



Jewish Community News

The Publication of Jewish Federation of the Desert

www.jfedps.org

Shevat-Adar | 5786 - February 2026

Mississippi Burning



*Arsonist Attacks Historic
Beth Israel Congregation of Jackson, Mississippi*

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2026

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Planting ~ Growing ~ Rebuilding



Danny Labin

*Chief Executive Officer,
Jewish Federation
of the Desert*

It's time for the holiday of Tu B'Shvat! If you're not a preschooler, you may not be planning to celebrate it. And even if you are a preschooler, or learned about it when you were, chances are you were taught that it is simply "the birthday of the trees." In some years, that explanation may suffice, but it only tells part of the holiday's story and inadvertently ignores the holiday's expanded significance in this present moment.

While the holiday appears in the Talmud and has been celebrated in different ways by our people for millennia, the early Zionists realized particular pertinence and actively brought it back with a sense of practical urgency. Thanks to those pioneers' prescience, the concept of planting trees in Israel became a central tenet of Zionism and a pragmatic means of literally making the desert bloom. Whether it's thousands of school children in Israel planting trees on Tu B'Shvat or our dedicating trees in Israel to honor our loved ones throughout the year, tree-planting has become

synonymous with supporting the ongoing development of the land in Israel -- to working in symbiosis with nature to turn the arid terrain of the Negev and the rest of the country into the breadbasket of agriculture and abundant greenery that it is today.

But what happened when that breadbasket, so carefully, skilfully and tirelessly cultivated for over a century, was suddenly pillaged, as it was on October 7th when thousands of acres of farmable land were destroyed along with so many other malicious atrocities that took place on that most terrible day? What happened when critical hothouses, crops, and orchards were suddenly rendered unusable? Something amazing happened. Zionism happened. Thousands of people volunteered, many leaving their day jobs aside, to come work the land, till the soil, care for crops, raise farm animals, and ensure that Israel's breadbasket continued to supply food and resources to the entire country. The continued rebuilding of Israel that is underway now began instantaneously. The concept of Tu B'Shvat went from being an annual celebration of nature's lifecycle; Tu B'Shvat became once again a moral imperative for everyone to replant, regrow and rebuild.

It may not always be obvious to look all the way to Israel -- with its unique challenges, context and events -- to see the relevance of Tu B'Shvat here. But some of the challenges in Israel are not as unique as they may first

appear from elsewhere. We only have to think as far back as this past Hanukkah to recall the horrific attack on Bondi Beach that brutally robbed 15 people of their lives. And we can think back just a couple weeks to the arson attack on Congregation Beth Israel in Jackson, Mississippi, reducing the historic synagogue and most of its Torah scrolls to scorched earth, for the second time in its history. And it was only mid-December, a little more than a month ago, when right here in nearby Redlands, a Jewish family's home decorated for Hanukkah was attacked. With so much devastation, hate and pain feeling so ubiquitous, why should a secondary holiday at best, like Tu B'Shvat, even register on our busy schedules?

Tu B'Shvat matters this year more than ever. Not only in Israel, but right here in the Desert. As the scorched, desecrated earth of each attacked Jewish community yearns for healing, so too does each of us, as members of the global Jewish community, share that same yearning. Tu B'Shvat is not only a chance to physically plant a tree and to celebrate the remarkable Zionist achievements of those who came before us, but a time for us all to redouble our commitment to ensuring verdant vibrancy for the Jewish future. Tu B'Shvat brings us closer to nature and to the earth while also bringing us closer to each other, to our shared need as a Jewish community to plant, grow and rebuild together.

Happy Tu B'Shvat!

How Does It Feel to Be Philanthropic in the World of Jewish Federations?



Arnie Gillman

*Board President,
Jewish Federation
of the Desert*

To be philanthropic in the world of Jewish Federations is to feel deeply connected — rooted in history, responsibility, and collective purpose. It carries a sense of continuity, knowing that one's giving is part of a centuries-old tradition of tzedakah, where generosity is not merely charitable but a moral obligation to strengthen community and repair the world.

Emotionally, this unique form of philanthropy often feels grounded. Jewish Federation serves as trusted communal hub, translating values into action: caring for the vulnerable, sustaining Jewish life, responding to crises, and investing in future generations. Donors frequently describe a sense of reassurance in knowing their contributions are pooled strategically, guided by professional insight and communal priorities rather than isolated impulses.

There is also a sense of pride in both the enormity and humility of collective impact. Unlike individual giving, Federation philanthropy emphasizes *klal Yisrael* — the well-being of the whole community. Supporting social services, education, Israel engagement, and global relief efforts

creates a feeling of shared connection and mutual responsibility. One is not just giving to a cause but doing so while standing with a community.

At the same time, it can be tough. Exposure to dire needs — poverty, displacement, antisemitism, aging populations — brings awareness of both privilege and obligation. Philanthropy in this space invites reflection: How do my values shape my giving? How can I respond thoughtfully to evolving challenges?

Ultimately, being philanthropic in the world of Jewish Federations feels purposeful. It aligns heart, heritage, and hope, offering our donors a meaningful way to translate compassion into lasting communal strength.

Please give generously!

Suspect in Mississippi Synagogue Fire Laughed as He Confessed to his Dad

By Molly Minta and Michael Goldberg, Mississippi Today



Ridgeland, where he also removed the license plate from his truck. Then he drove to the synagogue, used an ax to break through one of the windows, went inside, poured gasoline and lit it on fire with a torch lighter.

Investigators recovered a burnt cell phone believed to be Pittman's and a hand torch found at the synagogue by a member of the congregation, the affidavit says. Mayor John Horhn said Monday the suspect drove himself to a hospital after he was burned in the course of setting the fire. He added there is a possibility the suspect will be

charged with a hate crime. The affidavit states that Pittman sustained burns on his ankles, hands and face.

In a statement to Mississippi Today, Lt. Gov. Delbert Hosemann, a Republican who has long lived near the synagogue, condemned the attack. "The burning of Beth Israel Synagogue was an act of religious hatred against a place meant to offer prayerful peace and comfort," Hosemann said. "This was not only an attack on a house of worship, but also an offense against the religious freedom protected by our Constitution. Such acts threaten all of us."

The man suspected of setting fire to Mississippi's largest synagogue allegedly confessed his crimes to law enforcement and referred to the building in northeast Jackson as the "synagogue of Satan," according to a federal court document filed two days later.

Stephen Spencer Pittman, 19, of Madison is facing federal charges for using fire to maliciously damage or destroy a building involved in interstate commerce, according to a probable cause affidavit in the U.S. Southern District of Mississippi. The Beth Israel Congregation synagogue also houses the offices of the Institute for Southern Jewish Life, which provides school programs and traveling rabbinical services to Jewish congregations across the South.

The predawn fire reduced the historic synagogue's library and administrative offices to charred ruins and left smoke damage throughout the building, the same one the Ku Klux Klan bombed in 1967 for its rabbi's support of civil rights.

Pittman appeared in federal court on Monday afternoon via video conference, accompanied by a public defender. He affirmed to the judge, Andrew Harris, that he was competent and sober. Pittman appeared to be leaning back in his chair, gazing away from the

camera. When the judge asked him if he understood his rights to an attorney, Pittman responded, "Yes sir, Jesus Christ is Lord."

Both of Pittman's hands were wrapped in bandages, and he had no visible burns on his face. He is scheduled to be released from the hospital on Wednesday, his attorney told the judge before requesting a January 20 hearing to determine bond. The prosecutor, Matt Allen, moved to have Pittman detained as he awaits trial.

If convicted, Pittman faces five to 20 years in prison and a fine of up to \$250,000.

In a statement Monday, Beth Israel Congregation thanked investigators for swiftly apprehending a suspect and said it is noteworthy that Pittman "appears to have admitted to committing this heinous act out of hatred for the Jewish people."

Pittman is alleged to have confessed to his father, who later contacted the FBI and provided GPS data showing Pittman was at the synagogue early Saturday morning. The son "laughed as he told his father what he did and said he finally got them," says the affidavit from Nicholas Amiano, an FBI agent in the Jackson division. Amiano said Pittman purchased gasoline from Mac's Gas in

A LIVING HISTORY LESSON FOR THE 21st CENTURY JEWISH EARTH DAY



Come celebrate the "New Year of the Trees" at Har-El's beautiful Community Tu B'Shvat Seder, with the traditional four cups and symbolic fruits and nuts from the Land of Israel.

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

Monday, February 2, 2026 ■ 2:30 to 4:00 PM (registration: 2:15 PM)
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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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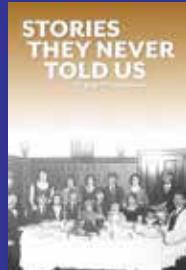
Presents
**The Annual Feast of
Jewish Learning**



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.

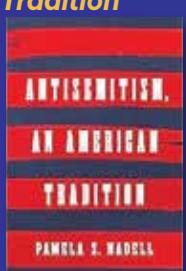
This book follows four families who left Europe between the 1890s and 1920s, tracing how they built new lives in the United States while relatives abroad endured wars, shifting borders, and genocide. It explores the challenges of maintaining family ties across continents and generations—and the ongoing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

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SUNDAY

MARCH 29, 2026
10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

**JEWISH FEDERATION
OF THE DESERT**

**JEWISH
COMMUNITY
NEWS**
A Publication of the
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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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ARTICLES & ADVERTISING

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Julie Menin Elected First Jewish NYC Council Speaker

By New York Jewish Week Staff

Julie Menin was unanimously elected speaker of the New York City Council, the first Jew in the role and a centrist Democrat. She will be a significant check on



Mayor Zohran Mamdani, who promised to "govern as a democratic socialist." Menin's mother and grandmother survived the Holocaust hiding in a cellar in Hungary, and her grandfather was killed. In her inaugural speech, Menin celebrated the new frontiers she shared with Mamdani. "We live in a day with the first Muslim mayor of New York City and now the first Jewish speaker of the Council serving at the same time," said Menin.

But the two have strong ideological differences. Mamdani sought to thwart her bid in favor of a more progressive

candidate, Politico reported, and Menin declined to endorse him for mayor. Menin invited Rabbi Joseph Potasnik, the head of the New York Board of Rabbis, to deliver her invocation. The organization recently criticized Mamdani for revoking two of his predecessor's executive orders related to defining antisemitism and banning boycotts of Israel. (Potasnik sat on one of Mamdani's transition committees.) Menin herself called Mamdani to say she was "extremely concerned" about repealing the orders, according to the New York Post.

She referenced a recent anti-Zionist protest outside a Manhattan synagogue in her speech, saying, "We cannot let what happened outside Park East Synagogue ever happen again, at any house of worship." Mamdani suggested that the event, which promoted migration to Israel, misused a "sacred space." But Menin also said

that Mamdani seemed open to a bill she plans to pass, which would prohibit protests in a perimeter around houses

of worship and schools. Gov. Kathy Hochul said she will announce a similar statewide measure.



Help Congregation Beth Israel Rebuild

Jewish Federations across the United States and Canada are partnering to raise funds to support Congregation Beth Israel in Jackson, Mississippi, following an arson attack that caused significant damage to this historic synagogue. Gifts to this fund will provide critical resources for rebuilding and recovery, helping ensure the congregation can continue to serve as a center of Jewish life.

As many of you have learned from press reports, Beth Israel Congregation in Jackson, Mississippi, was set on fire predawn on Saturday morning. Thankfully, no congregants or staff were injured, and the building was unoccupied at the time.

The destruction to the synagogue building was extensive, and, while damage assessments are still underway, the congregation is committed to rebuilding. Early reports indicated that several Torah scrolls were burned and others damaged. Thankfully, a Torah scroll rescued from the Holocaust was behind a glass case and survived the fire. The loss of the Sifrei Torah is a profound spiritual and communal loss, and we mourn it deeply with the Jackson Jewish community. At the same time, the fact that a Torah that survived the Holocaust and has been preserved for decades was not damaged reminds us who we are and how long we have endured.

Jewish Federations of North America have been in direct touch with the leadership of Beth Israel Congregation and with the Institute of Southern Jewish Life, with which we have a long relationship and which has its offices at the synagogue. We have offered and will continue to offer any and all support that the community may need. We know that many Federations, especially those located nearby, have also offered to help. We will not hesitate to pass on requests that other Federations could help meet. As you can imagine, this small community is being overwhelmed with inquiries from all around the world, so we encourage all Federations to work together in a collaborative manner to relieve the burden on the community and provide the maximum help.

