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OUR BRIGHTEST STARS
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Bridging the Gaps
Between Israel and the Diaspora

Who are the most influential Jews on the planet? Every year, The Jerusalem Post seeks to answer that question for its special Rosh Hashanah magazine – and every year we endeavor to put new names in a variety of fields on the list while acknowledging that certain people are worthy of being included after more than a decade. And now, as Israel faces a series of serious challenges – from beating corona to reviving the economy, from confronting its enemies to making peace with its neighbors, and from advancing national unity to boosting ties with the Diaspora – the Bennett-Lapid government is ushering the Jewish state into a new era.

As we were preparing this year’s list, comments from one of our top 10 – World Jewish Congress President Ronald S. Lauder – struck me as particularly relevant. Asked how he sees the relationship between Israel and Diaspora Jewry, Lauder replied: “In a word, negative – and that’s a problem for Jewry.”

The challenge was described in another way by Amira Ahronoviz, the first woman to serve as CEO of the Jewish Agency for Israel. “With the establishment of Israel, the prevailing paradigm was that all Jews would gather in one place, the State of Israel. Today we understand that there are two big centers of almost the same size, one in Israel and one in North America, which are developing in different directions and conducting essentially different Jewish lifestyles,” she said. “It seems that these two centers will be different forever and we have to find ways to connect them without falling into the growing gaps between them.”

There are almost 15 million Jews in the world (a tiny fraction of the global population of 7.8 billion) – some 6.8 million in Israel, 6.1 million in the US and Canada and the rest elsewhere. Wherever they are, Jews appear to punch above their weight. Of more than 900 people receiving the Nobel Prize since 1901, at least 20% have been Jews.

As we enter the year 5782, we can bask in pride over Jewish achievements in Israel and the Diaspora, and applaud our brightest stars who shine while making significant contributions to our world.

May this be the year in which we learn to reach out to each other for the benefit of all. Let’s not forget that of necessity, a bridge needs two sides. If it ends in the middle, it collapses. So it is with Israel and the Diaspora – which is why it’s essential to reinforce the bridges between us.

I’d like to thank all those who contributed to this magazine and wish you all good reading and shana tova!

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The biggest change in Israel in the past year was the departure of former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu after 12 consecutive years in "Balfour," as the official residence on the corner of Jerusalem’s Balfour and Smolenskin streets has come to be known.

The people who made it happen are Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Foreign Minister Yair Lapid, and they did it as a team.

Bennett and Lapid have a history of getting Netanyahu to do things he doesn’t want to do. Back in 2013, the “brothers,” as they were nicknamed due to Bennett’s penchant for calling everyone that, banded together so that Bennett would get into the coalition, despite Netanyahu not wanting him there, and so the haredi parties would stay out, as Lapid insisted. That coalition was a rocky one – even Bennett and Lapid joked they were downgraded from brothers to cousins – and only lasted a year and a half.

Fast-forward to 2021, when Israel held an unprecedented fourth election in two years. Lapid was in the “Never Netanyahu” camp, and had been since Netanyahu fired him from the Finance Ministry in 2014. Bennett said he was leaving his options open; he didn’t think Netanyahu was disqualified, but he was open to other options if Netanyahu was not able to get majority backing.

Though a majority of the Knesset’s seats went to right-wing and religious parties, Netanyahu, once again, could not cobble together a coalition. Parties that once worked with him refused to do so again for myriad reasons: he was under indictment on multiple charges of corruption; he was beholden to the haredi parties; he had broken one promise too many. The parties that were willing to work with him weren’t all willing to work with each other, like the far-right Religious Zionist Party, which refused to be part of a coalition that was dependent on the Islamist Ra’am Party. Bennett and Netanyahu negotiated, but even if Yamina joined the coalition, the numbers just didn’t add up to 61.

So, Bennett shifted to talks with his former brother Lapid, head of Yesh Atid, the largest party in the anti-Netanyahu bloc. And since Lapid needed Bennett, as well Ra’am, to form a coalition, they were able to make big demands. In Bennett’s case, it was to be prime minister in a rotation agreement, and to go first. Lapid is due to take his place in mid-2023.

With Netanyahu out of the way, the duo got to the business of leading what they call the “change government.” In many ways, one can look at this government and the one we had several months ago and sigh, “plus ça change.” The Delta variant has Israel in a state of pandemic déjà vu – though the COVID-19 vaccine continues to be highly effective in preventing severe illness – and the prime minister and health minister are still constantly urging...
Israelis to get jabbed. Though Lapid and Bennett have decided, unlike Netanyahu, to actually engage with the Biden administration on ways to counter Iran, the mullahs’ regime is still moving forward with its nuclear plan and the West is mostly undeterred from trying to negotiate with them despite their aggression across the Middle East, and there have been mysterious power outages and fires in Iran. The incendiary devices still fly in from Gaza and Hezbollah is still threatening us with its missile stockpiles to the north. The price of housing is on the rise and the cost of food has not gone down, etc.

But Bennett and Lapid are undeniably different from what came before them. The most obvious change is, of course, in the name and face at the helm. But there’s also a change in attitude. While it’s true that it takes an incredible amount of hubris for someone who only won seven seats in the last election to even think he could be prime minister, this government is structurally immune to the kind of concentrated power that Netanyahu had cultivated. With such a diverse coalition and such a small party within it, Bennett can’t just do what he wants or amass more and more authority under the Prime Minister’s Office, because if he goes too far, if his policies become too partisan, it will threaten the government’s delicate fabric. The same goes for the ministers of Yesh Atid, Meretz, Labor, New Hope, and Blue and White. So far, Lapid and Bennett have handled this delicate dance with relative aplomb, seeming to be perfectly in sync, whether they are talking about Iran and Hezbollah or the pandemic. They thank one another and give each other – and other ministers – credit, something the previous government lacked, as ministers would anonymously grumble.

The government that Bennett and Lapid are leading has the potential to make changes, for better or for worse, far beyond its spirit of partnership. The Health Ministry received a major, desperately needed budget increase. Necessary reforms in the state-funded rabbinate are on the agenda again, with haredim out of the coalition. Climate change is getting more government attention than ever before. The finance minister has leaned into “nanny state” taxes meant to change individual behaviors.

There is no doubt that Lapid and Bennett have had a massive influence on Israel in the past year, and the changes will continue in 5782. •

By LAHAV HARKOV
ANTONY BLINKEN

A
tonry Blinken is one of Joe Biden’s closest officials. In 2009, when Biden was VP, Blinken served as his national security adviser. Later, he became deputy secretary of state from 2015 to 2017. Shortly after Biden was declared the 2020 presidential election winner, he announced that Blinken, 58, would be his top diplomat.

During Blinken’s first month in office as US secretary of state, he primarily dedicated his time to China, widely considered America’s main competitor.

However, the situation quickly changed in May. Operation Guardian of the Walls brought the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to the administration’s center of attention and Blinken made his first visit to the region – stopping in Jerusalem, Ramallah and Cairo – to follow closely and make sure that the ceasefire held.

Blinken also worked closely with Biden and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin to deal with the fallout of the botched Afghanistan withdrawal. Blinken monitored the evacuation of the US Embassy in Kabul, as well as diplomats, US citizens and Afghan personnel. It is considered Biden’s most significant crisis since taking office, as Democrats and Republicans gave the administration a low mark on how the withdrawal unfolded. Another issue for Blinken is the indirect Vienna talks with Iran regarding mutual compliance with the 2015 nuclear agreement.

Shortly after swearing-in, Blinken vowed to work tirelessly to find a path to make both the US and Iran return to the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. However, the Iranians started to stall the negotiations some three months ago, and another round of talks has yet to be scheduled.

Whether the US will pursue a diplomatic solution or more sanctions and economic pressure, is yet to be seen. But in any case, Iran will dominate the secretary’s schedule during the next year as well.

By OMRI NAHMIA
Dr. Rochelle Walensky has become one of the most well-known faces in America’s fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. As the director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) she has taken to the nightly news, Twitter and Facebook to inform the public about the challenges posed by the virus and the steps the US is taking.

“One thing is clear,” Walensky tweeted on August 18, “While we are still learning how these vaccines perform over time and against emerging variants, the data show that getting vaccinated can keep you out of the hospital. Getting vaccinated can save your life.”

Standing tall at five feet and 11 inches, she has unabashedly defended the position of her organization. Last month, she directly addressed comments made by Fox News host Sean Hannity that “science shows the vaccine will not necessarily protect you. It’s not protecting many people.” In an interview with MSNBC, she termed Hannity’s statement “to be false” and said that even if someone who is vaccinated gets COVID, “your case will be far milder than if you didn’t have the vaccine.”

Walensky completed her medical degree at Johns Hopkins School of Medicine and her Master of Public Health at Harvard School of Public Health.

Married to Dr. Loren D. Walensky, she is the mother of three sons. They live in Newton, Massachusetts, where they belong to Temple Emanuel.

She was working as chief of infectious diseases at Massachusetts General Hospital and serving as a professor at Harvard Medical School, when Joe Biden tapped her for the top CDC role.

In her acceptance speech, Walensky chose not only to address the pandemic but the “long-standing public health challenges of social and racial injustice and inequity that have demanded action for far too long.”

The Infectious Diseases Society of America issued a statement after Walensky’s appointment, calling her “a gifted infectious diseases physician and leader” whose “contributions to research, policy and practice in understanding, responding to and controlling pandemic threats that include HIV, tuberculosis and now COVID-19 have informed global and domestic efforts that are critical to protecting Americans and advancing global health.”

By MAAYAN HOFFMAN
HELPING MANAGE THE
THE ISRAELI MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

“T he time has come for Israel
to prepare the health sys-
tem for the long term,” says
Dr. Zion Hagay, president of
Israeli Medical Association
and head of medical education at Kaplan
Medical Center in Rehovot. “It can no lon-
ger be repaired with ‘band-aids’ and tempo-
rary fixes.”

This was the overarching message that
was communicated by Dr. Hagay and
Leah Wapner, general secretary of the
organization, in an interview with the
Jerusalem Post.

Hagay and Wapner discussed the Israeli
medical establishment’s response to the
corona pandemic, how the Israeli Medical
Association helps and assists doctors in
Israel, and its future plans. The organization,
established in 1912, represents about 95
percent of the physicians in Israel, upholds
medical standards in Israel, promotes
public health, and advances the working
conditions of physicians in Israel.

Wapner, the organization’s legal advisor,
says that the arrival of the pandemic
weakened what already was a strained
medical system. “The first stage of COVID,”
she says, “was utter surprise. But the health
care system was in very bad shape because it
has had poor funding for the past 20 years.”
The pandemic, she says, brought the health
care system to its limits. COVID demands
a high percentage of medical personnel
working with individual patients, and
there was not enough staff to deal with the
flood of patients. Despite the difficulties,
she says, “we were able to deal with COVID
and contain it. But it came at a price. We
don’t believe it was necessary to have the
number of deaths that we had. We are still
having a high rate of infection.” According
to Wapner, the Israeli medical system is
wonderful in some areas and less capable in
other ways.

Israel’s health care system is excellent
for ambulatory patients, she explains,
and is well-equipped to deal with patients
who are home and who visit their Kupat
Holim clinic. Most COVID patients have
been treated at home. “If not for the Kupot
Holim, good network, and infrastructure
of the flow of information, we wouldn’t be
able to do it. This is why we are effective
in vaccination. When people want to get
vaccinated, we can get them vaccinated in
a very short period of time.” Wapner says
that the doctors and nurses performed
outstandingly and performed at the level
of expectation that one would expect from
health care professionals. “That is what
saved us.”

Dr. Hagay echoes Wapner’s words and
says that “the health system wasn’t
prepared for a pandemic of this size. In
recent decades, the health system in last
decades is starved and under-budgeted.”
Hagay adds that the country’s political
leaders need to understand that investing
in the country’s health care system is as
important as investing in education and
security. “Investing in Israel’s health care
system is an investment in the security of
the residents of Israel,” declares Dr. Hagay.

According to Dr. Hagay, Israel does not
have enough beds in its hospitals, the
health ministry budget is too low, and there
are not enough hospitals in the country.
He says that two additional hospitals
should be built to accommodate the Israeli
population— one in the north and one in
the south.
Dr. Hagay notes that Israel will soon be
facing a shortage of qualified doctors, as the
medical professionals who came to Israel
in the Russian aliyah of the 1990s begin to
retire. Additionally, he notes, while Israel
is still considered a young country, the
number of people over the age of 70, who
require more medical care, is rising. Hagay
says that 60% of Israeli medical students are
studying for their medical degrees outside
Israel, and many do not return. To ensure
that these students come back to live and

(Courtesy)
HEALTH CARE CRISIS

work in Israel, the IMA is working on a plan that will allow Israeli medical students studying abroad to perform their practical medical studies in Israel, beginning in their fourth year of medical studies. As a result, he says, these students will gain a greater understanding of the Israeli health system and will become better integrated into the system. In addition, the Israeli Medical Association is promoting a proposal to shorten medical studies in Israel from seven years to six years, enabling students to begin their residencies sooner and begin working as doctors. This proposal will also help to add more doctors into the system.

The pandemic, says Dr. Hagay, not only affected Israel's non-medical citizenry but had a dramatic effect on the country's medical personnel. Many doctors have experienced symptoms of post-traumatic stress and were not prepared for the many deaths that occurred, especially in circumstances where patients seemed to be recovering from COVID and suddenly died. “Doctors had not encountered this before,” he says, “and this caused a loss of confidence in their ability to predict if a patient would recover.” The Israeli Medical Association established a support system for doctors, offering psychiatric and psychological services and subsidizing treatment.

Interestingly, Dr. Hagay says that many of the respiratory illnesses, such as pneumonia, which typically occur during the winter months, have begun to appear in the late summer of 2021, during this fourth wave of corona that the country is experiencing. “There were no winter illnesses in 2020,” says Dr. Hagay. “For some reason, they have appeared now.”

Leah Wapner says that beyond the additional funding that is required for the health system, it is essential that the medical system retains its values of caring for others. “I hope that we don’t lose our values of life, our values of health, and not succumb to values of money, budgets, and finance. I hope that we will find better ways to deal with covid, but covid is not the end of the story. We need to seize the opportunity to learn, make it a better system, get better funding to get more health care workers, use new technology, and most importantly, remember that there is a reason why it is called a caring profession. We need to care for people. I hope we won’t lose our touch, and we will keep our ethics going.”

By ALAN ROSENBAUM
It is not uncommon to see Israelis clinging their cups in *l’chaim* to the Pfizer vaccine. They know they would not be at a bar without the company’s elixir that, even as cases rise, has allowed Israel to stay open.

Pfizer has shipped billions of doses of its vaccine around the world. The company recently said it expects vaccine sales to hit almost $34 billion this year. But Israel was the first to fully benefit from the company’s innovation.

At Pfizer’s helm is Albert Bourla, a Jew from Thessaloniki, Greece.

Bourla chose to gamble on Israel because of its small population and its sophisticated data collection system.

Greece was an option, but its electronic medical record-keeping was not up to scratch, he said in an interview with the *Financial Times*. The company also considered Sweden, but Bourla said he was worried about upsetting other EU countries.

“The biggest thing that became clear was Bibi [Netanyahu] was on top of everything, he knew everything,” Bourla said. “He called me 30 times, asking: ‘What about young people… What are you doing about the South African variant?’ I’m sure he was doing it for his people, but I’m also sure he was thinking: ‘It could help me politically.’”

Pfizer was the first mRNA vaccine maker to achieve Emergency Use Authorization from the FDA, getting full approval last month.

mRNA vaccines are proving to be the most effective and safe. AstraZeneca, Johnson & Johnson and Sinovac work, but are less effective – especially against variants.

Workers at Pfizer told *The Jerusalem Post* that Bourla receives much of the credit. He challenged scientists and employees across the company to develop and deliver a vaccine in record time. He said, “if not us, then who?”

“The principle was that we must do it,” Bourla said in a CNBC interview. “If we wouldn’t be able to have a solution by the time that it was needed, then we will be facing way worse problems around the world than us losing $2b. Bourla never expected the vaccine to be as successful as became. He learned about the breakthrough in a Zoom meeting with Pfizer’s general counsel and two statisticians.

“I heard the 95%, which I didn’t believe, I thought I didn’t hear it well,” Bourla told *FT*.

Bourla has been with Pfizer for 25 years, starting in the Animal Health division, working his way up through several global and senior positions.

A company spokesperson said that Bourla encourages employees to “take bold moves that help us achieve our purpose of delivering breakthroughs that change patients’ lives.”

COVID-19 showed Pfizer staff that Bourla was right: The company is capable of delivering breakthroughs.

Bourla attributes some of his success to growing up among Holocaust survivors who were not afraid to tell their stories. His mother and father narrowly escaped execution.

His father’s parents and two of his three siblings were among the thousands of Thessaloniki Jews killed. His mother was imprisoned and nearly murdered by a firing squad.

Before the Holocaust, there were around 55,000 Jews living in Greece. Some 95% were executed.

He told *FT* that his mother would recount the story of her near-death – “a story of horror but given with humor.”

Bourla doesn’t talk too much about his family’s background, but in an interview published in *The New York Times* he recalled how his mother would say that she was “in a worse position once, and now I have you and your sister. Life is miraculous. Nothing is impossible.”

“That was the spirit of her,” he said. “And she inspired me to be the same.”

He added in that interview that “my mother believed you can do anything in life. That there’s always a way. The way may not be clear in the beginning, but there is always a way. I owe her a lot because of that. She is my role model.

“What I got from my dad was to identify what can go wrong.”

*By MAAYAN HOFFMAN*
Avril Haines, Joe Biden’s director of national intelligence, is not a spy. An international law expert, Haines helped force counterterror policy under Barack Obama.

She went on to serve as deputy CIA chief and deputy national security advisor. As DNI chief, she now oversees intelligence operations and budgets for the US’ 17 intelligence agencies as well as directly advising the president.

According to JTA, her mother was the Jewish painter Adrian Rappin (originally Rappaport), and her non-Jewish father once wrote in an account about a trip with Haines to Israel that she identifies as Jewish. She is the first Jewish director of national intelligence, a position established in 2005. She is also the first woman to lead the intelligence community, and, having been confirmed on January 21 just one day after Biden took office, she was also his first Cabinet member.

In 2015, she was assigned to bridge a variety of differences between the CIA and a special US Senate task force led by Democrat Dianne Feinstein of California.

The issues included how much of the Bush administration-era torture to disclose as well as problems in cooperation between the sides.

In May 2020 Haines signed a letter along with many other Democrat foreign policy experts urging the party platform to take a more forceful position against Israeli settlement activity and to press forward with the two-state solution with the Palestinians.

By YONAH JEREMY BOB and OMRI NAHMIAS

It is still too early to assess the influence Isaac Herzog wields as the State of Israel’s 11th president.

Although his sons have told him they will make sure he does not let the prestige get to his head, there was no need. Herzog, who took office two months ago, and has a multigenerational prestigious pedigree, has never exhibited arrogance.

Friendly, polite and soft-spoken, he is equal- ly at home with all sectors of society.

Since childhood, Herzog accompanied his father and uncles through corridors of pow- er, and many of the who’s who in the Jewish world were guests in his parents’ home.

Although he has his own way of doing things, Herzog has in many respects followed in the footsteps of his father, Chaim who served as president from 1983 until 1993. The younger Herzog served in Military Intelligence, practiced law, went into politics and as citizen No. 1, became Israel’s first sec- ond-generation president.

In a sense, Herzog came to the job better pre- pared than his predecessors – with the possible exception of Shimon Peres, who held more ministerial portfolios over the years than any other politician.

But Herzog has quite an impressive record of service of his own: cabinet secretary, minister of housing and construction; welfare and Diaspora and finally, chairman of the Jewish Agency.

With the exception of Miriam Peretz, all other candidates for president dropped out of the race, realizing they did not stand a chance. It was hardly surprising that Herzog’s was a landslide victory.

Like his grandfather - Chief Rabbi Yitzhak HaLevi Herzog - his father and his uncles, the new president will continue to fight antisemitism in all its manifestations. He will also continue to speak out against the nuclearization of Iran.

Herzog intends to be a very active president, and given the rise of antisemitism around the world, coupled with Iran’s nuclear threat, he will have more than enough opportunities to prove how influential he can be.
MAYANEI HAYESHUAA
TREATING THE

COVID gave us a bit of a jolt,” says Chaim Fachler, Director of International Resource Development at Mayanei Hayeshua Medical Center, with typical British understatement, “but we were one of the first community hospitals to react in an efficient and effective way.” Mayanei Hayeshua Medical Center (MHMC) is a growing 320-bed independent community hospital in Bnei Brak, and as Fachler explains, the hospital’s exemplary performance during the pandemic has helped heal both the bodies and minds of both the cared and the caregivers.

