



# Jewish Community News

The Publication of the Jewish Federation of the Desert

www.jfedps.org

Tevet/Shavet 5785 - February 2025



**Arnie Gillman**

Jewish Federation  
Board President

As the fires in Los Angeles continue to burn all I can think about is how devastating it is for the thousands of families who now find themselves homeless. My wife, Sue, and I have friends who have sadly lost their homes as well. JFNA (Jewish Federation of North America) has started an Emergency Relief Fund to help those in need, please check out our weekly eblast for direction on how to help or donate the victims of the LA fires. If you know of anyone that has been evacuated to our local area and needs resources, please contact our office and I will try to help you get connected with the right resources.

Our paper goes to press before we know if the negotiated hostage release is successful, but the lead article on this page puts into words the many feelings we have been dealing with these past 15 months.

Locally we are in the process of interviewing candidates for our Federation's CEO. We also continue to work towards hiring two Co-Program Directors for the Tolerance Education Center. Norma Zuckerman and Michelle Gold will be coordinating programs with local schools in the desert and local Holocaust survivors.

We are going to press one day before our women's Lion of Judah event with guest speaker, Dara Horn, American novelist, essayist, and professor of literature, so will be reporting on it in the next JCN. Our Major Gifts event is on February 26, 2025, with guest speaker Rabbi David Wolpe. And mark your calendars for our Federation Golf Day at Tamarisk on March 25, 2025. More on it next month as well.

## In Israel and Across the World, Jews are Feeling Hope — and Getting Ready for Heartbreak

As Israel readies to receive dozens of liberated hostages, its citizens and Jews around the world are preparing for some to be deceased.

By Ben Sales, JTA



One of the most lasting images of late November 2023 — alongside tearful photos of freed Israeli hostages reuniting with their loved ones — was a video of a resident of Kfar Aza breathlessly listing the names of the liberated captives, before shouting the Shema.

The clip epitomized the joy and relief felt across Israel that week, as a ceasefire brought more than 100 hostages out of captivity and provided a balm for a nation in mourning.

Now, as another set of hostages is about to be released, the mood is not the same.

Fourteen months of war have passed since the last hostage release, and in that time much of Gaza has been destroyed, dozens of hostages have been confirmed killed and divisions in Israeli society have only grown.

And as Israel readies to receive dozens of liberated hostages, its citizens and

Jews around the world are preparing for heartbreak.

"My hopes are up. But my heart is heavy," wrote Ori Hanan Weisberg, an American immigrant to Israel, in a viral Facebook post noting that this week's ceasefire deal had been on the table for months. "I will say a blessing of thanks for every soul released. But it will be difficult for me to rejoice (though I hope hostages' family and friends do). Not because of the 'price' of doing the deal, but because of the 'price' we have paid over the last months. Even perhaps year."

He continued, "How many hostages died or were outright murdered in that time? How many extra months of hell did those being released endure and what effect will it have on them?"

Foremost in the minds of many is the condition of the released hostages. In November 2023, all of the freed hostages were alive. Now, it's estimated

that at least some of the initial 33 set to be released will return dead.

Family members of hostages have stressed the importance of receiving the bodies of those who have died so they can afford them a proper burial.

*Continued on page 3*



**Pasadena Synagogue  
burns to the ground in  
recent fires. See article  
on page 8.**



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You are cordially invited to attend the

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Major Gifts

ANNUAL DINNER 2025

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025

5:30 Reception, Dinner & Speaker to follow  
Couvert: \$150 per person

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Feature Films

- A Real Pain
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- Pink Lady
- The Performance

- Treasure
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- Neither Day Nor Night

- One Life
- Bad Shabbos
- Never Alone

Documentaries

- Colleyville
- The Commandant’s Shadow
- Charles Grodin: Rebel With A Cause
- October H8TE: The Fight for the Soul of America

- Fioretta

Subject to change



# Trump Appoints Ortagus as Deputy Mideast Envoy, But Admits He's Not Excited About It

In making announcement, US president-elect appears to reference the ex-State Department spokesperson's previous criticism of him, warns that he expects results soon  
By Jacob Magid, The Times of Israel

US President-elect Donald Trump on Friday announced his decision to appoint former State Department spokesperson Morgan Ortagus as his deputy Mideast envoy.

Ortagus will work under Steve Witkoff, who was one of the first appointments Trump made following his election in November. Both of them are Jewish.

Trump was far from effusive in his Truth Social post announcing the decision.

Ortagus "fought me for three years, but hopefully has learned her lesson," he says. He didn't get into specifics, but Ortagus criticized Trump's "isolationist foreign policy approach," in the 2016 presidential primary. She shifted to support Trump once he secured the nomination and was rewarded with the job of spokesperson of the State Department for much of his first term.

In the 2024 presidential election,



Morgan Ortagus

though, Ortagus backed Trump's former US ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley during her long-shot run.

"These things usually don't work out, but she has strong Republican support, and I'm not doing this for me, I'm doing it for them. Let's see what happens," Trump wrote on Friday.

Ortagus has close relationships with some of the less-isolationist foreign policy bigwigs in the Trump world, such as incoming secretary of state Marco

Rubio, incoming national security adviser Mike Walz and former senior White House adviser and Trump son-in-law Jared Kushner.

"She will hopefully be an asset to Steve, a great leader and talent, as we seek to bring calm and prosperity to a very troubled region. I expect great results, and soon!" Trump added.

Ortagus will bring a wealth of foreign policy experience, which will likely be of great value, given that Witkoff comes from the business world and has never worked in the public sector.

She worked as a public affairs officer at the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) before serving as an intelligence analyst in the Treasury Department focusing on the Middle East. In 2010, Ortagus was appointed deputy Treasury attaché at the US Embassy in Riyadh.

Ortagus converted to Judaism after she began dating Jonathan Weinberger. The couple got married in 2013 in a ceremony officiated by the late Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg.

The 42-year-old mother of one will work alongside a gradually growing Trump Mideast team that includes Witkoff, senior adviser for Arab and Middle Eastern affairs Massad Boulos, hostage envoy Adam Boehler and ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee.

Their first task could be trying to secure a hostage deal, as the Biden administration races to finalize negotiations between Israel and Hamas before Trump's January 20 inauguration. Qatari mediators hosted delegations from both sides on Friday but significant disagreements are said to remain.

Continued from page 1

But seeing the return of hostages' bodies will still occasion mourning, even if the fates of many of the captives have long been known.

Nowhere is that apprehension more acute than in the case of Kfir and Ariel Bibas, the two remaining children held hostage who, since the days after Oct. 7, have become faces of the captives' plight. In late November 2023, during the first ceasefire, Hamas announced that they and their mother Shiri had been killed.

Israel said it was investigating that claim but has not confirmed it. For more than a year, advocates for the hostages have spoken of the Bibas children, who would now be ages 2 and 5, as presumed to be alive. But now, as the Bibases are due to be released in the second week of the deal, voices across Israel are publicly grappling with the possibility that they are dead.

"We are 99% certain that they are dead, likely murdered even before the 1st exchange," Rachel Gur, an Israeli university lecturer and longtime political adviser, wrote on X earlier this week. "Shiri, Ariel and Kfir weren't kidnapped by a formal Hamas cell but by the enterprising civilians of Gaza. They were

stolen as trophies. A woman clutching 2 babies. They never stood a chance."

Sara Yael Hirschhorn, a historian who teaches at the University of Haifa, wrote, "If two little redheaded kids come out of Gaza in coffins, be ready for serious vigilante violence." (She made clear that the post was a prediction, not an endorsement of violence.)

Even prayers that the boys are alive and well have met backlash. On Secret Tel Aviv, a popular Facebook group, a post from November imagining a scenario in which "the Bibas family sits together in a darkened cell, with great love as they have never before felt," drew a stream of comments accusing the writer of being detached from reality.

Some Israelis and Diaspora Jews are turning to prayer to gird themselves for the days ahead — and in some cases, giving themselves an avenue for hope about the Bibases' fate.

"Even though I know all of the rumors, and all of the estimates, at this Shabbat's candle lighting I will pray for all of the hostages," wrote Tel Aviv resident Pnina Yanay in a post that has garnered hundreds of reactions.

Referring to a photo of Shiri Bibas clutching her two children as they were abducted to Gaza, Yanay said she would

"dedicate a special prayer for that mother in pajamas on Shabbat morning. ... I will pray for the entire Bibas family, and the rest of our nation's hostages, to return alive and whole. That there should be a miracle."

"There is hope that has been lost and that feels weird when it's a big aspect of Judaism to continue to always have hope," said Dana Cohen, a clinical social worker in Chicago who said she, her colleagues and many of her clients had been emotionally affected by Oct. 7 and its aftermath.

She said people who have been invested in the hostages' plight should prepare to feel a mixture of emotions over the coming weeks, from relief, joy and connection to anxiety, uncertainty and grief. "All feelings are valid," she said.

And as hostage families anxiously await their loved ones, some are turning toward what will happen next. The

second and third phases of the deal are set to include the release of the rest of the hostages, living and dead.

But it is far from clear that those stages, which Israeli government leaders have reportedly vowed to torpedo, will move forward, particularly as Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces fierce pressure from his government partners to resume fighting.

Alana Zeitchik, a cousin of hostage David Cunio who has been advocating for the captives for more than a year from her home in New York City, said she has no plans to let up.

"No, I don't have hope, I have the ability to take action," she said in an Instagram video. "Hope is not some amorphous thing that we can't touch and grab. It's actually the action that we take. It is the sheer will inside of us to do something"

*Philissa Cramer contributed reporting.*



# MedEx Event in LA Aims to Recruit 2,000 Jewish Doctors to Israel

By Raquel Guertzenstein Frohlich, The Jerusalem Post

Dozens of Jewish medical professionals participated in a MedEx event in Los Angeles that aims to integrate more doctors into the Israeli workforce, Nefesh B'Nefesh announced in a statement on December 20.

The joint initiative between the Ministry of Aliyah and Integration, the Ministry of Health, Nefesh B'Nefesh, and The Jewish Agency for Israel aims to recruit 2,000 Jewish doctors to Israel in the next five years, according to Nefesh B'Nefesh.

Healthcare representatives from

organizations and companies such as Ichilov, Hadassah, Clalit, and the Northern Medical Center conducted real-time job interviews at the event, the statement said. Attendees met with representatives from the Israeli Ministry of Health and Medical Directorate to discuss licensing, job opportunities, and relocation grants.

Aliyah and Integration Minister Ofir Sofer said this joint effort will strengthen the Israeli healthcare system with a focus on the Negev and Galilee.

"The MedEx events provide an important platform to encourage doctors to make Aliyah, while offering assistance to navigate the process," Sofer said. "It is heartwarming to see the significant interest from doctors in particular, and by Jews in general, to make aliyah during this time of war. This is a profound expression of Zionism and a demonstration of solidarity with the citizens of Israel.

### "Aliyah is a growth machine"

Maj.-Gen. (ret.) Doron Almog, the chairman of the Jewish Agency, said he welcomed the initiative and hopes it will lead to many Jews making aliyah.

"Aliyah is a growth engine, and the integration of more Jews into the actions and endeavors of the State of Israel, in medicine and other fields, is an essential part of its rebuilding and development," Almog said.

An emphasis was placed on employment in cities in Israel's periphery because of new grant programs from the Ministry of the Negev, Galilee and National Resilience, and the government administration in the Gaza border areas, according to the press statement.

