



# Jewish Community News

The Publication of the Jewish Federation of the Desert

www.jfedps.org

Kislev/Tevet 5785 - January 2025



**Arnie Gillman**

Jewish Federation  
Board President

This has been an extraordinary several months. Becoming Federation President meant working with Alan Potash, and together our Federation was moving forward. Then suddenly my partner and mentor was gone, and it has been a sad and difficult time. Concurrently, the war in Israel continues and hostages are yet not free; we pray every day for their release and return.

As a community we must move forward, and we have continued with the programs and projects that were planned. We have major events coming in the next several weeks. Women's Philanthropy's financially critical annual event, Lion of Judah, is taking place January 20<sup>th</sup>, honoring Carol Fragen as our community's Kipnis-Wilson Friedland honoree (with our Federation Board Member/Allocations Chair Lori Fritz also receiving this prestigious honor this year from her home community if Minneapolis) and bringing author Dara Horn as keynote speaker. Five weeks later will be our Major Gifts Dinner, and we will be bringing in one of the foremost American Jewish minds, Rabbi David Wolpe, as our speaker.

Our Federation continues to do good work for both our local Jewish community and overseas. I'm pleased to be able to report that this year we were able to increase our allocations, thanks to our generous donors. We continue to host excellent book authors from the Jewish Book Council at our annual Feast of Jewish Learning and at special programs throughout the year. We enjoyed an amazing night at the Cabaret for a Cause event featuring Sam Harris. We hope to be able to re-open the Tolerance Education Center soon, with a new Educational



**Presented to Arnie Gillman by JMOGD, The Jewish Men's Outreach Group of the Desert:**

*Founding member of the Jewish Men's Outreach Group of the Desert and President of the Jewish Federation of the Desert.*

*For having distinguished yourself by meritorious direct "hands on participation" and humanitarian acts directed towards an individual and group of individuals.*

*For his honesty, compassion and constant inspiration and for his selfless commitment, to touch and comfort others.*

*To honor your persistent serving and inspiring humanity with your noble deeds.*

*For your outstanding contributions and dedication to the citizens within our community.*

*For your philanthropic efforts to better the lives of others.*

*For making a difference and significant contributions to the Jewish community through your time, actions, talents and dedication.*

**JMOGD**

Jewish Men's Outreach Group of The Desert

Program Director, so that it can return to being the outstanding community resource it was under the guidance and careful, caring eye of its founder, Earl Greif.

The last four months have been an amazing experience for me. The Jewish Federations of North America's General

Assembly was an eye opener, learning how Jewish communities throughout North America impact world Jewry. Every day I learn more about our Jewish community and realize how much more we can do to help those in need. I have been meeting so many generous and caring people

whose priority is to help others.

I am grateful for our hard-working staff. Alberto Tejero, our Chief Financial Officer, is keeping our 'ship' afloat. So much of our programmatic activities have fallen on Leslie Pepper's shoulders and she has been incredible, juggling so many activities and seeing them all to successful completion. Gloria Benavides, Bebsabe Morrison and Merari Curiel have all stepped up and kept us moving forward ... but we are currently a ship without a captain, and our Board is beginning the challenging and difficult task of searching for a new CEO. We will keep you updated.

It is my honor and privilege to serve as President of our Federation. And I am honored the Jewish Men's Outreach Group of the Desert decided that I'm doing sufficiently well to present me with the first Alan Potash Humanitarian Award "For having distinguished yourself by meritorious direct 'hands on participation' and humanitarian acts." I am humbled.



**Please come and honor Alan's Memory**  
**Sunday, January 19, 2025 - 4:00-6:00 pm**

**At the Jewish Federation Building**  
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**Rabbi David Wolpe**

Max Webb Rabbi Emeritus of Sinai Temple

Named The Most Influential Rabbi in America by *Newsweek* and one of the 50 Most Influential Jews in the World by *The Jerusalem Post*, and twice named one of the 500 Most Influential People in Los Angeles by the *Los Angeles Business Journal*, David Wolpe is the Max Webb Emeritus Rabbi of Sinai Temple. He serves as the ADL's inaugural rabbinic fellow and a scholar in residence at the Maimonides Fund. Rabbi Wolpe has taught at Harvard, the Jewish Theological Seminary, the American Jewish University, Hunter College, and UCLA.

Rabbi Wolpe has published widely, including in *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Washington Post*, *Time*, *Newsweek* and *The Atlantic*. He has been featured on *The Today Show*, *Face the Nation*, *ABC This Morning*, and *CBS This Morning* as well as series on PBS, A&E, History Channel, and Discovery Channel, and has engaged in widely watched public debates with Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Steven Pinker and many others about religion and its place in the world.

Rabbi Wolpe is the author of eight books, including the national bestseller *Making Loss Matter: Creating Meaning in Difficult Times* (Riverhead). His latest is titled *David, the Divided Heart* (Yale U Press). It was a finalist for the National Jewish Book Awards, and has been optioned for a movie by Warner Bros.







# Jewish Book Council Events

**Evitchka** - Before World War II, there were two hundred Jewish children in the small town of Humenné, Czechoslovakia. After the war, there were six. Evitchka was one of them. Her survival is a testament to the luck, determination, and resilience of her parents and the bravery of a young Catholic couple. Her story crosses continents and spans decades, culminating in the unlikely chance to repay an unpayable debt.

Join us for a virtual presentation with one of the authors of "Evitchka," Stephanie Smartschan, on January 21<sup>st</sup>. Stephanie is an award-winning journalist turned marketing and development professional. She got her start working for The Boston Globe while



Dr. Larry Levitt



Stephanie Smartschan

a student at Northeastern University and went on to write for the Cape Cod Times newspaper. For ten years, she worked for the Jewish Federation of the Lehigh Valley as director of marketing and it was through this role that she met Eva Levitt, who served as president for two years,

and her husband, Dr. Larry Levitt.

Larry is a retired neurologist and co-author of "Neurology for the House Officer," an invaluable resource for medical students and residents that has been translated into eight languages. As a member of the Epidemic Intelligence Service, a division of the CDC, he was among the first to administer children's immunizations for measles. Upon moving to Allentown, Pennsylvania, in the 1970s, he founded



the neurology division at Lehigh Valley Hospital and served as a Dorothy Rider Pool Health Care Trustee, helping to establish the first hospice in Pennsylvania, along with a regional trauma program and a burn center. He is also the co-author of "Uncommon Wisdom: True Tales of What Our Lives As Doctors Have Taught Us About Love, Faith and Healing," which draws connections between doctors and patients.

Join us on **Tuesday, January 21st at 3:00 pm** for a virtual presentation by Stephanie Smartschan, *Evitchka*. Please RSVP to Leslie Pepper at 760-324-4737 to get the zoom link.

**Wednesday, January 22 at 12:30 pm - Swimming to Jerusalem** is the story of Bram Goodman; his family, friends, colleagues, and demons.

Born in Paris, he spent his childhood in Israel and moved to Brooklyn as a teenager. When Bram flunks out of college, he returns to Israel in an effort to find a sense of purpose. He enlists in the Army with Yoni, his cousin and best friend. Their tour of duty is uneventful until, nearing the end of their service, they find themselves on the Lebanon frontier confronting the horrors of war. After his discharge, an aimless and disillusioned Bram makes his way to Paris. Busking on the Boulevard Saint-Germain, he meets Liz and follows her back to New York.

Decades later, with a family and career, Bram uses his irreverent personality and sharp humor to mask the tragic events of his youth. When Theo, his youngest child, seeks to learn about his heritage, Bram does his best to ignore him but eventually he understands that he be a good father, he must confront the past he has attempted to keep at bay. It is a journey that will take him back,

Join us on a very special zoom presentation of *Cold Crematorium* on **Monday, January 27, at 2:00 PM.** by Alex Bruner, the author's nephew and a child of Holocaust survivors. He will discuss the historical and family context for his uncle's deportation to Auschwitz and the author's hellish journey.

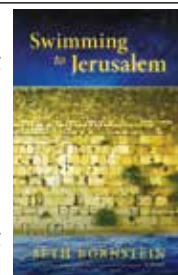
both emotionally and physically, to a place he thought he could leave behind.

Seth Bornstein has written plays, short stories and



Seth Bornstein

essays. *Swimming to Jerusalem* is his first novel. Born in Brooklyn, he attended Parsons School of Design and has had a career in urban economic development with positions in the



public, private and academic sectors. He has competed in international winter swimming competitions around the globe and has world records for taking the longest time to swim the shortest distances in the coldest waters. He resides in New York City with his wife, Diane Loughran.



## Lion of Judah EVENT

Tamarisk Country Club

Monday, January 20, 2025 | 9:30 am

Honoring Carol Fragen

*Our Community's*

*Kipnis-Wilson/Friedland 2025 Recipient*



OUR SPEAKER

Dara Horn

An American novelist,  
essayist, and professor  
of literature.

For more information contact:  
**Leslie Pepper** at (760) 324-4737  
leslie.pepper@jfedps.org



Jewish Federation  
OF THE DESERT | Women's  
Philanthropy

*continued on next page*



Continued from previous page-Book Club

This will take place on The International Holocaust Remembrance Day, or the International Day in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust. January 27 was chosen to commemorate the date when the Auschwitz concentration camp was liberated by the Red Army in 1945.

When veteran journalist, poet, and novelist József Debreczeni arrived in Auschwitz, he was "lucky" to be sent to a life of slave labor rather than directly to the gas chambers. He survived, and after the war wrote *Cold Crematorium*, which one reviewer called "the harshest, most merciless indictment of Nazism ever written."



Bruner will share pictures, documents, as well as selected audio recordings. He will also review why his uncle wrote the book, how it was initially received, the reasons it was not translated into a world language until now, and the lessons one can draw from the work. RSVP to Leslie pepper [leslie.pepper@jfedps.org](mailto:leslie.pepper@jfedps.org), 760-324-4737



**Women's Philanthropy** welcomed Andrew Mellen, one of the country's most sought-after

professional organizers, author of "Unstuff Your Life!", who presented his "foolproof rescue plan" to attendees at the December 11 program at the Jewish Federation Offices.



## FEAST OF JEWISH LEARNING 11-17-24

Not pictured: Lee Yaron  
"10/7 100 Human Stories"  
(left) Yonah Bob - online  
"Target Tehran"  
(middle) Rabbi Jeffrey Salkin  
"Tikkun Haam"  
(right) S. Ilan Troen  
"Israel/Palestine In World Religion"

## 'Coldplay' Store Intentionally Damaged Israel-bound Merchandise

By World Israel News Staff

Israeli fans of the band Coldplay were shocked to discover that merchandise they ordered was intentionally damaged, presumably because the items were bound for Israel.

Numerous Israelis, who are members of Coldplay's fan club, ordered special-edition merchandise that included a record and inserts autographed by the band's members.

"I opened the package and saw that everything was torn and the autographs were ripped," Coldplay fan Emily Pink told TV journalist Guy Pines.

Pink said she had confirmed with other Coldplay fans that everyone in Israel received damaged merchandise.

"A lot of us believe this is antisemitic. This is something that we paid money for, and

the damage isn't a mistake – it's intentional," she added.

Idan Karlan, another Coldplay fan, said that everyone who ordered merchandise to Israel received damaged items.

"Apparently the shipping company destroyed the merchandise on purpose when they saw that the package was bound for Israel," Karlan told Guy Pines.

