



Jewish Community News

The Publication of Jewish Federation of the Desert

www.jfedps.org

Tevet-Shevat 5786 - January 2026



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The Reciprocity of Jewish Unity



Danny Labin

Chief Executive Officer,
Jewish Federation
of the Desert

I recently had the privilege of leading a small delegation representing our Desert Jewish community at the JFNA General Assembly, the annual convening in Washington, DC, of all Jewish Federations across the United States and Canada. Usually referred to simply as “The GA,” it is an opportunity for all 141 Federations to come together in solidarity – to learn from each other and to tackle our biggest challenges in unity. This year, there was a special sense of enthusiasm in the air, the palpable excitement of people coming together after a long and difficult time, energized by a common desire to take a deep sigh of relief and share a proverbial hug after two years of unrelenting war and the hostages’ captivity.

We were all gathered for GA’s opening plenary when we learned that the first

speakers would be names that had all been uttered in shock and sorrow over the past two years: Noa Argamani, Avinatan Or, Guy Gilboa-Dalal, and Evyatar David. Noa, Avinatan, Guy, and Evyatar are four of the released hostages, each abducted from the Nova Music Festival on October 7th, and they were about to take the main stage to address the GA’s 3,000 attendees. There was total silence as Noa, released in June 2024, spoke first. She was followed by each of the men, who had all been released just one month prior. The audience’s silence was broken only by our abrupt spats of audible tears.

Each of the released hostages shared a message of hope and resilience that was positive, future-oriented, and grateful. But they weren’t only grateful for their freedom; they were grateful to us, grateful to the Jewish community. “Thank you,” they each repeated from the depths of their souls. “Thank you, to you, the Jewish People of the world, who never stopped marching, demonstrating, praying, thinking of us, and doing whatever it was you could do for us. We felt you, and you sustained us in those darkest hours.” It almost didn’t compute: They who experienced the most unspeakable

terror were thanking us? Shouldn’t it be us thanking them for their immeasurable heroism, their inimitable courage, and their profound ability to rise above those horrors and commit to moving forward? It suddenly became clear that the answer of who should be thanking whom was simple: our gratitude is reciprocal. That’s how it is when you are inextricably and yet inexplicably linked. Suddenly, in the basement conference hall of the DC Marriott was one of the greatest expressions of Jewish connection. The Talmudic proclamation of our interwoven fate: in action – *Kol Israel Arevim Zeh Le’zeh*, Every Jew Is Responsible for One Another.

Each of us can bask in that gratitude for the role we played, however it is that we each played it, over the last two years. We each made a difference that did not go unfelt. As we begin 2026 and enter into a new year filled with all the possibilities that a new year represents, may we each continue to do what we can, to contribute in whatever way we are able, to the future of our global Jewish community. We have learned that each of our efforts, each one of us, truly makes a difference.

Fostering Connection, Identity and Collective Responsibility



Arnie Gillman

Board President,
Jewish Federation
of the Desert

Our Hanukkah Party, Lion of Judah, Federation Day, and Comedy for a Cause are cornerstone events that strengthen the fabric of our local Jewish community by fostering connection, identity, and collective responsibility.

Our first annual **Hanukkah Party**, held at the Federation building on December 14th, brought families and individuals together to celebrate one of our most joyful holidays. Through music, candles, food, and tradition, the party created a warm and inclusive space where community members of all

ages shared in Jewish culture. The event was more than a party; it reinforced continuity, welcomed newcomers, and provided a sense of belonging to so many people.

The Lion of Judah gathering on January 12th will honor and empower women who are deeply committed to Jewish philanthropy. By recognizing their leadership, the event not only celebrates generosity, but also inspires new generations to take an active role in sustaining Jewish life. It strengthens the network of women philanthropists whose impact shapes vital programs in the Desert, in Israel, and globally.

Federation Day, taking place on February 11th, combines recreation with purpose, engaging community members who connect through golf, tennis, pickleball and card games. Each year, Federation Day creates a community environment where participants bond,

share a day in good cheer, and support the Federation’s mission. The day helps broaden engagement and foster new friendships, all while raising funds for vital initiatives.

Comedy for a Cause, on February 18th will bring people together through laughter while raising essential funds for important initiatives. Starring world-renowned Jewish comedian Modi Rosnefeld, the evening promises to be a light-hearted, welcoming environment that appeals to a broad audience, building unity and engagement as we eat, drink and laugh.

Taken together, these events cultivate community pride, strengthen Jewish identity, and fuel the philanthropic activity that sustains Jewish life.

I personally hope to see you at these events, as well as the many other programs that Jewish Federation plans throughout the year.

"Unique Designs" Jewelry to Be Sold at Lion of Judah Brunch January 12th

Women's Philanthropy is not only holding our annual Lion of Judah Brunch on Monday, January 12th, but we will be selling beautiful and "Unique Designs" Jewelry by local artist Barbara Price. Barbara studied design at U.C.L.A and came from a family of artists. Her jewelry has been sold at Marshall Fields, Nordstrom, and Neiman Marcus. She travelled extensively in Taiwan, Hong Kong and the Philippines finding unusual components to create her one-of-a-kind pieces. Barbara has generously donated 100% of the proceeds of the sale of her pieces to the Jewish Federation and our Women's Philanthropy Tzedakah project of raising money to help support the efforts of Chabad of Palm Springs Kosher Food Kitchen that provides over 100 delicious and nutritious Kosher meals to valley residents. The jewelry will be on sale at Tamarisk Country Club from 9:30-12:30 on January 12th. Please help support this worthy women's project and our community who benefit from the meals. If you are interested in volunteering to help with meal prep on Wednesday's from 11:00-1:00 at Chabad of Palm Springs please contact Leslie Pepper at leslie.pepper@jfedps.org or at 760-324-4737.



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Dr. Steven Windmueller

Steven Windmueller is an American scholar and Jewish communal professional, and professor emeritus at Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion in Los Angeles. A fellow at the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs and the board member of local Jewish organizations, he has authored over 100 works on Jewish politics and anti-Semitism and contributed to major Jewish and national media outlets.

Dr. Janette Silverman
Stories They Never Told Us



Most American families began as immigrants seeking a better life, whether for economic opportunity, safety, or survival.

This book follows four families who left Europe between the 1890s and 1920s, tracing how they built new lives in the United States while relatives abroad endured wars, shifting borders, and genocide. It explores the challenges of maintaining family ties across continents and generations—and the ongoing search to reconnect with ancestral roots and descendants around the world.

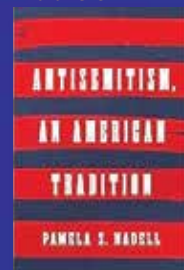
Jonathan Branfman
Millennial Jewish Stars



Millennial Jewish Stars explores why a new generation of Jewish celebrities—Drake, Lil Dicky, Abbi Jacobson & Ilana Glazer, Seth Rogen, and Zac Efron—have found

major success by highlighting rather than hiding their Jewish identity. Jonathan Branfman shows how these stars navigate racial antisemitism and stereotypes about Jewish masculinity, using humor, charm, or satire to reflect national hopes and anxieties. Their stories reveal how antisemitism, white privilege, and racism intersect in America—and offer readers new tools to recognize and challenge these forces in everyday life.

Pamela S. Nadell
Antisemitism, An American Tradition



Jews have faced antisemitism in America since their arrival in 1654, when early settlers even tried to expel them. Antisemitism, an American Tradition traces how European

stereotypes took root here, leading to centuries of discrimination—from quotas and exclusion to vandalism and violence, including Charlottesville and Pittsburgh. The book also shows how American Jews have pushed back through advocacy, legal action, and community alliances. In a moment of rising hate, it's a reminder that antisemitism in the U.S. is longstanding—and still demands vigilance.

**JEWISH
COMMUNITY
NEWS**

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EDITORIAL

Miriam H. Bent, Editor
Bailey Communications,
Layout & Design
Chief Executive Officer
Danny Labin

JCN STATEMENT

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

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Grant Opportunity Announcement



Jewish Federation of the Desert 2026–2027 Grant Submission Period is Now Open

Jewish Federation of the Desert invites non-profit organizations to request a grant application to submit proposals for this coming cycle that deliver on our mission to support vulnerable populations and improve the vibrancy of Jewish life in the Coachella Valley and around the world.

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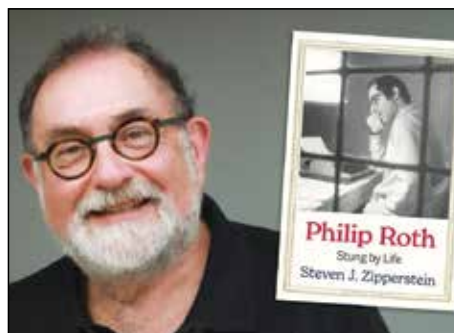
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Steven Zipperstein 'In Person' January 22

Author of "*Philip Roth: Stung by Life*" in Conversation with UCR Professor Michael Alexander at Jewish Federation

The Jewish Federation of the Desert in partnership with the University of California, Riverside welcome Professor Steven Zipperstein for a talk on his recent book, *Philip Roth: Stung by Life*, the landmark biography of one of our most prominent chroniclers of American life. He will be joined in conversation by Maimonides Chair of Jewish Studies, Professor Michael Alexander on Thursday January 22 at 4:00 pm.

In this groundbreaking literary biography, Steven J. Zipperstein captures the complex life and astonishing work of Philip Roth (1933–2018), one of America's most celebrated writers. Born in Newark, New Jersey—where his short stories and books were often set—Roth wrote with ambition and awareness of what was required to produce great literature. No writer was more dedicated to his craft, even



as he was rubbing shoulders with the Kennedys and engaging in a spate of famous and infamous romances. And yet, as much as Roth wrote about sex and self, he viewed himself as socially withdrawn, living much like an "unchaste monk" (his words).

Zipperstein explores the unprecedented range of Roth's work—

from "Goodbye, Columbus" and Portnoy's Complaint to the Pulitzer Prize-winning American Pastoral and The Plot Against America. Drawing upon extensive archival materials and over one hundred interviews, including conversations with Roth about his life and work, Zipperstein provides an intimate and insightful look at one of the twentieth century's most influential writers, placing his work in the context of his obsessions, as well as American Jewishness, freedom, and sexuality.

Steven J. Zipperstein is the Daniel E. Koshland Professor in Jewish Culture and History at Stanford University. He is the author and editor of ten books, including Rosenfeld's Lives: Fame, Oblivion, and the Furies of Writing and Pogrom: Kishinev and the Tilt of History.

Let's be honest—
If you are reading this, you're one of us.

