

Rosh Hashanah 5785

October 2, 2024

THE JERUSALEM POST



DOUG EMHOFF

America's Second Gentleman
aims to become first Jewish
White House spouse

50 MOST
INFLUENTIAL
JEWS



Drink Different

BETTER SODA

WITH EXTRA MINERALS



THE LIST IN FULL

50 MOST INFLUENTIAL JEWS

THE JERUSALEM POST

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*Ahead of the High Holy Days,
The Jerusalem Post remembers
the thousands murdered since
October 7 and the 101 hostages
remaining in the Gaza Strip*



Bring Them Home **Now!**

THE JERUSALEM POST

HOSTAGE

HOSTAGE

Most Important Events of the Year

By Aaron Reich

1. OCTOBER 7 MASSACRE OCTOBER 7, 2023

On October 7, 2023, Israelis woke up early in the morning to an unprecedented mass assault and infiltration of the South by Hamas. Armed terrorists struck towns and cities throughout southern Israel, going as far as Netivot and Ofakim. Ultimately, the terrorists murdered 1,200 people and took hundreds more as hostages to Gaza.



2. ISRAEL INTERCEPTS HOUTHI MISSILE IN SPACE OCTOBER 31, 2023

The October 7 massacre changed Israel forever, and an incident in Israel changed warfare forever. After the Yemen-based Houthis fired a ballistic missile at the Jewish state, an Israeli Arrow-3 air defense missile intercepted it high above the target – so high that it reportedly took place beyond the planet's atmosphere. While this may have been just a small part of the war, other than being the first Houthi attack on Israel, it was the first-ever instance of warfare taking place in space – the first ever military action on an entirely new theater of combat that had never been seen before.



3. ISRAEL-HAMAS HOSTAGE DEAL AND CEASEFIRE NOVEMBER 24-30, 2023

November 2023 saw the implementation of a brief ceasefire in Gaza, which included Hamas's release of 41 hostages back to Israel. It was only a brief pause in the war, and for many, it felt like a mere footnote to the ongoing conflict. But for those friends and families reunited with their loved ones, it was a moment of profound joy, one that for many in Israel and abroad brought a sense of hope that the rest of the hostages would soon follow.



4. IDF KILLS THREE HOSTAGES BY MISTAKE DECEMBER 15, 2023

Tragedy occurred in Shejaiya, Gaza, on December 15, 2023, when IDF soldiers accidentally killed Alon Shamriz, Yotam Haim, and Samer Talalka – three Israelis who were taken hostage by Hamas on October 7 and who were waving a white flag at the soldiers. None of the soldiers behind the incident faced disciplinary action. It was a moment of profound sadness, with one of the most promising opportunities to save hostages snuffed out by Israeli soldiers. It was a moment that acted as a grim capstone of the year and set the dark tone for 2024.



5. 21 IDF SOLDIERS KILLED SIMULTANEOUSLY JANUARY 22, 2024

Another tragic loss of life followed in late January 2024 when Hamas destroyed a building in Maghazi, just 600 meters away from the border fence by Kissufim. Hamas launched RPGs that set off explosives within the building. The building's collapse killed 21 IDF soldiers simultaneously and wounded several others. Hamas immediately fired on and destroyed an IDF tank, resulting in the deaths of two more soldiers. It was the single largest loss of life by the IDF during the war.

6. IRAN ATTACKS ISRAEL APRIL 13-14, 2024

After Israel attacked an Iranian consulate in Damascus and killed an Iranian general, Tehran responded with an unprecedented barrage of missiles and drones on April 13. Israelis had just hours to prepare as the Iranian onslaught headed their way. It was a terrifying time to be in Israel, but luckily, it ended with only one wounded. Israel and its allies successfully intercepted ninety-nine percent of all projectiles in a joint effort known as Operation Iron Shield.



7. ISRAEL RESCUES 4 HOSTAGES IN OPERATION ZAMORA JUNE 8, 2024

On June 8, Israeli security forces launched a daring operation to rescue several hostages from Nuseirat in Gaza. Israeli soldier Arnon Zamora was mortally wounded, and estimates put Palestinian casualties in Nuseirat as being anywhere from under 100 (according to Palestinian Health Ministry sources) to over 270. Israel was successful in saving four hostages, including Noa Argamani, whose reunion with her terminally ill mother shortly before her death was heartwarming news for a nation still grieving all those lost and those still suffering.



8. MAJDAL SHAMS MASSACRE JULY 27, 2024

Civilian deaths are always devastating, particularly when they involve children. On July 27, a Hezbollah-attributed rocket struck a soccer pitch in the Druze town of Majdal Shams in the Golan Heights, resulting in the deaths of 12 Druze children and the injuries of over 40 others. It was a dark moment for the community, which hadn't found itself on the frontlines of the war until now, and shone a spotlight on Israel's Druze.



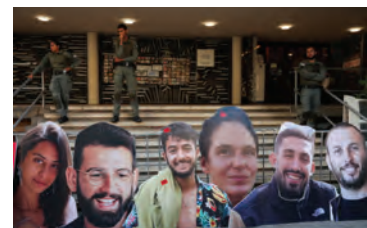
9. ASSASSINATION OF HAMAS LEADER ISMAIL HANIYEH JULY 31, 2024

July 2024 ended with a bombshell when reports emerged that Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh was assassinated in the Iranian capital city of Tehran. While Israel never took credit for it, foreign reports immediately blamed the Jewish state, with speculation soon running rife on just how Israel could have pulled this off. The news spread like wildfire and triggered warnings of potentially devastating Iranian retaliation. However, for many war-weary Israelis, cutting off the head of the Hamas snake sent a powerful message that nowhere in the world was safe for Israel's enemies. It rekindled hope that an end to the war was possible and that Hamas could be intimidated into reaching a deal to release hostages.



10. SIX HOSTAGES FOUND DEAD IN RAFAH TUNNELS AUGUST 31, 2024

Israel and the broader Jewish community were met with heartbreaking news on August 31 when it was revealed that the IDF found the corpses of six hostages in tunnels underneath Gaza, each of whom was believed to have been shot at close range just one or two days prior to their discovery. They included Hersh Goldberg-Polin, a 23-year-old American-Israeli who, for many English speakers, was the face of the hostage crisis. The deaths of Hersh and the other hostages – Eden Yerushalmi, Carmel Gat, Almog Sarusi, Alexander Lobanov, and Ori Danino – further exacerbated the ongoing divisions in Israeli society over the plight of the hostages, highlighted by the tears of anguish of a nation mourning as hope of rescuing their loved ones seemed more elusive than ever.



11. LEBANON PAGER EXPLOSIONS SEPTEMBER 17-18, 2024

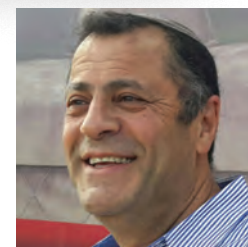
Another moment in Israel's ongoing war that likely will never be forgotten was the simultaneous destruction of pagers and, the following day, radios across Lebanon and parts of Syria. The incident, attributed to Israel by foreign reports, saw thousands wounded and several killed in what was believed to have been a targeted attack on Hezbollah. Foreign reports claim the attack was planned far in advance and that pagers-manufacturing company BAC Consulting, based in Hungary, is an Israeli front company and made the pagers as part of a contract with a Taiwanese firm in order to send them to Lebanon.

The bizarre incident was part of a series of escalations between Israel and Hezbollah – one that has the entire world on edge, nervous that a war could erupt at any moment.



“A shining light in the total darkness of war”

– President Isaac Herzog’s office



Gabi Nachmani
Founder and Director
Tenufa Bakehila

As Israel’s ONLY large-scale non-profit focused on home repairs for poverty-stricken homeowners, Tenufa Bakehila has transformed the lives of over 8,000 families, in 20 cities across the country. Every day, municipal welfare services refer new families to Tenufa for help in repairing their homes and rebuilding their lives.

Responding to new challenges amid war.

With over 30 years of experience, and 27 professional full-time workers repairing dilapidated homes year-round, Tenufa Bakehila is uniquely equipped to handle repairs on a large scale. And with the skilled manpower, equipment, tools and ability to respond immediately, it was only natural for local municipalities to turn to Tenufa to deal with the emergencies of war – especially the critical need to repair dysfunctional bomb shelters.

“Immediately following the initial attacks on October 7th, we received urgent calls from Municipal Emergency Headquarters, and even from the Israeli President’s office, to help with emergency needs,” explained Gabi Nachmani, director of Tenufa Bakehila. “We quickly mobilized our work teams to address urgent needs – especially in impoverished areas under missile attacks.”

While the Israeli government oversees and funds the maintenance of public shelters, the



Renovating a bomb shelter which was flooded by 50 cm of water and sewage. This shelter is designed to shelter some 30 families during missile attacks.

government is not responsible for the upkeep of shelters in privately owned apartment buildings. Many of these shelters are shared by poverty-stricken families, already struggling to afford basic repairs to their own homes; they simply don’t have the resources to fix their building shelters, leaving them without protection in a time of crisis.

“It is hard to imagine,” says Nachmani. “Every day, we receive reports of low-income residential building shelters in

Tenufa Bakehila stands with Israel’s most vulnerable population – in war time and beyond.

terrible condition... flooded with water and sewage, lacking functional bathroom facilities or working electricity. The shelters in these conditions offer no protection whatsoever, and the residents have no recourse. That is why Tenufa’s work is so critical.”

To date, Tenufa has repaired over 500 life-saving shelters, fixing walls, doors, windows and floors, and equipping shelters with emergency lights, new water tanks and pumps, and air ventilation where needed.

For this reason the Israeli President’s office called Tenufa Bakehila “A shining light in the total darkness of war.”

The cost of saving lives

It costs approximately 7,000 shekels to ensure that a shelter is safe and accessible. With an

average shelter accommodating 10 families, 5,000 families have already been provided with access to safe shelters during missile attacks, thanks to Tenufa’s quick response.

But many more still need help.

Tenufa Bakehila already has a waitlist of shelters in need of urgent repair, in four different towns, and new requests come in daily.

Working against the clock to save lives.

With Israel under heavier attack by Hezbollah, the need for life-saving shelters is even more critical. As of today, communities in Israel’s north are being relentlessly bombarded with missiles, forcing hundreds of thousands more people to seek safety and shelter. As we face an entirely new threat, with an enemy who possesses a significantly larger missile arsenal, many more families are in immediate danger.

Gabi Nachmani highlights the critical task now at hand. “With the war in the north intensifying, there is an urgent need for more funding, to repair many more dysfunctional bomb shelters. We are in a race against time to provide safety and shelter for families in the north now at risk.”

Tenufa Bakehila needs your support today!

Tenufa Bakehila-Building Hope is funded entirely by tax-deductible donations.

Donate now:
www.tenufa.org



Tenufa Bakehila work team making urgent repairs to bomb shelters in Israel’s north.

MISSED OPPORTUNITIES:

From Yom Kippur War to today's second chance

By Zvika Klein, Editor-in-Chief

At a bar mitzvah a few weeks ago, I ran into the father of a close friend of mine. An academic and a lifelong ideologue, he has spent his career wrestling with the questions of Israel's identity, values, and future. I asked him a simple question: "How are you?"

His response caught me off guard.

"Are you sure you want to know?" he asked, with the intensity hinting at a long conversation ahead. I nodded, and what followed was a 15 to 20-minute dialogue that still echoes in my mind. One sentence, in particular, stayed with me: "My generation is the one which is to blame for October 7 and the situation Israel is in at the moment. We had the opportunity to change Israel for the good after the Yom Kippur War. There was a window of opportunity. We had a chance to make Israel a more Jewish, more Zionist, more strategic country – but instead, we gave up. We lived our lives and enjoyed living as if these problems didn't exist. But they do."

It was a searing self-indictment that mirrored the harsh realities we face today. The Yom Kippur War of 1973 was more than just a military confrontation; it was a pivotal moment that exposed the fragility of Israel's security, the limitations of its leadership, and the vulnerabilities of its people. Much like today, Israel found itself at a crossroads. The war's unexpected blow dealt a harsh lesson in humility, shattering the hubris that had followed the sweeping victory of 1967. There were immense economic costs, social upheaval, and a deep loss of public trust in the government. The initial shock of the war gave way to a profound sense of national trauma, a wound that demanded not just recovery but a transformation.

The years that followed the Yom Kippur War were filled with opportunities for change. The war had starkly revealed the dangers of complacency and the need for strategic recalibration. There was a brief window when Israeli society could have realigned itself – politically, militarily, and socially. The chance to redefine Israel's identity was there for the taking: to foster a more inclusive, resilient, and forward-looking society that embraced both its Jewish and democratic values.

Yet, as my friend's father lamented, his generation let that opportunity slip away. They chose the comfort of routine, the safety of the familiar, and the allure of normalcy, even when reality was far from normal.

Fast forward to today, one year after October 7, 2023. Israel is once again at a critical juncture, thrust into a new era of uncertainty and conflict. The attack that day was a devastating reminder that the challenges facing Israel have not faded – they have evolved. The sense of crisis has returned, but so has the possibility of change. In the aftermath of October 7, Israel's leadership and its people face a choice: to retreat into the comfort of denial or to seize this moment as a catalyst for a profound



REUTERS/IRONEN ZVULUN

The story of post-Yom Kippur Israel is not just one of lost opportunities. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu speaking at a state memorial ceremony for former prime minister Golda Meir in Jerusalem, 2018.

The question today is whether we can harness the urgency of this moment to effect real change.

national reassessment.

We can draw many parallels between the post-Yom Kippur period and today. Then, as now, there were calls for greater strategic depth, for a renewed emphasis on security, and a clearer articulation of Israel's identity as a Jewish state. There were demands to strengthen the bonds between citizens and the state, to rekindle a sense of shared purpose that transcended political divides. But history has shown that windows of opportunity are fleeting. The lessons unlearned in 1973 haunt us now.

The failures of that era remind us that without decisive action, promises of change can dissolve into missed chances and deferred dreams.

Yet, the story of post-Yom Kippur Israel is not just one of lost opportunities. It also marked the beginning of significant diplomatic breakthroughs, including the Egyptian-Israeli peace process, which reshaped the region and opened the door to new alliances. It was a period of intense introspection that eventually led to critical reforms in the military and intelligence sectors. The war catalyzed a political realignment that brought new voices to the forefront of Israeli politics, most notably with the rise of the Likud Party in 1977. Even in its aftermath, the war's legacy was a testament to the power of resilience and the potential for rebirth

amid adversity.

The question today is whether we can harness the urgency of this moment to effect real change. My friend's father ended our conversation with a challenge: "You now have this chance to make a difference. There is a very short window of opportunity – use it."

In next year's 50 Most Influential Jews list, I hope, and pray, that we will learn of new leaders, new visionaries, new activists – people we haven't heard of yet, who will steer us in the right direction, to a better Jewish and democratic state.

Shana Tovah. Happy New Year.

DOUG EMHOFF

America's potential 'First Gentleman'

Doug Emhoff stands at the crossroads of history, poised to become not just the first male spouse in the White House but the first Jewish one – a milestone that carries the weight of generations. The potential first gentleman brings with him more than a charming smile and lawyerly poise; he holds the hopes, fears, and aspirations of millions of American Jews. This man, who often introduces himself simply as “Doug,” could become the most influential Jew in the world. But the question remains: will he seize this moment to champion his people and their causes? Or will his power and influence slip into the background, unnoticed and underutilized?

Emhoff's journey is a uniquely American tale. Raised in a Jewish household in Brooklyn and later Los Angeles, he never hid his faith. His professional path as an accomplished lawyer saw him climb the ranks of major law firms, representing clients in high-stakes litigation and building a reputation for shrewdness and charm. Yet his marriage to Kamala Harris catapulted him into the national spotlight. Emhoff has said, “Kamala knew who I was [when we met]. I can vouch for her love of me and everything I am. I practice my faith, and she encourages me.”

From the moment Harris became US Vice President, Emhoff stepped into a new role; one not just of ceremonial handshakes and ribbon cuttings but of substance. He's used his platform to take on antisemitism head-on, a task more crucial now than ever. “We are all human beings created in the image of God with dignity, humanity, and purpose,” he said, echoing sentiments deeply within Jewish tradition.

When antisemitism reared its ugly head following the October 7 attacks, Emhoff was not silent. He led the Biden Administration's National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism, launched in 2023, a sweeping initiative designed to confront hate wherever it festers. “Even now, as we are getting ready for school, we are making sure students are going to be safe,” Emhoff declared. “Protests are fine, but when they cross the line... [students] need to be able to go to class.”

Most Jews in America see him as a voice that they have been longing to hear—a voice that says, “You are not alone.” In

his travels, whether meeting with Jewish leaders in London or hosting roundtables with US community leaders, Emhoff hears the fears, frustrations, and stories of people who have been threatened, harassed, and vilified simply for being Jewish.

Could Emhoff be our modern-day Esther?

Yet, his Jewish advocacy also opens doors to more significant questions: How does Emhoff balance his faith and newfound power? How does he navigate the tensions between Jewish values, his role in a diverse administration, and the complex politics of Israel? As the possible first gentleman, he'll influence the highest levels. Will he use it for the benefit of the Jewish people and Israel, or will his voice be diluted in the din of Washington?

The weight of the role

Emhoff is not the first to step into the White House with a cause. Michelle Obama championed healthy eating and exercise; Laura Bush pushed for education and literacy; Eleanor Roosevelt was a relentless advocate for human rights. Emhoff could champion the fight against antisemitism, but there's room to go further. How about promoting dialogue between religions – creating the kind of coalitions that can break down centuries-old barriers?

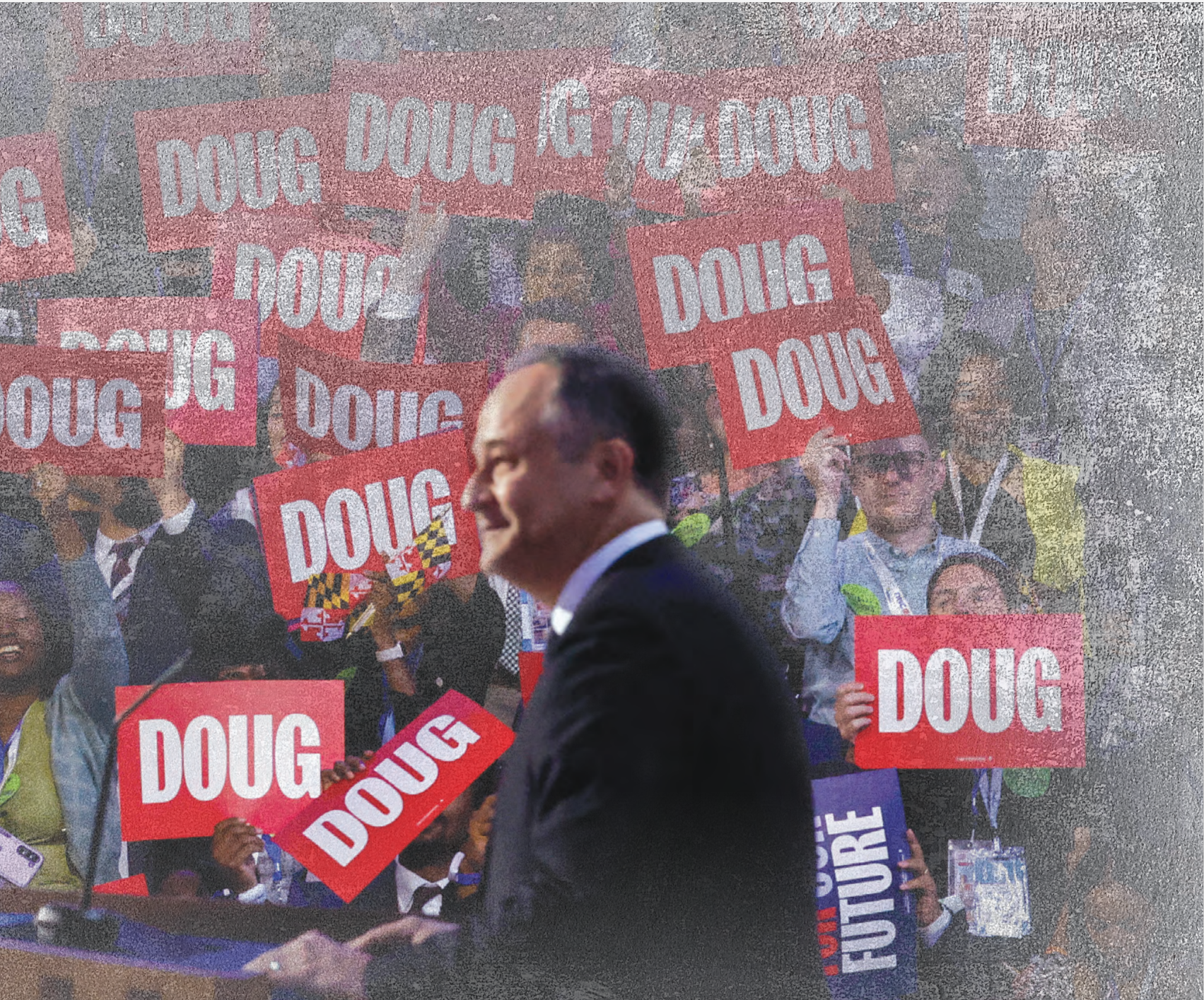
Some have drawn comparisons between Emhoff and the biblical Queen Esther, who used her position in the Persian court to save her people. Could Emhoff be our modern-day Esther? He has the ear of the president, access to the highest echelons of power, and a front-row seat to the policy-making that shapes American and Israeli futures. “I will continue to speak out against falsehoods, bigotry, and hate,” Emhoff has promised. But will those words translate into action? Will he be a strong enough advocate for his people, or will he be limited by the complex web of political alliances and competing priorities?

Has he done enough to combat antisemitism?

While Emhoff's advocacy against antisemitism has been visible and vocal, some argue that his efforts, and the broader White House strategy, fall short when it comes to addressing critical issues related to Israel. At a panel discussion at the Aspen Ideas Festival in June 2023, Emhoff and other Biden administration officials spoke extensively about combating antisemitism but avoided discussing Israel, even though the nation's significance is acknowledged in the 60-page National Strategy to Counter Antisemitism. The absence of Israel from public messaging has been a recurring point of criticism from Jewish leaders and community members who feel that the strategy overlooks how anti-Zionism can often mask antisemitic sentiments. “Doug Emhoff is great at showing up and saying the right things, but where's the action?” a critic posted online, capturing the sentiments of those who feel more needs to be done. Former Israeli ambassador to the UN Gilad Erdan also spoke out at the event, highlighting that words are not enough. “Jews today are afraid to walk outside with Jewish symbols,” Erdan said. “This is a disgrace on a global scale... the current approach is broken, and we need to take action. Not tomorrow, not next week, but today. Words are not enough.”

Jewish Insider highlighted this gap, noting that White House officials were reluctant to discuss how anti-Zionism would be addressed in the strategy's implementation. A senior White House official, when pressed on the matter, pointed to the text of the strategy: “When Jews are targeted because of their beliefs or identity, when Israel is singled out because of anti-Jewish hatred, that's antisemitism. That's unacceptable.” This official, however, declined to elaborate on how these definitions would shape concrete policy actions, leaving many Jewish advocates frustrated that the strategy stops short of directly addressing anti-Zionism as a significant contributor to rising antisemitism.

Further complicating matters, recent comments by CAIR's National Executive Director Nihad Awad have sparked controversy. Awad claimed that Gazans have the right to self-defense while denying



the same to Israel, stating he was “happy to see” Gazans “breaking the siege” during the October 7 massacre, which resulted in the deaths of 1,200 people. The White House swiftly condemned these remarks, labeling them antisemitic and emphasizing the responsibility of all leaders to call out antisemitism whenever it appears. “We condemn these shocking, antisemitic statements in the strongest terms,” White House spokesperson Andrew Bates said, reiterating President Biden’s stance that the Hamas attacks represent “unadulterated evil.”

As much as Emhoff has positioned himself as a staunch advocate, critics argue that his reluctance to confront contentious issues, particularly regarding

Israel and anti-Zionism, undermines his impact. This balancing act mirrors the broader tensions within the Jewish community. It is one that Emhoff will need to navigate carefully if he is to fulfill the promise of his platform.

A balancing act in the spotlight

Emhoff’s role as a Jewish advocate in the White House is not without its complexities. His family life reflects the nuanced dynamics of modern Jewish identity. His daughter Ella’s donation to a pro-Gaza organization highlights the varied and sometimes conflicting political views within Jewish families, which can complicate his public image. This balancing act is a microcosm of the

broader tensions in Jewish discourse today – support for Israel, advocacy against hate, and internal community divides.

While Emhoff’s efforts are commendable, some question whether his actions can rise to the level of influence he now possesses. Will he embrace his moment fully, becoming a strong advocate for Jews and Israel, or will his impact remain largely symbolic?

Doug, this is your moment. We need you to not just show up but fight. Use your platform to foster safety, unity, and pride among American Jews and beyond. We hope you rise to the challenge with courage and wisdom, just as Esther did. We need you now more than ever.

By ZVIKA KLEIN

JOSH SHAPIRO

Governor of Pennsylvania

A year ago, only a few people outside of Pennsylvania had heard of Josh Shapiro, 51, the Keystone State's governor since January 2023.

Today, the proudly Jewish governor who attended a Jewish Day School in suburban Philadelphia, studied on a high school program in Israel, and keeps a kosher kitchen in the governor's mansion in Harrisburg, is a widely recognized political name in America.

The reason: He was very much in the race to become Kamala Harris's running mate once US President Joe Biden stepped down in July and Harris's path to the Democratic Party's nomination was secured.

In the end, the talented politician who sounds uncannily like Barack Obama when he speaks – down to the cadence and use of terms like “hear me on this” sprinkled through his oratory – lost to Tim Walz.

Only Harris knows why she chose a progressive governor of a state she already has in her pocket (Minnesota) over a more moderate governor of a state she needs to win, but one factor that appears to have come into play is Shapiro's stalwart support for Israel.

An organized campaign was launched against Shapiro by the Left once his candidacy

looked serious, including dredging up an article he wrote in college questioning the viability of the Oslo Accords and saying the Palestinians were “too battle-minded” to live in peace with Israel.

When he emerged as a possible candidate in late July, CNN political correspondent John King matter-of-factly said Shapiro could be a liability because of his faith.

“He's a first-term governor; he's Jewish. There could be some risks in putting him on the ticket,” King said.

The risks were not necessarily due to Shapiro's Jewishness. If Jewish anti-Israel Senator Bernie Sanders had won the election, the radical

progressives who fiercely opposed Shapiro would not have protested. Rather, their opposition was because Shapiro was Jewish and unapologetically pro-Israel – a combination that, in a sad sign of the times, will not fly today with certain progressive elements inside the Democratic Party.

Identity politics has overtaken the US. Harris's identity as a black woman helped catapult her to where she is today. Shapiro's identity as a Jewish stalwart supporter of Israel is one factor that kept him back this time around.

By HERB KEINON

‘He’s a first-term
governor; he’s Jewish.
There could be risks
in putting him
on the ticket’



SHUTTERSTOCK

BILL ACKMAN

Taking stock

Bill Ackman did not hedge his bets this past year.

In the aftermath of the October 7 Hamas massacre and the outpouring of support for the terrorists on US campuses, the American billionaire who founded Pershing Square Capital Management went to battle against his alma mater, Harvard University, where he had donated tens of millions of dollars over the years.

When 30 student organizations at Harvard issued a statement on October 9 labeling Israel as being “fully responsible” for the Hamas slaughter and the university’s administration remained silent, Ackman went into takeover mode.

He posted on X/Twitter that the names of the signatories should be published so that his company and other potential employers would know their stance before hiring them.

“I don’t want any supporters of terrorism in our company,” said Ackerman.

The campaign forced some organizations to

withdraw their statements and prompted some students to cover their faces out of fear for their postgraduate future.

Ackman then began targeting Harvard’s administration and Harvard’s then-president in particular, Claudine Gay, to curb pro-Palestinian activity on campus. He recruited donors like him to also exert pressure by withholding their financial contributions, including to other universities rife with anti-Israel and antisemitic behavior.