Karlan said that he had received an unsatisfactory response by the shipping company, and that the business appeared to be uninterested in discovering the source of the intentional damage.

"There is something big here, that all packages are sent to Israel damaged like this," said Karlan.

But the "company simply said, 'here's

a full refund, thanks and bye.' Since then, they haven't responded to us."

Shir Beno, who also received damaged merchandise, stressed that the band and shipping company need to take responsibility for the intentional damage.

"It's not about money," Beno said. "We should not be sent damaged products just because we are from Israel. If this is due to antisemitism, it needs to be dealt with immediately."

Pink and Karlan said that they were extremely disappointed that Coldplay has not publicly commented on the intentionally damaged merchandise.

"I see them in a different light now," Pink said.

# JEWISH COMMUNITY NEWS

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## EDITORIAL

**Miriam H. Bent**, Editor  
**Bailey Communications**,  
Layout & Design

## JCN STATEMENT

The Jewish Community News seeks to provide news and feature material of special interest to its readership, and to create a heightened sense of Jewish identity through the dissemination of information about people, events and issues at home and abroad. The JCN seeks to serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas and opinions in the Jewish community.

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## ARTICLES & ADVERTISING

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# Jewish Federations of North America Lauds Court for Upholding TikTok Law

Jewish News Syndicate

The Jewish Federations of North America applauded the U.S. Court of Appeals in Washington, D.C., for its unanimous ruling on December 6 to uphold a law requiring Chinese company ByteDance to sell the social media app TikTok or face an effective ban in the United States.

The three-judge panel rejected TikTok's argument that H.R.7521, the Protecting Americans from Foreign Adversary Controlled Applications Act, is unconstitutional and violates the First Amendment rights of the 170 million Americans who use the app.

"This law is designed to address U.S. national security, but it will also do something else—slow the antisemitism epidemic that this platform has helped spread around the globe since the Oct. 7 Hamas attacks on Israel," the group stated.

JFNA reported that "antisemitic comments on TikTok rose 912%" in just one year.

"Jewish Federations will always stand

against antisemitic hatred and bias, which is why we supported this law's passage at every stage," the group added. "Today, the law was found to be constitutionally sound, and we look forward to its implementation

and enforcement."

If ByteDance fails to sell TikTok by Jan. 19, then app-store companies will be legally required to stop supporting the social network.

TikTok said it plans to ask the Supreme Court to overturn the appeals court decision.

## JMOGD / Sun City Jewish Services Chanukah Celebration

By Michael Zaifert

The Jewish Mens Outreach Group of the Desert, along with Sun City Jewish Services, had their annual Chanukah Celebration on December 8. The event was well attended with well over 200 people. The ballroom was decorated with blue and white balloons making the venue very festive with the colors of the Israeli flag.

Arnie Gillman was honored with the first Alan Potash Humanitarian Award, a well deserved recognition for our Jewish Federation of the Desert President, for making a difference and significant contribution to the Jewish community through his time, actions, talents and dedication. The award was presented by JMOGD Michael Zaifert, Alan Gitlin and Amy Nachman Potash.

Matt Fisher was also presented with an Appreciation Award for his selfless service to our community and organization for his toy collection efforts for underprivileged and children in hospitals during the holidays.

The evening was topped off by Michael Zaifert's band the "Fabulous Fossils" playing Jewish music as people entered the ballroom and dance music throughout the evening which brought the crowd to the dance floor all night. It was a wonderful time had by all.

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# UAE Official Visits Mourning Family of Murdered Chabad Rabbi in Israel

by Shiryn Ghermezian. The Algemeiner

A senior official from the United Arab Emirates traveled to Israel to attend the *shiva* of Chabad-Lubavitch emissary Rabbi Zvi Kogan, who was killed in a suspected terror attack in the UAE.

Dr. Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi visited family members of Kogan in Kfar Chabad who are observing the Jewish mourning period that takes place after the burial of a family member. Nuaimi is the chairman of the Manara Center for Coexistence and Dialogue, which is based in Abu Dhabi, and also a member of the UAE Federal National Council, where he chairs the Defense Affairs, Interior, and Foreign Affairs Committee.

During his visit to Israel, Nuaimi condemned the attack that targeted Kogan and reiterated the UAE's commitment to coexistence and peace.

"The UAE will never allow extremists to divide us," he said. "The state and its citizens



Dr. Ali Rashid Al Nuaimi flew to Israel to pay a shiva call to the family of Rabbi Zvi Kogan in Kfar Chabad on Nov. 29, 2024.

are more committed than ever to the values of openness and peace and will increase their efforts to ensure that Rabbi Zvi's legacy continues and that all communities live in harmony in the UAE."

An Israeli-Moldovan national, Kogan, 28,

had lived in the UAE for several years. He was an emissary for the Chabad branch in Abu Dhabi and ran a kosher supermarket in the UAE. He was reported missing from a location about an hour and a half from Dubai on Nov. 21, and his body was found by UAE

intelligence and security services three days later. He was murdered by terrorists after being abducted, according to Chabad.

The Emirati Ministry of Interior said last week that it had identified and arrested in the UAE three citizens from Uzbekistan as suspects in Kogan's murder: Olimpi Toirovich, 28, Makhmudjon Abdurakhim, also 28, and Azizbek Kamlovich, 33.

Officials in the UAE said they have not established a motive for Kogan's murder, but the office of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Israeli Foreign Ministry said in a joint announcement that Kogan was murdered in "a heinous act of antisemitic terrorism." Israel's President Isaac Herzog also condemned the "vile antisemitic attack."

Iran has been accused of being involved in Kogan's murder, but Iran's embassy in Abu Dhabi has rejected the accusation.

## Not Just Orthodox or Secular: New Program Offers Lone Soldiers a Pluralistic Home

The majority of immigrant soldiers from North America come from Reform or Conservative homes, and have had limited options until now

By Zev Stub, Times of Israel

A new program will offer those who immigrate to Israel on their own to serve in the military the option to be adopted by a family in a pluralistic Jewish community for the first time.

"Currently, lone soldiers in Garin Tzabar are given just two choices for accommodation," said Yoav Ende, executive director of the Hannaton Educational Center. "You can either go to an Orthodox religious kibbutz or a secular kibbutz. There is no alternative for someone whose affiliation or approach to tradition doesn't fit either of those models."

"We are offering a third option," Ende said. "To stay in a kibbutz and be adopted by a family in an egalitarian society that recognizes and values the entire spectrum of Jewish identity."

Garin Tzabar is Israel's most popular program for young adults who immigrate, or make aliyah, and serve in the IDF as lone soldiers. It provides a broad support system for new olim that includes assistance with government bureaucracy, full room and board, and adoption by an Israeli host family as part of an effort to help new immigrants integrate into society.

Adoption of a lone soldier typically means providing a room for the soldier when they are on leave, as well as



Hannaton Mechina program - Students relax outside between classes

including them in family activities.

Of an estimated 7,000 lone soldiers currently serving in the IDF, 1,200 are in Garin Tzabar, with about 400 new olim joining every year, the organization says on its website.

However, Ende said, there are large gaps in religious expression and outlook between different societies. Surveys show that about 40-50 percent of American Jews identify as Reform or Conservative, compared to just 10% who identify as Orthodox. In contrast, less than 10% of Jews in Israel self-identify as either Conservative or Reform.

About a third of lone soldiers come from North America, IDF data shows.

"Currently, the majority of lone soldiers from North America come from homes affiliated with the Reform or Conservative streams of Judaism," Ende said. "We are talking about large groups of graduates from pluralistic youth programs like Ramah or USY who come every year."

"Until now, Jews in Israel haven't thought much outside of the binary equation of religious or secular," he added. "When I was growing up in Israel as a child of immigrants, the entire education system was geared toward being either orthodox or secular. But now, Israeli society realizes that Judaism belongs to everyone, and people are

beginning to think differently."

Ende's Hannaton Educational Center, which offers pre-army preparatory training (Mechina) for religious, secular, Conservative (Masorti), or Reform recruits, is now completing construction of a new dormitory for lone soldiers, and is working to put together its first group of 25-30 such soldiers to start in August.

The Hannaton kibbutz in the Galilee was established in the 1980s by graduates of the Jewish Theological Seminary to serve as a Conservative community when the movement was virtually nonexistent in Israel. It is now a mixed egalitarian community of some 200 families dedicated to ideals of Jewish pluralism.

The kibbutz's educational center currently runs several programs designed to "teach about Judaism, Zionism, social responsibility, and a love of humanity and the land," Ende said.

"We have to think about what kind of Judaism are we building," he said. "Right now, we are going through a very difficult war, and there have been a few lone soldiers killed in battle."

"These soldiers have made very difficult efforts to become part of Israel, and we need to ask ourselves what we are doing to take care of them."



# Jewish Student Life on Campus Thrives Amid Increased Engagement and Support

By Eran Vaisben, Inland and Desert Hillel Director

This year, Inland and Desert Hillel, the Jewish student life on campus in our area, has reached new heights marked by a thriving community and a surge in engagement. This growth has been bolstered by proactive measures to address antisemitism and an array of enriching programs.

After a year of turmoil on university campuses and a historic rise in antisemitic incidents nationwide, the UC Riverside administration implemented robust changes to foster a safe and inclusive environment for Jewish students. These measures included the adoption of new policies that limit hateful protests along with bias training for staff and students. Additionally, the administration enhanced security measures at Jewish cultural and educational events on campus, ensuring a space where students feel secure in expressing their identities. Moreover, at UC Riverside, members of Hillel's staff and Student Board have developed relationships with top administrators which has led to a ban on BDS activities. In partnership with Chabad, Hillel has worked with the University's food services in order to offer dozens of new kosher and Israeli products to the community on campus.

Hillel has played a pivotal role in creating a vibrant community for Jewish students. This year, the organization expanded its educational and social programs to cater to a growing and diverse student body. Shabbat dinners have seen record attendance, offering a space for students to connect over traditional meals and meaningful activities. Hillel also led a special memorial event on October 7<sup>th</sup> for the greater Riverside community.



This coming winter quarter Hillel will offer a new program for non-Jewish students who would like to learn more about the Jewish community and help

combat antisemitism. Through a three-session program, participants will gain a deeper understanding for Jewish culture and heritage while developing critical thinking skills to recognize and confront antisemitic rhetoric and activity. The Jewish Federation of the Desert assists Hillel with new initiatives such as this.

In light of last year's disappointing response from UC Riverside administration in addressing anti-Israel and antisemitic activities on campus, University donors decided to redirect their contributions to Hillel. Anthony Marguleas, a UCR alum who was formerly a student leader in the UCR Jewish community, withdrew his endowment from UCR and has redirected the funds to assist Hillel students. Mr. Marguleas' generous donation will help provide scholarships for 25 Hillel students who need financial support.

The results of these efforts and changes are evident: Jewish student engagement has increased significantly this year in comparison with previous years. Students report feeling more connected to their heritage and supported by their peers and the administration.

"This year has been transformative for Jewish student life," said Anna Kaminitz, a UCR junior and Hillel Student Board member. "We see freshmen students eager to get involved with the UCR Jewish community. Despite last year's on-campus tensions, our community seems to have emerged even stronger."

As the campus community continues to flourish, Jewish students and their allies remain committed to fostering understanding, resilience, and celebration of their rich traditions.

