Godol of Aleph Zadik Aleph, BBYO’s high school fraternity, alongside International Teen President Kayla Hertzberg, the Anita M. Perlman International N’siah of B’nai B’rith Girls. The pair was elected by their peers at BBYO’s 2026 International Convention in Philadelphia in February.

International teen president candidates endured a three-month process, including self-reflection essays, interviews, vision statements and videos. This year, the first Israeli and Mexican international board members were elected. Adi credits his upbringing for shaping him into the leader he’s become.

“Beth El, the synagogue I have attended since first grade, has served as a foundation of my Jewish experience,” he shared. “When I got into the ‘upper school’ program at my Hebrew school, the classes switched from formal bar/bat mitzvah preparation to conversations about Jewish history, ethics and more. These moments laid a foundation for me and helped me form my curiosity for such topics. ... My local community sparked my curiosity and BBYO allowed me to explore and develop my interests.”

One especially meaningful experience came shortly after his bar mitzvah, at BBYO’s International Kallah leadership program.

“I was the person helping other people wrap tefillin,” he recalled. “Three weeks before, it was me who was learn-

ing. I was in this moment of teaching, and it gave me a shift in my mindset in BBYO. I want to be the person who’s here to help and bring light on my experience, showing that any experience at BBYO is a meaningful one.”

That spirit of mentorship and connection now defines the vision Adi brings to his international presidency.

“One of the greatest gifts about BBYO is its reach,” he said. “Spanning over 63 countries, we’re able to help shape teens’ lives. A specific goal that I hope to achieve is ensuring that these communities are being supported in ways that correspond with each community – an individualized approach. ... I would like to work toward ensuring we’re catering to those communities in ways that work for them.”

Adi’s priorities include strengthening chapter leadership, making BBYO more inclusive and expanding support.

“The goals I have for this year boil down to actively engaging chapter leadership both directly and indirectly to better our reach across communities, developing structures to ensure all Jewish teens feel welcome at BBYO regardless of their denomination, and continuing to grow and support all of our communities,” he added, “but specifically outside of North America to strengthen teen engagement across the world. I would view meaningful strides on these issues as success.”

His international perspective is also personal. Adi’s family traces their roots to Argentina.

“In a lot of places outside of the United States, it’s harder to be Jewish and maintain a strong identity and passion that BBYO seeks to cultivate,” he explained. “So, we’re making sure we can provide that for everyone.”

Like many leaders today, Adi recognizes the challenges facing Jewish youth.

“In this post-Oct. 7 world, there are several issues facing the Jewish community, from the rapidly rising amounts of antisemitism to polarizing opinions about Israel,” he shared. “While I’m not sure what a specific solution is for each issue, I believe an answer can be found by inspiring the next generation of Jewish leaders ... who want to help make a difference. As it says in Pirkei Avot, ‘It is not your duty to finish the work, but neither are you at the liberty to desist from it.’ We want a seat at the table.”

As he prepares for a gap year after graduating high school, Adi is dedicated to an impactful term, visiting BBYO chapters around the globe. He hopes younger Jewish teens considering BBYO will jump at the tremendous opportunity.

“My biggest piece of advice is: What you put in is what you get out,” he said. “This organization has changed my life in so many ways for the better, but that was because I was open to the change. Putting that effort into BBYO, making that first step, it will change your life.”

Wishing Adi hatzlacha and success as he embarks on his important mission leading BBYO International. **HW**

New Jersey Man Pleads Guilty to Ramming Chabad Headquarters with His Car



Members of the New York City Police Department Bomb Squad inspect the car that rammed into Chabad-Lubavitch world headquarters at 770 Eastern Parkway in the Crown Heights neighborhood of Brooklyn, N.Y., Jan. 28, 2026. Credit: Bruce Schaff via Wikimedia Commons.

(JNS) – Dan Sohail pleaded guilty last Wednesday to damaging Chabad-Lubavitch World Headquarters in Brooklyn, N.Y., facing a maximum sentence of three years in prison and mandatory restitution, according to the U.S. Department of Justice.

Sohail, 36, of Carteret, N.J., allegedly drove to a side entrance of the building, exited his vehicle, removed barriers, then returned to his car and rammed it into the building’s side entrance, knocking the door off its hinges.

“By pleading guilty today, the defendant admitted that he intentionally damaged the Chabad-Lubavitch World Headquarters, a globally significant Jewish religious institution, by repeatedly crashing his vehicle into the building’s entrance,” said Joseph Nocella Jr., U.S. attorney for the Eastern District of New York, citing increasing violence aimed at Jewish institutions.

Assistant Attorney General Harmeet Dhillon said that Sohail’s conduct “was a targeted attack on the religious liberty and peace of worship to which every

American is entitled.”

“The Department of Justice will not tolerate acts of hatred and violence against religious institutions,” she said. **HW**



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'They'll Do Anything to Buy an Hour,' Author Says of Iranian Regime Negotiators



The author Edwin Black speaks at the Saban Theatre in Beverly Hills, Calif., on May 11, 2026. Credit: Aaron Bandler.