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Rabbi Richard A. Zions, Ph.D.
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Behind The Scenes, Security Protocols at Synagogues Have Expanded Dramatically

Source: Religion News Service

While U.S. synagogues and other Jewish institutions don't follow the same exact protocols, they too have greatly expanded security over the past five years in response to a spate of violent incidents against Jewish Americans, beginning with the 2018 Tree of Life massacre that killed 11 Jewish worshippers in Pittsburgh. In 2025 alone, a gunman opened fire outside the Capital Jewish Museum in Washington, D.C., killing two Israeli Embassy staff members who attended an event there in May. Over the past four years, Jewish Federations of North America's LiveSecure initiative raised \$62 million, which it has since parceled out to various Jewish federations across the continent to hire a full-time security director or build up their existing security program. Those security professionals are connected to



La Iglesia a Favor de Israel, or "the church in favor of Israel," was launched, Nov. 22, 2025.

a systemwide network for Jewish community training and sharing of best practices known as the Secure Community Network (SCN). "We need to make sure that every institution, from the mikvah to the Chabad house to the day school to the 3,000-person synagogue, has a comparable approach to security so that we're not creating gaps," said Michael Masters, SCN National Director & CEO.



A PLACE OF REMEMBRANCE

You are encouraged to visit our community's Holocaust Memorial, located in the Palm Desert Civic Center Park off Fred Waring Drive, between San Pablo and San Pascual. Spearheaded by survivors Joe Brandt and Earl Greif, this moving memorial tells the unimaginable horrors of the Holocaust and why we must commit our lives and efforts to assure it does not happen again. Never again.

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DNA Test Kits are Prompting Hundreds of People to Discover Hidden Jewish Ancestry — And Then Convert

By Stewart Ain, The Forward



Joseph Martin holds the Torah during a ceremony where he was introduced to the California congregation as having completed his conversion.

A surprising trend is reshaping the American Jewish landscape: DNA test kits are prompting hundreds of people to discover hidden Jewish ancestry — and then convert.

At the American Jewish University in Los Angeles, nearly 900 students from every U.S. state but Wyoming are enrolled in its online introduction to Judaism course, many of them non-Jews who learned they were “even 2% Jewish” and decided to reclaim a lost lineage.

A personal spark: Angie Claudio-Rodriguez, raised Catholic, but felt a “deep connection” to Judaism she never understood. Things came to a head on Oct. 7, 2023, when Hamas terrorists attacked Israel, killing about 1,200 people and taking more than 250 hostages to Gaza. “Oct. 7 was a really tough time for me,” Oct. 7 pushed her to take a DNA test — and learn her grandmother was Jewish. Feeling like she had been “lied to my entire life,” she took an 18-week course, converted, keeps kosher, and now plans to make aliyah.

Roots revealed: Joseph Martin, 66, took a DNA test in 2021 and discovered that he’s from a large Sephardic family in Mexico with roots in Portugal. Martin said he “had always felt Jewish.” Although he had dated Jewish women, Martin married someone who was Catholic. Now divorced, he went online to meet someone, he said. “The first thing I noticed in one of the profiles was that she was Jewish. I said I’ve got to meet this woman. We’ve been together

for 11 years.”

But he was raised in an “Hispanic family, and we were very, very Catholic. My mother was a devout Catholic, going to church every Sunday. I went to Catholic schools through the eighth grade. And you know, gosh, Jewish was kind of a naughty word in the household when you’re raised as a Catholic because, after all, you know the Jews killed Jesus. Those were the kind of things that you hear, you know, as a kid growing up. ... I wish my mother was alive today so that she could take her DNA test and find out that she was Jewish all this time.”


When he learned four years ago that DNA results revealed he is 2% Jewish, he told his wife that he planned to convert to Judaism. She replied, “The Jewish soul always returns.”

By the numbers: Though the global Jewish population is estimated at 16.5 million, there may be as many as 60 million people around the world with Jewish ancestry, according to the American Jewish University (AJU). “There is a dramatic global interest in discovering if people have Jewish roots,” said AJU president Jay Sanderson. In fact, interest in Judaism has increased to such an extent that Sanderson


said hundreds of students from across the country are currently enrolled in AJU’s introduction to Judaism class.

Unlike synagogues, which generally offer only in-person introductory classes — available exclusively to their members — AJU is offering its classes to anyone.

“I think the biggest thing is that you have this program online and people can access it.”



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THE VICTIMS:



RABBI ELI SCHLANGER, 41

London born Rabbi Eli Schlanger led his congregation for 18 years and directed the Chabad mission in Bondi. He is survived by his wife and several young children, including an infant 2 months old.



RABBI YAAKOV LEVITAN, 39

Rabbi Levitan leaves behind a wife and 4 children. He was chief operating officer for Chabad of Bondi. The two men worked together for years and their wives have been best friends since high school.



EDITH BRUTMAN

A cherished figure in Sydney's Jewish community she was a woman of integrity who 'chose humanity every day.'



BORIS GURMAN, 69 and SOFIA GURMAN, 61,

Russian immigrants, they were married 24 years. Dashcam video showed Boris tried to wrestle the rifle from the assassin, before the gunman took his pistol and shot them at point blank range. Before dying they attempted to intervene to protect others around them.



TIBOR WEITMAN, 78

A father, grandfather and great grandfather, Tibor immigrated from Israel to Australia in 1988. He died protecting his family.



ALEXANDER KLEYTMAN

Alexander survived the Holocaust as a child. After the war he immigrated from Ukraine to Australia, where he was a civil engineer. His

wife of 57 years, Larissa, said her husband was murdered attempting to protect her.



PETER MEAGHER

Peter completed 34 years of service with the New South Wales Police Force, retiring as a detective sergeant.

He volunteered as a first grade manager for Randwick Rugby and was working as a freelance photographer at the Sunday Hanukkah event.



REUVEN MORRISON

Reuven Morrison was a businessman who escaped the Soviet Union as a teenager in the 1970s and built his life in Bondi.

Following a 2024 terrorist attack on a Melbourne synagogue, he informed the ABC he had become constantly alert, and expected Australia would offer Jews security. In an interview with ILTV, his daughter recounted her father's heroism, throwing bricks at terrorist Sajid Akram to try and stop him.



DAN ELKAYMAN

Dan, a French citizen, relocated to Australia last year to seek an engineering job. He was an ardent

soccer player and he played with the semi-professional Rockdale Ilinden Football Club. French President Emmanuel Macron wrote: "I have learned with deep sadness of the death of our fellow citizen Dan Elkayman in the antisemitic attack in Sydney. My thoughts are with his family and loved ones, and I extend to them the full solidarity of the nation."



BORIS TETIAROYD

Boris, a Soviet immigrant, attended the Hanukkah event with his son, who was seriously injured but is surviving his injuries, while his father succumbed to his wounds.



MARIKA POSANU

Marika was a Slovak citizen. She volunteered to transport kosher meals for Centre of Activity, an organization serving Jewish seniors. The organization said she lifted the room simply by being in it. She asked for nothing and gave everything.



MATILDA, age 10

Matilda and her family immigrated to Australia from Ukraine before Russia's invasion. She was a very friendly child, loved school and had many friends.

Book Lover— Quick Questions

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Cantor Melanie Fine

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Kestenbaum

Professor Samuel Trussell, J.D.

Rosa Weinstein, Anthropologist.

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Jewish Donors Help Raise \$1.3M for Ahmed al Ahmed, the Muslim Man Who Disarmed a Bondi Beach Attacker

By Grace Gilson, JNS

A crowdfunding campaign to support Ahmed al Ahmed, the Muslim fruit seller shot after disarming one of the men who was attacking a Hanukkah event in Sydney, generated \$1.3 in its first day — with the largest donation coming from the American Jewish billionaire Bill Ackman. Ackman gave \$66,000 to the GoFundMe for al Ahmed and promoted the campaign to his followers, tweeting, "This is the verified link for the Bondi hero."

In a viral video on Sunday, shortly after the attack on Bondi Beach that left 15 killed and over 40 injured, al Ahmed, 43, can be seen crouching behind a car before jumping into action as one of the terrorists shoots a firearm at the Jewish celebration. Al Ahmed, a Syrian-born father of two who was unarmed, then jumped on the attacker from behind, wresting the firearm from his hands.

"In a moment of chaos and danger, he stepped forward without hesitation," the sponsors of the GoFundMe, Car Hub Australia, wrote on the page. "His actions



New South Wales Premier Chris Minns visits Ahmed Al Ahmed, 43, at a hospital in Sydney, Australia, on December 15, 2025.

were selfless, instinctive, and undeniably heroic, taken without regard for his own safety. Early reports indicate he was shot twice in the process while protecting others."

As al Ahmed's heroic actions were shared widely on social media on Sunday, he garnered praise from Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese.

As al Ahmed recovered from his injuries in a hospital on Monday, he was visited by Chris Minns, the premier of New South Wales, the Australian state that includes Sydney.

"Ahmed is a real-life hero," wrote Minns in a post on X alongside a photo of him visiting al Ahmed in the hospital. "Last night, his incredible bravery no doubt saved countless lives when he disarmed a terrorist at enormous personal risk."

As Australian Jews Call for Action on Antisemitism, PM Unveils Moves to Curb Hate Speech

By Philissa Cramer, JTA

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has announced a slew of changes meant to curb antisemitism, including a crackdown on hate speech by extremist clerics.

The announcement comes four days after two gunmen killed 15 people at a Hanukkah celebration on Bondi Beach in Sydney. Many Australian Jews said they had feared such an attack after years of surging antisemitism and what they said had been an inadequate government response.

Albanese acknowledged the criticism during an address in Canberra, Australia's capital.

"More could have been done, and I accept my responsibility for the part in that as prime minister of Australia, but what I also do is accept my responsibility to lead the nation, and unite the nation," he said.

"Anyone in this position would regret not doing more, and any inadequacies which are there," Albanese added. "But what we need to do is to move forward."

The new policies would heighten penalties for speech that incites violence, including online; increase the government's latitude to block or rescind visas for those who spread hate; and penalize organizations whose leaders engage in hate speech.

As is the case in England, where two of the

largest police forces announced December 17 that they would begin arresting people who use protest slogans seen by many as antisemitic, Australian authorities said they aimed to tip the scales against the kinds of speech that had long been treated as just shy of criminal.

"There have been organizations which any Australian would look at and say their behavior, their philosophy and what they are trying to do is about division and has no place in Australia," Home Affairs Minister Tony Burke told reporters at Albanese's press conference. "And yet for a generation, no government has been able to successfully take action against them because they have fallen just below the legal threshold."

Albanese also pledged to enact a 13-point plan that his antisemitism envoy proposed earlier this year and announced a task force to ensure that Australian schools respond adequately to antisemitism. The moves follow a pledge made in the immediate aftermath of the Bondi Beach attack to tighten access to guns, which one of the alleged attackers had obtained legally.

Albanese's announcement comes as Sydney is in the midst of days of funerals for the victims, who included rabbis, a Holocaust survivor and a 10-year-old girl.

While some local officials have attended the funerals, he has drawn criticism for staying away. Burke was heckled when he visited a vigil at Bondi Beach, with some in attendance shouting, "Blood on your hands!"