## The Jewish Men's Outreach Group of the Desert

did a Toy and Gift Drive and donated them to the following organizations: Angel View, Aleph Schoolhouse, Big Brother & Big Sister, Boys & Girls Club, Bikur Cholim, Loma Linda, Martha's Village & Kitchen. Children in the Coachella Valley will have smiles on their faces, this holiday season, due to this generous group of men.





# Israel destroyed secret Iranian nuke site in October strikes

JNS Staff-(Nov. 16, 2024 / JNS)

The Israeli airstrikes on Iran last month destroyed a secret nuclear weapons research facility in Parchin, 19 miles southeast of Tehran, Axios reported on Friday.

The clandestine site held sophisticated equipment used for testing explosives needed to detonate nuclear devices, the report read, citing three U.S. officials, one current Israeli official and one former Israeli official.

The Washington-based Institute for Science and International Security acquired high-resolution satellite imagery of the facility, which showed that it was completely destroyed in Israel's Oct. 26 attack.

Israeli and U.S. intelligence agencies began noticing activity in the Taleghani 2 facility in the Parchin military complex in early 2024, which had been largely inactive since 2003, when the Islamic Republic froze its military nuclear program, according to Axios.

One unnamed U.S. official quoted in the report said: "[The Iranians] conducted scientific activity that could lay the ground for the production of a nuclear weapon. It was a top secret thing. A small part of the Iranian government knew about this, but



most of the Iranian government didn't."

Although President Joe Biden asked Jerusalem not to target Tehran's nuclear facilities, the site in Parchin was chosen as a target because it was not part of Iran's declared nuclear program.

This placed the mullah regime in a position where admitting a hit to the site would expose its efforts to resume activity forbidden by the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Moreover, "The strike was a not so subtle message that the Israelis have significant insight into the Iranian system even when

it comes to things that were kept top secret and known to a very small group of people in the Iranian government," the report cited a U.S. official as saying.

Last week, Rafael Grossi, the director of the United Nations' International Atomic Energy Agency, visited Iran for the first time since May.

He is expected to meet with his agency's board of governors in Vienna this week for a vote on a resolution to censure Tehran for its lack of cooperation with the U.N. nuclear watchdog.

Speaking about the tensions between

Israel and Iran, Grossi said during a news conference in Tehran on Thursday that the Islamic Republic's "nuclear installations should not be attacked."

Earlier in the week, Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz suggested that Iran's nuclear facilities may be targeted.

Iran is "more exposed than ever to strikes on its nuclear facilities. We have the opportunity to achieve our most important goal—to thwart and eliminate the existential threat to the State of Israel," Katz said.

Israel's two assaults against Iran's air defense system this year have left the country vulnerable to future attacks, with all four of Tehran's Russian-made S-300 surface-to-air missile batteries destroyed, according to U.S. media.

On April 19, Israel took out one of the S-300 systems in response to Tehran's first-ever direct attack against the Jewish state. On Oct. 26, in response to a second Iranian attack, Israel targeted 20 sites in Iran, destroying the remaining three.

"The majority of Iran's air defense was taken out," a senior Israeli official told Fox News.



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# Bill Clinton -Young Americans Shocked to Learn Arafat Turned Down Palestinian State

If 'you walk away from once in a lifetime peace opportunities, you can't complain 25 years later when the doors aren't all still open,' says former US president.

By Times of Israel Staff

Former US president Bill Clinton said young people in America today "can't believe" that late Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat walked away from a Palestinian state during peace negotiations with Israel under his mediation as president.

Clinton added, in reference to the failed Camp David talks of 2000, that having turned down a "once in a lifetime" peace opportunity, "you can't complain 25 years later when the doors weren't all still open, and all the possibilities weren't still there."

"I think what's happened there in the last twenty-five years is one of the great tragedies of the twenty-first century," Clinton told New York Times journalist Andrew Ross Sorkin, in an interview for the newspaper's DealBook Summit, promoting his new book, "Citizen: My Life After the White House."

The Times posted a video of the interview to its New York Times Events+ YouTube channel.

"All [young people in America] know that a lot more Palestinians have been killed than Israelis. And I tell them what Arafat walked away from, and they, like, can't believe it," said the former commander-in-chief.

Arafat "walked away from a Palestinian state, with a capital in East Jerusalem, 96% of the West Bank, 4% of Israel to make up for the 4% [of the West Bank to be annexed for Israeli settlements]," Clinton elaborated, repeating an account of the Oslo peace negotiations, to which the ex-president has returned repeatedly in recent interviews and remarks.

The talks, which aimed to resolve Israel's conflict with the Palestinians through a negotiated two-state solution, fell apart just six weeks before Clinton's second term ended.

"I go through all the stuff that was in the deal, and they, like – it's not

on their radar screen, they can't even imagine that happened," Clinton went on, describing his conversations with young Americans upset over the death toll in Gaza in the latest war.

The former US president also noted the sacrifice made by Israeli prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, who was assassinated by a Jewish extremist in Israel over his support for the peace process.

"I tell them, you know, the first and most famous victim of an attempt to get the Palestinians a state was prime minister Rabin, whom I think I loved as much as I ever loved another man," Clinton said, repeating a phrase he has often used to describe his relationship with the late Israeli leader.

"You walk away from these once in a lifetime peace opportunities, and you can't complain twenty-five years later when the doors weren't all still open, and all the possibilities weren't still there. You can't do it," Clinton said.


In addition to his remarks about the peace process, Clinton also commented on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's political survival, noting that he had remained in office "farther than I thought he would."

Clinton said that the Hamas terror group's October 7, 2023 attack — in which some 1,200 people were killed, mostly civilians, and 251 people taken hostage, starting the ongoing war — worked to Netanyahu's political benefit, focusing attention away from domestic controversies.

Cathryn J. Prince contributed to this report.



Former US President Bill Clinton



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# Iron Dome for Wildfires to Deploy in the US

Israeli AI startup, FireDome, inspired by Iron Dome anti-missile system, can detect and suppress wildfires.

By Abigail Klein Leichman, Israel 21C

Wildfires are increasing internationally, fueled by climate change-caused extreme heatwaves and old-fashioned human carelessness. These uncontrolled blazes destroy forests, shrublands and grasslands, savannas and croplands. The burned vegetation fans the flames of climate change even more, by releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere, and pollutes the air with particulates.

Recently, a new startup emerged from stealth with \$4.5 million in funding to pioneer an autonomous AI-assisted wildfire detection and suppression technology to complement and assist firefighters.

FireDome's patent-pending system has two components:

- A mechanical launcher that rapidly and accurately deploys capsules containing ecofriendly fire retardant to create a protective barrier to block encroaching flames, remaining effective for weeks.
- A computer vision-aided capability to quickly detect and extinguish spot fires caused by airborne embers that



bypass the primary barrier.

Scheduled for initial deployments during the 2025 fire season in the western United States, FireDome aims to bring its solution to high-risk wildfire communities, enhancing response coordination and offering customizable protection for large properties across sectors such as

agriculture, leisure, utilities and private homes, in coordination with local fire departments.

## Great need for solutions

"Global warming has increased the frequency and intensity of wildfires, making it more challenging and complex than ever to protect communities and fight these fires," said Gadi Benjamini, CEO of FireDome.

Our World in Data reports that in most years, several hundred people die directly from wildfires and tens or hundreds of thousands are displaced from their homes.

The World Resources Institute reports that forest fires are burning at least twice as much tree cover today as they did two decades ago.

Benjamini said that increased wildfire risks have also caused insurance premiums to skyrocket in recent years, placing a heavy burden on property owners.

"By combining precision hardware, computer vision, and advanced algorithms, FireDome offers proactive defense solutions to meet these new challenges."

The company, said Benjamini, plans "to forge partnerships within the climate-tech ecosystem to create end-to-end solutions that will help communities adapt to global warming and strengthen resilience to wildfires."

Firedome plans to coordinate its wildfire detection and suppression

system with local firefighters.

Wade White, retired assistant chief of the Los Angeles City Fire Department, said he believes that FireDome "enhances firefighting effectiveness and reduces risk by merging traditional fire suppression methods with cutting-edge aerospace, military technology, and AI advancements. This innovative approach is poised to revolutionize firefighting, improve strategic and tactical decision-making, and bolster community protection against major fires."

FireDome's leadership team includes cofounders Benjamini and Adi Naor Pomerantz, both experienced in defense strategies and R&D.

Benjamini was formerly a lieutenant colonel with 14 years in Israeli intelligence units, while Pomerantz is a materials expert with nearly two decades in R&D, including a decade at SolarEdge.

Among several senior experts, the startup is advised by Pinchas (Pini) Yungman, one of the founding fathers of Israel's Iron Dome and David's Sling defense systems.

The company completed a \$3 million pre-seed round, led by climate-tech investors including US-based Third Sphere and Israel's Gravity. Additional investment came from Germany's Caesar Fund, along with Atooro Fund and Vertex Ventures.

FireDome also secured a \$1.5 million grant from the Israel Innovation Authority to accelerate R&D.

Third Sphere Managing Partner Shaun Abrahamson said: "Our team has spent the last 10 years looking for promising approaches to reduce wildfire risk. FireDome is the first to move beyond detection with immediate, rapid response. We have massively reduced fire risk in cities with fire extinguishers, alarms, hydrants and sprinklers. We believe Firedome is set to become the core infrastructure for how we finally reduce the risk to people and property from wildfires."

FireDome showcased its solution at the Red Sky Summit in November in San Francisco and at the International Association of Fire Chiefs Technology Summit in December in Oklahoma City.

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# North American Jewish Doctors Consider Their Futures Amid Post-Oct. 7 Antisemitism

By Zev Stub, Times of Israel

Ask Jewish doctors in North America about their work and they'll likely tell you about the antisemitism they have faced since the beginning of Israel's war in Gaza last October 7.

"There was a nurse in the OB/GYN my hospital in Philadelphia spreading terrible antisemitic lies around the hospital," said one physician, who requested to hide his name for fear of retribution. "People in the office were afraid of giving her Jewish patients for fear something bad might happen. A number of staff members complained about her to HR, and we brought it up to the highest levels of the hospital, but nothing was done."

Things only changed when she waded into American politics. "After the elections, she posted on social media that she hoped everyone who voted for Donald Trump has a miscarriage," the doctor continued. "Six hours later, she was removed from her position. That was good, but many of the Jewish faculty were upset that the same standard wasn't applied for what she was saying about Israel."

These types of incidents are increasingly common in North American medicine. A study published Wednesday by Israel advocacy organization StandWithUs found that 39% of self-identifying Jewish healthcare professionals reported direct exposure to antisemitism within their professional or academic environments. More than a quarter of the 645 respondents reported feeling unsafe or threatened due to antisemitic incidents.

That survey was published just several days after a similar study was released by the Jewish Medical Association of Ontario (JMAO). Its survey of 1,000 medical professionals across Canada found that, while virtually no Jewish doctors experienced severe antisemitism at work before October 7, 39% say they have experienced it in hospitals, and 43% in academic settings.

More than 98% of Canadian Jewish doctors surveyed said they are very worried about the impact of antisemitism on healthcare in the country, and 80% say it has harmed their wellbeing.

Significantly, the study found that many of Canada's Jewish doctors are reconsidering their futures, with 31% of Jewish doctors in Ontario strongly considering or considering leaving the country.

Some 14% of Jewish doctors have already decreased their teaching roles, with another

31% considering reducing their academic roles, the JMAO report added.

The problem is similar on both sides of the border, noted Michelle Stravitz, CEO of the American Jewish Medical Association (AJMA), which was formed last year in response to growing antisemitism after October 7.

