

Israel Action Committee



בס"ד

ז' אייר 5786
April 24, 2026



Iyar's Tzedakah Highlight

American Friends of
Meir Panim

**THIS YOM HA'ATZMAUT,
HELP THOSE WHO EMBODY
ISRAEL'S SPIRIT OF SURVIVAL.**

Your gift isn't just charity —
it's a declaration: Am Yisrael Chai.
The Nation of Israel lives — because of you.



78

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1/5 Did you know that 1 in every 5
Israelis live below the poverty line?

Sadly, Israel has one of the highest poverty rates in any
country in the OECD.

More than a million Israeli children lack basic needs and live in
poverty!



Yom Ha'zicharon and Ha'atzmaut at Ahavat Achim

On Sunday, April 19, our shul had the privilege of welcoming Yehuda Lanzkron of Mantzichim, who shared with us his deeply moving and meaningful initiative.

Twenty-four years ago, Yehuda's brother Naftali was tragically murdered in a terrorist attack just three months after his bar mitzvah. In the face of unimaginable loss, Yehuda made a powerful decision: to channel his pain into a legacy of light, hope, and continuity.

In the aftermath of October 7th, he expanded this vision by launching a global initiative to dedicate Sifrei Torah in memory of the 960 fallen heroes. Through Mantzichim—meaning “dedication”—Torah scrolls are lovingly restored and returned to active use in synagogues around the world, each one serving as a living tribute to those we have lost.

The organization strives to ensure that every bereaved family who cannot afford it has a Sefer Torah dedicated in honor of their loved one, inviting communities everywhere to take part in this sacred mission.

This past Sunday, our congregation was honored to participate in this effort. The men were given the opportunity to take part in the writing of a letter in a Torah restored from Germany that will be placed at an IDF army base, while the women were given beautiful designs to crochet that will adorn the Torah covers of these dedicated scrolls when completed.

It was a profoundly meaningful experience—one that connected us to each other, to our heritage, and to the enduring strength of Am Yisrael. To find out more about this important initiative, please go to [Mantzichim](#).



Alongside our beautiful hummus bar, participants viewed the powerful film *A Bravery Fiercer than Death: The 35 Heroes of Gush Etzion*. The film tells the tragic yet deeply inspiring story of 35 young soldiers—many of them students at the Hebrew University—who set out from Jerusalem to deliver desperately needed supplies to the kibbutzim of the besieged Etzion Bloc just south of the city. It was especially meaningful to screen this film in advance of Yom HaZikaron, as the Gush Etzion kibbutzim fell on the 4th of Iyar, the day before David Ben-Gurion declared the establishment of the State of Israel.



The program concluded on a powerful and uplifting note with remarks from our guest speaker, Shai Leiger (37), a paratrooper reservist, husband and father—and the son-in-law of Vivian Lerner. He offered a thoughtful and hopeful perspective on Israel today in contrast to its early years in 1948. Reflecting on his experience, he spoke about the significant advancements in military equipment, protective gear, artillery, and technology now available to Israeli soldiers—resources that were unimaginable to the early chalutzim at the founding of the state.

While acknowledging that the current conflict is ongoing, Shai emphasized the remarkable progress Israel has made. He described meaningful strategic gains in the region and shared that, prior to October 7th, he could not have imagined Israel in such a strong and capable position as it stands today.

Personally, I left the evening feeling both moved and uplifted—deeply aware of the sacrifices of the past, yet filled with a renewed sense of pride, gratitude, and hope for the strength and future of the State of Israel.



*This Week in Worldwide
Jewish News*



Coming to a Town Near You

By Fern Strich

Maybe because I am the daughter and daughter-in-law of Holocaust survivors, I live with a keen sense of loss. Loss that I never was able to sit on the lap of my maternal grandfather while he taught me the Aleph-Bet. Loss of my maternal uncle who never was able to take me for a walk in the park or teach me to ride a bike. They were both murdered at the Maly Trostinec Camp on September 10, 1942. That heightened sense of loss sensitizes me to the events occurring around the world.

