

THE WEEKLY PRINT

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APRIL 28, 2026

Adeena Sussman's new cookbook spotlights simple cooking for complicated times

'I had this concept that I put forth for myself, everything should have 12 or fewer ingredients, and I wanted to use very minimal pots and pans,' Sussman told JI of her book, 'Zariz: 100 Easy, Breezy, Tel Aviv-y Recipes'

By Melissa Weiss

Adeena Sussman's Tel Aviv kitchen is a chef's dream. The long marble countertop next to the stove extends out from the gas range, perfect for preparing ingredients, pouring drinks and entertaining. A set of sharp knives is held in place by a magnetic holder affixed to the wall, while another set sits in a block on the counter. A bright red juicer stands next to the window. Hebrew and English cookbooks neatly line a shelf under the coffee presses and dried pasta, as well as additional shelves around the kitchen.

"This is my safe room," Sussman half-jokingly tells *Jewish Insider*. Her actual safe room — called a *mamad* in Hebrew — is a floor below, used frequently during the war with Iran, in the midst of which JI visited the cookbook author last month, weeks before the release of her third book, *Zariz: 100 Easy, Breezy, Tel Aviv-y Recipes*, which was released on Tuesday.

"This is where I live," Sussman said of her kitchen. "I get up in the morning, the first thing I do is come in here and make coffee and survey the fridge and decide what I'm going to cook or eat for breakfast for myself, and also just kind of commune with the space. It's a really great place for me."

The first sentence of the introduction of *Zariz* begins: "When the going gets tough, the cooking gets easy." Sussman began writing the book in the weeks after the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas terror attacks, amid regular rocket fire that frequently sent Israelis, including Sussman, who made aliyah in 2016, to their shelters.

"It's simple cooking for complicated times," Sussman explained of the book's origins. Nearly two and a half years after she began writing the book, "it hasn't gotten any less complicated."

Indeed, hours before JI was set to arrive at Sussman's home, she sent a version of a

text message that far too many Israelis sent or received during the six-week war with Iran: "There was a direct hit right near the house," she wrote, minutes after a cluster munition struck a building in her neighborhood.

She was OK, she said, and about to head to the shuk, which had gone back to its normal lively state minutes after Israel's Homefront Command notified Tel Avivians they could reemerge from their bomb shelters.

The shuk — an open-air market with fish, meat, produce and dairy vendors, as well as stalls selling tchotchkes, clothing and ready-to-eat food — is where Sussman does her shopping, and where she picked up the ingredients that day to make one of the dishes from *Zariz*: a preserved lemon, asparagus and cherry tomato orzotto (think orzo, but cooked in broth and given the risotto treatment).

The orzotto had a total preparation and cooking time of 30 minutes, and just a

handful of ingredients beyond basic kitchen staples. That's the vibe of *Zariz* — both the book and the Hebrew word itself: easy and agile.

"I had this concept that I put forth for myself, everything should have 12 or fewer ingredients, and I wanted to use very minimal pots and pans," Sussman said as she toasted the orzo in a pan. "Making simple recipes is definitely more complicated, because every ingredient and every technique and everything has to have maximum impact."

Limiting herself to a set number of ingredients — "fewer than a 'bat mitzvah,'" she writes in the book's introduction — was "a very intellectual exercise," she told JI. "I actually enjoyed having those guardrails, especially because I had very limited mental bandwidth then."

Sussman's books — she's written or cowritten more than a dozen in total, including three on her own — lean into local ingredients and what's fresh in the moment.

"When you ask at the shuk when things are seasonally available, they respond by holiday, not by month," she explained. "They'll say, 'Asparagus is between Tu B'Shvat and Pesach, and *rimonim* (pomegranates) are Rosh Hashanah — [it's a] very cool, very Israel-specific phenomenon."

Many of the recipes in *Zariz* — like in her previous books *Shabbat: Recipes and Rituals from My Table to Yours* and *Sababa: Fresh, Sunny Flavors From My Israeli Kitchen* — lean into local ingredients familiar to Israelis, but are also easy to find at American supermarkets and specialty stores in the U.S.

"The Israeli pantry is my pantry," she said. "Through all my books, the idea is that everyone gets familiar with this table of ingredients and that this is how I cook, and this is how I want people to cook. This is how this country cooks, and it's multicultural, and the influences come from everywhere: Arab, Jewish, and the dozens of immigrant groups that comprise the fabric of the food here. And it's very unique."