Prior to the shooting, Australian Jews were distressed by a string of arson and vandalism attacks on Jewish sites, as well as rhetoric in pro-Palestinian demonstrations seen as stoking antisemitic violence. Officials attributed some of the most searing attacks to criminals working indirectly on behalf of Iran, and Albanese ejected the Iranian ambassador in retaliation earlier this year.

Now, Albanese's new moves have drawn criticism and concern from some on the left, including a progressive Jewish group, about their implications for free speech. But the main body representing Australian Jews, which on Sunday called for "decisive leadership and action now," said it wanted more.

The Executive Council of Australian Jewry said that it would reserve a fuller judgment until after the funerals were over and more information was available but indicated that it was not satisfied. Albanese said it could take months to draft legislation to match his commitments.

"We will need to see the details before making an assessment as to whether the measures are likely to live up to their billing,"

the council said. "This suite of measures can only be regarded as a first step, but it is an essential one."

A Quick Quiz for You Book Lover to Book Lover:

Do you read book reviews?

Do you browse in
bookstores?

Are you now, or have you
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Have you reviewed
a book lately?

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Or call the office
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Ticket purchase deadline:
Tuesday, January 13, 2026



Jewish Federation of the Desert presents "Comedy for a Cause"

Comedian Modi Rosenfeld will perform live on **Wednesday, February 18, 2026**, at Jewish Federation of the Desert's fundraising event, "Comedy for a Cause." The evening will raise vital funds for the programs and services that JFED supports here in the Coachella Valley, in Israel, and Jewish communities around the world.

The event will take place at Tamarisk Country Club in Rancho Mirage. The evening will begin at 5:30 PM with a cocktail reception, followed by dinner, and Modi's performance. Tickets for this fundraiser are \$500 per person. To purchase tickets, visit JFEDPS.org or call 760-324-4737.

Voted one of the top 10 comedians in New York City by The Hollywood Reporter, the comedian is currently one of the comedy circuit's most sought after performers, featured on HBO, CBS, NBC, ABC, Comedy Central, The Howard Stern Show and E! Entertainment. With everything happening in the world today, we could all use a little levity, especially when it helps support our community here in the Desert and across the globe, said Jewish Federation CEO Danny Labin. "Modi's smart, incisive and insightful humor gives us a chance to take a break from the news and to come together as a community in both laughter and purpose."



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The Music That Binds Us

Cantor Azi Schwartz Returns to Palm Desert for a Soulful Celebration in January 2026

By Robyn E. Eagles

In an era defined by accelerating cultural shifts, mounting tensions, and a concerning rise in antisemitism linked to global events, the need for Jewish communities to come together and celebrate their vibrant heritage has never been more profound. Against this backdrop, the Coachella Valley is preparing to host a powerful annual event that serves as a beacon of cultural affirmation: the fourth annual **Azi Schwartz and Friends Concert**.

World-renowned Cantor Azi Schwartz is returning to the desert for a night dedicated to the enduring beauty and unifying force of Jewish music. The concert, scheduled for **Wednesday, January 14, at 7 p.m. at the Del Webb Sun City Clubhouse**, promises to be another extraordinary journey through the Jewish soundscape, drawing an audience that has swelled to nearly 500 guests each year.

An Evening of Cultural Connection

This isn't just a concert; it's a living testament to cultural Judaism—an evening where the threads of ancient tradition weave seamlessly with contemporary life. The program is designed to resonate with every attendee, spanning the spiritual depth of traditional cantorial melodies from Shabbat services to the contemporary flair of today's hits.

At the heart of the musical experience is the collaboration of celebrated cantors from across the U.S., masterfully led by musical director **Tali Tadmor** of the LA Philharmonic. Cantor Schwartz, Senior Cantor of Park Avenue Synagogue in New York, will be joined by an impressive lineup, including:

- **Rabbi/Cantor Danny Maseng:** globally known singer and songwriter from television, film and Broadway
- **Cantor Lisa Piccott:** Senior Cantor at Wilshire Boulevard Temple.
- **Cantor Lizzie Weiss:** Senior Cantor at Temple Emanuel of Beverly Hills.

Together, these powerful voices will share a tapestry of melodies that not only honor Jewish tradition but also reinforce the strength and resilience of the community.

"In times of uncertainty, our shared

culture—our songs, our stories, our history—is the anchor that keeps us grounded and connected," said Nadine Brindhendler, president of Sun City Jewish Services. "This concert is an opportunity for cultural Jews to step away from the noise, stand together, and feel the connection of our people through music."

A Legacy of Love and Remembrance

The annual concert series holds a deep personal significance, having been founded in 2022 by Coachella Valley resident **Law Rader** in memory of his beloved wife, **Carol Rader**, who passed away in March of that year.


Born from personal loss, the concert has grown into an enduring annual staple in the Palm Desert community. It serves as a beautiful, collective way to continue to celebrate the Jewish culture through tradition in the Desert. The ongoing concert is a tribute to the emotional and cultural resonance among the Coachella Valley Jewish community.

"This concert started as a tribute,

but it's more than that now. In these challenging times, it's a vital affirmation of who we are. Bringing hundreds of Jews together to share the strength and joy of our music reminds us all that our culture endures, our community is strong, and we are not alone. It's truly a celebration of life, heritage, and the unifying power of Jewish sound."

For cultural Jews—and all members of the wider community—this event offers more than just entertainment. It is an act of communal strength, a vital expression of identity, and a reminder that the Jewish spirit, articulated so powerfully through its music, will always endure.

Tickets are on sale now at ticketspice.com/azi2026.



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Facing Antisemitism and Exclusion, Jewish Authors Get a Lifeline

By Elana Sztokman/JTA

Susan Blumberg-Kason, a Jewish author whose work explores Jewish history and identity, was deep into a book about Golda Meir's Milwaukee childhood when her literary agent abruptly dropped her early last year.

The agent offered only a vague explanation, saying, "We can no longer

champion your career."

Blumberg-Kason was surprised at the 180-degree turn by her agent. But she soon discovered three other Jewish writers in her online community also had been suddenly dropped by their agents with little explanation other than the same phrase she heard: "We can no longer champion your career."

It didn't feel like coincidence.

"It wasn't just that she dropped me," Blumberg-Kason said. "It was that suddenly several of us were hearing the exact same sentence. It felt coordinated. It felt like something had shifted under our feet."

It turns out many other Jewish writers have had similar experiences over the past two years, since the beginning of the Oct. 7 war and the boom in anti-Israel and antisemitic ferment that followed. In writers' groups and forums, Jewish authors describe a sense that their work is being railroaded because they are

Jewish. They've lost agents, publishers and book events. Some report that editors have cooled the moment Jewish themes appeared in their work.

In May 2024, anti-Israel boycotters propagated a shared spreadsheet called "Is your fav author a Zionist?" that went viral, "outing" Jewish writers for any kind of connection to Israel.

Author Elissa Wald felt the anti-Jewish sentiment so strongly that she created the Never Alone Book Club for Jewish authors to give one another support. The group now has 3,500 members, a Facebook community and a Substack, and it hosts Jewish book events and shares resources for writers who no longer feel safe in mainstream literary spaces.

The challenging climate prompted UJA-Federation of New York to begin funding projects aimed at helping Jewish authors, awarding a total of \$300,000 in grants to six organizations working in different

areas of the literary ecosystem.

"Supporting Jewish writers is an important part of UJA's overall strategy to confront rising antisemitism," said Eric S. Goldstein, CEO of UJA-Federation of New York. "Efforts to marginalize Jewish voices in culture and the arts must be met by even greater efforts to ensure they're heard."

The organizations receiving UJA grants are helping Jewish writers with everything from publishing logistics and visibility to offering emotional support.

"Jewish writers were being dropped, disinvited, and sidelined — and many were questioning whether they could continue writing Jewish stories," said Rina Cohen, who manages strategy across UJA's Combating Antisemitism portfolio. "By supporting them with tools and resources, UJA is sending a clear message: You deserve to create freely, and we'll stand behind you as you do."

continued on page 23

Invitation to a Shabbat Book Review Experience

Are you someone who enjoys reading?

Book reviews, bookstores, book clubs, and piles of books at home—these are signs of a lifelong reader.

If you answered Yes to any of the questions above, HAR-EL has one more invitation for you:

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An Evening at the Museum Benefitting Jewish Family Service of the Desert

is a dazzling night of art, entertainment, and culinary delight! Guests will be welcomed into the stunning main level galleries of the Palm Springs Art Museum. Savor sumptuous heavy appetizers catered by the ever-fabulous **Eight4Nine**. Then, get settled in The Annenberg Theatre for a showstopping live performance by the incredible **Chris Ruggiero** whose smooth vocals and dynamic band will take you on a musical journey with songs you know and love and with a voice you'll never forget! You will not want to miss this magical evening as we come together to support the vital work of Jewish Family Service of the Desert.



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Israel to Invest Millions in US Jewish Education

By Jewish News Syndicate

Israel is preparing to invest millions of dollars in Jewish education in the U.S. after a year-long pilot program showed "unprecedented" growth in enrollment in participating schools, Minister of Diaspora Affairs and Combating Antisemitism Amichai Chikli announced in mid-December.

"In the past year, we have launched seven different pilot programs, each focusing on a different aspect of the challenge. In Atlanta, a unique pilot led by the Zalik Foundation provides scholarships to educators so they can send their children to Jewish schools,"

Chikli stated.

One year after the launch of the pilot, the ministry measured its impact and discovered a 5% rise in enrollment at participating day schools.

By comparison, a 2% increase was considered significant in the post-coronavirus period, making the recent jump especially notable.

Atlanta is one of several Jewish communities that took part in Chikli's ministry's flagship Project Aleph Bet, carried out in partnership with the Jewish Federations of North America

and philanthropic foundations.

The goal of the initiative is to strengthen Jewish education and increase the number of American children enrolled in formal Jewish education.

"Out of a deep belief that nothing is more important than strengthening Jewish education, we are preparing to expand the project dramatically in the coming year, and to invest, for the first time in the history of the State of Israel, tens of millions of shekels in Jewish education in the United States," Chikli wrote in his Hebrew statement on Tuesday.

Jerusalem's investment in the Diaspora "stems from its commitment as the nation-state of the Jewish people as was enshrined in the Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People, and as stated already in the Declaration of Independence," continued the Cabinet minister.

The Jewish state "bears a profound and ongoing responsibility toward the entire Jewish people around the world, including a commitment to strengthening Jewish identity, cohesion and a shared future," he said.

'Without Israel, Christianity Would be Wiped Off the Map,' Says US Senator

By World Israel News Staff

Christians around the world should support Israel against radical Islamic terror groups and their patron, Tehran, a US senator said, pushing back against recent comments by far-right populists denouncing Christian support for Israel.

On December 10th Bernie Moreno, Ohio's Colombian-born senior US senator, addressed The Jerusalem Post Washington Conference in D.C., during which he said Christians in the US should "see Israel's

fight as their own" and urged that more be done to combat antisemitism.

Moreno warned that without Israel safeguarding the Holy Land, Christianity would be "wiped off the map."