The attacks on Jews and synagogues everywhere be it in Australia, in Vietnam, in Norway, in Belgium, in France, in London, in Toronto, in Detroit and last week in Hastings-on-Hudson edging ever closer to where I live. In the small sleepy community of Westchester New York, a Jewish pizza owner named Isaac Garson was attacked in his shop by Pro-Palestinian activists. Does one not see the trajectory?

We live in a very sheltered community and yet change is afoot. This is not the Fair Lawn I grew up in. Seventy years ago, we played stick ball in the street with our Italian neighbors. We rode a school bus without fear of being attacked as was the case this past January in Teaneck on the return route from Yeshivat Noam. We attended Shabbat services without the need for an armed guard at the entrance to our synagogue.

Today the faces of the children streaming out of Thomas Jefferson and Memorial Middle Schools are different. We see women in Burkas & Hijabs shopping at the Garden State Mall. Last week Analilia Mejia, a far-left Democrat, supported by Bernie Sanders who attempted to pass legislation to block arms sales to Israel, won New Jersey's 11th Congressional District special election. Mejia has aligned herself with the progressive "Squad" in the House. Change comes slowly, almost imperceptibly and then all at once.

Armed with all this knowledge, I am still here. I now understand why those European Jews even those seeing the signs did not leave. Weighed down by generations of accumulated wealth and surrounded by family and friends could not escape their circumstances. I am not judging them I find myself facing the same dilemma. I recently returned from spending two months in Israel and despite the ever-present threat of war there, I never felt safer.

As we approach the 250-year birthday of our great country which has provided a refuge for world Jewry for two and half centuries, let us recall the Golden Age of Spain where the Jewish community flourished for half a millenium, but ended in the unfathomable Inquisition and ultimate Expulsion.

Maybe I mourn the loss of what was. Maybe I feel the loss of time. Or maybe I realize our collective communal clock may very well be ticking.





***From Exodus to Independence:
Renewing Our Commitment on Yom Ha'atzmaut***

This week is central for the Jewish people. On 5 Iyar, 5708 (1948), we celebrated the rebirth of our nation, Israel. For me it is the home where my soul yearns to dwell – the place where the Holy of Holies resides nestled between the centuries of our buried history and its people who today continue to shine with hope, resilience, and courage. It is truly a gift from Hashem, one we have yearned for across millennia and must continue to nurture.

Ironically, this Shabbat we read Parashat Acharei Mot–Kedoshim. Of all the parashot in the Torah, why did Hashem bring us back to our land at a time tied to this reading? This parsha focuses on the ethical and spiritual framework that defines us as a nation. After Yetziat Mitzrayim (the Exodus from Egypt) – the birth of the Jewish people on 15 Nissan – we were given not only freedom, but the opportunity to become a holy nation shaped by Torah and mitzvot.

At first glance, many mitzvot in the parsha can seem repetitive or overly specific. We might think, “I already know this – why so much detail?” But the Torah repeatedly reminds us:

Chapt. 18

2. “You shall observe My statutes and My ordinances... I am Hashem your G-d.”

Chapt. 19

2. “Speak to the entire community of the Israelites, saying to them, ‘You must be holy, for I, G-d, your G-d, am holy.

That refrain is not redundant; it is foundational. Every detail matters, and a life of kedushah (holiness) is built through consistent, mindful observance.

Sefer Devarim reinforces this message, promising blessing and elevation when we uphold the mitzvot, and warning of consequences when we turn away. The Tochachah (rebuke) is hard to read, yet it teaches an essential truth: our relationship with Hashem is not only spiritual but deeply tied to our survival as a people in our land. When we uphold the covenant, we merit protection and brachah (blessing); when we abandon it, we risk losing both.

15- And it will be, if you do not obey the Lord, your God, to observe to fulfill all His commandments and statutes which I am commanding you this day, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you.

63- And it will be, just as the Lord rejoiced over you to do good for you and to increase you, so will the Lord cause to rejoice over you to annihilate you and to destroy you. And you will be uprooted from the land which you enter therein, to possess it.