That's what she thinks many outside of Israel fail to understand about the country's food scene — and it's something she hopes to change.

"The shuk itself is like a late motif of life in Israel. Like when there's an Arab holiday, 30% of people aren't working there," she said. "Now I know when Coptic Easter is because I have Eritrean friends who live in the shuk who celebrate it. And same with Ramadan and related holidays."

The book combines local flavors with classic Western tastes: an onion dip made with labneh, guacamole with corn and *schug* (a spicy green sauce with origins in

Yemen), a cheesy gnocchi with added heat from harissa paste.

But where *Zariz* differs from previous books is its focus on recipes that are faster, to account for having less time to grocery shop, prepare and cook — the reality of life for Israelis in wartime.

"The whole idea of this book was easy things that don't lack for flavor or depth. It's more relevant than ever," Sussman said. "The recipes are not stupid simple. I still want you to have all the sensory pleasures of cooking, you know, like sizzling, stirring."

Shortly after sitting down to eat Sussman's fresh-off-the-stove orzotto, Israel's Homefront Command sent out an alert notifying those in central Israel, which includes Tel Aviv, of an impending Iranian missile attack. (Sussman's *mamad* is, as one would expect, cozy and full of snacks.)

"The *mamad* is like a necessary evil," she said. But the kitchen remains "a pleasure."

In a time when routines are hard to come by, and when, until the implementation of the ceasefire earlier this month, plans were frequently disrupted by missile attacks, *Zariz* is a reminder that cooking doesn't have to be difficult or time-consuming.

"One of the beautiful things about cooking," Sussman said, is that "cooking creates habits for you. The idea of having to make daily meals, you can view it as a chore, but then you can also view it as a privilege and pleasure, and also a method of self-care." ♦

APRIL 28, 2026

L.A.'s nondenominational Kadima Day School to shutter after yearslong funding crisis

The school's primary — nearly sole — funder announced last year that he would no longer support the school after it failed to expand its donor base, attract students

By Ayala Or-El

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

Los Angeles' nondenominational Kadima Day School is shutting down at the end of the school year and hopes to sell its campus to another Jewish day school, in light of growing finan-

cial struggles and diminishing enrollment, the institution informed parents, staff and other stakeholders this week.

The closure comes less than a year after the pre-K-8 school announced that it was in a financial crisis after its primary — and nearly sole — donor, board member Shawn Evenhaim, decided to halt his funding over

growing frustration that the school was overly reliant on him and had failed to expand its donor base.

"Kadima is participating in final negotiations with potential buyers," read the school's letter, which was sent on April 24. "We are hopeful that Jewish education will remain at 7011 Shoup Avenue and that the

students, families, and faculty will have an opportunity to be welcomed to a new community as they will be disenfranchised by Kadima's closure."

Last May, when Evenhaim cut his support, he warned the school, many of whose roughly 180 students come from L.A.'s Israeli expat community, that it was not financially sustainable and should not open for the 2025-2026 academic year. The board chose to proceed anyway, raising nearly \$900,000 through a tenacious fundraising campaign, featuring Israeli celebrities. But the school was not able to turn that emergency effort into lasting support.

"This didn't start a year ago," Evenhaim told eJP. "I've been warning for years that the school wasn't financially sustainable. No one should rely on a single donor, and if that donor stops contributing, and you don't have enough students, you have to shut down."

There are currently about 180 students enrolled at the school. Evenhaim estimates that 50-60 of them are in early childhood education, with the remainder in kindergarten through eighth grade.

Evenhaim, an Israeli American real estate developer, helped purchase the Shoup Avenue property in 2004. Including the funds that he gave for the acquisition, he has since donated \$10 million to the school and provided an additional \$6 million in loans.

Those loans have not been repaid, and the school has struggled to meet its mortgage payments, as well as cover salaries and suppliers. The financial strain led to staff reductions and a planned 8% cut in teacher salaries, though this was later walked back.

Evenhaim, whose three children attended the school, said his decision to stop providing financial support — after 20 years — came after concluding the school would not recover. "They dug themselves a hole they didn't know how to come out of," he said. "They used to call me on Tuesday and ask for \$200,000 by Friday because they needed to pay salaries. It happened a few times."

Evenhaim said the loans eventually grew to \$6 million.