"Christians like



Ohio Senator Bernie Moreno (R-Ohio)

myself understand that without the State of Israel protecting the Holy Land, Christianity would be wiped off the map immediately," Moreno said. "That is why you have tremendous allies, allies who see Israel's fight as their own."

While support for Israel among evangelical Christians in the US remains high, some polling suggests that the Jewish state has lost ground among evangelicals under 30 – part of a broader trend

of eroding support among younger Americans that has weakened conservative backing for Israel.

Moreno, a staunch conservative who has called for banning dual citizenship in the US, said that Israel and its supporters must wage a more robust public relations "battle," calling for war on antisemitism.

"If we fight the PR battle with the same determination as the military battle, we can eradicate antisemitism in America," he said.



Mensch International Foundation's 18th Annual **HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE DAY** Wednesday, January 28, 2026 at 11:00 AM

At the Amphitheater at Palm Desert Civic Center Park
43900 San Pablo Avenue at Fred Waring Drive, Palm Desert



Hungarian Ambassador
Istvan Gróf



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Evan Trubee



Rabbi BenZion Lew
Cantorial Soloist



Cantor Joseph Gole
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Father Greg Elder
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Henry Friedman
Survivor & Author



Steven Geiger
Mensch Foundation

Michele Gold, Tolerance Education Center • Danielle Schneider, Pianist • Lola Rossi, Sound Technician

**This year's program is dedicated to the victims of the October 7th Massacre in Israel
and victims of the Bondi, Australia attack on the first night of Hanukkah.**

Hanukkah

+ Other Community Celebrations Across the Desert



As published in the *Desert Star Weekly*

Hanukkah Celebration Brings Light, Music, and Community to the Desert



Photos by Pat Krause
CEO Danny Labin, Chief Andy Mills and President Arnie Gillman



Photos by Pat Krause
Palm Springs Gay Men's Chorus

By Pat Krause

The Jewish Federation of the Desert marked a joyful milestone with its first annual Hanukkah Community Celebration, held Sunday the 14th at the Federation building in Rancho Mirage. Several hundred people gathered for the new event, filling the space with warmth, laughter, and a true sense of community. Designed as a family-friendly celebration, the event was free and open to the public, welcoming longtime supporters

and first-time visitors alike.

Guests were encouraged to bring a toy to support a holiday toy drive, and the response was generous. A long table quickly filled with gifts of all kinds, a visible reminder of the spirit of giving that defines the season and the community itself.

The afternoon's entertainment was a highlight from start to finish. The Palm Springs Gay Men's Chorus delighted the crowd with Hanukkah songs alongside familiar holiday favorites, drawing warm applause and

plenty of smiles. Equally engaging was the Israel Folk Dancing, which invited guests not just to watch, but to participate. Instructor David Dassa guided dancers of all ages through the steps, patiently teaching each dance and encouraging everyone to join in. The lively music and movement brought big smiles to faces young and old, with children especially eager to take part—some showing off colorful face paintings as they danced.

Food added to the festive

atmosphere, with traditional Jewish treats served on a side table, including latkes and other favorites. One cheerful guest wandered through the crowd handing out Krispy Kreme donuts, adding a sweet surprise that was especially popular with children.

As evening approached, the community gathered for the lighting of the Chanukiyot, the Hanukkah menorahs. Palm Springs Police Chief Andy Mills had the honor of lighting some of the candles, joined by others

who stepped forward to take part in the sacred ritual. The moment was both meaningful and reflective. CEO Danny Labin noted the presence of security guards and regular patrols around the building, acknowledging recent world events while emphasizing the Federation's commitment to keeping the community safe.

The celebration closed with a feeling shared by many: gratitude, connection, and the enduring light of Hanukkah shining brightly in the desert.

Israel and Costa Rica Sign Landmark Free Trade Deal

Israeli Economy and Industry Minister Nir Barkat hailed San José as "a natural trade partner" for the Jewish state.

By Jewish News Syndicate Staff

Israel and Costa Rica have taken a "leap forward" in bilateral relations with the signing of a free trade agreement encompassing goods, services and investments, Jerusalem's Foreign Ministry announced on December 8.

The announcement came just days after Costa Rica's minister of foreign trade, Manuel Tovar Rivera, announced that San José would be opening an office for innovation in trade

and investment in Jerusalem in 2026.

The agreement will immediately eliminate over 90% of tariffs, granting broad access for Israeli industrial and agricultural products to the Costa Rican market. The Jewish state will also reduce import costs on a wide range of goods, from food and medical equipment to industrial tools.

"This agreement opens significant new avenues for both Costa Rica and Israel," Tovar Rivera said, adding: "It enhances access to high-quality Costa Rican goods and services while creating a mutually beneficial platform for collaboration in high-technology industries, premium agribusiness and specialized services."

Barkat hailed Costa Rica as "a natural trade partner for Israel—an advanced OECD country with a deep commitment to free and open trade."

He added, "The free trade agreement is expected to strengthen the growth trend in Israeli exports, deepen business cooperation, and help reduce the cost of living in Israel by lowering the costs of imports."



Israeli Economic Minister Nir Barkat and Costa Rica's minister of foreign trade, Manuel Tovar Rivera, at the signing ceremony for a free trade agreement in Jerusalem, Dec. 8, 2025.

The announcement that Costa Rica would be opening a trade office was made in the wake of a meeting in Jerusalem between Sa'ar and Tovar Rivera and followed similar moves by other countries that do not maintain their embassy in the Jewish state's

capital.

Costa Rica formerly maintained its embassy in Jerusalem but relocated it to Tel Aviv in 2006 due to international pressure and efforts to further its relations with the Arab world.

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This Seder is a living history: Lesson for the 21st century ... a fun, educational and deeply meaningful way to connect with our shared heritage and the call for environmental action (Jewish Earth Day).

- * When: Monday, February 2, 2026 ~ 2:30 to 4:00 P.M. (registration: 2:15 PM)
- * Where: The Jewish Federation of the Desert

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This community event is sponsored in part by an allocation from the Jewish Federation of the Desert. All are welcome!



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Europe Moves to Toughen Stance on Antisemitic Incitement After Bondi Beach Massacre

London and Manchester police warned that anyone publicly chanting to “globalize the intifada” will be arrested.

By Ailin Vilches Arguello, The Algemeiner

In the wake of the deadly attack on a Chanukah celebration at Sydney’s Bondi Beach, some European authorities are stepping up efforts to crack down on antisemitic incitement, with Britain and Germany targeting certain slogans and ramping up legal and security measures.

On December 17, London and Manchester police warned that anyone publicly chanting to “globalize the intifada” — a popular slogan among anti-Israel activists that has been widely condemned as a call for violence against Jews and Israelis — will be arrested.

Local law enforcement said the crackdown comes as the “context has changed” in the wake of Sunday’s massacre in Australia, where gunmen murdered 15 people and wounded at least 40 others who gathered at Bondi Beach to celebrate the first night of the Jewish holiday of Chanukah.

The British government’s latest effort to confront rising antisemitism comes after a series of deadly attacks earlier this year, including the Yom Kippur terrorist assault in Manchester, which left two Jewish men dead; the firebombing of a march for Israeli hostages in Boulder, Colorado, which killed one person and injured 13 others; and the murder of two Israeli Embassy staffers in Washington, DC.

“We know communities are concerned about placards and chants such as ‘globalize the intifada,’” London’s Metropolitan Police and Greater Manchester Police said in a joint statement, pledging to “be more assertive” and take decisive action against anyone inciting violence.

“Violent acts have taken place, the context has changed, words have meaning and consequence. We will act decisively and make arrests,” the statement read.

Britain’s Jewish community welcomed the government’s latest measure, with UK Chief Rabbi Ephraim Mirvis describing it as “an important step toward confronting the hateful rhetoric on the streets that has fueled acts of violence and terror.”

Phil Rosenberg, president of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, also praised what he called a “necessary intervention” to tackle the growing hostility and hatred that Jews and Israelis have continued to face over the last two years, following Hamas’s Oct. 7, 2023, massacre across southern Israel.

“We have seen the result of hate-filled slogans in murderous attacks around the

world, including in Manchester, the Capital Jewish Museum in Washington, DC, Boulder, Colorado, and this week in Bondi Beach,” Rosenberg said in a statement.

The Embassy of Israel in the UK also welcomed the government’s move, expressing hope that real action will now be taken “before it can lead to further radicalization and violence against Jews.”

“Calling to ‘globalize the intifada’ is clearly incitement to violence, and a direct line can be drawn between these antisemitic chants and the acts of terror that we have seen against Jewish people worldwide,” the statement read.

“It is disappointing it has taken such a long time for British authorities to recognize this, and it should not have been on the Jewish community to plead with the authorities to take these threats seriously, only being done so after more Jews have been killed,” it continued.

However, the initiative has also faced criticism, with opponents arguing that it constitutes political repression and violates the right to free speech.

“The statement by the Met and GMP marks another low in the political repression of protest for Palestinian rights,” Ben Jamal, director of the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, said in a statement ahead of a planned pro-Palestinian protest in central London on Wednesday.

“The horrific massacre in Sydney, Australia should not be used as a justification to further repress fundamental democratic rights of protest and free speech in this country,” he added.

UK police have already increased security around synagogues, Jewish schools, and community centers, stepping up patrols and implementing additional safety measures amid rising tensions.

Shortly after the new measure was announced, police arrested two individuals “for racially aggravated public order offenses” after they allegedly shouted slogans involving calls for intifada at an anti-Israel demonstration in central London, while a third person was detained for obstructing the arrests, the Metropolitan Police said.

UK Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer also announced that the government had increased funding for Jewish security to approximately \$34 million.

Meanwhile, German authorities have also stepped up efforts to address the surge in

antisemitic incitement and attacks targeting Jews and Israelis nationwide.

On Wednesday, the Berlin District Court ruled that the use of the slogan “From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free” constitutes a criminal offense, describing it as a symbol of the banned Palestinian terrorist group Hamas.

The ruling followed the conviction of a 25-year-old man who shouted the phrase at an anti-Israel protest and was found guilty of using symbols of terrorist organizations and inciting violence.

“Anyone who uses this phrase is backing Hamas and its core objective — the destruction of the State of Israel,” presiding

judge Susann Wettley ruled.

Although criminal courts across Germany have issued inconsistent rulings on the use of the slogan at protests and demonstrations, the Berlin decision could allow the German Federal Court of Justice to establish a clear nationwide legal standard.

Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Saar praised the ruling, saying other countries should follow Germany’s example.

“From the river to the sea, Palestine shall be free” is a slogan widely used by anti-Israel activists and has been interpreted by critics as a call for the destruction of the Jewish state, which lies between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea.

Women’s Philanthropy Challah Bake

Sunday, February 22 at 1:00 PM

Join the ladies of Women’s Philanthropy as we make and break bread together at our community Challah Bake!

Chabad of Palm Springs

250 E. Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs

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Rebbetzin Chaya Denebeim.**

Light refreshments will be served.