Perhaps the timing is a divine reminder: yes, we have been given another chance to live in Eretz Yisrael (the Land of Israel), but we must not forget what is at stake if we defile His laws and the land. It serves as an annual review of our covenant with Hashem – to remember past losses and to recall His strength and guidance in our destiny as a people.

The connection between this parsha and Yom Ha'atzmaut (Israel Independence Day) is striking. The return to Eretz Yisrael is not merely a historical or political event; it is a spiritual opportunity and responsibility. Just as Yetziat Mitzrayim (leaving Egypt) gave us physical freedom, Matan Torah (the Giving of the Torah) gave that freedom purpose. Likewise, the gift of Medinat Yisrael (the State of Israel) calls us to live lives rooted in Torah, guided by mitzvot, and inspired by kedushah.

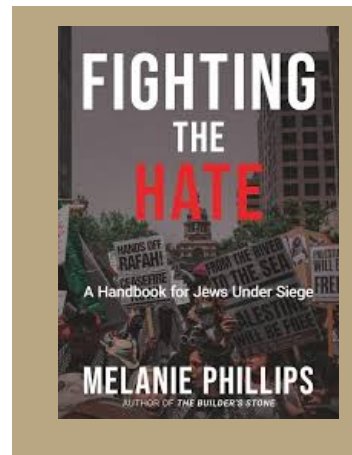
As we celebrate this remarkable week, may we recognize both the privilege and the responsibility of our time. May we strengthen our connection to Hashem, to His Torah, and to Eretz Yisrael – and in doing so merit continued brachah, protection, and unity for Am Yisrael (the People of Israel).

Shabbat Shalom!



SURVIVING THE GLOBAL ASSAULT AGAINST THE JEWS

By Deborah Kempin



I'm sure many of us have wondered, at one point or another, how we would respond if confronted with antisemitic rhetoric. Some might choose to ignore it. Others might react emotionally, speaking out in frustration but without clarity. And then there are those—myself included—who feel so stunned in the moment that no response comes at all.

Recently, I had the opportunity to read *Fighting the Hate: A Handbook for Jews Under Siege* by Melanie Phillips, a book that speaks directly to this very dilemma.

Phillips begins by addressing the emotional landscape many of us are experiencing. She writes that if you feel “frustrated and bewildered, aghast and disbelieving at the malice and derangement unleashed against Israel and the Jews and unsure how to respond under pressure, then this book is meant for you.” That framing alone felt both validating and grounding.

From there, she lays out a series of practical principles. One of her key messages is that while the instinct may be to respond emotionally, it is far more effective to respond thoughtfully and strategically. She encourages readers to assess each situation: Is it safe to engage? Is the person open to dialogue, or is it better to disengage? Not every confrontation requires a response, but when one does, it should be measured and informed.

An especially insightful idea she introduces is the concept of the “middle ground”—individuals who are not deeply entrenched antisemites, but who have absorbed misleading narratives. Phillips cautions against dismissing these people outright. Instead, she suggests that they are often the most worthwhile audience, as they may be receptive to facts and reason when approached thoughtfully.

Like many readers, I found myself particularly eager for concrete examples—what to actually say in the moment. Phillips provides what she calls a kind of “verbal armory,” offering responses that challenge false claims with logic and clarity. These responses are not about winning arguments, but about exposing inconsistencies and encouraging critical thinking.

For example:

Ignorant Person- “The Israelis have been committing genocide in Gaza.”

You- “The IDF literally phoned people in the path of their proposed missile attacks and gave them time to get out. Don’t you think that’s a bit weird for a genocide?”

You-“The Israelis allowed into Gaza more than fourteen million tons of food during two years of war. Do you think the Israelis are the only people in the world to feed the people they intend to kill?”

You-“At the UN World Conference Against Racism in Durban in 2001, a coalition of nongovernmental organizations approved a report declaring Israel guilty of genocide. Do you think this is the world’s first genocide to last for twenty-four years? Or do you think that having been wiped out in 2001, the Gazans were somehow reincarnated so it could happen to them all over again?”