On May 27, 2025, he decided he would no longer continue supporting the school. In a

letter to the board, he wrote that when he first became involved, he did not expect to be the sole supporter but hoped others in the Jewish and Israeli American community would also contribute. "But it never happened," he said. "We found ourselves almost alone in carrying the financial responsibility of keeping Kadima open."

Kadima's head of school, Jerry Shapiro, told eJP that he hoped the campus would remain a Jewish day school to provide the local children a Jewish education.

"Throughout millennia, we've been taught — and we've learned — that, *Talmud Torah k'negged kulam*, that Jewish education is more important than anything else," Shapiro said. "In this light, the closing of a Jewish Day School is a deeply sad and troubling moment, for those students and families affected today, and for all of those who would have experienced Jewish learning in the years to come. There will undoubtedly be various perspectives to share as to how this came to be, but for now, it is our fervent hope that our students will find a place of enthusiastic Jewish learning at another area-wide Jewish school, and that they'll retain the passion and love for Judaism and Zionism that was inculcated at Kadima."

Months into the school year, concerns among staff grew. In interviews earlier this year, several teachers said that they had begun looking for new jobs.

"We don't know if we'll open next year or if we'll even be able to finish the school year," one teacher told eJP, speaking on condition of anonymity. "It's very stressful. We have mortgages and bills to pay."

The school tried to find a buyer to take on the bond in order to remain on the campus. After those efforts were unsuccessful, it sent an email to teachers and parents last week announcing the closure.

Evenhaim said that a year ago he had proposed selling the school to a slightly more religious Jewish institution, but the board rejected the offer, saying it did not align with Kadima's educational approach.

Now, he said, at least two potential buyers are interested in the campus. "Had they accepted my suggestion back then, they wouldn't be where they are today, but they simply waited too long," Evenhaim said.

The developer and philanthropist, who is the founder and CEO of the L.A.-based Balaciano Group, said that two schools interested in acquiring Kadima have asked for his help, and that he plans to provide a one-time significant donation to support whichever one ultimately acquires the campus.

"I want to ensure there will still be a Jewish school there. I want to save Jewish education," he said.

When asked why he did not continue supporting Kadima but chose to help the new schools interested in acquiring the campus, he pointed to what he described as a lack of financial viability. "When you continue supporting a failing business, it won't succeed no matter how much money you invest in it," he said. "Unfortunately, they brought the school to where it is today. The other schools interested in the purchase have more students, better resources and a strong track record. They won't need to come to me each year for donations."

Evenhaim also addressed rumors that he plans to reclaim the property for development, saying he has no such intention. "If I had wanted to do that, I would have done it back in 2004 when we purchased it," he said. "I believe in Jewish education and want the place to continue functioning as a Jewish school."

Kadima was first established in 1970 by Rabbi Eli Schochet. In its first year, the school had fewer than 10 students. Over the years, it grew and moved through several locations before settling in West Hills, where it is now located on the Evenhaim Family Campus.

In an effort to attract more students, Evenhaim had offered reduced tuition. But even the approximately \$16,000 annual tuition was not enough to generate a significant increase in enrollment.

"People recently asked me if I regret giving so much money to the school," Evenhaim said. "And it's not only money — I've invested thousands of hours in the school. But I don't regret it for a second. In the past 20-plus years, we have made an impact on so many Jewish students, and I truly hope this campus will continue serving the community as a Jewish school. It would be a shame if it doesn't." ♦

APRIL 28, 2026

Acting Labor Secretary Keith Sonderling guided by Holocaust survivor grandparents

'My interest in protecting all Americans' rights in the workplace is undoubtedly shaped by my grandparents,' said Sonderling, who assumed leadership of the agency last week after Lori Chavez-DeRemer's resignation

By Gabby Deutch

Keith Sonderling's path to leading the Department of Labor, a role he assumed last week, was relatively straightforward, professionally speaking — an upward climb from employment lawyer to government service, in a series of increasingly senior roles.

But for Sonderling, working to set American labor policy has a more personal resonance, too. He said in his Senate confirmation hearing to serve as deputy secretary that his Jewish grandparents faced religious discrimination at work once they arrived in the United States, after surviving the Holocaust.

"Although more than willing to work, my grandparents lost employment opportunities based solely on their religious beliefs and life circumstances," Sonderling, 43, said last year. "It was only through their tenacity and relentless hard work that they overcame the barriers put before them, ultimately paving the path for me to appear here, before you, today."