Cost: \$36

All proceeds support our Tzedakah Fund, helping provide ingredients for the Desert Community Kitchen, where over 100 wholesome, kosher meals are prepared weekly for Bikur Cholim, for local residents in need, and Well in the Desert.

If you’re looking for a meaningful way to give back, we’d love to have you join us on Wednesdays from 11:00 AM–1:00 PM to help prepare meals for delivery.

For more information about the Challah Bake or volunteering with Women’s Philanthropy, please contact:

Leslie Pepper 760-324-4737 | leslie.pepper@jfedps.org



Shabbat Schedule - January 2026

AHAVAT ACHIM/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.

BEIT HAVERIM, Palm Springs

Rabbi Steven Rosenberg (rabbisteven.rosenberg@gmail.com) and Hazzan Dr. Sarah Sela. Where friends old and new gather Friday evenings at 6:30 pm for Shabbat services and festive Oneg. Shabbat services alternate between being held at Mission Hills Country Club or services/potluck dinners in members' homes. Shabbat mornings at 10:30 am: Nosh and drash/torah study online or in person. For schedule of services, potluck Shabbat dinners, Shabbat morning programs and activities, email beithaverimps@gmail.com or call 760-766-3212.

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 **Shabbat morning services** held every week at 9:45 am, followed by light Kiddush lunch. Visitors welcome with valid identification. For information, email info@congregationbethshalom.net or call 760-200-3636. www.CongregationBethShalom.net.
Sabra Hadassah of the Desert
"Hadassah Shabbat" Friday evening, January 9, 2026, at 6:45 pm.

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.

NEW! First Fridays: Services at 7 pm, followed by Shabbat dinners at 7:30 pm. Check website for details.

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: Info@ChabadLQ.com; website: www.ChabadLQ.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. Weekly in person Shabbat Eve services. Email for location and schedule. 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 Danny 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 first 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 re: in-person services, upcoming classes and Zoom links, visit orhamidbar.org.

TEMPLE HAR SHALOM, Idyllwild

www.templeharshalomidyllwild.org
Email: templeharshalomofidyllwild@gmail.com. Shabbat Candle Lighting on Fridays at 6:00 pm on Zoom. First 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 (Office open Tuesday-Thursday). Email: temple@templeisaiahps.com; Website: templeisaiahps.com.
Shabbat services Friday evenings in the Liberman Chapel at 6:30 pm, followed by Oneg. Torah services are on Shabbat mornings at 10:30 during season; 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. Interim Associate Rabbis: Rabbi Rachel Axelrad, Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Emert, Rabbi Suzanne Singer. Cantorial Soloists: Ezra Yaron, Elliot Levine. Check website for schedule. Friday Kabbalat Shabbat service is broadcast on Facebook: www.facebook.com/templeisaiahpalmsprings.

TEMPLE SINAI, Palm Desert (Member, Union for Reform Judaism)

Rabbi David Novak rabbi@templesinai.org 73-251 Hovley Lane West, Palm Desert, CA 92260. www.templesinaipd.org 760-568-9699. Go to templesinaipd.org for access information. Shabbat services are in-person and online on Livestream at www.templesinaipd.org. Friday evening services 5:30 pm, preceded by pre-service Oneg at 5:00 pm. Saturday morning Torah study 8:45 am; Shabbat morning services 10 am.

Temple Sinai's Avi Levine Religious School open to children irrespective of parents' membership at Temple Sinai.

Contact Talia Lizemer-Hawley, Educator, for more information: educator@templesinaipd.org

BIKUR CHOLIM

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



Community Calendar of Programs - January 2026

Tuesdays

5:00-7:00 pm Chabad of Rancho Mirage weekly **Community BBQ**. Join others in the community for a kosher weekly social. Restaurant style BBQ with choices from soups and salad to salmon and steak. **Pick-up** is also available/ Order online or call in order before 3 pm • Email: info@chabadrm.com • Phone: 760-770-7785 • website: www.ChabadRM.com.

Tuesdays

7:00 pm "Living With the Times": Exploring the weekly torah portion on Zoom. Instructor: Sussie Denebeim, Chabad of Palm Springs. Chabadps.com.

Wednesdays

7:00 pm Tanya Class with Rabbi Shimon Posner, Chabad of Rancho Mirage. In person and available online. Email: info@chabadrm.com, Phone: 760-770-7785; www.ChabadRM.com.

Sunday, January 11

10:00 am Havurah of the Desert program: **Standing Together: A**

Vision of Peace in Israel. Live Zoom.

Standing Together is the largest grassroots movement organizing Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel for peace, equality, and social and climate justice. Join to hear a Standing Together leader's reflections on the last two years, the grassroots success to achieve a ceasefire, and the steps the movement will be taking going forward to end the occupation and build peace. Free. Bagels and spreads. Location following registration; havurahofthedesert.org/ speakers.

Monday, January 12

9:30 am Women's Philanthropy's **Lion of Judah Brunch** with guest speaker IDF soldier and author Izzy Ezagui. (Minimum donation to the Jewish Federation Annual Campaign to attend: \$5000).

Tuesday, January 13

5:00 pm Palm Springs International Piano Competition presents **An Evening With Pianist John Bayless**. Program held at Temple Isaiah. Tickets: \$150. Call

760-773-2575. See ad page 10.

Wednesday, January 14

7:00 pm Azi Schwartz & Friends 2026 Concert at Sun City Palm Desert Mountain View Clubhouse. Cantor Schwartz is joined by Rabbi Chazzan Danny Maseng and Cantors Lisa Peicott and Lizzie Weiss. General admission \$54; VIP Seating \$125. Park See ad and article page 11.

Tuesday, January 20

9:30 am Coffee and nosh; **Sabra Hadassah meeting 10:00 am**. Meeting held at the Jewish Federation of the Desert in Rancho Mirage. Program: **Michael Appleman**, Ph.D. "The Plight of the Jewish Cubans." Information call 760-289-7987 or email deserthsc@hadassahorg.

Thursday, January 22

12:00 Noon. Circle of Sinai **Fashion Show and Luncheon** (11:00 am pre-show shopping), featuring the fashions of Daisy Blue. Members \$45; guests \$50 (each includes \$5 security fee).

Send checks, payable to "Temple Sinai" to 73251 Hovley Lane, Palm desert, CA 92260 or call 760-568-9699 to pay by check. See ad page 10.

Thursday, January 22

4:00 pm The Jewish Federation of the Desert in partnership with the University of California, Riverside welcomes **Professor Steven Zipperstein** for a talk on his recent book, *'Philip Roth: Stung by Life,'* a **landmark biography of one of our most prominent chroniclers of American life. He will be joined in conversation by** UCR Maimonides Chair of Jewish Studies, **Professor Michael Alexander**. RSVP to Jewish Federation, 760-324-4737. See article page 5.

Wednesday, January 28

11:00 am Mensch International Holocaust Observance. Palm Desert Civic Park. See ad page 13.

Share your community events with us. Email or call Miriam Bent at mhbentjcn@earthlink.net or call her at 760-835-1022.

Harlem Jews Asked to Add a Menorah to a Park's Christmas Display. They got a Community Celebration

By Jackie Hajdenberg, JTA

Amid the bitter cold December evenings, 100 or so neighbors have gathered in Harlem's tiny Montefiore Park to watch the neighborhood's annual Christmas tree lighting. But this year, the blue spruce — a landmark at the north end of the triangular park that's been illuminated for Christmas every year since 1992 — wasn't the only holiday decoration in the park. For the first time, the Christmas tree lighting was accompanied by the kindling of a large electric menorah, in honor of the third night of Hanukkah.

"We've lived in the neighborhood for a long time, and we walk by that park every single day," said Erica Frankel, who with her husband Rabbi Dimitry Ekshtut is the co-founder of neighborhood Jewish community group Tzibur Harlem, which co-sponsored the lighting. "And we've been dreaming that one year



there would also be a big public display for Hanukkah in the park alongside the tree."

The event arose following an inquiry by the couple to the Montefiore Park Civic Association, asking if they could install a large menorah in the park. Instead of a simple "yes," a broad coalition of civic, Jewish, Black, Dominican and interfaith organizations came together to create the first "Harlem Festival of Lights," a cross-denominational celebration of both Christmas and Hanukkah. (A Kwanzaa celebration was initially on the lineup, too, but the lighting of the kinara, the seven-branched candelabra that is part of the modern pan-African holiday, was ultimately rescheduled to coincide with the seven-day celebration that begins on Dec. 26.)



Tribute Card Donations

Sending tributes and memorials is a meaningful way to honor loved ones.

Honorarium Tributes In Appreciation For:

- **George Baril**, Happy 90th birthday from Stephen and Judy Ehrlichman, David and Nancy Meshulam.
- **Bonnie Carmell**, Wishing you the happiest of birthdays, from Loreen Jacobson, Marnie Miller and Sherry Schor.
- **David Conney**, Wishing you a happy, healthy birthday, from Joanne and Bill Chunowitz, and Gail and Bob Scadron.
- **Lenny Eber**, Congratulations on your 90th birthday, from Joanne and Bill Chunowitz, Leslie and Barry Usow.
- **Hilary Hawn**, In honor of our daughter Hilary Hawn, with love from Milton and Nina Zale *
- **Loreen Jacobson**, In honor of your birthday, from Jeanne Levitt.
- **Marjorie Kulp**, Wishing you a healthy and happy birthday, from the Parsow Family.
- **Bertel Lewis**, Thank you for the beautiful birthday party you gave Jeannie, from Fefe Passer.
- **Renee Mayer**, Thank you for including us with your family for Thanksgiving, from Joanne and Bill Chunowitz.
- **Ella Ohana**, Many blessings on your birthday, from Ana Landau and Waleska.

• **Eskie Shepard**, Congratulations on your big birthday, from Joanne and Bill Chunowitz, Maxine and Joe Kirshenbaum, and Jeanne Levitt.

• **Robin Winnick**, Thank you for the beautiful birthday party you gave Jeannie, from Fefe Passer.

Memorial Tributes Condolences Sent To:

• **Jim Borax**, Condolences on your profound loss, from Ken Schoenfeld.

• **Nancy Ditlove**, Sincere condolences on the loss of your Dennis, from Rhoda Brickell, Elaine and Gary Dachis, Jane Effress and Harvey Lambert, Sande and Ed Fineman, Barbara and Bernie Fromm, Cora Ginsberg, Frank Goldstin and Paul Clowers, Jill and Steven Gottlieb, Margot and Jerry Halperin, Barney and Pamela Harris, Lorene Jacobson, Ruth and Mal Kaufman, Hugh Klein, Rabbi Yankel and Rochel Kreiman, Nadine Landa, Mary Levine and Alan Goldstein, Jim Levitas and Barbara Federman, Jeanne Levitt, Roberta and Howard List, Marilyn Malkin, Marnie Marmet, Dee Dee Phillips, Barbara Platt, Dr. and Mrs. Paul Ross, Gail and Bob Scadron, Cecille Silverman.