Of course, the full the costs of rebuilding cannot be established at this time. We know the synagogue leadership will share with us these costs when they have them, and we will of course share them with all of you.

Once again, Jewish history and Jewish life are being tested. This is the same synagogue that was bombed by the Ku Klux Klan in 1967. This attack comes just a few short weeks after the deadly attack at Bondi Beach in Sydney.

Jewish Federations of North America will support Beth Israel Congregation and the Jewish community of Jackson, Mississippi through this moment of pain and through the long work of rebuilding as we always do.

Like the Torah that survived fire and history, our people persist. Our community is united and our resolve is stronger than ever.

Am Yisrael Chai!

Gary Torogow, Chair of the Board of Trustees, and
Eric Fingerhut, President and CEO,
Jewish Federations of North America.

To donate, contact Jewish Federation of the Desert:
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Rabbi Dr. J.B. Sacks to Facilitate Federation's Upcoming Melton Program

Rabbi Dr. J.B. Sacks (he/him) currently serves as spiritual leader of Congregation Beth Shalom in Palm Desert, CA. He serves on the Pastoral Advisory Group for the Spiritual Care Department at Eisenhower Hospital as well as the Yom HaShoah Observance Committee for the Jewish Federation of the Desert.

Rabbi Sacks was ordained from the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (JTS) in New York City and earned the Doctor of Ministry degree from Claremont School of Theology. JTS conferred an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree

upon a Rabbi Sacks, acknowledging, especially, his work in social justice and inclusion.

A long-time advocate of acceptance and inclusion within Jewish life, Rabbi Sacks is the first openly LGBTQ+ rabbi in the Conservative/Masorti Movement and the first of any movement to be hired as the senior rabbi of a non-LGBTQ+ pulpit.



Rabbi Sacks writes articles for Exploring Judaism, the digital home of Conservative Judaism. Rabbi Sacks currently serves on three Committees of the Rabbinical Assembly's Social Justice Commission: the Racial Justice Working Group, the LGBTQ+ Working Group, and the Strengthening Democracy Group.

Rabbi Sacks served on the faculty of the Academy of Jewish Religion California, where he headed the Department of Jewish Thought, teaching future rabbis

and cantors. Rabbi Sacks has also served as Director of Jewish Life at de Toledo High School, a community school, has served as a Hillel Director for the Claremont Colleges, a hospital chaplain at Jersey City Medical Center, and as a Rosh Edah (Division Head) at Camp Ramah in Ojai.

The eighteenth generation of rabbis on his mother's side, Rabbi Sacks lives with his husband Steven Karash in Palm Desert, California. They have an adult son, Evan.

BBC Apologizes for Purging Holocaust Story of References to Jews

By World Israel News Staff

Britain's national broadcaster issued a clarification after the outlet faced criticism for airing a Christmas special on the Holocaust-era evacuation of Jewish children from Europe that removed all references to Jews.

On December 26, the BBC show The Repair Shop aired a special segment devoted to the Kindertransport, the evacuation of some 10,000 children, nearly all of them Jewish, from Nazi-controlled territory in 1938 and 1939.

The segment centered on a 19th-century cello that had been damaged by the Nazis, and was brought to Britain aboard a Kindertransport convoy.

Shortly before the convoy's departure, Nazi guards smashed the cello, which remained damaged until it was repaired for the segment.

Critics pointed out, however, that nowhere in the segment was it mentioned that the children evacuated to Britain during the Kindertransport were Jews fleeing Nazi persecution, or that the owner of the cello, Martin Landau, who fled to Britain at age 14, was Jewish.

Despite 16 minutes of the hour-long program being dedicated to the cello's history and the context of the Kindertransport, the BBC segment made no mention of Jews and reportedly purged a reference to the word "Jew" made by actress Helen Mirren, who presented the cello to the show's repair team.

According to a report by the London-based Jewish Chronicle, Mirren's

reference to Jews was edited out of the aired version of the segment.

Amid a backlash over the omission of any reference to Jews, the BBC issued a clarification to the episode's iPlayer page, noting that "the Kindertransport was the organized evacuation of approximately 10,000 children, the majority of whom were Jewish."

Despite this, however, the BBC's official website still does not note the Jewish nature of the story or Landau's Jewish heritage.

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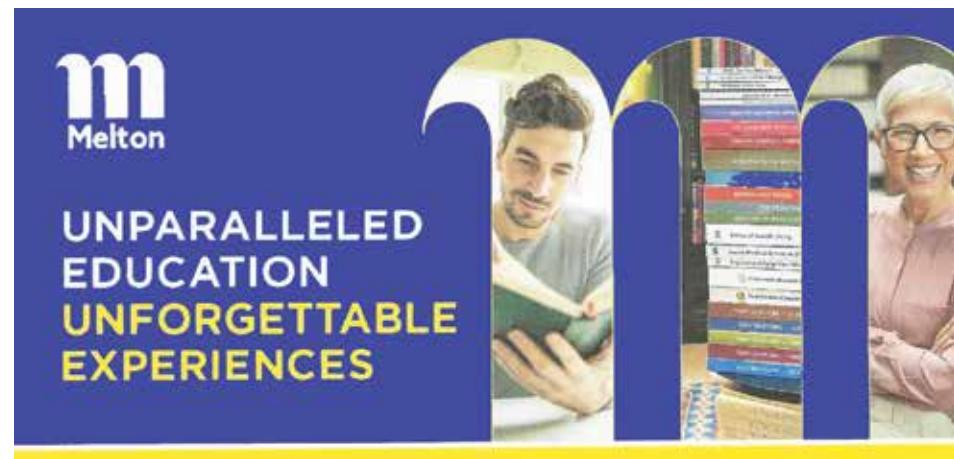
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Preparing for the Worst Case Scenario: Israeli Gov't Holds Wargame for Emergency Aliyah

The Aliyah Ministry conducted a war game simulating the emergency immigration of 45,000 Jews fleeing a collapsing country, testing plans for 800 arrivals daily for two months.

By Michael Starr, *The Jerusalem Post*

A country is collapsing – the economy is in shambles, the security situation has deteriorated due to widespread riots as residents seize what they can, and the 45,000 Jews that reside there are at risk.

The hope for these beleaguered Diaspora Jews is to flee to Israel, but airports will cease operation in 24 to 48 hours as utilities such as electrical grids fail.

This was the scenario facing the assembly of representatives from major government, nonprofit, and national organizations in Ramle in early December 2025, planning and simulating the emergency immigration of 800 people a day for one to two months.

This is not a hypothetical to Aliyah Minister Ofir Sofer, who said that emergency mass immigration was something that historically was likely to occur, particularly with global levels of antisemitism rising.

At the Israel National Resilience Institute, the Aliyah and Integration Ministry and National Emergency Authority (NEMA) conducted its Raise the Aliyah Banner exercise in preparation for mass Jewish immigration spurred by serious antisemitic or destabilization incidents.

every point in the aliyah process, at every level of the plans, down to minute details, gaming how every plan could be disrupted by reality. Aliyah Ministry director-general Avichai Kahana pressed ministries and authorities as they presented their systems and procedures, challenging and prodding them about possible gaps like a general in a military war game.

Aliyah Ministry fixes data gaps from Oct 7 war failures

Representatives were pushed to adapt as new developments and scenarios tore holes into their plans, and the overarching objective forced them to think beyond their own organization's responsibilities and how they would work together. Kahana said during the exercise that gaps in plans and interagency cooperation were more important to address than polishing established solutions.

Kahana said during the exercise that gaps in plans and interagency cooperation were more important to address than

polishing established solutions.

"Is there a plan for this?" was a common refrain as proctors attempted to push representatives beyond assumptions that any action would be smooth without prior consideration.

At four tables, the representatives were divided into task forces for solving the problems of the four stages of immigration: extraction from abroad, reception in Israel, short-term housing, and long-term absorption.

With electronic systems failing, the Jewish Agency would need to work physically within the community to coordinate with new immigrants. Those with houses in danger would need to be evacuated to a staging ground, but until they were ready to depart, it would be more efficient for residents to utilize the resources in their home.

The agency would need to organize food, medical attention for the wounded, and transportation. Emergency budgets would need to be set aside for food and other necessities.

Since in this worst-case scenario, airports are closing, the agency would need to transfer the Jewish refugees to neighboring countries to fly them out. Kahana challenged how the Jewish Agency would transport them.

The worst-case scenario was with their own cars, but they proposed that they would utilize the Jewish community's school buses. Kahana asked how long it would take to start moving the refugees into bordering states; he received an answer of a 12-hour window. The task force had to be ready to receive the first plane within 24 hours.

Another problem that was soon raised by Kahana, a preamble for a running theme at the exercise: the need for information and data sharing.

The Jewish Agency was reminded that this would not be a normal orderly aliyah in which everyone had filed their documents. These people would be fleeing with what they could, and documents could be forgotten. The agency had to make sure of who it was bringing into the country.

A hypothetical 73-year-old man didn't have his birth certificate, Kahana asked, "What do you do?" The foreign

extraction team suggested that any other identification could be used. Yet they might not have any identification at all, leading to another gap that needed more consideration when they broke from the simulation for team discussions. Kahana also demanded a more coherent data collection plan from the Jewish Agency.

"Everyone is coming. In four more hours, we need to have data for the reception at Ben-Gurion Airport," said Kahana.

The failures of the October 7 war served as a warning for NEMA and the aliyah minister's own planning ambitions, and Kahana explained to journalists that the lack of data about Israeli internally displaced persons meant that the government didn't have a full grasp of who was seeking haven at hotels and who was migrating place to place.

There was no sharing of data on the refugees by the authorities. The logistical problems mounted when government bodies needed to ask those at the hotels what their names were or what room they were in.

It wouldn't be enough for the Jewish Agency to state that it would transfer an Excel sheet with the details on the emergency immigrants. Simulation proctors pushed the agency to already decide in advance what categories would be needed.

It wasn't enough to state that they would email the Excel sheet to Ben-Gurion Airport; the Airports Authority needed to know how they would ensure that the data on the new immigrants would be accessible in its systems and known to all

continued on next page

women's PHILANTHROPY



CHALLAH BAKE

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22nd AT 1:00 PM



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

Come together at Chabad of Palm Springs
250 East Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs
to bake delicious challah with 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:

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relevant staff.

Representatives called every party to determine what data they needed to be collected and how it could be shared. It was suggested that a shared emergency dashboard be created to ensure universal accessibility and interoperability by the task forces.

Once Ben-Gurion Airport received the emergency immigrants, another common issue was raised: manpower.

The Airports Authority had a few dozen reception personnel per shift, and they could lengthen their shifts in an emergency situation. Kahana reminded that the emergency period could last up to two months – a few dozen was not enough.

Ben-Gurion's representative suggested calling up past employees so they wouldn't need to be trained. The proctors were positive toward this, but it wasn't enough to just have the idea. A call-up list needed to be created. The airport wouldn't be the only organization that would face a strain with an increased workload, and they would also need to find solutions.

Sherut Leumi (National Service)



NEW 'OLIM' from North America arrive on an 'aliyah flight' arranged by Nefesh B'Nefesh

volunteers were proposed as a reinforcement, but Kahana noted that they were a middle timeline stopgap, not an immediate solution, as they would need training.

It was suggested that other ministries be prepared to lend bureaucrats during the emergency period. More information

technology specialists would be needed, one representative noted, with the need for documentation and data becoming all the more vital. Other specialists, such as translators/interpreters or administrators who speak the language of the collapsing country, would also need to be reserved in advance.

New scenarios were introduced to throw the planners off guard. People were wounded in riots and antisemitic incidents, and the Health Ministry would need to be looped in to determine their needs. Disabled and special needs people would also need to be considered.

Children could be arriving without guardians, so it was suggested that a network of social workers be on standby. At first, the problem of pets was laughed at, but an animal welfare representative noted that when Jews were fleeing the Russian invasion of Ukraine, there were families that stayed behind with their pets because the flights didn't have the correct facilities to transport them. Once those animals arrived, they would need to be fed.

The next challenge would be habitation. Three hundred apartments were available at absorption centers, and 500 more housing clusters could be used – but the apartments needed to be renovated, and furniture and other necessities were needed. Together, they could house 1,000 people.

Leaning on a tactic for housing of October 7 internally displaced persons, hotels were suggested again, with tenders for special rates from the Tourism Ministry. Kahana argued that experience from the war showed that they were a temporary

solution, and they wouldn't want people stranded there for more than a month.