"We're seeing antisemitism in all spheres, in relationships with colleagues, patients, and medical students," Stravitz said. "We see repeated patterns of healthcare platforms being hijacked by anti-Israel agenda and medical students ready to abandon the Hippocratic Oath to advance an anti-Zionist agenda. It's creating fear and harming trust for Jews across the medical field."

Jews enjoy an outsized representation in the medical field. A 2005 study published on the US National Library of Medicine website found that Jews, who comprise about 2% of the country's general population, account for 14% of the nation's physicians. In Canada, a 1991 census indicated that four out of ten doctors and dentists in Toronto were Jewish.

Now, however, many Jewish medical professionals say antisemitism in the workplace is a constant threat. "I was in the operating room during a time where there was an incursion into Gaza, and during the procedure, the surgeon started talking to me about why the Jews invaded Palestine," one doctor said in a testimony compiled by the JMAO.

"A patient left me offensive messages and voicemails, telling me that he wouldn't see me because I was a Jew," said another. Another said, "A patient tried to force me to agree with their anti-Zionist views while I was trying to do my work." "Our annual Chanukah lighting ceremony was canceled," said another.

A separate report published last week in the Journal of Religion and Health found that more than 75% of Jewish-identifying medical students and professionals in the United States reported exposure to antisemitism. The survey, spearheaded by Dr. Daniella Schwartz of the University of Pittsburgh, found that references to antisemitism in US medical publications and social media accounts increased five-fold since October 7, while the use of antisemitic stereotypes increased 2-4-fold.

Some are concerned about the damage a sustained environment of antisemitism could do to the future of medicine.

"Everyone is talking about the 31% that

are considering leaving Canada, but just as concerning are the 46% of physicians who have said they are considering, or have already, decreased their teaching roles," said Dr. Barry Pakes, a physician and professor at the University of Toronto. "Jewish doctors are afraid to teach students and Jewish students are afraid to be in class with their colleagues and antisemitic teachers". Pakes said. "Canada has a shortage of doctors, and we are opening up new medical schools around the country. If Jewish doctors feel uncomfortable supervising students, that can have an impact on the entire medical system."

Stravitz noted anecdotal data indicating that Jewish enrollment in US medical schools has been falling in recent years, "although it is possible that there are just fewer students self-identifying as Jews for fear of being singled out," she said.

"Discrimination doesn't just impact doctors," JMAO chair Ayelet Kuper noted in a statement. "It undermines the entire healthcare system, compromising patient care and eroding workplace integrity."

While antisemitism has been rearing its

ugly head in virtually every profession, Pakes said there is something uniquely offensive about its appearance in the medical sphere. "We doctors pride ourselves on being evidence-based, science-oriented people. Many of us are also social justice leaders attuned to the needs of vulnerable minority groups," he explained. "It is particularly hurtful that we are no longer welcome in those spaces."

"We work in close collaboration with colleagues from all walks of life, and we expect that they care about us as individuals, even if antisemitism in general doesn't concern them," Pakes continued. "It is shocking to be spurned by colleagues who have shown themselves to be so passionately antisemitic and disconnected from the facts."

Pakes, who wears his kippah publicly at work, said he gets mixed reactions from patients and colleagues. "The response I get is usually positive, but many of my colleagues have differing experiences," he said. "The importance of surveys like these is that instead of highlighting individual incidents, they help quantify the collective trauma that thousands of doctors are experiencing."

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## Senators



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Adam Schiff (D-CA)



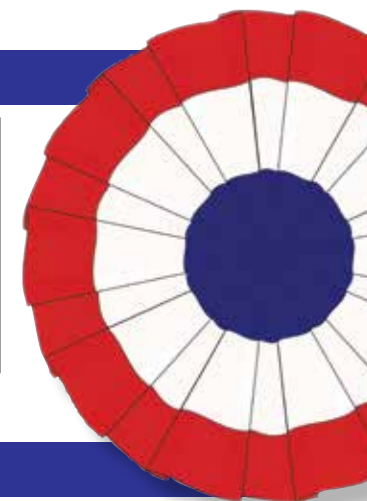
Elissa Slotkin (D-MI)



Charles Schumer (D-NY)



Ron Wyden (D-OR)



## Jewish Winners in the 2024 National Elections

There were dozens of Jewish winners across the U.S., including Governors, U.S. Senators, U.S. House members and the new mayor of San Francisco. The vast majority of Jewish candidates who won were Democrats. There will be 21 Jewish Democrats and three Jewish Republicans in the House of Representatives. In the U.S. Senate there will be at eight Jewish Democrats and one Independent. The total of 32 legislators is two less than in the last Congress, where there were a total of 35 Jews. The U.S. will have six Jewish Governors, all Democrats.

### U.S. SENATE

**U.S. Rep. Adam Schiff** (D-Calif.) easily defeated former Los Angeles Dodgers first baseman Steve Garvey to become California's next U.S. Senator. Schiff served 12 terms in the U.S. House and was the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee from 2015-2023. He takes the seat of long-time Jewish Senator Dianne Feinstein, who was elected to 5 six-year terms, dying in office in September 2023.

**U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders** (I-Vt.) won his fourth term in the U.S. Senate. He is the current chair of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee. **U.S. Rep. Elissa Slotkin** (D-Mich.) won her tight race for Senate against former U.S. House Rep. Mike Rogers by less than 20,000 votes, 48.6% to 48.3%. **U.S. Senator Jacky Rosen** (D-Nev.) was reelected in another close race, with 47.9 to 46.2 percent of the vote.

Jewish Senators not up for re-election in 2024 include: **U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer** (D-N.Y.) in his fifth term (current Senate Majority Leader), **U.S. Senator Ron Wyden** (D-Ore.) in his sixth term and is the current Chair of the Finance

## Representatives



Jake Auchincloss (D-Mass.)



Becca Balint (D-Vt.)



Suzanne Bonamici (D-Ore.)



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Jan Schakowsky (D-Ill.)



Brad Schneider (D-Ill.)



Kim Schrier (D-Wash.)



Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Fla.)



Brad Sherman (D-Calif.)



Eugene Vindman (D-Vir.)

Committee, **U.S. Senator Richard Blumenthal** (D-Conn.) in his third term, **U.S. Senator Brian Schatz** (D-Hawaii) in his third term after being appointed in 2012, and is the Chair of the Indian Affairs Committee and **U.S. Senator Jon Ossoff** (D-GA) is in his first term. Ben Cardin (D-MD) retired and while the new Senator is a Democrat, he is not Jewish.

### U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

There are three new Jews in the House of Representatives, two Democrats and a Republican. California State Assemblywoman **Laura Friedman**, a Democrat, successfully ran for the seat held by Adam Schiff for the past 24 years. **Eugene**

**Vindman** is a new Democratic Congressman from Virginia. He had served in the military and on the National Security Council. Joining only two other Jewish Republicans (David Kustoff of Tennessee and Max Miller of Ohio), is Texan **Craig Goldman** (R-Texas). He most recently served in the Texas House of Representatives.

### GOVERNORS

The U.S. will have six Jewish Governors, all Democrats. North Carolina Attorney General **Josh Stein** was elected to his first term as Governor, winning by a margin of 15% over Republican incumbent Lieutenant Governor Mark Robinson. (Trump carried North Carolina by only 3%). Delaware



Josh Stein (NC Gov.)



Matt Meyer (Del Gov.)

Governor **Matt Meyer** was handily reelected to a third term. The four Jewish governors not up for re-election in 2024 included Hawaii Governor **Josh Green** in his first term, Colorado Governor **Jared Polis** in his second term, Pennsylvania Governor **Josh Shapiro** in his first term and Illinois Governor **J.B. Pritzker** in his second term.



# Devastating Arson Attack on Melbourne's Addas Israel Synagogue

Netanyahu blames attack on Canberra's 'extreme anti-Israel' stance

By Times of Israel Staff

Australian police said that two people suspected of torching a synagogue in Melbourne were still at large, as members of the local Jewish community expressed outrage at their government for failing to protect them amid surging antisemitism.

Mask-wearing assailants set ablaze the Orthodox Adass Israel synagogue in Ripponlea, a southeast suburb of the Victorian capital and home to a large Jewish community. A board member for the synagogue told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation that one congregant was burned in the attack.

Following the attack, Melbourne police beefed up security at several Jewish institutions, Australia's 7NEWS reported.

The inside of the building was gutted, eyewitnesses said, and holy books were destroyed. Community members were seen rescuing Torah scrolls from the building.

In a sign of the apprehension of the local community, a leading Orthodox rabbi in Melbourne ruled that in the "current uncertain times," Jews there may carry their phones, on silent, over the Sabbath, when electronic devices are normally prohibited, according to messages circulating on social media and local WhatsApp groups.

Community members expressed their fury and frustration with local authorities.

In a press conference outside the synagogue, Victoria state Premier Jacinta Allan noted that the synagogue was "built by Holocaust survivors." Many of the synagogue's original worshipers were post-World War II immigrants from Hungary.

Allan offered 100,000 Australian dollars (\$64,300) to help repair the synagogue and said there would be an increased police presence in the area.

"Every available resource will be deployed to find these criminals who tried to tear a community apart," Allan said.

"We stand against antisemitism now and forever," she added.

However, according to Sky News Australia, Allan was forced to cut the press conference short after she was repeatedly heckled for having "lost control of the state" and let threats to



Fire blazing in Adass Israel Synagogue



Torahs rescued from burned building



Aftermath of fire

the Jewish community proliferate. The outlet said locals yelled "Shame on you, Jacinta!" as she headed to her car.

Local police said the attack, which destroyed the building and left one congregant with burns, was targeted, but that its motive was still unclear.

However, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said: "An attack on a synagogue is by definition an act of antisemitism."

"This was a shocking incident to be unequivocally condemned. There is no place in Australia for an outrage such as this," Albanese told reporters.

"To attack a place of worship is an attack on Australian values. To attack a synagogue is an act of antisemitism, is attacking the right that all Australians should have to practice their faith in peace and security," he added.

Counter-terrorism police will liaise with Victoria state police on the investigation, Albanese said.

A religious leader at the torched synagogue, Rabbi Gabi Kaltmann, described the arsonists as "thugs."

"Tonight is the Sabbath. We must all go and find a sense of calmness, comradery and community by gathering for the Sabbath tonight and praying together as one community," Kaltmann told reporters outside the synagogue.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu blamed the attack on the "extreme anti-Israel" stance of Albanese's government. In a post on X, Netanyahu said the arson was "impossible to separate" from Canberra's vote in favor of a UN General Assembly resolution calling on Israel to withdraw from Gaza and the West Bank, and its refusal in October to issue a visa for Israel's former justice minister Ayelet Shaked due to her anti-Palestinian statements.

"Anti-Israel sentiment is antisemitism," added Netanyahu.

Foreign Minister Gideon Saar, writing

on X, called the synagogue attack "abhorrent."

"Antisemitism must be relentlessly confronted. I urge Australian authorities to act swiftly and ensure the despicable perpetrators are brought to justice," he said.

Reacting to the arson, Australia's Opposition Leader Petter Dutton had similarly accused Albanese of failing to support Israel.

The Australian Jewish Association also said it was "outraged but not all surprised" by the attack, due to the feeling that Australia's government had abandoned the Jewish community.

Albanese did not immediately respond to a request for comment on the Association's statement.