"Our MedEx events reflect our shared commitment to addressing Israel's healthcare needs while empowering Jewish medical professionals in their Aliyah journeys," said Tony Gelbart, the co-founder and chairman of Nefesh B'Nefesh. "These medical professionals are embarking on a transformative path that will enrich their lives and strengthen Israel's healthcare system. And as such, we are committed to ensuring that their Aliyah and integration processes are as smooth and successful as possible."

The event was part of MedEx's newly founded International Medical Aliyah Program (IMAP).

Key partners include the Ministry of the Negev, Galilee, and National Resilience, the Marcus Foundation, the Gottesman Foundation, and the Jewish Federation of North America.

Similar events were previously held in cities such as London, Paris, and Buenos Aires. Notably, the Sunday Los Angeles event marked the first time the MedEx fair was brought to a West Coast US city. Nefesh B'Nefesh held an aliyah fair alongside the medical professionals event.

Key partners include the Ministry of the Negev, Galilee, and National Resilience, the Marcus Foundation, the Gottesman Foundation, and the Jewish Federation of North America.

## JEWISH COMMUNITY NEWS

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Jewish Federation of the Desert  
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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.

The JCN is published monthly, ten months a year by the Jewish Federation of the Desert, 69-710 Highway 111, Rancho Mirage, CA 92270, 760-324-4737, fax 760-324-3154.

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**Miriam H. Bent**, Editor  
760-323-0255  
e-mail: mhbentjcn@earthlink.net

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# FBI Arrests College Student for Plotting Mass Casualty Attack on Israeli Consulate in NYC

Egyptian national attending university in Virginia accused of encouraging informant to carry out attack, instructing him how to make a bomb, surveil the consulate and later escape

By Luke Tress, The Times of Israel

The FBI has arrested a suspect for a planned mass casualty terror attack against the Israeli consulate in New York City.

The suspect, Abdullah Ezzeldin Taha Mohamed Hassan, an 18-year-old Egyptian national living in Falls Church, Virginia, instructed an FBI informant to carry out the attack, according to a criminal complaint filed on December 16. He was identified as a freshman at George Mason University, which later confirmed he was enrolled at the school but said he was barred from campus following his arrest.

Hassan ran several social media accounts that supported ISIS, al-Qaeda and Hamas, and advocated for violence against Jews, the FBI said in the complaint filed in a federal court in Virginia.

Local police located Hassan after receiving a tip about one of Hassan's accounts on X. An undercover FBI asset then connected with Hassan on social media and secure messaging apps.

Hassan allegedly instructed the informant on how to join ISIS and shared jihadist propaganda, including a video that advocated for killing Jews.

He encouraged the informant to carry out an attack, sending him instructions on how to create a "martyrdom video," the complaint said.

The suspect sent the informant bomb-making instructions and told the informant, who said he was in New York, to target a building representing Jews, later settling on the Israeli consulate. The bomb-making instructions allegedly included the suggestion that packing the explosive with 30 mm aluminum ball bearings, for shrapnel, "will do the trick."

Hassan told the informant how to surveil the consulate and how to escape to ISIS territory after the attack and also suggested he could "lay havoc on them with an assault rifle" instead of a bomb. He also told the informant to livestream the attack so Hassan could give the footage to ISIS.

The conversations took place last month and this month, the complaint said.

Hassan, who according to a court filing was arrested on December 17, is accused of crimes related to distributing information on explosives and weapons of mass destruction.

Ofir Akunis, Israeli's consul-general in New York, thanked US security services for thwarting the planned attack.

"This attempted attack by terror organizations is an attack on the sovereign soil of the State of Israel in its entirety," Akunis said in a statement to The Times of Israel. "It's proof that terror knows no boundaries and that we must fight it everywhere and every time."

There was no immediate comment from the US Justice Department on the arrest.

Authorities have prevented other recent terror attacks against Jews in New York.

In September, a suspect was arrested in Canada while attempting to enter the US to attack a Jewish center in Brooklyn in support of ISIS.

And In July, a neo-Nazi was indicted for planning mass casualty attacks against Jews in New York City by distributing poisoned candy to Jewish children.

## 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

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, March 18, 2025

Wednesday, April 16, 2025

Thursday, April 24, 2025

Tuesday, May 13, 2025



## HAR-EL GALEN BOOKS & BORDEAUX SERIES SPRING 2025

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2025 - 3 PM



**Presenter:** Prof. Samuel Trussell, J.D.; Chair, Har-El Trimester Advisory Committee

**Book:** "Israel/Palestine in World Religions: Whose Promised Land?" by S. Ilan Troen



S. Ilan Troen is a Professor of Modern History Emeritus at Ben-Gurion University, Israel and Professor in Israel Studies Emeritus at Brandeis University, and founding director of the Israel Studies Centers at both institutions. ■ The book explores the century-long tangle of secular and theological debates about Israel's legitimacy, providing a better-informed understanding of this persistent issue.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 5<sup>th</sup>, 2025 - 3 PM



**Presenter:** Professor Steve Moyer, J.D. Vice President of Membership of Har-El

**Book:** "Target Tehran" by Yonah Jeremy Bob and Ilan Evayatar



Yonah Jeremy Bob is a senior military and intelligence analyst for The Jerusalem Post, and Ilan Evyatar is the former editor-in-chief of the award-winning magazine 'The Jerusalem Report.' ■ The book describes how Israel uses sabotage, assassination, cyberwar as well as diplomacy to oppose and undermine Iran's development of nuclear weapons with hopes of creating a new Middle East.

Yonah Jeremy Bob spoke at the Jewish Federation on Zoom from Israel in November, 2024. If you attended, please plan to add to the discussion.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2, 2025 - 3 PM



**Presenter:** Rosa Weinstein Anthropologist

**Book:** "The Forbidden Garden: The Botanists of Leningrad and Their Impossible Choice" by Simon Parkin, Award-winning British journalist and author.



During the dark times of Stalin's reign of terror and the Nazi bombardment of Leningrad (now St. Petersburg), world-renowned botanist Nikolai Vavilov and his colleagues fought bombs, scavengers and their own terrible hunger in order to save the world's largest collection of seeds, designated to change the future of world food production. Their sacrifice to insure freedom from enslavement and the betterment of human life foreshadows the message of the upcoming festival of Passover.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7<sup>th</sup>, 2025 - 3 PM



**Presenter:** Robert Schneeweiss, Past Director of Student Activities and Leadership Development at Central Connecticut State University. "The Life and Work of Ernest Hemingway." Bob will also share highlights of his recent trip to Cuba. Rabbi Richard Zions will make comments that will connect Bob's presentation to Judaism. In preparation, an option is to watch Ken Burns' new three-part documentary, *Behind the Scenes: Making Hemingway*, which aired in January, 2025 & can be obtained with a PBS App.

To register for any or all of the above, email to: [harelurjpd@gmail.com](mailto:harelurjpd@gmail.com). Location confirmed at the time of registration. Contributions welcome, not mandatory.

**HAR-EL**  
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# Jewish Book Council Special In-person Program: Tuesday, February 4: "Tatae's Promise"

The son of two Holocaust survivors, Dr. Moises Goldman is passionate about informing others about the perils of hate and antisemitism. Moises is an accomplished aerospace scientist, executive and entrepreneur. He holds a MSEE and PH.D. in engineering systems from UCLA and an MBA from MIT Sloan.

**"Tatae's Promise"** is the never-before-told true story of a young woman's escape from Auschwitz with her sister, a remarkable tale of unimaginable courage, family, faith and enduring love. Hinda was eighteen years old when an axe crashed through the front door of her home in Poland. Nazi soldiers swarmed inside and herded the family into an army truck and hauled "Hinda Mondlak's story is nothing short of extraordinary... Inspired by her father's promise and last words to her just before his execution—'You will live; you will tell'—this riveting adaptation urgently demands only one thing from us: we must listen!"

In December of 1942, a spoon and a small bowl were issued to Hinda Mondlak at the Auschwitz concentration camp. She was told that if she lost either of those eating utensils, she would lose the right to eat, no others would be issued. No storage was provided. Hinda, and all prisoners, kept their eating utensils in their uniforms, including during their long twelve-hour workdays at sometimes hazardous workstations. Hinda managed to keep hers throughout her time—two full years—at Auschwitz, where she used



Authors Dr. Moises Goldman, the son of two Holocaust survivors, is an accomplished aerospace scientist, executive and entrepreneur, and Sherry Maysonave, an award winning author and acclaimed motivational speaker.

it to eat the meager camp rations—thin gruel and stale bread.

At the time of her escape from Auschwitz, Hinda took the spoon with her. She kept it secreted away through all her travails and travels afterward. Unbeknownst to her husband, Hinda fed both of their children from it when they were babies. For her, it was healing to use the spoon to scoop up thick, nutritious food for Moises and Sara, who she prayed would never eat gruel, starve, or be under the dominion of cruel, hateful people.

The spoon's underside handle is stamped with the official motif of the German government under Hitler's reign, the Nazi eagle sitting atop a crown. Manufactured by the German company, Kriegsmarine, the spoon sported multiple markings, such as the letters ROSTFREI, which indicated it was made from an alloy, of steel and chromium, that resisted rust.

Hinda's daughter, Sara Goldman, is still in possession of the spoon today. In December of 2022, Sara graciously



mailed it to her brother, Moises, so that it could be photographed for use on the book cover of *Tatae's Promise*.

, is still in possession of the spoon today. In December of 2022, Sara graciously mailed it to her brother, Moises, so that it could be photographed for use on the book cover of *Tatae's Promise*.

*Tatae's Promise: You will live... you will tell* is based on eleven audio tapes recorded by Hinda Mondlak Goldman, the mother of co-author Moises J. Goldman, in the months prior to her death in 1985. Speaking in Yiddish and Spanish, Hinda chronicles her torture at the hands of the Nazis, her escape from Auschwitz, her subsequent travails, her fear of Nazis and Russian soldiers, her search for true love, and her immigration to Mexico City.

Rich in history, this book does not shy away from describing the heinous atrocities and despicable living conditions that were forced upon Hinda and millions of people—Jews, Jehovah's Witnesses, Romani people, and homosexuals—under the reign of

Adolph Hitler and the Nazi regime. Six million Jews were murdered in the Holocaust. That reflects the number of those accounted for and does not include the millions of Jews who were persecuted and displaced. The estimated total killed by the Nazi regime nears *fourteen million*.

*Why is this book timely and important?*

Today, decades after the world was shocked and horrified by the mass genocide and unjust persecution during Hitler's reign, millions of people still suffer, living under dictatorial regimes. Additionally, millions of people continue to be innocent victims of brutal wars or civil conflicts, often facing routine hatred, racism, starvation, ethnic or religious suppression, arrest, atrocities, and even genocide.

The world needs more engaging literary works that expose these perils and highlight inspirational and timeless themes. *Tatae's Promise*, based on actual events, achieves exactly that objective. The book tells the real-life story of a young woman's almost unimaginable courage and determination to survive in the face of what seemed to be insurmountable horrors. In the end, Hinda Mondlak triumphs over the Nazi Regime and Adolph Hitler's "Final Solution". Moreover, throughout the story, she experiences countless miracles engendered by her bold, irrepressible spirit, her faith, and her fierce love of family.

For more information and to RSVP contact Leslie Pepper at 760-324-4737.