• **Paul Fishman, Michael Fishman and Robert Fishman**, In memory of your beloved father, Dr. William Fishman, from Lita Widran.

• **Ellen Gold**, In memory of your beloved husband Mel, from Ellen and Stuart Markus, Norma and Ted Nelson.

• **Scot and Lance Karp and family**, In memory of Earl Karp, beloved brother, from Milton and Nina Zale.

• **Carrie Levin**, Condolences to you and your family. May your mother's memory be a blessing, from David Sidley.

• **Harry Marshak**, In memory of your mother Estelle z"l, from Rabbi Yankel and Rochel Kreiman, David Suss and Sue Rappaport.

• **Suzu Priest**, Our hearts go out to you for the loss of your brother, from Joanne and Bill Chunowitz.

• **Hedi Sands and Family**, Deepest sympathy on the passing of Ron, from Ellen and Stuart Markus.

• **Cecille Silverman**, In memory of Albert Silverman, from Kathi Balabin and Phil Schneider, Wendy Hahn and Kent Whinnery, Henry and Joan Kerns, Maxine and Joe Kirshenbaum, Jeanne Levitt, Ken Schoenfeld, Leslie and Barry Usow, and Robbie Winick.

• **Cindy and Stuart Tapper and Family**, We hope the legacy of your father, Dennis Ditlove, and the memory of his deeds help to ease your loss over time, from Todd and Anne Margolis.

• **Jerry Wendel and Family**, Our hearts go out to you for the loss of your son, from Joanne and Bill Chunowitz.

JMOGD Volunteers Step Up to Fight Hunger in the Coachella Valley

By Barry Fisher

Several times each year, members of the Jewish Men's Outreach Group of the Desert (JMOGD) roll up their sleeves at FIND Food Bank to help fight food insecurity in the Coachella Valley. Their work—sorting, packing, and preparing boxes of essential groceries—supports FIND's mission to provide nutritious food to thousands of local residents who struggle to put meals on the table.

Hunger has become an increasing concern across the region. Rising living costs, limited access to affordable food, and economic challenges have put many of our neighbors at risk. FIND Food Bank, the desert's regional food bank and a vital lifeline for families, seniors, veterans, and



children, distributes millions of pounds of food each year through a network of community partners and mobile pantries. Volunteers like those from JMOGD help keep this system running efficiently.

JMOGD members say their volunteer

days at FIND are among the group's most meaningful activities. Working side by side on assembly lines, they sort canned goods, pack produce and prepare boxes that will soon reach households in need. While their contribution is only a small part of the

large effort to fight hunger, it plays a key, tangible role in making sure food gets to those who rely on it.

"Our community is stronger when we show up for one another," a JMOGD representative said. "Helping at FIND reminds us how many people rely on this vital service—and how much impact a few hours of volunteer work can have."

Supporting FIND Food Bank, JMOGD strengthens its commitment to compassion, service, and enhancing the lives of residents across the Coachella Valley.

If you are interested in the JMOGD and its many programs, don't hesitate to get in touch with us at JMOGD2020@gmail.com or visit our website at www.JMOGD.org.

13th Annual Jewish Film Festival March 7-11 is Inviting Sponsors

By Michael Frydrych, Chair

This is our 13th year of bringing Jewish films from around the world to the Coachella Valley, and proof of our having reached international recognition, distributors are coming to us with their films. Once again Temple Isaiah will be offering remarkable Jewish themed films to our desert community. And, with gratitude, this is our 13th year of being supported by the Jewish Federation of the Desert.

Community support is essential to maintaining and growing this cultural event. We have a sponsorship package that makes becoming a sponsor attainable for everyone, both as businesses and/or individuals. Your name will appear on screen at the Palm Springs Cultural Center (formerly known as the Camelot Theatre) prior to all films. Sponsorship levels and benefits are listed on the accompanying form.

Become a sponsor: Fill out the form

Shekel Hits Strongest Level in Over Three Years

By Jewish News Syndicate Staff

The Israeli currency climbed to 3.21 per dollar, boosted by rate expectations, strong defense exports and rising foreign investment. The Israeli shekel reached its strongest level in more than three years against the U.S. dollar on December 9, trading at 3.212 shekels per dollar in afternoon inter-bank trading, according to Israeli financial daily Globes.

The Hebrew financial news site reported that the currency's strength reflects several factors, including anticipated U.S. interest rate cuts that widen the gap between dollar and shekel rates, making Israeli currency more attractive to investors. Wall Street's continued gains and improved Israeli fiscal data also contributed to the strengthening.

Bank analysts cited robust defense exports, increased foreign venture capital investments in Israeli startups and hedging activities by institutional investors as fundamental drivers of the "strong shekel" trend.

Against the euro, the shekel also strengthened to near three-year highs.

on the reverse side or call Temple Isaiah at 760-325-2281. As a nonprofit organization, your sponsorship is tax deductible. A 501(c)(3) letter for tax purposes will be provided upon request.



13th Annual PALM SPRINGS JEWISH FILM FESTIVAL

Spectacular Opening + four days of films • March 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

Sponsorship Categories

| Category | Executive Producer | Producer | Director | Star | Supporter |
|---|--------------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|--------------|
| \$ | \$5000+ | \$1000-\$4999 | \$500 - \$999 | \$325 - \$499 | \$36 - \$324 |
| Business/Name thanked before the screening at all films | ★ | | | | |
| Name on Film Festival screen prior to each movie | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ | ★ |
| Logo in addition to name on screen | ★ | ★ | ★ | | |
| Poster recognition in lobby | ★ | ★ | | | |
| Able to distribute promotional material in the lobby | ★ | ★ | ★ | | |
| Platinum Passes | 10 | 4 | 2 | 1 | |

Interested in sponsoring one of our movies? Contact Temple Isaiah: 760-325-2281.



Name _____ Company _____

Address _____

Telephone _____ Email _____



☐ Executive Producer \$5000+ ☐ Producer \$1000-\$4999 ☐ Director \$500-\$999

☐ Star \$325-\$499 ☐ Supporter \$36-\$324

☐ **ENCLOSED is my check**, payable to Temple Isaiah/JFF for \$ _____

☐ **CHARGE \$ _____** to my ☐ Visa ☐ MasterCard ☐ American Express credit card

Name as it appears on card _____

Num ber _____ Expiration _____ Security code _____

Mail completed form to Temple Isaiah, 332 West Alejo Road, Palm Springs, CA 92262. Thank you!

All sponsorship donations are tax deductible.

PURCHASE TICKETS AT www.PalmSpringsJewishFilmFestival.org

Southern California Evangelical Latinos Launch New Pro-Israel Group

By Karmel Melamed, Jewish News Syndicate

Shofars blasted, Israeli flags flew and Israeli music filled halls of Bethel Church, House of God in Anaheim, Calif., as some 100 evangelical Latinos and their pastors gathered to express solidarity with Israel and launched a new Zionist nonprofit targeting Spanish speakers on November 22.

The brainchild of the Nicaraguan pastor Marvin Garcia, who has led a Los Angeles church for the past 25 years, La Iglesia a Favor de Israel, or "the church in favor of Israel," responds to what Garcia sees as a need to educate Spanish-speaking evangelicals about the importance of supporting the Jewish state.

"We found that there were no evangelical Christian organizations in Los Angeles and Orange counties that were specifically reaching out to the Latino churches to educate them on how the Bible teaches us to love Israel and that those that bless Israel will be blessed themselves," Garcia told JNS.

For those who speak English, there is Christians United for Israel, which Garcia supports, he said. "But we wanted to reach the 80% of those evangelical churches who speak Spanish, do not know of our biblical

connection to Israel and have received negative exposure about Israel in the Spanish media." (CUFI has a Spanish version of its site and Spanish-language programs.)

There are currently about 200 Latino evangelicals in southern California, who come from 20 churches, who are members of the new group and about 35 Latino pastors, according to Garcia.

"The vision we have for LAFAL is to provide moral, spiritual and any other support to Israel and the Jewish people, because we love them and want to show them our solidarity," the pastor told JNS.

Membership in the group is free, but it asks three things of its members and churches, "to allow us one service to discuss Israel, to attend our conference on Israel and help us gain access to media or social media to express our solidarity with the people of Israel," Garcia told JNS.

Ruben Malekan, an Iranian rabbi who lives in the Los Angeles area, sang a Hebrew song at the event and delivered a message in Spanish thanking attendees for supporting Israel. "At this difficult time when Israel is facing serious threats to its survival from Islamic terrorists on



Shofars blown at an event at Bethel Church, House of God in Anaheim, Calif., as La Iglesia a Favor de Israel, or "the church in favor of Israel," was launched.

multiple fronts and antisemitism is on the rise in America, we in the Jewish community need to show our appreciation to our Christian friends, who are standing with us and Israel," Malekan told JNS.

Garcia told JNS that his passion and activism on behalf of Israel has been ongoing for several decades and that he has launched two pro-Israel associations in Nicaragua. He has also promoted Israel among evangelicals in El Salvador and Guatemala and has taken evangelical Latino groups to Israel over the years to solidify their biblical connection to Israel, he said.

David Edery, who has operated an informal group of 300 evangelical pastors called Friends of Israel-Amigos de Israel for more than 30 years, told JNS that members of the group have connected with Israeli officials, nonprofits and the consulate in Los Angeles.

The group covers "hundreds" of evangelical, Zionist churches in Southern California, Hawaii, Utah, Nevada, Colorado and Arizona, whose members visit Israel annually and fundraise for "worthy causes" in the Jewish state, according to Edery. "These Christian friends remain connected to Israel and us in the Jewish community," he said.

"We, in the Jewish community, need to step up and embrace our friends in the Latino Christian community who are the fastest growing population in America and can make a huge difference for Israel in the future," Edery said.

Richard Escobedo, senior pastor at Word of Faith Center in the Los Angeles area, is a member of the Friends of Israel group. He told JNS that his and other Latino churches have been supporting Israel and fighting back against Jew-hatred.

"As Christians, we are mandated by God to stand and support Israel and the Jewish people," Escobedo said. "It's vital that we come against the tide of growing Jew-hatred in America, because this hate always starts



Marvin Garcia, Nicaraguan pastor speaks at an event at Bethel Church, House of God in Anaheim, Calif., during which the group

with the Jews but doesn't end with the Jews." "It's a demonic evil and we need to educate the Hispanic church that it should not be tolerated anywhere," he said.

Escobedo and other local evangelical Latinos gathered last year at his church to honor the Oct. 7 victims, and his church has invited the local Jewish community to come celebrate Israel's independence and has raised funds to help Israelis, he told JNS.

"Our message to the Jewish community and Israelis is very clear. You are not alone in this fight for your survival," he said. "Millions of Bible-believing Christians in America and worldwide stand alongside you and will fight back against those who seek to harm you."