Daniel Aghion, president of the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, said the broader Australian community needed to condemn the arson attack.

"I've been getting phone calls this morning from the Hindu community, from other people, from good people who are prepared to stand up and that's my message for this morning to Australia, to the good people of Australia," Aghion told reporters.

"Don't leave the Jewish people behind. Don't isolate us. Don't leave us exposed to the risk of attacks upon our religious institutions, our communal institutions. Stand with us. Stand against this hate. And stand against this kind of horrendous attack which should not occur on Australian soil," he added.

The arson came as the Australian Jewish community reported a fourfold increase in antisemitic incidents amid the war in Gaza sparked by the Hamas onslaught of October 7, 2023, when thousands of terrorists stormed southern Israel to kill some 1,200 people and take 251 hostages.

Soon after the arson, Victorian police also removed a man from a nearby Jewish bakery after he wielded a hammer and abused community members.

According to the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, physical attacks on Jews in the country spiked from 11 in 2023 to 65 in 2024.

Some 100,000 Jews live in Australia.



# Jewish Family Service of the Desert To Host "A NIGHT AT THE CHI-CHI – A TRIBUTE TO HOLLYWOOD, March 5, 6 and 11, 2025

By Madeline Zuckerman

Jewish Family Service of the Desert (JFS), has announced it will be hosting "A NIGHT AT THE CHI CHI CLUB – A TRIBUTE TO HOLLYWOOD" on the evenings of March 5, 2025, March 6, 2025, and March 11, 2025 at the renowned PS Underground in Palm Springs, California. This event will feature a themed four-course meal, live music, and dancing. Doors open at 5:30 pm, with the Shows commencing at 6:00 p.m.

Barbie Rogers and Gary Geske will be honored with the 2025 JFS Humanitarian Award at this event. The Annual Jewish Family Service of the Desert Humanitarian of the Year Award recognizes a person or a couple who generously support JFS's efforts to promote the well-being of Coachella Valley residents through its social service programs, as well as, supporting



other local agencies. Barbie Rogers and Gary Geske have been named the recipients of the 2025 Award, noting their support for JFS, as well as, for The Joslyn Center, Loving All Animals, and the McCallum Theatre's Education Program, among others. Barbie and Gary exemplify the Jewish value of "Tikkun Olam."

"It is with great pleasure that Gary and I serve our community as best we can," said Barbie Rogers. "We take pride in the fact that we are able to help the less fortunate. During challenging times marked by high inflation, health issues, or the loss of a loved one, essential services and programs are crucial to support those in need. JFS stands out as one of the most exceptional services available to meet these needs. It doesn't matter what faith you are; JFS is always willing to give a help-

ing hand."

"A Night at the Chi-Chi Club" will take guests back in time to the 1950s in Palm Springs with singers and musicians performing songs from the stars who made the Chi-Chi the most famous night club west of the Mississippi. Featuring music from the likes of Nat King Cole, Frank Sinatra, Peggy Lee, Bing Crosby, Louis Armstrong, and more.

"JFS relies on the kindness of philanthropists like Barbie and Gary who see the value in our social services that are designed to prevent the onset of homelessness, reducing senior isolation, and offer much-needed tools to help mitigate the deleterious effects of mental health concerns," said Kraig Johnson, Executive Director of Jewish Family Service of the Desert. "Without this support, many of our most vulnerable neighbors would face life-changing circumstances without help and hope."

Event Sponsorships are available starting at \$1,200 all the way up to \$25,000. Individual tickets are \$500 per person.

Exclusive event Media Sponsors include THE DESERT SUN & LOCALiQ, Presenting Newspaper & Digital Media Sponsor; KESQ News Channel 3, TV Media Sponsor; and ALPHA MEDIA-PALM SPRINGS, Radio Media Sponsor.

For reservations and any additional information, go to [www.jfsdesert.org](http://www.jfsdesert.org) and click on events or call Cheryl Scarlett at 760-325-4088 ext. 107 or email her at [cscarlett@jfsdesert.org](mailto:cscarlett@jfsdesert.org)



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- **Stacie Gillman, Paul Gutkowski, and Shambles**, Happy Hanukkah. Mom and Dad love you forever. Arnie and Sue Gillman.
- **Cass Graff-Radford**, Celebrating you by helping others ... what a joy, from Margie Kulp.
- **Bernard Reiter**, Wishing you much happiness on your 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, from Gerald Hecker and Sally Mindell.
- **Leslie Usow**, Celebrating you by helping others ... what a joy, from Margie Kulp.

• **Leslie Usow**, Happy birthday from Cass Graff-Radford.

• **The Warsaw Family**, Happy and healthy New Year to the entire Warsaw Family, from Carolyn and Zeke Warsaw.

• **Kent and Wendy Hahn-Whinnery**, Congratulations on your 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary, from Loreen Jacobson.

## Refuah Shleimah Get Well:

• **Lori Fritz**, Get well soon, from Rabbi Yankel and Rochel Kreiman.

• **Allan Nyman**, Wishing you a speedy recovery, from Stuart Goldfine.

• **Cydney Osterman**, Get well soon, from Rabbi Yankel and Rochel Kreiman.

## Memoriam Tributes Condolences Sent To:

• **Jeffrey Feder**, Wishing out sincere condolences on the loss of your dear brother Henry, from Marnie Miller and Joe Noren.

• **Shelly Goldman**, In memory of Enid Goldman, from Joan and Pat Kerns.

• **Mr. and Mrs. Craig Karsen**, In memory of your beloved mother, Susan Karsen, from Ruth and Mal Kaufman.

• **Amy Nachman**, In memory of Alan Potash, from Gary Nachman and Sheila Fitzgerald, Cynthia Launer and Will Thomas.

• **Suzie Ruta and Family**, Our deepest sympathy for the loss of Todd, from Ed and Sande Fineman.

• **Mr. and Mrs. Jack Zaban**, With deepest sympathy on the loss of your beloved Aunt Susan, from Ruth and Mal Kaufman, Bob and Gail Scadron.

## US to Probe Spain for Barring Ships Bringing Arms to Israel

*Jewish News Syndicate*

The United States has opened an official investigation into whether Spain has been denying port entry to cargo vessels transporting American weapons to Israel. The move comes as Spain under Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez has emerged as one of Israel's most vocal critics in Europe and has championed the Palestinian cause.

The Federal Maritime Commission, an independent agency of the U.S. government, said it opened the probe after receiving information that the NATO ally had refused to allow at least three cargo vessels into its ports, two of which were U.S.-flagged.

"The commission is concerned that this apparent policy of denying entry to certain vessels will create conditions unfavorable to shipping in the foreign trade," it said on Thursday, in a notice published in the official journal of the federal government, the *Federal Register*.

Spain could be subjected to millions of dollars in fines if it has been found to have interfered with such commerce, with a maximum fine of \$2.3 million per voyage.

Spanish officials have not commented on the U.S. investigation.

Earlier this year, Spanish Transport Minister Óscar Puente acknowledged that a Danish-flagged ship was denied port entry for carrying weapons to Israel.

In late October, Spain's Interior Ministry announced the cancellation of an ammunition purchase from Israel. The canceled \$7.1 million contract was for 15 million 9 mm rounds for the Spanish police force from Guardian Ltd Israel, *El País* reported.

"The Spanish government has maintained its commitment not to sell or buy weapons to the Israeli state since the armed conflict broke out in the territory of Gaza," said the Interior Ministry. "In addition, other Israeli companies will be excluded as bidders in other arms procurement procedures currently being processed by the Directorate General of the Civil Guard," the statement continued.

A week earlier, the TRT news agency reported that Spanish Defense Minister Margarita Robles had confirmed the suspension of all weapons purchases

from Israel since October 7, 2023.

Sánchez previously joined the call for an arms embargo against Israel, which Canada, France and the United Kingdom also announced. Spain stopped its own defense companies from shipping arms to Israel in October 2023, shortly after the Hamas massacre that triggered the now-14-month-old war.

Spain was a smaller supplier, with its exports amounting to just under \$50 million in 2023.

Last summer, Spain became the first European country to ask the United Nations' International Court of Justice to be allowed to join South

Africa's case accusing Israel of genocide in Gaza.

The move came a month after Norway, Ireland and Spain announced that they would recognize a Palestinian state.

Two months ago, Sánchez urged the European Union to suspend the bloc's free trade agreement with Israel over its military campaigns in Gaza and Lebanon.

Earlier this month, Madrid announced significant increases in funding for the International Criminal Court and the terror-tainted United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA).



**A Hezbollah rocket hit a Haifa synagogue an hour after prayers. Haifa Mayor Yona Yahav called it "divine providence" that the attack had not resulted in a mass casualty event.**



# Repair the World Expands Jewish Service Initiatives Toward Goal of One Million Acts of Service by 2030

By Jason Edelstein, Repair the World

Repair the World, a Jewish engagement organization that mobilizes Jews and their communities to take action to pursue a just world, igniting a lifelong commitment to service, announced a major expansion of Jewish service opportunities through the Jewish Service Alliance (JSA) over the next two years. The expansion is supported by the Hayom Fund and will help Repair engage more young adults in meaningful and impactful acts of service.

"Especially at this moment, young adults are eager to create change and strengthen their Jewish identities," said Cindy Greenberg, President and CEO of Repair the World. "We're ready to meet this demand—based on our past success and the implementation of our adaptive strategic plan, through these new initiatives we expect to engage over 100,000 young Jews and their communities each year by 2027," said Greenberg. "As the leader of the Jewish service movement, and through the generosity of the Hayom Fund, we can



Repair the World participants packing food in LA

help Jewish young adults build a world they envision rooted in justice, solidarity, and service."

As Repair leads the JSA, which includes more than 40 Jewish organizations committed to Jewish service, through the

next phase of Repair's strategic plan, the organization will invest in the following new initiatives:

- The JSA will engage 300 young Jews as Service Ambassadors to facilitate bi-monthly Jewish service for their peers,

while participating in regular Jewish learning sessions. JSA partners, led by Repair, will facilitate these cohorts, and the Ambassadors will collectively lead 2,700 programs.

- In partnership with leading Israel trip providers, including Birthright Israel Onward and Jewish Federations of North America Serve Israel initiative, the JSA will lead new Israel trips and will:

- Enrich participants' pre- and post-trip experience through days of Jewish service, cohort learning, or targeted Jewish service learning programs to create a defined Jewish service journey for participants, domestically and abroad.

- Invest in professional development for trip providers to lead ethical and effective Jewish service learning.

- Engage trip alumni as Service Ambassadors.

- Launch a monthly community of practice for trip providers to offer training and resources.

- The JSA will launch a monthly Jewish learning series featuring senior Jewish educators. Open to the JSA, Repair stakeholders, and the broader Jewish community, this series will examine tensions that emerge when engaging in Jewish service by exploring the Torah that grounds the Jewish service movement. The series will be livestreamed on social media, shared across JSA partners, and added to the Jewish Service Learning Virtual Library.

- The JSA will implement part-time, professional development Jewish Service Educator Kollels that engage Jewish leaders from across the sector in intensive Jewish learning, high-level facilitation practice, group Shabbat and ritual celebration, and hands-on practice designing and leading service experiences.

"Whether designed for professionals at Jewish nonprofits or young adults engaging in Jewish community for the first time in years, Jewish service learning is a powerful experience," added Greenberg. This is an ambitious expansion that reflects the opportunity to help more people connect their Jewish ambitions and traditions to meaningful service. "We believe service in support of social change is vital to a flourishing Jewish community and an inspired Jewish life. By 2030, we intend to inspire and catalyze one million acts of service and learning toward repairing the world."