## Holocaust Survivors Share Their Stories With the Community

Diane Cohen Howe invited some of our Holocaust survivors to speak to her Morningside Country Club in Rancho Mirage, CA. Talia Lizemer Howley, the Educational Director at Temple Sinai and member of the Jewish Federation's Holocaust Committee introduced child survivors Rose Peppin and Rickie Taras to speak to the packed room of over 65 people, about their stories of survival and resilience. This is just one activity that the Jewish Federation is involved with in our community in addition to upcoming Yom Ha Shoah Community activities and ongoing speakers' series on related Holocaust and second generation topics.

For any more information on this or any other Jewish federation program please contact Leslie Pepper at 760-324-4737.

*Pictured left to right: Rose Pettin, Diane Cohen Howe (in back), Carole Haller, Rickie Taras and Leslie Pepper, Director of Community Engagement*





# Jewish Book Council Events

## Jewish Book Council Virtual Event - Donna Freed: "Duplicity" February 12

A fascinating story will be presented on February 12 when Donna Freed shares her past with our community via a virtual presentation. Unlike most of the programs we've offered through the Jewish Book Council, you will have the choice of viewing the program at the Jewish Federation Offices or get the zoom link from the Jewish Federation and watch it at home. The one limitation: it is only being transmitted at 3:00 pm (local time) so will need to be watched



Donna Freed



at that time, whether at the Jewish Federation or at home.

Donna Freed was born Rada Lindenmaier, and was adopted through the controversial Jewish New York agency, Louise Wise Services.

When Donna was six, her sister casually revealed that Donna, their older brother and she had all been adopted, a fact which was never again mentioned in the Freed family until Donna was an adult. In Donna's forties, she found out that her birth parents were con artists whose get-rich-quick scheme landed them on the front pages of newspapers around the world. Donna eventually found her birth mother, the woman behind the headlines, and uncovered an extraordinary family history.

*Duplicity* is a Jewish adoption family memoir with a true crime twist; it is

a story of love, identity, and ultimately forgiveness.

### **A powerful, poignant adoption memoir which reads like a thriller**

When her adoptive mother died in 2009 Donna Freed set out to track down her birth mother. What she discovered was truly shocking. She was the daughter of a pair of infamous con artists at the heart of one of the biggest true crime stories to grip the USA in the 1960s.

Previously redacted records from the infamous \*Louise Wise Services in New York revealed that Donna's mother (27, Jewish and single), her father (40, Catholic, married with 4 children), had hatched a plan to defraud an insurance company and run off to Spain to raise Donna. Further investigation revealed that in 1967, Donna's mother, Mira

Lindenmaier, faked her own death in a drowning accident off City Island in the Bronx for the double indemnity insurance money.

Donna loved her tricky, unconventional adoptive mother, but was now keen to meet her birth mother and find out how and why her parents abandoned her. How would she feel towards Mira, her 'real' Mum. How has becoming a mother herself impacted on her feelings towards her two mothers? Gripping and fast-paced, this extraordinary memoir is also incredibly moving, tackling fundamental questions about motherhood and identity, nature vs nurture.

For the ZOOM link contact Leslie Pepper at 760-324-4737 or at [leslie.pepper@jfedps.org](mailto:leslie.pepper@jfedps.org).

## New Israeli Airline Challenges El Al's Stranglehold on U.S. Routes

By Jewish Breaking News

For Americans looking for direct flights to Israel after months of limited options, there is hope as a new carrier prepares to enter the market.

TechAir has announced it will launch direct flights between New York's JFK Airport and Tel Aviv starting January 21. TechAir's flights will depart Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport at midnight and land at New York's JFK Airport early the next morning.

The new service will operate an Airbus A330-900 with 300 seats and offer round-trip fares starting at \$1,550 during an initial 72-hour presale period.

While this pricing sits above TechAir's original target of \$1,350, it remains more economical than El Al's direct flights and provides a faster alternative to routes with layovers operated by European carriers.

A new airline offers a much-needed alternative to El Al's current monopoly on direct U.S.-Israel routes currently commanding a whopping 71% traffic through Ben Gurion airport.

According to CTECH, TechAir's flights will depart Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport at midnight and land at New York's JFK Airport early the next morning. However, in order for the service to stay operational past March, it needs to sustain at least 35% seat occupancy.



Tech Air at Ben Gurion Airport

Meanwhile, U.S. carriers remain absent from Israeli airspace. United Airlines has suspended operations indefinitely, while American Airlines has canceled flights until at least March 2025.

Delta has announced plans to resume service in April 2025, though their projected fares of \$1,732 for summer travel exceed current market rates by several hundred dollars.

Connecting through Europe also isn't an easy task anymore as most European airlines are pushing their return dates into 2025. British Airways won't fly until late March, while Air France eyes a mid-January restart.

The Lufthansa Group, including Swiss and Austrian Airlines, has paused all Israel routes

through January.

Spanish carrier Vueling remains grounded until January, alongside Italy's ITA Airways

which won't fly until month's end.

Ryanair has taken Israel completely off its schedule through April, while easyJet and Dutch airline Transavia have suspended operations until spring. Croatia Airlines has yet to announce when it might return to Israeli skies.

However, some European carriers have already returned to Israeli skies.

Among those currently operating are TAROM, Aegean Airlines, Bulgaria Air, Air Europa, and several smaller carriers including Electra Airways, GullivAir, and FlyOne.

However, their options remain significantly reduced compared to prewar schedules.

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# 'Do You Have the Torahs?' Synagogue Raced LA Wildfire to Rescue its Past and Future

*The Forward*

Cantor Ruth Berman Harris searched for her husband through the thick smoke that engulfed the Pasadena Jewish Temple and Center. Laurence Harris had been beside her just moments before, but now, as flames closed in and the air grew heavier, he was nowhere in sight.

"Do you have the Torahs?" she shouted, her voice slicing through the chaos, trying to find him amid the suffocating darkness.

And then, there he was. Emerging through the smoke, almost surreal in his calm, carrying one of the synagogue's 13 Torahs — a Sephardic scroll, heavier than the rest, encased in silver etched with the patterns of a long-lost homeland. It had been donated by a congregant who fled Iran, a piece of history held in trembling hands.

Then the power went out. The fire, a beast consuming Los Angeles, roared closer. Joined by the synagogue president, Jack Singer, and custodian Robert Brown Jr., the couple dashed outside. "Ashes were falling in the parking lot," she recalled Wednesday morning.

They worked quickly, loading the Torahs into two cars. By 8 p.m., they were gone, leaving behind their synagogue, their history, their sanctuary. By night's end, the flames would claim it all.

## 'It's like losing your home'

The Pasadena Jewish Temple and Center stood for over a century, its campus a sanctuary of faith and history in a community nestled just beyond the urban sprawl of Los Angeles. By Tuesday night, it was one of more than 1,000 buildings reduced to ash as wildfires, fed by hurricane-force winds and parched conditions, raged with a vengeance across Southern California. The flames spared nothing, devouring three buildings on the campus, including the B'nai Simcha Community Preschool, where 45 children once laughed and learned.

"It's like losing your home," said Jack Singer, the shul's president, whose family has been members for nearly half a century. He said that the local interfaith community is strong, and he has already received offers from churches to host them. Yet even amid the devastation, his resolve was unshaken. "We are definitely going to rebuild. We will have a PJTC again."

Nearby, Kehillat Israel and Chabad



*The Pasadena Jewish Temple and Center destroyed in the wildfire on January 7*



*Pasadena Temple services in 2023*



*Rescued torahs*

hosted USO-style dances for servicemen from the local military base during World War II.

A congregant from Iran donated a Torah scroll encased in silver from his homeland to the Pasadena Jewish Temple and Center.

Over the decades, it grew to 440 families — merging with nearby Shomrei Emunah and Shaarei Torah to become the singular Conservative synagogue of the Western San Gabriel Valley, adding buildings, a swimming pool, and a congregation that included NASA engineers, Caltech professors, and those who built their dreams among the stars. "I used to joke that growing up in Pasadena, our shul had doctors, lawyers and rocket scientists," said Rabbi Alex Weisz, whose family has been members for generations.

For Weisz, PJTC was a second home. His grandparents joined in the 1960s. His parents were married at the same bimah where he and his siblings and cousins would have their b'nai mitzvah.

"I was a synagogue rat," Weisz lovingly recalled of his youth, spending countless hours at PJTC — as president of the USY chapter and a teacher's assistant in the religious school. "By the time I was a senior in high school," he said, "I was there six days a week." He credits those formative years with inspiring him to become a rabbi.

He is now the spiritual leader of Temple Beth Israel in nearby Highland Park, about 5 miles west of Pasadena. His parents are still members of PJTC; his dad, a past president, is now the vice president of the men's club.

Yet, in the ashes of the building, Weisz found meaning in the teachings of Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. "We are a tradition that sanctifies time, not space," he said. "The synagogue is more than a location — it's the connections, the love between people, whether they've been there for decades or are brand new."

Cantor Berman Harris echoed the sentiment, invoking the biblical mishkan, the mobile tabernacle that journeyed with the Jewish people in the desert wilderness. "The Torah is a living dialogue," she said. "There's no more raw reminder of our resilience than carrying our traditions forward and finding a new way to rebuild. It's the story of our people, and it's tangible now in a way that it hasn't been for generations."

of Pacific Palisades were evacuated but remain standing, at least for now. For a community still counting its losses, the survival of these sacred spaces offered a glimmer of hope. But the fires showed no sign of relenting, their fury intensified by strained water supplies and unyielding winds — a stark reminder that, for Pasadena and its people, the worst may still lie ahead.

## A synagogue without walls, inspired by the mishkan

The Pasadena Jewish Temple and Center, born as Temple B'nai Israel in 1921, stood as more than a building; it was a bridge between history and the present. The congregation moved into a new Spanish-style building in 1941, which



# Two Special Programs Will Highlight Community Yom HaShoah Commemoration this Year

By Leslie Pepper, Director of Community Engagement

## Tom Dugan One-man Show "Wiesenthal"

The Jewish Federation of the Desert is excited to be offering the one man show of Tom Dugan on the life of Simon Weisenthal, the famous Nazi hunter, as part of our Holocaust Remembrance programs that will take place in April.

The show "Weisenthal" will be held at Temple Sinai on Saturday, April 5, 2025. Tickets are \$36.00 per person. Sponsorship tickets are \$108.00 (6 times chai) per person and include a

reserved seat at the performance, a listing in the program, and invitation to the dessert reception following the show with the opportunity to meet Tom Dugan. For more information contact Leslie Pepper at 760-324-4737.

## Yom HaShoah

In 1951, just three years after the establishment of modern Israel, the Israeli Knesset selected the 27<sup>th</sup> of Nisan on the Hebrew calendar to be designated Yom HaShoah. This date

coincided with the start of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising, which began on the 19<sup>th</sup> of April 1943 and was a significant act of Jewish resistance against the Nazis during the Holocaust. For these past 74 years Yom HaShoah is observed, commemorating the widespread resistance and sacrifice of Jews during the Holocaust.

In past years our community has observed Yom HaShoah on the closest Sunday to the 27<sup>th</sup> of Nisan. With our being able to bring the author of a

significant Holocaust-related book to the desert on the actual day of Yom HaShoah – and not able to bring him here on the next Sunday – this year we are holding our Yom HaShoah observance on Thursday, April 24<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 pm at Temple Sinai. Our community's Holocaust survivors will be honored, and we will have the in-person presentation by Mitchell Raff on his latest book "Little Boy, I Know Your Name."