It was also suggested that kibbutzim and moshavim might be able to provide ready housing. An Education Ministry representative seemed to solve the problem by proposing that school, government, and hotel auditoriums be used to house refugees. Kahana requested that these new ideas be operationalized with prepared lists of institutions that could be enlisted. Basic needs would need to be met for those in temporary housing.

According to the simulation organizers, problems that arose during the war needed to be solved now, rather than on the spot – be it laundry, food deliveries, or domestic violence issues.

The Education Ministry representative told The Jerusalem Post how it was necessary to provide programming and services to the refugees to set order to their days. Children needed daycare or babysitting so that parents could have the flexibility to deal with administrative issues.

The gap in preparation that most worried Kahana wasn't the emergency period, but the long term.

"We are really good in emergencies... even after two weeks, they will be fine, they will be embraced, and they will have a place to sleep and a place to study. The children will have educational frameworks," said Kahana. "Now the emphasis will be on acting quickly in emergencies, and everyone is running on adrenaline. What happens after two weeks that the media no longer refers to it, no longer comes to cover it?"

The simulation prepared not just for a catastrophe like a coup in a country with a large Jewish population, but also for the day after.

Sofer told the Post that Israel had seen three recent periods of emergency that required policy shifts to address aliyah and housing: the coronavirus pandemic, the Ukraine-Russia War, and the October 7 war.

In 2022, 75,000 immigrants arrived at once. The aliyah ministry had developed its own plans, but Kahana said that it needed to be changed into a national plan.

"Israel is the home of the Jewish people," said Sofer. "Home is the first and foremost thing, and we are prepared for any such scenario, and we will always be happy to welcome them."

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New California Law Offers 'Clear Guidance' to Combat Jew-Hatred in K-12 Schools

Aaron Bandler, Jewish News Syndicate

A new California law providing "clear guidance" on combating Jew-hatred in K-12 schools went into effect on January 1 after a federal judge denied a preliminary injunction to block its implementation the day before, bill co-author Rick Chavez Zbur told JNS.

AB 715, which Gavin Newsom, the Democratic governor of California, signed into law in October, establishes a state civil rights office with a coordinator focused on antisemitism and bars the use of discriminatory teaching materials. Noël Wise, a judge in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California, issued her 22-page ruling, which was obtained by JNS, in response to a lawsuit that teachers and parents filed against AB 715 in November.

Zbur, a Democrat and member of the state Assembly who co-authored the bill, told JNS that he is "heartened by the court's strong and correct ruling that allows implementation of AB 715—a law that makes clear that antisemitism has no place in California classrooms."

"At a moment when Jewish students are facing a crisis of harassment and intimidation in our schools, this new law will provide clear guidance to recognize and respond to antisemitism, protect students from harm and discrimination and foster learning environments rooted in dignity and respect," he said.

A spokesman for the state attorney general's office told JNS that it "is committed to defending California laws." "We're pleased with the court's decision," the spokesman said.

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee filed the suit against AB 715 on behalf of parents and teachers in the state and Los Angeles Educators for Palestine, alleging it violates the First Amendment.

Wise stated in her ruling against the injunction that the teachers filing the suit "have failed to demonstrate that their classroom speech is protected by the First Amendment" and therefore "failed to allege an adequate First Amendment violation."

The suit also claimed that the law is vague regarding the definition of antisemitism, but notes the Biden administration's plan to fight Jew-hatred that uses the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance working definition. Wise wrote that these arguments were "inconsistent."

"On one hand, they insist AB 715 is vague because it fails to define antisemitism," Wise stated. "On the other hand, teacher plaintiffs decry the injustice of the IHRA definition to which they claim they will now be held."

She added that "a reasonable person reading AB 715 would sufficiently understand what the legislature meant by the word 'antisemitism,'" which is enough to show that it isn't vague.

An appeal was filed to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit in California on Jan. 1, according to the court docket.

Dawn Addis, a Democrat and member of the state Assembly who co-authored the bill with Zbur, told JNS that she is "grateful for this decision that upholds that schools have both the authority and the responsibility to protect students from harassment."

"AB 715 ensures our campuses remain places for learning and belonging for all students," Addis said.

Carly Gammill, director of legal policy for StandWithUs Law, told JNS that "this ruling indicates the court's view that AB 715 is constitutionally sound as drafted."

"Now that plaintiffs have appealed the ruling, however, whether and how AB 715 is ultimately implemented and applied remains an open question that is being monitored closely by all those concerned about the issue of antisemitism in California's K-12 schools," she said.

Gerard Filitti, senior counsel at the Lawfare Project, told JNS that "the court correctly recognized that California has the broad legal authority to set curriculum standards and enforce civil rights protections in public schools."

"Courts should not be used as a tool to undermine civil rights under the guise of free speech, and this ruling makes clear that such tactics are unlikely to prevail," Filitti said.

'Free from bias'

David Bocarsly, executive director of the Jewish Public Affairs Committee of California, which filed an amicus brief in support of the law, told JNS that, with the law now in effect, Newsom can nominate someone to head the newly created office of civil rights as well as an individual to serve as the state's antisemitism prevention coordinator, both of which would need to be approved by the state Senate, according to Bocarsly.

While Bocarsly said he is not sure what the timeframe will be for such nominations, he hopes "it will be speedy."

"That coordinator position will have the ability to support and work with school districts when incidents arise in schools to train educators about antisemitism, and they will be required to receive all data of complaints of antisemitic discrimination in schools," he said.

The coordinator will receive all of the complaints sent to school districts and the California Department of Education—and how those complaints were handled—and "will be able to consolidate and compile data, make it public" as well as provide "legislative recommendations to the legislature," Bocarsly told JNS.

The text of AB 715 states that, starting in September 2027, the coordinator will "track and report" all antisemitism "complaints and resolutions or lack of resolutions of complaints" in K-12 schools to the legislature, the state superintendent of public instruction and the executive director of the California State Board of Education. The reports will not contain any personally identifiable information.

Under the law, classroom content must now be "unbiased" and "undiscriminatory." This also applies to organizations that contract with schools to provide teaching resources, Bocarsly said.

"We know that a lot of groups that have been interested in inserting antisemitic, anti-Israel content in the classroom are contract providers for school districts. They sell their services," he said.

He added that the legislation will ensure that, if any such providers want to sell their "resources to school districts, they are held to the same standards that any teacher is and any school board member is."

"Jewish students should be able to have an education free from bias and discrimination," Bocarsly told JNS.

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Henry Louis Gates Jr. Explores 'Black and Jewish America'

By Avi Dresner, *Hadassah Magazine*

Henry Louis Gates Jr. is one of America's most prominent public intellectuals. The Harvard professor is perhaps best known as the creator and host of *Finding Your Roots* on PBS, but his latest series, *Black and Jewish America: An Interwoven History*, focuses on the connections and relations of the two historic allies.



Henry Louis Gates Jr.

In the four-part series, which premieres on PBS in February, Gates, 75, speaks with dozens of scholars, activists, religious leaders, writers and more about the kinship between the two groups.

"This series is not only about the past," said Gates, who talked to *Hadassah Magazine* from his home in Cambridge, Mass. "It is about us—and how, together, we can prevail over the forces of hatred that seek to divide us." This interview has been edited for brevity and clarity.

Many guests on *Finding Your Roots* have been Jewish. What have you learned about Jews in the process, and what parallels are there with the Black experience?

Someone told me that about 30 percent of our guests are Jewish. I've never counted, but that's probably right. With European Jews, for every member of the family who came to the United States, there was always somebody who didn't. And that somebody, overwhelmingly, was killed by the Nazis. On the show, we are able to put a face and a name on my Jewish guests' relatives.

who perished and about whom they knew nothing. We are the best in the business doing Ashkenazi Jewish genealogy. Ditto for African Americans. When you're doing African American genealogy, unless a person's family was freed early, it's very difficult to get back to the 18th century due to the lack of records.

Why did you decide to do a series on Blacks and Jews now?

The story starts in 1960, when I was 10, living in our overwhelmingly white tri-towns of Piedmont, W.V., and Westernport and Luke, Md. There were 300 Black people and one Jewish family, the Mamolens. Mrs. Mamolen invited Mrs.



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FILM	LENGTH	Q&A	LIVE	ZOOM
Bliss	125 minutes			
Dead Language	110 minutes	Yes		
Ethan Bloom	94 minutes	Yes	★	
For the Love of a Woman	117 minutes			
Guns and Moses	94 minutes	Yes	★	
Influenced	88 minutes	Yes	★	
Lucky Star	100 minutes			
Matchmaking 2	107 minutes			
One Big Happy Family	83 minutes	Yes	★	
Rosenthal: The Great Showman	92 minutes			
Running On Sand	104 minutes			
Soda	99 minutes			
Swedishkayt Yidlife Crisis in Stockholm	76 minutes	Yes	★	
Tatami	105 minutes	Yes		★
The Cakemaker	104 minutes	Yes	★	
The Everything Pot	90 minutes	Yes	★	
The Ring	110 minutes			
The Road Between Us	95 minutes			
The Tasters	100 minutes			
31 Candles	90 minutes	Yes		
Welcome to Yiddishland	96 minutes			
<i>playing with Yiddle Yiddle On</i>	15 minutes	Yes		★

Q&A subject to change



Gates to brunch at her house, which was the only time my mother was ever invited into a white person's house. I remember her talking about how good this person was, and that the reason she wasn't racist was because she was a Jew, and that Jewish people had been good to our people. I'll never forget that. Her son, Mark, was my first Jewish friend.

But the tipping point for me was Charlottesville in 2017. Because right there, you could see it—they hated Blacks, they hated Jews—and that Blacks and Jews were under attack. We need each other to fight our common enemy: white supremacy, white nationalism.

Do you have a favorite story about the role of Jewish women in Black-Jewish relations?

Esther Brown is my hero, and my favorite anecdote in this whole series. She was a middle-class housewife in Kansas, the daughter of Jewish immigrants. One day in 1948, her Black maid told her the school district was building a new school for white kids, while the segregated Black school was in shambles.

Esther became enraged. She and the Black parents organized a chapter of the NAACP. They wrote to Thurgood Marshall—the future Supreme Court

justice was then the leading civil rights lawyer for the NAACP—over and over until he sent a lawyer to take up their case, recruiting plaintiffs, including Oliver Brown, after whom the famous Supreme Court decision, *Brown v. the Board of Education*, was named.

And that was the end of separate but equal—all because of Esther Brown in partnership with Black people. One of the takeaways of the series is that many of the best moments in the history of our two peoples have been under the radar, with regular people who believe something is wrong and do something about it.

Western Reform Rabbis Meet in Palm Springs

By Rabbi David Novak, Rabbi, Temple Sinai and PARR Board Member

January 2026: The Pacific Association of Reform Rabbis (PARR) met at its annual convention the first weekend in January at the Palm Springs Hilton. This was the 80th gathering of Reform rabbis from the Western United States and the latest meeting to occur in Palm Springs. Reform rabbis from across the vast region streamed into the valley to reunite with new and old colleagues to learn, pray, eat and schmooze with each other.

PARR elected its new board as Rabbi Daniel Weiner the Senior Rabbi of Temple De Hirsch-Sinai of Seattle/ Bellevue (WA) ascending to the role of president.

After a welcome cocktail reception, Sunday evening's celebratory banquet dinner featured a video celebrating PARR's 80th with rabbis from PARR's past and present speaking about what PARR means to them.

Monday morning's Shacharit service

was led by Hebrew Union College fifth year students who will soon become ordained rabbis. This was followed by the first presentation of Dr. Marc Dollinger the Richard and Rhoda Goldman Chair of Jewish Studies at San Francisco State University. He spoke three times: "Laundering Antisemitism Ethnic Studies, Identity Politics and the University;" "Black Power, Jewish Politics: Reinventing the Alliance in the 1960s"; and "After October 7th: What on Earth Do We Do Now." He spoke for 90 minutes each time keeping everyone's attention mixing serious matters with his wonderful presentation style.

The Consul General of Israel to the Pacific Southwest Region in Los Angeles



Israel Bachar was interviewed by Rabbi Weiner on the compelling issues on the Israel/Diaspora relations. The Consul General called the interview "easy" even though the questions were challenging (in a loving way).