For the past year, since the Senate voted him in as deputy secretary, Sonderling has managed the day-to-day operations of the department's \$14 billion budget and its 16,000 employees. Now Sonderling finds himself somewhat unexpectedly leading the department, which has vast reach over employment policies and labor issues, after Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer resigned last week amid an investigation into allegations of misconduct.

Sonderling's promotion to acting secretary elevates a relatively young policy wonk with traditional conservative bona fides, though Sonderling has also earned the respect of some liberals who view him as less rigidly ideological, even as he generally

hews to the pro-employer positions of the modern Republican Party.

"I got the impression that throwing bombs against plaintiffs lawyers and against workers is not his style," Matt Scherer, an employment lawyer who is a fellow at the center-left Open Markets Institute, told *Jewish Insider*. "I think he is, in many ways, kind of a traditional Republican, in the sense that he wants there to be free markets. He wants employers to have a certain amount of leeway with their employees. But he also seems sincere in wanting to help workers."

Sonderling, who grew up in Boca Raton, Fla., got his start in Republican politics not through the world of Mar-a-Lago but rather a more traditional GOP path: through the world of Jeb Bush. Sonderling was on the national Jewish leadership committee for the former Florida governor's 2016 presidential campaign. It was at a Jewish outreach event for Bush that Sonderling met his wife, Fara, a lobbyist. The pair were married in 2019 in Jerusalem.

The Labor Department is not the splashiest government posting, or at least is not the federal body that usually garners the most headlines. But its policy guidance affects millions of American workers, meaning the person who leads it has the capacity to be incredibly influential. (Sonderling declined a request for comment from *JL*.)

During President Donald Trump's first term, Sonderling was best known for a major decision governing gig workers, like Uber and Lyft drivers. The Trump administration deemed these workers to be contractors, rather than full-time employees, when Sonderling led the department's division governing wage and working-hours laws.

He is best known in recent years for his foresight in weighing in on artificial intelligence and the disruption it is expected to cause in the workplace. Sonderling was appointed to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 2020, a role he held until his term expired in 2024 — and used his perch at the federal anti-discrimination agency to warn about how AI technology could lead to discrimination in hiring and other workplace decisions if employers aren't careful.

He also used his time on the EEOC to educate the public about antisemitism. As part of the Biden administration's 2023 national strategy to counter antisemitism, Sonderling helped author an EEOC informational flier about what an employer should do if they have experienced antisemitism at work. (Before moving to Washington in 2017, Sonderling had been involved with the Jewish Federation in Palm Beach County.)

"Unfortunately, people don't check their anti-Jewish attitudes at the door when they enter work," Sonderling said at a November 2023 webinar hosted by the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington. "There are so many people who believe ... that there can't be antisemitism in the workplace because Jewish people 'control' all these industries, whether it's Hollywood, whether it's the bank, whether it's government, finance. You see it across the board. But that is still workplace harassment."

Trump has not yet said whether he will formally nominate Sonderling to serve as labor secretary.

"Keith Sonderling will do a really great job as acting secretary and would be a great pick to handle the job permanently as well," said Ken Marcus, a former Trump adminis-

tration official who hosted Sonderling on a 2022 webinar for the organization he founded, the Louis D. Brandeis Center, which uses litigation to combat antisemitism at schools and universities.

Sonderling could conceivably stay in the role even without receiving Senate approval — under former President Joe Biden, Julie Su served as acting labor secretary for nearly two years when her nomination stalled in the Senate. And unlike some of Trump's other Cabinet secretaries, Sonder-

ling has so far avoided drama in his years in the government.

"He's a very important person and someone that the president trusts with an incredibly important agency like the Department of Labor, and yet, relatively speaking, he's kind of young by Washington standards," said Gerald L. Maatman, Jr., a Chicago-based employment lawyer at the law firm Duane Morris. "I would think people would say that is a person to keep an eye on."

Sonderling said in his confirmation hearing last year that his guiding principle is to help American workers achieve the American dream. It's a view shaped by his grandparents' post-Holocaust journey.