## IDF Soldier, Survivor of Oct 7th Massacre, Flees Brazil Ahead of War Crimes Probe

*Israeli man targeted in war crimes probe in Brazil manages to flee the country prior to opening of criminal investigation.*

By David Rosenberg, World Israel News

An Israeli tourist who has been targeted by a war crimes probe while visiting Brazil has managed to leave the country before the formal opening of the investigation, crossing the border to ensure he avoids detention abroad, Brazilian media outlets reported over the weekend.

On January 3 the Federal Court for Brazil's Federal District ordered police to launch an investigation into war crimes allegations against an Israeli tourist visiting the country on a tourist visa, over his actions in the Gaza Strip as an IDF soldier.

The probe was initiated in response to a petition by the Hind Rajab Foundation, an anti-Israel Brussels-based organization which lobbies foreign governments and law enforcement agencies to take action against Israeli officials and IDF soldiers.

The foundation accused the soldier in question of taking part in demolition operations in the Gaza Strip during the ongoing war against Hamas.

The Israeli foreign ministry warned the soldier and a traveling companion that Brazilian authorities had issued a warrant for his arrest.

Early Sunday morning, January 5, the soldier notified his father that he had left the country, the soldier's father told

Israel's Channel 12.

"I asked them to escape immediately and not stay even a moment longer," he said. "I believe they'll find their way home safely, but we need to make sure they know the truth about the soldier. He's not a suspect; he's a soldier who's been through hell."

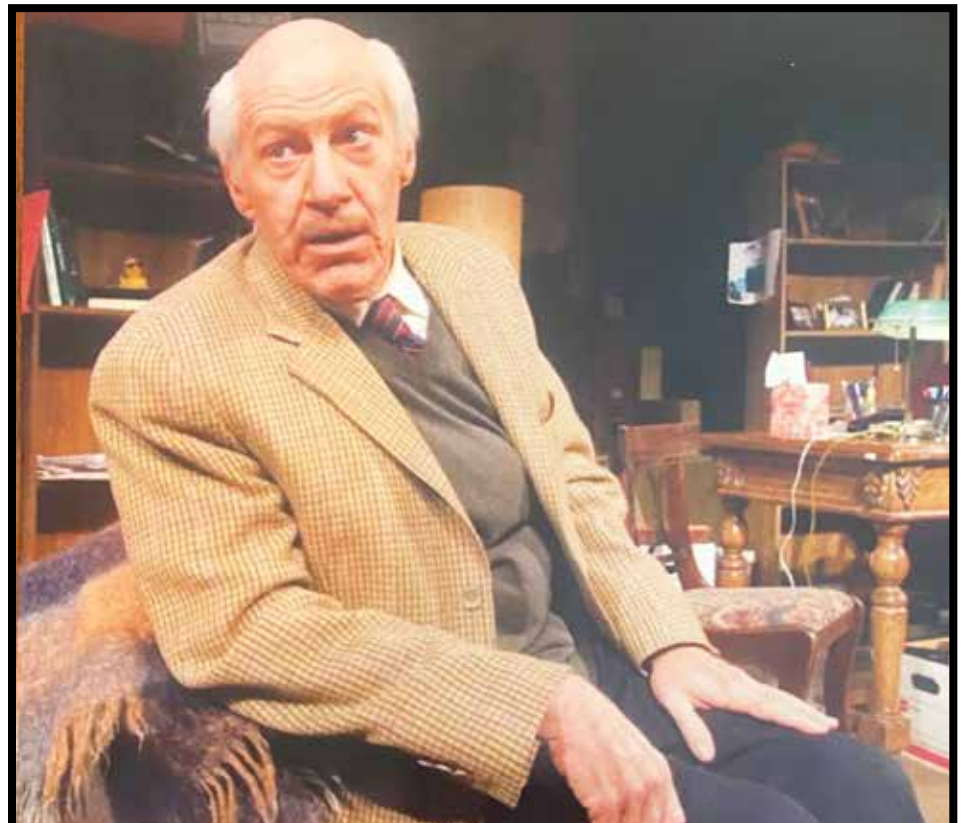
The soldier has been identified as a survivor of the Nova Music Festival massacre at Re'im, the largest of the October 7th, 2023 massacres.

A total of 364 people were murdered during the attack on the festival, with hundreds wounded and dozens taken hostage.

Opposition Leader Yair Lapid condemned the investigation against the soldier, while also accusing the Israeli government of failing to protect IDF soldiers abroad.

"The fact that an Israeli reservist was forced to flee Brazil in the dead of night to avoid being arrested for fighting in Gaza is a huge political failure by an irresponsible government that simply doesn't know how to function," Lapid tweeted.

"How did we get to the point where the Palestinians are better than the Israeli government in the international arena?"



# WIESENTHAL

**Award winning "Wiesenthal" a one man show by Tom Dugan  
Saturday Evening, April 5, 2025 - Temple Sinai**

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# Fifteen Days in Israel

## Revisiting Jewish Federation of the Desert's Projects in the Negev

By Wendy Brooks

This Hanukah, my husband, Harry Marshak, and I went to Israel from December 20, 2024, to January 4, 2025, going to Be'ersheva, in the south of Israel, where he volunteered teaching surgery at Soroka Hospital. Over the summer, we had traveled with Alan Potash and his wife Amy to visit some programs the Jewish Federation of the Desert sponsors in our sister region, Ramat HaNegev. On this trip, to honor Alan's connection to the Negev region, I reconnected with the Ramat HaNegev Council and spent two days touring the area and visiting amazing programs that the Jewish Federation of the Desert supports.

I was very fortunate to have Hadass Nisan, the Director of Resource Development and Yaara Ron Cohen, the Partnerships Director at the Ramat HaNegev Council coordinate my visit and escort me, as I explored the many programs the Jewish Federation of the Desert has sponsored in the area. With them, I got to explore the beauty of the Negev and connect with the residents of the region. I had the chance to speak with people who live and work in the Negev whose lives have been directly touched by the events that began October 7<sup>th</sup> 2023. I observed their perseverance and resilience that drives them to settle the land and look for ways to improve the lives of all the residents of the area.

The Ramat HaNegev is spread out over a large area and people live in smaller communities of kibbitzim and yishuvim. Seeing the programs supported by the Jewish Federation of the Desert revealed the ways the communities work together to support each other and share resources. I visited several schools that, in addition to providing traditional education, also support the emotional needs of the students. The Tzin Elementary school serves 413 children from communities in the Negev, including from the nearby air force base. Many of the children arrive every day on bicycles. Last year, they absorbed children who were evacuated from the Gaza envelope and refugees from the north. In an effort to support the emotional needs of the children they have implemented multiple programs, including counseling, art therapy, yoga and mindfulness practices. I met two 9-year-old girls who receive art therapy. They shared their paintings that they "do from their hearts" to help them process feelings. In Tlalim, a small community in the Negev, the Jewish Federation of the Desert sponsored



*Soroka Hospital*



*Eran Doron (Mayor of Ramat HaNegev), Wendy Brooks and Yaara Ron Cohen*



*Community Center in Merchav - Am Haddass Nisan, Benny Bollack, Wendy Brooks and Avital Babo*



*Special needs Kindergarten in Tlalim*



*Classroom in Kadesh Barnea*



*Wood Structure Built by High School Students in Ramat HaNegev*



*Robotics Program in high school at Ramat HaNegev*



*Metal working Workshop*



*Wendy Brooks (left) in Kadesh Barnea, with farmer Eitan Ronen (middle) and Yaara Ron Cohen (right).*

a special needs kindergarten that serves 7 children with autism and language delays. By having programs available in the community, children with special needs do not have to travel long distances to get services.

The regional high school for the municipality is on the campus of the Ramat HaNegev Council. The council provides several after school enrichment programs for teens, addressing students' diverse interests and developing skills outside the traditional classroom setting. These programs include wood working, metal work, music, and robotics. Students participate in building wood structures that are on the property, as well as wood benches, tables and swings that are used in community spaces. There is a music studio where high school students make music together. In the robotics program students are building a robot for a competition. Soldiers, as part of their army service, assist in running these programs, serving as mentors for the teens.

On my second day visiting the Ramat HaNegev we traveled to Kadesh Barnea and Nitzana, on the Egyptian border. We toured around Kadesh Barnea on Easy Riders, which are motorized 4-wheel scooters developed in Israel. We visited a farm, learned about sustainable farming practices, and then had a bit of wine at Ramat HaNegev winery. In Kadesh Barnea, we visited a kindergarten classroom funded by the Jewish Federation of the Desert and the construction of the bomb shelter for those children that is being built in memory of Alan Potash.

In addition to supporting educational programs, the Jewish Federation of Desert also supports community programs in the towns of Ramat HaNegev. In Merchav Am, a small religious yishuv, we met with Benny Bollack, the CEO of the community, who has spent over 200 days in the last year serving in the army reserves and the community manager, Avital Babo. Our Jewish Federation sponsored the community center which serves as the heart of the yishuv. They hold classes, activities for children, as well as lectures that bring in visitors from other neighboring communities. The day of our visit, they were setting up for a community-wide Hanukah party.

At Midreshet Ben Gurion, while walking the promenade overlooking the beautiful Zin Valley, I met with Eran Doron, the mayor of the Ramat HaNegev. He spoke about the continuing growth of communities in the Negev and of wanting to create more opportunities for person-to-person exchanges between residents of the Negev and our community. May we have many more opportunities to work together to support our Jewish communities.



# Israel Has Spent Millions Trying to Win Hearts and Minds Abroad. It's About to Spend 20 Times More

By Asaf Elia-Shalev, JTA

The Israeli government plans to offset wartime spending and an economic slowdown with tax hikes and deep cuts to public services. But the proposed budget for 2025 also includes a massive new allocation: toward pro-Israel advocacy efforts abroad.

Under the new budget, Israel's Foreign Ministry will receive \$150 million, on top of what it gets for its existing activities, for what's officially known as public diplomacy, or in Hebrew, *hasbara*. That sum is more than 20 times what such efforts have typically been allotted in past years.

The dramatic expenditure is the result of a political deal that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu struck last month to shore up his governing coalition. Politician Gideon Sa'ar and his New Hope party agreed to rejoin the coalition in return for the funding and the appointment of Sa'ar as Israel's foreign minister.

The news comes as public opinion about Israel in the United States and elsewhere around the world has been intensely battered as a result of a war that has left the neighboring Gaza Strip in ruins with much



Israel's Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar

of its population facing displacement, disease, and hunger.

Saar doesn't have a detailed plan for how to spend the money yet, but at the time he signed the coalition agreement with Netanyahu, his office released a statement saying it would be used to influence sentiment in the foreign press and on social media.

Saar's statement also said he foresees a focus on American college campuses, which have been rocked by pro-Palestinian protests since the war broke out when

Hamas attacked Israel in October 2023. The statement noted that its activity will be carried out in cooperation with American Jewish groups and alongside similar efforts by the Diaspora Affairs Ministry.

"Israel's *hasbara* efforts and consciousness warfare have for decades not received the critical and life-saving resources and tools they require," Sa'ar told the Israeli newspaper *Maariv*. "I am determined to make a change. Every shekel devoted to this cause is an investment, not an expense, and will strengthen Israel and its standing

in the world."

Sa'ar and his team have been holding brainstorming sessions with a wide array of individuals and groups who are involved in pro-Israel advocacy around the world, *Jewish Insider* reported. Participants include social media influencers, cultural figures, professional *hasbara* advocates and representatives of various Jewish groups.