Rabbi Michael Gan spoke Monday evening on "The Johnson Amendment: Free Speech and Acts of Conscience in a Fragile Democracy: The Legal Issues Surrounding a Bully Pulpit." Tuesday

evening the rabbis heard from young adults from the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles Chelsea Snyder and Megan Weissman on "Hearing, Reaching, and Engaging Young Adults in Challenging Times—A Conversation."

Concurrent with PARR a cantors' conference is held at the Hilton with multiple avenues of cross pollination.

As the rabbis returned to their

communities they did so looking forward to PARR's return to Palm Springs in January of 2027.



JFED CEO Danny Labin met with Consul General of Israel to the Pacific Southwest, Israel Bachar, at the PARR Conference, where they discussed a variety of initiatives to further strengthen ties between the Coachella Valley and Israel.

Somaliland Official: "Israeli Recognition is Historic Lifetime Achievement"

The Jerusalem Post/World News

Israel's decision to recognize Somaliland is a historic milestone that generations of Somalilanders have waited to see, Somaliland Foreign Ministry's Director-General Mohamed Abdirahman told The Jerusalem Post on January 10.

"This is very, very important," he said. "It is a significant milestone – an achievement that for a long time Somaliland has been waiting for. For me personally, it is the achievement of a lifetime."

Recalling the early years after Somaliland began rebuilding itself,



Director-General of Somaliland's Foreign Ministry, Mohamed Abdirahman

Abdirahman painted a stark picture of post-conflict hardship.

"I was young when Somaliland restored its independence," he said. "I remember

studying in schools without teachers or roofs because of the damage and destruction caused by the conflict. We were starting from scratch, but we never gave up hope."

For decades, he noted, Somalilanders waited for international recognition. "We always waited for the first country to come forward," he said. "That moment has finally arrived."

Abdirahman expressed deep gratitude to Israel and praised what he described as the courage of Somaliland's leadership.

"This is a historic decision," he said. "Our people highly appreciate and are deeply grateful to Israel."

According to Abdirahman, the breakthrough did not come overnight. While Somaliland's current government only took office earlier this year, diplomatic engagement has been ongoing.

"This process did not happen without meetings," he said. "Officials from Somaliland and Israel have been meeting and discussing these matters for some time. This was the result of serious, sustained dialogue."

Abdirahman also addressed the opposition to the move. "The government of Somalia has never wanted Somaliland to get its chance," he said. "It tried to use claims of legitimacy that do not exist. But today, there was nothing it could do about this."

The reaction on the streets, the Foreign Ministry's director-general said, has been unprecedented.

"There have been massive celebrations," Abdirahman said. "Young people, old people – everyone – were waving Israeli and Somaliland flags. The crowds were jubilant across Hargeisa (the capital), Berbera, and other cities. I have not seen anything like this for a very long time."

Unlike partisan celebrations tied

continued on next page

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continued from previous page

to elections, he added, this moment belonged to everyone. "This time, everybody was winning. It was something we owned together, something we are all proud of, especially the younger generation." "This is a reciprocal

relationship," he said. "Diplomatic relations will naturally lead to economic collaboration, security cooperation, and joint interests that benefit both sides."

He confirmed that Somaliland's President, Abdirahman Mohamed Abdullahi, has been invited to visit

Jerusalem, calling this "very, very important."

Plans are also underway to establish mutual embassies and maintain close diplomatic ties.

"Somaliland wants to be a reliable ally, one that can be trusted and recognized,"

Abdirahman continued. "There should be no question about that."

For Somaliland, he said, the moment is both historic and deeply personal. "This is not just diplomacy," Abdirahman added. "It is the realization of the dream that our people have carried for decades."

Desert Outreach Synagogue Gala Celebrates 10th Anniversary March 8

Celebration honors Rabbi Dr. Jules King's 70th birthday and Centenarian Helen Varon

By Atma Wiseman, DOS President

There is a growing buzz at Desert Outreach Synagogue. Extensive Gala plans are underway as we prepare to celebrate our 10th anniversary and Rabbi Dr. Jules King's 70th birthday.

We will join together at the Desert Willow Golf Resort on March 8th at 5:00 PM for cocktails and hors d'oeuvres on the patio, followed by dinner, and dancing. As a highlight of the evening, we will be honoring a special member of our community, centenarian Helen Varon. Music will be provided by Chris Lomeli and his trio.

There is a special \$195 early-bird price for tickets, if purchased before February 7th. Thereafter, tickets are \$225. To

purchase your tickets visit www.my-dos.org/form/10th-anniversary-gala.html or call 760.449.0111.

Our "Tribute Book" will feature a space for your commemorative wishes for the Rabbi and ads for your business or project. You may also place honorary and memorial messages with photos in the book. Right now, there is space for 3 cover ads, 2 full-page ads, 10 half-page ads, and 22 quarter-page ads. Personal ads are \$216/\$108/\$72/\$36 respectively. Business ads are \$500/\$350/\$216/\$108, and will include your business link on our website and in two follow-up email blasts. Space is limited, so please reserve now. Send copy to president@my-dos.org

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Please consider a sponsorship gift commemorating the Rabbi's birthday and our 10th anniversary. There are unique benefits associated with your sponsorship, including complimentary Gala tickets. Your generosity strengthens our congregation and allows us to plan for the future. Because dues only cover 32% of our operating costs, your fiscal leadership is critical to our existence. We gratefully acknowledge your tax-deductible contribution.

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Abraham Joshua Heschel wrote that we must attempt to celebrate more, rather than settle for being passively entertained. He reminded us that celebration implies activity, expressing reverence and appreciation. On March 8th, Desert Outreach Synagogue offers you a unique opportunity for both. We promise you an event both meaningful and celebratory. Please join us!



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Most Jewish Israelis Say Israel Is the Safest Place for Jews, New Survey Shows

By Ailin Vilches Arguello, *The Algemeiner*

Most Jewish Israelis view Israel as a safer place for Jews than anywhere else in the world, according to a new end-of-year survey, as Jewish diaspora communities continue to face unabated antisemitism, marked by a surge in targeted attacks and rising anti-Israel hostility.

On Tuesday, the Israel Democracy Institute released a December survey conducted by the Viterbi Family Center for Public Opinion and Policy Research, showing that 76 percent of Israeli-born Jews consider Israel the safest place for

Jews, up almost 10 percent from earlier in 2024.

In contrast, Arab Israelis expressed mixed opinions, with 32 percent saying Israel was safer for Arabs than abroad, 35 percent saying life abroad was safer, and 29 percent saying both were equally safe.

The survey also found that most Jewish respondents believe Israel should work with foreign governments to protect Jewish communities, deploy official emissaries — representatives who coordinate with local authorities — and play an active role in

planning security for Jewish events.

Half of respondents also backed financial aid for the Jewish diaspora, representing the most widely supported option in the survey.

Jewish communities around the world, especially in Europe, have faced a troubling surge in antisemitic incidents and anti-Israel sentiment since the Hamas-led invasion of and massacre across southern Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

Jewish leaders have consistently called on authorities to take swift action against the rising wave of targeted attacks and anti-Jewish hate crimes, ranging from the vandalism of murals and businesses to violent physical assaults, that their communities continue to face.

With global antisemitism continuing to skyrocket, Israel recorded a surge in Jewish immigration from Western nations in 2025, despite an overall decline in Jews abroad moving to their ancient homeland.

According to data from Israel's Immigration and Absorption Ministry, over 21,900 Jews from more than 100 countries arrived last year amid ongoing hostility abroad, a decline of roughly one-third from 2024, largely driven by a sharp drop in Russian emigration.

However, aliyah — the process of Jews immigrating to Israel — from the United States, France, the United Kingdom, and other Western countries surged sharply in 2025. Continuing a steady upward trend, arrivals from France jumped 45 percent last year to 3,300, up from 2,200 in 2024, while immigration from the UK rose almost 20 percent to 840 immigrants.

Ministry data also showed 420

newcomers from Canada, 220 from South Africa, and 180 from Australia.

These latest figures come as Jewish communities worldwide warn of escalating threats in the wake of a deadly attack on a Hanukkah celebration at Sydney's Bondi Beach that left 15 dead and at least 40 injured.

Last year, a string of deadly terrorist attacks also targeted Jewish communities abroad, including the Yom Kippur assault in Manchester that killed two Jewish men, the firebombing of a march for Israeli hostages in Boulder, Colorado — which killed one and injured 13 — and the murder of two Israeli Embassy staffers in Washington, DC.

According to Nefesh B'Nefesh (NBN), a nonprofit that promotes and facilitates aliyah from the US and Canada, overall North American immigration rose about 12 percent in 2025 to 4,150 new arrivals, the highest annual total the organization has seen in four years.

However, even as antisemitic incidents worldwide reach levels not seen in decades following the Oct. 7 atrocities, Jews and Israelis continue to emigrate to Europe, reshaping the heart of today's Jewish diaspora.

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.

According to recent demographic reports, Israeli immigrant communities in Europe are among the fastest-growing Jewish communities in the world.

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).



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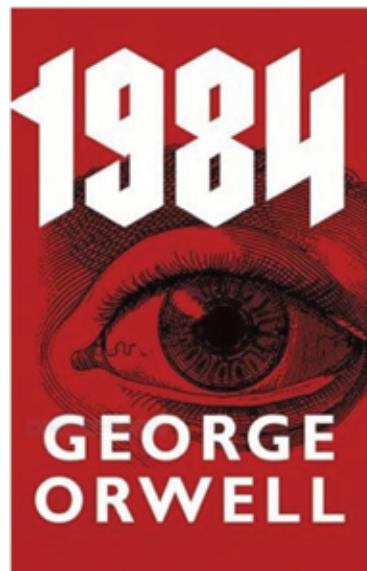
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By Cheryl Scarlett, JFS Director of Major Gifts and Fundraising



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This year, JFS provided over 15,000 services to approximately 3,000 people and offered crucial financial support to our most vulnerable Coachella Valley residents. JFS services include, but are not limited to, mental health counseling, emergency financial assistance for families and seniors, senior socialization programs, camp scholarships for children, case management, and programming for our cherished local Holocaust survivors.

Please support JFS by attending their March Fundraising event! This event will be a night of art, entertainment, and culinary delight! VIP participants will be welcomed into the Palm Springs Art Museum's main-level galleries, savor heavy appetizers catered by Eight4Nine, and enjoy music provided by DJ MODGIRL before the show. Then, all guests will settle into the Annenberg

Theater for a show-stopping live performance by Chris Ruggiero. Chris has appeared on national PBS specials, shared the stage with music icons, performed live on Good Morning America, and is succeeding at wowing audiences with his solo show across the nation. This rising young entertainer has created a live stage show that shares his remarkable story while breathing new life into timeless hit songs from the 60s and 70s, through today.

The night is also a tribute to Joanne and Myron Mintz, with the 2026 JFS Humanitarian Award. Joanne and Myron are both native New Yorkers, though

Myron spent part of his childhood in Wilmington, Delaware. Joanne was educated in Brooklyn and earned her graduate degree in Ohio. Myron's path was less linear: after serving in the U.S. Air Force and exploring various careers, he earned his degree from the California College of Podiatric Medicine. They both arrived in San Francisco in the summer of 1968 and, by chance, attended the same Jewish Federation mixer at the de Young Museum. They met, fell in love, married eight months later—and the rest is history. They are the proud parents of Candy and Stephen, and grandparents to Maya and

Emi. Relocating to the desert in 2000, Joanne and Myron have supported many nonprofits, including JFS, City of Hope, Hidden Harvest, McCallum Theatre, and the Literary Society of the Desert. They served as 2024 Season Ambassadors for CV Rep. Travel is their shared passion.

VIP tickets are \$500, and show-only tickets are \$175. Sponsorships are available. To learn more about JFS, or for more information about our event, please call Cheryl Scarlett at 760-325-4088 ext. 107, or email cscarlett@jfsdesert.org, OR VISIT www.jfsdesert.org.

STARRING
Chris Ruggiero



HONORING
JOANNE AND MYRON MINTZ



AN Evening AT THE MUSEUM
Benefiting
JEWISH FAMILY SERVICE
OF THE DESERT

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11, 2026

An Evening at the Museum Benefiting 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.