“Initially,” he continues, “the epicenter of the pandemic was in Bnei Brak.” Mayanei Hayeshua became the first hospital in the country to stop all visitors and restrict the entry of patients’ aides to the hospital. Realizing that the dangers of cross-contamination were great, the hospital built an advanced field-testing center in the hospital’s parking lot to prevent the arrival and spread of COVID within the hospital. “We acted quickly and most effectively,” says Fachler.

Mayanei Hayeshua is well-known for its expansive, six-story Mental Health Center, headed by internationally renowned psychiatrist Professor Rael Strous, that offers a range of treatments covering every aspect of human functioning. Fachler explains that in the early days of the pandemic, infected patients felt very anxious due to their isolation, apart from medical personnel wearing special protective gear. Says Fachler, “One patient said, ‘Forget about the physical part – I am dying from isolation.’”

The mental health team at Mayanei Hayeshua, consisting of psychologists and social workers, entered the corona ward and spoke to patients, calmed them, and helped them cope with their feelings of loneliness. “Even more important,” continues Fachler, “the mental health staff gave direction to the regular medical staff how to speak with COVID patients, and how to make the patient feel loved and cared for – and how the staff themselves were dealing with the new situation.”

Mayanei Hayeshua’s mental health staff was also active in the aftermath of the crowd crush at Meron on Lag BaOmer, in which forty-five men and boys tragically died. “We brought in Hatzalah groups who had been there, and they were given tools to cope with that sort of mental stress they encountered. We gave direction to the carers,” says Fachler.

The pandemic has also increased the adaptation of telemedicine at Mayanei Hayeshua. The hospital had begun to introduce teletherapy on a small scale...
before the pandemic hit, but once patients could no longer reach the hospital for regular treatments, they implemented a more comprehensive plan. “We obtained between 50 and 60 tablets that were modified for secure medical information,” Fachler explains. “We were able to set up the system for members of the professional medical staff who had to be in isolation and couldn’t come in physically but were able to continue to treat patients through Zoom or with the medical tablets that were tailor-made for continuing treatments. We also arranged teletherapy for patients who weren’t hospitalized 24/7 but were coming in for outpatient treatments.” As an example of its effective utilization, Fachler cites the hospital’s eating disorders unit. Half of the patients in the unit remain overnight, and half are present in the hospital during the day and return home in the evenings. Because of the COVID restrictions, some of the patients could not come to the hospital during the day and were therefore treated via teletherapy. “We were amazed to find that not only was there no reduction in the effectiveness of the treatment for those who were treated via teletherapy, but there were even occasions where because of teletherapy, we were monitoring them more hours per day than had they been in the hospital and gone home.” Fachler says that the hospital is continuing teletherapy for patients who have been hospitalized and discharged that require monitoring.

Chaim Fachler says that Mayanei Hayeshua Medical Center has earned a well-deserved reputation for its 18 medical departments, 32 outpatient clinics and institutes, 13,000 annual births, and more than 6,000 surgical procedures performed every year. “But our real uniqueness,” says Fachler, “lies in the cross-the-board passion of everyone who works here, from our dedicated social workers in the eating disorder unit to our professor in his 60s running the ICU. We are a community hospital, not just in name – we genuinely respond to the needs of the residents in our surrounding communities of Bnei Brak, Givat Shmuel, Petach Tikvah, and Ramat Gan. Our top priority remains – and will always remain – our patient-centered focus.”

*By ALAN ROSENBAUM*
Ronald S. Lauder, who has served as president of the World Jewish Congress since 2007, is a rare voice of moral clarity in today's world. In a Rosh Hashanah interview with The Jerusalem Post, Lauder bemoans the “negative” relationship that has developed between Israel and the Diaspora, and issues a heartfelt plea for it to be repaired.

As president of the WJC, which represents Jewish communities in 106 countries, Lauder meets regularly with heads of state, prime ministers and government representatives to discuss and advance causes of concern to Jews and Jewish communities internationally.

How do you see the relationship between Israel and Diaspora Jewry?

In a word, negative – and that’s a problem for the Jewish people and the State of Israel longterm. Here’s why: in the Diaspora, over 80% of Jews are Reform-to-Conservative and lead more secular lives, with a fleeting or conditional connection to Israel. The remaining 20% are Orthodox, and live a deep, daily connection to Israel. It is only through rebuilding the connection of the Diaspora to Israel, and Israel to the Diaspora, that both will sustain one another. Rebuilding this relationship is a key focus of mine over the next few years.

Israel has also been without a foreign minister for years, which has been detrimental to Israel’s standing and public image throughout the Diaspora – it has been neglected. I am hopeful that Foreign Minister Yair Lapid will be an important constructive force in doing the hard work to rebuild Israel in the Diaspora, and make the Diaspora a part of Israel once again.

What is the biggest challenge facing Israel and the Jewish people in the coming year?

Israel’s public image, and how it reflects on Jews worldwide. We have let our enemies define us in the battlefield of public opinion. For Jews under 40, especially the next generation in colleges and universities, the relationship with Israel has been nearly severed. Younger Jews are turning against Israel and expressing anti-Israel opinions fomented by long-standing opponents who are seeing a return on decades of investment. Jewish students compare Israel to apartheid-era South Africa, with no real effort to convince them otherwise. That’s nothing short of giving permission to Jews to turn against our homeland.

Only real investment in hasbara can salvage this situation. To date, neither Israeli leaders nor Jewish leaders outside of Israel have paid attention to this crisis, to our grave detriment. I intend to change that over the next few years with key investments in hasbara campaigns.

What is your vision for the World Jewish Congress?

The World Jewish Congress represents 106 communities on six continents. We are a service organization, providing government, policy and political support.

But this year, the WJC is branching out and building on these traditional services.

We are making critical investments in hasbara since Israel suffers from a crisis in public opinion; in education, since access to a Jewish education forms lasting bonds early in life, but also, our education system needs a watchdog, since anti-Israel and antisemitic thought is flourishing in colleges and universities. So, we’ll be holding higher education institutions accountable.

For instance, we will look closely at Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which mandates that if institutions, including education institutions, support hate or discriminatory speech targeting any minority group, including Jews, they lose federal funding. We will also invest in digital and cyber monitoring. We strongly believe that these are investments in a safer, more secure, and sustainable future for the global Jewish community.

To what do you attribute the current spike in global antisemitism, and how can it be best addressed?

Once again, a crisis in leadership has led to permission for our enemies to define us, creating space for antisemitism to flourish unchecked, especially on social media and in political discourse. For example, we have allowed Zionism and Judaism to be conflated, meaning that an opinion about Zionism is given permission to be equated with Judaism. This is a negative.

This should be addressed through diplomacy, accountability, and sustained public opinion work. It will take years and is my top priority. •

By STEVE LINDE
OREN REVACH –
LEADING ESTEE LAUDER COMPANIES ISRAEL

A good manager knows how to plan ahead,” says Oren Revach, General Manager of Estee Lauder Companies Israel, “in times of calm, and certainly in times of crisis.” Revach, who has headed the Israeli affiliate of the world-famous cosmetics company for the past fifteen years, has managed to stay a step ahead of the pandemic and has successfully led the company through this challenging period. Until the pandemic arrived in Israel, the Israeli affiliate sold products by Estee Lauder, Clinique, MAC Cosmetics, Bobbi Brown, Jo Malone London, and others primarily in physical locations, through large chains such as Super-Pharm and Hamashbir Lazarchan, in addition to its own network of freestanding shops. In mid-March, Revach quickly transitioned to a more substantial online presence.

“When Corona arrived on March 15,” explains Revach, “we moved all of our workers to remote locations, and 1000 workers began to work remotely.” The company purchased Israeli software to help provide service online, and online orders jumped from 500 per day to 12,000. Workers were taught how to work online and explained to customers how to place online orders. Revach increased his customer service department from 20 workers to 80 so that the company could provide rapid responses to customers waiting online.

Revach explains that Estee Lauder Companies’ greatest asset is its employees. “One thing that I learned this year,” says Revach, “is that the health and safety of our workers in a time of crisis is paramount. Workers need to know that there is someone who is leading and preparing the company for all eventualities.” To that end, the company kept in touch with workers throughout the year and arranged special remote events, such as a company-wide Hannukah candle-lighting ceremony for 1000 workers and their families on Zoom. “In the final analysis,” notes Revach, “it is the employees who are the direct contact with the consumers. They are the ones who deal with the customers.”

Revach calls the level of care and concern that Estee Lauder has traditionally offered, both for customers and staff, ‘high-touch service,’ meaning a combination of quality products with outstanding personalized service. “Brands don’t build people,” says Revach. “People build brands.”

Revach notes that the pandemic has influenced the buying habits of people throughout the world. The requirement to wear masks, he explains, caused sales of makeup to fall. On the other hand, sales of skin care products increased because “after you wear a mask all day, you want to apply something to your face at night.” Another category that experienced an increase in sales, says Revach is that of ‘home-styling.’ Before the pandemic, people would attend events and apply perfume before going out. Now that people are spending most of their time at home, Revach explains, they are purchasing decorative candles, scents, fragrances, and sprays for their home. One of Lauder’s companies, Jo Malone London, produces a wide variety of products for the home.

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Apart from his responsibilities at Estee Lauder Companies, Revach is promoting a new social network entitled UG – short for ‘United Genesis,’ or ‘You are Good,’ based on peoples’ sharing inspirational stories, stories of good deeds, and miracles that they experienced. In addition to the social network, which is expected to be available later this month, the app will map social organizations in the area where the user lives to enable users to volunteer to do good deeds. “The app is based on technology which knows how to connect people with common interests, and the basis of interest will be gratitude,” says Revach. Unlike Facebook, which has its ‘like’ button, UG will have a ‘thank you’ icon.

A second project that Revach has developed is JAMA, a social app that is a one-stop shop for expectant mothers that brings together a wide range of information for pregnant women. The app connects women in similar stages of pregnancy and provides tips and explanations from the beginning of their pregnancy until their child turns three years old. Women using the app can connect through shared experiences to feel connected to a larger community of users. The app also features dozens of experts who can assist mothers on topics such as sleep counseling, baby nutrition, breastfeeding, and more.

What does Oren Revach wish for the coming year? Regarding Estee Lauder Companies, he says, “We should continue to offer the best to our customers and know to identify and deal with crises in the best way, both to our workers and our clients – and give the best to our customers.” When it comes to the world at large, Revach says, “We should all be healthy. There should be peace throughout the world, and we should learn to be more tolerant and kinder to each other.”

By ALAN ROSENBAUM
"I’m not a big fan of being singled out as a female entrepreneur," says Eynat Guez, the only woman who heads a hi-tech unicorn in Israel. "I have talked a lot about my experiences creating a start-up and giving birth, and having kids, because it serves a bigger purpose of helping other women entrepreneurs, and encouraging women in general to pursue their dreams."

A fair request, but after Guez’s Papaya Global raised a valuation above a billion dollars in March, it became hard not to put her on a pedestal. In a year when Israel’s tech industry soared, Guez took a unique place at the table.

Israeli hi-tech companies have raised a whopping $15 billion in investments in the first eight months of 2021. For comparison, Israeli companies raised $10.5 billion for the whole of 2020, which was a record amount then. Israel now has about 70 “unicorns,” private companies valued above a billion dollars, and about half of those joined the list this year.

When Papaya Global, a company providing simple international payroll management solutions, said in March that it raised $100 million at a valuation of more than a billion dollars, all eyes suddenly focused on Guez. She had signed those investment agreements just weeks after having her third child. But the 41-year-old Guez took it all in stride.

“My husband is in charge of the day-to-day operations at home, and our children – aged four, two, and eight months – know very well that Papaya is my first kid, not my fourth kid. I work from the time I wake up until 1 a.m. most days, but I try to spend high-quality time with each kid, even if it’s only a half-hour or an hour," she said.

After she finished the army, Guez worked in Africa and China, but always dreamed of creating her own start-up. She launched Papaya in 2016 with two partners, without funding.

“The first two years were a nightmare," Guez recalls. “We couldn’t convince any investors to believe in us. This was before COVID, and they would say that a global payroll solution wasn’t solving a real problem in the market.”

Guez is a strong advocate for diversity within companies, and works with Breaking the Impasse, an advocacy group of Israeli and Palestinian business leaders.

“Israelis have a responsibility to create a much better ecosystem with our neighbors,” she says. “If companies would devote just 1%-2% of their workforces to Palestinians, it would go a long way to creating a better reality for both sides.”

By ZEV STUB

‘Israelis have a responsibility to create a much better ecosystem with our neighbors’
— Eynat Guez

(COURTESY)
Michael Ellis, 53, was appointed attorney-general for England and Wales in March, having served since July 2019 as the country’s Solicitor General.

In addition to top legal posts, Ellis also served in a number of other roles, such as minister of State at the Department for Transportation, parliamentary under Secretary of State at the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, and deputy leader of the House of Commons.

Besides being Jewish, he is a member of the Conservative Friends of Israel group, and previously participated in meetings with top Israeli officials to raise concerns about the JCPOA Iran nuclear agreement and the Islamic Republic’s nuclear capabilities in general.

The group that Ellis joined warned that the JCPOA “does not resolve international suspicions,” while granting Iran an easing of economic sanctions.

He is known for supporting efforts to combat antisemitism in Britain, and has publicly condemned anyone persecuting Jews from either the Right or Left of the spectrum.

In a recent article, Ellis launched a campaign to stop the public from violating court gag orders and suspects’ privacy on social media.

“Speculating about an accused’s previous convictions or character, naming or posting photos of victims, naming individuals or posting photos in breach of reporting restrictions, and leaking embargoed court documents are all examples of contempt of court that can be committed on social media,” he said.

Lucy Frazer, 49, was appointed solicitor general in March, having also briefly served in the same post in early 2019.

She had previously served as a minister of State at the Ministry of Justice since July 2019, and as Parliamentary under secretary of State at the Ministry of Justice.

Frazer was elected as a Conservative MP for South East Cambridgeshire in 2015, and had done an internship at Israel’s Ministry of Justice soon after she graduated from Cambridge.

Frazer’s Jewish grandfather was Dr. Hyman Frazer CBE, headmaster of Gateway Grammar School in Leicester.

Working to raise more awareness of the Holocaust and of other genocides, she wrote in 2020: “This week I signed the HolocaustUK Book of Commitment remembering those who were murdered during the Holocaust. Holocaust Memorial Day reminds us of a terrible time when 6 million Jews were killed. We must remember also, the other genocides that have taken place across the world.”

As solicitor general, she recently succeeded in getting the sentence of a hotel porter, who was convicted of sexual assault, tripled. The porter had attacked a woman in her hotel room after a Christmas party in 2018.

By YONAH JEREMY BOB
When US president Donald Trump left the White House, he moved to his Florida resort, and while every word he says still makes headlines, he has no statutory role.

By contrast, former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu remains the opposition leader, the Likud chairman and its candidate for PM in the next election, as well as the shadow over his former protégé, Prime Minister Naftali Bennett.

It has become cliché to say that he is the glue that holds this diverse government together. He is actually much more than that.

Netanyahu is determined to use his presence on social media, the journalists loyal to him, and his speeches in the Knesset to provide a constant contrast between his performance and that of the government that he criticizes. By doing so, he makes his successors’ jobs even harder.

He will continue speaking to world leaders, vaccine makers, Olympic medallists and family members of soldiers as though he were still PM.

His alleged hotel stays with discounts and the revelations of past renovations at his home will keep him in the headlines in a negative light.

Maintaining that presence also keeps at bay the dozen potential successors in the Likud, who cannot wait for their shot to head the party that has had only four leaders, who all became prime minister.

Former Knesset speaker Yuli Edelstein is the only candidate with the courage to not rule out running against Netanyahu. The rest have carefully said that they would run in “the post-Netanyahu era.”

A Likud leadership race could potentially include as many as nine candidates: Edelstein, current and former ambassadors to the United Nations Gilad Erdan and Danny Danon, former Mossad chief Yossi Cohen and MKs Nir Barkat, Israel Katz, Miri Regev, Tzachi Hanegbi and Avi Dichter. MKs Yoav Gallant and Amir Ohana and former MK Moshe Feiglin have not said they would run but it is presumed they would, too.

They may have to wait a while. Netanyahu turns 72 on October 21, but his father, Prof. Benzion Netanyahu, died at the age of 102. The opposition leader has given no indication he is going anywhere soon.

Like Trump, he is determined to come back. Like with Trump, legal challenges could get in the way.

Netanyahu’s criminal trial is moving slowly. Those who thought removing him from the PMO would expedite it have so far been wrong.

That leaves passing legislation against Netanyahu as the primary way to prevent his return. There will be bills enacting term limits and preventing anyone under indictment from forming a government.

Such proposals will dominate the Knesset agenda after a budget is passed.

They will also prove that Netanyahu remains just as relevant and dominant as ever, even though he no longer lives in the Prime Minister’s Residence on Jerusalem’s Balfour and Smolenskin streets.

Netanyahu is determined to provide a constant contrast between his own performance and that of the new government that he constantly criticizes.
Wiping out housing poverty across Israel

“Housing poverty is often invisible,” says Gabi Nachmani, director of Tenufa Bakehila, an NGO that fights back against the poor housing situation of thousands of disadvantaged families in Israel. “When a child goes to school without a coat, his teachers notice,” says Nachmani. “When a child has no lunch, the school provides. But when a child sleeps on a moldy mattress in a room with broken walls and exposed electrical outlets, when he cannot shower at night because there is no hot water – nobody sees.”

Nachmani’s organization, Tenufa Bakehila - Building Hope, is a life-renewing NGO that sees children like this every day. It has been repairing dilapidated homes for thousands of needy families across Israel for 28 years.

Gabi began his outreach as a young boy growing up in a poor Jerusalem neighborhood. Together with his brothers, he made repairs on neighbors’ homes as a dressed - an act of kindness. Today, he runs the largest home-repair nonprofit organization in Israel, directing a dedicated team of full-time professional workers.

Proper shelter is one of the three most basic human needs. While many organizations provide food and clothing to families in need, Tenufa Bakehila is the only large-scale nonprofit that provides families with a safe and respectable living environment in their place of shelter - their home. By repairing the home, they restore families’ dignity and hope for a brighter future.

As poverty-stricken children face their third school year under the strains of COVID, Nachmani is concerned about those whose homes are not a source of shelter and strength. Gabi explains how housing poverty exacerbates the typical challenges faced by children during the pandemic.

How has housing poverty affected children this past year?
Gabi: COVID shifted everyone’s focus towards the home, and still, the issue of housing poverty went unseen. People talk about the challenges for children in low-income families: loss of school lunches, lack of Internet service and computers. No one talks about the excruciating experience of being forced to “shelter at home” when your home can’t really be considered a shelter.

What does that look like? A home that isn’t a shelter?
Gabi: We repaired the home of a single parent where the kitchen sink was severely cracked, the faucet sprayed water in every direction, the cabinets were rotted out. Imagine trying to prepare a meal for your children in a kitchen like that.

We worked in another home where a single mother and her teenage children had no bathroom door. When the place they call home is unsafe and undignified, a family suffers not only discomfort but also terrible shame.

We have refurbished homes with extreme smoke and fire damage where the interior walls, the electrical and plumbing systems all needed replacing.

Watch Tenufa’s YouTube channel to see the reaction of an elated 11-year-old boy, finally able to take a hot shower, after four years of washing himself with cold water flowing from a small tube in the wall. Tenufa Bakehila’s workmen refurbished the entire bathroom in his home where he lives with his grandmother. https://youtu.be/Y00Ns-6L3MY

What is your call to action? What can people like me do to help?
Gabi: We are aiming to reach 500 low-income families this year. Tenufa needs your help to double the number of single-parent families from 60 to 120 deserving families – that is hundreds of children whose homes and lives will be renewed.

Tenufa Bakehila needs support from people like you who understand how one urgent home repair can improve the trajectory of a child’s life.

A decent home gives children an anchor. A respectable living environment empowers a child to interact socially with self-respect and dignity, to show up with greater confidence to succeed in school and in life. By supporting Tenufa Bakehila, you can help us wipe out the worst cases of housing poverty in Israel.

Tenufa Bakehila is spreading the word about the importance of shelter – of decent housing for children. As families gear up for the new school year, we are determined to empower families who suffer the demoralizing effects of housing poverty – to empower them to believe in themselves and to strive for success.