Ackerman furthered his campaign against Gay after she, along with Liz Magill, now ex-president of the University of Pennsylvania, and MIT president Sally Kornbluth gave opaque, legalese testimonies on post-October 7 antisemitism on campus during a congressional hearing. Gay and Magill were forced to resign due to an uproar over the incident; Kornbluth was pressured to do the same but managed to hold on to her position.

By DAVID BRINN

‘I don’t want any
supporters of
terrorism in our
company’



Q&A with Bill Ackman

How did the events of October 7 affect you personally and how did they change your way of looking at the world?

October 7 was a wake-up call for me about the importance of Israel, the omnipresence of antisemitism, problems with the elite higher education system in the US, and growing control of the Democratic Party by the progressive wing of the party, among other concerns.

Were you surprised by the campus protests and vehement antisemitism that arose in response to Israel's war in Gaza?

Yes. Shocked would be a more accurate characterization.

Do you think that your public campaign against Harvard's policies have had a positive effect?

Yes, to some degree. Harvard is now under enormous scrutiny from the Congress, its alumni community, and others, which should have a positive impact and help to steer the university from driving over a cliff, where it was heading prior to October 7th.

Has your public support for Israel at all affected your business relationships or personal relationships?

Yes. It has had a positive impact in that many partners, investors, and others are highly supportive of my public support for Israel. To the extent that there is any negative impact, it has not been material or even visible to me or to the company.

You've been very vocal in your support for former president Trump. Was that a result of the Biden/Harris response to the war against Hamas?

My support for Trump has arisen due to a number of factors, which include the fact that I believe that the world has become a much less safe place due to the current administration's foreign policy and actions. I believe that a Trump administration would lead to a safer world and a more peaceful Middle East.

Do you think American Jews' place and standing in the US has forever been altered as a result of the last year?

No. I do think October 7 and the events thereafter have brought the global Jewish community much closer together, and American Jews and others around the world have become inherently more supportive of Israel.

Do you think Israel's robust tech/innovation and venture capital world will be able to withstand the battering it's taken over the last year?

Definitely yes.

Do you think Israel is still a good place to invest in?

Absolutely. Unfortunately, the world has become a much less safe place. Companies with Israeli innovations in surveillance, AI, security, and defense will be huge beneficiaries of recent events, as there will be growing demand for their products and services.

ANTONY BLINKEN

US Secretary of State's unceasing campaign to free hostages

Since taking office in 2021, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, as America's top diplomat, has been one of the most prominent Jews on the international stage, influencing world events.

That has been particularly true in the aftermath of Hamas's invasion of Israel on October 7, killing over 1,200 people and seizing 251 captives.

Blinken has made nine regional trips that included visits to Israel to underscore American support for Israel's war against the Iranian proxy groups Hamas and Hezbollah.

He has represented the United States in its efforts to secure the liberation of Gaza's captives, which included the 105 released in the initial hostage agreement, and in its diplomatic endeavors to safeguard Israel's southern and northern borders.

At a time when the United Nations Secretary-General said that the October 7 attack should be viewed within the context of "56 years of suffocating [Israeli] occupation" of the Palestinian people, Blinken placed the attack within the larger context of Jewish history, specifically the Holocaust, as he linked his own identity as a Jew with that of the Jewish people in Israel.

"After October 7, I come before you not only as the US secretary of State but also as a Jew," he stated. "I understand on a personal level the harrowing echoes that Hamas's massacres carry for Israeli Jews and indeed for Jews everywhere."

From the start of his public service career, Blinken has placed his own Judaism and Jewish values front and center of his own and the country's foreign policy, based in part on

ensuring that the massive human rights violations that led to the killing of six million Jews during World War II would never happen again.

He has transformed his personal story as the grandchild of a survivor of Russian programs and the stepson of renowned Holocaust survivor Samuel Pisar, one of the tenets that drives his commitment to a foreign policy based on human rights.

During his confirmation hearing for secretary of state, he told how Pisar, as a teenager in Bavarian woods who escaped a death march, fell to his knees in front of a US tank, uttering the only three English words he knew, "God bless America."

Blinken explained that this sentiment was what "we

[the US] represent to the world, however imperfectly, and what we can still be when we are at our best," swearing that this would be "the vision that I would pursue."

On his first day as secretary of state, he recorded a message in honor of Holocaust Remembrance Day 2021 in which he recalled that Pisar had taught him "that evil on a grand scale can and does happen in our world and that we have a responsibility to stop it."

"Every day that I serve as Secretary of State, I will carry the memory of my stepfather and his family and the six million Jewish people and millions of others who were killed during the Holocaust.

"I will remember that a nation's power isn't measured only by the size of its military or economy but by the moral choices it makes," he said, pledging to ensure that atrocities like the Holocaust never happen again.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

'After October 7,
I come before you
not only as the
US Secretary of State
but also as a Jew'





AVSHALOM SASSONI/FLASH90

BENJAMIN NETANYAHU

Prime Minister of Israel

There have been very few moments for Israelis to feel proud of their leadership in the nearly 12 months since the October 7 massacre – a situation that no horror movie director could have ever imagined.

We were slaughtered.

We were raped.

We were humiliated.

We were tortured, physically, and emotionally.

We're now approaching the point of developing PTSD from a trauma that still hasn't healed.

There was chaos on October 7, and in the many days that followed. Israelis, as well as diaspora Jews, were yearning for someone to be a parental figure. Someone who would say, "You are hurting, but I'm with you," or "It will be okay at the end of this war." Surprisingly, it wasn't an Israeli leader who uplifted Israelis; it was actually an American president.

"I come to Israel with a single message: You are not alone. You are not alone," President Joe Biden said on October 17. He continued, "We are all human beings created in the image of God with dignity, humanity, and purpose. In the darkness, to be the light unto the world is what we're about. You inspire hope and light for so many around the world. That's what the terrorists seek to destroy...because they live in darkness – but not you, not Israel."

Biden moved Israelis. Many cried. Others were left with goosebumps – finally, a voice of reason. Biden took the spotlight when he recounted his well-known meeting with the late Israeli prime minister Golda Meir: "Don't worry, Senator [Biden]," she whispered to him. "We Israelis have a secret weapon: We have nowhere else to go."

Only 22 days after the October 7 massacre, Netanyahu appeared to answer journalists' questions in a press conference. Even then, he refused to take any responsibility for the catastrophe that had unfolded three weeks earlier: Over 1,000 people were killed, and hundreds were kidnapped by a ruthless terror organization, including elderly men and women, children, and young soldiers.

The journalists, as well as many Israelis, expected Netanyahu to take responsibility for these failures – but they quickly understood that was not what he intended to say.

"Contrary to the false claims, at no point and in no situation was Prime Minister Netanyahu warned of Hamas's war inten-

tions," read a post published at 1:10 a.m. on Netanyahu's X/Twitter account and Telegram, hours after the press conference.

The prime minister specifically mentioned the heads of the intelligence organizations, stating: "On the contrary, all security officials, including the heads of Military Intelligence and Shin Bet, assessed that Hamas was deterred and inclined towards a settlement. This was the assessment repeatedly presented to the Prime Minister and the Cabinet by all security and intelligence officials, including up to the outbreak of the war."

It's hard to understand
this government –
one step forward,
two steps back

Netanyahu, being Netanyahu, attacked the heads of the security forces – those under his command – instead of admitting that he, too, might bear some responsibility, as any brave leader would.

While speaking in the US Congress in July, Netanyahu spoke like a true leader, though still avoiding responsibility. At least he was trying to promote unity, resilience, and hope. "The men and women of the IDF come from every corner of Israeli society, every ethnicity, every color, every creed left and right, religious and secular. All are imbued with the indomitable spirit of the Maccabees, the legendary Jewish warriors of antiquity."

He brought soldiers, released hostages, and heroes of October 7 to Washington on his refurbished Israeli Air Force One. He spoke of Ethiopian Israelis, injured officers, Druze and Bedouin, religious and non-religious. For the first time in many years, Netanyahu was not just speaking of unity – he was promoting it. The only problem was that this was happening far away, in the US, in English. It wasn't in Hebrew, and it wasn't at home – even though his main goal was to speak to Israelis who opposed him.

Netanyahu has since refused to grant any interviews to Israeli media, except for one outlet: his fanbase at Channel 14 News.

However, he's given numerous interviews to international media, mainly American outlets, and even podcasts. This strategy is clear: Most journalists who aren't Israeli won't ask the tough, 'inside baseball' questions. *The Jerusalem Post* has tried to interview the prime minister so that our tens of millions of readers in Israel and worldwide can understand his perspective on the current tragic situation. But Netanyahu prefers it easy, either with conservative media or large outlets, where he can criticize them later and gain more support in his natural voter base.

American officials claim that a ceasefire between Israel and Hezbollah is imminent, yet Netanyahu insists he's not easily pressured. It's hard to understand this government – one step forward, two steps back.

Do you sleep at night? Would you have pursued the judicial reform if you had foreseen the backlash?

Does accepting responsibility equate to admitting guilt?

Why do you refuse to engage with Israeli media, choosing instead to communicate with Israelis only through your speeches abroad? When speaking overseas, you are clear, sharp, and resolute, embodying a strong Zionist spirit. Yet, these messages are hardly heard back home.

You frequently speak about the need for national unity, but polarization only deepens. How can you, as prime minister, change this situation?

What steps is your government taking, especially during this year of war, to foster unity and create a shared sense of purpose between the home front and those on the battlefield?

What would you have done differently in your leadership over the past two years?

To what extent does the fear of ending the war and losing the upcoming elections influence your decisions? How much does this fear shape your choices? Do you actually want the hostages to return?

What is your take on the Hostage Family Forum? Do you agree with claims that they are just a continuation of the anti-judicial-reform protests?

How can a prime minister function effectively when he doesn't trust his own defense minister and faces constant opposition from ministers briefing against him, such as Itamar Ben-Gvir?

Finally, my friends and family have all invested months—and many, also their lives—to protect our nation. Do you gen-

CHAIM GOLDBERG/FLA SH90



uinely believe that the ultra-Orthodox should not be required to enlist?

So, is Netanyahu influential? Definitely. He's the longest-serving Israeli prime minister. But is he using his power appropriately? Many, if not most, Israelis at some point this past year agreed that he needs to step down, whether after the war or during it. Most agree that he should be taking responsibility, as should others. But let's be clear – it can never be one person's fault or mistake. Many people are to blame for what has happened in the past year. Too many. However, regardless of who they are, the ones at the top should always take the blame, as leaders should do.

In a way, Netanyahu – one of the smartest and most capable leaders we've ever

had – has become like the elder rabbi of the haredi (ultra-Orthodox) communities in Israel. They are usually over the age of 80 or even 90, unable to see the full picture of what is going on because they aren't reading newspapers or listening to the radio. They know only what their advisors decide to tell them, fed information through particular perspectives or prisms. The problem is, as in the haredi communities, until these figures either step down or pass away, no new leader is considered capable of the role.

But it is time for Netanyahu to finally allow new leadership to emerge, whether from his party or others. As Golda Meir said, our secret weapon is that we have nowhere else to go.

By ZVIKA KLEIN

RACHEL AND JON GOLDBERG-POLIN

Israeli-American parents of hostage Hersh

“I love you” and “I’m sorry.” Those were the final words Rachel and Jon Goldberg-Polin heard – actually, read – from their son, Hersh, on October 7. Hamas terrorists attacked the Nova festival, which he had attended, while he and approximately 30 others were hiding in a bomb shelter that was being hit with grenades.

It was later discovered that Hersh’s arm had been partially severed before terrorists threw him and others onto a pickup truck and drove them over the Gaza border.

Since then, Rachel and Jon have not had a moment of rest. They spoke with practically every world leader under the sun, and then some, asking for their assistance in bringing the hostages safely home. Unfortunately, it was too late for Hersh, whose body was discovered in September, just a few days after he was murdered.

Since then, Rachel’s signature strip of masking tape with a Sharpie’d-on number — the number of days since October 7 — was adopted worldwide by Israel’s supporters and other hostage families.

In April, Hamas finally released proof of life in a video of Hersh, giving the family the inspiration they desperately needed that their fight was not in vain. Even so, they repeatedly highlighted the fact that the civilians sacrificed on either side suffer the most in war.

“We’re extras in a production that we never signed up for,” Rachel told *The Wall Street Journal* in May. Later, in June, she told *The Jerusalem Post* that, being a hostage family, “every minute is agony.”

Indeed, she has been the symbol of a grieving mother in these harsh months, telling JTA in December, “We get up every morning, and we have to pretend to be people. Because in order to save them, we have to function.”

They have been vocal advocates for the hostages, highlighting their diversity.

“I very rarely hear anyone advocating for the Muslim Arabs being held or the Thai Buddhists

being held or the black African Christians being held,” Rachel told CNN in June. “There are Nepalese, Argentinians, Germans, Polish; you just don’t hear it.”

The Goldberg-Polin family has been consistent in its criticism of the Israeli government, saying it has not done enough for the safe return of the hostages.

Jon and Rachel have been adamant in their call for people to do good in Hersh’s name, even launching a “Week of Goodness” in July to encourage kindness, good deeds, and generosity to help bring the hostages back.

By far, however, their most moving speeches — and, indeed, most heartbreaking — were those made at Hersh’s funeral in early September.

“One of the most fitting posts I saw about Hersh yesterday was the one that said, ‘May his memory be a revolution,’” Jon said. “Hersh, we failed you. We all failed you. You would not have failed you. You would have pushed harder for justice... Maybe, just maybe, your death is the stone, the fuel that would bring all the remaining 101 hostages.”

Rachel’s eulogy began with words that echoed in the hearts of every mother. “Out of all the mothers in the whole entire world, God chose to give Hersh to me. What must I have done in a past life to deserve such a beautiful gift?” she asked.

“How do we live the rest of our lives without you?” she asked Hersh himself. “Dada and I would often talk about who you would become. What you would be like when you grew up, what you would do, what you would look like, and what kind of parent you would be. But now, you will forever be our beautiful boy... forever young.”

Her final words were heart-wrenching: “Okay, sweet boy, go now on your journey. I hope it’s as good as the trips you dreamed about because finally, my sweet boy, finally, finally, finally, finally, finally, you’re free!”

By TAMAR URIEL-BEERI

Jon and Rachel
have been adamant
in their call for
people to do good
in Hersh’s name



ELIZABETH FRANTZ/REUTERS

RONALD S. LAUDER

President, World Jewish Congress

Ronald S. Lauder is president of the World Jewish Congress, wielding influence on a range of issues related to Israel and the Diaspora, and widely viewed as the global Jewish community's most prominent statesman. The WJC advocates for the safety and prosperity of Jewish communities in 106 countries, and, as its president, Lauder meets with presidents, prime ministers, regents, and figures at the highest levels of government in many countries worldwide each year to advance action on critical issues. He is leading the fight against extreme anti-Israel sentiment and antisemitism at a time when they are on the rise in all countries, on many college campuses, and on most social media platforms, and the WJC is seen by many as the strongest international voice on these fronts.

Lauder has served as US ambassador to Austria; prior to that, he served at the Pentagon as a senior official with responsibilities for NATO and key European policies. Following these diplomatic posts, he became president of the Conference of Presidents of Major Jewish Organizations. He led the Jewish National Fund from 1997 to 2007 and has been its board chair ever since. The World Jewish Congress elected Lauder as its president in 2007, a position he continues to occupy. In Israel, Lauder, working with the Jewish National Fund-USA, launched two hubs of economic development – the Lauder Employment Center in the Negev and, more recently, the Lauder Employment Center in the Galilee. These efforts have found jobs for thousands of young people in the North and in the Negev, helping to realize Ben-Gurion's vision. His global education focus includes founding 35 Jewish schools in eastern Europe as a first step to rebuilding decimated Jewish communities there. Lauder has been a strong advocate of a Marshall Plan for the Middle East, focused on spurring investments to create jobs and opportunity in the Palestinian territories and giving young people there a chance at a strong, prosperous, and optimistic future instead of one defined by violence and desperation. He believes that such a plan holds the promise of a path to sustainable peace in the

region, including a two-state solution.

In an interview ahead of Rosh Hashanah and the anniversary of October 7, Lauder shared his bold vision for peace and security.

‘Winning on the
battlefield is not enough.
Israel must focus on the
war of public opinion and
build and maintain
strong global alliances’

What do you believe is the most significant challenge facing the US and the Diaspora one year after October 7?

A resurgence of open hatred towards the Jewish people to levels unseen since our history's darkest chapter. This is alarming, especially with a troubling lack of security and support for Jewish students and educators on college campuses, which policymakers of both parties in all localities rectify. Recent polls reveal a troubling trend of Jews feeling compelled to hide their Jewish identity due to fear of discrimination or violence. Unacceptable. But these problems are emblems of a much bigger crisis: the epidemic of radicalism that promotes and condones hate against Jews and Israel – and is not just permitted but rewarded by extremists in education, popular culture, and politics. The past year has been eye-opening in just how bad the crisis is. It is also decades in the making: a creeping antisemitic, anti-Israel radicalism that despises and seeks to destabilize the West has been festering in academia, pop culture, and politics for decades; it did not just self-invent on October 8th. But it has revealed itself for all to see. The question for history is what do we do about it, and there is no question that we must fight extremism, including but not limited to hatred for Jews and for Isra-

el, throughout our education system. I am deeply committed to this issue long-term.

In your view, what is the most effective way to combat the rising tide of antisemitism and anti-Zionism?

To counter rising antisemitism and anti-Zionism, we must clearly define right from wrong and call out hate consistently. Tolerating or promoting hate and extremism must be known to have lasting consequences. We can't be silent or passive; we need to challenge these dangerous ideologies in academia, popular culture, and politics.

What is your advice to Israel when it comes to presenting its case to the world?

Israel cannot stand alone; it must work closely with its allies. Winning on the battlefield is not enough. Israel must focus on the war of public opinion and build and maintain strong global alliances that will not only back Israel during times of conflict but also be its partner in the aftermath. By presenting its case to the people of the world, Israel can ensure that it has support not just in war but in the crucial process of rebuilding and moving toward peace.

How do you view your role and the role of the World Jewish Congress in these challenging times?

As a global ally for Israel and the Jewish community, I see my role as a friend, supporter, defender, statesman. The World Jewish Congress is dedicated to protecting and advocating for a strong, safe, and prosperous Jewish community. We'll collaborate with anyone who stands with us, building bridges and ensuring Jewish voices are heard and respected. Our dedication to our community's safety has never been stronger.

How can the US and Israel enhance and strengthen their relationship in today's complex geopolitical landscape?

As an American patriot and a Zionist, I appreciate both parties' strong support for Israel, which cannot waver and which upholds our shared values of democracy and freedom. To strengthen the US-Israel

bond, we should expand the Abraham Accords, enhance defense and security cooperation, and boost technology and trade ventures. Open dialogue between our governments will help us address global challenges together, ensuring mutual prosperity and advancing peace

and democracy in the region. This must happen no matter who wins the upcoming American election.

What are your hopes and prayers for the coming year?

My prayers blend concern with opti-

mism. I pray for the safe return of the 101 hostages and for global efforts to end conflicts and bring lasting peace. I envision a secure Israel, supported by a regional Marshall Plan and a two-state solution. This vision drives my daily commitment.

By STEVE LINDE

ITAMAR BEN-GVIR

Improving or hindering security?

National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir has successfully imposed his will on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over and over again since taking office in late December 2022. He used the six MKs of his far-right Otzma Yehudit party to threaten government and coalition stability in order to gain concessions, such as the “Police Law,” which gave him the power to set “general policy” for the Israel Police; a committee to examine the formation of a new National Guard; control over the National Unit for Enforcing Planning and Construction Laws; and a sharp increase in his ministry’s annual budget.

Indeed, Ben-Gvir described the NIS 9 billion budget increase as a major achievement, which he said led to an increase in police officers’ salaries, curbed a wave of resignations, and increased police recruiting. Other achievements he listed included the formation of 933 new civilian first-response security teams; approving distribution of over 175,000 personal firearms; and forming a team to combat incitement on social media, which, he claims, led to the “quietest Ramadan ever.” Ben-Gvir also prides himself on worsening the conditions of Palestinian security prisoners and increasing enforcement against building violations, especially by Bedouin citizens in the Negev.

However, data show that his performance in combating crime, especially organized crime in the Arab sector, is abysmal. In 2022, under

the previous government, the number of homicides in the Arab sector dropped for the first time in seven years, from 126 to 116. In 2023, under Ben-Gvir, the number skyrocketed to 244, and in 2024, it has already reached 171, true to September 14. Arab MKs and mayors, along with members of the opposition, have

claimed that Ben-Gvir does not have an effective plan to combat crime; in her retirement speech on September 18, the head of the police’s operations branch said that the government was addressing the issue “ignorantly” and through “narrow political interests” and that criminal gangs had already taken control of some local authorities.

Ramadan this year was indeed quiet, but that could be despite Ben-Gvir, not because of him. His insistence on changing visitation rights for Jews to the Temple Mount during Ramadan, which security agencies warned could lead to a severe security situation, was curbed at the last minute. Furthermore, his insistence last month that the status quo on the Temple Mount had changed created an uproar in the Muslim world and forced the prime minister’s office to put out numerous clarifications that this was not the case to defuse the situation.

Ben-Gvir is certainly one of the most influential figures in Israel. But the question of whether national security improved under his tenure as national security minister is another matter.

By ELIAV BREUER

His claim about the Temple Mount status quo sparked Muslim outrage, forcing the prime minister’s office to issue clarifications



MARC ISRAEL SELLEM

DAVID BARNEA

Thwarting Iran, blocking global terror, allegedly masterminding Lebanon beeper explosions, hostage negotiator

Mossad Director David Barnea's image was framed as a "gadget-loving killing machine" long before he was accused by Hezbollah of wounding 3,000-4,000 of its operatives when thousands of their beepers, walkie talkies, and other electronic devices suddenly blew up on September 17-18.

Although he only became Mossad chief in June 2021, he was credited by many foreign observers as the architect of the assassination of Iran nuclear chief Mohsen Fakhrizadeh in November 2020 using a "star wars" style long-range remote control gun.

The impact of the electronic device explosions on Hezbollah did not just remove many operatives from the battlefield – although that in and of itself was substantial – it also disabled the organization's national communications and paralyzed their ability to respond for several days.

It probably laid the groundwork for the assassination of Radwan special forces Chief Ibrahim Aqil and his sub-commanders, who may have been forced to congregate physically in one spot due to the breakdown in electronic communications.

All this created an optimal situation for the IDF to start its mass air strikes, bearing down on Hezbollah with the terror group on its hind legs.

Already early in Barnea's term, it was reported that he undertook a radical restructuring of the Mossad's staffing and resources, empowering it to break new records using technology and creativity to combat Israel's enemies; the fruits of that long-term visionary move will continue to be felt going forward.

But Barnea's main role has remained combating Iran and its nuclear weapons program.

Under his leadership, the Mossad has thwarted over 50 Iran-sponsored attempted terror attacks against Jews worldwide this past year, at least double the preceding year, *The Jerusalem Post* exclusively reported last week.

While the world occasionally receives a glimpse into the clandestine world where Barnea and his spies operate, there are far more Iran-sponsored terror incidents thwarted by the Mossad, which the world will never get a whiff about.

In September 2023, Barnea revealed in a speech at Reichman University that the Mossad had thwarted an impressive 27

global terrorist incidents in foreign countries that Iran had planned against Jews and Israelis.

The fact that this number has at the very least doubled but that Barnea and the Mossad have kept pace in shutting down Tehran's escalating ambitions to harm Jews shows the vast resources he has poured into that mission.

Early in Barnea's term, he restructured Mossad, using technology and creativity to combat Israel's enemies

During Barnea's tenure from April to June 2022, the Mossad publicly took credit for abducting Mansour Rasouli of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps global terrorist unit 840, in which they released video footage of him confessing to masterminding a terrorist plot against Jews in Turkey; the Mossad was accused by Iran of killing around a dozen nuclear scientists and terrorism officials.

In June 2023, the Mossad revealed that it had thwarted an Iranian terrorist attack on Jews in Cyprus by kidnapping the mastermind from within Iranian territory.

Outside of Iran, the Mossad, according to foreign sources, assassinated Sayyed Razi Mousavi in December 2023 and Mohammad Reza Zahedi on April 1, both top IRGC chiefs in Damascus.

Also, on July 31 this past summer, Iran attributed the assassination of Hamas political chief Ismail Haniyeh to the Mossad.

In April, Iran publicly threatened to cross the threshold and develop nuclear weapons if Israel would dare to attack Tehran's nuclear facilities. The *Post* understands that the Mossad saw the Islamic Republic's public threat as a potential game changer, demonstrating that Iran was becoming even more dangerous and aggressive in the nuclear weapons arena.

The *Post* learned that this has led the Mossad to double down in its multifront battle, regarding a variety of technological

issues and disciplines, to block Iran from getting a nuclear weapon.

Unlike IDF intelligence chief Aharon Haliva, who quit in July-August because of his failure to stop Hamas's October 7 invasion, and Shin Bet Chief Ronen Bar, who has promised to quit too at some point, Barnea and the Mossad have been tasked with intelligence responsibility globally, but specifically not regarding Gaza. For that reason, no one has called for his resignation, and he is being judged more on his record regarding the above areas.

Regarding Hamas leaders, the Mossad has said it has a long arm and will get all of them, no matter where in the world they are hiding, for their role in the Oct. 7 slaughter of 1,200 Israelis and the kidnapping of over 250 hostages.

As reported by the *Post*, the statement made by Barnea in January, the day after Hamas deputy chief Saleh al-Aroui was assassinated, still applies: "None of them are going to live."

Barnea has made this an organizational and personal promise, which he is anxious to fulfill as soon as possible, not just in the distant future.

The Mossad chief has also been in the news regularly as Israel's lead negotiator with Qatar to return the Israeli hostages held by Hamas.

Barnea succeeded by walking on an incredibly difficult tightrope to seal an agreement with Hamas in November 2023, which returned 84 Israeli hostages and 24 foreign hostages.

Since December 2023, he has continued to work hard with IDF Maj.-Gen. (res.) Nitzan Alon and others to return the remaining hostages.

Along with the IDF, the Shin Bet, and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant, the Mossad emphatically rejects the idea that the Philadelphia Corridor has the existential value that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has attributed to it.

But he is also careful to blame Hamas for creating new conditions regarding the list of prisoners and hostages to be exchanged in any deal.

At the end of the day, even the chief of the Mossad cannot produce magic on his own when a stubborn messianic terrorist like Hamas Chief Yahya Sinwar is the negotiator – but he has promised to never give up as long as there is even a ray of hope.

By YONAH JEREMY BOB



OLIVIER FITOUSSI/FILAS90

YOAV GALLANT

Israel's 'go-to' defense minister

Yoav Gallant has been on the ropes for some time. His expected firing as Israel's defense minister was temporarily frozen on September 19 due to the anti-Hezbollah beeper explosions operation, but as long as he remains in office, he will also likely remain the second-most-powerful defense figure in Israel, as he has been for most of his term dating back to January 2023.

Gallant was on this list last year, but the article on him and security threats faced by Israel did not even mention Hamas, with only a quick note about a successful short operation by the IDF against Islamic Jihad in Gaza in May 2023.

Rather, the focus was on Hezbollah, Iran, and West Bank terror because "everyone knew" that Hamas in Gaza – which apparently had been so deterred that it did not even help Islamic Jihad fight Israel in May 2023 – was not considered a threat.

Gallant and everyone else (other than one junior intelligence officer and a few junior Gaza border lookout officers) within the political and defense establishment classes (and within the media) never saw Hamas coming on October 7, 2023.

His decades-long legacy as an aggressive and heroic general within the IDF was supposed to be topped off with addressing the Iranian nuclear threat, which he had spoken about so often.

Instead, his legacy will be forever marred as the defense minister in place when 1,200 Israelis were killed and around 250 kidnapped while a weak, makeshift militia of a few thousand fighters ransacked 22 villages all over southern Israel.

In historical terms, probably more of the blame will be placed on IDF intelligence for ignoring the warning signs and on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu for being one of the key architects of a "containment" policy for Hamas dating back to 2009. But Gallant will not be able to escape blame for not raising more questions about whether Hamas was really deterred and whether technological border solutions could fully replace having more boots on the ground next to the border fence.

However, Gallant will also receive some historical credit.