By Aaron Bandler

(JNS) – The United States and Israel are engaged in a just and legal war against the Iranian regime, which does not, as a matter of policy, negotiate in good faith, according to Edwin Black, an investigative journalist and book author.

Black, who also hosts an eponymous podcast, spoke to JNS prior to delivering a talk, which centered on Iran and on some of the things that the pope has said about Israel, at the Saban Theatre in Los Angeles on May 11.

The author thinks that the war against the Islamic Republic is going well, but he thinks that the regime has an apocalyptic vision, in which adherents wind up in paradise.

“We’ve had these negotiations, which are completely fruitless, because the Iranians over the past four to five decades have turned protracted negotiation into a tooth-pulling art form,” Black told JNS. “They’ll do anything to buy an hour, to buy a day, to buy 30 minutes.”

“They’re on their way to making nu-

clear bombs to destroy humanity, because they want to destroy humanity, because they feel that on the ashes of an incinerated civilization, they will rise to their paradise,” he said.

“There is no opportunity for compromise with these guys,” Black added.

The author thinks that the ceasefire, of which he is no fan, is necessary for the Trump administration to comply with the War Powers Resolution, a federal law that requires the administration to seek congressional approval for military action within 60 days, and because the country needs to rearm.

His July 2025 book about the Jewish state’s strikes on the Iranian regime was the product of 20 years of work, Black told JNS.

“I’m on this topic every day for decades,” he said. “Even while I’m going upstairs and even while I’m going to a movie and even while I’m in an airplane and even while I’m talking to you, in the back of my mind, I am tracking what is happening next.”

“I’ve had a front-row witness to this entire process,” he said.

The Obama administration “guaranteed” that Iran would have a nuclear bomb within a decade when it entered into the 2015 nuclear deal, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, according to Black.

“These are cultic people. They will never agree to even a fake peace,” he said of the Iranian regime. “Even now, they are saying, ‘Well we need to enrich. We have a God-given right to enrich,’ and of course they want to take

over the Strait of Hormuz and own it.”

The strait, and others near Gibraltar, Oman, Taiwan and the Phillipines are international waterways. “There will be no commerce. There will be no civilization without the free transit of goods and individuals and ideas across the international waterways of the world,” Black said.

Israel’s decision in December to recognize Somaliland as an independent country is significant, because it will provide the United States and Israel a military base that’s only a short flight away from Yemen, according to Black.

That, he told JNS, will let Washington and Jerusalem “attack threats to navigable waters.” In the end, Black thinks, the Iranian regime will be replaced by a “modern, peace-loving Persian people.”

“Just because we win the war doesn’t mean they agree we win the war,” he said. “We won World War I and Germany was devastated, but 11 years later Adolf Hitler came to power.”

“The Japanese wore their top hats and signed the instrument of surrender in 1945 and the last Japanese soldier surrendered in 1973, so there’s always going to be the 1% or the 1% of 1% with a bazooka, who is capable of firing a shot,” he added. “But then it becomes terrorism and not a terror regime, and we’ll have to deal with that as well.”

‘Need to live in peace’

Black told JNS that the talk in Los Angeles came about after he issued a video response to a comment by Pope Leo XIV. Rabbi David Baron, of Temple of the Arts, a Reform synagogue at the

Saban Theatre, invited him to expand on his video comments, Black said.

Black had a lot of criticism of the church, both of its historical Jew-hatred and of the contemporary Catholic church in Chicago, where he grew up and where the pope was previously a bishop.

He called the church in Chicago “one of the most criminal and corrupt organizations in American history” and told JNS, of the pope, that “because he’s a Chicago boy and I’m a Chicago boy, I knew the deep dark secrets of the Catholic church in Chicago.”

Black sees the pope as distinct from Catholics in the pews and said that relations are “very good” between Jews and Catholics.

“Don’t confuse the Catholic community with the pope,” he told JNS. “The pope represents the church, and he doesn’t represent God. It takes a little chutzpah to say, ‘I speak for God.’”

In the wake of the Hamas-led Oct. 7 attacks, Black thinks that Jews need not coexist with those who “spend day and night saying, ‘When will I get my chance to kill these people? And when will I get my chance to die trying?’”

“We need to live in peace, and the word of God is very clear: When people rise up to kill you, we must take measures for pikuach nefesh, to save a life,” he told JNS.

“In this particular case, we have not only saved the Jewish people,” he said. “We have saved millions upon millions of Arabs, Christians and Americans all over the world.” **HW**



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Alleging Conflicts, California Judge Boots Jewish DA From Trying Stanford Pro-Palestinian Protesters



Students and pro-Palestinian protesters gather at Stanford University to protest Israeli attacks on Gaza, April 22, 2024. Credit: Tayfun Coskun/Anadolu via Getty Images

By Niva Ashkenazi

(JTA) – This story originally appeared in J. The Jewish News of Northern California.

Jewish groups in the Bay Area are protesting a judge’s removal of a local Jewish district attorney from a case involving pro-Palestinian protesters accused of vandalizing Stanford University’s president’s office.

The district attorney, Jeff Rosen, was disqualified from retrying a felony case against five protesters after the judge ruled that Rosen had crossed a legal line when suggesting in a campaign message that the protest was antisemitic.