Whatever comes of the planning, the Israeli government will attempt to improve upon its weak record of executing similar, albeit smaller advocacy initiatives in the past. Millions spent on the national effort against antisemitism and the delegitimization of Israel around the world over the past decade have not produced almost any fruit in the eyes of Israeli government officials, according to reporting from investigative journalist Uri Blau in the Israeli digital outlet *Shomrim*.

"This activity has failed by every conceivable parameter," Avi Cohen-Scali, the director general of the Ministry of Diaspora and Combating Antisemitism told *Shomrim*.



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# Dozens of Israeli Consumer-Tech Startups Dazzle at World's Biggest Consumer Electronics Trade Show

Israeli innovations shine at the CES, including auto tech, digital health, food tech, robotics and more.

By Jonathan Frenkel, Israel 21C

The Consumer Technology Association's annual mega CES conference in Las Vegas every January traditionally kicks off the year by showcasing the technological trends expected to drive the next 12 months. Though CES is constantly adding new verticals, it's still the dominant consumer-tech verticals such as mobility (including auto tech), digital healthcare and IoT that draw audiences.

Now in its 58th year (the first CES was hosted in New York in June 1967, the same month as Israel's Six-Day War), the conference has established itself as the premier gathering for technology enthusiasts, innovators, creators, exhibitors and industry leaders. This year's event attracted over 140,000 attendees.

Without a doubt, CES is one of the most important conferences for Israeli companies to showcase their products, connect with consumers, corporate partners, prospective customers, and set the tone for the year.

Despite continuing challenges to Israel's security and economy many Israeli companies came to CES and showed the global business community that the Startup Nation is not just surviving but thriving.

## Israel Stood Out at CES

Israeli technology took center stage at the international startup-focused Eureka Park, described by the conference organizers as "where disruptors and investors connect, and mind-blowing products make their debut."

The Israel Pavilion, hosted by the Government of Israel Economic Mission, the Israel Export Institute, and the Israel Innovation Authority, hosted 14 Israeli startups.

This was, by far, one of the most popular country pavilions, and was always buzzing with activity, as founders engaged with a constant stream of interested professionals from around the world.

The companies featured at the pavilion included:

Bzigo, which makes an AI-powered indoor mosquito detection device that



CES, the largest annual consumer electronics trade show in the world, was held on January 1-7, 2025, in Las Vegas.



The Israel Pavilion at CES 2025 featured 14 startups.

pinpoints the location of the bugs, even in total darkness.

iRomaScents, whose Digital Scent Generator adds a new sensory dimension to cinema, shopping, and home media, and can help perfume buyers find fragrances tailored to their preferences.

SolCold, maker of an environmentally friendly outdoor coating, Glacier, that cools buildings passively by converting solar radiation into cooling energy.

Synoaia, which brings clinic-level skincare home with an IoT-enabled device called WISHPro.

TempraMed, maker of the unique VIVI cap that protects insulin (and other temperature-sensitive medications) at the optimum temperature anywhere, without batteries, and lets the user tracks

injections.

Visionary.ai, whose advanced AI software boosts camera performance.

Visual Layer, which provides an AI-powered platform for managing, organizing and exploring large collections of unstructured video and image data.

SavorEat, maker of Robot Chef, which automates meal preparation in food-service settings. Customers can personalize production of items from plant-based burgers to cookies, with the touch of a button.

Spicerr, which designed the world's first AI-powered smart spices dispenser, iRomaScents, whose Digital Scent Generator adds a new sensory dimension to cinema, shopping, and home media, and can help perfume buyers find

fragrances tailored to their preferences.

SolCold, maker of an environmentally friendly outdoor coating, Glacier, that cools buildings passively by converting solar radiation into cooling energy.

Synoaia, which brings clinic-level skincare home with an IoT-enabled device called WISHPro.

TempraMed, maker of the unique VIVI cap that protects insulin (and other temperature-sensitive medications) at the optimum temperature anywhere, without batteries, and lets the user tracks injections.

Visionary.ai, whose advanced AI software boosts camera performance.

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SavorEat, maker of Robot Chef, which automates meal preparation in food-service settings. Customers can personalize production of items from plant-based burgers to cookies, with the touch of a button.

Capsule, whose "Factory in a Capsule" platform creates on-demand, personalized consumer packaged goods (such as hair dye, facial mask and hand cream) using AI and eco-friendly capsules.

Neoja, which reimagines basketball with interactive courts that use advanced projection technology, turning the sport into a social, immersive experience fostering friendly competition.

CorrActions, whose AI-based neuromonitoring software for vehicles detects abnormalities (such as drowsiness) in the cognitive state of drivers and passengers.

Hailo, which specializes in AI processors to deliver data-center class performance to edge devices.

Carteav, developer of autonomous low-speed vehicles tailored for managed environments such as retirement communities, resorts and campuses.

## Mobility continues to drive on

Every year, mobility tech has a big showing at CES. And Israel has dominated this vertical consistently.

*Continued on next page*



Mobileye, a global pioneer in driver-assist and autonomous-driving technologies, always has a major presence, but there are also many smaller Israeli companies at CES touching every aspect of auto tech and smart mobility.

Mobileye's exhibition at CES 2025. Photo by Jonathan Frenkel

Along with a few early-stage mobility startups in the Israel Pavilion, other Israeli companies that exhibited in this space included:

Arbe Robotics, which develops 4D imaging radar technology that enables driver-assist systems while opening the way for completely autonomous driving (Arbe partnered with NVIDIA at the show).

Aurora Labs, developer of an AI-based vehicle software-management technology.

Autofleet, an end-to-end software platform for reliable and sustainable transportation services for fleets and mobility operators.

Autotalks, a semiconductor company devoted to vehicle-to-everything communications for manned and autonomous vehicles.

C2A Security, provider of an automated cybersecurity DevOps platform addressing the specific needs of carmakers and mobility companies.

Cognata, which provides a driving validation platform for the autonomous vehicles industry.

Upstream Security, the first cloud-based cybersecurity solution designed specifically for protecting existing and new connected vehicles and smart mobility services from cyberattacks.

Lidwave, maker of a deep-tech solution that revolutionizes 4D sensing and the verticals relying on it by examining the biggest challenge in LiDAR technology from a new perspective.

Addionics, whose AI-based, proprietary manufacturing process for producing 3D Current Collectors can be integrated into any type of rechargeable battery to improve energy consumption, durability, safety and cost. Addionics partners with major OEMs and automakers across North America and Europe to push forward global efforts for decarbonization.

#### Advancements in AI and IoT

How AI can be used in our daily lives was a major theme at CES.



#### Mobileye Pavilion

provides immediate drug-free relief in moments of anxiety, panic attacks or PTSD.

#### Networking highlights

Networking is always an important activity at CES. Several Israeli companies,

As such, NVIDIA CEO Jensen Huang's opening keynote set the tone for the whole conference. Though his talk was not Israel-focused, NVIDIA has a significant presence in Israel.

Huang did mention Israeli startup Dataloop AI, a data management and annotation platform that streamlines the process of generating machine consumable datasets from raw visual data. And among NVIDIA's other partners at the show was Israel's Innoviz, supplier of high-performance, automotive-grade LiDAR sensors and perception software.

This year, it felt as if much of the conceptual tech was ready for consumer use, judging by the proliferation of attendees wearing Meta's Ray-Ban glasses.

An example of a similar technology from Israel was Sightful, a startup that is reinventing augmented reality to increase human productivity. Sightful's AR glasses allow the user to work on multiple screens at the same time.

Sightful makes AR glasses enabling workers to interact with multiple screens at once. Photo courtesy of Sightful

Another notable Israeli company at CES in this space was Intuition Robotics, which designs social companion technologies intended for older adults.

Israel always has a strong showing in digital health at CES. One such company this year was CalmiGo, which won a CES 2025 Innovation Award for its patented technology-based exhaler device that

or multinational companies with an Israeli branch, held receptions during the conference.

For instance, DoubleVerify hosted a reception at the Aria, and Landmark Ventures held an "on field experience" happy hour at Allegiant Stadium, home of the Las Vegas Raiders.

The biggest gathering of this type was hosted by Israeli auto-tech company Foretellix and EcoMotion, Israel's smart mobility community. The event drew dozens of entrepreneurs and investors along with senior executives from Israeli mobility companies such as Innoviz, Arbe, Cipia, Upstream Security, C2A Security, Whilx and Kardome.

Professionals from major car manufacturers like Volkswagen, Toyota and Hyundai also joined, as well as executives from Barclays, Maniv Fund, and Woven Capital (Toyota's investment fund).

It is only at events such as CES where Israeli founders and executives can meet and mingle with so many relevant decisionmakers. As CES continues to grow, it's clear that Israeli tech will remain at the forefront of innovation in 2025.

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# Visitors to Israel Face a New Headache from January 1: Applying for a Travel Permit

Foreign nationals from visa-exempt countries seeking to visit Israel, including those from the US and European Union, will have to apply for a travel permit

By Sharon Wrobel, The Times of Israel

Most foreign airlines have suspended their services to and from Israel and airfares for available flights have surged amid the ongoing war with the Hamas terror group and rising geopolitical tensions. Now, Israel is pressing ahead with new entry travel regulations, putting another burden on foreign nationals seeking to visit despite the war.

As of January 1, foreign travelers from the US, European Union member countries, and dozens of other visa-exempt countries must apply online for digital authorization before their journey as a requirement to enter Israel. Previously, visitors from visa-exempt countries such as the UK, US, and EU member states have been able to visit the country without authorization.

"We don't think it's wise to introduce any bureaucratic burden in our war situation when coming to Israel is not something that people are considering

easily," Yossi Fatael, director general of the Israel Inbound Tour Operators Association, told The Times of Israel. "Right now, we need to be as open as we can for those who are interested in visiting Israel."

"While we understand that it is a procedure many countries are introducing, it should not be implemented right now in Israel," Fatael added.

Fatael had hoped that the government would postpone the introduction of the electronic travel authorization by at least six months or even a year as incoming tourism has plunged by 80 percent since the brutal onslaught by Hamas terrorists on October 7 last year that led to the outbreak of war.

The electronic travel authorization, called ETA-IL, costs NIS 25 (\$6.80) and applies to business, tourist, or leisure travelers wishing to stay in the country

for up to 90 days. Israel's Population and Immigration Authority advises that travel authorization applications be submitted at least 72 hours before booking flight tickets, hotel rooms, and other similar expenses related to planned travel to Israel.

Once the application form is filled out online with information about identity, length of stay, and reason for travel, a reply is sent via email within 24 to 72 hours. The electronic authorization is valid for travel on multiple trips to and from Israel within a period of two years or until the traveler's passport expires. Obtaining a new passport or a name or gender change will require an application for a new travel authorization.

"We are dealing especially with organized tours and pilgrims, and sometimes there are old people among them who are not familiar with going into the internet and filling out a form and

some don't even have a credit card," said Fatael. "Israel needs the incoming tourism not only from the economic point of view, but also these people will be the ones that will speak differently about us when they return home to improve our reputation."

The Population and Immigration Authority cautioned that a valid ETA-IL travel authorization does not automatically grant visitors the right to enter Israel. All travelers arriving at Ben Gurion Airport are subject to border control checks.

Exempt from the ETA-IL requirement are travel and official representatives, including air crew members; diplomats and passengers with official and service passports; foreign citizens who have a valid Israeli visa; and Israeli citizens or permanent residents holding a valid Israeli ID number.

Israel is joining a host of other Western nations requiring an advance online application and a fee for citizens from visa-exempt countries, including the US, Canada, and Australia.