He is the defense minister who directed the successful invasions of Gaza City, Khan Yunis, and Rafah. Regarding Rafah, in order to retain US support, the initial invasion plans were altered. However, *The Jerusalem Post* has learned that significant aspects of the invasion plans were a copy-paste from plans proposed by then IDF Southern Commander Gallant during the 2008-2009 conflict with Hamas, when his political and military superiors blocked the move.

Gallant believes that
he is the true
continued legacy of
Ze'ev Jabotinsky and
Menachem Begin

When the Biden administration lost faith in Netanyahu at critical points during the war, Gallant has been the go-to Israeli official to assure the US and manage cutting deals to smooth over the disputes, the *Post* has learned.

In bizarre fashion – given that during his time as IDF Southern Commander, many IDF lawyers regarded him as a bombastic cowboy – he has been one of the forces in the government for upholding the rule of law within Israel and human rights law for Palestinians. He has also been a thorn in Netanyahu's side regarding any attempts to carry out a judicial overhaul – or an overhaul without buy-in from some of the opposition parties.

Whenever National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir attacked Israel's defense chiefs or provoked its Arab allies, Gallant was the grownup who tried to set things straight.

Haredi parties and Netanyahu have tried to ignore the new realities of the war regarding the need for more from the ultra-Orthodox sector to serve in the IDF. Gallant, along with the High Court of Justice, held the line, saying that co-

alition politics could no longer exempt them when so many Israelis from all sectors are losing sons and daughters to the war on a daily basis.

Gallant's legacy on Hezbollah remains unclear.

He pushed the hardest for attacking Hezbollah with a major operation on October 11, something that Netanyahu vetoed along with Benny Gantz and the US.

Will Israel come out of this war having reduced the Hezbollah threat due to persistence over the last year, a major operation on August 25, major operations (attributed by Hezbollah and the world, and with significant details confirmed by the *Post*) on September 17-18, and other as-yet-untold stories?

Or will Israel leave itself vulnerable to Hezbollah after a year of sacrificing its sovereignty in dozens of villages, including the evacuation of 60,000 northern residents?

Will Gallant be credited for forward-thinking on October 11, which Netanyahu and others had to get in line with later?

Or will Netanyahu's approach of postponing the issue until Hamas is mostly defeated be validated?

Gallant has fought with Netanyahu – and lost – to get him to offer the Palestinian Authority a role in post-war Gaza so as to replace Hamas and to try to get him to cut a deal in July-August to return 18-30 hostages in return for withdrawing, at least temporarily, from all of Gaza, including the Philadelphi Corridor.

Who will history judge as having been correct on those issues?

Gallant believes that the Likud under Netanyahu has gone stray and that he is the true continued legacy of Ze'ev Jabotinsky and Menachem Begin, who were right-wing but had common sense and respect for non-partisan officials in the courts and military.

Netanyahu views Gallant as a disloyal soldier who frequently defected to the opposing team after receiving a significant role in the government.

How Gallant will go down in history will remain uncertain for the time being. But no one can dispute that he has been a major historical player.

By YONAH JEREMY BOB



CHAIM GOLDBERG/FLASH90

SHERYL SANDBERG

'Most important work of my life'

Former Meta COO and author Sheryl Sandberg is famous for encouraging women to “lean in” and make their voices heard in the business world. It was therefore fitting that this year she chose to take up the cause of women who can never lean in or speak up again – the victims of sexual assaults by Hamas on October 7.

She used her considerable power in the corporate world and media to make a documentary about the rapes and sexual abuse of Israeli women by the terrorists, called *Screams Before Silence*, which was released on YouTube in April. More than 1.2 million people have watched the film, now available with subtitles in several languages. Sandberg oversaw the making of *Screams Before*

Silence and personally conducted the interviews with rape victims, witnesses, first responders, medical personnel, forensic experts, and officials.

Horrified by the widespread denial of these rapes by international organizations, including women's groups that previously espoused the mantra “Believe All Women,” Sandberg took decisive action to bring the evidence of Hamas's horrific crimes and their systematic use of rape as a weapon of war to light.

She gave the violence survivors a voice and methodically presented evidence as to why so few have been able to speak out: The vast majority were murdered by the terrorists after and sometimes during the assaults.

'We can take the pain and trauma and turn it into hope'



THIBAUT CAMUS/REUTERS/POOL

Reiterating a statement she has made many times since October 7, Sandberg says in the film, “Rape is never resistance. Rape is never acceptable.”

Calling her advocacy for these victims “the most important work

of my life,” she concludes: “We can take the pain and trauma and turn it into hope, turn it into commitment, turn it into conviction that we are not going to let this happen again.”

By HANNAH BROWN

CLAUDIA SHEINBAUM

Mexico's first female and first Jewish president

Claudia Sheinbaum's election as Mexico's first female and first Jewish president on June 4, 2024, marked a significant milestone. However, her leadership has been met with mixed reactions, particularly among Mexico's Jewish community, which is largely conservative. Despite her Jewish heritage, Sheinbaum has kept her faith largely out of her public persona, and many Jewish Mexicans did not vote for her, citing concerns about her party's perceived authoritarian leanings.

The granddaughter of Jewish immigrants from Bulgaria and Lithuania, she embodies a blend of cultural identity, yet her political stance has sparked concerns. Critics argue that her presidency could consolidate power within her party, echoing authoritarian tendencies seen in other Latin American nations. This has raised fears, particularly among Mexico's

50,000-strong Jewish community, who worry that her Jewish identity could become a focal point for political criticism and antisemitic undercurrents.

Since the October 7, 2023, Hamas attacks on Israel, Sheinbaum has not directly addressed the matter in public. On that day, she remained focused on her campaign activities and made no statements about the violence. Later, she condemned Hamas while simultaneously calling for the recognition of a Palestinian state alongside Israel, reflecting a stance in line with Mexico's broader foreign policy of neutrality and non-intervention under President Andrés Manuel López Obrador.

Critics within the Jewish community worry that her Jewish identity could become politicized, especially if she faces criticism during her presidency. Some expressed concern that her actions could trigger



RAQUEL CUNHA/REUTERS

subtle antisemitism, while others, drawing uneasy comparisons to other Latin American governments, said they fear that Sheinbaum's close ties with outgoing President Obrador could lead to a concentration of power.

Despite these apprehensions, Sheinbaum's impact as a historical figure and her policy focus on addressing economic inequality make her an intriguing and influential leader in Mexico today.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

SYLVAN ADAMS

Enhancing Israel's global image

Sylvan Adams, a Canadian-Israeli businessman and philanthropist, has dedicated himself to enhancing Israel's global image since moving to the Jewish state in 2016. Known as the "self-appointed ambassador-at-large for Israel," he combats negative media portrayals by showcasing the country's reality, the Israel he says he "knows and loves," through high-profile cultural and sporting events.

Adams famously brought to Israel Lionel Messi, along with Argentina's national soccer team, for a friendly game in Tel Aviv; Madonna for a cameo at the Eurovision Song Contest (ensuring that it was the most watched edition in the Eurovision's history); and Trophée des Champions, the championship game of the French soccer league, again featuring Messi, the world's most famous athlete with a social media following of more than a half a billion fans.

Adams was also responsible for Israel hosting the largest sporting event in the country's history: the *Grande Partenza* ("Big Start") of the Giro d'Italia, showing Israel to nearly a billion television spectators and bringing a million Israelis into the streets to watch what Adams described as "a three-day national group hug."

These events brought Israel into the living rooms of hundreds of millions of viewers around the world, presenting a positive narrative over the heads of the often-hostile media.

Adams has also contributed significantly to Israel's sports infrastructure, founding the Middle East's first velodrome, establishing an institute for sports excellence at Tel Aviv University, and rebuilding and modernizing the gymnasiums at TAU, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, and the multicultural Jerusalem International YMCA. Following the October 7 massacre, Adams donated

\$100 million to BGU to strengthen Israel's southern region and contribute to the development of Israel's Negev via the university, the economic engine of the South.

The philanthropist also initiated projects that advance Israel's healthcare infrastructure, including a children's hospital in Holon and a state-of-the-art emergency facility at Tel Aviv's Ichilov Hospital – the largest in the world. He is the largest donor to Save a Child's Heart, a program that provides life-saving cardiac operations on children from disadvantaged regions, including countries without diplomatic ties to Israel.

Additionally, Adams has funded important Jewish community institutions in North America, primarily in his former home of Montreal, where Jewish ed-



MARC ISRAEL SELLEM

ucation and demographic continuity are his priorities. This includes building a new Jewish high school and teaching Jewish adolescents about their heritage because, as he says, "You cannot love what you don't know."

Adams, a member of the Giving Pledge, had the honor of lighting a torch at Israel's 75th Independence Day ceremony. When asked about any new projects he's working on, he replied, "Stay tuned; I'm just getting started."

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

PRESIDENT ISAAC HERZOG

A president active and engaged

Strictly speaking, the role of the president of the State of Israel is largely ceremonial. It touches on politics when the president makes his maiden speech in the Knesset, when he consults with political parties on their recommendations for a prime minister after the Knesset elections, when he tasks a Knesset member to form a government, and when he opens a new session of the Knesset.

Otherwise, he is expected to be apolitical. But each of Israel's 11 presidents came from a political background, and most were previously legislators and ministers.

Remaining apolitical has proved almost impossible.

President Isaac Herzog, who has served in several ministerial positions as well as opposition leader, is no exception. It could be argued that he is the most politically oriented president to date, surpassing even Shimon Peres, who was the longest-serving of Israel's MKs.

Remaining apolitical has proved almost impossible

Herzog spoke out against judicial reform, a political hot potato. He also meets regularly with released hostages and hostage families, insisting that the release of the hostages in Gaza takes priority above all other considerations. Regarding developments post-October 7, Herzog has called for an emergency national unity government several times.

The peripatetic Herzog acts in a diplomatic and political capacity during state visits and participation in international events. His talks with presidents, prime ministers, opposition leaders, and heads of Jewish communities include pointing out the cruelty of Hamas; the urgent need for the immediate release of the hostages; the danger of a nuclear Iran and its proxies, not only to the region but to the world; and the dangerous rising antisemitism.

These conversations are not limited to in-person meetings. Herzog is in frequent contact with heads



MARC ISRAEL SELLEM

of state, government leaders, and other influential personalities.

Furthermore, he hosts counterparts when they visit Israel and meets regularly with members of the diplomatic community and leaders and delegations of Diaspora Jewish communities.

His crowded calendar also includes meetings with heads of all the organizations that are part of Israel's defense and security network; visits to army bases and hospitals; educational and cultural institutions; Arab and Druze villages; and more. In other words,

he does his utmost to be the president of all the people.

What endears Herzog to many people is his wealth of knowledge on a wide variety of subjects, as well as his incredible recollection of names and faces. Given the numerous individuals he encounters daily, one could forgive him for forgetting, and it often comes as a pleasant surprise to hear him recall their most recent encounter. All of this, and more, contributes to his range of influence in Israel and around the world.

By GREER FAY CASHMAN

IDF CHIEF OF STAFF LT.-GEN. HERZI HALEVI

The IDF's leader in war

The Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Herzi Halevi, has faced unprecedented challenges over the past year as he has sought to lead the IDF in one of its most difficult wars in history.

On one hand, he is blamed as the IDF chief who failed to stop Hamas's October 7, 2023 invasion, the greatest military and national disaster since the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Because of that failure, he committed shortly after the start of the war to resign early as a sign of taking responsibility. On the other hand, he has received high marks from many for his management of the war since then, especially with his defeat of all 24 Hamas battalions in Gaza. However, even after his success in invading Gaza, he has been criticized by many, especially since June when the invasion of Rafah was mostly complete, for not fulfilling his promise to resign early. He has still maintained that he will resign early, but has not given a time frame.

The Israeli cabinet confirmed Halevi's promotion to his current role in October 2022, just under a year before the Hamas invasion. He formally took charge of the IDF in January 2023.

Halevi, born in 1967, began his career in the IDF in 1985, serving in the Paratroopers Brigade and then in the elite Sayeret Matkal unit. He served in Lebanon and fought in the Second Intifada. He was a former commander of the 91st Division, which defends northern Israel, as well as head of Southern Command. Next, he was head of IDF intelligence and deputy IDF chief of staff. He holds a BA from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and an MA from the National Defense University in



MARC ISRAEL SELLEM

northern Israel, as well as head of Southern Command. He holds a BA from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and an MA from the National Defense University in the US.

He assumed command of the IDF when it was undergoing a rapid modernization into the digital era as part of the Momentum Plan. The IDF was acquiring new drones as well as new armored personnel carriers and developing new artillery. The Hamas attack on October 7 caught the IDF by surprise, resulting in a massacre of Israelis and forcing Israel to call up more than 300,000 soldiers. Halevi has managed the war effort for a year, commanding one of the largest armies Israel has kept in the field over a long period of time.

As if to underscore the challenges he and the IDF now face on multiple fronts, he traveled on September 18 to northern Israel to meet with the army's Northern Command as Hezbollah threatened to widen the war against Israel. "We are very determined to create the security conditions that will return the residents to their homes, to the communities with a high level of security, and we are ready to do all that is required to bring about these things," he said that day. "Throughout the war, for almost a year, we have been fighting in Gaza with two main goals, as well as others - dismantling Hamas and returning the hostages. We have achieved a lot, and we still have further to go." How he will be judged on the major escalation with Hezbollah which started on September 17 is still an open question.

By **SETH J. FRANTZMAN**
and **JERUSALEM POST STAFF**

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BEZALEL SMOTRICH, MOSHE ARBEL AND NIR BARKAT

Navigating Israel's political landscape

Unlike Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich, chairman of the Religious Zionism Party, has taken explicit responsibility for the failures of October 7. However, he broke the link that many had drawn between the massacre and the nation's division over judicial reform prior to it.

Smotrich has staunchly op-

posed the proposed hostage deals because they would include a specified release of Palestinian security prisoners, which he deems too high a price, except for the November deal. Part of his opposition stems from his suspicions about the Palestinian Authority's intentions.

In his additional role in the Defense Ministry, Smotrich con-



MARC ISRAEL SELLEM

trols Civil Administration bylaws, which has led to more demolitions of illegal homes built by Palestinians and approvals of settlements over the past year, drawing ire from Jerusalem's closest allies. This is rooted in ideology, strengthened by October 7, that security is the surest way to guarantee survival, falling in line with his distrust and disdain towards the Palestinian Authority.

Smotrich has argued that the economy is in good shape, although the cost of living is increasing in every parameter, and all three major credit companies have downgraded Israel's rating.

Coalition agreements indicate that a Shas representative, possibly Interior Minister Moshe Arbel, will soon lead the ministry. Arbel stands out due to the widespread respect he enjoys across the political chessboard.

He also served in the IDF and has been an advocate to increase the number of haredim (ultra-Orthodox) in the army.

In September, he launched an initiative for a unity government with opposition members to defuse the far-right's veto. When reports of this initiative came out, he immediately clarified that he was acting on Shas chairman Arye

Deri's wishes and that he would tow the party line.

Likud MK Nir Barkat stands in a somewhat similar position in attempting to shift coalition power lines, albeit with essential differences.

Since the former Jerusalem mayor joined national politics, he has spent a lot of time and energy po-

The Shas minister has been an advocate to increase the number of haredim in the army

sitioning himself as the next Likud head, heading the Economy and Industry portfolio in 2022. His most notable policy is the "What is good for Europe is good for Israel" reform, an attempt to lower the high cost of products by lowering import prices.

Since October 7, Barkat has somewhat distanced himself from Netanyahu by attacking him from the Right and pushing for a more



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MARC ISRAEL SELLEM

aggressive approach, which falls in line with the tone and language of the party, including both elect-

ed officials and voters, since October 7.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

MARC ROWAN

Putting his money where his mouth is to fight antisemitism

Billionaire investor and philanthropist Marc Rowan spearheaded a campaign to create consequences for universities that failed to appropriately address antisemitism on campus in the wake of Hamas's October 7 attack on Israel.

The CEO of asset management firm Apollo Global Management, Rowan called on philanthropists to stop donations to the University of Pennsylvania in an op-ed published by eJewishPhilanthropy.

"At this watershed moment in UPenn's history, I call on all UPenn alumni and supporters who believe we are heading in the wrong direction to 'close their checkbooks,'" he said.

"Join me and many others who love UPenn by sending the university \$1 in place of your normal discretionary contribution so that no one misses the point," he added.

Rowan highlighted the impor-

tance of academic institutions while criticizing them for failing to condemn hate and explaining how influential this can be.

"Elite academic institutions hold a special place in our society, with their pedigreed histories, impressive faculties, and extensive resources," Rowan said in his op-ed. "The embrace of antisemitism and other forms of discrimination by these institutions legitimizes and reinforces hate, racism, and, ultimately, violence. UPenn is not alone among academic institutions in its failure to condemn all forms of hatred, including antisemitic hatred."

When asked by *The Jerusalem Post* about the role of philanthropy, Rowan said there should be a way for philanthropists to hold people to account.

"We have not exacted a price for being antisemitic; we have not called people out," he said. "We wouldn't hire someone



KEYORK DJANSEZIAN/REUTERS

who was anti-black, anti-gay, anti-woman, anti-Indian, anti-Hindu. Why would I hire someone who was antisemitic?"

"Why would I not call out philanthropic institutions that behave in an antisemitic

fashion?" Rowan asked. "Why would I give to organizations, cultural organizations, or otherwise, who are making it difficult for Jews? This is just common sense."

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

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AMIT SOUSSANA AND NOA ARGAMANI

Hostages demonstrate incredible bravery

Amit Soussana, a 40-year-old lawyer taken captive from Kfar Aza, was the first released hostage to give public and direct testimony of the sexual abuse she endured at the hands of Hamas terrorists.

Coming forward and publicly sharing the details of sexual offenses is always an incredibly difficult experience and an act of immense bravery.

Soussana demonstrated incredible strength by sharing her testimony, shedding light on the horrors the hostages endured and likely continue to endure at the hands of the terrorists, at a time when doubts about Hamas's sexual violence were already widespread.

Released as part of the November hostage deal after 54 days in captivity, she shared her experience in an eight-hour interview with the *New York Times*.

Many people became familiar



ALEXANDRE MENEGHINI/REUTERS



ALEXANDRE MENEGHINI/REUTERS

with Noa Argamani as the face of the hostage crisis after seeing footage of her capture from the Nova Music Festival.

Video shows her being loaded onto a motorcycle, surrounded and restrained by Hamas terrorists, while reaching out to her partner, Avinatan Or,

who was taken captive alongside her.

The terror on her face in the seconds-long footage showing her taken captive and her desperation as she attempted to reach Or, who was separated from her soon after, put a face and an image to the unimaginable, as peo-

ple around the world struggled to comprehend the horror of Hamas' captive-taking.

Argamani was rescued in the IDF's Operation Arnon after nearly 250 days of captivity. She is one of eight hostages whom the IDF has rescued alive.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

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RONEN BAR

Head of the Shin Bet

Ronen Bar was chosen to head the Shin Bet in 2021. At the time, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett described Bar as "a daring fighter and an excellent commander. I have no doubt that he will lead the agency to new highs of excellence in the name of Israel's security."

Like IDF Chief of Staff Lt-Gen. Herzl Halevi, he is blamed as the Shin Bet chief who failed to give a warning in advance to stop Hamas's October 7, 2023 invasion, considered the most colossal intelligence disaster since the 1973 Yom Kippur War. Also like Halevi, he promised shortly after the start of the war to resign early as a sign of taking responsibility. On the flip side, most say that the Shin Bet has been instrumental in hunting down Hamas's high command, including its military chief Mohammed Deif, and many others. Also, the spy agency has been critical in gaining intelligence from interrogating Hamas detainees to better learn Hamas's strategies and to find Israeli hostages. Despite those intelligence successes, Bar has been criticized, though not quite as harshly as Halevi, for



CHAIM GOLDBERG/FLASH90

not fulfilling his promise to resign early. The Dhin Bet chief remains committed to resigning early, but has not given a deadline.

Born in 1965, Bar received a BA from Tel Aviv University and an MA in Public Management from Harvard University.

He rose through the ranks of

the IDF, serving in the elite Sayeret Matkal unit before joining the Shin Bet. As he advanced through the security agency's ranks, he assumed leadership of the Operation's Division in 2011 and subsequently became the deputy head of the agency in 2018.

Bar was involved in coordi-

nating joint operations with the IDF prior to taking the reins of the agency. When he assumed control, the Shin Bet was going through a shift, much like the IDF and other security forces in general, towards more reliance on technology to confront Israel's threats.

In 2023, prior to the Hamas attack in October, the Shin Bet foiled hundreds of terror attacks. However, it failed to discover or prevent the Hamas massacre of October 7. Since then, Bar has been focused on defeating Hamas in Gaza and fortifying Israel's other fronts against threats.

During the war, he has been to Gaza to witness operations firsthand. For instance, in January 2024, he went to Khan Yunis to see the extensive Hamas tunnels uncovered under the city. During one trip there, Bar told the IDF and Shin Bet forces in the city that he was "happy to meet here in the streets of Khan Yunis both [Shin Bet] coordinators and our troops who work with you." He added, "no force can stand against this combination."

By SETH J. FRANTZMAN

ADENA FRIEDMAN AND JANET YELLEN

NASDAQ's Jewish chief and US Treasury Secretary

Adena Friedman, CEO of Nasdaq, Inc. since 2017, believes in the power of capitalism but recognizes that the system isn't easily accessible to all, she told *Time* magazine.

According to the World Economic Forum, which cited Pitchbook data, women received less than 2% of venture capital funding in the US and Europe in 2023.

Black founders in the US raised 0.48% of all venture

Stock market index Nasdaq should participate in making it so that "capitalism works for everyone," Friedman told the magazine.

She envisions the index as not just a trading platform but also an "engine for capitalism."



NATALIE BEHRING/REUTERS

Yellen announced new sanctions against Iran after its unprecedented attack on Israel

In this vein and under Friedman's tenure, Nasdaq adopted a rule for the index that required all companies listed to publicly disclose diversity

statistics on their board of directors.

The rule requires most Nasdaq-listed companies to have "at least two diverse directors, including one who self-identifies as female and one who self-identifies as either an underrepresented minority or LGBTQ+," Nasdaq said. Companies that don't meet these standards for diversity must explain why.

Not only would this ensure that outdated systems cannot

create glass ceilings for women and people from minority groups. As Friedman told *Time*, it also makes good business sense.

Boards made up of diverse people perform better financially and with less fraud, she said, adding that it results in "a much more sustainable model for our economy."

When appointed in 2017, Friedman became the first female CEO to lead a global stock exchange.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

Janet Yellen

The Jerusalem Post's list of most influential Jews of the year includes financial expert Janet Yellen for the second time; the first time was in 2016, when she served as chairwoman of the US Federal Reserve.

Yellen, who has been serving as US treasury secretary since January 2021, is committed to countering the financing of terrorism and preventing Iran-backed terrorist proxy groups from exploiting the US and international financing systems, according to her office.

By HANNAH SARISOHN

The Department of the Treasury is working to increase pressure on Hamas and disrupt its international financial networks, "including closely monitoring the group's efforts to seek other sources of revenue."

Not just a trading platform but also an 'engine for capitalism'

In April, Yellen announced new sanctions against Iran after its unprecedented attack on Israel. "The treasury will not hesitate to work with our allies to use our sanctions authority to continue disrupting the Iranian regime's malign and destabilizing activity," she said.

Yellen has also advocated strengthening the economy for Palestinians in the West Bank. Earlier this year, she urged Israel to resume transferring tax revenue to the Palestinian Authority to fund basic services. It had been stopped due to the PA's "pay-for-slay" policy, which encourages and funds terrorism.



EVELYN HOCKSTEIN/REUTERS

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ERIC FINGERHUT

CEO of the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA)

Eric Fingerhut has emerged as one of the most influential figures in the Jewish world, earning a spot on The Jerusalem Post's list of the most influential Jews of 2024. As the president and CEO of the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA), Fingerhut has brought innovative leadership to the movement, drawing on his extensive background as a former US congressman and head of Hillel International, the largest global Jewish student organization.

Under his leadership, JFNA organized an \$854 million emergency fund drive for Israel in response to the Hamas October 7 massacre, with over \$700 million already raised and substantial funds allocated to support critical needs such as food security, trauma relief, and assistance for displaced Israelis, including vulnerable communities like the Bedouin and people with disabilities. Fingerhut's ability to mobilize such an immense response demonstrates his commitment to supporting Israel in its most challenging moments.



JFNA

pus and defending Israel against new forms of anti-Zionism. This experience has informed his current role, where he has emphasized the importance of security and community engagement, ensuring that Jewish organizations are not just reactive but proactive in defending Jewish interests globally.

'Fingerhut led the March for Israel event in Washington, DC,... the largest pro-Israel rally in history'

His influence extends beyond fundraising; Fingerhut has also been at the forefront of the fight against rising antisemitism. He led the March for Israel event in Washington, DC, which attracted nearly 300,000 participants, marking it as the largest pro-Israel rally in history. This event highlighted the depth of support for Israel among American Jews and their allies. It emphasized the urgency of combating antisemitism, partic-

ularly on college campuses, which Fingerhut described as a critical battleground, emphasizing the importance of this cause.

Fingerhut's career trajectory – spanning politics, education, and Jewish communal leadership – has enabled him to bring a fresh perspective to the Federation movement. His tenure as head of Hillel International saw him confront significant challenges, such as addressing antisemitism on cam-

As a prominent leader of the organized Jewish world, Fingerhut's innovative approach combines strategic political insight, community mobilization, and an unwavering commitment to Jewish values.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

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VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

Still a beacon of freedom and democracy

After falling out of last year's list, 2022's list-topping Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky makes a storming return to this year's Top 50 Most Influential Jews.

His inclusion is a recognition of his extraordinary continued leadership during a time of immense national crisis. As Ukraine's first Jewish president, Zelensky has become an international symbol of resilience since the Russian invasion in February 2022, defying expectations with his unwavering stance. His background as a comedian and actor may have initially drawn skepticism, but Zelensky has proven to be a courageous wartime leader, embodying the strength and resolve of the Ukrainian people.

Zelensky's Jewish identity also plays a meaningful role in his leadership. He has openly spoken about his heritage, drawing attention to his family's personal experiences during the Holocaust, underscoring the significance of his position as a Jewish president



LEON NEAL/POOL VIA REUTERS

Another memorable event of the war occurred in August, when Ukraine's Armed Forces launched a cross-border offensive into Russia's Kursk Oblast, engaging Russian military and border forces. This marked the first foreign military incursion into Russia since the Nazis in WWII. Estimates indicate that the ongoing battle has resulted in over 15,000 Russian casualties, and the expansion of the war into Russian territory has significantly reduced public opinion towards the war.

In addition to his political achievements, Zelensky's role as a defender of democracy resonates across the world. He has effectively communicated his nation's struggle for freedom and sovereignty, rallying support from world leaders, as well as the general public, in defense of Ukraine. By doing so, Zelensky is not just shaping the future of his country; he is leaving a lasting impact on the global stage. His courage and integrity serve as an inspiration.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

in a country historically scarred by antisemitism. His leadership transcends the boundaries of national politics, connecting with global Jewish communities who see him as a beacon of hope in the face of oppression.

The past year has also seen significant war policy shifts. The United States made a significant change in its stance regarding

Ukraine's use of Western-supplied weapons to attack targets inside Russia. Amid concerns about Ukraine's ability to defend itself, Washington relaxed restrictions, and the new position allowed Kyiv to use Western arms for more expansive operations, including strikes within Russian borders, to target key military and logistical infrastructure.

LARRY ELLISON

An octogenarian superstar

When asked to describe a prominent figure from the tech industry, many would probably not envision a man in the ninth decade of his life. Yet Larry Ellison, born in 1944 in New York, is exactly that: a superstar of the technology sector and one of the wealthiest people in the world. Ellison, co-founder, executive chairman, and CTO of Oracle Corporation, has left an indelible mark on the software industry and beyond.

Raised by his adoptive Jewish parents in Chicago, Ellison's Jewish background has reportedly played a significant role in shaping his identity and philanthropic endeavors. Despite a non-traditional upbringing and a complex relationship with organized religion, he maintained connections to his Jewish heritage throughout his life.