Together, we can ensure that no child remains invisible – that every child has a safe and dignified place to eat, to shower, and to lay their head down at night.

By ELISHEVA WADLER

Check us out and donate at tenufa.org and on Facebook
Sylvan Adams is a businessman and philanthropist who since moving to Israel in 2015 refers to himself as the “self-appointed ambassador at large for the State of Israel.” Adams aims to showcase what he calls “normal Israel” by bringing world-class cultural and sporting events to the country.

Adams has famously brought to Israel Lionel Messi and the Argentinian soccer team, Madonna to adorn the Eurovision Song Contest finals, and was responsible for hosting the largest sporting event in the country’s history: the “Gran Partenza” Big Start of the Giro d’Italia. These events brought Israel into the homes of billions of television viewers.

Adams also works tirelessly to promote coexistence and national pride through Israeli sports. He is the owner of Team Israel Start-up Nation, a UCI World Tour team founded in 2014. Adams believes that sport is an invaluable resource that brings people together from different religions and ethnicities. Sport is also a touchstone of national pride for Israelis, erasing social differences.

Beyond sport, Adams’ philanthropic investments leverage Israeli innovation to positively impact Israeli society, the region, and beyond. His projects include the construction of a groundbreaking children’s hospital in Holon; revolutionizing the field of emergency medicine with a state-of-the-art emergency room in Tel Aviv; a project to supply tablet computers to special education teachers; and a scholarship program for promising artists. He is also one of the major donors of Save A Child’s Heart, a humanitarian organization that provides lifesaving heart surgery to Israelis, Palestinians and children from the developing world.

Adams is the only Israeli member of the Giving Pledge, an organization initiated by Warren Buffet together with Bill Gates for billionaires committed to give away the majority of their wealth to philanthropic pursuits.

In an interview with The Jerusalem Post earlier this year, Adams was upbeat about Israel emerging from the coronavirus pandemic.

“We are in a difficult period because the epidemic has killed tourism,” he said. “But I’m convinced it’ll be easy to revitalize it quickly. With a few successful initiatives, it will be possible to restore national pride and unity and get people out of the depressing situation in which we find ourselves. We are one people, and we need to restore our unity through every initiative that can strengthen us both internally and externally.”

Adams’ varied philanthropic pursuits will continue to make a tangible positive impact, in Israel, across the Middle East and beyond. And as he likes to say, he is “just getting started.”

- Sylvan Adams

‘We are one people, and we need to restore our unity through every initiative that can strengthen us both internally and externally’

– Sylvan Adams

By STEVE LINDE
JERUSALEM
30 Rashbag St., Jerusalem
Monday | Tishrei 7 | Sept 13
9:00-10:10
Dr. Yael Ziegler
Amos: The Difficulty of Teshuva
10:20-11:35
Tanya White
Yonah v Avraham: Can We Live with Uncertainty?
11:45-13:00
Rabbanit Shani Taragin
Yonah Re-lives the Yom Kippur Service

CHASHMONAIM
Beit Knesset HaRimon, Chashmonaim
Tuesday | Tishrei 8 | Sept 14
In Memory of Laura Friedman z’l
8:40-9:40
Rabbanit Leah Herzog
Finding My Way to Hashem: An Exploration of Tehillim 27
9:45-10:00
Allan Friedman
Words in memory of Laura
10:10-11:15
Rabbanit Batya Krauss
A Mother’s Prayer
11:20-12:00
Tanya White
‘To Be or Not to Be’: Intonations of Death In the Liturgy and its Meaning

BEIT SHEMESH
6 Nachal Maor St., Ramat Beit Shemesh
Sunday | Tishrei 6 | Sept 12
9:00-10:10
Rabbi Johnny Solomon
Yona’s Escape and Rabbi Twerski z’l on Recovery
10:20-11:35
Rabbanit Shani Taragin
Let Us Make Man: Teshuva in the Thought of Rabbi Twerski z”l
11:45-13:00
Rabbi Menachem Leibtag
Why the 10th of Tishrei was Chosen for Yom Kippur

For additional programs, details, registration and payments:
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While Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and Alternate Prime Minister Yair Lapid have the fanciest titles in the government, Blue and White leader Benny Gantz and New Hope chairman Gideon Sa’ar have the more symbolic title of deputy prime minister. But their influence cannot be underestimated.

Gantz would have become PM on November 17 had the previous government lasted. He has insisted on receiving independence and getting his way in disputes in the cabinet in return for his sacrifice.

Utilizing the eight seats Blue and White won against all odds in the March election, Gantz has taken full advantage of the leverage given to him by the Likud’s constant efforts to woo him since then.

Benjamin Netanyahu’s associates leaked a trial balloon that he would offer Gantz to serve as prime minister for four years, while he would suffice with the alternate or deputy prime minister title.

The obviously bitter Gantz has made a point of not ruling out accepting such an offer, which has increased his political power in the current government. The defense budget has gone up, and he has tried to obtain hefty pensions for high-ranking retired IDF officers.

His job in the years ahead will be to build up the army for the challenges of the future, as a potential nuclear Iran remains a potential existential threat and Lebanon, Syria, and Gaza are increasingly unstable. The future of the West Bank also remains up in the air, as 85-year-old Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas advances in age with no successor on the horizon.

Sa’ar has also made his share of sacrifices. He left the Likud in order to bring down Netanyahu, and even though New Hope won only six seats, he succeeded. A sharp political operator, he was one of the behind-the-scenes architects of the current government, and persuaded Bennett not to join forces with Netanyahu again.

Now Sa’ar wants to prevent a Netanyahu comeback by passing term limits, and preventing a candidate under indictment from forming a government.

Sa’ar also has plans in the Knesset’s winter session for reforming the legal establishment. The bill, which is currently being drafted, would include the rights of citizens in court and under arrest, the right to a fair legal process, the requirement of a warning, and the status of being considered innocent until guilt has been proven.

Sa’ar will also leave his mark by appointing a new attorney-general, splitting that powerful role and heading the judicial selection committee that is set to choose six new Supreme Court judges over the next four years and dozens of lower-level judges.

Recognizing the threat from Sa’ar, the Likud secretariat passed a proposal prohibiting the return of him and his New Hope colleagues to Likud, where he was once Netanyahu’s No. 2.

Meanwhile, Sa’ar will use the power he has to cause as many headaches as possible for Netanyahu and his other former colleagues in Likud.

By GIL HOFFMAN
The government’s diversity, from the far Left to far Right of the political map, does not prevent it from getting things done, she said. She believes it is the serious personalities involved and the desire to help the country that enables the divides to be overcome.

“I see that the experiment is working,” she said. “The previous government was more homogeneous, but due to its ministers’ personal behavior, even if they had the same views, they were busy fighting each other and stealing each other’s credit.”

Asked what her red lines are for remaining in the government, Zandberg admitted that such red lines have already been tested with the Evyatar outpost, the controversial citizenship bill and the state budget. She recalled that when there was a dispute with Bennett over a bill Meretz opposed, he made a point of meeting with the Meretz faction at 2 a.m., listening and compromising.

Zandberg insisted on the Environmental Protection portfolio in coalition talks, knowing that such issues have grown in importance around the world. While there are environmental achievements in which Israel leads the world, like water recycling and desalination, there are plenty in which Israel lags behind.

Showing her power behind the scenes, Shaked said last month that Yamina - led by Bennett – would quit the government if Yair Lapid advances Palestinian statehood when he becomes prime minister in two years.

“There will not be a Palestinian state in a government that we [Yamina] are party to,” said Shaked, adding that there is an agreement that this government will not deal with divisive matters.

As interior minister, Shaked plays a critical role relevant to Jews around the world today. It is her ministry after all, that is creating the most obstacles for people who want to visit the country despite COVID restrictions.

Shasha-Biton, number two on the New Hope list, has caused Bennett quite a headache in recent weeks, putting up a fight against government efforts to setting up vaccination centers in schools. She got her way with the decision to start the school year as planned on September 1 but lost out on the fight against in-school vaccines.

“I know how important it is to you, how important it is to children, how important it is to parents” to return to school, she explained. “We deserve to create certainty and stability in the education system, so that we can start the year in a good way.”

By GIL HOFFMAN and LIAT COLLINS

THE NUMBER TWOS

TAMAR ZANDBERG, AYELET SHAKED AND YIFAT SHASHA-BITON

(MARC ISRAEL SELLEM)
CLALIT HEALTH SERVICES LEADS THE WAY IN THE FIGHT AGAINST THE PANDEMIC

Clalit stands at the forefront of Israel’s national effort against the coronavirus. The epidemic has presented unique challenges, and Clalit has distinguished itself in its clinical, research, operational, and managerial capabilities. The Israeli public has seen Clalit’s capabilities during this period in dealing with COVID-19, and they have been recognized around the world. Clalit, Israel’s largest and leading health service organization, shapes and influences the Israeli health system. As a healthcare organization that provides medical services to 52% of the Israeli population (4.7 million patients), manages 1500 community clinics and 14 public hospitals, the challenge during the pandemic is great.

Clalit has used all the resources at its disposal to deal with Corona patients in hospitals and the community, at home, and is leading the fastest and most effective vaccination campaign in the world.

Clalit’s hospitals have been a backbone of the national hospital system, opening hospital wards to treat severe COVID-19 patients and complex medical conditions. Hospitals are adopting new technologies for remote monitoring and patient care, conducting collaborations with start-ups and leading research on the coronavirus, and have even opened clinics to treat those recovering from Corona while monitoring the long-term effects of the disease (long Covid).

Dr. Daniel King is an expert in pulmonary medicine and intensive care and manager of the Corona A section at Meir Hospital. “There were many challenges in setting up the ward,” he says, “but the main challenge is working for long hours under strict protective conditions that are challenging on several levels: the heat, the inability to drink and refresh even for a second, the physical limitations in movement and vision, and the distance from patients. We had many unforgettable experiences at the Corona ward, with many ‘first-time’ events. For example, the first time a corona patient entered the ward, the first time we connected a patient to oxygen, the first time we intubated a sick person, and, unfortunately, the first time we brought a family to say goodbye to a loved one on their deathbed. But the most meaningful experience was the discharge of the oldest patient, a 79-year-old to rehabilitation after surviving ventilation.”

Clalit also stands out in its care of COVID-19 patients within the community - those who are recovering at home. The State of Israel is among the few health systems where COVID-19 patients receive treatment and medical follow-up through the health maintenance organizations, and the family physician. This system, in which mildly ill patients are regularly cared for and monitored in their homes, enables optimal functioning of the in-patient system. Since the outbreak of the pandemic, 400,000 corona patients have been treated at home. In a short period, Clalit established a plan to accompany and monitor patients throughout the country. Family physician and nurses have maintained regular contact with those who are ill and have provided for all of their medical needs.

Dr. Roni Vered, Clalit’s Chief Physician in the Tel Aviv District says, “Managing the Corona Operation Center combines several essential roles. On a practical level, it means receiving daily lists of hundreds and thousands of new Corona patients, contacting them to provide guidance on quarantine and monitoring their medical condition, sending them kits for temperature monitoring, oxygen saturation meters, and supplying them with a contact to which they can turn at any moment if their condition worsens, or to taking care of various tests they were required to perform for non-corona medical issues.

“The biggest challenge for me was realizing during the early stages of the pandemic that most of the care of Corona patients rests on the community clinics’ shoulders and that the community health care operations can prevent a flood of new patients to hospitals. We continue to treat all other acute and chronic diseases, while treating Corona patients. About 60% of those who have had Corona in Israel have been treated by Clalit’s staff and have received medical and professional guidance.”

One of the cases that left a significant impression on Dr. Vered was that of a young woman who had just given birth and who was ill with Corona, together with her infant daughter. “She was at home alone, and she and her baby were ill. There was no family or friends who could help, and we, the command center staff, mobilized. We doctors and employees took care of everything she needed, from medication to diapers.”

The vaccination campaign has propelled Clalit and the State of Israel into the world’s consciousness. The successful and rapid vaccination campaign has been widely covered in the media in Israel and around the world. Clalit stands at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic, and its contribution is recognized by the Israeli public and around the world.
the development of solutions and technological innovations that have enabled the provision of “remote” medical services. The epidemic has been a test for remote medical care while removing regulatory barriers and lowering the threshold of suspicion of patients and medical staff to this new technology. At the height of the pandemic, more than 50% of family and pediatrician visits were conducted remotely online. The pandemic has shown that a suitable technological infrastructure, operational and managerial flexibility based on computerized medical files that centralize the information for each patient has made it possible to remotely administer quality medical care.

During this period, Clalit has continued to develop and adapt services tailored to patients’ needs. Services that can be used from home have been expanded, such as an online pharmacy service for home delivery, creating a network of volunteers that provides medications to at-risk populations, and the deployment of digital services that will enable telephone or video consultations with a family doctor, pediatrician, and consultants. Another example in online medicine is the new home ultrasound service that is being used by many pregnant women.

Still another example is Clalit’s initiative for conducting health promotion workshops and activities online, using a digital system to allow Clalit’s members to connect from their homes. This digital system has allowed Clalit to continue to offer quality health promotion group services on topics such as smoking cessation, weight control, diabetes, and breastfeeding, from their homes, during periods of personal quarantine. Since the beginning of the pandemic, over 4000 people have participated in these special activities.

Hedva Emuna, director of Clalit’s Southern District, sums up her feelings thus far.

“Dealing with the struggle against Corona has been a challenging experience. There have been several memorable landmarks, from the opening of complexes to conduct Corona tests, to vehicles that went to Bedouin villages to conduct testing.”

The fight against Corona is in full swing and is not over yet. On every possible front, Clalit is leading the way due to the capabilities of its 45,000 employees who work day and night to meet the needs of every patient and ensure the continuation of routine life as much as possible. The medical teams are imbued with a sense of mission and recognition that they are taking part in a historic event and are prepared for it with all their strength and energies.”

By N. HOROVITZ
It’s been a busy two years for Israel’s top security officials, Lt.-Gen. Aviv Kohavi and new Mossad chief David Barnea, fighting a war they never imagined they’d fight – the coronavirus and overseeing the battle against threats through a time of political and economic uncertainty.

Kohavi began his term in 2019 when Israel’s usual foes – Iran, Hezbollah and Hamas – were top priorities. And throughout his tenure, no matter the surrounding difficulties, Israel’s war-between-wars campaign against Iran and its Lebanese proxy Hezbollah has seen action on a weekly basis.

Over the past year under his command, the IDF has acted aggressively against Israel’s enemies, from north to south. It’s also played a key role in the fight against the coronavirus that has raged across the entire world.

He believes it is of utmost importance to build the military for threats it will face some 30 years in the future and constructed the IDF’s multi-year plan accordingly, with new concepts and methods of warfare that have been adapted to the challenges of the urban battlefield saturated with enemy fire.

But it’s the North that has seen almost daily operational activity against both Iran and its proxies in Syria and Lebanon where Hezbollah reigns.

The past year has seen an increase in the pace and quality of Israeli strikes against Iranian assets in Syria, including kinetic operations as well as an expansion of both covert and clandestine operations.

“Our message is clear,” Kohavi has warned. “We will continue to act as vigorously as necessary against Iranian entrenchment in Syria, and we are fully prepared for any sort of aggression against us.”

Barnea stepped into his role with a bang. On June 23, only three weeks after he had taken office, a facility for assembling advanced centrifuges at Karaj was attacked and seriously damaged by a drone.

Less than two months later, Barnea was holding critical meetings with CIA Director William Burns.

The Post has learned that during the Barnea and Burns meeting, the clandestine chiefs engaged discussed the deep and daring ties between the two organizations and the joint challenges confronting the two countries and their intelligence bodies.

While serving as Mossad director, Barnea has continued with developing and strengthening strategic cooperation with countries and organizations – intelligence and other – across the globe.

Many substantial challenges face the Mossad director, with the primary mission continuing to be to thwart Iran’s nuclear weapons program.

Just as crucially, Barnea has been tasked with working to prevent the establishment of an arsenal of advanced precision surface-to-surface rockets on Israel’s borders.

In his opening speech in June, Barnea alluded to potential assassinations of Iran’s nuclear scientists and attacks on its facilities.

Barnea said “the Iranian [nuclear] program will continue to be met with the full power of the long arm of the Mossad. We are very familiar with the different components of the nuclear program and we are very familiar personally with the officials involved in it and also with the officials who direct them.”

Based on the past, the coming year will be no less exciting, not for Israel or Kohavi and Barnea. 

By YONAH JEREMY BOB and ANNA AHRONHEIM
Nicola Mendelsohn, the British advertising executive named Facebook’s vice president for Europe, the Middle East and Africa, has been a strong force taking the industry by storm.

She has always been led by her Jewish heritage, with strong values instilled in her at a young age. “I grew up in Manchester, England, in an Orthodox home in which my parents taught me about tikkun olam, giving to charity and helping people,” Mendelsohn told The Jerusalem Post. “It’s always been a fundamental part of my Jewish life, of my DNA and who I am. It’s something which motivates me in my day-to-day work and which I hope my husband, Jon, and I have instilled in our four children.”

Mendelsohn had her start in a surprisingly different career path, studying English and drama for her bachelor’s degree. She was later inspired by a good friend to pursue advertising and quickly fell in love. “The creativity, the problem-solving, the innovation, are all skill sets that I have learned and that I continue to draw upon,” she explained. “I’m a believer that your job title doesn’t need to be ‘creative’ to be creative and it can be an integral part of any role. Using past experiences will always bring a new dimension to any role you take on.”

Mendelsohn, the daughter of kosher caterers who – Celia Cyme Banqueting – has not had it easy. In 2016, she was diagnosed with follicular lymphoma, a rare and incurable form of blood cancer. The diagnosis did not stop her, though. She launched the Follicular Lymphoma Foundation (www.theflf.org) and continued her work. “I feel grateful to be blessed with a life that I cherish and that there were not big changes that I wanted to make,” she said on the matter. “Work is a huge part of my identity and it’s something that gives me energy rather than saps it.”

Adi Soffer Teeni has been pushing Israel as the Start-Up Nation for years – and, as Facebook Israel’s general manager, has managed to create platforms for Israelis to push themselves forward in the industry. Teeni didn’t start in the tech industry – in fact, she’d been studying law when she fell in love with tech back in the early 1990s. “As you can imagine, the new exciting phenomenon [of the internet] was just picking up, and I was already fascinated with it,” she told the Post. “At that moment I realized I didn’t want to be a lawyer, as the vision... of how for the first time technology will directly serve people in a way that will change our lives was just so exciting.”

She told of her army service, where she served in the Israel Air Force, and how even then started to show a passion for data. “This was really the first time I understood the power of data in the process of decision making in reality – and I was astonished by the idea of prediction models and the impact they can have on our lives,” she explained. “Little did I know that 30 years later, data and prediction models would be such a huge part of everything we do in the tech industry and of every part of our lives.”

To young women, she says: “Bet on yourself. Have the confidence to set ambitious goals and follow them and not be afraid to take on the roles that feel almost ‘too big.’ Invest in yourself with the support you need while growing a family and managing a career.”

By TAMAR BEERI

NICOLA MENDELSOHN AND ADI SOFFER TEENI

FACEBOOK EXECUTIVES

(COURTESY) (RAMI ZERN GER)
COVID CAN’T STOP LEKET!
LEKET ISRAEL – RESCUING SURPLUS FOOD FOR THOSE IN NEED

“The past year,” says Joseph Gitler, founder and chairman of Leket Israel, the leading food rescue organization in Israel, “has been unexpected in its highs and lows.” Over the past year and a half, Leket, which supplies hundreds of charitable organizations with food to distribute to those in need, has experienced many challenges. The organization’s mission is to lead the safe, effective, and efficient collection and distribution of surplus nutritious food in Israel to those who need it. This vision has been challenged during the pandemic.

Leket Israel operates two main projects, explains Gitler. First, Leket works with the catering industry, hotels, cafeterias, and army bases, ensuring that excess food that remains from events can be utilized for those in need. Second, Leket works with the farming community, packing houses, kibbutzim, and moshavim, rescuing surplus fruits and vegetables and donating them to individuals and organizations.

“What’s happened over the past year,” he says, “is of those two projects, one has skyrocketed, and one has plummeted.” Leket receives the bulk of its food from the IDF, followed by hotels and corporate cafeterias. When the pandemic struck, the IDF changed the way in which they served their meals, and virtually all corporate cafeterias and hotels closed. As a result, the amount of excess food that Leket collected was dramatically reduced. Much of Israel’s tourism industry has vanished, says Gitler, and as a result, “many of the hotels that we work with were shut down. Others are operating at a low capacity. They are cooking less, so there is less excess,” explains Gitler. Leket Israel approached caterers, hotels, and restaurants and purchased meals from them, so that it could continue to provide food for its clients.