The ETA-IL requirement is similar to other procedures that have been put in place in recent years in Europe, the US, Australia and New Zealand. For example ETA-IL is equivalent to the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) in the US that visitors from visa waiver program countries must obtain before traveling to the US. The goal of the requirement is to screen out travelers suspected of posing a security threat, and improving immigration control and service before they land at ports of entry.



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## Honorarium Tributes In Appreciation For:

- **Nancy and Dennis Ditlove**, In honor of your 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, from Susie and Bob Diamond.
- **Barbara Feldman**, Wishing you many years of good health and happiness in your beautiful new home, from Barbara and Robert Paget.
- **Carol Fragen**, Congratulations on receiving the Kipnis-Wilson/Friedland Award, from Joanne and Bill Chunowitz, Dan Weisberg and David Klingenberg.
- **Lori Friend**, In honor of your birthday, from Lili Ann Zisook.
- **Lori Fritz**, Congratulations on receiving the Kipnis-Wilson/Friedland Award, from Dan Weisberg and David Klingenberg.
- **Arnie Gillman**, In honor, well deserved, of being first recipient of the Alan Potash Humanitarian Award, from Carol and Bob Friedman.
- **Wendy Goodfriend**, Wishing you the best for the year to come and always, from Gail Richards.
- **Adrian and Cass Graff-Radford**, Congratulations on the Bar Mitzvah of your grandson Jack, from Cora Ginsberg.
- **Cass Graff-Radford**, In honor of your birthday, from Jane Effress, Lori and Howie Friend, Sally Kovler, Karen Lee, Trudy Schwartz and Lili Ann Zisook.
- **Bob Hartman**, It was an honor to celebrate your 75<sup>th</sup>, from Jeff and Linda Noddle.\*
- **Margot Halperin**, Thinking of you, from Gail and Bob Scadron.
- **Margot Halperin**, Welcome home. Sending love and all good wishes, from Loreen Jacobson.

- **Lance and Scot Karp**, In your honor, from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **Arlen Kitsis**, In honor of your birthday, from Alan and Carol Parsow.
- **Margie Kulp**, Happy birthday wishes from Wendy Hahn and Kent Whinnery, Gail Richards, and Leslie Usow.
- **Margie and Steve Kulp**, Thank you for a lovely evening, from Judy and Barbara Appelbaum.
- **Dolly and Julian Levy**, Congratulations on your great grandchild, from Eunice Meister.
- **Renee Mayer**, Thank you for your warm hospitality, from Barbara Platt.
- **Allan and Roberta Nyman**, In your honor, from Steve and Leslie Kurtz.
- **Bernard Reiter**, Congratulations on your 90<sup>th</sup> birthday, from Arnie Gillman.
- **Leslie Usow**, In honor of your birthday, from Jane Effress, Lori and Howie Friend, Sally Kovler, Karen Lee, Trudy Schwartz and Lili Ann Zisook.
- **Eileen Zoll**, Wishing you the happiest of birthdays, from Kathi Balaban and Phil, Jane Effress and Harvey Lambert, Jo and Gary Leifer, Dolly and Julian Levy.

## Refuah Shleimah Get Well:

- **Margot Halperin**, Get well wishes from Eunice Meister.

## Memorial Tributes Condolences Sent To:

- **Jeff and Sara Braverman**, In memory of

Phyllis Braverman, from Amy, Ezra and Adeev Nachman Potash.

- **Peggy Cohn**, We were so sorry to hear about the passing of Billy Cohn, from Jeff and Linda Noddle.\*
- **The Edelman Family**, In loving memory of Sherry Neuman, from Idajean and Irv Kaplan and family.
- **Micki Goldner and Family**, In memory of Jack Goldner, from Susie and Bob Diamond.
- **The Greitzer Family**, In loving memory of a special lady, Trena, from Barbara Platt.
- **Sue Leveton and Family**, Condolences on the death of your husband, father and grandfather, from Ellen and Stuart Markus.
- **Eunice Meister and Family**, In memory of Jerry Meister, from Susie and Bob Diamond.
- **Mr. and Mrs. Nate Metzger**, Deepest sympathy on the loss of your beloved sister-in-law Sandy, from Gail and Bob Scadron.
- **Amy Nachman and Family**, In memory of Alan Potash, from Hannah Kaplan-Solomon, Rabbi Richard and Lynda Zions.
- **The Neuman Family**, In loving memory of Sherry Neuman, from Idajean and Irv Kaplan and family.
- **Sarah Star**, In memory of your beloved mother-in-law, Esta, from Marnie Miller.
- **The Vittenson Family**, In loving memory of Sherry Neuman, from Idajean and Irv Kaplan and family.
- *Funds earmarked for Israel Emergency Fund*

## Israel Shoots Down Nomination for New UN Mideast Envoy

Tells UN Secretary-General António Guterres to Draft List of Alternative Candidates

By World Israel News Staff

The Israeli government has rejected the nominee tapped to serve as the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process. On November 21, 2024, the previous UN Middle East envoy, Norway's Tor Wennesland, announced his resignation from the position after a rocky tenure.

First appointed in December 2020, Wennesland had been involved in mediating talks between Israel and Hamas prior to the October 7, 2023 invasion. After the invasion, however, Wennesland admitted that he had misjudged Hamas.

"Politics failed," he told *The New*

*York Times*. "Diplomacy failed. The international community failed. And the parties failed."

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres recently submitted the nomination of a possible successor, former Finnish Foreign Minister Pekka Haavisto, to Israel for consideration. Israel

rejected Haavisto, an ally of Guterres, over his close ties to the UN secretary-general, marking a continuation of tensions between Jerusalem and the Portuguese politician who has served as chief UN officer since 2017.



# Department of Ed resolves Title VI Antisemitism Complaints Against 5 U of California Campuses, U of Cincinnati

By Andrew Lapin JTA

The U.S. Department of Education announced it had resolved nine antisemitism- and Islamophobia-related civil rights complaints made against five campuses inside the University of California system on Friday, including some involving a prominent pro-Palestinian encampment in Los Angeles that had descended into violence in the spring.

The sweeping resolution comes in the final weeks of President Biden's term, and as President-elect Donald Trump has threatened to eliminate the department altogether, which could potentially move antisemitism investigations under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act to the Justice Department.

The Education Department's Office of Civil Rights, which handles Title VI cases, wrote in an open letter to Michael Drake, president of the UC system, that it had "identified compliance concerns that the Universities appear not to have responded promptly or effectively" to allegations of harassment. In addition, OCR said, three of the schools "appear to have engaged in different treatment of students based on actual or perceived national origin."

Four of the resolved cases involved the University of California, Los Angeles, where an unruly spring encampment — and pro-Israel counterdemonstrations — ended in violence and arrests. UCLA received complaints on behalf of both Jewish and pro-Palestinian students that the school had failed to protect them during the encampments, which also recently earned the campus a



legal rebuke based on accusations that protesters blocked Jewish students' access to parts of campus. (An internal antisemitism task force at UCLA also recently found that the school had fostered an antisemitic environment, including as a result of the encampments.)

Two more complaints involved UC Davis, where a faculty member in October 2023 posted threats to "Zionist journalists" on social media, and where Muslim and Palestinian students alleged they had been doxxed and stalked.

The other three cases involved the targeting of a Jewish student body president at UC Santa Barbara; allegations of "anti-Zionist propaganda" posted in the Critical Race and Ethnic Studies department of UC Santa Cruz; and UC San Diego's alleged failure to respond to harmful activity from its Students for Justice in Palestine chapter.

In a statement to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, the UC system said it was "pleased" with the resolution agreement

and that it "unequivocally rejects anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and all forms of harassment and discrimination." The statement pointed to other steps the school said it had taken lately to address the issue, including establishing its own office of civil rights, an anti-discrimination policy, and new limits on protests and other activities.

As part of the resolution agreement, the UC system agreed to annual Title VI training for staff and campus police, to report more information to OCR about how its campuses will respond to harassment complaints, and annual audits and regular campus climate assessments for the five campuses mentioned in the complaint.

Six of the nine complaints involved harassment against Jewish and Israeli students; OCR said it dismissed one of those complaints, involving a Jewish UCLA student who said SJP had blocked her from joining the group, due to lack of evidence. The other three complaints

involved harassment against Muslim, Arab or Palestinian students.

Justin Samuels, a non-Jewish conservative legal activist whose complaint triggered one of the UC Davis investigations, told JTA he was "happy to have helped" in their resolution. Samuels has been active in filing Title VI complaints related to campus antisemitism in the wake of the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attacks.

He added, "I expect the Trump administration to be a lot more proactive on shared ancestry discrimination."

OCR has continued to resolve antisemitism-related Title VI cases since the election, though dozens more remain active in its system. A separate resolution agreement, also announced Friday, ruled that the University of Cincinnati did not appropriately respond to complaints of discrimination against Jewish students related to a "Spooky Zionist" student gathering.

The university similarly agreed to regularly report its handling of discrimination cases to the office, and to additional employee training and campus climate assessments.

"The university appeared to operate under the mistaken understanding that if a complainant could not identify a perpetrator by name; the conduct was not directed at a specific individual; the conduct involved multiple perpetrators or a registered student organization; or the conduct occurred off campus, the university did not have an obligation to address alleged harassment," the office determined in a statement.

## Azi Schwartz & Friends 2025

Sun City Palm Desert Concert Another Enchanted Evening

It was another fantastic concert at Sun City Palm Desert on January 8th, with Azi Schwartz, Senior Cantor of Park Avenue Synagogue in New York, and is a world-renowned vocal performer and recording artist. Accompanied by musical director Dr. Tali Tadmor and special guests Sarah Lonsert, Jenni Asher and Danny Maseng, it was once again a wonderful evening of glorious music. The performance was dedicated in loving memory of Carol Rader (1942-



2022) and was sponsored by Jewish Federation of the Desert and Sun City Jewish Services.

Presidents Nadine Brinhendler (Sun



City Jewish Services) and Arnie Gillman, (Jewish Federation of the Desert) both gave warm welcomes. The hard-working committee who made it happen



included Event Chair Lew Radar, Steve Bergman, Nadine Brinhendler, Robyn Eagles, Arnie Gillman, Alan Gitlin and Michael E. Zaifert.





# Japan's Kaneka Buys Israeli Medical Device Startup in \$100 Million Deal

Endostream Medical, the developer of an implant device for the treatment of brain aneurysms, will operate as Kaneka's first Israeli R&D hub

By Sharon Wrobel, The Times of Israel

Japanese conglomerate Kaneka Corp. has inked an agreement to buy Israeli startup Endostream Medical, a medical device developer for the treatment of brain aneurysms, in a deal valued at about \$100 million.

Following the acquisition, the operations of the Or Akiva-based medical device startup will remain in Israel and serve as Kaneka's research & development center. Kaneka plans to keep Endostream's 12 employees and hire additional staff to jointly develop devices for the treatment of cerebrovascular diseases that affect the blood flow to the brain, such as aneurysms and strokes.

Founded in 2015 by Danel Mayer, CEO, and Alon May, VP of Technology, Endostream has developed an implant device called Nautilus for the treatment of brain aneurysms. The device has a spiraling design made of nitinol, or nickel titanium, wire covered with a platinum-based alloy coil sleeve to block and divert blood flow to the aneurysm.

The device, which the startup says has been successfully implanted in hundreds of patients around the world, received regulatory approval in Europe in November 2024. Regulatory approval and launch in the US are expected in the



Endostream medical device for treating brain aneurysms

spring of 2026, and in Japan one year later.