Ellison's entrepreneurial journey led to the founding of Or-



STEPHEN LAM/REUTERS

acle in 1977, which grew to become the third-largest software company in the world by revenue and market capitalization, dealing with database software, cloud computing, and more. This made Ellison a role model for many aspiring entrepreneurs, embodying the potential for in-

novation and achievement.

In terms of philanthropy, Ellison has made substantial contributions to various causes, including several with Jewish connections, such as large contributions to the Friends of the IDF and the city of Sderot. He has also funded medical re-

search at various institutions and start-ups, including Israeli ones.

While Ellison's public engagement with his Jewish identity has been less pronounced than that of some other high-profile figures, his actions have nonetheless had a significant impact. His support for Israel and Jewish causes has helped strengthen ties between the Jewish Diaspora and Israel, and his success story continues to inspire Jewish entrepreneurs worldwide.

As a self-made billionaire with Jewish roots, Ellison represents a powerful narrative of Jewish achievement in the business world. His life story and philanthropic choices reflect the diverse ways in which Jewish identity can manifest in the modern era, particularly at the intersection of technology, business, and cultural heritage.

By OHAD MERLIN

DANIEL HAGARI

The Israeli public's war messenger

On October 7, Hamas invaded southern Israel and wreaked havoc on the Gaza border communities, murdering over 1,200 people and taking more than 200 hostages. As Israelis' confidence and trust in their leaders and national institutions plummeted to an unprecedented low, Israel acquired the much-needed national pacifier: R-Adm. Daniel Hagari, the IDF chief spokesperson.

stand up and talk to Israelis when they were fearing the worst in the early hours of October 7.

From his daily briefings to the Israeli public in the early days of the war until now, Hagari has been willing to speak to the public not only during the ecstatic highs of hostage releases and rescues but also during the most destabilizing lows, when no one else in the political or military echelon dared.



AVSHALOM SASSON/FLASH90

Hagari's politically neutral rhetoric and calming demeanor stood out, helping Israelis through a year of turmoil and disaster while quickly becoming a cult figure of sorts to many

Hagari's politically neutral rhetoric and calming demeanor stood out, helping Israelis through a year of turmoil and disaster while quickly becoming a cult figure of sorts to many. Hagari, who only entered his role as spokesperson seven months before the massacre, was the first public figure to

Hagari's influence on Israel's perception and public diplomacy, ranging from organizing English-language press conferences for international reporters to filming tours of Hamas tunnels and Gazan schools used for terror, cannot be understated.

Hagari's efforts to maintain public trust in the military establishment were not in vain. According to data released by the Israeli Democracy Institute earlier this year, Jewish Israelis lost the least trust in the IDF compared to other institutions, with faith in the military remaining at least 30 percentage points higher than any other institution. Among the Arab Israeli sector, faith in the IDF rose by 23% in the same time frame.

In his effort to communicate IDF actions as clearly as possible while valiantly fighting against the online dissemination of false information about IDF soldiers and the war, Hagari has successfully cemented himself as the face of the IDF's communications to both Israelis and the international community. As a result, he is one of the world's most influential Jews today.

By TAL SPUNGIN

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ELI BIN

Magen David Adom CEO

Eli Bin, CEO of Magen David Adom (MDA), has been at the forefront of saving lives in Israel for decades. When he was 15, he began his journey with MDA as a youth volunteer. Following his service in the IDF, he played a pivotal role in the organization's operations, serving in both field and management roles, before becoming the first CEO to rise from within the ranks of MDA employees. His vision as CEO is excellence in all areas of MDA's work, along with a constant aspiration to improve services for citizens, nurture human capital, and promote volunteerism while maintaining a balanced budget.

Under his leadership, MDA has developed groundbreaking emergency management systems that are among the most advanced in the world and have significantly reduced emergency teams' response times by removing inherent barriers – integrating national emergency bodies, such as the IDF, Israel Police, and Fire and Rescue Services, as well as civilian agencies – while creat-



MDA

ing transparency and real-time information-sharing. His strategic vision led to the establishment of the world's most advanced and protected national blood bank, ensuring safe blood storage and processing for the IDF and Israeli hospitals, even during missile attacks, earthquakes, and chemical warfare.

As head of the national rescue organization, Bin continuously strives to strengthen MDA's emergency preparedness. In this

framework, he has significantly increased the number of volunteers, which now exceeds 32,000 men and women from all sectors of Israeli society. Additionally, he has led a leap forward in the life-saving tools operated by MDA, including advanced rescue vehicles, a nationwide helicopter system, and special command and control tools for mass casualty evacuation.

As a person who believes in leading by example, Bin is al-

ways on the front lines, standing shoulder-to-shoulder with MDA teams. Whether on October 7 or during wars, terror attacks in Israel and abroad, or the COVID-19 outbreak, Eli is there, leading rescue efforts.

Bin's clear understanding of the country's emergency needs and his unwavering passion for saving lives have made this remarkable leader a key player in protecting the home front. He continues to lead Magen David Adom at the forefront of emergency medicine and aspires to continue improving Israel's medical system to benefit the country's citizens.

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By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

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AMIR YARON

Navigating Israel's economy through war

Prof. Amir Yaron, the governor of the Bank of Israel, has been instrumental in steering Israel's economy through the challenges posed by the Israel-Hamas war.

The bank's primary move was to announce that it would sell foreign currency to stabilize the shekel.

The October 7 attack on Israel and the ensuing war have had huge implications for Israel's economy. Tens of thousands of displaced Israelis, hundreds of thousands of reservists, agricultural and industrial areas near the border made inaccessible by

fighting, and limits on foreign workers – alongside significant geopolitical threats against Israel creating large amounts of uncertainty – have all had huge impacts on Israel's economy. The country's GDP growth has slowed as its deficit has swelled.

The primary job of Israel's central bank is to maintain price stability; it is also tasked with supporting the government's economic policy goals. In order to achieve these objectives during the war, Yaron guided the bank through a series of moves meant to contend with the war's impacts on the economy.

The bank's primary move was to announce that it would sell foreign currency to stabilize the shekel, as well as take additional steps in the foreign exchange market to maintain price stability.

The BOI also announced a plan that was adopted by Israel's



MARC ISRAEL SELLEM

commercial banks to help Israelis contend with the financial results of the war through mitigating the burden of credit and banking fees on them. It also set in motion a plan to provide loans to small businesses hurt by the war.

Early on, the governor called

for a committee to map out the country's security needs in order to create an appropriate budget. This was a critical step at a time when the country's security needs have changed and have created economic and budgetary challenges.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

AMIR PERETZ

Former Israeli defense minister and Labor leader

Amir Peretz, former minister of defense, has been the chairman of Israel Aerospace Industries for the past three years. As minister of defense, Peretz updated Israel's security doctrine, which passed the test on April 14.

On the night of April 14, Israel and the world witnessed the security doctrine Peretz established

Thanks to his international recognition as the father of the Iron Dome and David's Sling, Peretz has opened new markets internationally since



taking office, including all the countries of the Abraham Accords. The company's order backlog, under Peretz's leadership, reached the legendary sum of \$22 billion. Peretz also expanded the company's activities to the periphery, and at the end of three years, plants were established

in Ofakim and Beersheba, and innovation centers were opened in Dimona, Eilat, Acre, and the Gaza border communities. During Peretz's tenure, the Arrow deal with Germany was signed – the largest defense deal in the history of Israel. On the night of April 14, Israel and the world wit-

nessed the security doctrine Peretz established. Until his tenure as minister of defense, Israel's security doctrine stood on three pillars: deterrence, warning, and attack. Peretz added a fourth pillar – defense. This change led to the Iron Dome, David's Sling, and the significant expansion of the Arrow system. All three systems proved themselves when about 400 rockets and UAVs launched at Israel were intercepted with a 99% success rate.

Peretz was born in Morocco and immigrated to Israel at the age of 4. He has previously served in other senior positions in Israel such as deputy prime minister, minister of defense, minister of economy and industry, minister of environmental protection, and chairman of the Histadrut labor federation. Each of these roles laid milestones in the history of the State of Israel over the past 40 years.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

MARK ZUCKERBERG

Revolutionizing the world with social media

Mark Zuckerberg, born in 1984 in New York to a Reform Jewish family, has become one of the most influential figures in the technology and media industry as the co-founder and CEO of Meta (formerly Facebook).

Zuckerberg's creation of Facebook in 2004 revolutionized how people connect and share information, profoundly impacting Jewish communities worldwide by facilitating the preservation of cultural ties across distances and generations. As his wealth and influence grew, Zuckerberg became increasingly involved in philanthropy, pledging that he and his wife would give away 99% of their Facebook shares over their lifetimes.

While his philanthropic efforts are broad in scope, Zuckerberg has supported educational initiatives that promote innovation and entrepreneurship, emphasizing the use of technology to solve global challenges, which may



align with the concept of *tikkun olam*.

Around 2017, Zuckerberg began to publicly address and reflect on his Jewish heritage, sharing pictures with Kiddush cups, stressing the importance of religion, and writing against the antisemitism in Charlottesville and

other manifestations that he deemed bigoted, quoting his Jewish upbringing. Lately, he spoke out against Hamas's October 7 massacre and revealed that he sings the Mi Sheberach prayer for healing to his daughters while putting them to sleep.

However, Zuckerberg's in-

fluence has not been without controversy. Facebook's policies regarding hate speech, antisemitism, and misinformation have been scrutinized, with some critics arguing that the platform hasn't done enough to combat manifestations of bigotry and hate. In a similar context, earlier this year, Zuckerberg addressed parents of social media victims, offering a sincere apology.

As one of the most prominent Jewish figures in the tech industry, Zuckerberg has become a symbol of innovation and success for many young Jewish entrepreneurs. His story embodies the potential for individuals from Jewish backgrounds to shape the future of technology and society at large. As long as META continues to reinvent itself in the ever-changing world of tech, Zuckerberg will likely also be there at the forefront.

By OHAD MERLIN

JERRY SEINFELD

Deadly serious

Jerry Seinfeld built his mega-successful comedy career talking about nothing. But this past year, his statements and actions regarding Israel demonstrated that he stands for something.

Since the Hamas massacre of October 7, Seinfeld has been one of the only A-List entertainers to visit Israel and vocally express support for the Jewish state in its battle against Hamas.

On October 9, Seinfeld posted “I Stand With Israel” on Instagram. “My heart is breaking from these attacks and atrocities. But we are also a very strong people in our hearts and minds,” he wrote.

During a solidarity visit in December, Seinfeld and his wife, Jessica Sklar, visited Kibbutz Be’eri and met with the families of hostages and those who had returned from Hamas captivity.

Veteran Los Angeles comic Mark Schiff, who has served as Seinfeld’s opening act over the last few decades, said Seinfeld’s public openness about Israel and his Jewishness comes from the inner depths of his being.

“If you want to know how deeply Jerry feels about Israel, listen



DAVID SWANSON/REUTERS

to his Bari Weiss interview from 43:14 to 44:00. It’s as deep as it gets,” Schiff told *The Jerusalem Post*, referring to the now-famous segment of the podcast ‘Honestly with Bari Weiss’ from the *Free Press* in May.

During those seconds, Seinfeld described his visit to the killing fields in the South as “the most powerful experience” of his life. When asked by Weiss if he was thinking about something in particular, Seinfeld was speechless,

and tears came to his eyes. Unable to articulate, he stammered, “Sure, yeah... you know, you just... you know.”

The fallout from Seinfeld’s unflinching stance for Israel included a walkout by some students at Duke University when he delivered the commencement speech in May, as well as hecklers at his stand-up shows shouting epithets like “genocide supporter” and “Nazi scum.”

“It’s so silly,” he told Weiss.

“They want to express this sincere, intense rage but again, a little off target. So that’s to me comedic.”

Unlike younger Hollywood A-Listers, Seinfeld is at a stage in his career where it doesn’t matter if he offends a segment of his fan base. He doesn’t have to play the “keep quiet or it will damage your career” game.

Still, his unabashed allegiance to the place he spent a summer volunteering (on a kibbutz) at age 16 lifted the hearts of Israelis left reeling by the events of the last year, and it justifies his appearance on the *Post*’s list of the year’s 50 most influential Jews.

Kibbutz Be’eri resident Yuval Haran, whose father was murdered by Hamas on October 7, is a huge Seinfeld fan. He told Seinfeld how much the show and his visit to the kibbutz mean to him.

“When I heard that Seinfeld was coming to the kibbutz, it really moved me,” Haran said. “I can’t count the number of times we would sit together and watch Seinfeld.”

Sometimes, a lot about nothing means everything.

By DAVID BRINN

BENNY GANTZ AND YAIR LAPID

Will they finally succeed?

Opposition leader Yair Lapid and MK Benny Gantz, the top two politicians in Israel’s opposition, have different methods and dispositions, but their goal is the same: to replace the government that was responsible for the divisive judicial reforms in 2023, the Oct. 7 Hamas massacre, and the ensuing prolonged war in Gaza.

Both, however, are willing to make an exception and provide the prime minister with a political “safety net” to ensure a deal to rescue the hostages from Hamas captivity.

According to Lapid, “This year, the most important thing is bringing the hostages home and putting Israel back on track around the fundamental values on which the country was built – a strong, proud, liberal, Jewish democracy that focuses on strengthening the middle class and is always looking forward.”



MARC ISRAEL SELLEM



MARC ISRAEL SELLEM

Gantz brought his National Unity party into the government four days after the war began, but left in June, claiming that the prime minister was taking political considerations into account in his wartime decision-making.

Lapid’s entry into government was contingent upon the departure of the two far-right parties. Upon rejection of this offer, Lapid chose to stay in the opposition.

Neither Lapid nor Gantz, however, has managed to create a serious threat to the Netanyahu gov-

ernment. An initiative for a unity government in mid-September sputtered out after former Gantz ally Gideon Sa’ar nearly entered the government – a move that may still happen and increase the coalition’s ranks from 64 to 68.

Still, both are operating publicly and behind the scenes to effect change. Both have visited Washington and developed independent channels with the US administration; Lapid regularly joins protests against the government in favor of a hostage deal,

and Gantz held a press conference to debunk the prime minister’s claims about the Philadelphia Corridor.

When governments in Israel fall, it is usually due to internal implosion, and predictions about the political future are often incorrect. At this time next year, Lapid and Gantz may be senior members of a new government, or they may be right where they are now – attempting, unsuccessfully, to topple Netanyahu.

By ELIAV BREUER

DR. DEBORAH LIPSTADT AND DAVID FRIEDMAN

US Special Envoy for Monitoring and Combating Antisemitism and former US ambassador to Israel

US President Joe Biden appointed Dr. Deborah Lipstadt as the special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism, and the US Senate confirmed her appointment in March 2022. In July 2024, Lipstadt's office issued the landmark Global Guidelines for Countering Antisemitism.

'Learn, study, speak up'

"This is the first time ever there is an international framework for how to respond to antisemitism," Lipstadt told *The Jerusalem Post*.

Before her current position as an ambassador for the US State Department, she founded Emory University's Tam Institute for Jewish Studies, where Lipstadt served as the Dorot professor of modern Jewish history and Holocaust studies. She has written and won awards for three books, most recently, *Antisemitism: Here and Now*.

The *Post* listed Lipstadt among the 50 most influential Jews in 2024 for the second consecutive year. When asked how she felt about being awarded a spot on the list, she said she was "delighted."

"More than I'm happy, it makes my family happy," she added.

"The fact that I have a voice" is important, she continued. "There are so many Jews - especially since October 7, but even before October 7 - who wake up every morning worrying about antisemitism, who truly in their heart of hearts, and especially since October 7, are frightened, fearful, and concerned. The fact that I get up every morning" for six, sometimes even seven days a week "and my job is to do something about it, and I have a chance to do something about it, is a privilege of immeasurable proportion."

Her role as special envoy is to lead efforts to advance US foreign policy to counter antisemitism around the world. She told the *Post* that she meets with Jewish stakeholders, organizations, and



JOHN MACDUGALL/POOL VIA REUTERS

US Senate members on a daily basis, holds staff meetings to "figure out priorities," and meets with senior members of the State Department mainly to discuss how to get more countries and institutions to sign on to the guidelines she put forth in relation to antisemitism.

'Friedman's involvement in the Abraham Accords reshaped the Middle East, bringing Israel closer to its Arab neighbors in ways once thought impossible'

Regarding what these guidelines can do for Jewish communities around the world, she said, "If you live in a country that has adopted this and has embraced this and then your country engages in or doesn't speak out against antisemitism, you can go to them... and say, 'You adopted this, you embraced this, you endorsed this. How come you are being silent and not addressing this? How come you're not offering protection? How come you are not enforcing laws?'"

As of September 2024, 42 countries have signed the Global Guidelines for Countering Antisemitism, and Lipstadt's office continuous-

ly works to get more signatories. Receiving each signatory is a process that involves conducting negotiations and meetings. Since April, she has traveled to 12 countries, and in each one, she discussed the guidelines. "There is a concept of walking the precincts. Before elections, the head of

the committees of the parties would walk the precincts so people would get out and vote. We walked the precincts," she told the *Post*.

Lipstadt has a long history of combating antisemitism. She became renowned after being sued for libel in the UK by David Irving, one of the world's leading Holocaust deniers, who is well respected by neo-Nazis around the world. The case lasted six years and was heard in court in a 12-week trial. As a result, the court declared Irving a "right wing polemicist" who engages in antisemitism, racism, and misogyny.

"I've been lucky... now I can look back on it, in having good enemies. I was sued by a

world-leading holocaust denier, but I fought and won," Lipstadt recalled to the *Post*.

She said that the best actions to take for those who wanted to follow in her footsteps were to "learn, study, [and] speak up."

When asked which Jew influenced her the most, she responded, "I don't have one person." However, she appreciated that her parents chose synagogues with rabbis skilled at influencing and educating their communities, including Emanuel Rackman, who later became the president of Bar-Ilan University. She told the *Post* that these rabbis taught her to think critically and analytically.

"My parents loved their tradition. [They] loved and reveled at being part of this tradition. And I don't just mean religiously; I mean culturally, in all its manifestations," she clarified.

Lipstadt has friends who care about fighting hatred and antisemitism while promoting fairness and equity. "They are a light in the dark for me," she said, quoting a saying from *Pirkei Avot* (loosely translated, the ethics of our fathers): "Find yourself a teacher, a friend, a community."

Lipstadt concluded, "I've been very lucky to be surrounded by groups of Jews who care very deeply, who think analytically, and who revel in being Jews... I've been very lucky - I've never been a Jew alone."

By DARCIE GRUNBLATT

David Friedman

David Friedman's ascent as a key figure on The Jerusalem Post's list of the most influential Jews of 2024 marks a turning point in the Israeli-Palestinian debate. With his new book, *One Jewish State: The Last, Best Hope to Resolve the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict*, Friedman has become a leading advocate for a one-state solution, filling the void for those who reject the two-state model but lack a clear version of an alternative. After October 7, his vision resonates more than ever as the Knesset's recent vote against a two-state solution reflects growing support for his ideas.

Friedman's influence stems

Continued next page

from his time as the US ambassador to Israel, where he was instrumental in historic decisions like relocating the US embassy to Jerusalem and securing American recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. Most notably, his involvement in the Abraham Accords reshaped the Middle East, bringing Israel closer to its Arab neighbors in ways once thought impossible.

Now, Friedman is not just echoing conservative viewpoints; he's redefining them. In his book, he argues that Israel's future lies in

complete sovereignty over Judea and Samaria while granting local autonomy to Palestinians – comparable to Puerto Rico's status in the US. His approach challenges old paradigms and provides a narrative that appeals to those who see the two-state solution as a failed relic. As support for his ideas grew, Friedman's role evolved from diplomat to key architect of Israel's future, reshaping not just policy but the dialogue on Israel's most pressing challenges.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF



MARC ISRAEL SELLEM

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URI POLIAVICH

Bringing Jewish identity to life

Growing up in Ukraine and missing out on basic Jewish education, Uri Poliavich has made it his goal to ensure that Jewish children and families worldwide have the opportunity to connect to Jewish tradition, whether through schools, informal educational programs, summer camps, and more.

At a young age, his family made aliyah to Israel. Poliavich later graduated from the law faculty at Bar-Ilan University.

In 2020, Uri Poliavich and his wife Yael founded the Yael Foundation, a philanthropic initiative in 35 countries impacting 13,500 Jewish students that is leading change and promoting excellence in Jewish education. Its many initiatives positively



COURTESY Yael FOUNDATION

impact the future of the Jewish people worldwide.

The Yael Foundation's grantees nurture a strong sense of identity in children to help them become tomorrow's Jewish leaders. The

foundation is uniquely driven by the conviction that all Jewish children, irrespective of their geographic location or community size, should have access to high-quality Jewish and general

education.

In the coming year, the foundation plans to issue \$26.6 million in grants at three different tiers to dozens of schools internationally.

Poliavich is also the founder and CEO of the leading iGaming turnkey solutions provider Soft2Bet. His exceptional leadership has been at the core of Soft2Bet's innovative spirit since he founded the company in 2016. The company continues to be the main industry contributor. It recently launched Soft2Bet Invest, a fund that supports growth-stage and mature companies harnessing pioneering technologies in casual gaming, AI, and high-margin gaming software solutions.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

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ASAF KOCHAN, ASSAF RAPPAPORT AND OFER YANAI

Israeli hi-tech power

Asaf Kochan

Brig. General (Res.) Asaf Kochan is co-founder and president of Sentra and a former commander of the IDF Intelligence Unit 8200 (Israel's NSA), which has stared down some of the world's worst nation-state and criminal cyber attackers.

In an August Forbes article, he flagged the rising opportunities and threats of generative artificial intelligence on defense and in hacking, especially against third-party providers and those in a country's and business's supply chain.

"Third-party breaches are

happening more often and causing more damage. This means that organizations need to take action to protect themselves. The substantial impact of UnitedHealth's breach is an example of how detrimental it can be if a strong data security posture isn't implemented," wrote Kochan.



COURTESY

He added, "As security threats become more advanced and regulations evolve, using innovative solutions like GenAI [on defense] is no longer optional; it's a necessity to keep pace."

Given his diverse top-level military and business experience in planning, coordinating, and implementing national policy in cyberspace, Kochan has a unique perspective on what matters the most in cyber security.

Besides the special background of Kochan and of many of Sentra's employees, his cyber defense firm is set aside from other competitors because it adopts a data-centric approach to cloud security.

Many cyber defense firms defend their clients using firewalls, which protect a company's entire digital perimeter, computer infrastructure, and endpoints.

In contrast, Kochan has told *The Jerusalem Post* that Sentra is dedicated to "understanding your data. Not all data is equal. We scan, and we discover and classify your entire data and your environment and build a catalog of your most sensitive data assets, whether customer data or your intellectual property (IP)."

The former IDF Unit 8200 chief stated, "We assume many 'crown jewels' in your environment you are not aware of. We use an advanced algorithm and machine learning to pull in your environment. Often, we found substantial amounts of data that you did not know you had."

Assaf Rappaport

Assaf Rappaport is the co-founder and CEO of Wiz, a rapidly growing cloud security company launched in 2020 in New York. Its founders are Israeli and it maintains significant operations in Tel Aviv.

According to Forbes, Wiz had a \$12 billion valuation in May of this year. In July, it walked away from a reported \$23 billion acquisition offer from Google, based on Rappaport's belief that the company could significantly outgrow that offer by going public.

Wiz software scans storage providers, including clients like Amazon Web Services, Microsoft Azure, Google Cloud Platform, Oracle Cloud Infra-



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structure, and Kubernetes, to zone in on cyber security risks, evaluating vulnerabilities that malicious actors could exploit to hack cloud resources or other data. It also works with clients like Fox, Morgan Stanley, and LVMH.

The company was always growing rapidly, with revenue surpassing \$100 million already in 2023 as it took on a daring and audacious approach to hiring fast, raising funds, and going after massive multinational clients.

In a LinkedIn post, Rappaport wrote, "When people ask me what sets Wiz on such a strong growth path, my answer is simple: a relentless focus on delivering real value to our customers. That's exactly what today's launch of Wiz Code is all about."

"Wiz has become more than just a single product. We're now a full platform built on one unified tech stack, which sets us apart from others. We have to keep innovating... By bridging the gap between security and development, we're making sure cloud risks are caught and fixed directly in the code before they turn into

big issues."

Previously, Rappaport was general manager of Microsoft Israel and CEO of Adallom. Rappaport also served in Unit 8200 during his IDF service.

By YONAH JEREMY BOB

Ofer Yanai

The early Zionists drained malaria-filled swamps in Israel to make the land habitable, developed efficient agricultural methods to grow produce in the desert, and worked by the sweat of their brows to build the foundations of the State of Israel. Following that tradition, Israeli multi-millionaire Ofer Yanai founded and grew the renewable energy company Nofar Energy.

Forty-nine-year-old Yanai, the second of eight children from a national-religious home, was born to a Tunisian-immigrant father and a Libyan-immigrant mother in 1975. He grew up in Yavne, a city in central Israel.

Despite early struggles, such as attempting to establish a fax-based food delivery company (this was before the internet) called go4it that failed

to achieve success, his persistence would ultimately pay off.

Yanai holds a bachelor's degree in Physics, Mathematics, and Computer Science from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and a master's degree with honors in Business Administration from Ben-Gurion University.

Later, in 2011, Yanai founded Nofar Energy. He encountered hurdles again when, his initial project installing solar panels on communities in the South failed, costing him hundreds of thousands of shekels he had invested out of his own pocket.

He never gave up, though, and in 2020, the company went public on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange, marking the second-largest IPO in Israel. Currently, the company, of which Yanai owns roughly a quarter, is worth approximately NIS 3.15 billion. Yanai, today, is the chairman, founder, and controlling shareholder of Nofar Energy.

The company now operates in Israel, the UK, the US, Serbia, Italy, Romania, Spain, Poland, and Germany. In 2018, it established the first floating solar panel system in Israel. The company initiates, constructs, and operates renewable energy facilities. It was the first company in Israel to use floating panels, storage facilities, and microgrid systems.

Yanai's company is instrumental in bringing clean energy to communities across Israel and beyond. Worldwide, the company boasts 1,110 MW in connected and ready-to-be-connected solar projects and generates over 3,000 MW through renewable energy.

Yanai leads the company's global and Israeli operations as chairman of the board while also pursuing philanthropic work as the chairman of the Yanai Foundation, through which he supports various projects and fields, including education, healthcare, peripheral development, foster families, and more.

Last year, he bought 51% ownership of Hapoel Tel Aviv Basketball Club before purchasing an additional 30%. This year, he became a shareholder in Channel 13 in a global collaboration with the channel's owner, Len Blavatnik.

By SAM HALPERN
Jerusalem Post Staff
contributed to this report.

BEN SHAPIRO, JAKE TAPPER, AND DANA BASH

Ben Shapiro, Jake Tapper, and Dana Bash have used their platforms to make sure balanced coverage of the Israel-Hamas War doesn't fade from mainstream media.

Ben Shapiro: Anything is up for debate

Ben Shapiro is a prominent conservative commentator, lawyer, and author. He co-founded The Daily Wire, a media company that has become a significant platform for conservative viewpoints.

Shapiro also hosts The Ben Shapiro Show, where he discusses political and social issues from a conservative perspective, often delving into topics that are both controversial and critical to the conservative agenda.

Amid the Israel-Hamas War, Shapiro has been a staunch defender of Israel. He actively participated in university debates, addressing the complexities of the conflict and condemning Hamas's actions.

Shapiro's commentary on the war often includes historical context and legal analysis, providing his audience with a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand

He aims to counter misinformation and highlight the atrocities committed by Hamas.

Shapiro's commentary on the war often includes historical context and legal analysis, providing his audience with a comprehensive understanding of the issues at hand.

He uses his platform to advocate for policies that he believes will ensure Israel's security and stability.

Shapiro's influence extends beyond his show and debates. He is a prolific author, having written several books that explore conservative principles and critique progressive ideologies.

His writing often reflects his deep commitment to free speech and individual rights.

Jake Tapper: The journal-



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ist's journalist

Jake Tapper is CNN's lead Washington anchor and the host of The Lead with Jake Tapper. Known for his rigorous journalism and commitment to truth, Tapper has covered major events and interviewed key figures throughout his career.

Since the Israel-Hamas War was in the spotlight of global media, Tapper provided a platform for Israeli hostage families on his show, allowing them to share their stories and raise awareness about their plight.