"My interest in protecting all Americans' rights in the workplace is undoubtedly shaped by my grandparents," Sonderling said, "who, despite suffering unspeakable tragedies, were able to achieve the American Dream." ♦

APRIL 27, 2026

From wartime deficits to workforce integration: Aaron Institute's Eckstein examines Israel's economy

Zvi Eckstein warns that the country needs economic reforms to pay for its increased defense spending and prevent Israelis from fleeing abroad

By Justin Hayet

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

As Israel continues to maneuver through an era of profound regional — and internal — instability, the economy is emerging as the "eighth front," a theater as critical to national survival as the seven military ones, according to Zvi Eckstein, head of the Aaron Institute for Economic Policy at Reichman University and former Bank of Israel deputy governor.

According to Eckstein, the nation's long-term financial health is being tested in ways not seen since the Second Intifada in the early 2000s, pointing to historic highs in defense spending and the complex pressures of a strong shekel as primary stressors. With these forces defining the current moment, Eckstein warns that the country's fiscal resilience has reached a pivotal threshold.

Eckstein argues that the shekel's historic highs present a complex challenge. He explains that an "excess supply of dollars," driven by a high-tech sector that accounts for 57% of exports, keeps the currency strong despite wartime pressures. However, Eckstein points out a stark contrast on the ground: While Israel ranks among the top 15 globally in nominal GDP, its citizens face a

cost of living 30% higher than that of other average advanced nations.

Against this backdrop, the Aaron Institute is convening its annual conference on Tuesday — a two-day deep dive into the 2027 budget, the country's cost-of-living crisis and the potential economic growth that the greater integration of Arab and Haredi Israelis into the workforce will yield for the economy. The conference will feature a prestigious roster of experts, including Nobel Laureates Daron Acemoglu and Joel Mokyr, as well as Bank of Israel Governor Amir Yaron.

Eckstein spoke with *eJewishPhilanthropy* ahead of the conference, offering a sober look at Israel's wartime economy. Beyond the fiscal burden of war and the shifting demographic fears of a "brain drain," he outlined the country's historical economic rhythms and current-day forces that define this moment — and Israel's economic future.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Justin Hayet: *This is the Aaron Institute's 11th annual conference, and while each year has its own "hot topics," the current economic situation feels uniquely heightened by more than two years of war. Given the massive scale of these events, what are the fiscal challenges*

posed by the conflict, and how do you see it impacting Israel's national expenditures and economic stability moving forward?

Zvi Eckstein: We are facing huge expenditures from the war. Through 2023, 2024 and 2025, [Israel's] spending was running around 8% of GDP, which requires the government to issue debt. The main challenge is the uncertainty of whether the war will continue across military fronts in Lebanon, Iran and Gaza. This generates a demand for military action and costs that simply were not there before Oct. 7, [2023]. The question is how to balance the budget to maintain a high quality of life so people do not leave Israel.

We built a macro model based on the necessity of military expenditure being higher than the pre-Oct. 7 rate of 4.5%. During the war, these expenditures doubled, generating a huge debt. Another challenge is funding the expenditures needed to renew stocks of ammunition and interceptors to prepare for the next round with Iran and to renew army units. We need a larger army expenditure over the next several years. The key is determining what economic reforms we can generate to have a higher growth and income rate to fund these expenditures and achieve stability in the medium and long run.

JH: *While we hear about acquisitions in the startup arena, we also hear about some of Israel's smartest minds leaving in a "brain drain." What is the current situation regarding demographics and this trend?*

ZE: If you look at the stock market, [Israelis] are optimistic; if you compare the value of stocks to profits, Israeli stocks are expensive. However, there is the topic of [the] "brain drain." Middle-aged professionals — doctors and high-tech workers — see the danger through the war and have high opportunities in many other countries. Usually, there is a movement of Israelis going abroad and then coming back. Before 2023, more people were coming back than leaving. Since 2023, the number of Israelis who left versus those coming back has switched from a positive to a negative. It went from positive 20,000 people to negative 40,000 people. This net effect has changed, and it is worrisome.

JH: *The shekel is at historic highs. How do the currency and high-tech sector impact the economy?*

ZE: As a child, the big problem was that the currency was always depreciating, but since 2004, the high-tech sector has driven a massive growth period. Today, 95% of the sector is export-based and highly competitive, drawing Israel's top talent.

High-tech now accounts for 57% of total exports and 20% of the GDP — higher than any other country, including the U.S. Because the industry is so profitable, production continues even as the shekel strengthens. This sector flourished during COVID and throughout the war; even with many workers in the reserves, production has increased due to AI. Since our exports exceed our imports, there is an excess supply of dollars, which strengthens the shekel. We predict the shekel could [stay at 3 or go] lower in the

near future, though if the S&P 500 jumps, Israelis may move money there, causing the shekel to weaken.