On the flip side, he adds, there has been an increase of more than 50% in the amount of produce rescued and delivered from farms. Initially, at the start of the pandemic, farmers were left with crops that they couldn’t sell in their normal course of business. This positive trend in the number of fruits

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SPOTLIGHT ON LEKET ISRAEL
and vegetables received from the farming industry has continued over the past year and a half. Gitler says that Leket exceeded its goal of obtaining 20 million pounds of fruits and vegetables by 10 million in 2020, receiving 30 million pounds. This year, the organization is on a pace to receive $5 million pounds of fruits and vegetables.

Apart from the challenge of obtaining enough food to support those in need, Gitler says that Leket’s senior staff has had to reimagine its entire operation in the past year and a half. Due to the pandemic, the organization had to reduce its number of volunteers by tens of thousands and adjust its logistics, especially during the early months of the crisis when people did not fully understand how the virus was transmitted.

Leket works with more than 300 charitable organizations and normally supplies them with food, which they, in turn, provide to their clients. In the first months of the pandemic, many of these organizations were forced to close, and Leket had to make sure that the food reached recipients. “We took it upon ourselves,” says Gitler, “together with the help of our partners, to make direct deliveries. That changed all our logistics, and that pressure came down on our staff to figure out how to do it in a crisis that no one understood.”

Gitler himself has spent much of the past year and a half, “hunkered down in my house,” as he puts it, making sure that Leket has had the financial resources it needed to maintain its operations throughout the year. “It has been a challenging but rewarding year for our team, from top to bottom,” he says, “and I give them great kudos for their leadership. “We are fortunate that in 2020, people came out of the woodwork and wanted to help. It was a joy to see,” says Gitler.

Leket needs volunteers, says Gitler, and he points out that the organization follows all health and safety standards to ensure the wellbeing of those who are volunteering. Most of the volunteering that is needed is at the Leket warehouse in Gan Haim near Kfar Saba, repackaging fruits and vegetables for distribution for agency partners, and dividing fruits and vegetables into different gradations for allocation to soup kitchens and private individuals.

“We are thankful that the charitable community has come along with us and allowed us in a time – during in a worldwide crisis when we might have had to cut our services – to increase our services tremendously,” says Joseph Gitler. Social service should lead in a time of great crisis.’ What lies ahead for Leket in the New Year of 5782? Speaking of the resurgence of the pandemic after it had seemingly died out in May and June, Gitler says, “Two months ago, I would have had a different answer. Now that we see that COVID has reared its ugly head again, if this means closures, many corporations who were starting to bring employees back and reopen corporate cafeterias will close their physical offices. If this happens, we will have to find new sources of food and funds to take care of our clients.”

Leket is in the midst of its annual holiday fundraising campaign that will enable it to maintain the assistance that it provides. “I beseech readers to give us a tailwind so that we can continue providing maximum output for those in need,” says Gitler. Those interested in volunteering for Leket, as well as those who would like to donate to the organization, can visit the website at leket.org/en.
Wendy Sherman serves as the deputy secretary of state. Her hands have been full since taking office in March, mainly dealing with China and recently with Afghanistan.

Sherman was born in 1949 in Baltimore and worked as a social worker and in nonprofits before shifting to strategic communication in the 1980s.

She first joined State in 1993 as assistant secretary for legislative affairs. In the past three decades, she served in different positions under three administrations, dealing with issues from North Korea to the Dayton Accords. For the Jewish community, she is mostly known for her role negotiating the 2015 Iran nuclear accord.

“For me personally, one of the most difficult parts was the tension with this beloved country and its people,” Sherman said in 2016 about Israel, according to Defense News.

“So having the dissension and the difficulties that we had in this process – and with the American Jewish community of which I consider myself a part – was very, very painful,” she said then.

In March 2021, she addressed prospects of rejoining the JCPOA noting that it was impossible to return to the starting gate because the world had changed in the six years since the deal was signed.

Among the regional shifts she referenced were the Abraham Accords that Donald Trump brokered between Israel and four Arab states.

These normalization deals with Israel were “a good thing,” and they have “changed the geopolitics of the region, and that means that one has to think of this in a different way because there are different elements on the table,” she said.

By OMRI NAHMIAS

RON KLAIN

CHIEF OF STAFF

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The White House’s COVID-19 response is connected by infrastructure reform and a good relationship with Congress and all goes through Ron Klain, the White House chief of staff. Klain is one of Biden’s closest confidants and first worked for him in 1989 when the president was a senator. He served as chief of staff to Biden when he was VP and was appointed as the Ebola response coordinator.

“Ron Klain’s deep, varied experience and capacity to work with people all across the political spectrum is precisely what I need in a White House chief of staff,” Biden said when tapping Klain for the job.

Klain was raised in Indianapolis and attended Georgetown and then Harvard Law School. He was a law clerk for Supreme Court Justice Byron White.

In 1994, he became chief of staff to A-G Janet Reno and later was general counsel to Al Gore’s recount committee following the 2000 election. Kevin Spacey played him in the HBO film Recount.

“I’m a staff person, not prime minister,” he told The New York Times podcast Sway. “I have the benefit of having worked for nine of the people who’ve done this job. I draw something from all of them.”

“Ron Klain has been Joe Biden’s political alter ego for many of the last 40 years, regardless of his position or Biden’s interaction with Jews and Israel,” Steve Rabinowitz, a Democratic Party strategist, told The Jerusalem Post earlier this year when Klain was appointed. “Along the way, Klain has proven himself as friendly to our community and to Israel as we are with his old/new boss,” he added.

By OMRI NAHMIAS
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When Avigdor Liberman was foreign minister and defense minister, then-prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu was clearly still in charge of making the big decisions.

Now that he is finance minister, Liberman’s power is unquestionable. Arguably Israel’s strongest finance minister since Netanyahu left the post 16 years ago, Liberman has been given the right to personally handle Israel’s finances by Prime Minister Naftali Bennett.

Other finance ministers were limited by the oversight of an independent chairman of the Knesset Finance Committee and meddling deputy ministers. Liberman has his underlings in Yisrael Beytenu, MK Alex Kushnir and Hamed Amer, as the committee chairman and a minister inside the Finance Ministry.

Liberman earned that power by taking the first steps to bring Netanyahu down. His refusal to join a Netanyahu-led coalition after the April 2019 election led to the three elections that followed, and his agreement to enter a coalition with Ra’am (United Arab List) head Mansour Abbas ended the political crisis.

The Jerusalem Post once asked Liberman whom he hated more: Arabs, haredim (ultra-Orthodox) or Netanyahu. He gave an ambiguous response at the time, but since then, the answer has become clear.

He deposed Netanyahu and blocked Shas and United Torah Judaism from joining the current government. But in a recent interview with Maariv journalist Ben Caspit, Liberman, who built a career out of fighting Arab politicians, praised Abbas and justified investing an unprecedented amount in the Arab sector in the 2021-2022 state budget.

Liberman has said that his job as finance minister is to do what is best for the economy, not to make friends. And he is taking that commitment seriously.

The budget he has put forth is one of the most ambitious Israel has seen, with reforms touching on most aspects of life. Most of the reforms he is looking to push through are in the fields of agriculture, regulation and bureaucracy, housing, employment, transportation and other matters, which are fixes that the OECD and local economists have been recommending for years or even decades.

But he will have to do battle with many interest groups to push them through by the November 4 deadline when elections would be automatically initiated if the budget is not yet passed into law. Lobbies of farmers, IDF soldiers and the handicapped have already started protesting. The haredim will fight reforms about kosher supervision that are in Liberman’s Economic Arrangements bill, the omnibus legislation that accompanies the budget.

Meanwhile, Liberman has tried to stay above the fray on other issues. He attempted to stay away from everything related to COVID-19, like the plague that it is. He was criticized for sending Amer to the Ministerial Committee on the Coronavirus, but he continued keeping his distance.

Liberman will make every effort to keep the government going for its entire term that ends in November 2025, which would require passing another budget in two years.

Whenever the next election happens, if Netanyahu is not there, Liberman will be able to say that he is the only candidate who has held the defense, foreign affairs and finance portfolios and stake a claim for the premiership.

Or Liberman, who is 63, could retire from politics and earn a windfall in the private sector, taking advantage of the connections and experience he earned in his successful career in politics.

By GIL HOFFMAN and ZEV STUB
Supreme Court President Esther Hayut knew she was walking into one of the most stressful and controversial jobs in the country when she took over in 2017, but no one could ever have imagined the intensity of attacks she has had to fend off.

With around four years under her belt as the chief and another two plus years to go, she’s on track to be the most influential chief justice since Aharon Barak.

Hayut will eventually serve longer than predecessors Miriam Naor and Asher Grunis combined and the historic rulings during her term overshadow even the major decisions that came down during Dorit Beinisch’s era.

For some years, less influential politicians had expressed their anger at judicial decisions by threatening to use a D-9 (armored bulldozer) to demolish the court.

But it was only with two years of brutal election campaigning as well as the era of former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu under indictment and turning his full fury on the courts along with Amir Ohana, his former justice minister, that the judiciary faced the real potential of being taken apart.

With the government of Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid taking power in mid-June and Gideon Sa’ar becoming justice minister, Hayut could finally give off a sigh of relief.

That sigh of relief could also be seen in delayed rulings that were rushed out in droves.

In recent months, Hayut and the High Court endorsed the Jewish Nation State Law, angering many on the political Left, as well as endorsing the alternate prime minister rotation related basic laws and a basic law extending the time to pass the budget as constitutional.

This was after 17 months of also holding that nearly all coronavirus emergency laws, including Shin Bet (Israel Security Agency) surveillance of infected persons was constitutional (the court very belatedly rolled back the surveillance, but only once the volume of infections had dropped dramatically.)

On the flip side, the High Court infuriated the political Right by even hearing some of the above basic law cases which the Right believes the court lacks jurisdiction to even debate.

Moreover, the High Court angered the Right with limits on Netanyahu’s involvement in law enforcement appointments (while he was still prime minister) ordering the appointment of a police chief and justice minister (when Netanyahu was stalling his coalition partner Benny Gantz’s picks).

In addition, the High Court endorsed non-Orthodox conversions, granted equal financial rights to a wife who had not been faithful to her husband – which overturned the Rabbinic High Court on the issue – and struck down the law that exempted the haredi sector from IDF service, setting a deadline of January 6, 2022 for the state to pass a new law or begin a universal draft.

Like her predecessor, Miriam Naor, she is categorized by many as a moderate activist. She is ready to strike down Knesset laws and state policies in particular circumstances, but tries to avoid wading too deeply into issues with larger political implications.

Despite angering the Right and the haredi political parties, some of the above decision and her leading an 11-0 vote in May 2020 to green-light Netanyahu to form a new government despite being indicted will always also mar her name on the Left.

By YONAH JEREMY BOB
“Every day is a new beginning of a new year,” says Yossi Dahan, head of the Eldan Group, Israel’s leading auto leasing and rental car conglomerate, which he co-founded 54 years ago in 1967. Sitting comfortably in his spacious office at company headquarters in Tel Aviv, wearing rimless glasses and a friendly, crinkly smile, Dahan’s optimism reflects his personal experiences and successes in life.

Yossi Dahan was born in Morocco in 1941. To gain a greater understanding of his family roots, Dahan hands me a colorful book in Hebrew, entitled ‘Poems of the Heart – Stories of Moroccan emigres in songs and rhymes,’ which features poems describing the lives of Moroccans who moved to Israel, along with photos of families from Morocco and Israel. The book contains a page describing Yossi Dahan and his family. Dahan’s father, a rabbi, was born in Salé, in northwest Morocco, near the capital city of Rabat. Tragically, he died when Yossi was four years old. Photos of Yossi appear in the book – as a baby with his father, in school in Morocco and in Israel, with his mother and family, and visiting his father’s grave in Morocco, which he renovated.

In February 1955, Yossi made aliya alone at the age of fourteen with Aliyat Hanoar, arriving at the dormitory of the Neve Amiel school near Sdeh Yaakov in the Jezreel Valley. “We worked half a day and studied the other half of the day in the agricultural moshav,” he recalls. Dahan studied there for two years, then went to Kibbutz Saad before attending the technical school of the Ordnance Corps (Heyl Himush). He then entered the IDF, became an officer, and was discharged from the army in August 1967, shortly after the Six-Day War.

Dahan, who lived in Ashkelon (he now lives in Tel Aviv), then embarked on his business career. He had trained both in insurance and in real estate but instead decided to form a car rental company with a fellow Moroccan emigre, whose last name was Elbaz. Eldan, a contraction of the founders’ names – Elbaz and Dahan – was born. Recalling his entry into the car rental business, Dahan says, “When I was discharged from the army in 1967 and went into the car rental business, everyone said I was making a mistake.” He was starting a new business shortly after a major recession in Israel, and few felt that he would succeed. In addition, Dahan had been very successful in the IDF,
and he says with a smile, “In Israel of 1967, if you were an officer, you were considered second only to God.” Dahan decided to try out the car rental business for six months and told himself that he could always return to his IDF job if the company didn’t succeed. “At first, I bought four Contessas (a Japanese car that was assembled in Israel),” he recalls. Then we sold all four, and I purchased eight more.” In the wake of the Six-Day War, the country grew rapidly, and throngs of tourists began to arrive. Eldan flourished. “The country grew, and tourism grew. The path proved itself, and the rest is history,” he says. In 1980, Eldan opened additional branches, including one in Tel Aviv, and in 1986, the company opened an office at Ben Gurion Airport. Today, the company operates 24 branches throughout the country and is active in many different fields, including car rental in Israel, operational leasing, private leasing, car rental abroad, car sales, insurance, hotels and vehicle transportation, and other holdings.

Yossi Dahan’s two sons run the company on a day-to-day basis, but he still comes to his office each day, spending four or five hours daily at the company headquarters. Yossi does not want to stop working. “When you succeed in something,” he says, “you want to succeed even more. If you stop, then what will you do the next week?” he asks rhetorically. “I like what I do, I see the fruits of my labor, and I can help others.”

In late July, Dahan demonstrated his generosity and willingness to help with a substantial NIS 21 million gift to Barzilai Hospital in Ashkelon that will be used to complete the hospital’s cardiology building. “When you can do something like this,” he says, “it gives you the satisfaction that you have accomplished something significant in life.”

Today, most of Eldan’s car business is in leasing, and Dahan says that the company leases approximately 25,000 vehicles. Interestingly, he says that while fewer tourists arrived during the pandemic, resulting in fewer rentals, more Israelis purchased cars through Eldan’s car sales because people preferred to travel in their own vehicles rather than risk becoming infected by utilizing crowded public transportation.

The biggest issue confronting the car leasing and rental business, says Dahan, is the future of electric cars. There is a great deal of uncertainty as to how the secondary car market will accept electric vehicles. Dahan notes that there are a number of lesser-known brands in the electric car market and predicts that there will be greater acceptance and competition when more of the major brands enter the market. He says that usage of electric cars for short-term rentals will require a greater number of charging stations throughout the country. “It will take time,” he adds.

Eldan, says Dahan, is working on additional strategies for further company growth, but he notes that it is difficult to plan these days in the shadow of the corona pandemic. “What seems promising today may not turn out to be successful in the future,” he says. “Corona has caused a great deal of uncertainty, and people are afraid to make investments, especially in older, more established industries.”

What are Dahan’s personal expectations for the coming year? Dahan, who is eighty years old and has nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, chuckles and says, “I no longer buy green bananas. When you are young, you take good health for granted. My hopes and expectations are for good health, and to enjoy what God allows us to do. I pray that our children remain healthy and fulfill their dreams, and I pray that the country will continue to do well, offering a quality of life for everyone.”

By ALAN ROSENBAUM
JAN KOUM

BEHIND WHATSAPP

JAN KOUm

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Jan Koum is your typical rags-to-riches success story, and considering that he co-founded Israel’s most popular media application, that title does not go undeserving.

Koum was the mind behind WhatsApp, the messenger application that, for over a decade, has taken the world by storm. While Koum once stood in line for food stamps, he is now worth $10.8 billion. Israelis in particular find WhatsApp to be central to their lives.

The Ukrainian billionaire began his life outside of Kyiv and left for California amid a troubling sociopolitical state in the region, as well as rising antisemitism.

Ironically, he was initially rejected from working for Facebook. Once Apple launched the App Store, he thought of WhatsApp, but it was far different from what it is today: then it was simply a platform of user statuses.

A few users downloaded the initial version and used it to share statuses, which would be sent to their contacts. This developed into a form of communication, as people started to chat over statuses in a “reply” option. Soon it was an instant messaging platform taking the world by storm.

He sold the platform, which now houses over 2 billion users, to Facebook for $22 billion in cash and stock in 2014.

He founded the Koum Family Foundation, which works primarily as a philanthropic venture.

According to Jewish Insider, the foundation donated over $19 million to Jewish causes in 2018 alone.

He has voiced opposition to the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement in the past, commenting on a Facebook post by StandWithUs in 2015 which pointed out apparent hypocrisy of BDS supporters, calling the post “priceless.”

By TAMAR BEERI

There is no question that the Abraham Accords have changed the Middle East. Peace between Israel, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco has led to greater stability, not only for the Jewish state but for the entire region.

These four men, some of the key architects behind the historic peace deals, are no longer in government but they are still looking to make deals — this time in finance.

It is an interesting, but not surprising move.

The interplay between being a diplomat and an investor or being active in trade and commerce is natural. The same skills it takes to help smooth relationships between countries naturally translate to other walks of life. In addition, Jewish and Zionist history is replete with examples of those who were successful in both worlds, from Moses Montefiore to Isi Leibler, the Australian Jewish activist and businessman who passed away this year.

Yossi Cohen, who recently stepped down as head of the Mossad, was tapped by Softbank, the massive Japanese conglomerate holding company to lead their investment

DAVID FRIEDMAN, YOSSI COHEN, STEVE MNUCHIN AND JARED KUSHNER

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DIPLOMATS TO INVESTORS
“One of the reasons for the choice of Cohen is the fact that he is a well-known and popular figure in Israel, even though he does not have a background in investment,” Globes noted. “Cohen has the ability to connect to Israeli entrepreneurs and technology and to open doors for them in any company, government or public authority in any territory.”

Cohen was born in Jerusalem in 1961 and served in the paratroopers before studying in London and joining the Mossad. Appointed National Security Advisor to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, he became head of Mossad in 2016. Under Cohen, Mossad was credited with numerous important operations designed to intercept Iran’s nuclear activities.

His name has been floated as a possible successor by Netanyahu in 2021 as the prime minister confronted political infighting and another election. Instead of rushing into politics, Cohen has chosen a different path, at least temporarily.

“SoftBank has pioneered a new approach to technology investing and created the world’s largest ecosystem of emerging technology champions,” Cohen said at the time of the announcement of his role. “Israel’s advanced technology and entrepreneurial culture make it a natural fit for SoftBank’s investment vision, and I look forward to helping fast-moving companies scale in the region and globally.”

Steven Mnuchin, the secretary of treasury under President Donald Trump, and David Friedman, the former US ambassador to Israel, recently opened an office in Tel Aviv for a new investment fund called Liberty Strategic.

“We’re opening an office here because of the extraordinary technology, especially in cybersecurity and fintech, which are major areas of interest for us,” Mnuchin said a few months ago, noting that his experience overseeing cybersecurity for the entire financial services industry of the US, as well as the IRS, is relevant for the new venture.

“We hope to be considered one of the best strategic partners in these areas,” he said, adding that in Israel, “there is a lot of great technology and we think we can grow businesses.”

Mnuchin was born in New York in 1962 and went to Yale, before working for Goldman Sachs, where his father had also worked. He left Goldman in 2002 and became an investor, playing a key role in companies such as OneWest before being tapped by Trump to lead the Treasury Department. He became one of several key former Goldman executives to go to the helm of America’s key government financial department.

Mnuchin and his new investment firm may open more offices in the region in countries that are part of the Abraham Accords.

Friedman, who was born in 1958 and studied at Columbia before becoming a bankruptcy attorney, had worked with Trump before he became president. He said later of the Abraham Accords that the vision to put the peace deals together was there from the beginning, and the goal was to build trust among the partners. “No one saw it coming,” he said in a recent interview.