"How wonderful it is that there are righteous Christians amongst us, who haven't abandoned us, to the contrary they stand tall in solidarity today with the Jewish people," he said. "God bless these wonderful faith leaders and their congregations, who publicly stand with the truth and with the people of Israel."

"We in the Jewish community need to show our appreciation to our Christian friends, who are standing with us and Israel," Rabbi Ruben Malekan told JNS.

MEET THE TEAM

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Grace Baggett
Marketing Coordinator

Maria Herrera
Branch Assistant Manager

Jaclyn Curdes
Office Administrator

Monique Herrera
Escrow Officer

REDEFINING THE ART OF REAL ESTATE

Before launching a real estate career, I spent two decades as the owner and director of the leading art gallery in Vermont: curating, guiding, and closing deals that aligned aesthetic vision with long-term value. That background sharpened my eye for design and deepened my understanding of how people connect with space, skills I now use to match clients with homes that fit not only their lifestyle, but their future.

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The hyper-competitive nature of today's real estate market requires creative strategy, powerful negotiation, and knowledge of opportunities that others miss. I'm a tenacious researcher with access to off-market properties, pocket listings, and expired opportunities that expand your choices beyond what you'll find on public platforms.

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My background in the visual arts equips me with the expertise to elevate presentation and storytelling in ways that drive results. I personally direct every photo shoot, and utilize the finest real estate photographers and drone operators in Riverside County. Whether it's designing a tailored staging plan or consulting with my marketing team on your property's social media campaign, I'm hands-on, full-service, and focused on achieving superlative results.

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Curating extraordinary homes throughout the Coachella Valley

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continued from page 12

The Jewish Book Council used funding from UJA for a unique program to kick off the 100th anniversary of Jewish Book Month: The council designed and distributed 100 Jewish Book Kits to libraries and public spaces across New York City that offer a curated selection of Jewish literature, visual displays, QR codes and author highlights. The aim is to give librarians and community centers an accessible way to showcase Jewish books, helping make Jewish writing visible in the very spaces where many writers feared their work was being erased.

"Jewish books need visibility," said Jewish Book Council CEO Naomi Firestone-Teeter. "We said: Let's bring more Jewish books out into the world — into more readers' hands — and build community around them. That's what the kits do. They let people see Jewish books where they live their lives."

It's not always clear that a Jewish writer's professional setback stems from antisemitism. Publishing is a brutal industry, and even successful writers experience abrupt and opaque rejection.

But many Jewish writers say that what

they're experiencing suggests something nefarious. They've felt their Jewishness was treated as suspect in classrooms, critique groups or conferences. They've felt pressure from editors to strip Jewish elements from their work.

When the Jewish Book Council opened a portal inviting Jewish writers to share incidents affecting their creative or professional lives, over 400 authors wrote in.

"Some of what we see is subtle and hard to pinpoint, and some of it is very direct: events canceled, students pushed out of MFA programs for being 'Zionists,' bookstores refusing to stock books," Firestone-Teeter said. "Things are not okay. This is not just the normal difficulty of publishing."

In addition to the Jewish Book Council, UJA's other five grants went to Artists Against Antisemitism, PJ Library, the Jewish Theological Seminary, the Jewish Life Foundation and 70 Faces Media (the parent organization of the Jewish Telegraphic Agency).

In October, 70 Faces Media held a one-day Jewish Authors' Summit, offering writers practical tools, digital strategy

training and community-building to navigate this increasingly hostile publishing environment.

PJ library will hold a Jewish children's book festival for authors and families at New York's 92nd St. Y on Jan. 11, 2026. In just the first few days, an unprecedented 3,500 registrants signed up.

The Jewish Theological Seminary held a literary festival in September that brought together 450 writers, students and community members for masterclasses, public panels and craft development.

The Jewish Life Foundation is creating a TV and podcast series, "The People of the Book with Josh Radnor," that will spotlight Jewish authors and conversations about Jewish identity and culture.

Artists Against Antisemitism created a full-day gathering for 140 authors, the Jewish Writers Mifgash, that included pitch sessions with literary agents, professional development workshops, mentorship matching and mental health support. Project Shema, a training and support organization focused on contemporary antisemitism, led a session

at the conference on how to recognize antisemitism in creative spaces.

Elizabeth Berkowitz, one of the event's organizers, said several authors came away with promising leads.

"Agents were asking, 'Can you send me the full? I want to see more,'" Berkowitz said. "We definitely had some shidduchs made — real follow-ups between writers and agents who were actively seeking Jewish authors."

Novelist Zeeva Bukai said just being around others experiencing the same challenges was a welcome relief.

"I realized it's not just me experiencing this; others are too," she said. "That validation was just as important as the tools we learned to deal with it."

That's the point, said the Jewish Book Council's CEO.

"We want authors to know we've got you on the other side," Firestone-Teeter said. "Your job is to keep writing. Our job is to deal with the industry issues and build a community that celebrates you and your work. Jewish writers need to feel confident writing the books only they can write."



Reshaping the Diaspora: Israeli Migration Is Changing Jewish Life Across Europe

By Ailin Vilches Arguello, *The Algemeiner*

Even as antisemitic incidents across Europe reach levels unseen in decades following Hamas's Oct. 7, 2023, massacre across southern Israel, Jews and Israelis continue to move to the very cities where Jewish identity feels most fraught — creating an unlikely, though often uneven, pattern of demographic renewal at the heart of today's Jewish diaspora. It is a quiet shift that persists against all odds: growth where fear might suggest retreat.

Despite an increasingly hostile social and political climate, Jewish life in much of Europe is not shrinking. In some places, it is holding steady — and in others, growing. Indeed, according to recent demographic reports, Israeli immigrant communities in Europe are among the fastest-growing Jewish communities in the world.

In Berlin, Hebrew can be heard on park benches and in co-working spaces. In Amsterdam, Jewish schools report steady enrollment and new Hebrew-speaking parents arriving each semester. In London cafés, Israeli students trade WhatsApp groups for housing and internships, while British Jewish institutions describe newcomers who arrive anxious but eager to build communities. Meanwhile, new Chabad houses continue to open across the continent.

Today, Europe is home to nearly 30 percent of all Israelis living outside the country — roughly 190,000 to 200,000 people — with their population steadily increasing across the continent, according to a report from the Institute for Jewish Policy Research (JPR).

JPR data shows that Israel-born Jews now make up nearly 50 percent of the Jewish population in Norway, 41 percent in Finland, and over 20 percent in Bulgaria, Ireland, Spain, and Denmark.

Over the past decade, the number of Israeli-born Jews has grown significantly in Baltic countries (135 percent), in Ireland (95 percent), in Bulgaria (78 percent), in the Czech Republic (74 percent), in Spain (39 percent), in the Netherlands (36 percent), in Germany (34 percent), and in the UK (27 percent).

Europe today is witnessing both rising antisemitism and a growing presence of Israelis — a dynamic that upends long-held assumptions about Jewish life on the continent and challenges popular narratives about Jewish "safety" and migration in the post-Oct. 7 era. Demographers, Jewish

leaders, and recent residents describe a moment defined not by disappearance, but by movement, recalibration, and — in some places — cautious renewal.

"You can really see the growth in recent years," said Shai Doitsh, who lives in Berlin and serves as the director of community development at Israeli Community Europe (ICE) — a nonprofit organization dedicated to supporting Israeli immigrants in 16 cities across the continent. "Our Shabbat dinners keep getting bigger, services are fuller, events are livelier. You can feel a vibrant, thriving Jewish life across the cities we serve."

A Post-Oct. 7 Europe Transformed

The paradox is clear: antisemitism has reached levels not seen in decades, yet European Jewish communities are being stabilized — and in some cases subtly grown — by Israeli arrivals. Europe today hosts more Israel-born Jews than ever before, and many are arriving even as hostility rises.

"There's no denying the risk and rising antisemitism, but Jewish life isn't shrinking — it's growing," Doitsh told *The Algemeiner*, adding that ICE is even opening new centers in other European countries to meet higher demand for community services.

This quiet influx is unfolding against one of the most challenging climates European Jews have faced in the 21st century.

Governments and Jewish security organizations across the continent have documented a dramatic rise in anti-Jewish hate crimes since the Oct. 7 atrocities. Germany recorded more than 2,000 antisemitic incidents in 2024 — nearly double pre-Oct. 7 levels. While Germany's Jewish population has grown in some urban centers, the rise in antisemitic crimes has prompted heightened security in schools, synagogues, and community hubs.

In the UK, the Community Security Trust (CST) — a nonprofit charity that advises Britain's Jewish community on security matters — recorded 1,521 antisemitic incidents from January to June this year. This was the second-highest number of antisemitic crimes ever recorded by CST in the first six months of any year, following 2,019 incidents in the first half of 2024.

Last month, hundreds of anti-Israel demonstrators gathered outside St. John's Woods Synagogue in London to protest

the war in Gaza. In widely circulated social media videos, protesters are seen chanting, "We don't want no two states, Palestine 48," and "From the river to the sea, Zionism is f— treif."

France presents a similar pattern. According to the French Interior Ministry, the first six months of 2025 saw more than 640 antisemitic incidents, a 27.5 percent decline from the same period in 2024, but a 112.5 percent increase compared to the first half of 2023, before the Hamas-led invasion of southern Israel.

Across the country, Jewish families have reported removing mezuzot, changing children's school routes, and avoiding synagogues unless armed security is present.

In France, rising antisemitism and economic factors have led to slight declines in the number of Jewish households, particularly in Paris and Marseilles. While French Jews continue to live, work, and participate in communal life, emigration to Israel and other European countries slightly outpaces arrivals.

Smaller European nations — including Spain, Belgium, and Central/Eastern European states — have seen modest Israeli migration, sometimes doubling small local communities.

Amid this increasingly fraught climate, Doitsh said a real sense of vulnerability persists, affecting people's daily lives as community members and families take new precautions about where they go and what they wear.

For the first time in years, ICE-sponsored events across multiple countries have even had to introduce security. He also noted that organizers are changing event locations and keeping addresses private.

"The community is now dealing not only with antisemitism but with violence, hostility, and open hatred. Many people feel unsafe in their daily lives," Doitsh said.

Yet fear has had a counterintuitive effect: strengthening community life.

"Antisemitism has reinforced community ties," said Professor Sergio DellaPergola, chairman of JPR's European Demography Unit and a leading scholar of Jewish population studies. "People seek solidarity and connection. When they feel vulnerable, they look for their own community."

The Truth Behind the Numbers: An Uneven Trend

Though Israeli-born Jewish communities in Europe have grown substantially in recent years, the trend remains complex and uneven throughout the region.

"This is not a moment of large waves of Jewish migration," Dr. Daniel Staetsky, senior research fellow at JPR, told *The Algemeiner*. "What we are observing are moderate but meaningful movements, and they vary significantly by country."

While the total Jewish population in Europe may not be growing substantially in absolute numbers, its composition is changing dramatically. This shift reflects two interconnected trends: the demographic decline of native European Jews and the rising number of Israeli Jews relocating to the continent. Even modest arrivals can have a significant impact against the backdrop of an aging Jewish population.