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# 'Our Jewish Revenge': Pregnant Army Wives Throw Massive Baby Shower

Forty women, husbands at war, share experiences and receive support.

By Amelie Botbol, Jewish News Syndicate

Forty wives of IDF reserve soldiers gathered in Modi'in, between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, recently for a collective baby shower titled "Our Jewish Revenge."

Meira Cowland, who organized the event, is expecting her first child. Her husband has been on the battlefield for many months. "The first challenge is loneliness. Being pregnant and not having your husband around really amplifies it," Cowland told JNS.

"You are not feeling well, you are throwing up. It's hard for you to cook or take care of your home. What should be a totally crazy experience together, you simply go through alone," she said. Cowland felt compelled to share her story on social media, prompting online followers to offer to throw her a baby shower.

"To me, it felt a bit weird having a party during a war, but somebody randomly wrote to me that if I felt that way, lots of other women must feel the same and struggle," she said.

Pretty quickly, people reached out asking her how they could help throw the collective baby shower. In response, Cowland asked followers to nominate pregnant women whose husbands were at war.

"At the same time, we had big and small companies and individuals reaching out. Event planner [Yehudit



The baby shower in Modi'in for wives of IDF reservists, Nov. 24, 2024

Kosowsky of] Yehudit Designs offered to take on the project pro bono, and we also received hundreds of gifts," she said.

Each of the 40 women attending the Nov. 24 event was presented with a duffel bag, replete with essentials for the hospital stay when giving birth. A trauma therapist participated, teaching them how to cope with being alone and to minimize any stress to their baby. A doula, massage therapists and an expert on the rights of reservists' wives also attended.

"We had letters sent from the husbands, we also paid for soups to be

delivered after the women have their babies," Cowland said.

The event also helped the women offset some of the expenses that come with pregnancy.

"When I first started looking for the things that I would need to buy, I realized that I was up against such a crazy expense. It sent me into a panic," Cowland said.

"We ask ourselves how we could reduce the costs for these women. We've had a few donors who reached out and offered to assist women who are financially struggling," she added.

While 40 women were selected to

take part in the event, Cowland said she received between 300 and 400 nominations.

Matana Bracha Horowitz, 26, moved to Jerusalem from California eight years ago and got married three months before Hamas's Oct. 7, 2023, massacre. She is expecting her first child.

"It takes a toll on you when you are constantly scared and nervous, it messes with you completely. When my husband was in Gaza, I couldn't breathe, I couldn't focus, I couldn't do anything although I had to. I didn't have friends with husbands on active duty," Horowitz told JNS.

Her husband, being religious, was drafted into the military at an older age and was in regular service when Hamas invaded. He did not return home for another four months.

Horowitz told JNS that beyond the material gifts she received at the event, the true value came in the form of the connections she made.

"I have a feeling that these girls and I are friends for life. We are each other's support system. Our men have their units and their comrades; we don't. Not all army wives live near each other and not everyone wants to get together," she said.

"The people I met there understand," she continued. "No one gets us like we get each other."

## New House Foreign Affairs Chair Fervent Supporter of Israel

Brian Mast Volunteered with Sar-El, the nonprofit that places civilian volunteers in support rolls with the Israeli military.

By Ron Kampeas, JTA

The House of Representatives elected Florida Rep Brian Mast, a zealous pro-Israel Republican who has volunteered with a group that assists the Israeli army, to chair the powerful House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mast bested three other contenders to succeed Texas Rep. Michael McCaul, who is term-limited. Insiders say that President-elect Donald Trump lobbied the Republican Steering Committee, which names committee chairs, to choose Mast.

"I have no doubt Congressman Mast — a distinguished combat veteran

and experienced member of this committee — will serve the nation well in this role, as he sacrificed in Afghanistan," McCaul said in a statement.

Mast, 44, a Christian and military veteran who lost both legs on duty in Afghanistan in 2010, volunteered in 2015 with Sar-El, a group that places civilians from abroad in support positions with the



Brian Mast (R-FL) wore an Israeli army uniform to Congress in the days after Oct. 7.

Israeli army. He has said the experience helped shape him.

A dedicated page on his congressional website describes the experience. "I learned at the Shabbat tables of my hosts just how much each family truly desires peace between every neighbor of Israel, regardless of religion or history," he said. "We cannot let Israel face its enemies alone."

Mast wore his Israeli army uniform to Congress in the days after Oct. 7, 2023, when Hamas massacred 1,200 people inside Israel and took hundreds hostage.

Mast's pro-Israel posture has often been pugnacious. California Rep. Sara Jacobs, a Jewish Democrat, last year sought to censure Mast for suggesting that there were no innocent Palestinian civilians in the war Israel was waging against Hamas in the Gaza Strip. "I would encourage the other side to not so lightly throw around the idea of innocent Palestinian civilians, as is frequently said," Mast said at the time. "I don't think we would so lightly throw around the term innocent Nazi civilians during World War II."





# Shabbat Schedule - January 2025

## **BETH SHALOM, Palm Desert**

(Member, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism)

Rabbi Dr. JB Sacks (rabbi@congregationbethshalom.net).  
42600 Cook Street, Second Floor, Palm Desert, CA 92211. 760-200-3636.  
Shabbat Morning Services: 9:45 am, followed by light Kiddush lunch.  
Friday, January 10: Welcome 2025 Erev Shabbat Service at 5:00 pm, preceded by refreshments and Hanukkah treats at 4:30 pm. Visitors welcome with valid identification. For information, email info@congregationbethshalom.net or call 760-200-3636. www.CongregationBethShalom.net

## **CHABAD OF PALM SPRINGS & DESERT COMMUNITIES**

Rabbi Yonason Denebeim & Rabbi Arik Denebeim  
250 East Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs, CA 92264 www.chabadpalmsprings.com 760-325-0774. Shacharit services Monday-Friday at 7:30 am; Sundays at 8:00 am and Shabbat at 10:00 am. Evening services 10 minutes before sunset. Check website or call to confirm times.

## **CHABAD OF PALM DESERT**

Rabbi Mendy Friedman  
Located in south Palm Desert. Call for information and location: 760-969-2158; www.chabadpd.com. Shabbat morning services 10:00 am. Monthly Shabbat dinners.

## **CHABAD OF RANCHO MIRAGE**

Rabbi Shimon Posner & Rabbi Benny Lew.  
www.chabadrm.com  
Weekly Shabbat Services start at 10 am, followed by a sit down lunch/kiddush.  
Check online for weekday and Friday schedule of services  
Text 760-770-7785  
or e-mail: info@chabadrm.com to be added to our mailing list. All programs and events are updated on our website.

**Ckids Hebrew School** 10:00 AM - 12:30 PM on designated Sundays

throughout the school year. Check our schedule online Info: chabadrm.com/ckids or Chaya Posner: chaya@chabadrm.com or 760-272-1923.

## **CHABAD OF SUN CITY PALM DESERT**

Rabbi Yonason Denebeim.  
Call 760-848-8250 or e-mail: info@chabadsuncity.com for information.  
Monthly Social Happy Hour. Holiday dinners and celebrations. Zoom Torah classes. Contact Rebbetzin Sussie Denebeim to receive weekly "Chabad in Sun City Newsletter" with listing of all services and activities: sussiedenebeim@gmail.com.

## **CHABAD OF LA QUINTA**

Rabbi Moshe Katz  
50620 Eisenhower Drive, Ste. G103, La Quinta, CA 92253. 760-709-2431. Email: chabadlaquinta@gmail.com.  
Chabad LQ offers weekly Torah studies, home visitations, Kosher meals, Shabbat Services, Women's Circle, Youth activities, Holiday programs and more.

**CONGREGATION HAR-EL**, a Contemporary Reform Congregation (Member, Union for Reform Judaism), offering year-round services, Torah study, youth and adult classes and events. Membership open for residents and non-residents. Rabbi Richard Zionts, Ph.D.; Cantor Joseph Gole, D.Mus. harelurjpd@gmail.com 760-779-1691.

Website: harelurjpd.org.  
Shabbat Eve Zoom Services are conducted weekly at 5 PM. Rabbi Richard Zionts shares a D'var Torah on a timely topic based on our timeless tradition. Cantor Joseph Gole provides inspiring melodies and insights from our Shabbat Eve liturgy. Attendees are encouraged to click on the Zoom presentation early for a conversation with clergy and congregants. Har-El welcomes visitors from out of state as well as those in California and the Coachella Valley.  
Rabbi Zionts holds Torah Study on

Zoom every Saturday morning at 11 AM. For a Zoom link, contact harelurjpd@gmail.com.

## **DESERT OUTREACH SYNAGOGUE, Rancho Mirage**

Rabbi Dr. Jules King; Rabbi Rachel Axelrad, Rabbi Chazzan Maseng and Sarah Lonsert, Cantorial Soloist. 760-449-0111. Mailing address: P.O. Box 982, Rancho Mirage, CA 92270. Shabbat services held at 7:00 pm on the second Fridays at Unitarian Universalist Church of the Desert in Rancho Mirage. On second Saturdays: 10:30-11:30 am Torah study on Zoom with Rabbi Axelrad. *Check the calendar for updates.*

**Adult Education:** Adult B'nai Mitzvah, Hebrew—Beginning and advanced, Introduction to Judaism, Adult Confirmation, Adult Learning. Contacts: rabbi@my-dos.org; www.my-dos.org

## **OR HAMIDBAR**

Rabbi David Lazar  
rabbi@orhamidbar.org  
In-person services each 1st Friday of the month and 3rd Shabbat morning. Online services all other Friday evenings and Shabbat mornings of the month. Kabbalat Shabbat Service - Fridays 6:30 pm; Shabbat prayer and study - Saturdays 10:30 am. For more information of in-person services, upcoming classes and Zoom links, visit orhamidbar.org.

## **SUN CITY JEWISH SERVICES, Palm Desert**

Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Emert and Cantorial Soloist Ezra Yaron. In person services in Speaker's Hall in the Sunset View Clubhouse (second clubhouse) in Sun City Palm Desert the first and third Fridays at 7:15 pm. Information: Nadine Brinhendler, 707- 332-3947.

## **TEMPLE HAR SHALOM, Idyllwild**

www.templeharshalomidyllwild.org  
Email: templeharshalomofidyllwild@gmail.com. Shabbat Candle Lighting on Fridays at 6:00 pm on Zoom. 1st Friday with Rabbi Malka Drucker; 2nd

Friday with Rabbi Ilana Grinblat; 3rd Friday with Kerry Abram; 4th Friday with Rabbi Ilana Grinblat. Shabbat Book Study with Rabbi Malka Drucker on Zoom Saturdays 4:00-5:00 pm. Check our website for current info including Torah Study with Rabbi Ilana one Saturday morning per month. For more information and for Zoom link call 951-468-0004.

## **TEMPLE ISAIAH, Palm Springs**

332 West Alejo Road, Palm Springs, CA 92262, 760-325-2281. Email: temple@templeisiahps.com; www.templeisiahps.com.  
Shabbat services Friday evenings at 7:30 pm followed by Oneg. Check website to confirm services and programming.  
Services also streamed online. To access any activity, go to Temple Isaiah's website and click on link to desired service or program.