“Rosen is allowed to take a strong stance against crime in the community, against antisemitism. But caution and care need to be taken when utilizing active litigation in campaign communication,” Judge Kelley Paul said from the bench.

The judge said Rosen had erred when publicly labeling the incident antisemitic when it was not charged as a hate crime.

“This case is not a hate crime,” Paul said. “The characterization of the prosecution as a fight against antisemitism runs afoul of case law.”

In an email to J. The Jewish News of Northern California, Rosen’s office wrote that while it “disagrees with the judge’s ruling, we respect it.”

In a joint statement, the Jewish Community Relations Council Bay Area and Jewish Silicon Valley wrote that they are “deeply troubled” by Paul’s decision and that the case “must proceed.”

“This decision uniquely targets minority prosecutors, suggesting they are incapable of pursuing justice in cases perceived to be impacting their own communities,” the statement says, add-

ing that it “risks reinforcing longstanding antisemitic prejudices and invites future defendants to weaponize a prosecutor’s identity against them.”

The five protesters face felony vandalism and conspiracy counts stemming from a June 2024 protest in which 13 people broke into Stanford’s executive offices and caused an estimated \$300,000 in damages. A jury deadlocked in February, splitting 9-3 on the vandalism count and 8-4 on conspiracy. Rosen quickly announced his plan to retry them.

The disqualification motion was filed by deputy public defender Avi Singh, who argued that Rosen had compromised his office’s neutrality by featuring the prosecution on a campaign fundraising page titled “DA Rosen Fighting Anti-Semitism,” alongside a donation button.

Singh argued that the fundraising campaign falsely implied that the defendants were antisemitic. None was charged with a hate crime.

Rosen, who has spoken publicly about his commitment to fighting antisemitism and supporting Israel, has denied any conflict of interest.

In her decision, Paul pointed to Rosen’s remarks in a March 2025 speech he gave for the San Jose Hillel, about a month before his office filed charges against the protesters. A video of the speech is linked on the “Fighting Anti-Semitism” page on his campaign website.

In the speech, Rosen equated antisemitism and “anti-Americanism,” a phrase that Deputy District Attorney Robert Baker also used to describe the

conduct of the protesters during the trial’s closing arguments. Paul ruled that the similarities in the language disqualified the entire DA’s office from the case, not just Rosen.

In their own statement, the local Jewish groups suggested Rosen was being disqualified because he is Jewish.

“Generations of American Jews in positions of public trust have all too often been treated as suspect or inherently conflicted,” JCRC Bay Area and Jewish Silicon Valley said. “This decision risks reinforcing longstanding antisemitic prejudices and invites future defendants to weaponize a prosecutor’s identity against them, casting any public opposition to hate as grounds for disqualification.”

Rosen’s challenger in his June primary election, former prosecutor Daniel Chung, has turned the ruling into a campaign video. Chung called Rosen’s pursuit of the Stanford case “overzealous” and “a waste of time and money.”

“This is a humiliating loss for DA Rosen and his entire office,” Chung said in an Instagram video. “For years, millions of dollars have been spent trying to prosecute Stanford student protesters with felony charges.” Rosen’s actions, Chung said, “jeopardized the due process of the defendants” and “exemplifies the undermining of integrity, competence and compassion under DA Rosen for the last 16 years.”

The ruling hands the case to California’s attorney general, which will decide whether to retry the defendants – German Gonzalez, Maya Burke, Taylor McCann, Hunter Taylor-Black and Amy Zhai – or drop the charges. [HW](#)



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Why Rebalancing Can Be So Important

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

Imagine sitting in a rowboat and wanting to get back to shore. If you just sit there, the wakes from passing boats and the wind could cause you to drift further toward the middle of the lake – not where you want to be. Of course, they might actually move you toward the shore. Who knows?

On the other hand, you could use your paddles. It's more work, but it'll increase the possibility of you reaching your destination.

It's similar with your portfolio. If you neglect it, market activity may cause it to drift away – possibly far away – from where you want it to be.

Take, for example, a portfolio that starts out 60% stocks/40% bonds. If stocks were to have a particularly good year and bonds a bad one, the allocation could shift to, say, 70% stocks/30% bonds without the investor even realizing it. While this portfolio likely has better growth potential than the original, it could also take a bigger hit if stocks, which tend to be more volatile than bonds, turn around and have a bad year.

To help avoid this, you should consider periodically "rebalancing" your portfolio. This involves looking at how

you're diversified across different types of investments and considering selling some investments and buying others when necessary to bring your portfolio back to the asset allocation you originally intended. In the example above, you might think about selling stocks and buying bonds to get to 60% stocks/40% bonds.

All investing involves risk, including loss of principal.

Asset allocation and diversification are investment methods used to help manage risk. They do not guarantee investment returns or eliminate risk of loss including in a declining market.

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Plough Towers Executive Director Leigh Hendry to Retire in December

On May 13, Plough Towers President Steve Baer announce to the Board of Directors that long-time Executive Director Leigh Hendry will retire at the end of the year.