Friedman met with the foreign ministers of both Bahrain and the United Arab Emirates in mid-June, and said they both felt that the peace agreements, despite the difficulties faced during the recent war in Gaza, had passed the test with flying colors. He said that leading Mnuchin’s investment office in Israel is the rare job that combines business with working for a cause in which he strongly believes.

“I love this country, and the last four years have been just a blessing to be here, and I want to participate in the further growth of Israel,” said Friedman. “This is the growth of Israel. This is part of what makes the country great: it is a job creator, a growth creator, and an area about Israel that the world admires.”

Meanwhile Jared Kushner, son-in-law of Trump and a key architect of the Abraham Accords, is also going into the investment world.

Born in 1981 to a real estate developer, Kushner became integral to the business in the 2000s, expanding it and also purchasing the New York Observer. He played a key role in Trump’s campaign as a problem solver, and later served as senior advisor to the president, handling the most sensitive and important issues including peace in the Middle East.

Kushner is not starting a Miami-based investment firm called Affinity Partners. Although there is only sparse information on this firm, the decision to go into the investment world is part of the larger pattern of diplomats-turned-investors.

Kushner, for instance, was a key administration contact for business leaders and helped negotiate the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement, a free trade agreement between the three North American countries, as well as the OPEC+ oil deal that led to the largest cut in oil production in history.

These men will be interesting to follow in the years to come. Not only are they becoming influential business players in Israel’s tech market, some of them are still holding on to political ambitions.

By SETH J. FRANTZMAN
The world of medicine is constantly searching for technologies and solutions to improve and expand services for the benefit of patients. In order to leverage new technologies and provide advanced, effective quality services for the residents living in the south of Israel, Soroka University Medical Center is establishing an innovation center that will promote the creation and development of unique solutions in the world of healthcare. “We have reached a point where the combination of computer systems, diverse information sources together with clinical, nursing, and rehabilitative knowledge and experience create a tremendous opportunity to establish groundbreaking projects in the world of healthcare. At Soroka, we are leveraging the assets that have accumulated over decades and are leading three main tracks to encourage entrepreneurship. The first is collaboration with external parties. The second is internal entrepreneurship, and the third is promoting joint research and building ventures based on applied research. These three tracks are operating in parallel to seed and nurture solutions for the benefit of improving service and public health,” said Yarden Nevo, Associate Director-General of the medical center.

The Innovation Center - “City Square” where clinical excellence, applied research and entrepreneurial spirit meet

The Innovation Center will be located in the heart of the hospital, in a unique building covering 600 square meters that will be adapted for the needs of these activities. The building is in its advanced architectural stages and will be completed during the first half of 2022. The new complex will enable cross-pollination of ideas between the various stakeholders, including hospital staff, researchers from academia, students from multiple clinical and technological disciplines, and external partners such as start-ups and technology companies. In addition, the center will seek collaboration with government, social, and environmental entities who will work together on integrated projects to develop solutions for a better medical future. The Innovation Center will focus on a number of key areas, including personalized medicine, cyber for health systems,
improving patient experience and the human-machine interface, artificial intelligence, data-driven solutions, remote/telemedicine, and digital health.

Providing external companies quick and convenient access to services

The hospital is opening its doors to joint research activities with start-up companies and will provide a wide range of value-added services such as access to experts based on knowledge and experience accumulated at the hospital to validate ideas and provide advice to companies at various stages. Soroka is the second-largest hospital in Israel, operating the most-active delivery rooms (17,000 births per year), dealing with the highest number of referrals in Israel to emergency rooms (250,000 per year), and operating 14 internal laboratories in which approximately 4,000,000 samples are received per year, providing services to a population of over one million people. Soroka is unique in this respect because it serves as the main hospital for the entire population in the area. The data it possesses contains all the tests and medical processes that a person undergoes from birth and throughout all stages of life. As part of the research activities, a team of data scientists enables speedy access to the data of any dedicated target audience from the vast databases, thus enabling efficient work in development processes.

Companies that work together with the hospital will enjoy consulting services from entities in the business, legal and financial fields and receive assistance in raising venture capital. The center will provide them with access to an advanced workspace that includes meeting rooms, lounge areas, and tools for team activities. "It is important to note that we are open to collaborations with companies at various stages, from beginning companies that can be assisted by clinical advice and access to databases for building solutions, through companies that have already developed their solution and are interested in validating and collecting feedback from users or conducting clinical trials and even companies who are in commercial stages. We are aware of the challenges involved in collaborating with hospitals and therefore accompany the processes required to obtain regulatory and other approvals and enable fast-paced work. Our role as a leading center for medical services and a source of knowledge and clinical excellence is to remove barriers and simplify processes in order to enable the hospital to become the natural place where start-up companies in the field of health are established," adds Yarden Nevo.

Innovation through collaborations with external parties

The hospital is an integral part of the social, economic, and community fabric of the southern region. Most of our employees are residents of the area, and we see great importance in the involvement of regional factors in the activities of the Innovation Center. From this point of view, the consulting services in the center will be provided by selected companies located in the southern region. If possible, students born and raised in the south will be involved in setting up new ventures. "We want to increase the number of ventures that start in the south, existing as the number of people who think, talk and lead entrepreneurship processes. The hospital is a key partner in regional processes for promoting innovation and initiatives led by the Beersheva Municipality. For example, Soroka was chosen to lead the digital health sector within the health district’s innovation district that experiences the challenges on a daily basis and is in the best place to offer solutions. Some of the processes that the Innovation Center will promote will include training in entrepreneurship for the various teams, transferring knowledge on topics such as tools for evaluating new ideas, market and competitors’ analysis, design thinking, sources of financing ventures, and more. The framework will allow hospital staff to advance ideas, examine business viability and assess the potential for setting up ventures. The Innovation Center will provide the supportive envelope and accompany the teams in their journey and early stages of project inception."

From advanced applied research to groundbreaking ventures

"Soroka is a leading university medical center in various research fields and conducts hundreds of studies a year. The fact that the hospital is integrated within Ben-Gurion University creates fertile ground for advancing research areas involving multidisciplinary teams from the hospital and the academic framework. Recently, as part of this collaboration, an agreement was signed between the technology transfer office at the university and the hospital to promote activities in the field of bio convergence. This field is gaining momentum and includes combining biology with tools and engineering methods from other disciplines such as electronics, artificial intelligence, computational biology, physics, materials science and more," says Professor Victor Novack, director of Soroka Clinical Research Center and director of the Department of Internal Medicine H in Soroka. The hospital will examine the possibility of establishing ventures based on applied research, conduct market analyses, and explore the economic feasibility of building products, services, and technologies for the benefit of public health. The intention is to develop applied research by setting up a team that will build a prototype, map the market from a business perspective, and raise capital in the free market. For many years, there have been those who foresaw the potential of the Negev, "In the Negev, the people of Israel and its state will be tested – only with a collaborative effort can we accomplish the mission of settling the desert, and making it bloom. This effort will determine the fate of the State of Israel and the status of our people in the history of humanity (Ben Gurion 1955)." We are here to contribute, pull our weight and support the processes that will help in turning the vision into reality.

By XXXXXXX
After 48 Second-Ladies, the Biden-Harris administration made history in January, when Kamala Harris became the first female vice president, meaning that for the first time, America also had a second gentleman - Douglas Emhoff. Born in 1964 in Brooklyn, Emhoff is also the first Jewish spouse of any vice president.

He made his name as a successful litigator, working in several firms since the 1990s. After Biden and Harris won the 2020 presidential campaign, he left his position as a partner at DLA Piper to avoid conflict of interests.

Since becoming the second gentleman, Emhoff’s main mission has been to encourage Americans to get the COVID vaccine. From Kansas to Alabama, and Illinois to Tennessee, he has toured the country repeating: “We need to do better.”

“We’re on a path to a more normal life but we are not there yet,” he said in Memphis recently.

In his first interview, with NBC in June, he said he also hoped to continue to use his position to speak out against antisemitism.

“I’m going to keep doing what I’ve been doing, which is advocate on these issues,” he told NBC. “Kamala Harris has had a long history with the Jewish community, not just because she married me. So this isn’t just me. It’s the entire administration.”

By OMRI NAHMIAS

Judaism has a long tradition of helping those in need. Ariel Zwang heads the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC), the Jewish humanitarian organization.

Over a century old, the JDC is operational in over 70 countries, providing aid and community support to Jews and working to “develop innovative solutions to Israel’s most complex social challenges.”

Zwang’s position in Jewish leadership shines not only in humanitarian aid. She hails from a family of educators and rabbis and is the current vice president of Congregation B’nei Jeshurun in Manhattan.

Zwang wasn’t new to the CEO position either. She spent 12 years leading American social service agency Safe Horizon. Under her leadership, the company doubled its size. 250,000 people annually were impacted by Safe Horizon’s programs.

The JDC announced in October 2020 that Zwang would be taking up the position – the first woman to do so in the organization’s history. She started as CEO on January 2, 2021.

“I’ve spent my career working on behalf of those who don’t have all the basics that every human being deserves. And I have also lived my life knowing that we Jews are all responsible for each other, no matter the circumstances,” Zwang said at the time.

After a devastating earthquake struck Haiti on August 14, killing over 2,000 people, the JDC announced it would work with a local vendor to supply medical equipment to a hospital affected by the disaster.

“We are heartbroken over the tragic loss of life in Haiti and send our prayers to a people and nation in mourning yet again,” JDC CEO Ariel Zwang said in a statement. “As we have done so many times in the past, we’ll be there to offer care, healing, and opportunities to empower Haitians to build back better and safer.”

By SARAH BEN-NUN

THE WORLD’S MOST INFLUENTIAL JEWS

DOUGLAS EMHOFF

THE VP’S HUSBAND

ARIEL ZWANG

HUMANITARIAN
By ALAN ROSENBAUM

DR. SHLOMI CODISH
LEADING SOROKA UNIVERSITY MEDICAL CENTER, PART OF CLALIT HEALTH SERVICES

Leading a hospital under normal circumstances is challenging because of the resources that are lacking in the country’s health system,” says Dr. Shlomi Codish, director-general of Soroka University Medical Center in Beersheva. “Nowadays, during corona, it requires one’s attention 24/7, not just in treating patients, but in keeping with the hospital staff and their well-being, in order to provide the best treatment for the citizens of the Negev.”

Dr. Codish, a graduate of Ben-Gurion University’s Faculty of Health Sciences, was appointed director-general in 2018. He holds a master’s degree in public health from BGU and is a specialist in internal medicine.

Soroka University Medical Center, explains Dr. Codish, is unique among Israeli hospitals. It is the second-largest hospital in Israel and the only one in the Negev, which covers 60% of Israel’s landmass. With its 1,170 beds, Soroka provides medical services to over one million residents of the Negev. In addition, he notes, the hospital has unusual strategic importance due to its proximity to Gaza. “We are the only medical center that can provide a comprehensive response in any security event involving Gaza,” says Dr. Codish.

In this respect, Soroka was uniquely positioned to handle the pandemic. “We have many emergency protocols and a culture that can adapt to emergency situations,” says Dr. Codish. “We can get up to speed quickly in these circumstances.” Dr. Codish explains that Soroka treated the pandemic emergency in the same way that it has been trained to handle all unusual events, opening a command center, and using its emergency protocols that were already in place.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Dr. Codish notes, Soroka has managed to have most mildly ill corona patients treated through the community clinics, primarily with Clalit health care clinics, instead of hospitalizing them. Patients seriously ill with corona have been treated in the hospital itself.

Critically ill corona patients at Soroka are treated in a separate intensive care unit (ICU) dedicated to corona patients, rather than being placed in internal medicine wards, says Dr. Codish. “They receive the same treatment as anyone who needs to be in the ICU. We want everyone to have the best chance of survival.”

Dr. Codish says that it is crucial to support hospital staff during the pandemic. “This week,” says Dr. Codish, “we opened a new corona ward maintained by nurses from the department of surgery.” He explains that this is a team effort, and every division in the hospital is stepping up, taking part in this national mission. In addition, he notes, “If we get to an extreme situation, everyone in the hospital will need to treat corona patients.”

As head of Soroka, Dr. Codish recognizes that he has a visible and public form of responsibility. “What we say publicly has significance, and we need to speak responsibly. We need to encourage people and set a personal example. In a period where public trust in and compliance with governmental instructions is critical, our words and actions have meaning. Our personal choices about attending mass events, for example, weddings or soccer matches, need to reflect this.”

Dr. Codish says that it is impossible to predict the effects of the coronavirus in Israel and the world in the coming year. Nevertheless, he says it is clear that the Israeli health system must change. “The current situation is not healthy, even in normal times. We are in a situation where the health system has an annual shortfall of between NIS 3 and 5 billion.” The current circumstances put constant pressure on medical teams.

In his view, the country must vastly increase the amount of medical personnel in the system and plan for the next 15 years. “Where will the next generation of doctors and nurses come from? Who will replace those who came from the Former Soviet Union in the 1990s? These issues were true before corona and are even more pressing now.”

Looking beyond corona, Dr. Codish emphasizes the importance of innovation and the unique role that Soroka can play. “One of the most important elements of medicine today,” says Dr. Codish, is “research and innovation.” Soroka University Medical Center is uniquely qualified in this area, he explains. Ben Gurion University, a major research institution, is nearby. A hi-tech park is just 800 meters away from the hospital, and the first innovation district in Israel, located in Beersheva, with Soroka being a key partner of its establishment, encourages innovation and development. “Research and innovation are a strategic area for the hospital, and we have to progress as quickly as possible. The hi-tech world is going towards medicine, digital health, and biopharma. We want to be at the forefront of these developments. This can be a game-changer, not just for us, but for the entire country, the health system, and for the world.”

Ultimately, says Dr. Codish, the most essential component of Soroka is its staff. “Having the responsibility of maintaining the health of one million Israeli residents in over 60% of the country’s landmass is a tremendous responsibility. We have 5,000 people on our staff, and each morning when they get up, they ask themselves, ‘How can we help the residents of the Negev today.’ This is our greatest asset, and my greatest responsibility is to preserve this spirit.”

By ALAN ROSENBAUM
To Israelis and many Jewish organizations around the globe, the name Lynn Schusterman is synonymous with philanthropic endeavors aimed at improving quality of life, encouraging leadership, strengthening Jewish identity, supporting Jewish innovators and expanding opportunities for service learning and promoting inclusivity.

She and her late husband Charles created the Charles and Lynn Schusterman Family Foundation in 1987. Of the millions of dollars given away by the foundation, 75% went to Jewish causes and 25% to their home state of Oklahoma. In 2020, the Schusterman family gave $400 million across its charitable grant-making, including $150 million in COVID relief efforts in the US and Israel.

The Schustermans have devoted substantial resources to ensuring a strong US-Israel relationship and to strengthening Israel as a secure homeland for the Jewish people and a thriving democracy.

They are the lead funders to support Israel and combat BDS on college campuses and are at the forefront of welfare work for Israel through long standing support for child and family safety, with particular focus on the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

The foundation is currently chaired by the couple’s daughter Stacy H. Schusterman, a billionaire in her own right. Her late father, who died in 2000, was the founder and owner of Samson Resources, which over time became one of the largest oil and gas exploration and production companies in the United States. After spending a year in Israel in the early 1980s, Stacy, one of three siblings, returned to the US, graduated from Yale, and subsequently earned an MBA from the University of Texas.

She then began working in the family business, serving as its CEO and then selling it for $7.2 billion. Following the sale, she founded Samson Energy’s deep-water drilling company.

Stacy serves as president of the Bezalel Foundation, a non-profit organization which endows Jewish causes, and also sits on the board of trustees of AIPAC. In addition, she is a member of the international board of governors of Hillel and with her husband Steven H. Dow, supports the JDC.

“Our Jewish values have always been – and will always be – at the core of our family’s philanthropy: a commitment to the pursuit of justice (tzedek), repairing the world (tikkun olam) and treating all people with dignity and civility (derekh eretz),” Stacy wrote on the foundation’s website.

By GREER FAY CASHMAN
Long before he became a well-known name in the Western world, a resident of the UK and an Israeli citizen, in May 2018, mega philanthropist Roman Abramovich, who is believed to be one of the most affluent people in Israel, was among the most influential Jews in the former Soviet Union.

In 1999, Abramovich who was then 33 years old, was elected governor of the Russian province of Chukotka, and was subsequently elected for a second term, serving until 2008. Among the Russians who became billionaires after the fall of the Iron Curtain, Forbes has ranked Abramovich as the 11th wealthiest Russian, but has also noted that he has donated more money than any of his compatriots to a variety of causes in Russia, Britain, the US, Portugal and Israel, as well as in other countries.

Globally, he is known as the owner of the Premier League Chelsea Football Club, which he has used to motivate, educate and inspire fans to fight hate racism.

Abramovich leads and funds a unique and comprehensive global campaign, under the banner ‘Say No to Antisemitism,’ dedicated to raising awareness of the evils of antisemitism from an educational perspective. The club works with leading figures and authorities around the world to help spread the message.

As part of this effort, Chelsea players, management, staff and fans have personally met with Holocaust survivors, joined the March of the Living, and called to proactively tackle antisemitism. The campaign involves partners like the World Jewish Congress, ADL, the Holocaust Educational Trust, the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, the Jewish Museum, the Imperial War Museum and the Royal Air Force.

The Chelsea Foundation recently launched a new program in partnership with the Peres Center for Peace and Innovation and the Israeli Football Association, introducing football sessions for Arab and Jewish children across Israel, a partnership that was developed following Chelsea Women’s visit to Israel in 2019, during which the team took part in football and education workshops with Arab and Jewish girls, benefitting 1000 children in the first year alone.

In terms of both investments and philanthropy, Abramovich is a strong believer in diversity.

A generous donation that he made to Keren Kayemet LeIsrael-Jewish National Fund (KKL-JNF) for a comprehensive forest rehabilitation program in the southern Negev desert, helps to combat the area’s rising desertification and promotes increasing nature tourism to the area. Abramovich, who is of Jewish Lithuanian descent, and is very sensitive to Holocaust-related issues, decided to establish a forest of some 25,000 new and rehabilitated trees, in memory of Lithuania’s Jews who perished in the Holocaust, plus a virtual memorial and tribute to Lithuanian Jewry (Seed a Memory) enabling people from all over the world to commemorate their ancestors’ personal stories by naming a tree and including their name in the memorial.

An ardent, long-time supporter of Jewish culture around the world and an avid fan of modern art, Abramovich continuously contributes to Jewish art and culture initiatives, such as the Jewish Museum in Moscow and the M.ART contemporary culture festival in Tel Aviv. He also has been recognized by the Forum for Jewish Culture and Religion for his contribution of more than $500 million to Jewish causes in Israel, Russia and elsewhere over the past 20 years.

In 2015, Abramovich donated approximately $30m., to Tel Aviv University to establish an innovative Center for Nanoscience and Nanotechnology, which aspires to become one of the leading facilities in the Middle East.

Still under construction, but nearing completion, it will bear his name.

Among Abramovich’s other beneficiaries is the Sheba Medical Center at Tel Hashomer to which he has donated in excess of $60m. for various advanced medicine ventures. These include the establishment of a new nuclear medicine center spanning 2,000 sq.m., the Sheba Cancer and Cancer Research centers, the Pediatric Middle East Congenital Heart Center and the Sheba Heart Center.

Recently, due to the alarming increase in COVID-19 cases in Israel, Abramovich gave Sheba another donation for a new subterranean Intensive Care Unit, spanning 5,400 sq.m., to provide Israel with vital crisis response in times of national emergencies.

Alongside his philanthropic activity, Abramovich has invested some $120m. in 20 Israeli start-ups ranging from medicine and renewable energy, to social media.

By GREER FAY CASHMAN
Houda Nonoo is proud of the era of peace in wake of the Abraham Accords. A former ambassador to the United States from Bahrain, she spoke to The Jerusalem Post from Manama one day before the Association of Gulf Jewish Communities (AGJC) was to hold its first Shabbat dinner in Bahrain.

“I’m doing a taste test for the Challah. We have 30 people joining us - diplomats, members of the Jewish communities throughout the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council), as well as Bahraini & Emirati Muslims. We are bringing people together,” she said.

Nonoo’s family came to Bahrain from Iraq in the 1880s and she is from the second generation born in the Gulf kingdom. The community at its highest point had 1,500 people; now the community has about 50 people, and Nonoo is related to all of them from either her mother’s or father’s side, she told the Post. Nonoo’s role in the Foreign Ministry and her role now with the AGJC and other organizations is important for Bahrain and as a symbol of the new peace and coexistence opportunities that are forming in the region.