JH: *Your institute prides itself on non-political and data-driven proposals with the potential to unleash economic growth for Israel. What are the proposed reforms for economic stability and the cost of living that you will announce at the conference?*

ZE: We must enhance employment for Arab men and women by improving education and Hebrew-language proficiency. We estimate this would increase the growth rate by an additional 0.4%, based on Israel's GDP of NIS 2 trillion (\$670 billion).

Second, we must address the cost of living. While Israel ranks between 10-15 in GDP among OECD nations, our cost of living is 30% higher than the average of advanced countries. This is a result of bureaucracy and bad planning, particularly in agriculture. We are the only country that subsidizes farmers by price rather than production volume. While Israelis admire farmers, we must find ways to support them without maintaining these market failures. Our final conference session will focus on these main sources of the cost of living, specifically food and housing, to improve the national quality of life.

The path forward depends on the integration of the two sub-populations most critical to our economic and social value: the Arab and ultra-Orthodox communities. We are already seeing a shift toward better integration; interestingly, we have also noted a reduction in interest from donors in supporting ultra-Orthodox causes. If the next government shifts even a modest amount of resources toward workforce integration — with a specific focus on high-tech, AI, transportation and housing — we could see Israel's growth rate reach 3.5-4%. While this

will not solve the underlying political issues, it will return Israel to a much higher quality of civilian life.

JH: *There is often a lot of noise regarding the statements and work of ministers and political appointees, yet your think tank focuses its work at the professional level. What is the role of civil servants in government fiscal and economic policy?*

ZE: Our institute is the most focused, high-quality economic program in the country in terms of actually influencing the professional economists within the government.

We are serious and non-populist. The professionals in the government are not populists either; in fact, the most successful reforms in Israel's history occurred because professionals convinced politicians to adopt new policies.

The history of Israel shows that even major economic policies attributed to leaders like [Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu were actually created by professionals. Perhaps the only major reform driven by politicians was stopping the 1985 inflation crisis — and even then, it was George Shultz, a professor of economics, alongside Stanley Fischer and Herb Stein, who provided the road map to save the economy.

The "rules of the game" have changed on three major occasions: the 1985 hyperinflation, the loan guarantees for immigrants in the early '90s, and the post-Second Intifada period, when the U.S. required Israel to lower expenditures in exchange for debt guarantees. Throughout these shifts, the U.S. has remained economically supportive, but the successful execution of policy always comes back to the influence of Israeli [governmental] professionals. ♦

APRIL 29, 2026

Mallory McMorrow reveals Michigan Democratic activist accosted her husband with antisemitic slur

The Senate candidate shared that her husband, who is Jewish, was verbally attacked in front of their 5-year-old daughter

By Gabby Deutch

An activist at this month's Michigan Democratic Party convention in Detroit screamed an antisemitic slur at the husband of Michigan Senate candidate Mallory McMorrow, in front of the couple's 5-year-old daughter, McMorrow revealed in a radio interview airing Wednesday.

McMorrow, a state senator seeking the Democratic nomination for an open U.S. Senate seat, is not Jewish, but her husband is and their daughter attends a Jewish preschool. The incident occurred at a convention where far-left activists also booed one of her primary opponents, Rep. Haley Stevens (D-MI), a moderate pro-Israel lawmaker.

The third candidate in the race is physician Abdul El-Sayed, a progressive who has a longstanding hostile record towards Israel.

"At the convention a few weeks ago, there was a mood," McMorrow said in an interview with WHMI, a radio station in metro Detroit. "They booed Haley, but there was a man who walked up to my husband and my daughter — I was not there, just my husband and my daughter, and screamed an antisemitic slur at him in his face, in front of my 5-year-old."

On the campaign trail, McMorrow has made a point of trying to cater to both the state's sizable Jewish population and its large Arab population. She described herself in the interview as trying to be "the bridge," while navigating conflicting views that she hears from voters.

"I got in an Uber the other day and unprompted, the man said to me, 'Why is it that this country can afford to drop bombs on other countries, but we can't feed our kids?' There is a truth in that anger that we as a country have to figure out how we solve that," McMorrow said.

But she cautioned that politicians and activists who are unhappy with American policy in the Middle East need to ensure their criticism does not veer into antisemitism.