This coverage brought international attention to the human impact of the conflict, highlighting the personal stories behind the headlines. Tapper's empathetic approach to journalism ensures that the voices of those affected by the conflict are heard, fostering a deeper understanding of the human cost of war.

Additionally, Tapper, alongside Dana Bash, moderated the

highly anticipated Biden-Trump debate in June 2024.

Tapper's work during the Israel-Hamas War is a testament to his commitment to journalism that informs and engages the public.

Bash's reporting goes beyond just presenting facts, she also provides context and analysis that help viewers understand the broader implications of political events

Dana Bash: A trailblazer in political reporting

Dana Bash is CNN's chief political correspondent, recognized for her in-depth reporting and insightful analysis of American politics.

Her career at CNN has spanned over two decades, during which she has covered numerous presidential campaigns, congressional activities, and major politi-

cal events.

During the Israel-Hamas War, Bash interviewed Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in March, pressing him on the issue of allowing humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Her questioning highlighted humanitarian concerns and the need for Israel to provide a solid plan for distributing aid amid the conflict.

Bash's interview with Netanyahu was notable for its directness and depth, as she sought to uncover the complexities of the situation and the Israeli government's stance on humanitarian issues.

Bash's reporting goes beyond just presenting facts, she also provides context and analysis that help viewers understand the broader implications of political events.

In addition to her work

during the Israel-Hamas War, Bash has been a key figure in CNN's political coverage, providing analysis and insights during election cycles and major political developments.

Her contributions to journalism have paved the way for future generations of reporters, particularly women, in the field of political reporting.

By JACOB LAZNIK



MIKE SEGAR/REUTERS

GALI BAHARAV-MIARA

Attorney-General of Israel

Gali Baharav-Miara is a complex and fascinating figure who, despite not having done anything particularly extraordinary since her appointment, has become a demon for half the nation and a Joan of Arc for the other half. Her role is even more intriguing when one delves deeper into her position: to serve as the government's legal adviser as well as its chief prosecutor. To be the one who provides ministers with guidelines on how to uphold the law, but in reality, her advice is binding.

Fans and admirers of Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán and his methods in Israel see Baharav-Miara as a speed bump obstructing their path. Or, in the language of politicians: she is preventing them from governing. She and her irritating laws taken from the legal code passed by the Knesset prevent policy advancement. She blocks, she interferes. In a country where democracy has



YONATAN SINDELF/FLASH90

become a punching bag for populist and irresponsible politicians, and the rule of law is a convenient target for fans of the "strong leader" genre, at times it seems that Gali Baharav-Miara is the last dam before the flood.

Gideon Sa'ar, who was the Justice Minister in the short-lived Naftali Bennett-Yair Lapid government, chose her from a long

list of candidates and elevated her to the high position without hesitation. He found in her an honest and courageous professional, who could contend with the anti-constitutional and anti-democratic tsunami.

Sa'ar knew exactly what he was doing. Baharav-Miara has not filed an indictment against Netanyahu, nor has she investi-

gated him. But a tsunami is a tsunami, and everything becomes legitimate in the attempt to turn Netanyahu into a political martyr who is only on trial because the old elite hates him.

Her place on the list of influential Jews is clear: She has demonstrated great courage, integrity, and above all, a rare backbone. She did not bow down to protests, she did not flinch in the face of threats to fire her, and she did not hesitate to stand firm, even in the most complex and violent moments seen on Israel's political stage. Baharav-Miara positioned herself in a powerful and influential stance, as befits an independent and uncompromising attorney-general. In the face of the waves of hatred, She has proven that moral and ethical backbone can save wavering democracies.

By ATTILA SOMFALVI

The writer is a political and strategic adviser, a former news anchor and correspondent

ANDREW M. HUTTER, MD AND DANI NAVEH

Israel Bonds chairman and president

Dr. Andrew M. Hutter was elected the national and international chairman of the Israel Bonds Board of Directors on February 28, 2024.

Under his guidance, Israel bonds have played a vital part in continuously strengthening the Jewish state by generating support from Jewish communities worldwide, especially during the nation's darkest moment on October 7.

Dr. Hutter has been involved with Israel Bonds for over 20 years and has spearheaded many committees. He began his tenure with leadership positions in metro New Jersey, serving as chairman of the medical division and then general chairman of the metro New Jersey campaign. He also co-founded the national medical division of Israel Bonds and has led medical delegations to Israel on its behalf.

He is proud that his wife Barbara and their children Jared, Melissa, and Jessica have also taken an active role with Israel Bonds. Hutter is a graduate of Howard University College of Medicine and an



ISRAEL BONDS

ensuring that the organization maintains annual global sales of over \$2b, a substantial increase from previous years.

In 2023, Israel bonds accounted for 25% of Israel's foreign debt

orthopedic surgeon in New Jersey.
By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

Dani Naveh - Israel Bonds President & CEO

Dani Naveh has been president and CEO of Israel Bonds since December 2021.

Significant achievements and a commitment to Israel's economic resilience have marked Naveh's tenure. Under his leadership, Israel Bonds has achieved record-breaking worldwide sales results and

continues to play a vital role in galvanizing support for Israel among the global Jewish communities and local and state governments like never before.

Since October 7, Israel Bonds has generated over \$3.5b in record-breaking global sales. In 2023, Israel bonds accounted for 25% of Israel's foreign debt.

Naveh elevated the organization as an impactful resource for Israel, particularly during difficult times. He has positioned Israel Bonds for continued success,

With extensive experience in government, business, and finance, Naveh served as the minister of health and as a member of the Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee in the Knesset. Prior, he served as cabinet secretary, led the Israeli side of the steering committee with the Palestinian Authority, and played a central position in the dialog between Israel and the US. He also coordinated government activities against antisemitism.

Naveh is married to Tsili and father to Itay, Ilay, and Yael.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

MIRIAM ADELSON, FRANK LOWY, SCHUSTERMAN FAMILY, OFRA STRAUSS, YAEL ECKSTEIN, EITAN NEISHLOS, OLESSIA KANTOR, HENRY SWIECA, IDAN AND BATIA OFER

Fighting back

The Hamas assault on October 7 and the ensuing war have spurred influential philanthropists in Israel and the Diaspora to give generously to the war effort, fund game-changing initiatives, effect social change, and speak out effectively for Israel and against antisemitism at public forums and in the media.

Dr. Miriam Adelson, whose casino magnate husband, Sheldon, passed away in 2021, is the richest Israeli in the world. She is the owner of Israel's free daily newspaper, *Israel Hayom*, a major donor to United Hatzalah, and a leading supporter of Republican presidential nominee Donald Trump. In November 2023, she wrote these memorable words in an op-ed published in *Forbes* Israel:

"We Israelis, we Jews, love life. And we are done with meekly counting our dead. We have given so much to the world, so much to generations of civilization. Now it is time for some reciprocity. Don't be dead to us. Be decent and fair. Be morally and intellectually clear-eyed. Be brave. We will not forgive our enemies in Gaza or anywhere else. Nor would you. And nor shall we forget the many who stand by us, understanding that our fight is their fight, too."

Sir Frank Lowy, who was born in Slovakia, made his fortune in Australia and made aliyah in 2018. A mega-donor to Tel Aviv University, inter alia, he donated \$18 million to TAU's International School in memory of his late wife, Shirley, enabling it to expand, enrich, and diversify its student body and study programs. Lowy is the founder

of the Lowy Institute, Australia's leading foreign affairs think tank, and chairman of the Institute for National Security Studies, an independent think tank in Israel that studies key issues relating to national security and Middle East affairs.

The Schusterman family's philanthropic foundation funds a range of initiatives in the United States and Israel, pursuing more just and inclusive societies and distributing over \$400 million annually to a variety of causes in both countries. They made their fortune via the family business, Samson Investment, one of the US's largest oil and gas companies, and created the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in 1987. Since Stacy H. Shusterman took over as chair in 2018, the foundation has increased its support for vital educational programs and social services, including the Israel on Campus Coalition and Israel Institute, the Schusterman-Israel Foundation, Birthright, the ROI Community, and the Jerusalem Season of Culture.

Ofra Strauss is an Israeli businesswoman's icon who, since 2001, has chaired the Petah Tikva-based Strauss Group food corporation, started by her family. She also chairs the Israel-America Chamber of Commerce and the Maala-Business for Social Responsibility, as well as serving as president of Jasmine, an NGO that promotes Jewish and Arab women's entrepreneurship. A former chair of WIZO, her vast philanthropic activities include the founding of a scholarship program named after her

grandmother Hilda Strauss, a co-founder of the family business, and serving on the boards of HESEG, the Israeli Foundation for Former Lone Soldiers from the Diaspora and the Taub Center for social policy studies in Israel.

Yael Eckstein has served as president and CEO of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews since the 2019 death of her father, Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, who founded the organization in 1983 to promote better understanding and cooperation between Christians and Jews and build broad support for Israel. Since October 7, she has boosted the Fellowship programs that provide food, medical and financial aid, and security to millions of needy Israelis. The organization also facilitates aliyah for Jews from around the world and assists impoverished elderly Jews and children in the former Soviet Union. Under Eckstein's leadership, the Fellowship – which has offices in Jerusalem, Chicago, Toronto, and Seoul – is continuing the pioneering bridge-building work that has brought together millions of Christians worldwide to support Israel and the Jewish people.

Eitan Neishlos, based in Dubai, serves as president and founder of the investment house Neishlos Capital and spearheads the Neishlos Foundation, a philanthropic platform fostering co-existence, tolerance, and unity among the younger generation. The mission is achieved through Holocaust education initiatives and by promoting bonds of kinship and respect between Jews and Arabs, inspired by the Abra-

ham Accords. Neishlos began his philanthropic journey in memory of his grandmother Tamara Zisserman, a Holocaust survivor whose life was saved by a Christian family. Most recently, he expanded his investments into security and film production, notably bringing some of his business endeavors to the United Arab Emirates.

Olessia Kantor, born in the Soviet Union, began as an investigative reporter but moved to Israel in 1995 to escape censorship. After fleeing domestic abuse, she found refuge in a shelter where she learned Hebrew and rebuilt her life. Overcoming many challenges, she became a successful businesswoman and dedicated herself to philanthropy, supporting battered women, promoting Jewish-Catholic dialogue, aiding Jewish centers, funding scholarships, and contributing to cultural restoration in Israel.

Now a best-selling author and mother of four, Kantor is actively helping victims of the October 7 War, including traumatized survivors and wounded soldiers. Driven by her belief in the power of hope, she continues to give back, inspired by her own journey of resilience.

Henry Swieca, a billionaire and investor based in New York, made headlines when he quit the board of Columbia Business School at the end of October, saying the campus had become unsafe for Jews since the launch of the Israel-Hamas War. A child of Holocaust survivors, Swieca is the founder of Talpion Fund Management and had been a member of the Co-



COURTESY



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ERIC SULTAN



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ALEX LIVAK



COURTESY



AMIR RON

‘We denounce those who seek to place blame on the people of Israel for the atrocities committed by the terrorist organization Hamas’

lumbia Business School’s Board of Overseers since 2014. “With blatantly anti-Jewish student groups and professors allowed to operate with complete impunity, it sends a clear and distressing message that Jews are not just unwelcome, but also unsafe on campus,” he wrote in his resignation letter. “My resignation is an expression of my deep concern for the direction in which the university is heading.”

In a similar move, Israeli billionaire Idan Ofer and his wife, Batia, whose philanthropy focuses on cultural and education-

al causes in the US and UK, resigned from the executive board of Harvard’s Kennedy School of Government in mid-October to protest the university leaders’ response to the Hamas attack. Ofer is the son of shipping billionaire Sammy Ofer, who was once Israel’s richest man.

“Unfortunately, our faith in the university’s leadership has been broken, and we cannot in good faith continue to support Harvard and its committees,” the couple said in a statement. “We denounce those who seek to place blame on the people of

Israel for the atrocities committed by the terrorist organization Hamas.”

The bold actions taken by Swieca and the Ofers not only had a domino effect but ultimately contributed to the resignations of three Ivy League presidents (Columbia, Harvard, and the University of Pennsylvania) over the institutions’ mismanagement of pro-Palestinian student protests related to the Israel-Hamas war and their perceived failure to address antisemitism on campus.

By STEVE LINDE

AHARON BARAK AND ICJ DEFENSE TEAM

Standing Firm at The Hague

Most Israelis glued themselves to their television sets in January of this year as Israel mounted a legal defense at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in the Hague, the Netherlands, in response to South Africa's allegations that Israel's actions in Gaza during its war with Hamas amounted to crimes of genocide.

South Africa claimed that Israel's military actions were "genocidal in character" and accused the Jewish state of intending to destroy Palestinians in Gaza, a charge Israel firmly denied.

To navigate the country through this unprecedented and complex case, Israel selected a defense team consisting of some of the most esteemed legal experts in the field.

Israel appointed Aharon Barak, former president of the Israeli Supreme Court, as its ad hoc judge. According to ICJ rules, a country that is involved in a case and does not have a judge of its nationality on the 15-strong bench can nominate an ad hoc judge.

Barak, one of Israel's most influential legal figures, brought a wealth of judicial experience to the table, having served on the Supreme Court from 1978 to 2006. His role on Israel's defense team highlighted the importance Israel placed on securing high-caliber legal minds to counter the serious accusations laid against it.

British lawyer Malcolm Shaw, a globally renowned authority on international law, territorial disputes, and human rights issues, also led Israel's defense. Shaw's deep experience with cases involving international borders, the law of the sea, and state immunity made him an ideal candidate to lead Israel's defense in this landmark case. His extensive career includes advising various governments, such as the UK, UAE, Serbia, and Ukraine, as well as appearing before international tribunals like the ICJ and the European Court of Human Rights.

The legal team also included Dr. Tal Becker, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' legal adviser, and Dr. Galit Rajwan, head of the Ministry of Justice's International Procedures Cluster. Other key figures were Colonel Roni Katzir, head of the De-



MARC ISRAEL SELLEM/THE JERUSALEM POST



JOHANNA GERON/REUTERS



JOHANNA GERON/REUTERS

partment of International Law at the Ministry of Defense, and Daniel Garon, the National Security Council's head of legal affairs. Attorney Dr. Omri Sander, representatives from the Prime Minister's Office, and other governmental bodies also contributed their expertise to ensure a comprehensive and robust defense.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled that the 1948 Genocide Convention could potentially classify Israel's ac-

tions in Gaza as genocide. As a result, the Court issued provisional measures, instructing Israel to take all necessary steps to prevent any acts that might violate the Genocide Convention. However, the ICJ did not mandate Israel to halt its ongoing military operations in Gaza, focusing instead on preventive actions related to genocide allegations.

In February, Israeli Foreign Minister Israel Katz honored the team for their tireless efforts,

Aharon Barak's role on Israel's defense team highlighted the importance Israel placed on securing high-caliber legal minds to counter the serious accusations laid against it

praising their skillful representation of Israel in the face of what he described as South Africa's "false and hostile slurs." Katz stated that the defense team had stood as the "voice of truth and justice" for Israel on the international stage.

The case underscored not only the ongoing conflict between Israel and Gaza but also the significant role international law plays in shaping global perceptions and outcomes. With figures like Shaw and Barak at the helm of Israel's defense, the nation underscored its commitment to defending against serious international allegations.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

IFAT OVADIA-LUSKI, YAAKOV HAGOEL AND SHAI DAVIDAI

Defending Israel worldwide

Ifat Ovadia-Luski

Chair of KKL-JNF

Ifat Ovadia-Luski (48), married and mother of three, serves as the Chairwoman of the Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF). She took office about two years ago, becoming the first woman in history to lead KKL-JNF and one of the national institutions of the Zionist movement. She heads an organization with over 1,000 employees, manages an annual budget estimated in the billions of shekels, and leads a board of 37 members representing various movements and parties.

Since the outbreak of the war, Ovadia-Luski, together with KKL-JNF's board, has spearheaded significant initiatives to support border communities and evacuees. These efforts include: providing emergency funding directly to affected councils during the first week of the war; allocating resources for standby units in the North and South; organizing recreational activities for evacuees in hotels; relocating the residents of Kibbutz Kfar Aza to temporary housing at Kibbutz Ruhama; and connecting Jewish communities abroad to support Israel.

Additionally, she launched initiatives to honor women heroes of the war by naming a path in their honor at Ofakim Park and planting trees in memory of those murdered at the Nova party in Re'im Forest. Recently, KKL-JNF approved further assistance plans, including support for communities in the western Negev and the North amounting to NIS 225 million; supporting firefighting teams in the North; and upgrading the Re'im campsite near the Nova party area. Another initiative led by Ovadia-Luski last summer was the renewal of cooperation between KKL-JNF and JNF-USA for rehabilitation and development projects in Israel, totaling about \$50 million, after more than two decades of disconnect between the organizations.

Yaakov Hagoel:

Championing Zionism in a Year of Challenge

Yaakov Hagoel, Chairman of the World Zionist Organization, and representative of World Likud, has faced a

year marked by war, rising antisemitism, and an increased demand for aliyah. His leadership, rooted in Jewish and Zionist values, continues to address the urgent needs of the Jewish people globally. At the beginning of the "Operation Swords of Iron" war, the WZO launched a center that coordinated donations of essential supplies from the Diaspora to Israeli soldiers on the front lines. The organization also provided mobile shower facilities and supported numerous other initiatives for our soldiers. Hagoel called on Jewish communities in Israel and abroad to offer vacant apartments to evacuees and displaced families. Over 500 apartments are currently being used by those affected, including families of hostages. He also organized dozens of international delegations to witness the destruction firsthand and show solidarity with the residents of southern and northern Israel. Following the October 7 massacre, Hagoel convened the Jewish People's Challenges Conference, bringing together 500 Jewish leaders from 38 countries to discuss the war and the surge in antisemitism. Under Hagoel's leadership, the WZO was asked by the Israeli government to assist the Hostage and Missing Persons Directorate, providing support to returning hostages and to their families. Through the WZO's Settlement Division, seven new neighborhoods have been established to temporarily house kibbutzim attacked on October 7. Hagoel also successfully advanced a government initiative to commemorate Jews from the Diaspora who lost their lives in antisemitic terror attacks. Additionally, he pressed the President of Argentina to reopen the investigation into the 1994 AMIA bombing, seeking justice for the victims.

Shai Davidai

The educator who stood up for Israel

Shai Davidai, an assistant management professor at Columbia Business School, is one of the most outspoken and fiercest critics of the university's administration for its handling of antisemitism on cam-

pus in the wake of the October 7 massacre.

Days after October 7, hundreds of dueling protesting students faced each other on Columbia's campus. On October 12, an Israeli student was assaulted outside the main campus library of Columbia University in New York City, according to police.

Davidai quickly condemned then-university president Minouche Shafik for allowing student groups who chanted pro-terror songs to remain on campus without retribution.

In a now-viral video posted on his personal YouTube channel on October 18, Davidai addressed a group of supporters holding posters of Israeli hostages and said, "We cannot protect your children from pro-terror student organizations because the president of Columbia University will not speak out against pro-terror student organizations."

Columbia's chapter of Students for Justice in Palestine collected more than 8,000 signatures in April calling for Davidai's termination, accusing him of using social media to incite harassment and violence against pro-Palestinian students "under the guise of fighting antisemitism," the *Columbia Daily Spectator* reported.

A Zionist organization garnered more than 31,000 signatures in support of Davidai after the professor's announcement that the university formally launched an investigation into his conduct.

"Who do you think they will come for after me? Do you think they'll be done?" Davidai said at a rally in August, ahead of the 2024-2025 school year. "If you're waiting to speak up, you might wait too long, and when you want to speak up, you might find that they'll already have taken your voice and taken your opportunity to speak up."

"So, here is a message to all professors out there, Jewish and non-Jewish professors, decent people who know the difference between right and wrong," he said. "If you speak up and they come after you, I personally will have your back."

By HANNAH SARISOHN,
JERUSALEM POST STAFF



COURTESY OF HAHISTADRUT



VIA WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



JNF-USA

RUSSELL ROBINSON AND JONATHAN GREENBLATT

Rebuilding Israel's communities and combating antisemitism

Russell Robinson -
CEO of JNF-USA

As CEO of Jewish National Fund - USA, Russell F. Robinson has dedicated himself to realizing the Zionist organization's historic philanthropic vision for the land and people of Israel. Under his leadership, JNF-USA has inspired millions of Americans to support the Jewish Homeland, fostering a new generation of changemakers through JNFuture, the organization's fastest-growing society of donors aged 22-40, and through the 32,000 alums of its Alexander Muss High School in Israel.

JNF-USA, established over 124 years ago, remains a cornerstone of the Jewish philanthropic world, ensuring a strong, secure, and prosperous future for the land and people of Israel through bold initiatives and Zionist engagement. The organization's vision encompasses a wide range of initiatives, including developing housing sites, sourcing water solutions, supporting firefighters, assisting people with disabilities, boosting tourism, promoting aliyah (immigration to Israel), medical centers, agricultural and culinary research, and operating a renowned high school semester abroad program in Israel.

In the wake of the tragic events of October 7, Robinson and JNF-USA are spearheading efforts to unite organizations from around the world to rebuild Israel's shattered southern communities while reimagining a brighter future for the North region.

Robinson has also elevated JNF-USA to become one of the top-rated charities in the United States. He is an inductee in the Jewish Hall of Fame, which recognizes individuals who have made an extraordinary contribution to Judaism and Jewish values during their lifetimes.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

Jonathan Greenblatt

Jonathan Greenblatt has served as national director and CEO of the Anti-Defamation League for nearly a decade. Recently, he spoke with *The Jerusalem Post* and shared his



JNF-USA

perspective on the rising tide of antisemitism that has washed over the world since October 7, and how the ADL is adapting and innovating in order to face the challenge.

"The ADL is the oldest anti-hate organization in America," Greenblatt explained. "It was founded in 1913 with the singular focus of fighting hate."

The ADL head added that despite the variety of positions held by the staff at the civil rights organization, "all of us have the same job description: protect the Jewish people."

Before joining the ADL, Greenblatt served in the Obama administration as Special Assistant to the President and director of the Office of Social Innovation and Civic Participation.

Greenblatt noted that this role, in which he strove to promote innovation and national

service to accelerate economic growth and job creation, inspired his thinking upon coming to the helm of the ADL on how to engage volunteers more effectively.

However, Hamas's October 7 attacks on southern Israel and the ensuing war created a wave of antisemitism around the world, which, Greenblatt said, had "velocity and viciousness" that shocked him.

Since then, Greenblatt's work and the role of the ADL have been more relevant than ever.

"We've had to add more staff. One of the big things that ADL does is respond to incidents. People call us or email us or text us or enter in an online form," he explained. "We respond to every incident, [and] we've had to add staff just to deal with the deluge."

"Our job here is to call balls and strikes on antisemitism.

We don't play for the red team or the blue team. We're here to defend the Jewish team. We're here to defend the American team," he added. "Donors don't tell us what to do. I've lost plenty of donors over the years because they're unhappy with this position or that position. We just try to keep our heads down, play the long game, and remind ourselves of the job description. It's always the same: protect the Jewish people. That's it."

Greenblatt stressed that building partnerships was a key part of that mission, adding that after he staffed a G7 meeting for former president Barack Obama, he was involved in the creation of the "J7," a body composed of representatives from the seven largest Jewish communities around the world: the United States, Canada, UK, France, Germany, Australia, and Argentina.

Immediately after October 7, Greenblatt also worked to rally cooperation with non-Jewish entities.

"The first call I got on the 7 was from Al Sharpton, who said, 'What can I do?'" Greenblatt recalled. "Twenty-four hours later, Reverend Sharpton and his National Action Network, the NAACP, the National Urban League, and other groups released a statement decrying what happened on 10/7. The Asian American community did the same, and many others."

The ADL chief looked to the future as well, defining success for the organization as "turning the tide on this wave of antisemitism. Success is decreasing the number of anti-Jewish incidents."

Greenblatt noted the expansion of the groundwork of systems of accountability and training that the ADL has established in educational institutions and businesses as a strategy for achieving this goal.

He also emphasized the need to address antisemitism on a societal level by tackling it both from the bottom up and the top down.

"We need everybody to play a role. Leaders need to lead," he said. From presidents of countries to presidents of local PTAs,

'Success is decreasing the number of anti-Jewish incidents'

“I want more of that moral clarity from people in positions of authority. I want people in positions of authority to demonstrate authority.”

Additionally, Greenblatt called for “consequences to doing things that are consequential,” pointing to his disappointment when universities backed down after initially withholding diplomas from students who had been suspended during anti-Israel protests.

Regarding his vision for the future, Greenblatt said, “I am bullish on this country, and

Israel aside, I would say that America has been the best haven for the Jewish people in our history.”

However, he pointed out that one should never assume that a country will always be safe for Jews. “I can’t imagine having grandchildren anywhere other than America. I do this job in order to fight for their right to be here, to live as Jews with all the privileges and all the rights that I have been able to enjoy, as did my parents, as did my grandparents.”

By SAM HALPERN



MARC ISRAEL SELLEM/THE JERUSALEM POST

HAIM TAIB, ROBERT SINGER AND RANAN HARTMAN

Shaping the future of the Jewish world

Haim Taib

Haim Taib’s business and philanthropy focuses on long-term value and economic growth that leads to social impact. Taib’s companies – Mitrelli Group, JETA Holding, and Menomadin Foundation – operate across three continents in the fields of national infrastructure, real estate, water and food security, energy, education, healthcare, and technology.

Taib started his path in Angola, directing his efforts towards food security by establishing rural settlements across the country similar to Israeli kibbutzim, where agricultural products harvested by residents were used to support the local community and encourage regional development.

In 2010, Taib established Mitrelli Group. Today, Mitrelli employs over 2,500 people, operating in three continents and nine countries. Under Taib’s leadership, Mitrelli has executed approximately 80 large-scale infrastructure development projects and social initiatives in Angola, Senegal, Côte d’Ivoire, Mozambique, and beyond.

Among his most notable projects is one of the largest-scale affordable housing initiatives in Africa, which has provided

homes for over 120,000 individuals.

In 2019, Taib established the Menomadin Foundation, an international impact fund that leverages the experience, resources, and capabilities he accumulated in his near 30 years of work in Africa. Menomadin leads strategic philanthropic initiatives in education, welfare, and municipal development and invests in impact-driven startups. The foundation operates in Angola through its cultural center, Fundação Arte e Cultura. Menomadin, which specializes in formulating national roadmaps, initiated the National Welfare Plan adopted by the Israeli government in 2022.

Taib is president of Save a Child’s Heart in Africa, an NGO that provides quality cardiac care to children with heart disease. In cooperation with the Côte d’Ivoire government, his group launched a program at the Abidjan Cardiology Institute to train local doctors in pediatric heart care. In June of 2024, Taib received the Unity Award from President Isaac Herzog for his contributions to Israeli resilience.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

Robert Singer



ANIL ABEYKOON

Robert Singer has a robust background in global Jewish affairs, Jewish education, and diplomacy. As the former CEO of the World Jewish Congress, he made significant contributions to the international Jewish community. Before that, he served as CEO and later chairman of World ORT, focusing on advancing educational initiatives worldwide.

Currently, Singer chairs both the Center for Jewish Impact and Alumot Or. He is also the president of SASA Setton. He is dedicated to leading initiatives that

empower vulnerable populations in Israel, particularly children with special educational needs and hospitalized youth.

Robert co-founded the Technion’s Aniëres program, which creates pathways for young Jewish individuals from challenging economic backgrounds to become leading engineers. His role as a governing board member of the Combat Antisemitism Movement has been vital in safeguarding Jewish communities globally.

In response to the outbreak of war, Robert led the Embrace



SHAHAR AZRAN



ONNO ACADEMIC COLLEGE

Leading the successful integration of students from underprivileged backgrounds

40% are first-generation students in academia. Parallel with its academic programs, OAC, a significant research center for multicultural education, has established numerous social educational enterprises, ranging from integrating young people with autism into IDF intelligence units to providing rehabilitation and counseling for trauma victims.