"I have some news that is both sad and exciting," he wrote. "Our Executive Director, Leigh Hendry, has submitted her resignation letter, with the end of 2026 being her target date. Although we are all sad to lose a great director, we are also excited for Leigh to start the next chapter in her life.

Leigh wears many hats, and she wears them all very well. I've been blessed to have Leigh as the director for the entirety of my time on the executive board. Leigh has been dedicated to Plough as the director for almost 11 years, and even longer before as a board member. She will be missed by all!"

Steve also noted that a search committee is diligently looking for Plough Towers' next director. [HW](#)



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Netanyahu Threatens to Sue NY Times Over Kristof Column as Jews Protest Outside Newspaper’s Building



Demonstrators call for the retraction of a column by Nicholas Kristof at the New York Times’ Manhattan office on May 14, 2026. Credit: Grace Gilson

By Grace Gilson

(JTA) – As backlash over a recent column published by the New York Times alleging that Israeli guards sexually abused Palestinian detainees reached a fever pitch Thursday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu broke his silence by threatening legal action against the paper.

“Today I instructed my legal advisers to consider the harshest legal action against The New York Times and Nicholas Kristof,” Netanyahu wrote in a post on X last Thursday morning. “They defamed the soldiers of Israel and perpetuated a blood libel about rape, trying to create a false symmetry between the genocidal terrorists of Hamas and Israel’s valiant soldiers.”

Netanyahu’s legal warning, which followed a similar allegation of defamation over the paper’s coverage of starvation in Gaza last year, was dismissed by the Times in a statement distributed

during a rally against the newspaper outside its Times Square headquarters late last Thursday afternoon.

“This threat, similar to one made last year, is part of a well-worn political playbook that aims to undermine independent reporting and stifle journalism that does not fit a specific narrative,” said Danielle Rhoades Ha, a spokesperson for the paper. “Any such legal claim would be without merit.”

The statement went on to defend Kristof’s column, titled “The Silence That Meets the Rape of Palestinians,” calling it “deeply reported” and describing him as “widely regarded as one of the world’s best on-the-ground journalists in documenting and bearing witness to sexual abuse experienced by women and men in war and conflict zones.”

A Jewish legal scholar, Jed Rubenfeld, said in an essay in The Free Press that Netanyahu’s threatened lawsuit,

if filed, would be “dead in the water” based on legal precedent.

Despite the New York Times’ repeated defense of the column, which chronicled detailed accounts of sexual abuse by Israeli guards, many Jewish groups and leaders have said it relied on biased sourcing to advance claims made by Palestinian detainees, including that guards trained dogs to rape Palestinian prisoners.

The backlash spilled onto the streets of Manhattan last Thursday evening, when more than 100 protesters waving Israeli flags and carrying signs reading “#EndJewHatred” gathered outside the New York Times headquarters to demand the paper retract the column.

While the Times has previously faced blowback from pro-Israel voices for its reports alleging widespread starvation in Gaza, recent demonstrations at its headquarters have more often come from pro-Palestinian activists that accused the paper of having a bias toward Israel.

Last Thursday’s protest, organized by Pro-Israel groups including EndJewHated, Stop Antizionism, Hineni and the Movement Against Antizionism, featured impassioned chants of “shame on Kristof” and “we demand action” amid steady drumbeats.

“We want to say that we are saying no to this,” Adam Louis-Klein, the founder of the Movement Against Antizionism, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. “We are saying no to anti-Zionist libels, and we are making the connection that is inherent between anti-Zionist libels and the violence and hatred that Jews are being subjected to every single day.”

Many attendees carried signs that read “J’accuse” next to the Times’ logo, a reference to the Dreyfus affair, as well as others that read “When did the New York Times become Der Sturmer?” a reference to the notorious Nazi newspaper.

Ellis Shrem, a 30-year-old rally participant, said Kristof’s column was enough to make him cancel his Times subscription altogether.

“I’ve been a New York Times subscriber for a long time, and I know they’re left-leaning, fine, but when you print blood libel, like, that’s just another, I just canceled the subscription,” Shrem said. “It just threw me over the edge, and that they refuse to retract, refuse to give an inch on something that they know they printed is evil. I just couldn’t take it anymore.”

Anya Levitov, a 52-year-old participant, said that she had been “enraged” not just by Kristof’s column, but also by the many comments supporting the piece in its comments section. She said that the experience had felt “worse than it was in my childhood in Soviet Union,” when anti-Zionist propaganda reigned, fueling local antisemitism.

“It’s just so absurd and so beyond the pale that it was hard for me to imagine that so many people – that they will print it in the first place – but so many people will buy it,” Levitov said.

The protest drew heckles from some passersby, including a child who yelled into the crowd “F—ck the Jews” and a taxi driver that shouted from his vehicle “Zionist pigs.” One woman who passed the group shouted, “You guys are depending on U.S. taxes, losers.”

For many at the rally, the underlying call for the paper to retract Kristof’s piece was rooted in a fear that it would further inflame antisemitism online and beyond, a sentiment echoed in signs reading, “Antizionism gets Jews killed!”