## **TEMPLE SINAI, Palm Desert**

(Member, Union for Reform Judaism)  
Rabbi David Novak  
rabbi@templesinai.org  
73-251 Hovley Lane West, Palm Desert, CA 92260. www.templesinaipd.org 760-568-9699. Go to templesinaipd.org for access information. Shabbat services are in-person and online on Livestream at www.templesinaipd.org. Friday evening services 5:30 pm, preceded by pre-service Oneg at 5:00 pm. Saturday morning Torah study 8:45 am; Shabbat morning services 10 am.  
**Temple Sinai's Avi Levine Religious School** 9:30 - 12:00 AM on designated Sundays throughout the school year. Contact Talia Lizemer-Hawley, Community Educator, for more information, educator@templesinaipd.org

## **BIKUR CHOLIM**

A project of Chabad of Palm Springs & Desert Communities (Community Outreach) www.BikurCholimPS.com  
Rabbi Yankel Kreiman - 760-325-8076, and Rabbi Mendy Kreiman - 760-567-6726.





# Community Calendar of Programs - January 2024

## Sundays:

**11:00-11:30 am** Chabad of Palm Springs/Sun City **Tanya Teachings.** For men and women.

## Tuesdays:

**5:00-7:00 pm** – Chabad of Rancho Mirage weekly BBQ. Check website for details.

**7:00 pm** – Chabad of Palm Springs/ Sun City: Tanya, a class for women, with **Sussie Denebeim.** Call 760-848-8250 for more information.

## Wednesdays:

**11:00 am** Or Hamidbar. **Rabbi David Lazar** class: The Book of Proverbs on Zoom. For Zoom link visit orhamidbar.org.

**7:00 pm** Chabad of Rancho Mirage Tanya Class led by **Rabbi Shimon Posner.** For men and women. Hosted each week in Rancho Mirage and also available on Zoom.

**8:00 pm** – "Judaism 2.0 with **Rabbi Steven Rosenberg.** Online course on ZOOM: Judaism 2.0: New course: "What Jews Believe". To participate, email Rabbi at rabbisteven.rosenberg@gmail.com.

## Wednesday, January 8

**3:30 pm** Har-El Zoom Book Review of the 2024 book **The Message** by Ta-Nehisi Coates. Rabbi Richard Zions will review this 232-page controversial book, with responses from members of the Har-El Book Course Committee. Coates is a best-selling author and won the National Book Award for The Water Dancer in 2015. Non-members are welcome. Email harelurjpd@gmail.com for a Zoom invite.

## Wednesday, January 8

**7:00 pm** Sun City Palm Desert presents **Azi Schwartz & Friends 2025 Concert,** at Sun City Palm Desert Mountain View Clubhouse/Sierra Ballroom. VIP Seating \$125. General Admission \$54. See ad page 5.

## Thursday, January 9

**6:30 pm** Sabra Hadassah of the Desert: **"Only three things are for sure: Death, Taxes and Menopause"** with **Dr. Ava Mahapatra, M.D.** Sun City Palm Desert, Sunset View Clubhouse, Oasis Room. \$20 members; \$25 non-members. Coffee and nosh will be served. Information: Call Vivian at 818-687-9446.

## Sunday, January 12, 2025

Chabad Rancho Mirage 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Golf Classic: Desert Willow Golf Course, Palm Desert.

## Sunday, January 19

**10:30 am** Har-El Women's Retreat: **Har-El Celebrates Double Chai: 21 years of Har-El** (established 2004) and **15 Years of the Women's Retreat.** Featured speaker: **Professor Steven Windmueller, "The Changing Landscape of Jewish Communities: Challenges and Rewards."**

See ad page 9.

## Sunday, January 19

**4:00-6:00 pm** Jewish Federation of the Desert's Memorial for **Alan Potash.**

See page 1.

## Tuesday, January 21

**3:00 pm** Jewish Book Council VIRTUAL presentation by **Stephanie Smartschian** of the book **Evitchka.** See story page 3.

## Wednesday, January 22

**1:30 am-12:30 pm** Jewish Men's Outreach Group of the Desert

(JMOGD) lunch at the Jewish Federation Offices, joined by Jewish Book Council author Seth Bronstein before Bronstein's 12:30 pm presentation.

## Wednesday, January 22

**12:30 pm** Seth Bronstein IN PERSON presentation – open to the community – on his book **Swimming to Jerusalem.** Early reservations are urged, as space will be limited due to the JMOGD luncheon at 11:30 am See story page 3.

## Monday, January 27

**2:00 pm** Jewish Book Council very special ZOOM presentation of Jozef Debreczeni's **Cold Crematorium,** by his nephew **Alex Bruner.** See story page 4. This presentation is taking place on International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the date Auschwitz was liberated in 1945. Debreczeni survived Auschwitz and his book has been called "the harshest, most merciless indictment of Nazism ever written."

## Event Highlights 2025

**Jewish Federation of the Desert  
Feast of Jewish Learning: Part 2**  
Sunday, March 23, 2025

**Women's Philanthropy/  
Community Engagement  
Jewish Book Council Programs**

Monday, January 20, 2025  
Sunday, February 9, 2025  
Wednesday, February 12, 2025  
Wednesday, March 5, 2025  
Wednesday, March 19, 2025  
Wednesday, April 9, 2025  
Wednesday, May 7, 2025

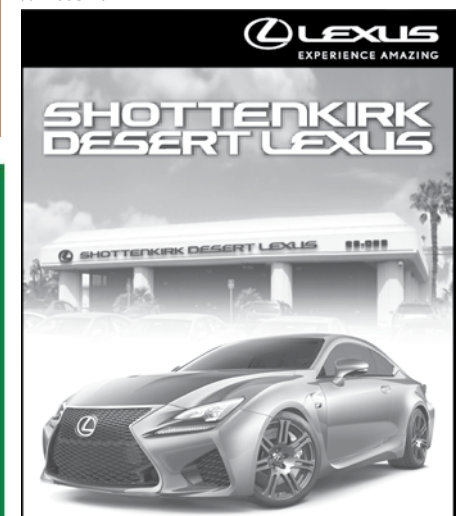
**Tolerance Education Center  
Jewish Book Council Programs**

Tuesday, January 21, 2025  
Tuesday, March 18, 2025  
Wednesday, April 16, 2025  
Thursday, April 24, 2025  
Tuesday, May 13, 2025

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# An Israeli Cafe Chain Launched By and For Oct. 7 Survivors is Expanding to More Cities

**Cafe Otef features chocolates using a recipe from a murdered chocolatier and cheeses and honey from devastated kibbutzim.**

By Deborah Danan, JTA

A woman with a gaunt face and ripped pajama pants ambles into Cafe Otef, nestled in a up-and-coming yet still gritty corner of Tel Aviv's Florentin neighborhood. She gestures to the water dispenser, and Ziv Hai, a worker at the cafe, obliges with a glass while owner Reut Karp offers her a cigarette.

"We don't have them in our region," Hai said about apparently unhoused people. "Learning how to navigate that has also been part of the journey."

Hai was far from home because the cafe is no ordinary establishment. Founded by Tamir Barelko, a serial entrepreneur in the culinary world, it is the second in the Cafe Otef chain — "Otef" referring to the "envelope" region of Israel bordering Gaza that Hamas terrorists invaded on Oct. 7, 2023. The first branch opened as a pop-up in Tel Aviv's glitzy Sarona complex, staffed by residents of Netiv Haasara, one of the communities targeted in the massacre. This branch, named Cafe Otef-Re'im, honors the kibbutz of the same name, where 80 terrorists invaded, killing seven residents and kidnapping four. The kibbutz was also next to where the Nova music festival massacre took place.

Staffed entirely by displaced residents from the battered communities in the south, the cafe offers a wide range of goods from that region: cheeses from Be'eri, honey from Kibbutz Erez, jams, spreads, granola and specialty cakes, alongside branded items such T-shirts, water bottles, and aprons — all sourced from small producers affected by the massacre.

But the piece de resistance is the chocolate, crafted from recipes by Dvir Karp, the owner's late ex-husband, who was murdered on Oct. 7 in front of their children, then ages 10 and 8.

Reut Karp said that during the pandemic, "when we all thought we were going to die," she had urged her ex-husband to write down his chocolate recipes. Despite his initial resistance — insisting he had them all in his head — he eventually complied. After his murder, Karp felt a profound responsibility to preserve his legacy. She believes Dvir would have been proud of her posthumous rebranding of his chocolates, including a new logo inspired by the luxury brand Cartier, though she joked he would "probably say I went overboard."



*Reut Karp, whose ex-husband was murdered on Oct. 7, 2023, in front of their children, shows off art connected to the massacre at Cafe Otef, the Tel Aviv coffee shop she manages in his honor.*

Most of Re'im's residents were evacuated to nearby apartment buildings in Florentin, while Hai, who is from a different kibbutz close to Egypt, was initially relocated with his family to Ofakim, a small city near Beersheba. In April, he moved to Tel Aviv, where he said he experienced an intense culture shock.

"At first, I was like, what the hell am I doing here, and I just wanted to move back," he said. Over time, however, he adjusted to city life, finding a sense of belonging through his work at the cafe, which opened in the summer.

"I feel like I left a piece of myself behind in Sufa, and here in Tel Aviv, I'm trying to rebuild myself anew. The cafe gives me a place where I can feel comfortable," he said. "I can tell a dark joke, and everyone here — because they're also from the south — gets it."

Karp, who co-owns another cafe featuring Dvir's chocolates in Israel's south, was approached by Barelko to manage the Re'im branch. She declined, citing her responsibilities to her three children who are still coping with the trauma of the attack (Karp herself was away for the weekend of Oct. 7). Determined to involve her, Barelko appointed managers to handle daily operations, allowing Karp to serve as the owner and hostess.

The role proved a perfect fit for Karp, who expressed gratitude for having a reason to get up each day.

"So many times over the past six months, I've said, thank God I have this place that forces me out of bed. And all the workers say the same thing," she shared, highlighting one employee who had lost his entire

family in the attack.

The cafe has become a gathering place for those directly impacted by the events of Oct. 7 — survivors of the Nova music festival, bereaved parents and others — while also offering a space for those not directly affected to engage with their stories and find meaning. "They want to feel a sense of connection and to know it's not just a gimmick," Karp said.

"People always say Tel Avivians are living in a bubble — sitting in coffee shops while soldiers are fighting and hostages are trapped in Hamas tunnels," she added. "But here, people let themselves enjoy coffee without the guilt."

The cafe's location in the center of the country has also made it a natural meeting point for evacuees from both Israel's north and south who have been relocated to the city. Karp noted the unique camaraderie that has formed between the two groups, describing it as a shared understanding of what it means to be displaced within their own country.

As if on cue, an older woman from Kibbutz Manara in the north approached and chatted with Karp about her recent visit to her kibbutz — the first since the ceasefire agreement with Hezbollah in late November. Their laughter seemed out of place given the context of the conversation, with the older woman remarking that it would take "at least a decade" to rebuild the kibbutz. Over 70% of the homes in Manara have been damaged, with rocket fragments still scattered across the area, prompting some residents to compare it to Chernobyl.

The two hug before the older woman

walks away — a scene that plays out repeatedly throughout the afternoon.

"Some people recognize me from TV but hesitate to ask questions or offer a hug," Karp said. "But that contact is like a human charger for me."