JFS DESERT

Scan the QR code to the right or visit jfsdesert.org/events-page. Call JFS at (760) 325-4088 ext. 107 or email cscarlett@jfsdesert.org





Wednesday, February 11, 2026
FEDERATION DAY AT TAMARISK
Call the Jewish Federation Office for details: 760-324-4737

Chabad of Rancho Mirage Hosts Golf Tournament and Gala to Strengthen Youth and Teen Programs

By Chaya Posner

Chabad of Rancho Mirage's annual Golf Tournament and Gala Dinner united the community for a day of purpose and inspiration, culminating in an evening focused on strengthening and expanding youth and teen programming. The event was held under the theme, "Raising Courageous Jews in a Hostile World."

Featured speaker and Holocaust survivor Ricki Taras delivered a powerful message on the vital role of Jewish education in ensuring both physical and spiritual survival, emphasizing that Jewish continuity depends on passing values and identity from one generation to the next.

The evening's message was brought to life through the story of seventh grader Jack Starr, who shared his experience confronting antisemitism at his Palm Desert middle school. While his father, Ryan Starr, reflected on feeling unprepared for similar challenges growing up, Jack spoke with confidence—crediting his Jewish education and involvement at Chabad for giving him the tools to respond

with knowledge and pride. In a moving moment, Ricki Taras handed a framed mezuzah to Jack Starr and his family representing continuity Ledor Vedor – from one generation to the next.

Chabad also announced the arrival of Rabbi Sholom and Sarale Posner as

Youth Directors. Since their arrival, they have launched a four-day-a-week after-school program, expanded the Kosher Food Club at Palm Desert High School to weekly meetings, and will lead a delegation of teens to the International Teen Shabbaton in New York next

month.

The gala underscored the importance of proactive investment in Jewish youth. The evening reflected a shared community commitment to raising confident, resilient Jewish leaders for the future.



Ellen and Phil Glass with California Assemblymember the Hon. Jeff Gonzalez



Rabbi Sholom and Sarale Posner present Holocaust Survivor Ricki Taras with Ledor Vedor Award



David Tsikman, Scott Scherer, Michael Saywich, Bryan Kocen/Jewish Federation Treasurer, and Ari Regar



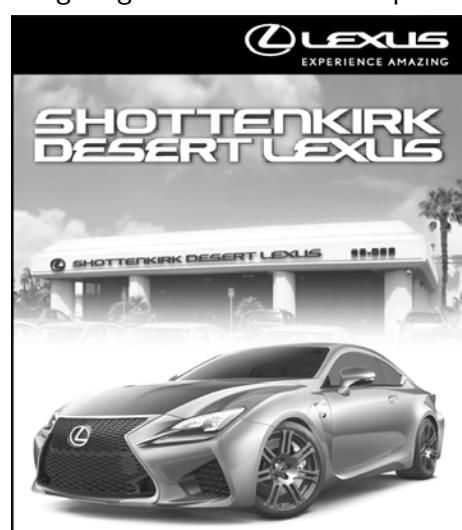
Gala Dinner chair Barry Kaiman with Assemblyman Jeff Gonzalez and Event Chair David Tsikman



Dr Gerald Schultz, David Tsikman, and Ari Regar with Senior winning group



Ricki Taras makes a 'Ledor Vedor' presentation to the Starr Family - Ryan, Keren, Jack and Roy



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Tribute Card Donations

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

Honorarium Tributes In Appreciation For:

- **Becky Benaroya**, So happy to join you for your wonderful birthday, from Gloria Snyder.
- **Bobby and Susie Diamond**, Wishing you many more happy milestone occasions, from Leslie and Barry Usow.
- **Bonnie Carmell**, In honor of your special birthday, from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **David Conney**, In honor of your special birthday, from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **Lenny Eber**, In honor of your special birthday, from Phyllis Eisenberg. And apologies to Lenny for aging him 10 years, listing his birthday in last month's paper as his 90th, not 80th!
- **Carol Fragen**, Birthday wishes for your August birthday from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **Marjorie Kulp**, Happy 75th birthday from Barbara Appelbaum, Nancy and Michael Basofin, Joanne and Bill Chunowitz, Wendy and Bill DeWoskin, Paul and Sandy Epstein, Lori and Brad Fritz, Mitchell and Nanci Kantor, Rick and Lainie Kline, Cathy and Mark Maslan, Linda and Jeff Noddle, Mary Kaye Recht and Ron, Lisa and Marc Roth, Elise Sacks, Judy and Mark Schwartz, Jane and Larry Sherman, Evelyn Shukur, Cecile Silverman, Katie and Scott Small, Lili Ann, Ricky and all the Zisooks,
- **Norma Nelson**, Happy birthday from Donna and Sid Weiss.
- **Debbie Orgen**, Congratulations on your award from Hadassah, from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **Jaime Siegel**, Happy birthday. Wishing you 60 more happy years, from Marjorie Kulp and Nina and Milton Zale.

Refuah Shleimah Get Well:

- **Margot Halperin**, Hoping you are on your way to recovery. We all need you, from Cecille Silverma

Memoriam Tributes Condolences Sent To:

- **Jim Borax**, In memory of Sheri Borax, from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **Nancy Ditlove**, In loving memory of your beloved Dennis, from Janice Blum, Michael Gobuty, Vicki Goldberg, Sondra Green, Joan Kerns, Dr. and Mrs. Paul Lubar, George and Dale Rotner, Jana Rubin, and Cecile Silverman.
- **Nancy Ditlove and Shari Snow**, In loving memory of your beloved husband and father, Dennis Ditlove, from Lili Ann and Richard Zisook.
 - In memory of Marilyn Eager, from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **Sandy Epstein**, In memory of Richelle Lewis, from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **Mary Freeman**, In memory of your husband, Dick, from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **Myra Gordon**, In memory of Norman Lewis, from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **Libby Hoffman**, In memory of your husband, Buddy, from Phyllis Eisenberg
- **Alison Hyman**, In memory of your beloved mother, from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **Scott and Lance Karp**, in memory of your beloved brother, Earl Karp, from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **Joan Kerns**, In loving memory of your beloved husband, Pat, from Joanne and Bill Chunowitz, Suzanne Feder, Adrienne Gerland, Margot and Jerry Halperin, Loreen Jacobson, Cecile Silverman, Judith Sontag and Mike Pollak.
- **Sydelle Kramer**, In memory of your beloved husband Sherman, from Donna and Sid Weiss
- **Marjorie Kulp**, in memory of your beloved mother, Frances Horwich, from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **Norman Libman**, In memory of your beloved wife Doris, from Marnie Miller.
- **Carol Horwich-Luber**, in memory of your beloved mother, Frances Horwich, from Phyllis Eisenberg.

- **Harry Marshak and Wendy Brooks**, In memory of your beloved mother, from Lori and Brad Fritz.
- **Norma and Ted Nelson**, In memory of your brother Barry, from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **Penni Perrault**, With love and sympathy with the loss of our dear Artie, from Harriet Goldberg, Scott and Julie Goldberg.
- **Alan Potash Family**, in memory of Alan Potash, from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **Stephanie and Dr. Paul Ross**, Happy anniversary from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **Cecille Silverman**, In loving memory of your husband, Albert, from Phyllis Eisenberg, Lili Ann and Richad Zisook.
- **Helen Silverman**, in memory of your husband, Bill, from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **Shari Snow**, may the memory of your father, Dennis Ditlove, always be for a blessing, from Harold and Robbin Gross.
- **Marcia Stein**, In memory of your beloved sister, from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **Cindy and Stuart Tapper**, in loving memory of Dennis Ditlove, from Dan and Deb Fuchs, Ellen Siegel Pollack.
- **Bernice Wiedershine Family**, in memory of Bernice Weidershine, from Phyllis Eisenberg.
- **Shirley Zipkin**, in memory of your beloved husband, Laurence, from Phyllis Eisenberg.



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.



Shabbat Schedule - February 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 beithaverim@palm.org 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.

Join Congregation Beth Shalom for a special Pirkei Avot class taught by Rabbi Rachel Axelrad, Saturday morning February 7 & February 21 at 8:45am. Information and Reservations: - 760-200-3636.

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.templesinai.org 760-568-9699. Go to templesinai.org for access information. Shabbat services are in-person and online on Livestream at www.templesinai.org. Friday evening services 5:30 pm, preceded by pre-service Oneg at 5:00 pm. Saturday morning Torah study 8:45 am; Shabbat morning services 10 am.

Sabra Hadassah of the Desert

"Hadassah Shabbat" Friday evening, February 27: Pre-service Oneg 5:00 PM; Services at 5:30 pm.

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@templesinai.org

BIKUR CHOLIM of Palm Springs

(Community Outreach). www.BikurCholimPS.com. Rabbi Yankel Kreiman, 760-325-8076.



Community Calendar of Programs - February 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.

Thursdays

8:30-9:30 am A class for men. **Text-Based Talmud: "Establishing Courts of Justice"** with Rabbi Yonason Denebeim / Chabad of Palm Springs. To RSVP text 760-424-2177

Sunday, February 1

4:00 pm Congregation Beth Shalom presents Los Duenos Del Klezmer with Skip Heller and Lena Maria Cardinale. Held at St. Margaret's Episcopal Church on Highway 74, Palm Desert. Doors open at 3:30 pm. Tickets available at door: \$50.

Wednesday, February 11

Federation Day at Tamarisk, combining 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. Contact Federation Office for details, 760-324-4737.

Wednesday, February 18

Major Gifts Event: Jewish Federation of the Desert presents **Comedy for a Cause**, starring world-renowned Jewish comedian Modi Rosenfeld, at Tamarisk Country Club. **SOLD OUT**. Call Federation Office to be placed on waiting list: 760-324-4737.

Saturday, February 21

7 pm Mensch International "Secret Improv Vice" at Mizell Center, Palm Springs. Tickets: \$20. See ad page 12.

Sunday, February 22

5 pm Mensch International Dinner at Desert Willow CC, with posthumous awarding of Mensch Award to Kirk Douglas and John Wayne. Dinner: \$85. See ad page 10.

Email (preferred)
Miriam Bent at
mhbentjcn@earthlink.net
or call
760-835-1022
to have your events
included in the
community calendar.

De Facto Ban? UK Authorities Classify Circumcision as Child Abuse

Jewish and Muslim leaders up in arms after Britain's Crown Prosecution Service drafts memo to local prosecutors labelling circumcision as potentially constituting a form of child abuse.

By World Israel News Staff

Britain's national prosecution service has classified circumcision as a potential form of child abuse, instructing local prosecutors to scrutinize instances of circumcision for possible criminality.

Over the weekend, The Guardian reported that the UK's Crown Prosecution Service, which determines policy for law enforcement agencies and prosecutors across the country, has drafted a new memo offering guidance regarding the legal status of circumcision.

The draft of the memo obtained by The Guardian said that while male circumcision is not explicitly banned by law in the UK, unlike female circumcision, it should still be considered potentially abusive.

"There is not a specific criminal offense of carrying out male circumcision," the memo reads.

"However, this can be a painful and harmful practice, if carried out incorrectly or in inappropriate circumstances. It may be a form of child abuse or an offense against the person."

The document was penned days after a London coroner called for the governmental regulation of circumcision,

following several high-profile infant deaths linked to circumcision.

On February 19, 2023, six-month-old Mohamed Abdisamad died, precisely one week after his circumcision.

A jury inquest concluded last October that the cause of death was "invasive streptococcus pyogenes infection following male circumcision."

West London Assistant Coroner Anton van Dellen penned a report following the inquest, warning that unless the government regulates circumcisions, more infants will die following botched or improperly conducted circumcisions.

Britain's Office for National Statistics has recorded seven deaths of boys since 2001 where circumcision was believed to be a factor.

Jewish and Muslim groups in the UK objected to the language of the CPS' draft memo, noting that any procedure could potentially be dangerous if carried out "inappropriately," with the CPS unfairly singling out circumcision.

"To suggest that circumcision is in itself a harmful practice, is deeply pejorative and misplaced," said Milah UK co-chair Jonathan Arkush.

"Any procedure that is carried out inappropriately or without proper controls, including piercing a child's ears, could be a harmful practice and a possible case of child abuse."