During the Israel-Hamas War, 24 OAC students and alumni of the college were killed, dozens were injured, and hundreds served for months in military reserve service while receiving significant academic and financial support from the college. The students and academic staff volunteered to help evacuated families, providing 350 people with temporary housing solutions in the student dormitories. Dozens of lecturers provided trauma therapy treatment in hospitals and IDF bases. Indeed, the entire OAC multicultural community – Jews, Arabs, Christians, and others – stepped in to help each other out.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

Campaign, mobilizing resources and coordinating emergency relief for Israeli society. This initiative includes rehabilitating 35 early childhood excellence centers in the western Negev over three years through a continuous support process, which involves implementing a tailor-made pedagogical model, designing enriching learning environments, and emphasizing emotional well-being.

The campaign also connects the diplomatic community with local Israeli society, supports public diplomacy efforts, assists the Barzilai Mental Trauma Center for children, helps injured IDF soldiers pursue Paralympic

dreams, aids displaced families, provides scholarships for students from the Gaza border communities, and offers crucial support for Supernova music festival survivors, among many other activities.

Robert's unwavering dedication to Israel's welfare and resilience exemplifies the leadership needed in times of crisis.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

Ranan Hartman

Ranan Hartman is the CEO of Ono Academic College, which he founded in 1995 at 26. Today, OAC is the largest college in Israel, with over 23,000 students studying at its three cam-

puses (Kiryat Ono, Haifa, and Jerusalem). In 2024, OAC, which includes four faculties (Law, Business Administration, Health, and Humanities), was named the most recommended academic college by Globes.

Hartman, the youngest son of Barbara Hartman and the late Rabbi Prof. David Hartman, founder of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, was born in Canada. Hartman served as an officer in the IDF Armored Corps and later received a law degree from Bar-Ilan University.

Hartman, as head of OAC, has been leading the successful integration of students from underprivileged backgrounds, of which

SRULIK EINHORN

Mastermind behind winning campaigns and global strategy

Half a daily BBC broadcast could be connected to this mega strategic advisor, reflecting Srulik Einhorn's far-reaching influence. Einhorn's inclusion in *The Jerusalem Post's* list of the most influential Jews in 2024 highlights a career that began far from the political world. After co-founding Allenby Concept House, Israel's leading digital branding agency, and refining his skills with major brands like Heineken and SodaStream, Einhorn made a significant transition into political consulting. This transition, where he played a decisive role as chief creative director for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu across multiple successful election campaigns, showcases his adaptability.

Today, Einhorn advises heads of state across Europe, the Middle East, and Africa, shaping public opinion and decision-making through powerful messaging. Involved in six elec-

tion campaigns in key countries, his expertise is crafting resonant narratives through short, catchy videos that speak the language of today's fast-paced world.

Einhorn blends traditional media with social platforms,

'Half a daily BBC broadcast could be connected to this mega strategic advisor'

precise targeting, and creative message dissemination. Our readers likely encounter his work daily without knowing he's the mastermind behind the scenes

– that's exactly how he operates. As the founder of Perception, he has overseen over 30 global election campaigns, working closely with Jonatan Urich, Netanyahu's chief advisor, to cement his position as a political and corporate strategy leader.

Known as a "creative director to world leaders," Einhorn keeps a low profile, maintaining a discreet network that spans senior officials, tycoons, and celebrities. His behind-the-scenes approach makes it nearly impossible to know whom he collaborates with or serves.

Einhorn's career took a decisive turn when he transitioned into the political realm as Netanyahu's strategic advisor and chief creative director. From 2019 to 2022, he advised on five of Netanyahu's election campaigns, where his creative strategies were instrumental in securing victory. This shift into politics established Einhorn as



BOAZ ARAD

one of Israel's top political consultants, leading him to advise leaders across continents in recent years' most high-stakes geopolitical and election campaigns.

In addition to his political work, Einhorn has contributed to supporting Israel's security efforts.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

VICTORIA STARMER

A true influencer

IF THE United States elects its first female president next month, the dinner conversations during the exchange state visits between the US and the UK will likely be interesting.

British Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer is a barrister; his wife, Victoria, is a solicitor.

US Vice President Kamala Harris is an attorney, and so is her husband, Douglas Emhoff.

Lady Victoria is Jewish, as is Emhoff.

Is this good for Israel?

Skeptics say no, even though there have been British media reports that the Starmers maintain a kosher home and that their two teenage children have been raised Jewish.

Emhoff has said that his marriage has helped strengthen his Jewish identity.

The Starmers will undoubtedly be invited to dine at the palace when King Charles hosts foreign dignitaries for dinner. When that happens, Lady Victoria will get on famously with Princess Anne. Both are passionate about racehorses.

Although she is politically savvy and has been active in political campaigns, Lady Victoria has avoided becoming a politician. Furthermore, she has no intention of playing the role of the PM's wife except when necessary, such as attending diplomatic and state events. She is her own person, pursuing her own career. No longer a practicing solicitor, she works full-time as an occupational health worker at a London hospital.

Lady Victoria has never given a media interview and is unlikely to do so. She is also fiercely protective of her teenage son and daughter's privacy, refusing to allow anyone to photograph them.

So, what qualifies her placement in the list of influential Jews?

It's said that behind every great man is a great woman. Friends who know the Starmers well say that her husband never makes important decisions without first consulting with her, relying completely on her advice.



REUTERS

She's also a realist, well aware that her husband is the fifth British prime minister in five years, and that, with all the best intentions, there's no guarantee he will remain in office a full term.

While the Starmers reportedly have a close family life, this does not include her going gung-ho into boosting his career at the expense of her own. They are partners, but unlike Israel's Isaac

and Michal Herzog, they are not a team. Michal Herzog participates in some 80% of her husband's activities.

Lady Victoria shares her husband's life, but only a small portion of his career – first thing in the morning and at the end of her working day – and, as far as she and her husband are concerned, that's quite a satisfactory arrangement.

By GREER FAY CASHMAN

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DOVI WEISSENSTERN, ELI BEER, AND RABBI YOSSI ERBLICH

Israel's medical heroes

Dovi Weissenstern, born in 1975, is the CEO of ZAKA, a renowned search, rescue, and recovery organization. With over a decade of leadership experience, he manages 4,000 volunteers, guiding ZAKA's emergency response in Israel and globally. Under his leadership, ZAKA has gained recognition as a UN consultant due to its role in international disaster relief. Weissenstern excels in crisis management, strategic planning, and external relations, and played a key role in ZAKA's response to the October 7 attacks.

Eli Beer, founder of United Hatzalah, leads Israel's largest volunteer EMS organization, responding to 2,000 daily emergencies. On October 7, thousands of volunteers risked their lives providing critical medical aid in southern Israel, even as ambulances withdrew. United



REUBEN CASTRO



UNITED HATZALAH



YOSSI FILMER

Hatzalah's innovations, including the Ambucycle and GPS-based dispatch, ensure fast response times. Beer emphasizes their readiness for future crises while maintaining their goal of reaching every emergency within 90 seconds.

Rabbi Yossi Erlich, founder

of Le'Maanchem, is a leading medical advisor in Israel, known for assisting with complex medical cases and his work with Israeli security agencies. His organization also promotes medical innovation and provides emergency support during crises, including the October 7 terror at-

tacks. Rabbi Erlich has received numerous accolades, including recognition from President Putin and Israel's President Herzog, for his life-saving contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergencies

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF,
ALAN ROSENBAUM

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DANNY DANON AND OFIR AKUNIS

Israel's diplomatic public faces

Veteran Likud politicians-turned-diplomats Danny Danon and Ofir Akunis are among the more public faces of Israel's battle against rising antisemitism on the global stage in the aftermath of the October 7, 2023, attack on Israel.

Danon took up the mantle of Israel's ambassador to the United Nations in New York this summer after having already represented his country at the UN from 2015 to 2020. He is the first Israeli diplomat to have returned to the position for the second time.

From this high-profile seat, he will present Israel's case to the world in an atmosphere of increasing delegitimization as the Palestinian Authority and Arab countries seek to strip Israel of its right to self-defense, including against Iranian proxy groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah.

In a recent interview with *The Jerusalem Post*, Danon said, "The atmosphere is very hos-

tile. In the past, it was a few ambassadors. Today, unfortunately, we see many countries joining the efforts to isolate us, and our goal is to explain what we are doing, why we are doing it, and maintain the support we have from the countries that understand the challenges we face."

Akunis took up his post as Israel's consul general in New York in April, at the height of the anti-Israel protests across college campuses in the United States.

Akunis, Israel's representative to the largest Jewish community in the United States, is on a mission to tell the world the truth about the Jewish state and push back against false narratives, including on college campuses such as Columbia University.

"I think that justice is on our side. We are the good that needs to defeat evil. We are the speakers of truth who need to defeat falsehoods," he told the *Post*.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF



MARC ISRAEL SELLEM/THE JERUSALEM POST



MARC ISRAEL SELLEM/THE JERUSALEM POST

ALON FUTTERMAN, ALON DAVIDI, AND INBAL RABIN-LIEBERMAN

Israel's southern heroes

Alon Futterman Director Kfar Azza Foundation

Alon Futterman is the director of the Kfar Azza Foundation, created after the massacre of October 7, when Hamas attacked Israeli towns and killed 1,200 people. Kfar Azza lost 64 residents, and 19 of the 240 kidnapped individuals are from the community. The foundation supports those impacted by this tragedy and helps them rebuild their lives.

The displaced southern community now faces challenges in rebuilding, planning for the future, and securing economic and social stability. The foundation aims to form partnerships, provide professional assistance, and establish flexible funding to meet the community's needs, supplementing government support.

Alon advises other communities affected by the October 7 massacre and raised millions of dollars globally to support survivors. He has held prominent roles, such as CEO of Keren Hayesod – UIA. He also founded TALMA, an educational leadership program. He has received numerous awards for his public service and is an advocate for social change.

Alon lectures on educational leadership and hosts the *Kfar Azza Talk* podcast, highlighting stories from the Gaza border communities. He lives in Ben Shemen Youth Village with his wife, Meital, and their two children.

Alon Davidi Sderot's heroic and resilient mayor

Sderot Mayor Alon Davidi is one of the many regional and municipal leaders who fought on their own on October 7 when Hamas terrorists invaded from Gaza, wreaking havoc, murdering 1,200 people, and taking more than 200 hostages.

Some of the very first images the Israeli public saw of the massacres taking place across Israel's South came from Sderot. Footage of trucks carrying terrorists quickly spread online, igniting many Israelis' worst fears. Over 50 civilians were brutally murdered in the city, as well as 20 police officers, who died in a gunfight with Hamas terrorists while defending their station, which was burned to the ground.

Davidi remained vocal as the fighting in his city continued. The

battle of Sderot lasted two more days, ending only on October 9. Davidi spoke to anyone who would listen, calling on the government to help the municipality evacuate the city's residents.

After the gunfight ended, Davidi toured the war-torn areas of his city. Echoing the residents' fears, he said, "They've lived here for over 20 years. This place is not safe; it is too dangerous for them here. We have a strong community, but their pockets are being emptied."

His calls were eventually heeded, and by the end of October, more than 80% of the city's residents were evacuated. Many of them have gradually returned to their homes since February, but that hasn't stopped Davidi from speaking out about what he views as injustices done to southern Israelis over the course of the last year.

Speaking about his own experience as a Sderot resident on October 7, Davidi told 103FM in May, "Do you know how difficult it is for us? We are always under stress; some southern communities have yet to return."

"I keep hearing about our forces being too lax...but we have to show strength and understand that while it won't be easy, we will emerge victorious."

Davidi's resilience as mayor of southern Israel's most beleaguered city epitomizes the strength of Israel's southern residents at large, elevating him to one of the world's most influential Jews today.

Inbal Rabin-Lieberman The regular civilian who rose to the occasion

On October 7, Inbal Rabin-Lieberman, a 25-year-old resident of Kibbutz Nir Am, demonstrated extraordinary bravery and quick thinking that saved her community from the brutal Hamas assault that the collective Jewish world is reeling from until today.

As Hamas terrorists launched a surprise assault on Israeli border communities, Rabin-Lieberman was among the first to recognize the imminent threat. She swiftly organized the kibbutz's defense, distributing weapons and coordinating the kibbutz's response team of 12 residents.

Rabin-Lieberman's decisive actions and leadership were pivotal



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HADAS PARUSH/FLASH 90



SCREENSHOT/TWITTER

in preventing the terrorists from breaching the kibbutz. She ran between houses, setting up ambushes and ensuring that her community was prepared to defend itself.

Her efforts not only protected the lives of residents of the kibbutz but also defenseless agricultural workers who were in the area when Hamas began its brutal assault.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF,
JACOB LAZNIK

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DANIEL CHAMOVITZ

President of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev

Professor Daniel Chamovitz, president of Ben-Gurion University of the Negev (BGU), is a paragon of academic leadership, scientific innovation, and social responsibility.

A renowned plant geneticist, Chamovitz has made significant contributions to our understanding of plant biology with implications for global food security and environmental sustainability. His book *What a Plant Knows* has been translated into 18 languages, demonstrating his ability to make complex scientific concepts accessible to the public.

Since assuming the presidency of BGU in 2019, Chamovitz has exemplified the fusion of scientific excellence with social

impact. Under his leadership, BGU has strengthened its position as a global leader in desert research, water management, and renewable energy – critical areas for humanity’s future. He has spearheaded initiatives to make higher education more accessible to underserved populations, particularly in Israel’s Negev region.

Chamovitz’s influence extends beyond academia. He has been a vocal advocate for science-based policy-making and has played a crucial role in fostering collaboration between academia, industry, and government. He has been instrumental in positioning the Negev as an emerging high-tech hub, contributing to Israel’s economic

development and global competitiveness. In the wake of the October 7 attacks, Chamovitz’s leadership has been pivotal. He has guided BGU in providing critical support to affected communities and mobilizing the university’s resources for trauma care, infrastructure rehabilitation, and community resilience programs.

Chamovitz’s work embodies the Jewish values of *Tikkun Olam* (repairing the world) and the pursuit of knowledge. His ability to bridge scientific research, education, and social responsibility makes him not just an influential figure in Israel, but a beacon of Jewish leadership on the global stage.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF



WIKI COMMONS

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RABBIS HIRSCHY ZARCHI, YUDA DRIZIN, EPHRAIM MIRVIS, AND AMMIEL HIRSCH

Spiritual guidance in trying times

With the emotional turmoil caused by the Israel-Hamas War and the major spike in global antisemitism since October 7, the importance of rabbis as spiritual and community leaders has become more evident than it has been in decades.

At a time when many Jews in the Diaspora find themselves afraid of being persecuted for their identity, many turn to their rabbis for guidance and support.

Arguably, this sense of danger for Jews has been particularly evident on college campuses, with high-profile anti-Israel protests held at universities such as Harvard and Columbia. On their campuses, Chabad Rabbis Hirschy Zarchi and Yuda Drizin of the aforementioned Ivy League universities have been at the forefront of Jewish life. As a result, when protests erupted on campuses and pro-Palestinian encampments became global front-page news, these rabbis were front and center, serving

as beacons of leadership when their communities needed them the most.

Sir Ephraim Mirvis, UK Chief Rabbi, is also a notable figure at this time. Mirvis, one of the world’s most prominent Orthodox rabbis, has been vocal in criticizing British policy, such as the withholding of weapons sales to Israel and the Labour-led government’s handling of widespread pro-Palestinian protests throughout the country.

Many Jews who aren’t Orthodox have also struggled, particularly those in progressive spaces, like many Reform Jews around the world. It is here that Rabbi Ammiel Hirsch has been a pillar of guidance. Throughout the war, he has been active on social media and in media interviews, criticizing progressive groups that support Hamas and condemning the rising antisemitism in the US.

These rabbis remind us just how important pulpit leadership is during these trying times.

By AARON REICH



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SCREENSHOT/YOUTUBE



REUTERS



SWFS

DAN GOLDFUS, DR. YORAM KLEIN AND PROF. ISRAEL DUDKIEWICZ

From the frontlines to the operating room

IDF Maj. Gen. Dan Goldfus is the incoming head of the Northern Corps and the Multi-Domain Joint Maneuver Array. He is best known for breaking down Hamas's tunnel network in Khan Yunis in Gaza while commanding Division 98, the IDF's special forces division of sorts.

However, this meant that he was only minutes away from catching Gaza Chief Yahya Sinwar.

In January, Goldfus's soldiers started reaching places where hostages were being held.

In March, they penetrated into the heart of Khan Yunis and arrived at an underground compound, where Sinwar had fled.

According to Goldfus, they were super close – the closest the IDF has been on his heels since the start of the war – and had they caught him, perhaps the war would have ended; at least the results of the war to date would have been different.

Of course, Goldfus still believes the IDF has made very significant achievements; he would merely argue that catching Sinwar then could have sped up Hamas's defeat.

How did Sinwar escape? Was it the sheer volume of tunnels? Was it because the IDF could not fire on him, knowing he was surrounded by hostages?

The *Jerusalem Post* has learned that in Goldfus's view, the reason is unimportant; at the end of the day, no one has actually found Sinwar to date.

He would have been dead if the IDF had found him, but he is already considered a dead man walking.

With patience, Goldfus tells those close to him that the IDF will eventually reach Sinwar, just like it got to Hamas military chief Mohammed Deif.

This last point raises questions about whether and how Sinwar could be better at hiding than Deif, whom Israel had failed to assassinate for many years despite half a dozen attempts.

Without overanalyzing, Goldfus would simply remark that since the IDF got Deif but not

Sinwar, he is now clearly the hardest to reach.

Concerning Deif, Goldfus places importance on the fact that the IDF located and killed him while he was hiding in a presumably safe humanitarian zone.

So, Goldfus believes that eventually Sinwar will go to a place that he thinks is safe, where it would be harder for the IDF to reach him because of its generally restrictive rules relating to humanitarian zones, and he will make a mistake.

Goldfus is certain that when that happens, the IDF will show up in time to get Sinwar and that Sinwar knows this as well.

During a *Jerusalem Post* embedded visit with Goldfus in December 2023, he said he hoped Sinwar wanted to live for the sake of making a deal to get more hostages back alive. Goldfus still believes this, even more strongly now. His view is that there is no doubt about it and that Sinwar is not only seeking to enhance his personal safety but also to secure insurance or immunity following the signing of a ceasefire agreement.

According to Goldfus, if Sinwar's people were important to him, he would have cut a deal a long time ago.

Next, Goldfus would note how much money Hamas invested in the tunnels, as well as what they could have done in Gaza instead. Given the right approach, it could have become another Singapore.

Therefore, according to Goldfus's understanding of Sinwar, the Gaza chief cares only about his continued rule.

Goldfus also made news with a speech in March slamming the political class for its unseemly debates about exempting *haredim* (the ultra-Orthodox) from serving in the IDF just as he was losing soldiers in battle. Not wanting to cause problems for the IDF high command, he apologized for his sharp tone but refused to back down on the substance.

Goldfus, the son of immigrants from South Africa with

many extended family members murdered in the Holocaust, believes there is no greater honor than to defend Israel and serve the Jewish democratic state.

By YONAH JEREMY BOB

Dr. Yoram Klein and Prof. Israel Dudkiewicz, Sheba Medical Center

Dr. Yoram Klein, Director of the Trauma and Urgent Surgery Unit, and Prof. Israel Dudkiewicz, Chairman of the Rehabilitation Division at Sheba Hospital, have played key roles in the treatment of wounded soldiers and civilians during the Israel-Hamas war.

Dr. Klein is an expert in multi-system trauma care, emergency surgery, as well as intra-abdominal and soft tissue infections, and tends to the wounded during the war the minute they arrive at Sheba via helicopter or ambulance.

On October 7, 92 patients arrived at Sheba Hospital within a span of eight hours, many with severe injuries, including penetrating wounds, extensive internal bleeding, and nerve damage. Remarkably, all survived that day.

Dr. Dudkiewicz is an expert in the use and development of new technologies, mainly in prosthetics, orthotics, and assisted technology. He has treated many of those wounded in the war, assisting them in the crucial rehabilitation process necessary for their return to normal function. As director of Sheba's rehabilitation division, he expanded its capacity at the war's outset, adding 86 beds to its existing 140.

Since October 7, 70% of all injured soldiers have been treated at Sheba, and most impressively, 99% of all critically injured soldiers flown to Sheba within an hour of being injured have survived their injuries to date.

Sheba's success in treating the wounded from the Israel-Hamas war is undoubtedly due to dedicated doctors such as Dr. Klein and Dr. Dudkiewicz, as well as its entire medical staff.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF



SETH J. FRANTZMAN



SHEBA MEDICAL CENTER



SHEBA MEDICAL CENTER

GAL GADOT, MICHAEL RAPAPORT, NOA TISHBY, AND EDEN GOLAN

Defending Israel with charm

Three very different entertainment industry personalities – Gal Gadot, Michael Rapaport, and Noa Tishby – became Israel’s most outspoken defenders on social media this year.

Gadot, known for her role as Wonder Woman, is the biggest Hollywood star ever to emerge from Israel, and she used her considerable influence – she has 108 million followers on Instagram – to show her grief for the victims of the October 7 massacre by Hamas and to spotlight the ongoing plight of the hostages in Gaza. While so many actors shied away from making any statement about the war, she put it front and center, pouring her heart out and raising awareness.

Rapaport, an actor/comedian known for his bluntness, made Israel the center of his life throughout the past year, visiting several times. He spent time with the hostage families and tirelessly used his tough-talking, politically incorrect New Yorker persona to combat antisemitism and anti-Israel hate online. He appeared twice on *Eretz Nehederet* (Wonderful Country) – Israel’s SNL – first in a Harry Potter-inspired sketch and then in a bitterly funny skit in which he pretended to host the Oscars that excoriated Hollywood bigs for ignoring the plight of the hostages. He got plenty of laughs, but even more respect.

Noa Tishby, a US-based Israeli actress-turned-activist and author, found a way to amplify her already strong voice, speaking out online to put the war into perspective and using her charm, wit, and beauty to explain the conflict. Together with retired American football player and commentator Emmanuel Acho, she published a new book, *Uncomfortable Conversations with a Jew*, which demystifies the history of antisemitism all over the world. No matter what the haters said, Tishby stood her ground – and ours – by responding graciously and making defending Israel fun and sexy.

By HANNAH BROWN

Eden Golan

Israeli-born, Russia-raised Eden Golan represented Israel in the 2024 Eurovision Song Contest, as the nation mourned post-October 7. As the world rooted against her, Golan remained poised in the face of fear, knowing that the people of Israel and the Jewish people as a whole were standing behind her.

A year after Israel’s Noa Kirel placed third in the competition with her performance of “Unicorn” on the Liverpool, UK-based stage in 2023, Golan performed her heart out in a city deemed one of the most antisemitic in the world: Malmö, Sweden. In Malmö, when out in public, she wore a wig and traveled with heightened security. She rehearsed with people shouting “boo!” in preparation for the expected reaction from the crowds of vehemently anti-Israel protesters.

Golan was born in Kfar Saba on October 5, 2003, to parents from the former Soviet Union. She and her family relocated to Moscow for her father’s job when she was a child. It was there that Golan began competing in musical competitions, including the 2015 Russian selection for the Junior Eurovision Song Contest. She scored just below the competition’s winner, according to IMDb.

The following year, she performed at New Wave, a competition in Crimea, in a duet alongside musician Nyusha.

Her family returned to Israel nearly two years ago, and she immediately jumped back into competing and performing here. She participated in the second season finale of Israel’s *I Can See Your Voice* in 2023 but was eliminated in the first round.

Like every other Israeli, her world changed forever two days after her birthday. Just a month later, a contestant who had competed for the spot she earned lost his life in battle in the Gaza Strip. This only inspired Golan to give the competition her best shot possible in his memory.

In preparation for the Euro-



MIKE BLAKE/REUTERS



NOAM BEVKIN/FENTON/FLASH90

vision Song Contest 2024, the Israeli Public Broadcasting Corporation again decided to select the country’s representative for the competition through cooperation with the Keshet 12 channel and *Rising Star*. Golan won all stages of the show, performing Whitney Houston’s “I Have Nothing” and Aerosmith’s “I Don’t Want to Miss a Thing” for the final. She ultimately won both the jury and the public vote and was selected to represent Israel in the contest.

In interviews ahead of May’s competition, Golan said that

this year’s song contest “wasn’t just another Eurovision.” And it certainly wasn’t. Never before had thousands of artists called for the European Broadcasting Union, the body that runs Eurovision, to ban Israel from competing. Following the EBU’s refusal to ban Israel, these artists called for a complete boycott of the contest due to Israel’s presence.

Before, during, and after the competition, the Israeli delegation and fans attending the contest faced serious threats. If it were just another Eurovi-



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sion, the Shin Bet head, Ronen Bar, would not have gone to Malmo to oversee the security arrangements for the Israeli delegation, nor would the Israeli government have issued travel warnings for Israelis attending the event. Multiple reports indicate that the Israeli delega-

Eden Golan brought hope and light to Israel, serving as a model for Jews in a troubling time.



LEONHARD FOEGER/REUTERS

tion, traveling in a motorcade with blacked-out windows akin to heads of state, was under the protection of 100 Swedish police officers. Golan and her entourage were advised to remain in their hotel rooms when not performing.

Still, the spritely singer did not let the haters get her down or keep her from making the most of her experience.

Golan had to go with the flow, particularly after multiple sets of her submitted lyrics for the initial version of "Hurricane," originally titled "October Rain," were rejected for allegedly being "too political."

So, what's next for Golan?
In an interview with Ynet,

the pop star revealed that she was preparing for her army service. As a returning resident, she would serve, but she had postponed her call-up in her second year back in Israel from Moscow due to her Eurovision participation.

At 21, this native Israeli is enlisting a bit older than a typical IDF recruit. Most of her peers are already being discharged, but she said that she understands the utmost importance of serving her country. "I believe serving your country is vital, especially in today's reality," she told Ynet earlier this month. "Even if it means being more well-known and older than the other recruits. I really hope to serve as a singer, performing for soldiers on bases, visiting those who protect us, and bringing them some joy. I get chills just thinking about it."

Golan is preparing for basic training, which will not strip her of her iconic colored hair streak or glamorous nails that are part of her identity and not just her stage presence. "I promise you, I can do everything with these nails! Absolutely everything. Wash dishes, put on necklaces, wear earrings, and even handle a weapon," she told Ynet.

Eden Golan will go down in history as a person who brought hope and light to Israel, serving as a model for Jews in a troubling time.

By JOANIE MARGULIES

Hannah Brown contributed to this story.

Danel Group: A tale of resilience and growth amidst adversity

The year 2023 was challenging for everyone, especially for the Danel Group, whose core mission is to provide essential services to a wide range of populations in Israel. “The war presented the group with unprecedented challenges, but it also revealed the resilience, determination, and mutual responsibility that drive us,” says Sigal Regev, Chairperson of the Danel Group.

Regev describes the Danel Group as “a company with a soul,” emphasizing the sense of purpose and mutual responsibility that motivate the company’s employees and the pride she feels in their courageous response to challenges. “Despite the existing challenges in the country, Danel not only survived the past year but also continued to grow and develop, which is a testament to its resilience and enormous growth potential,” she proudly states.

Sigal Regev, Chairperson of the Danel Group, leads the company with determination and vision. She believes in the values of purpose, mutual responsibility, and excellence, and, together with the board of directors and management, propels the group to new achievements even in challenging times. Regev is a seasoned executive with extensive experience in the healthcare and finance sectors.

Her career journey began at Clalit Health Services, where she dedicated many years to serving in various senior roles. She later served as Vice President of Business Development at Meir Medical Center and Chief Financial Officer at Meuhedet Health Maintenance Organization. In 2018, she returned to Clalit as Senior Vice President of Innovation, Planning, and Research, and in the same year, she was appointed CEO of Meuhedet, becoming the first woman to head a health maintenance organization in Israel. After retiring from Meuhedet, she served as Chairperson of the Raphael Hospital and as a director at Discount Bank. In 2024, she was appointed Chairperson of the Danel Group’s Board of Directors. Her achievements have garnered her

widespread recognition and numerous accolades, including the prestigious Ben-Gurion Award and prominent rankings on the lists of influential women compiled by “Globes” and “Forbes Israel”.

“The Danel Group is much more than what people know,” explains Regev. “It is a collection of diverse companies, each specializing in a different field and providing essential services to various populations in Israel, including the most vulnerable.” Among the companies in the group are Danel Nursing, which provides nursing services to the elderly; Beit Ekstein, which provides services to people with disabilities; and Danel Human Resources, specializing in employment, placement, managed projects, and outsourcing nationwide, as well as the private medicine sector, Dr. Levninger, and more.