Around 100 of Re'im's 450 residents have returned home. Yet, according to Karp, many of their temporary neighbors in Tel Aviv feel conflicted about their departure. "On the one hand, they're happy for us to go back home, but on the other, they want us to stay because our presence here has put a face to Oct. 7," she said.

The red anemone, or kalanit — Israel's national flower, ubiquitous in the region of Re'im — is equally ubiquitous at the cafe, embroidered on staff uniforms, printed on takeaway cups, and displayed on ceramic items for sale. But otherwise, there are few overt signs of the cafe's deeper purpose. One less obvious sign comes in an innocuous poster on the wall, its tiny spiral text easy to miss.

Created by Adi Drimer, an art teacher from Re'im, the artwork contains the haunting text messages sent in the kibbutz WhatsApp group on Oct. 7. Karp points out her own chilling plea from that day, begging other kibbutz members to rescue her children: "Urgent! Urgent! Daria and Lavi are alone," read her text. "Dvir was murdered."

Karp said the decision to avoid making the cafe overtly about the massacre was deliberate, respecting those who prefer to keep their coffee and grief separate.

"We also don't want to sink into the sadness of it all," she said. "This is a place for renewal, and when people see us moving forward, it inspires them."

Barelko has big plans for the chain. Two new branches are set to open in the coming weeks: one in Rehovot, called Cafe Otef-Sderot, for residents of the southern town, and a misnomered Cafe Otef-Kiryat Shmona, paying tribute to those evacuated from the northern town for 14 months.

He also plans to introduce food trucks at various locations across the country and expand the initiative to include employment for soldiers disabled in the war, whose numbers are estimated in the thousands.

"In the end, we realized this is the best approach to rehabilitation. It builds both hope and resilience," he said.



# Three Palm Springs-Area Rabbis Join 6,500 Colleagues at International Conference of Chabad-Lubavitch Emissaries

By Moshe New/Chabad.org

Some 6,500 Chabad rabbis and Jewish leaders from around the globe gathered in Brooklyn, N.Y., from November 27-December 1, for the annual International Conference of Chabad-Lubavitch Emissaries, the largest rabbinic gathering in the world. Arik Denebeim from Chabad of Palm Springs, Shimon Posner from Chabad of Rancho Mirage, Moshe Katz from Chabad of La Quinta represented the Jews of the Greater Palm Springs region.



*Rancho Mirage Rabbi Shimon Posner (right) with Rabbi Yakov Cahnman, roving Rabbi for rural Arizona*

While the yearly conference has a celebratory feel, welcoming rabbinic leaders from Alaska to Zambia, the past year was a difficult one for the Jewish people, seeing tragedy in Israel, and other parts of the world. For Jews around the globe and the family of emissaries



*"Annual class picture" of Rabbis attending the conference*

in particular, this week has been a particularly difficult one: On November 25, mere days before the conference's start, Abu Dhabi-based Chabad Rabbi Zvi Kogan was buried in Israel, after being murdered by terrorists in Dubai at the age of 28.

The conference included workshops on a kaleidoscope of contemporary issues that ran over the course of the weekend, including disaster relief, combating hate, education, counseling and dealing with

grief, and much more. Conference goers who serve students on college campuses where Chabad has become the heart of Jewish life took part in a separate track discussing issues specifically relevant to campus communities.

With the onset of Shabbat on Friday evening, the emissaries spend the Jewish day of rest in prayer and brotherly comradery, often in the company of family and friends. Sunday morning saw the snapping of the annual "class

picture" under the iconic gables of 770 Eastern Parkway, the headquarters of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement, representing the many faces of the Chabad rabbis from war-torn Ukraine to the towns along Israel's hostile borders, anti-Israel filled college campuses across the U.S. to sleepy towns in the Midwest, all posed in a portrait of Jewish pride and unity.

## Sebastian Gorka: "Israel Has to Neutralize Every Threat to the People of Israel, Period, End of Story"

By Ben Rappaport, United with Israel

Sebastian Gorka, whom President-elect Donald Trump has tapped to be senior director for counterterrorism in his incoming administration, emphasized that the soldiers of the IDF fighting against terrorism are doing "the L-rd's work."

In an interview with Israel's *Channel 14* published December 4, Gorka responded to Trump's warning that there will be "all hell to pay" if Hamas doesn't release the hostages by his inauguration.

"Trump," he said, "will stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Israel and Prime Minister Netanyahu to make sure that the threats to [Israel] and to Judeo-Christian civilization are destroyed."

Responding to the claim that Israel is committing "genocide," Gorka said, "Now we have a new totalitarian ideology to replace Nazism, and that's Global Jihadism.



*Sebastian Gorka, Trump's Counterterrorism Director*

So if anyone says Israel is committing genocide, they're on the side of the real genocidal jihadis."

Addressing the Israel-Lebanon ceasefire and whether northern Israelis would be able to return to their homes, Gorka said Israel must render terror groups incapable of harming its citizens.

"With the recent pager operation, Israel has done an incredible job of

undermining the capacity of groups like Hezbollah, Hamas, and the global jihadi movement to hurt [Israeli] citizens," he said, adding that Israel must "undermine their will to do so as well."

"Israel has to neutralize every threat to the people of Israel, period, end of story."

Regarding the idea of a "Palestinian state," Gorka said, "If you read the recent polls since October 7, more than 70% of the [Palestinian Arab] population agree with the massacre of Jews on October 7. Until the people of Gaza and the West Bank decide they want to live in peace with Israel and do not want to kill every Jew, until that time, there is no political resolution, and Israel has to be responsible for the security of those territories."

Asked what his vision of a "decisive victory" would look like, Gorka said,

"There is no classical victory now. Israel should be responsible for the security of those areas and make it impossible for any jihadi group to exploit those territories to launch new mass casualty attacks against the people of Israel."

"For the time being, it's going to be a security situation and not a political one."

Gorka concluded with a message of encouragement for Israel.

"Hold the line. America will be back very, very soon. We bless every single one of you," he said, addressing IDF soldiers and their families, adding, "Things will change. You are doing the L-rd's work by saving innocent people and bringing justice to evildoers. So don't give up, hold the line, and we will keep you in our prayers."

*Happy Chanukah and Happy New Year From The Federation Staff*





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## HAVE A NOSH

There are no celebratory Jewish holidays in January to give pertinent recipes. On the other hand, this paper should be in the homes around December 24<sup>th</sup> - which is before the start of Chanukah, so I decided to give you additional Chanukah recipes, above what was put in the December paper, and a recipe or two appropriate for Chanukah or New Year's parties! For



my third recipe I'm giving you a Herring recipe that clearly is not a latke, but I just found it again after a couple years and if you like herring this recipe will blow you away. I got it from a friend about 47 years ago and it is just as good now as then! The Gurkas Dilijs are a Norwegian appetizer and a refreshing addition to a hors d'oeuvres table. Happy Chanukah! Happy New Year! MHB

### California Corn Cake Latkes With Guacamole

1½ cups corn kernels, preferably fresh	2 egg yolks
1/3 cup cornmeal	2 Tbsp. chives
1/2-cup milk	1/2-teaspoon each salt & pepper
1/3 cup flour	1 Tbsp. oil
4 Tbsp. melted unsalted butter	1/2-cup clarified unsalted butter
2 eggs	3/4 cup of your favorite guacamole recipe

Roughly chop the corn kernels by hand or with a few quick burst in food processor until a chunky but creamy consistency is reached. Place in a large bowl and whisk in the cornmeal, milk and flour until no lumps remain. In a separate bowl combine the 4 Tbsp. melted butter, eggs and egg yolks. Stir in the corn mixture, add the chives and season with salt and pepper. Heat a large saucepan to medium high heat. Pour in the oil and half cup clarified butter. Using a ladle, make dollar size corn latkes, frying them approximately 2 minutes per side. Keep hot in a warm oven. Serve with a dollop of guacamole on top. Makes about 20 appetizer size latkes.

### Yam & Ginger Latkes (Pareve or Milchig)

1 egg	2 medium yams (about 1 lb), peeled & grated
1/2 teaspoon fresh lemon juice	1 small onion, grated
1/2teaspoon salt	1 1/2 teaspoons flour
1/8 teaspoon freshly ground pepper	1/4 teaspoon baking powder
2 Tablespoons minced crystallized ginger	1/4 to 1/3 cup vegetable oil
1 1/2 Tablespoons honey	1/3 cup sour cream or chunky applesauce
1 garlic clove, minced	

In a large bowl, combine egg, lemon juice, salt and pepper and beat until well blended. Add ginger, honey and garlic and mix well. Stir in grated yams and onion. Sprinkle flour and baking powder over yam mixture, mixing well.

In a large frying pan, over medium heat, add 2 tablespoons oil. Drop tablespoons of mixture into the hot oil and flatten with back of a spoon. Cook, turning once, until golden on both sides, about 5 minutes total. Drain on paper towels and keep warm in a low oven until all batter has been made into latkes. Serve warm, with sour cream and/or applesauce.

May be made ahead and refrigerated up to two days. To heat, place in a single layer on a cookie sheet in a 450 oven for five minutes, or until heated through. Makes 24-30 mini latkes.

### Ann's Danish Herring

2 jars herring	1 cup tomato sauce	1 teaspoon mustard
1 cup sugar	1 cup diced unpeeled apple	powder
1 Tablespoon oil		¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
1 cup brown vinegar	1 cup sliced onion	

Cut herring into small pieces. Mix sugar and oil well. Add vinegar and tomato sauce and mix well. Add remaining ingredients. Pour over herring and put in jar(s). Seal with lid and refrigerate until ready to serve.

### Gurkas Dilijs

3 -4 small English cucumbers	1 teaspoon dill weed	1 teaspoon mayonnaise
1 2-oz. tin anchovies	1 teaspoon shredded green onion	1/16 teaspoon cayenne
6 oz. cream cheese		Sour cream and Chervil

Scrub but do not peel cucumbers. Cut off ends. Cut into one-inch lengths and scoop out center seedy portion (suggest using a grapefruit knife). Drain anchovies and chop. Mix with cream cheese, dill, onions and mayonnaise. Season with cayenne. Blend well. Stuff mixture into cucumber sections. Chill for several hours. Just before serving top each section with a dab of sour cream and sprinkle with chervil. Serve very cold. (Can be made hours ahead. They stay crisp).





## Simchas

Mazel tov to **Raizel Lew**, daughter of **Rabbi Benny** and **Chani Lew**, on her Bat Mitzvah at Chabad of Rancho Mirage on December 21 ...The award **Arnie Gillman** received from JMOGD (see photo and story page 1) was presented to him

by **Michael Zaifert, Alan Gitlin** and **Amy Nachman Potash**, for "making a difference and significant contribution to the Jewish community through his time, actions, talents and dedication." At the same occasion, **Matt Fisher** was presented with an Appreciation Award for his "selfless service to our community and organization for his toy collection efforts for underprivileged and children in hos-

pitals during the holidays ... Kudos to Sabra Hadassah of the Desert and their president **Debbie Orgen**, for inviting the community to attend their remarkable program on December 12: the



first-person account of **Michal Elon**, a nurse and mother of ten, who was shot and seriously injured trying to save an Israeli soldier on an army base located on the border of Gaza that horrible morning of October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, bringing once again into sharp focus the viciousness and cruelty inflicted by Hamas ... Email or call **Miriam Bent** with your Simchas: [mhbentjcn@earthlink.net](mailto:mhbentjcn@earthlink.net) or 760-835-1022.



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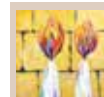
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