“It’s a watershed moment for The

OBITUARIES

Benjamin “Ben” Ashner

Benjamin “Ben” Ashner passed away peacefully at the age of 91 in Memphis, Tennessee.

He is survived by his children, Jennifer Sterin (Tom), Dub Ashner (Joel), and Nick Ashner (Lani), along with 7 grandchildren and 2 great-grandchildren.

Graveside services were held on Monday, May 11 at Temple Israel Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Temple Israel. **HW**

Sandra Helene (Applebaum) Friedman

Sandra Helene (Applebaum) Friedman, of Vernon Hills, passed away peacefully on May 6, 2026, following a recent diagnosis of bile duct cancer. She was born May 25, 1948, to the late Ruben and Sylvia (Franklin) Applebaum in Memphis, Tenn. Sandra was the middle of three children, growing up with her brother, Allen, and sister Randie.

Sandra was a devoted mother, Bubbe, sister, aunt and friend whose warmth, strength and caring spirit touched everyone who knew her. Family was the center of her life, and she took immense pride in the people she loved most. Her career spanned a range of supporting roles in banking, education administration, retail, music, corporate law and more. Amongst all that, she also made a fine chocolatier from her home workshop, Candi by Sandi.

She is survived by her loving children, Eric (Sandra) Friedman of Palatine and Stacey (Rob) Wolfe of Highland Park; her cherished grandchildren, Ryan Friedman, Emma Friedman, Sam Wolfe, Josie Wolfe and Hank Wolfe; and her brother, Allen (Phyllis) Applebaum of Houston, Texas.

Sandra was preceded in death earlier this year by her beloved sister, Randie (Applebaum) Breland of Dallas, Texas. Sandra will be remembered for her love of family, her generous heart, her enjoyment of a good game night and the joy she brought to those around her. Her memory will forever remain a blessing to all who knew and loved her. Volunteerism was also important to Sandra. It was her wish for donations to be made to the American Cancer Society in her memory, a cause remaining near to her heart since losing her mother to cancer several decades ago, www.cancer.org.

A graveside service was held on Monday, May 11, 2026, at Shalom Memorial Park, Arlington Heights, Ill. For information and to leave condolences: www.shalommemorial.org or 847-255-3520. **HW**

Times, New York and for the culture to do the right thing and correct the record on the story, because it’s not just The Times’ reputation that’s at risk, but Jewish safety,” attendee Michael Wigotsky told JTA. **HW**

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A TALE OF TWO TREES



*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

(7/9/12) –I used to cite mysteries in the Chumash that shocked and astonished me: 1) G-d’s desire to kill Moses, 2) G-d’s ban on Moses entering the Promised Land, 3) Moses’s marriage to the Cushite kid – not an Israelite, but a Cushite. There are others that puzzle us. But these were the top three. But now I have a new twister that beats them all. It’s those two trees that adorned the middle of the Garden of Eden. Why would the Creator of all goodness and evil want us not to discriminate between them? As a child I had a great respect for Torah, but I was never very good at Sunday School – especially Genesis.

It was those two trees that confused me. Later, I could recite all the Kings of Israel and Judah, but first I had to straighten out the meaning of the two trees. You know, the Tree of Life and the Tree of Good and Evil. There is much confusion. The most-deadly tree is the one in the midst of the garden – “for in

the day that you eat it you shall surely die.” But the sly, slippery serpent, who even though according to a midrash (I just made up) was a handsome devil with blue eyes and curly blond hair, reassures the woman, “you shall NOT be doomed to die, but instead you shall know good and evil.”

Uh oh, already I am confused. This is not the Tree of Life. Is it not misnamed? Why would G-d not want man to differentiate from good and evil? Isn’t that difference what the Chumash tries to teach us for the several hundred pages? Why must knowledge bring death? And to further confuse me, G-d has planted BOTH trees in the midst of the garden, so when reference is made to the tree in the midst of the garden we don’t know which tree is intended. This sounds like the Tree of Life that brings death if you touch it, not the Tree of Good and Evil. Then – a minor confusion – when the ex 6-2 blue-eyed, curly haired devil asked Eve of the tree, she replies – with probably a touch of the dramatic – that the Creator of trees and humans and blue-eyed temptresses – told her not to even touch the forbidden tree. Why the exaggeration? G-d didn’t say that. What if Adam felt like climbing trees one day? Would he still be stricken? In fact, G-d’s instructions were directed to Adam, not Eve. She had not yet been constructed. Furthermore, why is the snake in this

male-dominated world, talking to Eve, the junior partner?

Well, the plot is rather simple from then on. They have an all-fruit picnic lunch on the green meadows of Eden: main course – fruit from The Tree of Good and Evil. But guess what? They don’t die. G-d is not capable of a lie, so evidently the woman lied. Or Moses misheard the dictation. Or maybe, probably it meant there was no death in the world until this minor felony. But again, I ask why such a fuss over the knowledge of good and evil. How many times does the Chumash say otherwise; i.e., that its purpose is to teach man the difference between good and evil. Why penalize this knowledge?

Maybe this violation did not immediately open the door to death, but established it as a human condition. It sounds like the “original sin” of Christianity, where they pay for the sins of their forefathers.