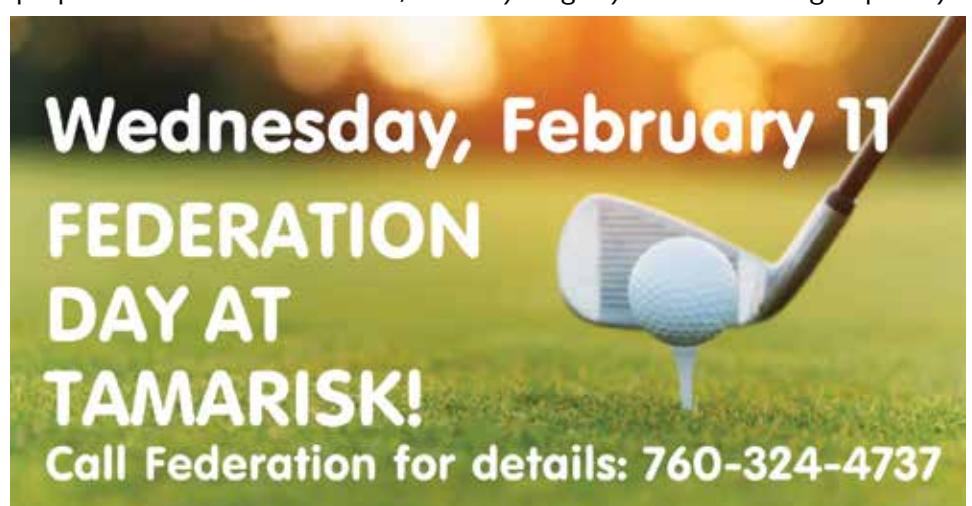
"The incidence of complications in circumcision performed in the Jewish community is vanishingly rare. Circumcision is a core part of our identity. I have never met any Jewish man who thinks they've been harmed by circumcision."

The Muslim Council of Britain issued a statement backing efforts to ensure proper standards for circumcision, while

rejecting the characterization of the practice as child abuse.

"Male circumcision is a lawful practice in the UK with recognized medical, religious and cultural foundations, and it should not be characterized in itself as child abuse."

"However, where procedures are carried out irresponsibly, without proper safeguards, and cause harm, they may rightly fall within the scope of criminal law. The lack of consistent regulation elsewhere creates unacceptable risks, and addressing those risks to protect young boys should be an urgent priority."



Honduras' New Palestinian President-Elect Vows to Rebuild Ties with Israel

By World Israel News Staff

Honduras' new president-elect has vowed to repair relations with Israel after being declared the winner in November 30's heavily contested election.

On January 7 the Honduran National

Electoral Council certified the results of the November 30 presidential vote, formally declaring Nasry Asfura of the National Party the winner and president-elect.



Honduras' President-elect, Nasry Asfura

Asfura narrowly edged out a centrist candidate, Salvador Nasralla of the Liberal Party, by a margin of 40.3% to 39.6% in a three-way vote.

President-elect Asfura is the son of Christian Arabs who emigrated from the British Mandate for Palestine in the 1940s.

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio congratulated Asfura after President Donald Trump endorsed him ahead of the November election.

"The United States congratulates President-elect Nasry Asfura of Honduras on his clear electoral victory, confirmed by Honduras' National Electoral Council," Rubio said.

"The United States urges all parties to respect the confirmed results so that Honduran authorities may swiftly ensure a peaceful transition of authority to President-elect Nasry Asfura."

After being declared the winner, Asfura

spoke by phone with Israeli Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar, who also offered his congratulations.

According to a statement by the Israeli Foreign Ministry, Asfura and Sa'ar agreed to "strengthen" ties between the two countries – more than two years after the country's far-left incumbent, Xiomara Castro, recalled the Honduran ambassador to Israel over the Gaza war.

"Honduras and Israel have a historic relationship that began 72 years ago with the establishment of the State of Israel," the Foreign Ministry said, "In recent years, however, under the current administration, relations between Israel and Honduras deteriorated. After Oct. 7, Honduras recalled its ambassador from Israel and has not since appointed a new ambassador to Israel."

"In addition, Honduras has not yet accepted the credentials of Israel's ambassador to Honduras. In the conversation between Minister Sa'ar and President-elect Asfura, the two agreed to strengthen bilateral relations for the benefit of both countries. During the call, Minister Sa'ar also invited the president-elect to visit Israel."

Sa'ar took to X shortly after the call, writing that the incoming president seeks to improve bilateral relations.

"I was glad to congratulate the President-elect of Honduras, 'Tito' Asfura, on his election as President of Honduras. I conveyed our warm wishes to the people of Honduras, wished him success in his role, and invited him to visit Israel."

"Honduras has a long history of friendship with the State of Israel and the Jewish people. We agreed to work to strengthen bilateral relations for the benefit of both countries," Sa'ar wrote.

Honduran President Juan Orlando Hernández, also a member of the National Party, relocated his country's embassy in Israel to Jerusalem in 2021 following a similar move by the US three years earlier.

However, with the election of Castro later in 2021, ties between Israel and Honduras cooled, culminating in the recalling of the Honduran ambassador two years later.

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 ever been, in a book club?

Have you reviewed a book lately?

If you answered 'Yes' to any of these questions, HAR EL is inviting you to just one more:

Would you come once to hear a review
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Come as you are—we're on Zoom,
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We meet Shabbat mornings,
beginning at 9:30 AM, and meet for 50 minutes.

One caution: It's so fascinating that one visit won't
feel like enough... You'll want to come back.

To receive a Zoom invite, just email:
harelurjpd@gmail.com

Rabbi Richard A. Zions, Ph.D.
HAR-EL Presiding Rabbi & Moderator

GUEST PRESENTERS:

Rabbi Hillel Cohn, D. Min.

Rabbi Kenneth Emert, D. Min.

Cantor Melanie Fine

Cantor Joseph Gole, D. Mus. (Hon.)

Student Rabbi, Chaplain Allison Kestenbaum

Professor Samuel Trussell, J.D.

Rosa Weinstein, Anthropologist.

HAR-EL
An Institute for Study and Worship in the Reform Tradition
Member, Union for Reform Judaism
Est. 2004

DID YOU KNOW?

All monies received from Tribute Card purchases go into our SPECIAL MITZVAH FUND, which enables the Jewish Federation of the Desert to respond to emergency needs of Jews living in our community.

Sending Tribute Cards is a wonderful way to thank, extend good wishes, offer condolences or recognize a special occasion.

To send a Tribute Card, call the Jewish Federation: 760-324-4737.

UAE Cuts State Funding for Citizens Studying at UK Universities Due to Fears of Radicalization

"The UAE will not send its students to become hostages of Islamist jihadist ideology disguised as campus activism," said Emirati Expert in Strategic and Political Affairs, Amjad Taha.

By Mathilda Heller, *The Jerusalem Post*

The United Arab Emirates has cut funding for its citizens studying at United Kingdom universities over fears that they may be radicalized. This was first reported by the Financial Times and The Times and confirmed by *The Jerusalem Post* on January 11.

The UAE's Ministry of Higher Education website lists universities eligible for state scholarships. For the first time, the 2026 academic-year list does not include any UK universities. Almost 40 other countries, including Israel, France, and the US, are permitted.

This was not the case in previous years when hundreds of study visas were granted to UAE students to study in the UK each year. Just over 200 Emirati students were granted visas to study at UK universities in the year ending September 2025, over 50% less than in 2022.

UAE officials fear campus radicalization

According to the Financial Times, when UK officials inquired after the omission, UAE officials did not want their students "to be radicalised on campus."

Officials told *The Times* that the funding was being limited due to concerns over the influence of the Muslim Brotherhood. The UK has not moved to proscribe the Muslim Brotherhood, despite consistent

lobbying by the UAE and other parties.

Many have pointed out that it is unprecedented for a Muslim country to fear that its students may be radicalized by Islamism in the UK.

"The UAE will not send its students to become hostages of Islamist jihadist ideology disguised as campus activism," said Emirati Expert in Strategic and Political Affairs, Amjad Taha. "Across British and Irish campuses, Muslim Brotherhood networks have turned lecture halls into echo chambers of extremism, where antisemitism is normalized, and violence is intellectually laundered as resistance."

"In the UAE, clarity is law. Muslim Brotherhood ideology is banned. Antisemitism is a crime, not an opinion. Extremism is not activism. Wisdom begins where excuses end. This decision is not driven by fear but by foresight. Not by isolation but by responsibility. Those who protect the future are rarely applauded in the present, but history always recognizes them in the end."

Taha then posted a list of universities where Muslim Brotherhood-linked extremist networks are reported to operate recruitment and radicalisation activities. In the UK: University of Birmingham; University of Manchester; SOAS University of London; University of Bradford; Queen Mary University

of London; University of Leeds, and Newcastle University. And in Ireland: Trinity College Dublin; University College Dublin (UCD); University of Galway; University College Cork (UCC); Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI); Dublin City University (DCU) and Ulster University.

"An Arab state now treats a European campus as a radicalization risk," said Ahmed Alameri, an Emirati political analyst. "The reversal is complete. Western universities have become incubators for Islamist networks, protected by cowardice and disguised as tolerance. When institutions refuse to draw red lines, they do not educate minds; they manufacture extremism. This is not a message. It is an alarm."

Kier Starmer has 'no interest' in fighting extremism

National security researcher Khaled Hassan said the announcement follows months of direct engagement with the UK. "The UAE finally realised that Keir Starmer will never do anything they suggest and that he basically has no interest whatsoever in fighting Islamist extremism," he said.

It is important to note that the UAE is not outright banning its citizens from studying in the UK, and that those who

wish to self-fund the study are still able to do so. However, students in need of overseas study grants (which cover tuition, living stipends, travel, and health insurance) will no longer be able to study at British campuses.

In 2014-2015, David Cameron's government commissioned Sir John Jenkins to carry out an inquiry into the Muslim Brotherhood. While the inquiry concluded that aspects of the Muslim Brotherhood's ideology and tactics are fundamentally opposed to British values, such as democracy, it did not find enough evidence to justify a full ban.

The Muslim Brotherhood has been banned in the UAE since 2014, and the country exercises a zero-tolerance policy on the movement and its members. In 2024, the UAE put 84 Emiratis on trial for ties to the group, and ultimately sentenced 43 to life in prison.

Then, in January 2025, the UAE officially designated eight organisations based in the United Kingdom as terrorist groups, citing their ties to the Muslim Brotherhood. The announcement adds the entities to the UAE's "local terror list," a register of individuals and organisations deemed to pose a threat to national security.

(Note: article originates from UK's "The Times" so spelling reflects British format)

Foreign Ministry Confirms Samoa Will Open Embassy in Jerusalem This Year

By Lazar Berman and *Times of Israel* Staff

The Foreign Ministry said Sunday that Samoa will become the third Pacific island nation to open an embassy in Jerusalem, confirming a report last week in Samoan media.

Foreign Minister Gideon Sa'ar spoke with Samoan Prime Minister La'auli Leuatea Schmidt and invited him to Israel, according to the Israeli statement.

Samoa, which has an estimated population of around 212,000 and is smaller than the US state of Rhode Island, is set to open the embassy later this year.

Last week, the Samoa Observer, a local newspaper, reported that Schmidt, who was sworn in last September, announced that the country intended to open the embassy.

"I [have] instruct[ed] our foreign affairs to start preparation to open an office of Samoa in Jerusalem this year," he was quoted as saying



Vava'u Beach in Samoa

in an address at a Christian pro-Israel prayer service.

According to the report, he noted that the

step would be in the wake of the same move by neighboring Fiji.

Seven countries — the United States, Fiji,

Guatemala, Honduras, Kosovo, Papua New Guinea and Paraguay — currently have full embassies in Jerusalem. More nations have branches in Israel's capital, with a full embassy in Tel Aviv amid a decades-old taboo against establishing diplomatic missions in Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, Argentina has halted its plans to relocate its embassy to Jerusalem, due to "tension" between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Argentine President Javier Milei in recent weeks. According to Channel 12 news, tensions arose due to the Israeli-owned Navitas Petroleum company's plans to carry out offshore drilling in the Falkland Islands, expected to begin in 2028. The Falkland Islands are a British overseas territory, although Argentina claims that it, not the United Kingdom, has sovereignty over the islands, which it refers to as Islas Malvinas.

An Intellectual Perspective on Pro-Zionist Movements

by Rabbi Richard Zions, Ph.D.

While we are familiar with Zionism as the movement advocating the establishment and support of a Jewish state in Palestine, we might be curious as to what Christian Zionism is and what it represents.

The term "Christian Zionism" is an ideology which, in a Christian historic and theological context, supports the return of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel. Many evangelical Christians, prominent in political and religious life, are active as advocates and proponents of Christian Zionism.

Its roots may be found in the late 16th and early 17th centuries in England with the rise of the Puritan movement within



English Protestantism.