To date Endostream has raised about \$5 million from venture capital fund Peregrine Ventures alongside a number of prominent American neurosurgeons.

"By combining Kaneka's manufacturing and Endostream's technology, we will jointly develop new medical devices, mainly for cerebrovascular treatment, in addition to the Nautilus device for aneurysm treatment currently under



Endostream Founders Daniel Mayer and Alon May

development," Kaneka said in a statement. "We aim to achieve sales of over 20

billion yen (\$126 million) by 2030."

Established in 1948, Kaneka Corp. is a developer and manufacturer of devices for the treatment of cardiac, peripheral vascular, and cerebrovascular diseases, as well as medical devices used in the treatment of gastrointestinal tract diseases. The manufacturer operates out of Osaka and Tokyo in Japan, and employs about 11,500 people.

An aneurysm occurs when part of the wall of an artery weakens, allowing it to balloon out or widen abnormally. It can be potentially life-threatening if it bursts or ruptures, which causes bleeding inside the body. An estimated 1 in 50 people will develop an aneurysm in the blood vessels in the brain during their lifetime, according to the Brain Aneurysm Foundation.

Most of these aneurysms are discovered when they are already causing cerebral bleeding, and need to be treated with blood thinners, which aggravate the bleeding. Endostream said that its technology eliminates the use of blood thinners and anticoagulants drugs that help prevent blood clots and is therefore more effective and safer for patients.

## Trump Administration Plans Crippling Sanctions on International Criminal Court

The incoming administration's strategy extends beyond unilateral actions, as it plans to secure commitments from U.S. allies to reject cooperation with arrest warrants targeting Israeli officials.

By Ariel Kahana, Jewish News Syndicate

President-elect Donald Trump plans to implement devastating sanctions against the International Criminal Court in The Hague immediately after taking office, sources close to the matter disclosed to Israel Hayom. These executive orders could be unveiled as soon as January 21.

The sanctions package will target both individual ICC personnel, including judges and prosecutors, and the institution as a whole.

The administration intends to classify the ICC as an organization threatening U.S. interests, employing designation procedures similar to those used by the State Department for terrorist organizations globally.

This designation will trigger severe restrictions on anyone involved with the

court's operations.

Financial institutions worldwide will be required to terminate relationships with ICC personnel or face U.S. sanctions themselves.

Mirroring actions taken against sanctioned Israeli citizens by the outgoing administration, ICC staff will find themselves unable to perform routine banking operations or use credit cards.

Their financial activities will be effectively frozen, with exceptions only for essential needs such as food purchases. Furthermore, all U.S.-based assets belonging to ICC employees and the institution will be frozen.

The incoming administration's strategy extends beyond unilateral actions, as it plans to secure commitments from U.S.

allies to reject cooperation with arrest warrants targeting Israeli officials.

These measures aim to create conditions allowing the court to independently withdraw its arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defense Minister Yoav Gallant.

Officials hope that during appeal proceedings, either Chief Prosecutor Karim Khan or the judges will identify legal grounds to rescind these warrants.

The incoming administration considers the ICC's arrest warrants against Netanyahu and Gallant a direct threat to U.S. national security.

The incoming officials believe these actions ultimately seek to strip the U.S. and its allies of their ability to mount military defenses against global threats.

Trump administration officials and Republican senators widely view Israel's situation as a precedent, believing the U.S. could face similar warrants next, leading them to treat these actions against Israeli officials as precursors to targeting American leadership and military command.

Sen. Tom Cotton (R-Ark.), who will lead the Senate Intelligence Committee starting this week, said that "the ICC is a 'kangaroo court' and Karim Khan is a deranged zealot. Woe to him and anyone who tries to enforce these lawless warrants. Let me give everyone a friendly reminder: The U.S. law on ICC is known as the 'Hague Invasion Act,' and there's a reason for that. Think about it."





# Shabbat Schedule - February 2025

## BEIT HAVERIM, Palm Springs

Where friends old and new gather for Shabbat dinners, creating community, joyful spirituality and insightful learning. For information, please send us a note at BeitHaverim@protonmail.com or call 760-776-3212. Next Shabbat potluck dinners and Shabbat Services: Friday, January 31, Israeli Cuisine Saturday mornings, February 1, 15, 22: 10:30 Torah Study Friday, February 14, Americana Potluck Friday, February 21, French Cuisine

## BETH SHALOM, Palm Desert

(Member, United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism)  
Rabbi Dr. JB Sacks (rabbi@congregationbethshalom.net); Ken Hailpern, Madrikh Ruhani (ken@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  
**Scholar in Residence Weekend: February 28-March 2.** See complete Weekend Schedule in Community Calendar (next page) and ad on page 4.

## 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 Zions, 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 Zions 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 Zions 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@templeisaihps.com; Website: templeisaihps.com.  
Shabbat services Friday evenings at 6:30 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.  
At the present time we have a series of "Interim – Associate Rabbis." The regular roster of rabbis is Rabbi Rachel Axelrad (Interim-Associate) and "Rabbi Kenneth Emert" (Interim-Associate). Kabbalat Shabbat services start at 6:30 followed by our Oneg. Torah services are on Shabbat mornings at 10:30 followed by our Oneg. We will be having Shacharit/ Torah Service at least once a month on a regular basis on various Shabbat mornings starting at 10:30 followed by our Oneg.  
February schedule includes Saturday, February 1: Torah Study with Rabbi Suzanne Singer; Friday, February 7:



Kabbalat Shabbat with Rabbi Rachel Axelrad; Saturday, February 1: Shacharit/Torah Service with Rabbi Axelrad; Friday, February 14: Rabbi Kenneth Emert and Cantorial Soloist Ezra Yaron; Saturday, February 15: Torah Study with Rabbi Axelrad. Check website for the rest of the month's schedule..

**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.templesinai.org 760-568-9699. Go to templesinai.org for access information. Shabbat services are in-person and online on Livestream at www.templesinai.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@templesinai.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 - February 2025

## 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.

**7:00 pm** A Women's Class on Zoom with Sussie Denebeim "Living With the Times." 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.

## Saturday, February 1

Beit Haverim **Teen Youth Nite. Join us for pizza and a movie.** For more information email BeitHaverim@protonmail.com or call 760-776-3212.

## Sunday, February 2

**11:00 am** Beit Haverim "**New Friends**" Brunch. For more information email BeitHaverim@protonmail.com or call 760-776-3212.

## Sunday, February 2

**3:00 pm** Beth Shalom: "**Sip and Paint with Tina Escobar**." Suncrest Country Club. Members: \$35 / Non-Members: \$40. Includes all materials, "nosh" and drinks. Advanced reservations are required by Monday, January 27<sup>th</sup>.

Information: 760-200-3636; info@congregationbethshalom.net.

## Tuesday, February 4

**3:00 pm** Jewish Federation IN PERSON presentation on "**Tatae's Promise**" with author **Moises Goldman**. See article page 6.

## Wednesday, February 12

**3:00 pm** Jewish Federation of the Desert Jewish Book Council **Virtual** Event, with **Donna Freed**, on her fascinating book "**Duplicity**." See article page 3.

## Wednesday, February 12

**3:00 pm** Har-El Galen Books and Bordeaux program: **Prof. Samuel Trussell, J.D.** will lead discussion on S. Ilan Troen's book "Israel/Palestine in World Religions: Whose Promised Land?" The book explores the century-long tangle of secular and theological

debates about Israel's legitimacy, providing a better-informed understanding of this persistent issue. To attend email harelurjpd@gmail.com. Location will be provided at time of registration. See ad page 5.

## Friday, February 14

**5:30 pm** **Hadassah Shabbat** at Temple Sinai.

## Wednesday, February 26

**5:30 pm** Jewish Federation of the Desert **Major Gifts Dinner**. See ad page 2.

## Friday, February 28-Sunday, March 2

Beth Shalom **14<sup>th</sup> Annual Scholar-in-Residence Weekend** with **Dr. Michael Berenbaum**. "**CONFRONTING ANTISEMITISM**." Reservations required by February 20. See ad page 4 for full schedule.

## Sa'ar Calls for National Plan to Prepare for Mass Aliyah

Israel's top diplomat noted a rise in immigration from France and Britain amid surging global antisemitism.

Jewish News Syndicate Staff

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar called for an emergency meeting to prepare for an expected spike in immigration as antisemitism rises globally in the wake of the Hamas-led terrorist attacks in southern Israel on October 7, 2023.

In a letter to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Wednesday evening, Sa'ar said that a wave of worldwide antisemitism has eroded Jews' sense of security in the Diaspora and has already generated a greater demand for immigration to Israel.

"A broad national plan is required that will also include optimal absorption of



Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israel's Foreign Minister (New Hope Party leader) Gideon Sa'ar

the expected immigration," he wrote.

The top diplomat noted a rise in immigration from France and Britain was already evident. That phenomenon is

expected to extend to other countries as well, Sa'ar said.

In the United Kingdom, 1,978 instances of Jew-hatred were recorded in the first six months of 2024. That is the highest January-to-June total ever reported by the Community Security Trust (CST), a Jewish group collecting data on antisemitism. The previous record of 1,371 incidents was in 2021.

On Nov. 24, about 60,000 demonstrators marched through the British capital to protest rising Jew-hatred. It was the largest demonstration against antisemitism in London since the 1936 anti-fascist "Battle of Cable Street."

On Nov. 19, French officials urged a collective European Union response to what they described as "one of the worst explosions of antisemitism" in recent history. French European Affairs Minister Benjamin Haddad convened an emergency meeting in Brussels with his E.U. counterparts to discuss the issue.

A report published in November by Israel's Ministry of Diaspora Affairs' National Task Force for Countering De-legitimization found that since the October 7 massacre, more than 96% of Jews in Europe have encountered antisemitism in their daily lives.



# Kosher Bill Passes in Illinois After Over Two Years of Advocacy

By Agudath Israel of America

After more than two years of dedicated advocacy, Agudath Israel of Illinois (AIOI) has successfully championed the passage of SB457, a significant piece of legislation now awaiting the governor's approval. The bill mandates that schools, correctional facilities, and state hospitals provide kosher and halal food options upon request, ensuring that individuals with religious dietary needs have access to meals that align with their faith.

Notably, the legislation also amends the Kosher Food Act, which prohibits the sale of food wrongly labeled as certified kosher but has been unenforceable, as it did not contain a legal definition of kosher. This bill now provides a definition, which should enable the enforcement of the Kosher Food Act.

Rabbi Shlomo Soroka, director of government affairs for Agudath Israel of Illinois shared, "We are pleased with this outcome, which ensures students have access to meal options that align with their religious dietary requirements.



L-R: Moshe Siegal, Senator Ram Villivalam, Representative Kevin Olickal, Rabbi Shlomo Soroka and Rabbi Heshy Forster at Yeshiva Ohr Boruch, The Veitzner Cheder in Chicago

The success of this legislation comes after a gubernatorial veto of a previous version of the bill and extensive collaboration among stakeholders. We extend our gratitude to the governor and his team for their collaboration with

Agudath Israel, the bill's chief sponsors, Senator Ram Villivalam (D-Chicago) and Representative Kevin Olickal (D-Chicago), our Muslim partners, and other stakeholders in achieving this important milestone."

The passage of SB457 represents a landmark achievement, reflecting a commitment to inclusivity and respect for diverse religious practices in public institutions with bipartisan support.