And even more mysterious, why does the knowledge of good and evil bring shame to their nudity? What’s good or evil about walking around naked? This is not the Victorian age, you know. The only need for clothing was warmth, not the need to guard morality. So why the sense of guilt? This is a strange tale full, I fear, of mistranslation. Why is the knowledge of good and evil not commendable?

SCRIBBLER ON THE ROOF

By Ted Roberts

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At the end of the episode, G-d announces, “that the man has become like one of us.” He knows good from evil, thereby emphasizing that he now has a conscience. (Is this bad?) And strangely enough ignores the fact that the woman, too shares his morality. A strangely twisted tale. If we’re not careful, says the divine narrator, they will take as well from the Tree of Life and live forever. Consequently, their banishment from the garden.

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**

Congressman Cohen Announces Plan for His Political Future

“This morning I made public my decision not to run in any of the three gerrymandered congressional districts carved out of the 9th District I have represented for more than 19 years. The state General Assembly last week diluted the Black vote in thirds to make Republican victories likely. Cases are pending that could restore the 9th District to its current contours until 2028 and, if we prevail, I will remain a candidate in the 9th, but that appears unlikely. It has been the honor

of a lifetime to represent the people of Memphis in my 47 years of public service, first at the state Constitutional Convention and on the Shelby County Commission, then 24 years in the state Senate and now more than 19 years in Congress. There’s no reason to be modest: No other politician has done more for the city and region – from my decisive vote to create the Regional Medical Center at Memphis (now Regional One), to the state lottery and Hope scholarships that have helped

tens of thousands get a college education, to persuading the U.S. Department of Transportation to invest more than \$393 million to replace the Interstate 55 bridge, the largest infrastructure investment in the state’s history. At the national level, I was Chairman of the Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution, Civil Rights and Civil Liberties when we held hearings to strengthen the Voting Rights Act that the Supreme Court has now destroyed. I was the first to introduce com-

plete Articles of Impeachment against Donald Trump. The Center for Effective Lawmaking, a project of the University of Virginia and Vanderbilt University, named me the fifth most effective legislator in the 118th Congress in its assessment last year. If we prevail in the courts and the 9th District remains intact for the 2026 mid-term election, I will remain a candidate and will be proud to represent its people for another two years. If not, it has been an honor serving you.” **HW**

ISRAEL INSIGHTS Election Winds

By Howard Weisband

It’s now mid-May and the wind speed calculating the possibility of early elections in Israel is rising quickly, fueling a favorite Israeli pastime of both pundits and public speculation: predicting the next Government and who the Prime Minister might be.

At the end of April, Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid announced the formation of a new political party, Beyachad (Together), a merger of their two parties that will run as one list in the 2026 national elections whenever that might occur.

Those elections must be no later than October 27 according to Israeli law, ending the four-year term of the current Government, headed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Israel of course is a parliamentary system, so said elections could be held earlier if mandated by the approval of a Knesset law following a process introducing a bill that would dissolve the Knesset after several readings and votes, amounting to approximately three months.

The wind force toward early elections, albeit not yet a gale, picked up some speed on May 12 when the Rabbinic leader of a small Haredi/Ultra Orthodox party, Degel HaTorah (Flag of the Torah), told his constituents and the

Israeli public that it was time to dissolve the Knesset.

According to a Times of Israel May 12 report, “We no longer have any trust in [Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu,” Rabbi Dov Lando said in a statement. “From this point forward, we will do only what is best for Haredi Judaism and the yeshiva world. We must act to dissolve the Knesset as soon as possible. The concept of a [right-wing] bloc [including the Haredim] no longer exists as far as we are concerned.”

Tough words. However, Degel HaTorah cannot do it alone. It certainly needs the other Haredi parties to speak and do likewise, particularly Shas as the largest party in the Haredi bloc. Shas has been more inclined to support the Government even from outside the coalition.

But most frustrating to me and to so many other Israelis, perhaps quite a majority, is the issue itself. It’s not October 7. It’s not Iran, Hamas, or Hezbollah. It’s not the betterment of Israeli society as a whole or its economy.

It’s the Haredi draft law, more specifically the granting of wholesale army exemptions to Haredi young men, as well as the granting of multiple millions of shekels to Haredi institutions, all as pay-off for their being a part of the coalition

and supporting the Government.

What changed? The same May 12 Times of Israel article by Sam Sokol explained: “The decision by the UTJ (United Torah Judaism/Haredi) factions was made after Netanyahu told Haredi MKs last week that the coalition currently doesn’t have the votes to pass the draft exemption legislation, and reportedly asked them to agree to shelve the bill until after the elections. Since the beginning of the government’s tenure in December 2022, Netanyahu had repeatedly assured his Haredi partners that the legislation would be passed.”

Netanyahu himself is generally an expert at reading the political winds. He knows that the Haredi draft will be a significant issue, perhaps the most significant issue in upcoming elections, determining how the public might vote. He also knows that the public is angry that while a number of military leaders took responsibility for the October 7 failures, many having resigned their positions, the political echelon has not taken similar responsibility, beginning with the Prime Minister himself.