The Puritans sought to "purify" the church from what they considered remnants of elaborate ritual from the Catholic past. As a result, the Puritans emphasized plainness in ritual, personal piety and regular study of the Bible as well as strict adherence to Biblical teachings.

As avid readers and students of the Bible, a number of Puritans came to believe in a future restoration of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel, based on the prophecies of return found in the books of such prophets as Isaiah and Ezekiel. This idea was connected with millennialism which holds that the Second Coming of Jesus will be followed by the Final Judgment and "Christ's reign" on earth.

The return of the Jews to the Land of

Israel would be a precursor that would hasten this event.

This led to the emergence in late 19th and early 20th century England of Christians who were committed to the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine including Anthony Ashley-Cooper, 7th Earl of Shaftesbury as well as those who, before and during World War One, lobbied such British cabinet members as Prime Minister Lloyd George and Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour. Their efforts were helpful in the issuing of the Balfour Declaration of November, 1917 which officially supported a "home for the Jewish people" in Palestine.

Another influential figure who was influenced by Christian Zionist sentiment in Britain was Major-General Orde Charles Wingate, a senior British army officer who became famous for his creation of the Chindit commando force that penetrated into Japanese-occupied territory in Burma during World War Two.

Wingate's father, Colonel George Wingate, was a committed member of the Plymouth Brethren, a Protestant evangelical church, which emphasized Bible Study. As a child, Wingate was immersed in study and memorization of the Scriptures, where he became familiar with the teachings of the Prophets of Israel and the restoration of the Jewish people to the Land of Israel.

Wingate arrived in Palestine in 1936 and early on became an avid supporter of a Jewish state in Palestine. He organized the Special Night Squads,

fighting units consisting of both Haganah and British soldiers, who carried out special missions against pro-Nazi Arab units. A member of the Night Squads trained by Wingate was Moshe Dayan who later served as a general in the IDF. Wingate was killed in an airplane crash in 1944 and is buried in Arlington Cemetery. Israel's National Centre for Physical Education and Sport is named after him, Machon Wingate.

It should be noted that a person need not come from a Christian religious orientation in order to be a Christian Zionist. One may be of the Christian faith, regardless of denomination, and be a supporter of a Jewish state in Palestine

from a more secular perspective and out of sympathy for the Jewish people as a people and not out of any self-interest.

Such was the case of Marian Evans, a 19th-century English novelist who wrote under the name of George Eliot. Marian Evans was an agnostic and somewhat of a non-conformist in the Victorian England of her day. She undertook a deep study of Judaism, Hebrew and Jewish history which is reflected in her novel Daniel Deronda, the story of a young man who discovers and re-affirms his Jewish identity. In Daniel Deronda, the hero settles in Palestine not because of antisemitism or non-acceptance in society but rather to affirm and fulfill his heritage.

Most recently, in December of last year, Prof. Samuel Trussell presented a book review in the Har-El Galen Book Course of The Jewish Odyssey of George Eliot by Gertrude Hilmelfarb. It is this kind of study that broadens our understanding of the role that the Christian Zionists have played in the development of Israel.

In summary, from the Puritans to the Earl of Shaftesbury to General Wingate and his influence on Moshe Dayan to the British surrender of the Mandate of Palestine in May, 1948 to the movement of Christian Zionism in our country, there has been a continuous pattern of support for Israel through Christian Zionist beliefs. As a Rabbi and Professor of History, it is my opinion that we, as Jews, need to fully understand this movement from both a political and religious perspective. By studying its history, we can then have intellectual discussions without misunderstanding the intent of the Christian Zionist movement.

Rabbi Richard Zions was ordained at the Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Cincinnati, Ohio where he also earned a Master's Degree in Hebrew Letters. He holds a Ph.D. in History of Late Antiquity with minors in Religious Studies and Middle East History. He has taught at three state universities: Penn State, LSU and Cal Poly, Pomona as well as at the College of the Desert. He is the Presiding Rabbi of Har-El Congregation, Palm Desert, CA.

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JMOGD Hosts Festive Chanukah Dinner, Collects Over 1,000 Toys for Local Children, and Honors Community Leaders

By Barry Fisher

The Jewish Men's Outreach Group of the Desert (JMOGD) celebrated the spirit of Chanukah with its annual Chanukah Dinner and Toy Drive on December 17, 2025, at Fantasy Springs Resort Casino. Nearly 200 guests filled the ballroom for an evening marked by fellowship, tradition, and community generosity.

The centerpiece of the celebration was JMOGD's highly successful toy drive, which collected more than 1,000 new, unwrapped toys for distribution to local children and families in need throughout the Coachella Valley. The impressive response reflected the organization's deep commitment to community service and the Jewish value of tzedakah—charitable giving.



Alan Gitlin receiving the "Alan Potash Humanitarian Award" presented by Michael Zaifert, Danny Labin, Federation CEO and Arnie Gillman, Federation President.

During the evening, JMOGD also honored several members of its Board of Directors for their outstanding leadership and dedication. Honorees included Alan Gitlin, Barry Fisher, Ben Weissbach, Phil Hudis, Norm Jacobs, and Michael Zaifert. These individuals were recognized

for their hands-on service and tireless efforts in advancing JMOGD's mission to provide a welcoming environment for Jewish men—and their significant others—to build meaningful friendships, perform mitzvot (good deeds), and make a positive difference in the community.

Guests enjoyed a festive dinner, music, and entertainment by Wendy and Rick, creating an atmosphere of warmth, unity, and celebration that truly captured the spirit of the holiday.

Founded on the principles of fellowship, service, and community involvement, JMOGD continues to be a vibrant and active presence in the Coachella Valley. Through social gatherings, volunteer opportunities, and charitable initiatives, the organization strengthens bonds among its members while extending a helping hand to neighbors in need.

For more information about JMOGD and its upcoming events, visit JMOGD.org, email JMOGD2020@gmail.com, or attend one of the group's monthly gatherings.

Judge Lets California Antisemitism Law Take Effect

By Hannah Feuer *The Forward*

A federal judge on December 31 allowed a California law aimed at combatting antisemitism to go into effect, rejecting a legal challenge that argued the measure should be blocked because of its potential to chill classroom speech about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The California law, AB 715, establishes a state Office of Civil Rights and an antisemitism prevention coordinator, who will be appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state senate. It also requires school curricula to be "factually accurate" and free of "advocacy, personal opinion, bias, or partisanship."

The bill drew opposition from the California Teachers Association and a legal challenge from the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, whose national legal director, Jenin Younes, argued the law's "entire point is to conflate criticism of Israel and Zionism into discrimination law, then deploy a new bureaucracy to punish that speech."

But Judge Noël Wise wrote in her decision that the teachers challenging the law were unlikely to succeed on the merits, partly because teachers do not have the same First Amendment rights as private

citizens while teaching.

Wise also rejected the argument that the law was so vague, teachers couldn't know what would and wouldn't count as antisemitic.

"A reasonable person reading AB 715 would sufficiently understand what the legislature meant by the word 'antisemitism,'" Wise wrote in her decision. "That is enough."

The California law does not define antisemitism, but cites the Biden administration's National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism. Biden's strategy references several antisemitism definitions, while calling the International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA) definition — which classifies most expressions of anti-Zionism as antisemitism — the "most prominent."

Younes told the Forward that the law is confusing for teachers, because it suggests they could be punished for anti-Zionist speech but doesn't specify when criticism of Israel crosses the line into antisemitism.

Meanwhile, supporters of the law say it is crucial for combatting rising antisemitism in California schools.

"Today's ruling is a powerful and clear affirmation that protecting students from

harassment is not only lawful, it is essential," David Bocarsly, executive director of the Jewish Public Affairs Committee of California, wrote in a statement. He added that the ruling made clear the law "respects free speech while ensuring schools meet

their responsibility to keep students safe."

The law went into effect January 1 but is still subject to further challenges in court. Younes said the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee will appeal the decision.



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Anti-Israel Boycotts Are Not OK in Arkansas

I won a groundbreaking legal victory, and the principles I helped establish are even more important today.

By Justice Nicholas Bronni, Arkansas Supreme Court

Nicholas ("Nick") Bronni is a justice of the Arkansas Supreme Court, currently running for a full term on that court. He previously served as the Solicitor General of Arkansas. He is writing in his personal capacity and not as a spokesperson for the Arkansas Supreme Court or the state's judiciary.

I served as the state solicitor general who successfully defended Arkansas's law barring state contractors from engaging in antisemitic commercial boycotts. It was one of the most significant victories of my public-service career—and one that is even more important in the post-Oct. 7 world. It also established principles relevant to the latest controversy over antisemitic activity on college campuses.

Broadly speaking, Arkansas's law requires those doing business with the state to certify that they don't refuse to do business with parties solely because they're somehow affiliated with Israel. Similar laws exist in dozens of states, all targeted at combating the dark web of antisemitic boycotts. Indeed, as the German parliament

explained in 2019, the contemporary antisemitic boycott "movement's 'Don't Buy!' stickers on Israeli products inevitably awake[n] associations with the Nazi slogan."

After Arkansas adopted its law, the Arkansas Times, an alternative media group that periodically ran state advertisements, refused to agree that it would not boycott Israel. It therefore lost its state contract. It sued, claiming that Arkansas's law violated its rights to free speech.

I disagreed, arguing that declining to buy something, which is all boycotting really is, is neither speech nor inherently expressive conduct. It's commercial activity, and commercial activity isn't protected by the First Amendment. Moreover, as I argued, this principle is hardly a novelty: It's the same reason that courts have long



recognized that the First Amendment doesn't shield refusals to do business based on race.

The federal trial court in the state's capital of Little Rock agreed with me and dismissed the lawsuit. The Arkansas Times appealed and convinced a divided federal court of appeals to reverse the trial court's decision. Not deterred, I asked the entire St. Louis-based federal court of appeals to review that decision—something that very rarely happens.

However, the full court agreed. A supermajority of the court then ruled in Arkansas's favor, upheld our law and dismissed the lawsuit. The Arkansas Times then asked the U.S. Supreme Court to review the case. The Supreme Court denied that request without dissent, ending the effort to block Arkansas's law.

Arkansas's victory was and remains the leading decision in a nationwide wave of challenges brought by the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU)

against state anti-BDS laws. Most legal commentators and national media bet against us. Yet Arkansas took a stand and established that governments can refuse to do business with those who discriminate.

Two years later, that principle is at the center of the latest clash over taxpayer funding and antisemitism. Last year, the Trump administration threatened to freeze—and in some cases, freeze—federal grants to universities that failed to protect Jewish students on campus. Critics claim that this unlawfully stifles free speech; supporters argue that failing to protect students isn't expression.

Arkansas's case establishes a baseline for resolving that dispute, reaffirming that the government can condition public benefits on an agreement not to engage in certain conduct. For onlookers concerned about antisemitic discrimination, the key point is that—just as in Arkansas's case—the government's ability to prevail depends on showing it has regulated conduct rather than expression.

Argentine Doctor Suspended After Threatening to Cut Jewish Throats

By David Swindle, *The Algemeiner*

A doctor in Argentina has been suspended from his job at a hospital in Buenos Aires after posting antisemitic messages on social media that included explicit calls for violence against Jews.

The suspension of Miqueas Martínez Secchi, a resident physician specializing in intensive care at José de San Martín Hospital in La Plata, marks yet another example of rising antisemitism in health-care settings across the West.

"Instead of performing circumcision, their carotid artery and main artery should be cut from side to side," Secchi wrote in one post.

The medical professional's antisemitic online activity was exposed by journalist and commentator Dani Lerer, who posted the graphic messages on the social media platform X. The posts prompted widespread outrage, leading Secchi to delete his social media account—but not before other users were able to save screenshots.

Buenos Aires Province Health Minister Nicolás Kreplak released a statement responding to the incident. "Any aggressive message or one showing

a lack of respect for human life is incompatible with health care practice and particularly with medicine. They are fundamental values of training as a health professional," he posted on X. "Health is one of the essential assets of society, and it is indispensable to be firm against any act of discrimination and racism. As is public knowledge."

Kreplak then referenced Secchi and noted he is under investigation.

"Due to this message, consistent with other previous behaviors that now acquire relevance, the resident doctor at Hospital San Martín de La Plata who made those public statements is suspended and in an administrative and judicial investigation process, in order to conduct an evaluation under an ethical, technical, and professional committee that will determine whether it is appropriate or not for them to resume their training process," the minister said.