"In Western Europe, immigration from Israel has helped stabilize Jewish populations and, in some cases, create slight increases," DellaPergola told *The Algemeiner*. "But these increases occur against a background of demographic decline, especially in countries like Germany and Italy, where fertility is very low."

In other words, Israeli immigration helps keep European Jewish populations stable, masking the underlying decline of "native" communities where low fertility would otherwise shrink the absolute number of Jews.

Western European nations such as Germany and the Netherlands have seen their Jewish numbers bolstered in recent years by Israelis seeking economic opportunities, academic programs, and, paradoxically, a sense of stability.

In Germany, Israeli arrivals are concentrated in Berlin, Frankfurt, and Munich. Hebrew-language classes and Jewish cultural programming have expanded, stabilizing what would otherwise be a declining population due to low fertility. Security concerns remain elevated, but the communities themselves report renewed energy.

In the Netherlands, slow but steady Israeli immigration helps counterbalance demographic decline. Amsterdam schools, synagogues, and youth programs increasingly rely on this influx.

"Immigration from Israel has played a stabilizing role for countries like the Netherlands," Staetsky said. "It is not

continued on next page

large enough to reverse aging or lower fertility, but it slows decline and creates demographic balance."

Meanwhile, Britain's Jewish community has remained largely steady at around 313,000, compared with approximately 300,000–320,000 a decade ago.

According to a 2018 JPR study, high birthrates among Haredi Orthodox Jews are responsible for the recent growth in the number of British Jews after decades of decline. Births in the British Jewish community have reportedly exceeded deaths every year since 2006, implying "Jewish demographic growth in the United Kingdom."

France's Jewish population, at roughly 438,500 today, was estimated to be over 500,000 in the mid-2010s — a gradual decline tied in part to emigration and rising antisemitism.

Eastern European Jewish communities, particularly in the Baltics, are also shrinking due to low fertility and ongoing migration, as increasing numbers make aliyah to Israel.

DellaPergola told The Algemeiner that this trend reflects long-term structural factors rather than a sudden ideological shift.

"There is a dynamic flow," he said. "Many Israelis move to Europe, but simultaneously many European [Jews] move to Israel. You

have arrivals and departures, and the result in most countries is relative stability."

However, DellaPergola also acknowledged that the war in Israel has dramatically altered migration patterns.

In 2024, approximately 80,000 Israelis left the country while only 24,000 returned, creating an unprecedented negative migration balance of almost 58,000 people, according to the Israeli Bureau of Statistics.

"I expect this trend to continue into 2025, marking a second consecutive year of negative migration, something unprecedented," DellaPergola said.

Some of these emigrants may be responsible for the recent growth of Israeli communities in Europe, according to Staetsky.

Earlier this year, a study by the Israel Democracy Institute found that over one in four Israelis are contemplating leaving the country, pointing to the high cost of living, security and political concerns, and "the lack of a good future for my children" as key factors. Of those considering emigration, the European Union is the top destination (43 percent), surpassing North America and Canada (27 percent).

A Demographic Paradox

Staetsky emphasized that most Jewish

migration today is not driven by ideology or fear alone.

"Migration trends reflect a balance of economic and social considerations," he told The Algemeiner. "People move where they believe opportunity is strongest."

Europe's future as a Jewish center is far from assured. Fertility rates across the continent remain low. Political volatility is rising. Trust in public institutions varies sharply by country. For many Israeli families abroad, Europe is not necessarily a permanent destination but part of a global career trajectory.

This uncertainty is not abstract. For some Israelis living in Europe, it has become deeply personal. Take the case of Benjamin Birley — an Israeli Jew living in Rome and a social media influencer — whose experience lays bare the strain many Jews say they now feel in their everyday lives.

Birley came to Italy to pursue a doctoral degree and has spent the past several years there. But he says the climate has shifted sharply, with the Israeli–Palestinian conflict seeping into daily interactions in ways he describes as "unbearable." Even though he must return to finish his program, he has decided to leave Europe temporarily and go back to Israel "to get some fresh air and breathe."

"Italy in general has a lot of anti-Israel

sentiment," Birley told The Algemeiner. "There is just a relentless Palestinianism that is always in the media, in the culture, in your local café."

"If you're Jewish or Israeli and you're openly Jewish or Israeli in Italy, you have to be prepared for endless conversations and debate and hostility with random people who literally have no idea what they're speaking about. And for me that was just not a sustainable way to live," he said.

DellaPergola cautioned against long-term predictions. "I believe it is not worth making projections given the difficult and uncertain times European Jewish communities are experiencing," he said.

If there is a takeaway, it is not a grand demographic narrative but a more complex and human one: Israelis and Jews are weighing fear against opportunity, identity against mobility, history against present-day realities. They are choosing Europe not because it is uniquely safe, but because it still offers possibility — even amid threat.

The story of Jews in Europe after Oct. 7 is not retreat. It is one of presence and a quiet reshaping of diaspora patterns in a world where the old certainties no longer hold.

While Europe's Jewish future remains uncertain, it is being rewritten, not erased.

JEWISH FEDERATION 2025-2026 SEASON ~ COMMUNITY EVENTS

| | | |
|-------------------|-----------|---|
| January 12, 2026 | Monday | Lion of Judah Brunch |
| February 11, 2026 | Wednesday | Federation Day at Tamarisk Country Club |
| February 18, 2026 | Wednesday | "Comedy for a Cause" Starring Modi Rosenfeld |
| March 29, 2026 | Sunday | Feast of Jewish Learning (Note Date Change) |
| April 14, 2026 | Tuesday | Holocaust Remembrance/Yom HaShoah Observance |



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HAVE A NOSH:

There are no Jewish holidays to celebrate with recipes this January. Lamenting what to write about this month, my son

David suggested that I wish you all a Sweet New Year with some of my very special collection of chocolate desserts. These are wonderful recipes, easy to make

and delicious ... but blame David if you put on some extra pounds in the process! Enjoy! MHB



CHOCOLATE-ORANGE MOUSSE

(Adapted from a Raymond Burr recipe found in Look Magazine in 1970!)

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1 10-oz. Jar chocolate or fudge sauce (Low calorie product works well too) | 1/4 cup cold water |
| 1 square unsweetened chocolate (to cut sweetness) | 1/4 cup Triple Sec, Curacao or Grand Marnier |
| 1 envelope Knox gelatine | 1 teaspoon instant coffee granules |
| | About 20 oz. Cool Whip |

In saucepan, heat chocolate sauce along with square of unsweetened chocolate to melt but not boil. Soften gelatine in water. Heat until melted and stir into chocolate sauce. Refrigerate 15 minutes. Meanwhile, dissolve coffee in liqueur. Add to sauce. Fold chocolate into Cool Whip. Pour into a pretty bowl or individual sherbert glasses. Refrigerate until set.

Garnish suggestion: Melt semi-sweet chocolate squares or chocolate chips. With a knife, carefully spread on underside of citrus leaf or other non-toxic leaf. Refrigerate at least an hour, until chocolate hardens. Carefully peel leaf off, leaving a chocolate shaped "leaf". Leaves can be made ahead and refrigerated or frozen until ready to use. Add one or two to individual desserts or top bowl of mousse with a circle of leaves.

CHOCOLATE PATE

- | | |
|---|--|
| 8 oz. bittersweet or semi-sweet chocolate | 1 cup unsalted butter or margarine (cube not soft), cut in small pieces |
| 3 Tablespoons rum, cognac, amaretto or other favorite liqueur | Handful of chocolate covered raspberry or orange flavored jellies, cut into little squares (optional alternative: social tea cookies, cut into 1/4 to 1/2 inch dice) |
| 2/3 cup ground blanched almonds | |
| 1/4 cup sugar | |
| 2 eggs, separated | |

Spray a small (3.5" X 7.5") loaf pan or terrine with Pam and set aside. Suggest putting a rectangle of parchment or wax paper to cover bottom (sides not a problem).

Melt chocolate in double boiler over hot, not boiling water or carefully melt in microwave oven. Let cool slightly then stir in the rum or liqueur. Set aside, keeping warm. Blend ground almonds, sugar and egg yolks in food processor with steel blade. Add butter/margarine pieces and process to blend. Pour into chocolate. Beat egg whites until stiff peaks and fold into chocolate mixture. Fold in jelly squares. Pour into oiled pan and chill for at least 24 hours. Loosen sides by sliding a thin knife along edge and unmold. Cut into thin slices.

FUDGY PARVE BROWNIES

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| 4 ounces unsweetened chocolate bar, chopped | 3 eggs |
| 3/4 cup dairy-free margarine | 1 teaspoon vanilla extract |
| 2 cups white sugar | 1 cup all-purpose flour |
| | 1 cup chopped walnuts |

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 13 x 9" pan. Microwave chocolate and margarine in large bowl at HIGH for 2 minutes or until margarine is melted. Remove bowl from microwave and stir until chocolate is melted. Stir in sugar. Mix in eggs and vanilla, then stir in the flour and nuts. Spread batter into prepared pan. Bake for 35 minutes (do not overbake). Makes 24 brownies.



Simchas

Congratulations to **Debbie Orgen** on being presented National Hadassah's coveted and rarely presented Hadassah Leadership Award for her extraordinary efforts and tireless performance on behalf of Hadassah and its life-saving work in

Israel. Debbie just completed three years as president of Sabra Hadassah of the Desert and instead of taking a well-deserved rest she is taking on the task as Treasurer! ... Beth Shalom held its annual meeting in recent weeks and we extend heartfelt congratulations for a job well done to **Bill Singer**,



Debbie Orgen

who steps down after 4 years at the helm ... and a warm welcome to **Ben Altman**, Beth Shalom's new president ... Mazel tov to **Malya Werdiger** on her becoming a Bat Mitzvah at Chabad of Palm Springs on December 16. Malya's proud parents are **Rabbi Boz** and **Chaya**



Ben Altman

Werdiger, and family came from far and wide to celebrate the simcha ... Congratulations to **Stephanie and Dr. Paul Ross** who recently celebrated their anniversary ... Share your simchas with us. Email or call Miriam Bent at mhbentjcn@earthlink.net or 760-835-1022.



Stephanie and Dr. Paul Ross



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| Friday, January 9 | Vaerah | 4:13 pm |
| Friday, January 16 | Shmot | 4:19 pm |
| Friday, January 23 | Bo | 4:26 pm |
| Friday, January 30 | Beshalach | 4:33 pm |



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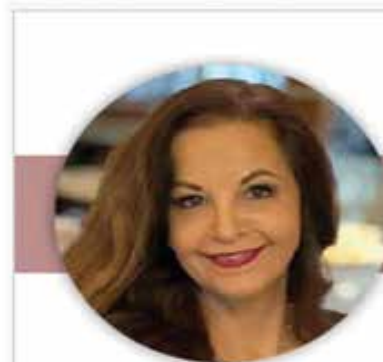
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