Netanyahu is looking to judge those winds and take control if possible. On May 13, as I write this column, it has been announced that his coalition, the

Government itself, is going to introduce its own bill to dissolve the Knesset and call for elections, either on October 27 or at the beginning of September before Rosh Hashanah.

As Prime Minister, he wants elections as far from October 7 as possible and all that the date itself conjures in the mind of the public. Some pundits have begun to think and even speculate that he may even announce his retirement from politics beforehand, given some recently revealed health issues, plus his own legal battles, and the possibility of political defeat. However his character has always been to confront such matters, not step away.

Meanwhile, stay tuned. The election winds will be gaining strength rather quickly, possibly reaching hurricane speeds in the near future.

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**



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 Director of Activities, Doris Vassar.

Meet Doris Vassar



Doris with her teammates who create all the activities at the Home.

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

I'm originally from San Diego, California. I moved to Memphis and went to then-Memphis State and earned a business management degree. I worked for a home health company before joining MJHR's staff.

My husband, Kennedy, and I are blessed to have a grown son, a young daughter, and a grandson.

I love to travel, cook and bake. I create custom wedding and birthday cakes, and do some event, wedding and birthday party planning.

MJHR: How did you become connected to MJHR?

I started working at the Home in 2008 as a CNA (Certified Nursing Assistant). At the same time, I went back to school for medical billing and coding and graduated at the top of my class.

After that, an evening front desk position opened, then I became the front desk supervisor, followed by working in medical records, then director of activities in 2019. That was during COVID, everything we thought we knew, we had to learn how to do differently. We made it through, but it was a lot!

MJHR: Share your favorite MJHR story.

It's like a family here, we look out for each other. I just love the residents, and they love us. Sometimes we're all they have.

One of my favorite stories is from our 90th anniversary. We did a short, funny video with actors. One of the actors was wearing a hospital gown and rollers in her hair and was walking around outside at the front of the building. Somebody thought the actor was a resident and said, "Doris, you've got to run out and get her!" It was so funny!

Another is when I was diagnosed with colon cancer, residents were blowing up my phone trying to figure out where I was, what was wrong, and when I was coming back. Once I told them, they really wanted to know everything. It made me feel good and made my healing process much better. They look out for me, and I look out for them. It's been a joy to work at MJHR.

One more favorite story is when I was working the front desk, I encountered many families. I've made an impression on many families, but three stand out. I was the first person they met, and they were in tears because they had to



Doris with a resident in the lobby of the Home.

put their loved one in the Home, but I made them feel comfortable, and we became the best of friends. They still thank me to this day. Two of the three families' loved ones passed on, but we keep in touch. The other family still has a loved one here, and we have become like family. I attend their family events, and they call me their sister. I have met some exceptional people whom I have grown to love and adore, and they say the same for me.

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

The Home has changed so much from when I started. We now have an Adult Day Center and redid our rehab gym. In the future, we're looking to add assisted living, which will be great. We used to have a gift shop and daycare – it would be great to bring that back for employees to bring their kids to work. We're also working on a summer camp idea, which I hope to see over the next few years.

MJHR: Tell us about being director

of activities.

Residents really enjoy Bingo, and Purim was wonderful here. We virtually travel with residents too. We recently took a virtual tour of Ireland and had lunch with famous Irish foods. We decorate the activity room like the country. Sometimes I help cook, and sometimes we have the meals catered from local restaurants, like when we featured Jamaica. The residents really look forward to all that. When we did Hawaii, I learned that Spam is a delicacy there, so I included it as side with the meal. That sure was interesting!

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. **HW**

Moskowitz Urges Jews to 'Play Offense' at Israeli Independence Day Celebration in Washington



Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-N.J.) and Rep. Jared Moskowitz at the Israeli Embassy's celebration honoring Israel's 78th Independence Day, at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery in Washington, D.C., May 13, 2026. Credit: Israeli Embassy to the United States

(JNS) – Rep. Jared Moskowitz (D-Fla.) urged Jews “to stand up, to fight back, to play offense” last Wednesday

as Trump administration officials and bipartisan lawmakers gathered in Washington, D.C., to celebrate Israel's

78th Independence Day.

“We have to stop the defense,” Moskowitz said at the Smithsonian's National Portrait Gallery, hosted by Israeli ambassador to the United States Yechiel Leiter. “We as Jews feel like if we just educate people, if we just give them the information, if we just talk to them, they'll finally understand.

“We need to make it very clear that's not going to fly,” he added. “You're not going to mess with us.”

The Israeli Embassy in Washington said the reception celebrated the U.S.-Israel alliance and marked the first Israeli Independence Day event in 12 years with no Israeli hostages being held in Gaza.

Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-N.J.) praised the longstanding bipartisan support for Israel.

“We should feel proud of the U.S.-Israel relationship, of the independence, of what it's done for America, of the bi-

“We have to stop the defense,” the Florida congressman said. “You're not going to mess with us.”

partisan nature, historically, of the relationship,” Gottheimer said. “Thank God we have Israel to help us fight terror, to stand for freedom and to stand for democracy.”