The incident in Argentina continues an alarming pattern of rampant antisemitism in health care across the Western world which has left Jewish communities feeling unsafe and marginalized.

In November, for example, a Jewish columnist from Amsterdam said she was denied medical care by a nurse who refused to remove a pro-Palestinian pin shaped like a fist.

Elsewhere in the Netherlands, local police opened an investigation into Batisma Chayat Sa'id, a nurse who allegedly stated she would administer lethal injections to Israeli patients.

In Italy, two medical workers filmed themselves at their workplace discarding medicine produced by the Israeli company Teva Pharmaceuticals in protest of the Jewish state and the war in Gaza.

In Belgium, a local hospital suspended a physician after discovering antisemitic content on his social media, including a cartoon showing babies being decapitated by the tip of a Star of David and an AI-generated image depicting Hasidic Jews as vampires poised to devour a sleeping baby.

The same doctor came under fire after he recently diagnosed a nine-year-old patient by listing "Jewish (Israeli)" as one of her medical problems on his report.

Several such incidents have occurred in the United Kingdom, where British Prime Minister Keir Starmer unveiled a new plan in October to address what he described as "just too many examples, clear examples, of antisemitism that have not been dealt with adequately or effectively" in the country's National Health Service (NHS).

One notable case drawing attention involved Dr. Rahmeh Aladwan, a trainee trauma and orthopedic surgeon, who police arrested on Oct. 21, charging her with four offenses related to malicious communications and inciting racial hatred. In November, she was suspended from practicing medicine in the UK over social media posts denigrating Jews and celebrating Hamas's terrorism.

That same month, UK Health Secretary Wes Streeting called it "chilling" that some members of the Jewish community fear discrimination within the NHS, amid reports of widespread antisemitism in Britain's health-care system.

Incidents in the UK included a Jewish family fearing their London doctor's

continued on next page

Years of Ignored Antisemitism Led to Terror in Australia

By Sharon Levy, The Algemeiner

Years of hatred and antisemitism that was swept aside or outright denied led to one of the most horrific attacks on the Jewish people in Australia.

The warning signs were unmistakable more than two years ago: chants of "gas the Jews" outside the Sydney Opera House days after October 7; "Jew die" graffiti scrawled outside a Jewish school; a synagogue firebombed; and a Jewish community that made clear, again and again, that it did not feel safe or protected.

A terrorist attack targeting the Jewish community should not be what it takes for the world to pay attention to the undeniable rise in antisemitism.

And yet, even now, it appears that many are still unwilling to acknowledge the attack was antisemitic.

Despite the terrorists specifically aiming at the crowd gathered at the Hanukkah event, there was initial reluctance to name the Jewish community as the target.

Rather, the attack was framed in vague terms as part of a broader act of violence and a public safety issue in Australia. This reluctance to call out antisemitism is not incidental, but part of the pattern that allowed it to foster unchecked for so long.

As the news coverage on the attack continued, outlets slowly started to shift the story away from the victims of the attack and towards the terrorists who carried it out.

While understanding the motive and background has a place in responsible reporting, many outlets instead crossed a dangerous line by subtly humanizing the perpetrators while sidelining the Jewish victims.

One headline in Newsweek focused on the attacker's relationship with his family, quoting that his mother considered him a "good boy." But what his mother thought of him before the attack should not have been headline news — the fact that he took part in mass murdering people at a

Hanukkah event should have.

The pain and trauma of the victims' families and survivors deserved the center of the story, rather than emotional character references for the terrorist.

The Irish Times similarly stressed the terrorists had no criminal background, omitting their ISIS-inspired ideology and once again framing them as ordinary, well-meaning people.

The BBC likewise whitewashed the crimes of the terrorists by refusing to call them terrorists at all. Instead, they were described merely as "gunmen," a term so sanitized that readers would have no idea from the headline that they carried out a deadly attack on Jews.

Meanwhile, Sky News shifted the focus from the Jewish victims to warn that Muslims in Australia may feel unsafe. This creates a moral inversion that recasts the aftermath of an antisemitic terror attack as a story about the potential discomfort of an entirely different community.

This inversion completes a familiar pattern where Jewish victims disappear, antisemitism becomes abstract, and the media moves on without ever confronting the hatred that made the attack possible.

When explicit calls to murder Jews are dismissed as isolated incidents, when attacks on Jewish institutions are minimized, and when Jewish fear is treated as political exaggeration, violence becomes inevitable. A terrorist attack against Jews in Australia is the consequence of sustained denial, indifference, and moral failure. The minimization of antisemitic incidents and violence against the Jewish people in the media contributes to the vicious cycle.

Antisemitism does not begin with terror attacks. It begins when warning signs are ignored — and it will continue until institutions, leaders, and the media are willing to say clearly and unequivocally that Jews were targeted because they are Jews.

continued from previous page

antisemitism influenced their disabled son's treatment. The North London hospital suspended the physician who was under investigation for publicly claiming that all Jews have "feelings of supremacy" and downplaying antisemitism.

In Australia, two nurses filmed themselves bragging online about refusing to treat Israelis, making throat-slitting gestures, and boasting of killing Jews. Both lost their licenses and now face criminal charges.

A US-born Jewish woman who moved from Israel to Australia six years ago told The Algemeiner last year that she no

longer feels safe in hospitals given the atmosphere of heightened antisemitism.

"In the past year alone, my little boy has witnessed many hostile protests where 'anti-Zionists' have actually come into the Jewish community without permits to intimidate us. Time and time again, instead of [authorities] dispersing and arresting anyone in the crowd

for screaming racial slurs and threats, Jews are asked to evacuate and told if they don't run away, they are inciting violence," the woman said.

"Now they actually brag online about killing Israeli patients," she continued, referring to the case in Australia. "I don't know how safe I would feel giving birth at that hospital."

JEWISH FEDERATION 2025-2026 SEASON ~ COMMUNITY EVENTS

February 11, 2026

Wednesday

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February 18, 2026

Wednesday

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Sunday

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HAVE A NOSH:

The holiday of Tu B'Shevat (this year falling on the night of February 1) is celebrated as both the "birthday of the trees" and a celebration of the bounty of the land of Israel, divided into the seven species: barley (shurah), dates (tamar), figs (te'enim), grapes (anavim), olives (zayit), pomegranates (rimonim) and wheat (chita). It has been a while since I gave you selections from my collection of fruit desserts, so I picked a few delicious (and easy) options with which to observe Tu B'Shevat. Enjoy! MHB



DATE-NUT TRUFFLES

1 cup dates
2 tbsp. chocolate chips

1 cup almonds
1-2 tbsp. honey

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

COCONUT BALLS

½ cup raisins
2 T. orange juice
¾ cup walnuts
1 tsp. zest of one orange

½ cup dried dates, pitted
1 small bag unsweetened shredded coconut
½ cup dried apricots

In a food processor, process raisins, walnuts, dates and apricots for 1-2 minutes or until finely chopped. Add orange juice and zest and blend for 1-2 minutes more. Chill mixture in refrigerator for 15 minutes. Dampen hands, form mixture into balls, and roll them in coconut. Store balls in refrigerator.

FIG-GINGER BALLS

2 cups dried black mission figs*
(about 8 oz)
½ teaspoon ground cinnamon

1 Tablespoon honey.
1/4 cup crystallized ginger (about 2 oz)

Remove the stems from the figs and discard. Coarsely chunk the figs and put in a food processor with the crystallized ginger, cinnamon and honey. Pulse until ingredients are finely chopped but not processed into a paste. Roll the fig mixture into heaping teaspoon sized balls. Makes about 18. *I prefer the softer texture of Mission figs but other figs will be equally delicious.

TU B'SHEVAT CHOCOLATE BARK

8 oz good quality dark chocolate
8 oz white chocolate* (see note)
Assorted dried fruit and nuts
(approximately half cup each)
Suggestions: dates, dried figs, raisins,

dried apricots, dried cranberries,
assorted nuts
(your preference: walnuts, pecans,
almonds, pine nuts)
Sea salt (optional)

Line a 11" x 17" cookie sheet pan with parchment paper. Choose which dried fruit and nuts you want and chop them into medium-small pieces. Set aside.

Melt the dark chocolate over a double boiler. When the chocolate is fully melted, spread it over the parchment paper. Freeze for approximately 10 minutes, until chocolate is firm. Melt the white chocolate over a double boiler. Spread the white chocolate over the dark chocolate and immediately sprinkle the fruit and nuts over it, before the chocolate sets. (*Note: recipe doesn't call for best quality white chocolate because it often doesn't melt as well, so buy "good" not "best"!)

Optional: sprinkle some sea salt over the bark to provide a contrasting flavor. Freeze for 1-2 hours, then break into jagged pieces. Store in an airtight container in a cool, dry place or wrap and keep in refrigerator or freezer.

COCONUT-STUFFED DATES

1/2 cup unsweetened shredded coconut, plus more for topping
2 Tablespoons coconut oil, melted
2 Tablespoons honey or pure maple syrup

Pinch sea salt
½ teaspoon cinnamon
12 large, soft Medjool dates
9 oz. dark chocolate chips

In a food processor, combine the shredded coconut, coconut oil, maple syrup or honey, pinch of salt and cinnamon. Process until a smooth paste is formed; set aside. Cut the dates in half lengthwise on one side and remove the pit. Stuff a small amount of coconut mixture into each date and press to close. Place stuffed dates in the freezer to firm for 15-20 minutes. Melt the chocolate over a double boiler or in a microwave. Dip the cold dates in the chocolate. Roll each to cover completely and then lift out with a fork, letting the excess chocolate drip off before placing on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Sprinkle extra shredded coconut on top of each chocolate-covered date as you go. Place the finished dates in the refrigerator to firm. Serve cold or bring to room temperature for 10 minutes before serving for a softer bite.



Simchas

Congratulations to **Rabbi Benny** and **Chani Lew** on the January marriage of their daughter, **Rochel'e Lew** to **Dovid Moya**, son of **Rabbi Yossi** and **Mindy Moya** of Brooklyn, New York ... We have two more presidencies



to welcome: Mazel tov to **Bob Weinstein** on his recent election as President of Temple Isaiah, and congratulations to **Marilyn Katz** on assuming the Presidency of the Leadership Team of Sabra Hadassah of the Desert ... Chabad of the Desert Rancho Mirage is delighted to announce the arrival of **Rabbi Sholom and Sarale Posner** as Youth Directors. Since their



Marilyn Katz,
president of
Sabra Hadassah
of the Desert

arrival, they have launched a four-day-a-week after-school program, expanded the Kosher Food Club at Palm Desert High School to weekly meetings, and will soon lead a delegation of teens to the International Teen Shabbaton in New York ... One more simcha for **Rabbi**



Rabbi Sholom and
Sarale Posner

Shimon and Chaya Posner: the recent birth of their newest granddaughter, **Tirtzah**, born to their son **Dovid** and his wife, **Chaya Mushka Posner**, in Iowa. Mazel tov. Mazel tov ... The exciting new project in town, **Desert Community Kitchen**, told us that if you are ill and need help with meals, contact them (see their email in the box, below), and they will deliver kosher food to your home ... Share your simchas with us. Email or call Miriam Bent at mhbentjcn@earthlink.net, 760-825-1022.



Classifieds

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WRITER, EDITOR, PROOFREADER, COPYWRITER ... I have a 'whey' 'weigh' 'way' with words. Contact Tina Levine at prunehaven@protonmail.com or call or text 310-993-1668.

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Candle Lighting Times

Friday, February 6

Shabbat Yitro

4:44 pm

Friday, February 13

Shabbat Mishpatim

4:51 pm

Friday, February 20

Shabbat Terumah

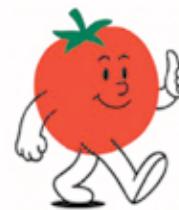
4:57 pm

Friday, February 27

Shabbat Tetzaveh

5:03 pm

DESERT COMMUNITY KITCHEN



Since October 2025, Desert Community Kitchen has had over 100 volunteers who prep and package over 1,000 fresh Kosher meals - and 2,000 cookies - for those in need. To get in on the action and make a difference, go to our website: www.desertck.com.

Session dates vary but current information is always listed on the website. □ Signing up online is required each time you plan to come so we can know how many volunteers to expect.

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We Mourn the Passing of...

Pat Kerns, Eleanor Ruth Reef and **Lee Silverman** (son of Renee Glickman). Our deepest sympathies to their families and friends. May their memories endure as a blessing.



ברוך דין האמת

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