Beit Ekstein is the largest organization in Israel providing services to people with intellectual and developmental disabilities, autism, and complex learning disabilities. The company operates schools, residential facilities, and employment services, helping thousands of people integrate into society and live fulfilling lives. “These are populations that need help, especially now, in the unique times we are in,” says Regev. “They have to deal with anxiety, reach shelters, and cope with stress, while the caregivers themselves are facing difficulties.”

The war affected everyone, and Danel was no exception. “Many employees were called up for reserve duty, while others stayed behind to care for children and spouses, who were mobilized,” Regev explains. “At the same time, the demand for the company’s services, particularly in the field of nursing for the elderly population as well as in special education, increased significantly.” She mentions a survey conducted by Danel Nursing among its patients, which revealed the severe impact of the war on their mental health, with many reporting a worsening of depression and anxiety.

“Precisely because the Danel

Group deals with vulnerable populations - such as the elderly, many of whom were evacuated, or whose caregivers had to leave, and sometimes the elderly were evacuated to one place and the caregivers to another - Danel was there to meet the needs.”

Even in the face of the challenges posed by the war, the Danel Group did not compromise its commitment to its clients. “Danel Nursing established a virtual branch in the Dead Sea to continue providing services to the elderly who were evacuated from their homes, and quickly arranged for new caregivers for the elderly in other cities, using an advanced technological system,” Regev explains. “At the same time, Beit Ekstein continued to operate its facilities and schools and even opened four new schools, in response to the need for special education schools, emphasizing schools for children with emotional needs. All this was done with a deep understanding of the importance of routine and education, especially during difficult times.”

“Danel Human Resources extended a helping hand to the Eshkol Regional Council, which suffered heavy losses in its workforce,” Regev continues, adding that the company quickly recruited hundreds of essential workers for the council, enabling it to continue functioning and providing services to residents during the war. In addition, Danel Human Resources initiated a project in collaboration with the Ministry of Defense, assisting disabled IDF veterans in reintegrating into the workforce.

Beyond its regular operations, the Danel Group and its subsidiaries also initiated special activities in the spirit of the times. Beit Ekstein’s patients crafted ceramic anemones by hand and presented

them to wounded soldiers. Dr. Levninger also contributed to the cause, setting up mobile eye clinics for families evacuated from the Gaza border area, with the network’s doctors conducting comprehensive eye exams for hundreds of evacuees. At the Barby Club in Tel Aviv, Beit Ekstein’s “Evening of the Bands” took place, where students from across the country performed original songs and covers, many of which reflected the complex spirit of the times.

Despite the numerous challenges, Regev says the Danel Group is ending the year with cautious optimism. “The company has proven its resilience and adaptability, and it is determined to continue growing, developing, and providing essential services to the populations that need them most, even in the future,” she says. “The story of the Danel Group is an inspiring tale of a company that successfully combines business success with a deep commitment to society and the community, even in the most difficult of times.”

By NERIA BARR



Sigal Regev,
Chairperson of
the Danel Group
(Photos by Inbal
Marmari)



TOP 25 YOUNG VIZIONARIES

Here is the list of 25 Young Vizionaries chosen by *The Jerusalem Post* & Jewish National Fund-USA:

1. Yuval David
2. Natasha Hausdorff
3. Ishay Ribo
4. Hen Mazzig
5. Naftali Akum
6. Ashira Solomon
7. Chad Holtzman
8. Arsen Ostrovsky
9. Civia Caroline
10. Dr. Naya Lekht
11. Melissa Lantsman MP
12. Eve Barlow
13. Ashager Araro
14. Elena Yacov
15. Naor Ihia
16. Mosab Hassan Yousef
17. Gabriel Boxer and Elan Kornblum
18. Ryan Lavernway
19. Nimrod Palmach
20. Emily Austin
21. Avivit Ohana
22. Aviva Klompas
23. Max August
24. Elizabeth Savetsky
25. The Hostages

A new generation of Zionist leaders steps up in a defining moment for Israel

Jewish National Fund-USA and The Jerusalem Post honor young ViZionaries



DAVID/DEE DELGADO/REUTERS

A PRO-ISRAEL rally takes place at Times Square in New York City

Few periods in recent Jewish history have been as tumultuous and cataclysmic as the past 12 months. With the Hamas terror attacks on October 7 and the outbreak of the Israel-Hamas War, the still unresolved hostage crisis, hundreds of thousands of Israelis evacuated from their homes in the North and South of the country, the attacks on Israel from multiple fronts throughout the Middle East, the Iranian missile attack – this has been a year like no other. These events have had a profound effect on Jewish communities around the world,

with outbreaks of antisemitism, anti-Israel protests, and campus disturbances directed against Jewish students.

Despite these difficulties, the Jewish community has experienced an unprecedented surge of commitment, determination, and pride in Israel. From social media influencers to academics, from college students to politicians, many who have never before spoken of their feelings or support for Israel have emerged as proud Zionists. A new generation of leaders has begun to emerge – one that is unafraid to raise its voice on behalf of Israel.

For these reasons, this year's *Jerusalem Post* 25 Young ViZionaries under 45 holds even greater significance as it recognizes those who have truly stepped up during this generation-defining moment for our Zionist movement. It is a time to celebrate the emerging next generation of Zionist leaders. It is also a reminder that in times of crisis, leaders emerge from the crowd – not only to defend Israel but also to shape a brighter future for the world. They are Zionism's visionary, bold, and creative young leaders.

The Jerusalem Post's 25 Young

ViZionaries initiative has always been about recognizing innovative thinkers, entrepreneurs, activists, and changemakers who embody the positive spirit of Zionism. However, after October 7, it has taken on a deeper meaning. Today, it reflects the courage, resilience, and creativity that have sustained the Jewish people for millennia. These new leaders are not just responding to the present; they are laying the foundation for a more hopeful tomorrow, focused on unity, innovation, and rebuilding.

"This is their moment; this is their time," said Russell Rob-



JEWISH FEDERATION OF GREATER PHILADELPHIA

HUNDREDS GATHER for a pro-Israel rally in Philadelphia's Independence Square.

inson, CEO of Jewish National Fund-USA. “We see older generations of Zionists mentoring newer generations, and our young people leading the way, teaching us new ways to communicate that our founder, Theodor Herzl, could only dream about. This time in our history calls on all of us to lead.”

One of the key qualities that organizations like JNF-USA look for in their young leaders is a driving passion for Israel and the ability to inspire others. This year's list of young leaders, some of whom have seen their communities devastated by terror, are stepping up to ensure that Israel continues to thrive against all odds. They have set an example for others and have shown countless young Zionists that they, too, can step out from the sidelines and take their rightful place in Zionism's storied history.

Many of these young leaders are best known on social media platforms such as X/Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook. Names like Arsen Ostrovsky, prominent human rights attorney and CEO of the International Legal Forum; Hen Mazzig, Israeli writer, speaker, and activist; and Emily Austin, American sports TV personality, broadcaster, social media influencer, and pro-Israel advocate. Others are making their mark in film, politics, law, and education. The common thread that unites them is their passionate support of the State of Israel.

The Young ViZionaries initiative also recognizes the hostages and victims of October 7 – especially the young people who have suffered at the hands of ter-

ror. JNF-USA dedicates the program to them – for those who are living and for those who perished at the hands of evil.

JNF-USA is dedicated to inspiring and equipping the next generation of Jewish leaders through programs like JNFuture, its donor society for young professionals aged 22 to 40.

JNFuture fosters a deep connection to Israel and Zionism while empowering its members to be proactive supporters of the

A new generation of leaders has begun to emerge – one that is unafraid to raise its voice on behalf of Israel.

Jewish homeland's future. JNFuture President Ian Sachs notes, “Now more than ever, we must invest in the next generation of Jewish leaders. They are the future stewards of our homeland, our culture, and our people's story.”

Alongside this, we must continue to support pro-Israel students on college campuses across the globe. The battle for our Western democratic values is taking place in classrooms, lecture halls, and on social media feeds. These students must have the tools and knowledge to stand proud of their Zionist

heritage and connection to Israel. Programs like Alexander Muss High School in Israel play a crucial role in this, providing pre-college students with a deeply immersive experience that prepares them to be informed, confident advocates for Israel.

Several of this year's ViZionaries are also part of JNF-USA's Speaker's Bureau, including Yuval David and Aviva Klompas, both of whom have been at the forefront of advocating for Israel and dispelling disinformation. Their work is a testament to the power of informed leadership, especially in times of crisis.

As JNF-USA continues to lead the rehabilitation of Israel's North and South through its Reimagine and Build Together plans, we are reminded that leadership in times of crisis requires both action and vision. As CEO Russell F. Robinson says, “We don't do projects; we do vision.” The ViZionaries we honor today embody this dual commitment, and their contributions will help shape Israel's future for decades to come.

The importance of this program in identifying and elevating these young leaders cannot be overstated. In a post-October 7 world, the need for strong, visionary leadership has never been more apparent. This list marks not only what has been achieved but also what can still be built together.

Join us in celebrating the next generation of ViZionaries – the 25 most influential Zionists under 45 – Zionism's visionary, bold, and creative young leaders who have stepped forward at this most critical time.

1

YUVAL DAVID

Yuval David is a proud Zionist, Jewish-American multi-award-winning actor, filmmaker, adviser, journalist, and leading LGBTQ+ activist. A creative powerhouse and compelling storyteller on stage and on screen, in news, and across social media, David

shares his captivating narrative on enduring hope, promoting pro-Israel and Jewish activism. Blending his skills and experience in entertainment, media, and politics, he advocates for the people of Israel on international news platforms, among political leaders and heads

of industries, on campuses, and on social media. He has worked with survivors of the October 7 massacre and others who have suffered due to the ongoing Israel-Hamas War. David's compelling approach is motivational. He focuses on the notions of progress, justice, and Jewish self-determination, inspiring people across the globe.



COURTESY

2

NATASHA HAUSDORFF

Natasha Hausdorff is a London-based barrister and director of UK Lawyers for Israel. She holds law degrees from both Oxford University and Tel Aviv University. Her expansive

legal background includes accomplishments such as clerking for the late Supreme Court of Israel chief justice Miriam Naor. Hausdorff was a fellow in the National Security Law Program

at Columbia Law School. With expertise in international law and national security, she is a prominent advocate for Israel's legal rights on the global stage. Hausdorff frequently writes and speaks on legal issues concerning Israel and international law.



SCREENSHOT/YOUTUBE

3

ISHAY RIBO

Ishay Ribo is a well-known Israeli singer and songwriter whose compositions are infused with spirituality and meaning. He is popular among both secular and religious audiences, both in Israel and

abroad. Ribo was born and raised in France and moved to Israel with his family when he was eight years old. Ribo has been an outspoken advocate for Israel and has, in the face of anti-Israel opposition, proudly

performed on college campuses including Harvard and Yale. In his most recent sold-out performance at Madison Square Garden in New York City, he highlighted the plight of the hostages and the need to rally around Israel during these challenging times.



TAMAR HANAN

4

HEN MAZZIG

Hen Mazzig is an Israeli writer, speaker, and activist known for advocating for Israel and promoting peace. Born to Iraqi and North African Jewish parents, he

frequently shares his family's story of persecution and escape from the Arab world. Mazzig is a former IDF officer and has worked in various humanitarian roles. A

prominent voice against antisemitism, he uses social media and public speaking to bridge gaps between Israel and its critics, inspiring thousands to stand up for Israel and combat misinformation about the Jewish state globally.



COURTESY

5

NAFTALI AKLUM

Naftali Aklum is the CEO of Yerus, an organization that highlights the rich heritage and contributions of Israel's Ethiopian community through educational workshops and tours. Born in Ethiopia in 1979, Aklum and his family made their way to Israel in 1980 and settled in

Beersheba. A proud Israeli and Zionist, Aklum served in the Israel Defense Forces as a firefighter before pursuing studies in politics, government, and Middle Eastern studies at Ben-Gurion University. He currently volunteers with at-risk youth and mentors Ethiopian-Israeli aca-

demics, helping them secure job placements and thrive in Israeli society. He has stood up for Israel and showed the world the diversity and complexities of the only Jewish state. He has proudly represented Ethiopian-Israelis and dedicated himself to furthering the mission of the Jewish National Fund-USA and its work in Israel's north and south.



COURTESY

ASHIRA SOLOMON

Ashira Solomon is the host of “The black and Jewish Podcast,” – which explores the intersection between Black and Jewish communities – and co-host of “The Quad”. Born and raised in California, and based

between Israel and the US, Ashira holds a Bachelor of Science and a Master of Public Administration (MPA). She is a public policy expert, international speaker, and dedicated advocate for Israel and Zionism. She is

also a member of Jewish National Fund-USA’s Speakers Bureau. As an expert in feminism and co-host of “The Quad” podcast, Solomon is committed to ensuring diverse voices are heard, enriching the geopolitical landscape from a woman’s perspective each week.



COURTESY

6

CHAD HOLTZMAN

Chad Holtzman is the immediate past national president of JNFuture, Jewish National Fund-USA’s donor society for young professionals (22-40 year olds). Over the past year, he inspired countless young Amer-

ican professionals to stand up for Israel. He also raised philanthropic support for Israel’s Fire & Rescue Authority, which has been tested like never before since October 7. Professionally, Holtzman serves as senior

counsel at Grant & Eisenhofer, specializing in antitrust litigation. He represents clients in high-profile cases involving pharmaceuticals, financial services, and commodities. He also serves as a board member of the International Alliance for Child Literacy.



COURTESY

7

ARSEN OSTROVSKY

Arsen Ostrovsky is a prominent human rights attorney and the CEO of the International Legal Forum. He has addressed institutions such as the United Nations, the US Congress, European and British Par-

liaments, and the French Senate. A frequent commentator in global news outlets, Ostrovsky has also lectured at the United States Naval Academy. In 2018, he was honored with the Nefesh B’Nefesh Sylvan Adams Bonei

Zion Prize for Israel Advocacy, and in 2022, he was named by *The Algemeiner Journal* as one of the Top 100 People Positively Influencing Jewish Life. An active advocate for Israel online, his posts reach millions globally each month. He previously practiced law in Australia and the US.



COURTESY

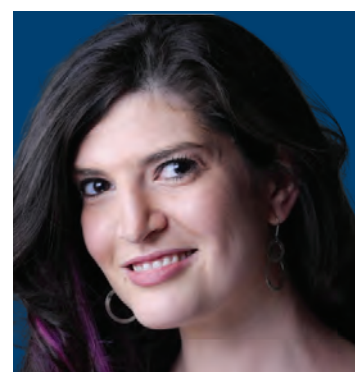
8

CIVIA CAROLINE

Civia Caroline is a dynamic and passionate Zionist whose dedication to the State of Israel and its people is truly inspiring. With an unwavering love for music, culture, humanity, and Israel’s vibrant spirit, Caroline has consistently channeled her ener-

gy into fostering a deep connection between individuals and the rich heritage of the Jewish people. Through her tireless efforts serving on the Greater LA Jewish National Fund Board of Directors as well as founding its Arts & Entertainment Task Force, she has

touched countless individuals and made a significant impact. Her work in supporting the communities in the Negev and Galilee and highlighting their needs to a broader audience ensures critical philanthropic funds can be raised to support the values of compassion, unity, and perseverance’s collective futures.



COURTESY

9

DR. NAYA LEKHT

Dr. Naya Lekht is a scholar on contemporary antisemitism, dedicated to fostering Jewish pride through education. She earned her PhD in Russian Literature from UCLA, focusing on Holocaust literature in the Soviet

Union. In 2019, Lekht became Director of Education at Club Z, developing a national curriculum on Jewish peoplehood, Zionism, and advocacy. She is a 2018 Scholar-in-Residence at Oxford through ISGAP, and she also

presented at the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation in 2022. Lekht is the Education Editor for *White Rose Magazine* and is working on her upcoming book, *Zionism in the Diaspora: Reclaiming Israel Education*. She is also a member of Jewish National Fund-USA’s Speakers Bureau.



TIKVAH FUND

10

11

MELISSA LANTSMAN MP

Melissa Lantsman is a Canadian Member of Parliament and a strong advocate for Israel. As deputy leader of the Conservative Party and shadow minister for transport, Lants-

man has consistently used her platform to defend Israel's right to security and self-defense, particularly in the face of global antisemitism. A vocal supporter of Canada-Israel relations, she has

worked to strengthen economic and diplomatic ties between the two nations. Lantsman is also an active Jewish community member and has participated in initiatives promoting awareness of Israel's importance as a beacon of democracy in the Middle East.



COURTESY

12

EVE BARLOW

Eve Barlow is an LA-based music and pop culture journalist, formerly the deputy editor of the *New Musical Express*. She has written for *New York Magazine*, *The Guardian*, *Billboard*, the

Los Angeles Times, and *GQ*. In recent years, Barlow has become an outspoken advocate for Jewish identity, Zionism, and combating antisemitism, especially within the music and political

scenes. Named one of *The Algemeiner's* Top 100 People Positively Influencing Jewish Life in 2020 and 2021, she continues to use her platform to challenge antisemitism and anti-Zionist rhetoric in both media and social spaces.



COURTESY

13

ASHAGER ARARO

Ashager Araro was born in Gondar, Ethiopia, and immigrated to Israel as an infant during the 1991 Operation Solomon. She grew up in central Israel and is one of eight siblings. Araro excelled in her military service in the Israeli

Defense Forces, where she rose to the rank of Lieutenant in the Paratroopers Brigade. Following her military service, Araro studied government, diplomacy, and strategy at the Interdisciplinary Center Herzliya, which enabled her to pursue a career

in Public Diplomacy. Araro's career has brought her to countries throughout Europe, North America, and Africa, where she has engaged audiences on issues pertinent to Israel and the Jewish people. Alongside her fulfilling work in public diplomacy, Araro established the Battae Ethiopian Israeli-Heritage Center.



COURTESY

14

ELENA YACOV

Elena Yacov is an experienced nonprofit executive and an attorney who has dedicated her career to helping funders create lasting impact through their philanthropy and nonprofits reach their full potential. As the Executive Director of the Milstein Family Foundation,

Elena oversees grant-making, operations, and program development, guiding the Foundation's strategic philanthropic initiatives with precision and foresight. Elena is also the Executive Director of the TalkIsrael Foundation, spearheading its mission to foster a positive and

constructive dialogue about Israel among American teens using the power of social media. She directs the organization's strategy and operations, including brand development, partnerships, and budgets. Elena is also the founder and CEO of Alta Consulting LLC, a consultancy aimed at optimizing philanthropy for startups, corporations, and individuals.



COURTESY

15

NAOR IHIA

Naor Ihia is the spokesperson for President of Israel Isaac Herzog. Before assuming this position in June 2021, he served

as the Likud party spokesperson for the past two years and the political spokesperson for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.



COURTESY VIA MAARIV

MOSAB HASSAN YOUSEF

Mosab Hassan Yousef, dubbed the Green Prince, is the son of one of Hamas's founders and leaders. He famously became a key informant for Israel's Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency),

providing vital intelligence for over a decade. His efforts helped thwart numerous terrorist attacks, by which he earned his notorious nickname. Yousef later publicly renounced Hamas

and moved to the United States, where he became a vocal advocate for peace and a critic of Islamic extremism. His story was chronicled in the award-winning documentary *The Green Prince* and his autobiography *Son of Hamas*.



MARC ISRAEL SELLEM

16

GABRIEL BOXER AND ELAN KORNBLOM

Gabriel Boxer, known as the "kosher guru," is a kosher food influencer and advocate for Israel. He recently gained attention for being the only US civilian embedded with the IDF in southern Gaza during Operation Swords of Iron. Boxer, who was in Israel on October 7, has made multiple trips back to support Israeli soldiers and has provided essential gear and equipment. However, his deep commitment to Israel extends

beyond food; he actively works to strengthen the nation's security and advocates for its soldiers.

Elan Kornblum is the founder of Great Kosher Restaurants, a widely recognized platform for kosher dining enthusiasts. Kornblum has built a network of restaurants, chefs, and food lovers worldwide. In fact, he created the largest kosher restaurant foodie Facebook group in the world, which has

over 100,000 members. Beyond his culinary influence, Kornblum is a dedicated advocate for Israel. He uses his platform to rally his followers to stand up for Israel, particularly during challenging times, by organizing events and encouraging support for Israeli businesses and causes. His leadership in both the



SCREENSHOT/INSTAGRAM/@KOSHERGURU

COURTESY

food and advocacy worlds has made him a respected figure in the Jewish community.

17

RYAN LAVERNWAY

Ryan Lavernway, a former MLB veteran and captain of Team Israel's baseball team, has been an outspoken advocate for Israel and the Jewish people.

Representing Israel on the international stage has deepened his Jewish identity, and he has used his platform to combat rising antisemitism and advocate for

Zionism. Lavernway regularly participates in events to promote Jewish pride and solidarity, speaking out against misinformation and antisemitism following events like the October 7 attack.



PRESTON MACK/MLB PHOTOS VIA GETTY IMAGES/VIA REUTERS

18

NIMROD PALMACH

Nimrod Palmach is the CEO of ISRAEL-is, an organization dedicated to improving global perceptions of Israel. An educator and social entrepreneur, Nimrod has established and managed dozens of leadership programs. Previous roles include CEO of the Ein Prat

Leadership Academy, Founder of the Nahal Oz and Sofa Leadership Preparatory Academy, Founder and Director of the Gevim program for young leadership, Founder of the Derech Prat youth organization, and Head of the Mamriim initiative promoting social mobili-

ty in the city of Bat Yam. Most recently, Nimrod served as the Founder and CEO of Fifty-Two Consulting and was a project manager at the Sharaka Gulf-Israel center for social entrepreneurship. Holding a master's degree in Diplomacy and Security from Tel Aviv University, he is also a combat officer in the IDF reserves.



COURTESY

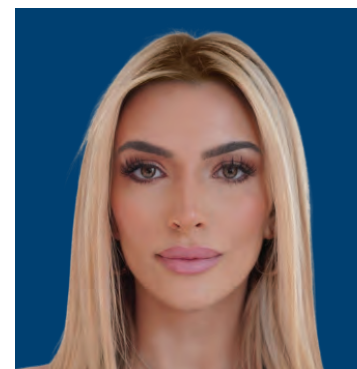
19

EMILY AUSTIN

Emily Austin is an American sports TV personality, broadcaster, social media influencer, and pro-Israel advocate. She began her career interviewing NBA

players and athletes on her show, *The Hoop Chat*, and went on to serve as an MTV anchor and Miss Universe judge. Austin also owns a skincare company, People's Beau-

ty. With over 2.2 million followers on Instagram, she is an outspoken advocate against antisemitism and vocal supporter of Israel. She regularly appears on the news, talk shows, and speaks to groups globally about Israel and Zionism.



COURTESY

20

21

AVIVIT OHANA

Avivit Ohana is a 28-year-old Israeli entrepreneur and former Israel Air Force officer. She is the founder and owner

of Entrepreneurship Leadership Israel, a program that connects the global Jewish community to Israel through entrepreneur-

ship and leadership. She holds a B.A. in Business Administration and Digital Innovation and the honors program at Reichman University and UQAM University in Canada.



ELI ORGANIZATION

22

AVIVA KLOMPAS

Aviva Klompas is the co-founder and CEO of Boundless and a member of the Jewish National Fund-USA Speakers Bureau. Previously, she served as associate vice president of Israel and Global Jew-

ish Citizenship at Combined Jewish Philanthropies (CJP) in Boston. Aviva was also a senior policy adviser for Ontario's Syrian refugee resettlement efforts and the director of speechwriting at Isra-

el's Permanent Mission to the UN. She is the author of *Speaking for Israel* and *Stand-Up Nation* and holds a master's in public and nonprofit management from NYU. Her work has appeared in major publications like *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*.



COURTESY

23

MAX AUGUST

Max August is a Senior Associate at General Atlantic, a global growth equity firm. He focuses on the firm's technology investments in Israel. In 2022, he

was named under Forbes Israel's prestigious "30 Under 30" list. Recognized for his leadership and impact in the financial world, Max has played a significant role

in General Atlantic, where he focuses on strategic investments. His work and expertise have made him a rising figure in the investment sector, particularly in sourcing growth opportunities in the tech and innovation industries.



SCREENSHOT/LINKEDIN

24

ELIZABETH SAVETSKY

Lizzy Savetsky is a well-known social media influencer who uses her platform to advocate for causes that are close to her heart. She is an outspoken ac-

tivist for Israel and the Jewish people and works with numerous non-profit, philanthropic movements to support her people and homeland.



COURTESY

25

THE HOSTAGES

We recognize the hostages and victims of October 7, especially the young people who

have suffered at the hands of terror. This spot is dedicated to them – those living and those who per-

ished. We also pay tribute to those who have bravely shared their ordeals publicly, raising much-needed awareness about the plight of those still in captivity.



SHANNON STAPELTON/REUTERS

United for Good – A social network that is changing the world

“Success comes through persistence,” says Oren Revach, the creator of UG (United for Good), a social network that spreads goodwill throughout the world. Revach says that the negative culture of today’s social networks, filled with shaming and bad news, is detrimental to society. “People can no longer communicate with each other,” he says. “All the social networks do not connect people – they separate between people.”

UG was launched on the internet a year and a half ago and recently became available as an app for smartphones. Over 150,000 people have registered using the smartphone app, and thousands are accessing the network online. UG was recently adopted for use by the Israel Teachers Union for use in its schools by students and teachers at all levels and has been promoted by Bank HaPoalim to its staff, encouraging positive social discourse.

UG teaches a new language of communication and embraces gratitude and giving, as exemplified by its home screen, which displays icons where users can learn more about volunteering and mentoring, share and read positive news, and become an integral part of a community of good. In the UG system, judgmental likes have been replaced with thanks and quality for positive content with the aim of teaching a new and unifying language.

For example, the ‘Good News’ section of the app reported that a tourist visiting Israel left their purse, which contained over 10,000 euros, on the train. Due to the quick response of the staff of Israel Railways, the purse was returned to its owner with the money intact. Another user uploaded photos of the beautiful fall sunsets of recent days in Israel. Still another good-news post reported that the youth soccer team of Kibbutz Be’eri, which was attacked by Hamas terrorists on October 7, recently returned to action in a match against a team from Rahat. Before the game, players on both sides waved flags calling for the return of the hostages from Gaza.



In addition to UG’s ability to connect people for volunteering, spreading good news, and reporting inspirational stories, the app enables users to write virtual notes and prayers to be sent to the Kotel (Western Wall) in Jerusalem.

Revach is expert in branding and marketing, and says that UG is, in a sense, a brand for the hearts of users around the world, connecting community, business, and love. “Today, people trend towards the positive. Everyone is searching for a positive brand. Who doesn’t want to see positive news and inspiration?” he asks rhetorically.

“UG is all about community,” he adds. “The more you give to others, the more you get.” UG also includes a type of ‘social mall’ that rewards users by the number of thanks they have accumulated from others.

Unlike other social networks, UG does not permit shaming, slandering, or other negative discourse and is dedicated to positivity. “We help people to become members of an empowering community of users,” says Revach, “that is non-judgmental and creates a positive impact.”

Revach says that companies that work with UG and follow its guidelines can receive the UG seal of approval. “We are creating a revolution in the social discourse,” he says, adding that the initiative is designed to change the way people act not only in Israel, but around the world.

In the difficult times that Israel currently finds itself, says Revach, people understand more than ever the need to focus on the positive and unite as a community. “The world needs this now. It is a great innovation – something new for the world



Oren Revach (Photo by Liel Zand)

that presents an alternative. We are revealing the good in people’s hearts.” UG, with its focus on positivity, also promotes resilience and mental health, which is sorely needed today.

“The goal of UG is to love and share the good. We all have much for which we can be thankful,” concludes Revach. UG can be accessed online at <https://ug-official.com/landing> for iPhones on the App Store and Android devices on Google Play.