"Ensuring our youth has access to food that respects their dietary restrictions is imperative for their health," said State Senator Ram Villivalam. "This measure continues to break down barriers when accessing food, particularly in schools, and builds upon the commitment to providing an inclusive environment for all."

"The passage of this legislation ensures that students across Illinois have access to religiously accommodated lunches. We are not only respecting their cultural and spiritual needs but also fostering a learning environment where every child feels valued and supported," said State Rep. Kevin Olickal. "This is a win for our students, their families, and the principles that make our state strong."

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## New Syrian School Curriculum: 'Jews Are Damned, Have Gone Astray'

The changes, which were posted on the Education Ministry's Facebook page, sparked near-instant backlash.

By World Israel News Staff

Changes made by Syria's new government the country's school curriculum have raised serious concerns, after lesson plans were edited to include messages condemning those who do not follow Islam.

Islamist rebels recently ousted longtime leader Bashar al-Assad, who had long promoted secularism in the country and within its institutions, in a flash offensive.

The current caretaker leader of Syria, Ahmad Al-Sharaa, who was previously affiliated with Al-Qaeda, has repeatedly claimed that Syria will grant full rights to all of its citizens, regardless of their faith.

But changes to lesson plans posted online suggested that Syria's education system is currently undergoing an Islamic revamp.

Lessons about evolution and the



Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, leader of the Syrian rebel group

origins of life have been entirely removed from the curriculum, CNN reported.

A document specifying edits to lesson plans showed language changed in a way that clearly states non-Muslims are misguided.

The phrase "path of goodness" was changed to "Islamic path," and "those who have are damned and have gone astray" to "Jews and Christians."

The changes, which were posted on the Education Ministry's Facebook page, sparked near-instant backlash.

"The current government is a

caretaker government that does not have the right to make these amendments to the curricula," one Syrian wrote in response on the ministry's Facebook post.

"The curricula must be amended in accordance with the new constitution."

Another Syrian commented, "How long does it take to write a constitution? [The Islamic rebel groups] are telling us three to four years. Time it takes to change the national curriculum: Three hours. What a farce."

In a statement, Education Minister Nazir Mohammad al-Qadri downplayed the changes.

He claimed that he had only ordered "the removal of content glorifying the deposed Assad regime and replaced images of the regime's flag with those of the Syrian revolution's flag in all textbooks."



# GOP-led Congressional Report on Campus Antisemitism Recommends Cutting Funds to Universities That Boycott Israel

The report said that protections extended to Jewish students must apply when Zionists are named as the targets of exclusion or harassment.

By Ron Kampeas JTA

A report on campus antisemitism by the Republican-led U.S. House of Representatives recommended cutting government funding to universities that boycott Israel. The report released December 19th detailed the findings of seven congressional committees and painted a dire picture of antisemitism in the United States while specifying that it concerned "antisemitism on college campuses and in government."

"Across the nation, Jewish Americans have been harassed, assaulted, intimidated, and subjected to hostile environments — violations that stand in stark contrast to America's fundamental values, including a foundational commitment to religious freedom for all," the report said.

"The Committees' findings are alarming," it said. "For instance, some of our most prominent American universities refused to crack down on antisemitism."

The Education Committee, chaired by North Carolina Rep. Virginia Foxx, has gained attention over the past year-plus for a series of hearings on campus antisemitism — one of which led to the resignation of the leaders of two Ivy League schools. The committee recommended that Congress pass a law to cut federal financial aid for students, under Title IV of the 1965 Higher Education Act, at universities that boycott Israel.

"A significant amount of campus unrest resulted from anti-Israel radicals' efforts to coerce institutions to divest from and boycott Israel," said the report. "Congress can help stop this madness by passing legislation so any institution of higher education that contravenes U.S. foreign policy by boycotting or divesting from Israel will become ineligible for federal student aid under Title IV."

The report focused on a handful of universities where reports of pro-Palestinian protesters harassing and intimidating Jewish and Israeli students have been most prominent, among them Harvard University, the University of Pennsylvania, the University of California, Los Angeles, the Massachusetts Institute

of Technology, Northwestern University and Columbia University.

It said efforts by the administrators of those universities to address antisemitism on campus were inadequate or nonexistent. It singled out Northwestern and Columbia for not clearing out pro-Palestinian encampments last spring that, the report said, intimidated Jewish students. Northwestern's Jewish president took flak this year for the agreement the school struck with encampment protesters, and defended the deal in a contentious congressional hearing.

"These encampments frequently generated substantial harassment — and in some cases physical assaults — of Jewish students, created hostile environments, and disrupted campus operations," the report said. "In a dereliction of their responsibilities, many school officials failed to clear these encampments in a timely manner, often negotiating with encampment participants, and in some cases appeasing them with appalling concessions."

The tax-writing Ways and Means Committee recommended removing the tax-exempt status of nonprofit groups that, it said, abet terrorism. The Commerce Committee, which oversees the Department of Health and Human Services, recommended that the department more closely scrutinize whether educational institutions receiving its National Institutes of Health research grants are protecting Jewish students.

The report said that protections extended to Jewish students must apply when Zionists are named as the targets of exclusion or harassment. NYU changed its by-laws to outlaw discrimination against "Zionists" this summer.

"Universities should make clear that discrimination against Zionists is an unacceptable violation of their conduct policies and must prevent hostile environments created by discrimination against 'Zionists,'" it said. "Campus Jewish communities are often targeted through antisemitic discrimination and harassment on the purported basis of

being 'Zionists.' While criticism of Israel is not inherently antisemitic, hatred against 'Zionists' is."

When House Speaker Mike Johnson, a Louisiana Republican, launched the multi-pronged investigation in April, he made clear that its sole focus would be universities and groups often identified with the left that have backed the pro-Palestinian protests. The report barely mentioned right-wing antisemitism, and comes amid reports that the incoming Trump administration plans on shutting down the Department of Homeland Security's efforts to track far-right extremists.

The only allusion to right-wing antisemitism was when the report cited Claudine Gay, the former Harvard University president for "disparaging" New York Rep. Elise Stefanik as a "purveyor of hate" and "supporter of proudboys."

Stefanik, President-elect Donald Trump's nominee to be ambassador to the United Nations, has echoed a version of "Replacement Theory," a baseless claim whose original form says Jews are orchestrating the mass immigration of people of color to

replace whites. Stefanik's campaign said in 2021 that Democrats want to "overthrow our current electorate" via undocumented immigration to the United States.

She has also used the term "hostages" to refer to people prosecuted for their involvement in the pro-Trump Jan. 6, 2021 Capitol riot, which sought to overturn the 2020 election. A number of those defendants are members of the Proud Boys, a far-right group.

Stefanik's questioning of Gay in Congress, in which Gay equivocated about whether she would penalize calls for the genocide of Jews at Harvard, led to Gay's stepping down.

The Jewish Federations of North America welcomed the report.

"We applaud House leadership for publishing this report, which sheds light on this critical issue," said its vice president of government relations, Karen Paikin Barall. "To put a halt to this hatred, bipartisan collaboration along with public and private sector partners is essential. We look forward to working in the next Congress to confront this critical challenge."

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Fruits and nuts that grow on trees in Israel are central to the holiday of Tu B'Shevat, in particular grapes/raisins, figs, pomegranates, dates, almonds, oranges, fruits with edible seeds, such as blueberries, and fruits with inedible pits, as peaches and plums. A particularly nice custom is to eat fruits you haven't



tasted before, and to say the Shehecheyanu, a blessing of gratitude. You might recognize the fig-ginger balls as a recipe I've given you for Pesach, coated in chocolate. The original recipe is without chocolate and perfect for Tu B'Shevat ... and delicious with or without chocolate! The second recipe is made with dates and almonds and chocolate (Tu B'Shevat may be a minor holiday but it IS delicious! Enjoy! MHB

### FIG-GINGER BALLS

2 cups dried black mission figs\* (about 8 oz) 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon  
1 tablespoon honey.  
1/4 cup crystallized ginger (about 2 oz)

Remove the stems from the figs and discard. Coarsely chunk the figs and put in a food processor with the other ingredients and pulse until ingredients are finely chopped but not processed into a paste. Roll the fig mixture into heaping teaspoon sized balls. Makes about 18 balls.

### DATE-NUT TRUFFLES

1 cup dates 2 tbsp. chocolate chips  
1 cup almonds 1-2 tbsp. honey

Put all ingredients in a food processor and pulse until combined. Remove dough and roll into balls. Refrigerate until ready to eat.

### MAPLE GLAZED PECANS

1/3 cup pure maple syrup 1/8 teaspoon fine sea salt  
1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract 2 cups pecan halves

Line a baking sheet with parchment paper and set aside. In a pre-heated skillet (medium heat) Stir together maple syrup, vanilla and sea salt. Fold in pecans coating all the pieces with the syrup. Continue to cook until the syrup caramelizes (constantly stir so it doesn't burn). This will take approximately 5 minutes. Place on prepared baking sheet and let cool. Store in an airtight container.

### FRESH FIGS WITH GOAT CHEESE AND HONEY

12 ripe Mission figs, cut in half 3-4 tablespoons wildflower honey  
4 ounces good-quality chèvre goat cheese French bread or crackers (optional)

Place figs on a plate cut side up. Spread some of the goat cheese on each fig. Drizzle with some honey and serve with bread or crackers.

### ALMOND STUFFED DATES

12 large medjool dates 12 whole almonds  
1/4 cup almond paste

Pinch off a small piece of the almond paste and roll it into a cylinder that is a bit shorter than the date. Stuff the date with the almond paste and top with a whole almond. Repeat with remaining dates.

**... and, of course, celebrate the holiday with platters of your favorite fresh fruit!**





## Simchas

Mazel tov to **Ryan Holman**, son of **Nikki Jacobson**, on being called to the Torah as a Bar Mitzvah at Temple Sinai on December 29, 2024. Ryan impressed all with his outstanding

Jewish knowledge and performance, none more excited than his beloved and proud grandmother **Gayle Jacobson** ... Mazel tov to **Rabbi Shimon** and **Chaya**



Ryan Holman

**Posner** on the birth of their newest grandson and child number eight for **Mendel** and **Fraydee Kessler** in Sedona, Arizona, on January 13. Excited siblings include sister **Musya** and brothers **Leibel, Mordechai, Zalman, Chaim, Gedalya and Sholom**. The Jewish Community News goes to press

before his brit milah, so we will have to wait until next month to share his name, but we send our warmest best wishes and mazel tov to the Posner-Kessler family ... Email or call Miriam Bent with your Simchas: [mhbentjcn@earthlink.net](mailto:mhbentjcn@earthlink.net) or 760-835-1022.



## Classifieds

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welcomed. JFS has rewarding **volunteer opportunities** in its community programs and is now accepting applications for several positions. **Tribute cards** provide a unique way to celebrate a special occasion or honor a loved one, all while supporting JFS programs. If you're interested in learning more about volunteer opportunities or supporting JFS through the purchase of tribute cards, please contact 760-325-4088 ext. 101.

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## Candle Lighting Times

Friday, February 7	Beshalach	4:40 pm
Friday, February 14	Yitro	4:46 pm
Friday, February 21	Mishpatim	4:53 pm
Friday, February 28	Terumah	4:59 pm

### Community School Aleph Schoolhouse

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## We Mourn the Passing of...

**Linda Borses, Mildred Ernest, Doreen Fishbein, Dora "Debbie" Klapper, Monte Landis, Byron Pierce, Diane Reback, Ronald Reiner and Betty Sheldon.** Our deepest sympathies to their families and friends. May their memories endure as a blessing.



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