Beyond specific responses, she emphasizes the importance of education. This deeply resonated with me. For many years, I’ve made a conscious effort to read more, revisit history, and better understand the complexities of the region so that I can speak from a place of knowledge rather than emotion.

Phillips also discusses the idea of projection—how accusations are often reversed, with blame shifted onto Jews and Israel despite evidence to the contrary. This insight helped me better understand the rhetoric we are hearing and why it can feel so disorienting. She suggests that we reframe the narrative to reclaim language that has been hijacked. Fighting back means restoring the truthful meaning of words such as replacing antisemitism with the term “Jew-hatred,” or “Judeophobia.”

Finally, she addresses a broader concern: the silence of many within the diaspora. The lack of a strong, unified response has allowed misinformation to spread unchecked. She offers practical suggestions for communal action, from holding media outlets accountable to proactively sharing accurate historical context and information.

This book does not claim to solve every challenge, but it provides something incredibly valuable: a sense of preparedness. It reminds us that while we may not control what others say, we can control how we respond—with clarity, confidence, and conviction. In the coming month, I look forward to sharing more ideas and insights from this book, and continuing this important conversation together.



**LOOKING FOR AHAVAT ACHIM MEMBERS INTERESTED IN
TRAVELING TO THE NORPAC MISSION TO WASHINGTON -
OFFICIAL REGISTRATION HERE!**

MISSION DATE: WEDNESDAY, MAY 13, 2026

FORM GROUP HERE!

In 2024, more than 1,200 advocates came to Washington, holding over 300 meetings with lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. In 2025, that number dropped to just over 800.

Fewer voices—at a time when we need more.

Because the stakes have never been higher.

Israel is facing ongoing threats from Iran and its proxies. At the same time, antisemitism is surging across the United States—on college campuses, in our cities, and even in our institutions.

For the past 15 years, we have watched the once-strong bipartisan consensus around Israel steadily weaken—beginning in the era of Barack Obama and continuing with the rise of The Squad.

That is exactly why this moment demands action.

In a single day, the NORPAC Mission facilitates hundreds of meetings that directly influence how lawmakers think, vote, and lead.

We cannot afford to be quieter.

We cannot afford to be fewer.

And we cannot afford to stay home.

We must show up. We must stand up. And we must speak clearly.

This is not just advocacy. It is our responsibility and a right as American citizens.

When we show up in strong numbers, our leaders notice—and policy moves.

That is how we protect our community.

That is how we strengthen the U.S.-Israel relationship.

Let's stand together—united, strong and proud—this May 13 on the NORPAC Mission to Capitol Hill.

*For more information and to register (**deadline is April 30**), please visit: <https://norpac.net/mission-to-washington>.*

Join us on Tuesday, May 13, 2026 as we travel Washington, DC. On a single-day trip you will meet with Members of Congress and their staff and share your concerns with them about aid to Israel, Iran, antisemitism, and more. Help us make a difference once again!

Buses will leave for Washington DC from our area around 6:30am and return between 9:00pm and 10:00pm. There will be briefings on the bus. All meals will be provided.

Jewish Community Events and Israel

BOKER TOV SIVAN

- MUSICAL HALLEL
- KIDS ACTIVITIES
- FREE BREAKFAST

SUNDAY MAY 17TH

9:15 AM SHACHARIT (Hallel at 9:40)

10:00 AM ARTS & CRAFTS for Kids

10:30 AM BREAKFAST

RSVP AT [TINYURL.COM/BOKERTOVSIIVAN](https://tinyurl.com/bokertovsivan) BY 5/13

AHAVAT ACHIM
אהבת אכים

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Glenn Cohen is the Hostage Debrief Team Leader and former Mossad Chief Psychologist. Born and raised in New York City, he moved to Israel after high school and went on to serve more than three decades as an air force pilot, special-forces psychologist, and IDF Hostage Negotiator.

REGISTER TODAY!

jfnnj.org/VisionaryVoices

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let their Torah live
on through you



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