By ALAN ROSENBAUM

Scan the code to download the UG app for your smartphone



Treatment Under Fire

THE WAR TAUGHT US A LOT ABOUT FLEXIBILITY AND ADAPTATION TO A CHANGING REALITY. IT WAS CLEAR TO US THAT WE HAD TO RESPOND QUICKLY AND THAT OUR PATIENTS NEEDED US NOW, PERHAPS MORE THAN EVER

On Saturday, October 7, 2023, Uzi Bitan, CEO of Meuhedet Health Fund, faced a challenging reality. As rockets rained down near his home in Lehavim, located in the south of Israel, and the security situation worsened, he immediately realized the need to move the health fund into emergency mode and respond quickly and efficiently and to provide essential medical services to patients, especially in the hardest-hit areas.

Uzi Bitan was born and raised in the Negev, the fourth of eight siblings. His life and sense of mission, instilled from childhood, connected him deeply to Israel's geographical and social peripheral regions. From a young age, he felt compelled to help these communities. "I believe everyone has a purpose in this world, and through that purpose, I have reached a place where I can strive to improve medical services in the periphery," he says.

Bitan's background and his military service as an Air Force officer shaped his approach to his role as a senior manager in the healthcare system. After completing a bachelor's degree in industrial and management engineering and a master's degree in business administration at Ben-Gurion University, Bitan began his career in healthcare in the 1990s, holding various management roles in Israeli health funds, including 14 years as the manager of the Southern District. "Before I was appointed CEO of Meuhedet, I served for 10 years as the health fund's Chief Operations Officer, so I know the system from all angles," he explains.

The attack on October 7 caught Bitan, like many others in southern Israel, off guard. "We heard the rockets flying overhead and thought we were entering yet another round of escalation," he recalls. Still, it quickly became clear that this was an unprecedented emergency situation, unlike anything we've been through before. It was clear to us that we had to respond quickly and that our patients needed us now, perhaps more than ever."

Thanks to Meuhedet's exten-



Uzi Bitan, CEO of Meuhedet Health Fund (Photo by Inbal Marmari)

sive experience in providing medical care during emergency situations, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic, the health fund was able to adapt quickly and accurately to the situation on the ground. By 8:30 a.m., an emergency mental health hotline staffed by psychologists, psychotherapists, and social workers was opened to assist anyone needing emotional support. Additionally, the fund's teams began delivering medications to housebound patients, especially in areas under continuous rocket threat. Bitan rolled up his sleeves, helping with the war effort by joining the team and distributing medications.

Bitan also ensured that Meuhedet's healthcare services were available in hotels housing evacuees from the South. "Our teams reached all the hotels, as far as Eilat and the Dead Sea," Bitan detailed, "and we reached out to all of our members, understood their individual needs and either directed them to the nearest clinic or provided them with care on-site, including a mobile women's health unit and a mobile dental

clinic that came to them." We also established a control center that managed the entire event, centralized the needs of the people, and proactively reached out to see how we could help," he shared.

Meuhedet also faced the challenge of maintaining continuous care in all clinics, even with rockets overhead and staff dealing with numerous challenges, including the closure of the education system. "On the morning of October 8, we had opened all our clinics, in accordance with the Home Front Command's guidelines," Bitan said. "In Ashkelon, Netivot, and Be'er Sheva—when there was still concern about terrorists roaming the streets of Ashkelon—we made sure to take care of our patients and ensure they received the medical treatment they needed."

Even after the dust began to settle, Bitan didn't waver from the emergency button, as the health fund, experienced with previous rounds of conflict, knew how to ensure that staff could arrive at clinics with peace of mind. "We set up about 50 daycare centers

for the children of employees inside the health fund's clinics," he explained. This ensured that parents could continue providing essential medical services, knowing their children were in a safe environment.

The war also brought new challenges in the field of mental health. "This field was already suffering from a shortage of personnel before the war," Bitan explained, but in the new reality, with demand for mental health services skyrocketing, Meuhedet had to quickly expand services. Recognizing the need for accessible appointments, Meuhedet opened several new mental health clinics, expanded existing ones, and adjusted its treatment system to also offer remote therapy via phone calls. "We developed systems that provide up to 15 therapeutic phone sessions for people in immediate need of treatment," he explained, adding that despite these efforts, they still face significant challenges posed by the private market, where psychologists and psychiatrists can earn higher salaries than in the public health system.

Another major challenge Bitan highlighted is improving access to healthcare in the periphery. Having been born, raised, and still residing in the South, this issue is very close to his heart, and he admits that not a day goes by without him thinking about reducing healthcare disparities between the center and the periphery. For him, healthcare services must be available and accessible to everyone, everywhere in the country. One of the ways Meuhedet is working to reduce these gaps is through its mobile women's health unit, which travels to cities across the country, offering life-saving screenings like mammograms and ultrasounds to women, even in remote areas with limited access to these lifesaving examinations. According to Bitan, this project is necessary due to low awareness and lack of access to important screening tests among women in distant areas. "We know that the percentage of women undergoing mammograms in the periphery is much lower than in the center. In the center, 80% of women get mammograms, compared to 60% or even 40% in the periphery," Bitan explains, emphasizing the importance of raising awareness to prevent breast cancer: "We want to increase awareness and ensure that women across the country, not just in the center, receive the screenings they need to prevent advanced-stage diseases. Imagine how many lives we can save."

Despite the war, Bitan implemented one of the projects he is most proud of this year—a network of urgent care centers that opened this year. "One of the biggest challenges in the healthcare system is the tremendous

pressure on emergency rooms, especially in the evenings and on weekends, when health fund clinics are closed, and people need immediate medical attention," he explains.

This is where Meuhedet's urgent care centers come in. "We started operating a network of urgent care centers over the past year in Ashdod, Hadera, Tel Aviv, and soon in Rehovot, joining the one already successfully operating in Jerusalem." The urgent care centers operate in the evenings, on weekends, and during holidays, providing immediate professional care by specialist doctors, and patients are on their way within less than an hour after arriving. The urgent care center in Jerusalem, which operates continuously throughout the day, sees about 300 patients daily. The expert medical teams, many of whom also work in emergency rooms across the city, save lives daily, whether it's expertly removing a foreign body by a specialist doctor, diagnosing a heart attack, or quickly identifying a stroke.

"This year, we also decided to allow people to receive flu vaccines at the urgent care centers. We understand that people are busy, working, and taking care of children, so it's convenient for them to take a few minutes for themselves in the evening. That's why we decided to provide the option of getting vaccinated at the urgent care centers in the evening, aiming to increase vaccination rates and save people from severe flu that could incapacitate them."

Meuhedet provides medical services to many populations, including new immigrants. Bitan describes the significant efforts



Uzi Bitan distributing medicines in the first days of fighting

invested in making information and services accessible in all languages, aiming to help new immigrants understand and navigate Israel's healthcare system, which can be confusing even for long-time residents, let alone for those who have just arrived.

In recent months, the health fund has invested extensive efforts in preparing for extreme scenarios in the north: "The health

fund prepared a plan to care for ventilated patients in case of a blackout," Bitan shares. "In addition to generators, oxygen tanks, and readiness to evacuate patients to the center of the country if necessary, we have prepared ourselves for the most extreme scenarios, hoping they don't occur."

Bitan concludes the conversation with cautious optimism: "This war taught us a lot about flexibility, organization, and adapting to a changing reality. We learned that using technology and providing remote services, which we also did during the COVID-19 pandemic, along with proactive service, are essential tools we will take forward."

With a long-term strategy that includes opening additional urgent care centers, focusing on the periphery, and using new technologies, Meuhedet continues to work vigorously to provide the best care for its members, even in difficult times. "When the war ends, we'll come out stronger and more capable of providing even better medical service to our members," Bitan concludes.

By RONNIE TAL



The Meuhedet women's health mobile arrived at Dead Sea hotels to provide medical assistance to women who were evacuated from their homes

10 INFLUENTIAL CHRISTIAN MOST ZIONISTS

Here is the list of 10 Most Influential Christian Zionists chosen by *The Jerusalem Post* & the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews

1. Michele Bachmann
2. Mike Huckabee
3. Jonathan Isaac
4. Allen Jackson
5. Sean Hannity
6. Carlos Duran
7. Paul Lanier
8. Carlos Ortiz
9. Dr. Phil
10. Dumisani Washington

Bridging Faiths: IFCJ Leads the Charge Against Antisemitism with \$10 Million Investment

In a remarkable collaboration with the Jerusalem Post, ten influential Christians join the ranks of Jewish leaders voicing their support for Israel

By Alan Rosenbaum

We fight darkness with light,” says Yael Eckstein, President and CEO of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews.

The Fellowship has shined that light for more than forty years in the form of lifesaving humanitarian aid and security for millions of people in Israel and aliyah flights that have brought hundreds of thousands of new Israelis home to the Holy Land. And all of this has been done in partnership with the Christian community, which stands in solidarity with Israel and the Jewish people.

And this light has been shined in the past year. Since the October 7 attacks, the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews has already distributed over \$100 million in emergency aid, helping install over 200 bomb shelters on Israel’s northern border, delivering fortified vehicles for frontline workers and first responders, donating thousands of helmets and flak jackets for security teams, firefighters, and soldiers; and distributing over a million meals to Israel’s hungry.

This desire to not only save lives but to partner with Israel in its ongoing fight against antisemitism is illustrated by the numbers. In June 2024, The Fellowship’s monthly donations and acquisition of new donors reached record levels. “There are millions of Christians who want to be engaged, who want to be spoken to, who want to be educated,” Eckstein explains. “Even though we are not asking them for any call to action, we’re not asking them for donations,



GUY YECHIELY

Beit Batya soup kitchen in Kiryat Shmona.

when they’re engaged, and they understand what this war is all about and what the repercussions are if we don’t speak up, they themselves are motivated to proactively donate for Israel.”

With Israel engaged in an existential war and with antisemitism spreading around the world, these Christian friends are needed more than ever. Before June, Eckstein says that Israel’s supporters were not receiving enough information about what was happening in Israel and, as a result, Israel was in danger of losing these dear friends. The Fellowship invested over \$10 million in a program to combat antisemitism, partnering with Christian public figures and influencers and educating and equipping these



AVISHC SHAAR YESHUV

Yael at Kibbutz Be’eri.



partners with the tools they need to reach and educate larger Christian audiences looking for information and guidance.

“It’s not the traditional antisemitism program that other foundations and organizations have,” explains Eckstein. “We are not trying to change anyone’s mind. We are not going after the people who are burning Israeli flags and American flags and trying to convince them that they should support Israel. We are engaging our Christian friends in order to reclaim that friendship, to make sure that we will continue to have between 50 and 100 million Evangelical Christians standing with Israel and the Jewish people, no matter what happens. For more than 40 years, our donors and the Christian world have relied on us and trusted us to provide them with real-time updates on what’s happening in Israel and the topics they care most about while also pointing out the darkness around the world and how they can take tangible action against those things.

“We’ve felt that not only is it our mission to raise funds to protect Israel and the Jewish people from the rocket attacks and the terror that surrounds us, but also to engage the Christian community and be a legitimate source of information that provides both practical and spiritual tools in order for them to continue to stand with Israel and know what Israel’s facing.”

This new program engages Christians in America, updating them on what is happening on the ground in Israel and providing them with tools to confront antisemitism and support Israel in their own communities. These Christian friends are educated about and immersed in life in Israel through a weekly update on events in Israel, positive stories about daily goings-on in the country, and reports of the on-the-ground impact they are making by supporting The Fellowship.

By representing Christians in America and around the world, The Fellowship is helping their millions of voices be heard. “We are essentially giving them tools so they don’t have to be the silenced majority,” Eckstein says. “They can be making a voice for themselves.”

One tool that is promoting Israel among Christian communities is The Fellowship’s Flags of Fellowship program. Many churches turned to the IFCJ, Eckstein says, requesting infor-

mation on how to commemorate the events of October 7. The Fellowship prepared a kit for churches with everything needed to mark a day of remembrance and solidarity, including 1,200 Israeli flags to plant on church grounds, a video for congregation members, educational text for a sermon for those who are unfamiliar with Israel, and a series of talking points on Israel. The Fellowship was expecting fifty churches to sign up for the initiative. More than 350 churches throughout the United States, in all 50 states, signed up for the program.

The Jerusalem Post is now joining The Fellowship in embracing Israel’s Christian friends, acknowledging the contributions of ten Christian Zionists who have supported Israel in its hour of need, honoring their hard work during this most challenging time. Spotlighting these influential individuals will inspire others to support Israel.

“I think that these top ten Christians who have stood with Israel, especially in the face of antisemitism, are being very bold, very brave, oftentimes risking their own reputation, and following, and sponsorship, going against the tide to stand with truth and justice and what’s right and stand with



CHEN SCHIMMEL

Bishop Lanier in front of IFCJ mobile bomb shelter.

Israel,” says Eckstein. “The Fellowship is so honored to partner with Christians like that to make the message heard, even farther, even wider, and when you have leaders like that, who are willing to be brave and bold and standing for what’s right, even going against the trends, the future looks a lot brighter than how the news makes it look.

“What’s become clear since October 7 is that most of the world hasn’t learned from history. We see that Christian Zionists, of which there are around 700 million evangelical Christians around the world, con-

tinue to stand and voice their support for Israel, continue to go against the tide in order to recognize Israel and the Jewish people’s right to exist, and not to continue the mistakes of the past, but instead to prove this friendship. No matter what happens, no matter what the world says, no matter how trendy it is to go against the Jewish people, they will stand shoulder to shoulder with their brothers and sisters, with the Jewish people and Israel, no matter what.”

This article was written in cooperation with the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews.



GUY YECELY

Yael with Yenta Rabinovich in Kiryat Shmona.

MICHELE BACHMANN

When Michele Bachmann was just a teenager, she made her first trip to the Holy Land with her church's youth group. Her time living and working on a kibbutz in southern Israel "changed the course of my life," she said.

Since then, she has been a steadfast friend of Israel, visiting more than 30 times and serving on the board of The Fellowship.

Bachmann has served in the US Congress and is currently dean of the Robertson School of Government at Regent University.

Her friendship has been invaluable, particularly since October 7. She spreads a message of truth and love for the Jewish state and its people to Christians, including young people who are bombarded with anti-Israel hatred.



COURTESY IFCJ

1

MIKE HUCKABEE

“Everything that I embrace as a Christian is rooted in the promises that God gave to the Jewish people.”

Among the many Christian friends of The Fellowship and the State of Israel, none has a passion and calling stronger than that of Governor Mike Huckabee. His accomplishments – the 44th governor of Arkansas, a presidential candidate, an ordained Southern Baptist pastor, and a television host – certainly show him to be a man of action and a man of God.

Huckabee visited Israel for the

first time 50 years ago. Having been to the Jewish state more than 100 times in the five decades since, including taking tens of thousands of visitors “to show what Israel is all about,” he is also a longtime friend of The Fellowship. His support for both Israel and The Fellowship has proven invaluable in the months since the October 7 massacre, as he has helped give a voice to those who survived the attacks, those who are fighting to protect Israel, and Israelis and Jews worldwide who are now facing unprecedented antisemitism.



TBN

2

JONATHAN ISAAC

Jonathan Isaac grew up in the church, but he truly found his faith as an adult. This came after he had already responded to another calling, becoming a star athlete in the NBA.

Playing for the Orlando Magic, Jonathan uses his platform to inspire young people, promote his Christian faith, and support Israel and the Jewish people.

Especially in the months since

the Hamas attacks of October 7, Isaac has spoken up in support of Israel – something that young people, especially in America, need to learn from their role model. It’s a stance that not only inspires youngsters around the world, but also provides hope to the Jewish people in Israel and around the world as they face growing anti-Semitism and hatred.



DANIEL BROWN FOR DAILY WIRE

3



4

ALLEN JACKSON

The son of a veterinarian, Allen Jackson spent his childhood caring for animals. But then the Bible inspired young Allen to care for people – more specifically, for their spiritual well-being.

Jackson earned degrees from Oral Roberts University and Vanderbilt University. He also studied at the Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem; the latter helped nurture his love for Israel and the Jewish people.

Since 1989, Jackson has led World Outreach Church in Mur-

freesboro, TN, which grew from fewer than 30 people to more than 15,000 through outreach activities, community events, and worship services. Now, technology makes it possible for Allen Jackson Ministries to reach over 3,000,000 each week worldwide.

Included in Jackson's message is his love and support for the State of Israel and the Jewish people. A longtime friend of both, he has been fighting against the growing antisemitism in the months since the October 7 attacks while spreading the truth about Israel.



COURTESY

5

SEAN HANNITY

Sean Hannity, longtime host of *The Sean Hannity Show*, a nationally syndicated talk radio program, reaches millions of people of faith on the airwaves each day. Additionally, Hannity's political commentary program on Fox News attracts millions of viewers.

It is this audience – those who love Israel and are eager to sup-

port the Jewish people – that finds a like-minded friend in Hannity. For decades, he has focused on Israel and staunchly defended the Jewish state – both its right to defend itself against terror and its right to exist. His close relationship with Israel has inspired millions of Christian Jews in America and around the world.



I HEART

6

CARLOS DURAN

Pastor Carlos Duran immigrated to the United States from Colombia at the age of 19. With degrees in Business Administration and Project Management from Liberty University, Carlos is an entrepreneur and business owner in the Washington, D.C. area.

Duran is also a pastor and leader in his community, as well as internationally. Working for The Promise Keepers for more than a decade, Pastor Duran also found-

ed and leads *Hombres de Palabra* (Men of Their Word) and the National Hispanic Pastors Alliance, building bridges of faith and fellowship the world around. This loyal friendship extends to the Jewish people and the Jewish state; he has long been an ally of both, including serving on the executive committee of the Latino Coalition for Israel and speaking in support of Israel in the days and months since the Hamas attacks of October 7.



COURTESY

7

PAUL LANIER

Bishop Paul Lanier first met Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein in the same way so many Christians became acquainted with The Fellowship and its founder – on television. Upon meeting the rabbi late one night, Lanier felt compelled to join The Fellowship, recognizing that helping the Jewish people “is the most Christian thing I can do.”

Now serving as chairman of the board of directors for The Fellowship, Lanier also pastors the Hope Community Church in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, which he founded in 1990

with his wife, Debbie. An author, composer, and recording artist who also received his Doctorate of Ministry from the Erskine Theological Seminary, Lanier has made it his life's work to bring his many gifts from God to his friendship with God's people.

He has also had the opportunity to visit the Holy Land many times, both before October 7 and afterward, helping feed the hungry, shelter the frightened, bring the prayers of faithful friends to the Western Wall, and build bridges of faith among all of God's children.



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CARLOS ORTIZ

Pastor Carlos Ortiz immigrated to the US from Colombia in 1986.

“Once I was in the United States, I was given the opportunity to study and become a pastor,” Ortiz explains. “So that’s what I did.”

He still sees this as the best way to help the many faith communities he works with, including Israel – itself a land of immigrants and people of faith.

His dedicated work over the decades has helped mend and nurture the relationship between Latin American countries and Israel, earning him recognition as Ambassador of Goodwill by the

State of Israel in 2016 and as one of the world’s “50 Most Influential Israel Supporters” by Israel Allies in 2020.

Carlos has brought this faith and friendship to The Fellowship, serving as the church outreach director. This has allowed him to visit Fellowship projects and beneficiaries in the Holy Land, bring their stories and truths to the Christians he ministers to, and continue building bridges of fellowship between Christians and Jews, including a recent meeting in Washington, D.C., with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.



COURTESY CARLOS ORTIZ

8

DR. PHIL

Dr. Phil McGraw, known for his popular television show, is open about his Christian faith and deep connection to Israel. “Israel is our friend and ally,” he said after October 7. “They don’t need us to just be their friend in good times. They need us to be their friend in bad times.”

On a trip to Israel in June, he made sure to visit the sites of Hamas’s massacre and met with hostage families to convey Israel’s suffering to his large audience. McGraw’s appreciation for the Jewish state stems from both his Christian beliefs and his respect for the nation’s resilience.

As a young teenager, he became a devoted Christian. “I remember it like it was yesterday because that was a big step for me at 13 years old because I didn’t have a lot of leadership at that point,” he said in a recent interview with Trinity Broadcasting Network.

“I didn’t do it just because that’s what you do at that age. I had to really think this through. I spent a lot of time with the minister and youth pastor.”

McGraw added that he also read the entire Bible and continues to study it to this day. “It’s a journey. You don’t ever get there.”



PHIL KLEIN/REUTERS

9

DUMISANI WASHINGTON

When Dumisani Washington’s parents gave him the gift of a Bible, they might not have realized the powerful influence it would have on this future friend of Israel and the Jewish people. The Old Testament stories that a young Dumisani read inspired him to learn more about Israel and God’s people, and to ultimately devote his life to building bridges between Christians and Jews and among people of faith.

Working for decades in pro-Is-

rael advocacy, Pastor Washington leads the Institute for Black Solidarity with Israel. He has also authored the book *Zionism and the Black Church*, which examines the bonds between Jews and African Americans. An accomplished and conservatory-trained professional musician, one of his many artistic ensembles is The Hebrew Project, which combines gospel music and Hebrew lyrics – a true celebration of both Christian and Jewish faiths.



COURTESY

10

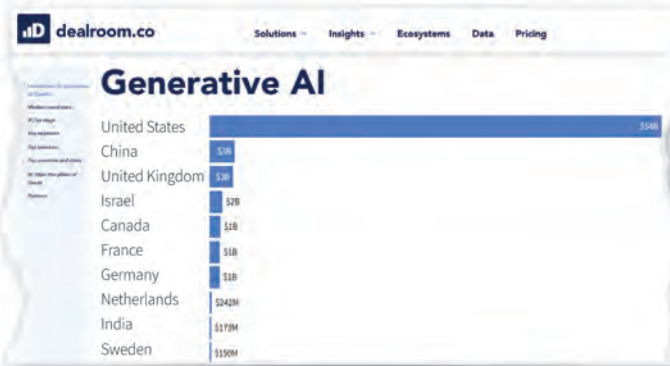
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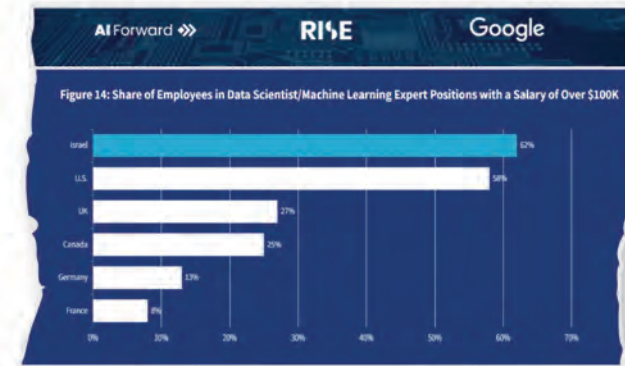
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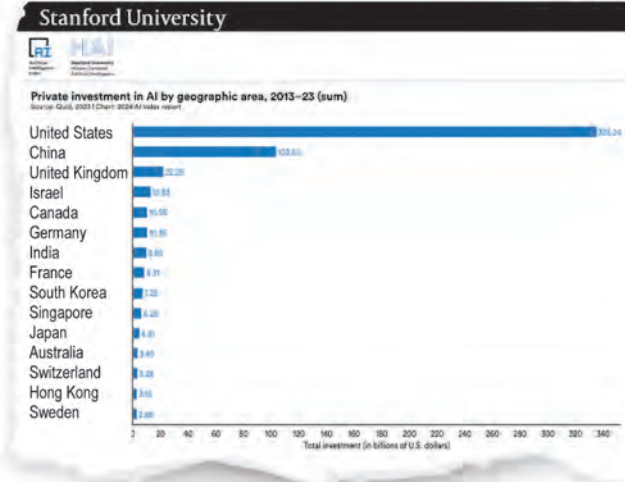
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New 'Elul' program at Matan attracts younger student cohort seeking inspiration post-October 7

Matan – The Sadie Rennet Women’s Institute for Torah Studies, one of the world’s leading institutions for women’s Torah study, has launched a unique, dynamic, and innovative three-week Elul program at its Jerusalem campus, specifically designed for younger women from diverse Israeli backgrounds. Taking place in a warm and inviting atmosphere, Bo’i HaRuach (“Blowin’ in the Wind”) is part of its broader Beit Midrash programs, which focus on Tanakh, Gemara, Halakha, and Jewish thought. In addition, Matan offers two fellowship programs, the Eshkolot Fellowship and the Kitvuni Fellowship.

Rabbanit Rachel Harris, a graduate of Hilkhata, Matan’s Advanced Halakhic Institute and the former Rosh Beit Midrash in a pre-army Mechina, is spearheading the Bo’i HaRuach program, working alongside Rabbanit Rachelle Sprecher Fraenkel, Head of the Matan Beit Midrash.

The idea for the program emerged in response to the national trauma of October 7 and the recognition that many young women—secular and religious, those already on a path, and those seeking one—were eager to strengthen their Judaism, knowledge, and faith. They wanted to share their journey with others and form a like-minded, connected community.

Rabbanit Harris comments on her motivation behind building the Elul program. “In a world that feels a bit lost, where people are asking challenging questions arising around the war, we wanted to give a Torah



Rabbanit Rachel Harris teaching students in the Elul program (Photo by Yardenna Glazer)

response. Torah study and introspection can be like flowing water to a weary soul.”

The program has been remarkably successful; Matan is alive with the sounds of learning, prayer, song, dialogue, and collegiality. Currently, there are 50 students in the program, most around 24 years old, from across Israel. Participants in the program include female soldiers, recent national service graduates, seminary graduates, a student undergoing conversion, and students from various higher learning institutions. A common feature among them is their aspiration to grow in learning, leadership, and spirituality and to create a meaningful Jewish life in their own unique ways.

Na’ama, a current student in the program, comments on its diversity. “There is a broad range of teachers and a wide variety of students, which allows everyone to find her place in the Beit Midrash.”

The program includes broad-based classes on Jewish literature, learning, and lore. There are kumsitz musical gatherings, communal prayer (tefillah) and selichot, workshops, tours, and evenings shared with the broader community. Classes range from Parashat HaShavua (the weekly Torah portion) to an introduction to the Talmud, exploring major Torah figures, a



Students in Matan’s new Elul program (Photo by Yardenna Glazer)

taste of the Zohar, photography and tefillah, writing workshops, and more. Daily communal lunches encourage friendship and unity, and the program will culminate with a special group Shabbaton.

Students have the opportunity to learn and mingle with top Matan lecturers who bring a personal touch and passion to their subjects. Their expertise and enthusiasm and the amazing atmosphere have helped create a new gem at Matan.

Noa, another student in the program, was struck by both the staff and the other programs operating simultaneously at Matan. “The staff is friendly, and it is a pleasure to be in a learning environment where there are many other great women studying Torah in the various programs.”

The intention is to continue the program beyond Elul with year-long, multi-level learning and tailor-made experiential opportunities for participants. This

will include special study days (Y’mei Iyun) before holidays, retreats, Shabbatons, monthly meetings, programming during winter break, and an active WhatsApp group to keep the women cohesive and supportive.

One of the exciting benefits for Matan is that the program has introduced an entirely new, young cohort of students to the institution. Many had never heard of Matan but were intrigued by Bo’i HaRuach and have already become an integral part of the Matan family. We are excited to see this program blossom, grow, develop its own special character, and take a prominent place alongside Matan’s many successful community programs.

For more information on Matan and its many programs:
www.matan.org.il,
info@matan.org
 02 594-4555

By ALAN ROSENBAUM



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SHANI LOUK
(23)



שגיא דקל חן
SAGUI DEKEL CHEN
(35)



בר קופרשטיין
BAR KUPERSHTEIN
(22)



אלי שרעבי
ELI SHARABI
(51)



מתן זנגאוקר
MATAN ZANGAUER
(24)



לירי אלבג
LIRI ALBAG
(19) (18)



אלמונ סרוסי
ALMON SARUSI
(26)



דרור קפלון
DROR KAPLON
(68)



ולדימיר זוקוב
VLADIMIR ZUKOV
(64)



אנדרי קוזלוב
ANDREY KOZLOV
(27)



עמירם קופר
AMIRAM COOPER
(85)



חיים פרי
PERI CHAIM
(79)



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TSACHI IDAN
(49)



דולב יהוד
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(35) 36



ירדן ביבס
YARDEN BIBAS
(34)



ג'ודי וינשטיין
JUDI WEINSTEIN
(70)



מקסימ הרקין
MAKSYM HARKIN
(35)



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ORON SHAUL
(30)



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