“When our leaders signed the Abraham Accords, they wanted to create a new Middle East based on peace and prosperity for all. When I traveled with the foreign minister for the signing of the Accords he said this is a warm peace, embraced by leaders and their people,” she said.

Bahrain announced that it would be establishing relations with Israel on September 11, 2020 and signed the Accords on the White House lawn on September 15th, just a few days later. “Since then, we’ve seen so many fruits from the Accords on the business side; Bahrain’s Electricity and Water Authority (EWA) signed a deal with Mekorot to share water knowledge and technologies, including desalination facilities, automated control systems for water facilities and technological upgrades,” she noted. In addition the National Bank of Bahrain signed memorandums of understanding (MOUs) with Israel’s two largest banks – Bank Hapoalim and Bank Leumi. Sheba Medical Center at Tel Hashomer and Salmaniya Medical Complex in Manama are cooperating on a number of initiatives, including exchange programs, Nonoo noted. “We are still at the beginning of this relationship but we have done so much in a year. It has been baby steps so far but the future is bright.”

Nonoo was a founding member of the Bahrain Human Rights Society in 2004 where she focused on women’s rights and children’s rights and domestic workers. “When I became the secretary-general [of the organization], it propelled me to the national stage because we were doing a lot of good things for people. I was appointed in 2006 by His Majesty to the Shura Council which is the Upper House of Parliament where I served on economic and financial committees.”

She recalled the phone call on April 24, 2008 at 3:18 pm. The foreign minister said that “His Majesty was appointing me Bahrain’s ambassador to the US. It was such an honor to be given that position and serve my country. I arrived in July 2008 and was there for 5-and-a-half years. I was also a non-resident ambassador in Mexico, Brazil, Canada and Argentina.”

Nonoo became the first Jewish female ambassador from Bahrain, and the first Jewish woman from any of the Arab or Muslim states to be an ambassador to Washington. She always says that despite this historic first, “I’m Bahraini first.”

Nonoo is active on social media. She tweets “Shabbat Shalom” every Friday and showcases new places and photos from Bahrain.

Her first trip to Israel was last November with the Bahraini foreign minister’s delegation. “I never thought in my life I would go to Israel and my time there was absolutely amazing. I went back a second time within a week. I’m waiting for my third trip and hope to go back as soon as COVID travel restrictions ease up,” she said.

Jewish life in Bahrain is also growing. “We began refurbishing our synagogue in February 2020, before the Abraham Accords,” she mentioned. With the renovation completed in 2021 the synagogue is now ready for use. On Saturday August 21 the synagogue saw a reading for the first time from the Torah that Jared Kushner commissioned as a gift to His Majesty King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa. “It is very meaningful for us to use this Torah for the first time this weekend as the first anniversary of the Abraham Accords approaches because the Accords were signed with the goal of creating a better life for the youth in our region,” she said.

* By SETH FRANTZMAN
The COVID-19 pandemic and the May conflict between Israel and Hamas have given rise individually and in unison to one of the worst waves of antisemitism in recent decades.

Jew hatred from the Right and Left, from white nationalists to so-called progressive and racial justice activists, has erupted across the world resulting in violent assaults, appalling vandalism and terrifying incitement against Jews and Jewish institutions.

In such times, the need for authoritative voices to speak out against the ancient scourge of Jew hatred is paramount, and there is perhaps no one today who is more knowledgeable and has spoken with greater clarity than Deborah Lipstadt.

Lipstadt is the renowned historian of the Holocaust and Jewish history, who famously took on Holocaust denier David Irving in court and won. She has authored numerous books and papers on antisemitism and the Holocaust and was in July nominated by US President Joe Biden to be the next US special envoy to combat and monitor antisemitism.

Lipstadt is also the author of eight books, including her 2005 memoir: History on Trial: My Day in Court with a Holocaust Denier about the libel case brought against her by Irving.

And the professor has been clear that the current wave of antisemitism emanates from across the political and ideological spectrum.

In an essay published earlier this year in The Jewish Quarterly, Lipstadt denounced the antisemitism prevalent among the white nationalists and others who participated in the January 6 insurrection on Capitol Hill in the US, describing it as a “defining component” of the “white power, white supremacist and white nationalist” agenda.

At the same time, she has also spoken out against antisemitism on the left, notably criticizing comments made by US Rep. Ilhan Omar who said that accused pro-Israel groups of demanding lawmakers “pledge allegiance to a foreign country.”

Lipstadt: “Dual loyalties is part of the textbook accusations against Jews. They are cosmopolitans, globalists, not loyal to their country or fellow citizens,” adding that Omar was relying “on traditional antisemitic tropes” in her claims.

More recently at the Global Forum on Antisemitism at the Foreign Ministry in July, Lipstadt argued that antisemitism must be tackled as part of the fight against all prejudice.

“You cannot fight antisemitism and be a racist. Conversely, you cannot fight for the rights of other groups and engage in antisemitic attacks,” she said of the broad swathe of the political and ideological map that engages in Jew hatred.

“The fight might never result in total victory, the roots of this hatred are too deeply embedded to ever be eradicated, but we must act as if we are able to achieve that victory,” she concluded.

As the designated new US special envoy to combat and monitor antisemitism, with a confirmation hearing expected to take place in the next few months, Lipstadt will be well placed to exert her influence over this fight and help direct US policy on how to best combat the resurgence of the unremitting bane of Jew hatred.
LARRY ELLISON

Larry Ellison, founder of software giant Oracle Corp, is a rags-to-riches success story. Born in New York to a 19-year-old unwed Jewish mother and brought up by his great-aunt and great-uncle, Ellison is the ninth-wealthiest person in the US and the tenth in the world, with a reported fortune of $93.9 billion.

Ellison never finished college, but founded Oracle with $1,200 of his own money at age 33. Oracle now has some 135,000 employees across the globe, and more than $10 billion in 2020.

Ellison stepped down as CEO of Oracle in 2014, handing over the helm to Israel native Safra Catz and Mark Hurd while he became the company’s executive chairman and chief technology officer.

Oracle opened offices in Israel in 1996, and currently has 400 employees here. He visited Israel in 2007, and has been a strong supporter.

“Larry and I are deeply committed to Israel,” Catz said earlier this summer on a visit to Israel. Oracle launched a massive new underground cloud data center in Jerusalem “because we love Israel and we know the country needs it,” he said.

A close friend of former prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Ellison has been named as a potential witness in the trial against the Likud leader as part of Case 2000, the alleged bribery affair involving Yedioth Ahronot. Netanyahu and his family recently vacationed on Ellison’s Hawaiian island, Lania, which he purchased in 2012 for some $300 million.

Among his contributions to Israeli causes are more than $26 million given to Friends of the Israel Defense Forces, as well as $500,000 to fortify a community center in Sderot in 2007.

By ZEV STUB

TORY BURCH AND SARA BLAKELY

Being a woman can be challenging – the world of fashion serves as a place of both expression and comfort. Self-made entrepreneurs and fashion icons Tory Burch and Sara Blakely stand at two ends of that spectrum, filling it in.

Blakely believes it is her “calling to support women.”

Blakely has made this her slogan, and turned it into, Spanx, an undergarment company, which she says has the goal of “help[ing] women feel great about themselves and their potential.”

The story goes, according to the website, that she was looking for a garment that would give her smooth look under her white pants. She cut the feet off of her pantyhose, and that was it. As of August 4, Blakely’s worth stands at $750 million, according to Forbes.

Shopping is cool, but Spanx has a rotating philanthropy board to make Spanx’s products accessible in a modern capitalist society, available to women everywhere.

“Simply because of their gender, they are not given the same chance I had to create my own success and follow my dreams,” Blakely wrote in her Giving Pledge in 2013.

The Giving Pledge is a forum which facilitates philanthropists giving back to their communities and causes they care about. Blakely fits the bill, committing half of her wealth, according to the Spanx Foundation’s website.

“While many of the world’s natural resources are being depleted, one is waiting to be unleashed – women,” she wrote at the time.

Blakely’s calling doesn’t stop there. Spanx is the brains behind the Leg-UP program, which markets the products of other female entrepreneurs in the company’s catalog, Blakely explains in her pledge.

TORY BURCH, a trend-setter fashion name, provides the clothes that Spanx goes under.

The company was established by Burch in 2004, with the goal of empowering women in general, and women entrepreneurs in particular.

It’s not all fashion. The Tory Burch Foundation, established in 2009, is dedicated to guiding female entrepreneurs to exposure and success by providing them with resources.

It includes a fellowship program, a capital program which facilitates affordable loans to women entrepreneurs, as well as a webinar series to make business management education more widely accessible.

In 2017, the company launched the #EmbraceAmbition initiative, fighting back against stereotypes, sexist double standards relating to ambition and unaddressed biases regarding gender, race and sex.

“As a designer, I strive to create beautiful pieces that inspire women to live with confidence and optimism. As an entrepreneur, I want to build giving back into everything we do,” said Burch, according to the company website.

By SARAH BEN-NUN
There should be “no more” excuses against the placement of women in leadership roles, prolific scholar, author and speaker Tamara Cofman Wittes told a Zoom audience at a John Hopkins event last year in which she reflected on her career in US foreign policy.

To ensure that women would not be ignored, she helped found The Leadership Council for Women in National Security in 2019.

Even before Joe Biden took office, the council had transferred to his team the names of more than 850 women qualified to serve in Senate-confirmed national security and foreign policy roles.

Wittes herself is now one of those nominees. She is awaiting Congressional confirmation for her new role in the Biden administration working for Samantha Power as the assistant administrator for USAID in the Middle East.

As head of the USAID Middle East bureau, she will oversee development in Morocco, Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza. She will also direct $250 million in Israeli-Palestinian peace building initiatives.

Wittes is “leading voice on the region who has shaped policy from in and out of government,” Power, head of USAID, said.

A native of Michigan who now lives in Washington, Wittes has a doctorate from George-town University, where she has also taught.

Her USAID role is her second governmental for-ay. She worked in the Obama administration as the deputy assistant secretary for Near Eastern Policy.

Among the lessons she learned was the importance of women leadership.

“I came out of my experience in government with an understanding of how much diversity enriches the work that we do. How unavoidable it is to confront issues of exclusion and injustice in our work and how imperative it is for me, at this stage in my career, to be someone who helps push the envelope and makes it better for the people who are coming behind me,” she said.

If money talks, then Joshua Harris and Marc Rowan are screaming.

Harris co-founded Apol-lo in 1990 with Rowan and Leon Black, turning the company into one of the world’s largest investment funds, managing over $350 billion in assets.

Both Harris and Rowan are among the wealthiest individuals in the United States. Bloomberg (August 2021) estimates Harris’s net worth at $7.27b. and Rowan’s at $5.74b.

In February 2021, Rowan was announced as the chief executive designate to replace CEO Leon Black, who agreed to step down in the wake of a report that he had paid the late Jeffrey Epstein, a convicted sex offender, $158 million for advice on tax and estate planning and related services between 2012 and 2017. Black himself was cleared of any wrongdoing.

Harris is also the principal owner of the New Jersey Devils hockey team in the NHL, the Philadelphia 76ers, and is a general partner in Crystal Palace Football Club of the English Premier League.

Harris founded his charitable organization to develops leadership skills and strengthens communities. One of the organization’s projects, The 48ers’, promotes the successful integration of Ethiopian youth within Israeli society through basketball.

Rowan serves on the board of trustees of the University of Pennsylvania and in October 2018, he donated $50m. to the Wharton School, the largest single gift in its history.

Rowan is a founding member and chairman of Youth Renew-al Fund and vice-chairman of Darca, Israel’s top educational network operating 40 schools with over 22,000 students throughout Israel’s most diverse and under-served communities. He also serves on the board of OpenDor Media, a digital media company centered on engaging Jewish and Israeli content.
Amira Ahronoviz was appointed by former Jewish Agency chairman Isaac Herzog as the first female CEO and director-general of the Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) in 2018, and has proved to be both effective and innovative in the role.

Together with Herzog, she drafted a comprehensive strategic plan to meet the challenges of the Jewish people in the next decade, including boosting aliyah from around the world, ensuring security for Jewish communities worldwide facing antisemitism, and strengthening the Diaspora.

Under her leadership, the Jewish Agency is focusing on serving as a bridge between Israel and the Diaspora, creating partnerships and dispatching some 2,000 emissaries to about 60 countries.

She was instrumental in establishing a mechanism to transfer emergency funds to Jewish communities in crisis, together with the Jewish Federations of North America and Keren Hayesod. They set up JReady to help communities deal with COVID-19 by connecting them with experts and methods to better cope. At the same time, they also set up a fund to help communities stay safe from antisemitic attacks.

JAFI established an operation center to help thousands of immigrants from around the world make aliyah, despite the pandemic. Despite the closure of the airport and the cancellation of many flights, it managed to bring doctors and nurses to Israel to help the medical efforts here, and spearheaded Operation Rock of Israel operation to bring some 2,000 immigrants from Ethiopia. Thousands of youths also came to Israel from abroad in the framework of Masa, funded by the government and the Jewish Agency.

“The corona crisis created a situation in which communities outside of North America – many of them small but splendid – which for years supported the State of Israel, suddenly collapsed without the ability and infrastructure to survive the impact of the pandemic,” she told The Jerusalem Post. “These sought the aid and assistance of Israel and from global organizations such as ours. This strengthened the need for a global Jewish platform that would take care of the essential assets of mutual responsibility.”

Having grown up in Israel’s periphery, her focus has been working to strengthen weaker communities in peripheral communities and invest in young leaders in those communities, as well as thousands of elderly people and Holocaust survivors living in Amigor housing, new immigrants at absorption centers, lone soldiers and victims of terror.

Ahronoviz spent several years abroad, living in Diaspora communities.

“The fact that I had the chance to grow up in Jewish communities in the Diaspora, to be exposed to the richness, the variety and the mutual responsibility of Jewish life, to a large extent helped me define the way in which I perceive my Jewishness today,” she said.

In the past year, Ahronoviz has significantly raised the percentage of women in key positions in JAFI, both in Israel and abroad. For example, in June she appointed Gadeer Kamal-Mreeh, the first female Druze member of Knesset, as JAFI’s top emissary in Washington, DC, where she also supports Israeli engagement efforts on North American college campuses.

“This unprecedented appointment will bring greater awareness regarding that diverse landscape to the United States as part of our efforts to strengthen understanding of Israel worldwide,” she said.

Regarding the current situation in Israel and the Diaspora, Ahronoviz said, “We are living in an interesting and paradoxical period for the Jewish people. Most of them live under free regimes in Israel and abroad, where they can conduct Jewish lives in a way that suits them, while integrating and influencing the society in which they live. The current period is full of significant challenges that threaten the future of the Jewish people.”

Asked what she meant, she said: “With the establishment of Israel, the prevailing paradigm was that all Jews would gather in one place, the State of Israel. Today we understand that there are two big centers of almost the same size, one in Israel and one in North America, which are developing in different directions and conducting essentially different Jewish lifestyles.

“It seems that these two centers will be different forever and we have to find ways to connect them without falling into the growing gaps between them. Our future depends on the connection and support for a thriving Jewish life in the Diaspora – and these, in turn, depend on a strong State of Israel that inspires and serves as a source of spirituality.”
As COVID continues to spread across the US, it was another rocky year for AIPAC, and its leaders, Betsy Korn and Howard Kohr. After canceling the 2021 policy conference due to COVID, the pro-Israel group announced earlier this summer that it would cancel the 2022 conference, too, citing a spike of coronavirus cases. According to an AIPAC source familiar with the discussion, the decision was made because it was “not practical to plan the event a few months in advance as the Delta variant is spreading.”

AIPAC also announced in early August that it would reschedule two congressional trips sponsored by the American Israel Education Foundation. A House Republican freshman trip and a bipartisan trip of members of the House Armed Services and Homeland Security committees will now take place in February 2022.

But that is only one of the veteran lobby organization’s problems. Facing a Congress that is increasingly polarized with parts that are blatantly anti-Israel, Kohr and Korn need to ensure that AIPAC not only remains relevant but also can continue to effect change and help the Jewish state.

In a surprise move, the lobby went on the offensive against Rep. Ilhan Omar earlier this summer, posting ads on Facebook reading: “For Ilhan Omar, there is no difference between America and the Taliban. Between Israel and Hamas. Between Democracies and terrorists.” It was a journey into uncharted waters for AIPAC which has traditionally strived to avoid the spotlight in an effort to retain bipartisan support for Israel.

But with Israel under attack and antisemitism in the US rising, the group understands that it needs to be more aggressive - online against people like Omar and in its general messaging. More tests are sure to come.

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF

Winnie Sandler Grinspoon is the president of the Harold Grinspoon Foundation, established by her father-in-law, Harold Grinspoon, in 1991.

Since its inception, the foundation has invested more than $230 million in programs that have made Jewish life and learning more vibrant, connected and enjoyable. Perhaps its most notable creation is PJ Library, which distributes free Jewish-themed books, music and resources each month to more than half a million Jewish children around the world. PJ Library mails more than 230,000 Jewish-themed books every month in the United States and Canada, reaching more than 175,000 households in North America.

The Israeli arm, Sifriyat Pijama, works with the Education Ministry, and the foundation runs a version for Arab-Israeli children as well. In a 2020 article in Tablet, the online Jewish magazine, Harold Grinspoon explained that the idea of distributing books to children came to him while attending the Seder table of his eldest son and daughter-in-law, Winnie. When his daughter-in-law handed out Jewish books as afikomen prizes, Grinspoon noticed the enthusiasm of his grandchildren.

Another successful initiative developed by the foundation is JCamp180, which provides consulting services in board development, strategic planning, fundraising, and outreach technology to volunteer boards of affiliated camps. In 2020, the foundation gave $10m. in emergency grant funding to support nonprofit Jewish summer camps participating in the foundation’s JCamp 180 program. This year, the Grinspoon Foundation, together with an anonymous donor, committed to almost $11m. in matching funds.

A third landmark program established by the Harold Grinspoon Foundation is called Life & Legacy, which assists communities across North America, through partnerships with Jewish Federations and foundations, to promote after-life giving to build endowments that will provide financial stability to Jewish day schools, synagogues, social service organizations and other Jewish entities. Since the program’s inception, donors have committed almost $1 billion in future gifts to participating organizations.

Winnie Sandler Grinspoon is continuing the pioneering work of her father-in-law to ensure that the foundation will continue to be a major presence in Jewish education for many years to come.

By ALAN ROSENBAUM
It’s difficult to imagine how Australian businessman and philanthropist Anthony Pratt, the executive chairman of Visy and Pratt Industries, the world’s largest privately owned recycled paper manufacturer, finds time for his manifold activities.

Pratt, a second-generation philanthropist who heads the Board of Trustees of the Pratt Foundation that was established in Melbourne in 1978 by his parents Richard and Jeanne Pratt, and which became active in Israel in 1998, ranks in fourth place on the Rich List of the Australian Financial Review with an estimated fortune of $20.09 billion, 205 on the Forbes list of the world’s billionaires, and 267 on the Bloomberg index.

He is the third-generation member of his family to make his fortune (much of which was inherited), from the corrugated box business, which expanded into related enterprises.

The bulk of his business activities are in America rather than Australia, and his largest American investment, made in recent weeks, is the construction of a $540 million paper mill in Kentucky, which demonstrates his confidence in America’s ability to recover economically in the post-pandemic era.

A generous donor to the coffers of Australian political parties and a personal friend of former US president Donald Trump, Pratt has no problem in helping to boost America’s economy during the Joe Biden administration. His gifts to political parties on home turf have been even-handed, and that ability to be even-handed, notwithstanding personal relationships, stands him in good stead in America.

It is not only from paper that Pratt derives his income. He also owns Australia’s largest glass bottle manufacturing company, which he purchased in July 2020 for $1 billion and has since expanded its operations. Consistent expansion has enabled Pratt to provide thousands of jobs for people in Australia and the US and to continue with his parents’ vision of improving the quality of life for people in several countries.

Visy industries was launched by his Polish immigrant grandfather Leon, who received a loan of £1,000 from his sister Ida Visbord, and honored her by naming the company in a derivative of her surname. In 1969, when Leon died, the company was taken over by Leon’s son Richard, under whose direction it expanded significantly, and continues to do so, under the management of Richard’s son Anthony, who became executive chairman following Richard’s death in 2009.

He shares the ownership of Visy with his sisters Fiona Geminder and Heloise Waizlitz, who own a third each, but he is the sole owner of Pratt Industries.