U.S. Energy Secretary Chris Wright, the evening's keynote speaker, said that “Israel's strength as an economic and technological powerhouse reflects the power of innovation, resilience and freedom.”

“The United States looks forward to further advancing energy security, prosperity, and opportunity alongside our closest ally in the region,” Wright said. **HW**

At Jewish Democrats Summit, Rising Senate Candidate Graham Platner Divides the Room

By Joseph Strauss

(JTA) – WASHINGTON – Simon Rosenberg was almost done running through his thoughts about upcoming Senate races when the political strategist threw a rhetorical bomb into the crowd of Jewish Democrats.

“And then there’s Maine,” Rosenberg said, eliciting laughter – some of it uneasy. The race and its presumptive Democratic nominee, Graham Platner, had been on people’s minds last Wednesday during the confab, the national summit of the Jewish Democratic Council of America, but no one had yet mentioned him from the stage.

The omission was notable because Platner is seen as a rising star in the Democratic Party. He was initially battling in the primary against Maine Gov. Janet Mills, whom the JDCA had endorsed. But he effectively clinched the nomination when Mills dropped out of the race two weeks ago, and now is expected to challenge Rep. Susan Collins in November.

Among Jewish Democrats, there is a debate over whether to support Platner, who has caused concerns with his past Nazi tattoo and staunch criticism of Israel but also has a chance to unseat an

incumbent Republican and help the party take control of the Senate.

Rosenberg revealed at the summit where he stood in that debate – somewhere the JDCA’s leadership has not been willing to go.

“The Maine party is excited, ready to go, and we’re all going to be along the Platner train in a few weeks,” he said.

The laughs gave way to murmurs and groans. Some attendees shook their heads at one another. One woman mouthed something to her neighbor, motioning “No” with her arms.

“He’s going to be the candidate, and let’s hope the very best of him comes out in the next five, six weeks,” said Rosenberg, who hosts the “Hopium” podcast. “But that is going to be an interesting race.”

Moderator Jill Goldenberg piped in, easing the tension. “We are not leaving on that note!” she said, asking Rosenberg a final question about what gives him hope.

Platner, the left-wing candidate and former oyster farmer, has drawn concerns from some Jewish groups with his Nazi tattoo, which he recently covered up with another design, and his

anti-Israel rhetoric and calls to end U.S. military assistance to the country. The JDCA is among them.

“As far as I’m concerned, you can regret having a Nazi tattoo, you can try to cover it up, but it’s still there,” said Halie Soifer, the group’s CEO, told reporters last Wednesday. “And to me that symbolizes reasons for deep concern about his views and values.”

JDCA has not taken a position on the race since Mills dropped out. Soifer did not entirely rule out the possibility of getting behind Platner but said he would “have to demonstrate great assurances on a range of issues of concern to our organization to receive our endorsement.”

She added, “But we may just not get involved in that one.”

A key Jewish Democrat, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, said after Mills stepped aside that he would support Platner’s bid to unseat Collins. Schumer, who had initially recruited Mills to run, also spoke at the JDCA summit. He did not mention the Maine race during his remarks and declined to talk to the press afterwards.

“We disagree – we can disagree with

them potentially!” Soifer said, when asked about party leadership backing Platner, adding that the JDCA is backing a number of other candidates in hopes of taking control of the Senate.

“It could be that at the end of the day, we just stay out of Maine, don’t get involved, even if the party has decided to fully embrace Platner,” she said.

Ami Fields-Meyer, a former Biden White House adviser who spoke more critically of Israel than most of the summit’s speakers, did not weigh in on Platner specifically. But he echoed Rosenberg’s call for building coalitions that include “people we don’t agree with,” and advocated for the Democratic Party and Jewish community to embrace a wider range of viewpoints on Israel.

“We love to talk about a big tent. It’s our favorite thing to talk about,” Fields-Meyer said. “This is the moment. This is the moment to open up the party and to open up our Jewish community to the hardest conversations that we can be having about the future of Israel and the future of the Jewish people.”

Fields-Meyer’s comment drew loud applause. [HW](#)



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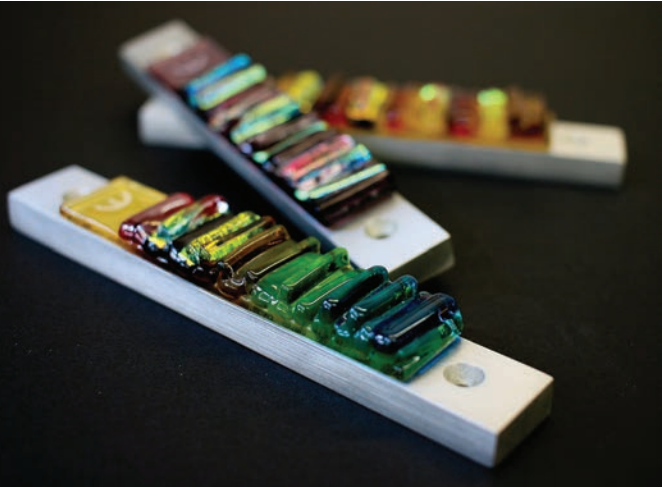
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