One of the most outstanding gifts to Israel by the Pratt Foundation is the Park of the Australian Soldier that was dedicated in 2008 and honors the memories and the courage of members of the Australian Light Horse Regiments, who in October 1917, defeated the Ottoman troops. Richard and Jeanne Pratt were present for the ceremony, which was attended by then-Australian governor general Michael Jeffrey and then-president Shimon Peres.

Anthony Pratt had his own relationship with Peres when the two, together with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi participated in the food and water security dialogue held in New Delhi in 2014.

Pratt takes a keen interest in food security, agricultural sustainability and water issues. He is also interested in climate change and environmental protection.

In 2007, Pratt pledged to the Global Initiative of former US president Bill Clinton to invest more than $1 billion over the next decade in recycling infrastructure and utilizing clean energy. He fulfilled his promise in five years instead of 10.

In addition to Donald Trump, Pratt rubs shoulders with Bill and Hillary Clinton, Tony Blair, Mike Pence, Narendra Modi, Michael Bloomberg, past and present Australian prime ministers Tony Abbott, Malcolm Turnbull and Scott Morrison and many other international figures.

Pratt has received many honors and citations, but one of his proudest moments was in 2013, when he was awarded an honorary PhD by his Alma Mater, Monash University in recognition of his “outstanding career of achievement and service to philanthropy, business and commerce.”

By GREER FAY CASHMAN
F or the majority of America’s nearly 90-million strong Evangelical community, supporting Israel is not about politics but the Bible.

“The connection really starts with Genesis 1:1,” explained Shari Dollinger, co-executive director of Christians United for Israel, with the verse “In the beginning, God created the heavens and earth.”

“If people are not tied spiritually to Israel, when Israel does something they don’t agree with, they can walk away,” said Dollinger. “If the link to Israel is through Scripture, tied to who they are – once you are rooted, you cannot walk away.”

Dollinger and her co-influencer, Yael Eckstein, the CEO of the International Fellowship of Christians and Jews, have devoted the majority of their adult lives to creating meaningful and relevant bridges between the Christian community and Israel.

Dollinger began at CUFI 14 years ago, first as associate director and since 2018 as co-executive director, a position she shares with Pastor John Hagee’s wife, Diana.

Although Dollinger grew up in Kansas, a state with a large Christian community, she was raised within a close-knit Jewish community, attending day school, and never really knew about Christian Zionists. After interning with ex-senator Sam Brownback, who had a 100% pro-Israel voting record and about 0.003% Jewish constituency, did she understand.

“I was amazed and enamored,” she said. It spoke to me that he was not politically motivated by the Jewish community; that he had all of these Christian constituents that deeply supported Israel and the power the Christian community has to shift public policy.”

When Dollinger was hired, she was the organization’s third full-time hire. Today, it has around 50 employees located around the United States – and Dollinger has played a strategic role in CUFI’s growth.

CUFI has 10.5 million “members,” defined as email addresses, and another 2.5 million social media followers – a high percentage of whom stand up for the Jewish people and the Jewish state, according to Dollinger.

CUFI was instrumental in building support for moving the US Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem; at the ceremony in Jerusalem in 2018, Pastor Hagee delivered the benediction.

“There are at least 10.5 million Christians that are committed to supporting their fellow Americans in combating the rise in antisemitism,” Dollinger said. “This should make American Jews feel better and sleep better at night.”

ECKSTEIN, TOO, is from the Midwest. She grew up in Chicago. Her father, the late Rabbi Yechiel Eckstein, founded the fellowship.

When she made aliya in 2005, she did not really envision working for the organization. When she needed a job, she asked her father, who assigned her basic office work.

“I was putting stamps on envelopes,” Eckstein recalled. “My prayer was that God should use me to do things in the world, whatever that looks like.”

Then, in 2006, she was sent up North during the Second Lebanon War to report back about the needs of the people. She started chronicling her experience for the fellowship’s donors, who were immediately taken by her powerful messaging.

The rest is history.

Eckstein had already been selected as the next president of the fellowship when her father died suddenly in 2019.

“There was a lot of pressure on me to fill his shoes,” she recalled. “But I decided that he had filled his shoes and I will fill mine.”

She knew, taking over, that most organizations that pass to the second generation usually fail – especially Christian ministries. In her first year, Eckstein lost the fellowship’s long-standing chief operating officer and its director-general. She put together a budget in hopes of just breaking even, but surprised even herself.

“We had expected to raise $123 million that year,” Eckstein said. “We closed with $173m. And this year, two years later, we have doubled our donor base from around 300,000 donors to 627,000. We have almost doubled our budget, too, which means we have helped almost double the amount of people.”

And she did all this in the shadow of COVID-19, during a war with Hamas and a lot of other surprises.

“My goal was to be focused, strategic, intentional and well-planned, yet agile enough that at the drop of a dime we were able to be on the ground, meeting needs,” Eckstein said.

The Fellowship is the largest philanthropic NGO in Israel; the next largest is around half of its size.

In the past two years, she said, she has proven that Christians loved her father, but did not support Israel because of him. It is a genuine support for God’s country.

“As a religious woman, I am in such a privileged position,” she said. “I help people make aliya, provide food to the hungry, and I have a platform to teach Christians more about the roots of their faith.”

“The Torah is coming alive in Israel,” she concluded. “Christians are yearning for that connection.”

By MAAYAN HOFFMAN
While Israel and the world are focused on big pharma cures for COVID-19 and vaccines, an Israeli start-up founded by an entrepreneur from Nahariya has become the face of Israel’s first line of defense—literally. Joshua “Shuki” Hershcovich, 66, and his company, Sonovia, have redefined the role of masks in the fight against COVID-19. The big difference is “transitioning masks from passive filtration rectangles to active protection shields,” Hershcovich told The Jerusalem Post.

The company produced its first mask in the beginning of 2020. Last year, the company had more than $9.5 million in sales to hundreds of thousands of clients in more than 180 countries. And it likely saved a lot of lives, too.

Hershcovich said he was an entrepreneur from the age of 12, when he “found a way to innovate within the lawn-mowing market.” He spent years in the US, including several ventures as a leading denim merchandiser. But he told the Post that once he realized he was contributing to the damage caused by one of the leading pollutive industries in the world—the textile industry—he decided to shift gears. He envisioned a technology that would transform the textile industry, that would make it “green.”

In 2013, he founded Sonovia with the aim of researching, developing and ultimately commercializing textiles based on a lab-scale sonochemical process that was developed at Bar-Ilan University.

“The technology is based upon a physical phenomenon called cavitation,” explained Jason Migdal, head of the company’s business development team. “Sound waves are used to physically infuse desired chemicals onto the structure area of materials, enhancing them with clinically proven antiviral and antibacterial properties.”

At the start of the COVID crisis, the company had not completed the commercialization process, but it did have enough stored fabric in its R&D line to produce between 5,000 and 10,000 masks, which could be made immediately. It transferred the fabric from where it was being stored abroad to Israel, found a local company to manufacture the first masks and sent them to China.

When the pandemic hit Israel, it donated around 120,000 more masks to Israeli hospitals, medical professionals and coronavirus patients.

As its antiviral, antibacterial and antifungal fabric underwent more and more clinical testing, it was found to neutralize viruses, bacteria and fungi with over 99% proven efficacy— including against the Delta variant.

Tens of thousands of masks were donated to first-responders, schools and populations in need. In addition, hundreds of thousands of masks were sold worldwide.

“We moved like a commando unit,” Hershcovich recalled. “It was just a few of us; today there are more than 50 people in the company and we have our own place in Acre. Then, we just moved fast—very fast.”

At the end of last year, Sonovia was awarded with the honorable start-up competition prize from The Genesis Prize Foundation. It has also received numerous grants and support from the European Union and other leading global improvement initiatives since its inception.

It has struck deals to develop a clothing line with Delta and is working to implement its technology in other sectors, including the airline and automotive industries.

And it strives to make a difference in Israel, collaborating with organizations like Masa Israel Journey to provide internships to young Jews considering making Aliyah. It chose to locate its sewing plant in the mixed city of Acre, near Hershcovich’s hometown, to help provide employment opportunities for Arabic women in the city.

“I am so happy that I can tell you that I want to make the world better, help people to live better lives—and save a lot of lives,” Hershcovich said. “That is my vision.”

By MAAYAN HOFFMAN

THE WORLD’S MOST INFLUENTIAL JEWS
Yifat Oron captured a lot of attention this summer when Blackstone, one of the world’s largest investment firms, chose her to head its new office in Tel Aviv. But with more than 20 years of experience as a tech investor and executive in Israel, Oron has already been driving innovation in Israel’s tech sector for many years.

“I grew up in Israel, but my parents moved to New York when I was 16, which was very fortunate,” Oron said. “I was able to defer my army service while I studied at the University of Pennsylvania, in a dual-program of engineering and finance, a combination that would become the theme of my career. When I came back for the army, I did officer school and then joined the Defense Ministry’s Directorate of R&D (MAFAT), where they are developing defense technology projects that are 10-20 years ahead of their time.”

Eventually, Oron landed a job with JPMorgan Chase, and then came back to Israel to found a venture capital fund, Vertex Partners, working with early-stage startups. Then, in 2013, a new opportunity opened up.

“I met a gentleman from Bank Leumi who said he was trying to figure out how to get the banking system more exposed to the Start-up Nation,” Oron said. “This was a time when the Israeli economy was split between the tech sector and everything else, and most of the financing options available were from foreign lenders. The question was whether the banking system can be more a part of the tech ecosystem. I felt at the time that this was a project that could change the map for startups, and I decided to join.”

As the CEO of LeumiTech, Oron’s job was “to build a bank within a bank that would provide all of the needs of a tech company. It was very different than regular banks. Whatever an entrepreneur wants to start a company, we would have it. We started growing very quickly, and served a large part of the tech community. And not surprisingly, the other banks soon did similar things.”

That innovation did wonders for the hi-tech sector as a whole, Oron said. “In order to grow an industry, you need to have all the necessary players in your ecosystem. Now, the banks were competing to make it easier for startups, offering more competitive rates and better services. I did that for seven years, and it was very rewarding and industry-changing.”

It was after this that Oron was introduced to Blackstone, a global equity firm with some $700 billion under management. The fit was right, and the company announced in April that she would head the company’s new office here.

Blackstone’s decision to open an office in Tel Aviv, instead of merely keeping tabs on the local scene, reflects the changing reality in the local market and serves as a signal to others.

“LeumiTech was a project that we started to help these companies grow to the next level, and we have a lot of resources at our disposal around the world to do so. Among other things, we are the largest real estate owner in the world, and we have more than a billion square feet of logistics space.”

Oron is passionate about eliminating gender stereotypes that can hold women back.

“In Israel, we have grown by about 1,000% in the number of companies led by women,” she said. “I get notes from women I have never met saying that the fact that Blackstone picked a woman to lead their office was very important for them. The world has changed in a huge way.”

But, she said, there is more work to be done. “In my home, if someone would ask my daughter to describe her mother and father using all kinds of descriptive elements except for gender, you wouldn’t be able to tell who’s a woman and who’s a man. Eliminating preconceptions is critical to reaching the full equilibrium between men and women. I hope that one day, we won’t even have to talk about women in tech.”

By ZEV STUB
If climate change is the Super Bowl of pressing issues facing mankind, then Susan Solomon is one of the MVPs.

Like a pied piper bringing awareness to the issue when most of the public had never heard of climate change, the decorated professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology is perhaps best known for pioneering the theory explaining why the ozone hole occurs in Antarctica, and obtained some of the first chemical measurements that helped to establish the chlorofluorocarbons as its cause.

But the professor of atmospheric science has also authored several influential scientific papers on climate science, including an ominous one on the irreversibility of climate change.

In a symposium upon accepting the 2009 Volvo Environment Prize, Solomon said, “The Earth has a budget, just like anything else. And if we add greenhouse gases to the atmosphere, it’s going to keep more heat in to the planet, and less escaping to space, and the planet has no choice but to warm up. That’s basic physics, and there’s no way to beat basic physics.”

The 65-year-old Chicago native spent most of her career at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, but joined the faculty of MIT in 2011, where she serves as the Lee and Geraldine Martin Professor of Atmospheric Chemistry & Climate Science.

Among her awards and honors, Time magazine named her as one of the most 100 influential people in the world in 2008, she received the 1999 National Medal of Science (the highest scientific honor in the US), as well as the Grande Medaille (the highest award of the French Academy of Sciences), and she led a working group that wrote a report on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which won the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize.

Solomon’s greatest accomplishment may have been to activate the worldwide effort to combat climate change, a process she sees as an act of tikkan olam.

“There is the straightforward part of working as hard as I can to repair the damage that humans have done to the planet, I have a deep-seated love of nature and as I have studied ozone depletion and climate change, I often reflect on how important it is for humankind to stop piling abuses on this beautiful world that she just can’t sustain. Certainly for me there is a concept that we are the stewards of this remarkable planet, and haven’t been doing our job. Without an ozone layer, there would be no life at all on the surface of the Earth, because ozone’s absorption of high energy ultraviolet light had to start before anything could crawl out of the ocean and walk on land. So I’ve derived a great deal of satisfaction out of the work that I’ve done on understanding ozone depletion, which has had an impact on the global phaseout of ozone-damaging chemicals.

“This brings me to the second part of tikkan olam, namely that climate change and many other forms of pollution have the largest impacts on poor people. The rich derive most of the benefits of burning fossil fuels, yet it’s poor people – both in their own countries and in the poorest parts of the world – who suffer the most. Society as a whole has to come to terms with that, and for me that means trying to understand the science to help us make better choices and better policies to repair what we’re doing both to the Earth and to each other.”

By DAVID BRINN
MAYIM BIALIK

The clue is Mayim Bialik - if you realized that the answer is, “Who is an American actress, neuroscientist, author and now host of the new primetime version of Jeopardy?” then you got it right.

The announcement that in late August Bialik would be the first guest host of the new primetime version of the long-running quiz show was the best news about the show since Mike Richards, who was previously announced as the host, had to step down due to offensive remarks he made. Jeopardy’s beloved, veteran host, Alex Trebek, passed away in 2020 and there has been endless speculation about who might take over. Bialik had already been tapped to host some Jeopardy specials, but following Richards’ departure, she stepped into his spot.

Bialik is best known for her work on the hit CBS sitcom, The Big Bang Theory, where she played Amy, a young scientist nerdy enough to win abrasive geek Sheldon Cooper’s heart and persistent enough to hold onto him. She currently plays the main character in Call Me Kat on Fox, a series that is advertised with the tagline, “Disappointing her mother since 1982.”

Bialik, who is as religiously observant as she is scientifically curious, also hosts a weekly podcast about mental health called “Mayim Bialik’s Breakdown.” She interrupted her Hollywood career for a few years to get a doctorate and wrote her thesis on a neurological condition called Prader-Willi syndrome.

In a statement she made in August about joining Jeopardy, she said, “I couldn’t be more thrilled to join the Jeopardy! family. What started out with my 15-year-old repeating a rumor from Instagram that I should guest host the show has turned into one of the most exciting and surreal opportunities of my life!”

A distant cousin of poet Haim Nachman Bialik (1873 -1934), Mayim is a staunch supporter of Israel. A fan of the Jewish cappella group, the Maccabeats, she and her sons appeared in the group’s 2011 Hanukkah video and she studies Torah with a partner. Will she bring more Judaism-oriented categories to the new Jeopardy? Many of her fans are hoping the answer is: What is a good bet?

By HANNAH BROWN

RUSSELL ROBINSON
LEADING JNF-USA

Russell F. Robinson is the charismatic CEO of Jewish National Fund-USA and has succeeded in making the organization one of the US top-rated charities and the leading organization for the land and people of Israel.

Robinson has been featured in best-selling management books and regularly appears on TV, radio, and in print media.

He has served as CEO of JNF-USA (which is a separate organization from the Israel-based KKL-JNF) since 1998, when at 41 he became the youngest CEO in its history. He has overseen the organization’s groundbreaking One Billion Dollar Roadmap to develop the Negev and Galilee, and its meteoric rise to the $100 million charity it has become today.

He works tirelessly, traveling around the US and Israel to meet with the organization’s partners and affiliates, to ensure that JNF-USA’s vision and philanthropic investment is more relevant and meaningful today than ever before, particularly among its growing 22-40-year-old JNFuture leadership division.

Today, almost 120 years after it was founded, JNF-USA is unparalleled in the Jewish philanthropic world. Its strategic vision has been, and always will be, to ensure a strong, secure, and prosperous future for the land and people of Israel.

Everything JNF-USA does – every project, initiative and campaign – is integral to the organization’s vision of building and connecting to Israel. JNF-USA plants trees, builds houses and parks, sources water solutions, buys fire trucks, and improves the lives of people with special needs. In addition, JNF-USA works to boost tourism, support aliyah, promote Zionist education and engagement, build medical centers and trauma centers, fund agricultural and culinary research, and run a high school semester study abroad program in Israel.

A sixth-generation American Jew, Robinson grew up in El Paso, Texas, though his family first laid down its American roots in Petersburg, Virginia, after emigrating from Alsace-Lorraine in the late 1700s.

In an interview with The Jerusalem Report earlier this year, Robinson said that the Zionist movement has reached an inflection point, and now more than ever, “we must reclaim the word ‘Zionism.’”

“For too long, those who support Zionism have let others who have no interest in Israel’s future control the narrative,” Robinson said. “We want to spark a new conversation about Zionism and bring people from across the political and religious spectrum together. We have already started the conversation at share.jnf.org, where we are celebrating the beauty and diversity that is Zionism in the 21st century.”

Robinson noted that JNF-USA is building a 20-acre World Zionist Village in Beersheba, which in his words, is “the biggest project ever in the Jewish world that will bring together Zionists from around the world for the greatest conversation ever had about Zionism.”

By STEVE LINDE
Jews around the world, like everyone else have had to confront the changes and difficulties brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. This has made the role of Jewish philanthropy ever more critical, as nonprofits conducting vital social functions have come under increasing financial pressure.

One individual at the heart of fundraising within the Jewish community is Felicia Herman, whose roles at the Natan Fund and the Aligned Grant Program of the Jewish Community Response and Impact Fund have placed her in the center of efforts to help those hurt by the pandemic.

Felicia Herman

After working as the Natan Fund’s executive director for 16 years, Herman this year became president of the organization, through which philanthropists pool their charitable resources and pick Jewish and Israeli NGOs, social businesses and social entrepreneurs to support.

Despite the pandemic, the fund supports a wide range of organizations designed to tackle problems facing Jews around the globe, and ensure their operations can continue.

Natan has funded organizations such as the Zioness Movement in the US, which advocates for a strong Zionist identity while engaging in civil rights activism; Eshkolot, which provides ultra-Orthodox youth with education opportunities; and the Jewish Fertility Foundation, which provides financial assistance to Jews with fertility challenges.

And Herman has also served as director of the Aligned Grant Program of the Jewish Community Response and Impact Fund, an organization formed by seven foundations, working together with the Jewish Federations, to provide emergency support for US-based Jewish nonprofit organizations involved in Jewish education, engagement and leadership.

In 2020, JCRIF amassed a fund of $91 million for grants and no-interest loans to preserve Jewish institutions.

It has provided funds to Prizmah, the national network of Jewish day schools, for tuition assistance for families facing financial challenges, and gave emergency funding for Jewish camps through grants and no-interest loans which suffered badly due to the financial difficulties wrought by the global health crisis.

Herman, through her leadership and innovation, has been an important part of the philanthropic map helping ensure that the fabric of Jewish life in the US has not been torn asunder by the global health crisis.

INNOVATIVE PHILANTHROPIST

Dan Gilbert is the 46th wealthiest person in the world, with a net worth of almost $31 billion. But Gilbert is known not only for his wealth, but for his generosity to others, in helping his native city of Detroit, and in overcoming personal adversity.

The 59-year-old is the co-founder of Quicken Loans, America’s largest mortgage lender, founder and chairman of the Rock Family of companies, a portfolio of technology businesses and real estate investments, and chairman of the Cleveland Cavaliers, NBA champions in 2016.

Gilbert moved Quicken’s headquarters to Detroit in 2010, bringing 17,000 employees to downtown Detroit in an effort to revitalize the city. In 2011, he co-founded Detroit-based Bedrock, a real estate firm specializing in acquiring, leasing, financing, and managing commercial and residential space, that has developed more than 160 properties totaling more than 18 million square feet in Detroit and Cleveland.

Gilbert and his wife Jennifer are signatories to the Giving Pledge, a movement of philanthropists who commit to giving the majority of their wealth to philanthropy or charitable causes, either during their lifetimes or in their wills, created by Bill and Melinda Gates and Warren Buffett.

The couple has five children, and their oldest son was born with neurofibromatosis, a genetic disorder that causes tumors to form on nerve pathways in the body. Gilbert has established neurofibromatosis research clinics at the Children’s National Medical Center in Washington, DC, and the Dana Children’s Hospital at the Sourasky Medical Center in Tel Aviv. In May 2019, Gilbert suffered a stroke, which affected the left side of his body.

In October 2020, Gilbert was awarded the Fred M. Butzel Award, the highest award granted to a Detroit-area Jewish person by the Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Detroit. Gilbert told the Detroit Jewish News at the time, “With my recent physical condition, I just learned what gratitude is because it’s just been a humbling experience.”

In July 2021, he announced a $500 million plan to invest in Detroit neighborhoods, connecting his own rehabilitation with the rebirth of the city of Detroit. Gilbert and his wife operate the Gilbert Family Foundation, which works to find a cure for neurofibromatosis and supports economic stability in the Detroit area.

By OMRI NAHMIAS

By ALAN ROSENBAUM
Avraham Duvdevani took over as global chairman of Keren Kayemet LeIsrael-Jewish National Fund in November, putting him in charge of Israel’s largest environmental organization.

Representing the religious, right-wing World Mizrachi slate, he was elected by the board to succeed Labor’s Danny Atar. Duvdevani, a religious Zionist who advocates settlement building throughout the West Bank, caused a stir earlier this year when he initiated a move for KKL-JNF to officially authorize the purchase of land in Judea and Samaria, a major policy change for the organization that was established in 1901.

Fighting for the rights of Israelis to live in all parts of the Land of Israel has been a key mission in Duvdevani’s career. As head of WZO’s Settlement Division, he said in 2002 it “was very easy to get permission from the minister of defense and the government to build settlements that strengthened Jerusalem as the capital and the Jewish majority in Jerusalem and that blocked the option of the Palestinians to build in and near Jerusalem.”

A powerful nonprofit, KKL-JNF owns some 13% of the total land in Israel and has planted over 240 million trees in the country. It has also built 180 dams and reservoirs, developed 100,000 hectares (250,000 acres) of land and established more than 1,000 parks.

Duvdevani was born in 1945 in Jerusalem. Prior to his military service he studied at the Netiv Meir and the Kfar Hassidim yeshivot, after which he served in the Paratroopers Brigade and fought in Jerusalem during the Six Day War.

Duvdevani has a great deal of experience in working to promote Zionism both in Israel and abroad, and he is very well acquainted with Jewish communities worldwide.

In 2010, he was elected chairman of the World Zionist Organization, spearheading its growth after its split with the Jewish Agency. Before this, among other roles, he was director-general of World Bnei Akiva, was the head of the informal education track at Orot Israel College and an active member of the board of governors for the Jewish Agency since 1991.

He has also been a member of the Executive of the World Mizrachi Organization, a member of the Jordan Valley Public Council, chairman of the Hevruta Community Center in Ramat Gan, chairman of the Ramat Gan branch of Elitzur sports organization, and a member of the central committee of the now-defunct National Religious Party and Bayit Yehudi, formerly led by Prime Minister Naftali Bennett.

By STEVE LINDE

Lt. Col. (Res.) Sarit Zehavi founded the Alma Center four years ago with one goal in mind: to explain the situation of Israel’s tense northern border.

Zehavi opened Alma – an organization that gives briefings on Israel’s security challenges on the northern border – in the bomb shelter of her home and named it after her eldest daughter.

One year later, Zehavi, who served 15 years in the IDF’s Military Intelligence division, opened the research center in northern Israel. With a team analyzing, translating, and mapping, Zehavi also gives briefings along the borders of Lebanon and Syria.

Before coronavirus, ALMA was giving tours to about 50 delegations per month.

The delegations are not Israeli – that’s not ALMA’s audience – but foreign delegations of policy makers and other influential individuals curious about Israel’s North.

“When I was in the army, I served in a lot of roles in the Northern Command, and I heard that they were looking for an intelligence officer who could give briefings to delegations in English,” she told The Jerusalem Post. “When I left the army I understood that I had a gift to explain really difficult situations in a simple manner.”

“And the fact that I live in the North makes it really personal,” Zehavi said. “I see the border everyday, I see the Iranian flags.”

Three days after Hezbollah fired a barrage of 20 rockets toward northern Israel, Zehavi said “I know exactly where the rockets landed. Today on the way to work I saw just how bad the burning was from the fires caused by the rockets. No one is writing about that.”

Another motivation behind her work is the issue of human shields.

“The IDF can solve our security problems, be it in Gaza or Lebanon, in a few days, but they aren’t able to because of the human shields,” she said, referring to the innocent civilians living in areas where Hamas and Hezbollah have stockpiled their missile arsenals.

ALMA has released dozens of reports in the past year, including one that uncovered close to 30 missile launching sites belonging to Hezbollah in civilian areas in the Lebanese capital of Beirut. The report found that the never-before-published sites concentrated mainly in Hezbollah-dominated areas of Beirut are related to the launch, storage, and production of the group’s Fateh 110/M600 medium-range missiles, and those subject to the Hezbollah missile precision-guided missile project (PGM’s).

ALMA also released a report this past year disclosing Hezbollah’s presence in southern Syria as much larger than previously revealed to the public by the IDF, with some 58 sites where the terror group’s Southern Command and Golan Project have been deployed.

So with Israel’s northern front heating up, you can find Zehavi “When she does best: educating.”

By ANNA AHRONHEIM
Growing up, Ramat Gan native Yael Vizel was never interested in clothes. Little did she know that a few years later she would found a start-up with the goal of revolutionizing the online shopping experience by providing the first virtual fitting room.

Zeekit — which means chameleon in Hebrew — allows users to try outfits they see online on their own pictures. It was acquired by Walmart in May and while the exact details of the deal, including its monetary element, were not disclosed, some have estimated that the retailer chain spent at least $200 million, securing Vizel a spot among Israel’s tech stars.

The 37-year-old journey towards success began early.

“I grew up as an athlete — a swimmer — and a ballerina,” she said. “These two very different hobbies provided me with useful skills for my professional career...to be competitive, hard worker and at the same time a person of details and appreciation for art and science.”

The daughter of a lawyer and an engineer, she served as an officer in the Israeli Air Force “in both tech and operational positions, which ‘trained’ me to be a leader, take big daily decisions and operate according to the military-style mantra that ‘failure is not an option’.”

“I was the first female commander at most of the positions I’ve held, which taught me that there are no barriers — if you’re good, achieving the goals and a hard worker,” she added.

In university she continued to be a trailblazer, enrolling in an electrical engineering program at the Technion in Haifa, one of the seven female students out of 150 men.

While fashion was not her cup of tea, it was her dislike for shopping that inspired Zeekit.

“Zeekit was created in order to help me find the right clothes for me easily, without ‘wasting my time’ trying clothes on, return items that don’t fit me and be able to see myself dressed up with thousands of styles with just a swipe,” the entrepreneur remarked.

The start-up was established in 2014. Vizel and her business partners Nir Appleboim and Alon Kristal created a virtual tool to show how a specific piece of clothing would look on a person, employing similar technology to the one that she used to turn 2D images into 3D graphics for military mapping.

“Developing a technology that can virtually dress up any person with an endless amount of items, which just have regular pictures of them (e.g. like in regular catalogs that we see online) is an extremely hard technology mission,” Vizel noted.

“That’s also the reason for not having a strong competitor for Zeekit — we’re the only company worldwide which actually cracked the virtual dress-up technology ‘code,’” she added.

When the pandemic hit, online shopping skyrocketed. For Zeekit it was a game changer.

“Apparel is both an extremely important category for all the large retailers, and at the same time the category that customers have the hardest time with. That’s the reason for the booming interest Zeekit has had during COVID,” she said.

The start-up began to receive different offers to be acquired. Ultimately, the deal was closed with Walmart, which will leave the company in Israel with Vizel at the helm.

Asked how she feels about the disparities between men and women in the hi-tech sector and being an exception, Vizel said that she believes the situation will change.

“More women gradually get into tech and entrepreneurship, and the more success stories of female CEOs we’ll see more women being compelled to take these leadership positions,” she remarked. “Being an exception is both challenging and exciting — I liked these two aspects at the same level.”

And as much as she did not grow up passionate about fashion, the connection with the field was ultimately in her blood.

“My grandfather had a textile factory when he immigrated to Israel from Romania after the World War II,” she revealed. “In a way, Zeekit is the modern and digital variation of his textile factory. He visited our office once, making jokes that ‘no one works here but everyone is just playing on their computers,’” she added.

*BY ROSELLA TERCATIN*
LINOY ASHRAM
AND ARTEM DOLGOPYAT
ISRAEL’S GOLDEN PAIR

LINOY ASHRAM

Linoy Ashram is not the easiest person to catch up with these days. Understandably so, after the 22-year-old Israeli captured the All-Around Rhythmic Gymnastics gold medal at the Tokyo Olympics in August and rose to legendary status in the country’s sports pantheon.

After multiple attempts to arrange an appropriate time for an interview, the Rishon Lezion native reached out to The Jerusalem Post and was happy to spend a few minutes discussing her monumental accomplishment and the big-picture implications.

“Things have started to calm down in the last two weeks, since I won the gold medal, but only a little bit,” Ashram told the Post. “There are still hundreds of messages, interview requests and corporate invitations to deal with daily, but it is all wonderful. I have gotten countless messages on WhatsApp, Instagram and all forms of social media. I really haven’t had time to respond to everyone, but I try.

“I think I have told different versions of my story about a thousand times, but each time the whole experience still feels somewhat surreal.”

Ashram is no stranger to circular hardware around her neck, a 2018 World All-Around silver medalist, two-time (2017, 2019) World All-Around bronze medalist, the 2020 European All-Around champion and the 2019 European Games All-Around silver medalist, among more. However, Olympic gold is different – especially as Ashram became the first-ever female Israeli athlete to top the podium and trigger “Hatikvah” at any Olympic Games.

Just the third blue-and-white competitor to earn an Olympic gold medal – along with Gal Fridman (windsurfing, 2004 Athens Games) and Artem Dolgopyat (artistic gymnastics, 2020 Tokyo Games) – Ashram is mindful of the enormity of her historic achievement, but is still getting used to the local prominence.

“One of the most surprising things to me about the whole experience isn’t necessarily all the work I put in and re-playing the competition over and over in my mind, but really it is so stunning to me how many people recognize me in the streets of Israel these days, anywhere and everywhere and people of all ages, even when I am wearing a mask. In Tokyo, there were plenty of tense moments, including a shaky performance in the qualification round and a dropped ribbon during her dazzling final routine, performed to “Hava Nagila.”

Ashram had to sit on pins and needles while Russia’s Dina Averina had a chance to vault over the Sabra into first place, but ultimately the Israeli prevailed in the judges’ scores on the strength of her first three rotations and finished a minuscule .15 points overall ahead of the Russian world champion.

“The hardest part of my time in Tokyo is tough to say. The moments while waiting for my fellow competitors’ final scores were very heart-palpitating, but really what was more difficult was after my first day of the qualifying competition, when I did not have my best performance and I was worried that I may not even advance to the finals.”

After breaking the Russian grip on the sport – she is the first from outside a post-Soviet Republic to win a gold medal at an Olympics where former Soviet states participated – Ashram is well aware of where her performance placed not only herself, but Israeli rhythmic gymnastics on the world stage. In fact, she borrowed a line from Tal Brody’s – the Maccabi Tel Aviv European champion – playbook.

“We are on the map and our sport is on the map,” proclaimed Ashram. “If up until now this sport was just for eastern Europeans, it can now be said that this is a sport for all. My result has opened the way for many countries that never thought in their lives that they would be able to reach such results.”

Looking back on her rise from to world and Olympic champion, Ashram had a key message to impart.

“The most important message that I would give to the 10-year-old me and anyone else out there with a dream would be to just continue to focus on what you love about sports and surround yourself with people who love you and motivate you. And just do it your way, always!”

In November 2017, at the age of 18, Ashram enrolled in the IDF and worked as an administrative assistant. Since her discharge, she has been studying education at Ono Academic College.

Asked about her plans and whether she will soon start training for Paris 2024, Ashram noted that “for right now, I just want to enjoy living in this amazing moment. I want to give my body and mind time to rest, and I want to continue my studies.”

No matter what the future holds for Ashram, her legacy is set in... well, gold, and she will always be a shining example of Israeli hard work and perseverance, along with global triumph and success.

“It’s exciting and emotional for me to think of myself as an ambassador for Israel, at least in the sports forum,” she stated with immeasurable pride. “I’m very honored to play this role and always want to represent not just myself but our entire country.”
ARTEM DOLGOPYAT

If Artem Dolgopyat wasn’t a household name in Israel prior to the Tokyo Olympics, he certainly is one now.

The unassuming and exceptionally modest, 24-year-old artistic gymnast is still taking it all in following his remarkable gold-medal performance in the floor exercise at 2020 Games in August.

“My expectations going into Tokyo were just to do my work as best I can and then let the results come as they did. In the end I was happy, of course,” the Ukraine-born Israeli told the Post.

Dolgopyat’s passion for gymnastics goes back to the age of six when he first signed up to attend his local club in Dnipro, Ukraine, as he followed in the footsteps of his father, Oleg, who was a gymnast himself.

In 2009, Dolgopyat immigrated with his family to Israel at the age of 12. He joined the gymnastics team of Maccabi Tel Aviv and attended the Shevah Moffet school in Tel Aviv before dropping out due to language difficulties and the burden of training.

“I would tell all young athletes with dreams that you always have to believe in yourself, most importantly,” Dolgopyat told the Post. “Secondly, never stop working hard and setting expectations and goals for yourself. And dream high and never give up.”

At 18, he enlisted with the IDF, serving at the Tel Hashomer army base.

Dolgopyat continued to compete at the top youth competitions and finally broke through in 2017 when he won a silver medal in the Floor Exercise at the World Championships held in Montreal.

That same year saw him also win medals at the Maccabiah Games, which led him to medals in floor exercise both in 2018 and 2019 at the European Championships.

He qualified for the Tokyo Games by winning a silver medal in the Floor Exercise at the 2019 World Championships in Stuttgart, Germany, and bronze and gold medals at the 2020 European Championships held in Turkey. Dolgopyat captured gold in the floor exercise and bronze in the vault.

Slowly but surely, the expectations bar was raised, with the chances of winning a medal in Tokyo moving from a pipe dream to possibility, and the Associ-
When ultra-Orthodox Julia Haart dipped her stilettos into the reality-TV pool and made the Netflix series, *My Unorthodox Life*, she could not have anticipated that her family’s adventures would spark a lively debate on the role of women in the observant community.

But Haart, who grew up religious in Monsey, New York, married and had four children before she left the fold for a life in the fashion business. She is now CEO of the talent media conglomerate Elite World Group and she designed a line of shoes. Divorcing her first husband, she remarried an Italian businessman and parades her complicated new life on the popular Netflix series, moving her brood among Manhattan, Monsey, Paris and the Hamptons.

The series drew praise for Haart’s outspoken stance against ultra-Orthodox insinuance on traditional women’s roles and her success in a demanding field. But it also came in for criticism, with some calling it a kosher Kardashian reboot, with staged scenes and a penchant for glitzy status seeking.

But detractors and devotees agreed on one thing: Everyone was watching.

And for many women, particularly those who are religiously observant (frum), the oppressive Orthodox life depicted in the series was at odds with their own experiences. Some spoke out, wanting to share the fact that they are able to live fulfilling lives in the observant community. Alexandra Fleksher, cohost of the “Normal Frum Women” podcast and columnist for Midrasha magazine, called *My Unorthodox Life* a “ smear campaign” and introduced the hashtag #MyOrthodoxLife on social media, drawing thousands of responses.

While Haart probably did not expect that her series would inspire so many Orthodox women to share their often positive stories, she is happy that people are talking about her and her series. In an interview with Women’s Health magazine, she said, “Knowing that there’s something you want to do because you feel that it’s the right thing, and you need to share your story with the world because, hopefully, you can inspire others doesn’t mean it’s easy to do, right? So, it’s something I felt I had to do. I felt it was my responsibility to do.”

With all the talk about Haart and the series on social media, it seems a good bet there will be a second season. And Haart’s memoir, *Brazen: My Unorthodox Journey from Long Sleeves to Lingerie* will hit stores in March. Those craving their Unorthodox fix until then can join Haart’s 330k (and growing) followers on Instagram, where she posts scenes from her fabulous, un-frum life nearly every day.

By HANNAH BROWN

Although NSO Group is just one of a number of top Israeli cyber firms and Shalev Hulio is one of many Israeli cyber CEOs, none of his counterparts took over the news in 17 major media outlets on several continents all at once like he did this year.

A serial entrepreneur and investor who has founded several hi-tech companies, the 39-year-old Hulio was described by the Financial Times as “pudgy, indiscreet... 007 obsessive Israeli tech nerd who has found himself at the intersection of big secrets and big money.”

For several years, NSO has been part of the top tier of Israel’s cyber offensive private sector for hacking cell phones of terrorists and other organized crime operatives. During that time, Israel also used the chip of providing NSO’s and others’ technologies to countries like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Morocco in order to improve ties and advance normalization.

In July, the Pegasus Project accused NSO and Hulio of enabling some of its Middle Eastern and other non-democratic clients to spy on prime ministers, journalists and human rights activists, with French Prime Minister Emmanuel Macron being at the top of a list of potential targets from some of NSO’s clients.

Whether NSO is responsible for what its clients do or don’t, whether the Pegasus Project’s accusations applied to NSO or to others, who was behind the Pegasus Project and whether NSO’s profile among Arab states and non-democratic states needs to be lowered are all good questions.

However, the bottom-line is that Hulio and NSO have been and will continue to be at the center of the discussion and on the frontlines of Israel’s cyber offense in the private sector.

By YONAH JEREMY BOB

When Amnesty International sued to have NSO’s export license revoked in the Tel Aviv District Court in 2019, The Jerusalem Post witnessed around two dozen Defense Ministry officials appear to convince the judge (successfully) how important it was to national security to keep the firm running.

In and of itself that gives a clear indication of NSO and Hulio’s staying power. But Haart’s 330k (and growing) followers on Instagram, where she posts scenes from her fabulous, un-frum life nearly every day.

By HANNAH BROWN
It does not happen often that a rabbi makes it to the cover of a fashion magazine. However, Rabbi Delphine Horvilleur can also boast a cover of the French lifestyle magazine Elle, as well as several books, a successful congregation in Paris and meetings with the highest authorities in her country and abroad.

In spite of the fact that among the 600,000 French Jews, very few identify with Reform Judaism, Horvilleur’s synagogue affiliated with the Liberal Judaism Movement of France has a membership of several hundred families.

She is also the editor of Tenou’a, a quarterly magazine which describes itself as “a series of workshops and spaces of collective intellect rallying together the full spectrum of Jewish thought,” and “a place of inquiry, of daring, of creation.”

Raised in Paris, a granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, mother of three, Horvilleur studied at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, as well as in New York, where she was drawn by the opportunity to study Talmud, something that as a woman she could not do in her native country.

It was during her period in the US that she decided to pursue rabbinical ordination, which she eventually received from the Hebrew Union College in 2008.

Thanks to her books and her public engagement, she has become a prominent voice in the public debate in the country.

In her writings, Horvilleur addresses questions related to contemporary issues, feminism and innovative readings of traditional Jewish texts.

In 2015, the rabbi was called to eulogize one of victims of the Charlie Hebdo slaughter, Elsa Cayat, a Jewish psychiatrist who wrote a column for the satirical magazine.

In 2018, she officiated – together with France’s (Orthodox) Chief Rabbi Haim Korsia – at the funeral of Simone Veil, an Auschwitz survivor who became a prominent French political leader and the first woman to serve as the president of the European Parliament.

Horvilleur has met with French President Emmanuel Macron to discuss questions related to religious extremism.

She has also steadily denounced the rise of antisemitism within French society, including by authoring a book about it – In Reflexions sur la Question Antisemite – in 2019.

“The fight against antisemitism is not just a problem of the Jews, it is something that must mobilize the whole of French society,” she said in a 2018 interview after the murder of 85-year-old Holocaust survivor Mireille Knoll.

“There is no longer just the traditional far-right antisemitism,” she added. “The new development is represented by the children of Arab-Muslim immigrants, fueled by sermons from some religious leaders. Mine is a very provocative view, but we need to face it. Only someone blind can deny that there is a new growing antisemitism among these young people.”

By ROSELLA TERCATIN