"I will be the first to say, and I've taken a lot of heat for it — when it crosses the line into antisemitism, I will be the first to say so," said McMorrow. "We have to make space for you to be angry and do so in a way that does not make people feel scared, truly scared, to just exist as a Jewish person in this country."

McMorrow has been endorsed by J Street and pledged not to accept any funding from AIPAC. But she has also taken aim

at El-Sayed for his approach to the Middle East. After he announced that he would hold campaign rallies with the far-left, antisemitic streamer Hasan Piker, McMorrow slammed El-Sayed in an interview with *Jewish Insider* last month.

She reiterated that position to WHMI, although she said she has "no problem" with people who appear on Piker's show if they want to try to reach his audience and push back on his point of view.

"Bringing somebody in to campaign for you implies that you endorse that person's point of view, and it tells your audience that this messaging is who I am," said McMorrow, noting that the timing of Piker's appearance in Michigan was particularly striking, just weeks after the attack on Temple Israel in West Bloomfield.

Asked whether she believes Piker to be antisemitic, McMorrow said no — but added that it almost doesn't matter.

"I don't think that he is. I think he gets dangerously close," she said. "I think there is justifiable anger at the ongoing war. I think a lot of what he says is uninformed and hurtful. I can't purport to speak for what he believes in his heart, but I can tell you, for my family, a lot of what he says is really hurtful." ♦

APRIL 29, 2026

Together but still short: Bennett and Lapid's merger leaves the opposition shy of a majority, polls find

Judging by polls published by six Hebrew-language media outlets after the merger on Sunday, not much has changed since the announcement that Bennett and Lapid were joining forces

By Lahav Harkov

The near-consensus among Israeli political pundits is that the merger of the parties led by former Prime Ministers Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid is a huge moment in the campaign ahead of the next Knesset election, scheduled for Oct. 27.

However, judging by polls published by six major Hebrew-language media outlets after the merger on Sunday, not much has changed since the announcement that Bennett and Lapid were joining forces.

The newly formed "Together" opposition party polled around 24 seats — nearly the same number of seats as the two parties combined before the merger. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Likud party is, according to the average of the latest polls, still the largest party at 29.

According to the latest polling, it would be difficult for either side to build a governing coalition. The opposition Zionist parties did not get a 61-seat majority in any of the six polls. The most favorable poll for the opposition showed the anti-Netanyahu Zionist parties at 60 seats in the 120-seat Knesset, while the current coalition received over 61 seats in two polls (from those commissioned by Channel 14 and I24NEWS, which are more sympathetic to Netanyahu than the other media outlets).

To be sure, polls taken within 24 hours of an event are not the most reliable, and much can change in the six months until the election.

The key question after the Bennett and Lapid merger is whether they are fighting other opposition candidates for dominance

within their bloc — in which case, Bennett has likely solidified his status as Netanyahu's main competition for the premiership — or to broaden the bloc's appeal to win a majority in the Knesset.

Netanyahu famously said in 2018 and many times since, in reference to shifts in the opposition: "I don't intervene in how the left divides up its votes." That quip, made when Bennett was still in the pro-Netanyahu camp, is now reflective of Bennett's weakness.

So far, the polling has shown that Bennett, who was solidly on the right for the first eight years of his political career, will struggle to peel off voters from the right-wing pro-Netanyahu bloc into his camp.

In his last election campaign in 2021, Bennett ran primarily on right-wing messages but ended up leading a coalition of mostly center and left parties, together with an Arab party in the government, something many right-wing voters, as well as two Knesset members who jumped ship, viewed as a betrayal.

Add to that the fact that Lapid is to Bennett's left — something both acknowledged several times in their Sunday night press conference, referring to their "differences" — likely referring to Bennett's support for settlements and opposition to a two-state solution, which Lapid supports. Both candidates emphasized their shared views on domestic policy in response.

Netanyahu has kept mostly quiet about the Bennett-Lapid merger, but his one re-

sponse shows that he will try to widen the wedge between Bennett and the right.

Netanyahu's social media accounts posted an image from 2021 showing Lapid and Bennett sitting with Mansour Abbas, head of Ra'am, the Islamist party in their governing coalition. Ominous music plays in the background, and the words "they already did it once; they will do it again" are splashed across the picture.

The Ra'am factor will also likely be key after the election. The Zionist opposition parties have said mixed things about whether they would be willing to have an Arab non-Zionist party in their coalition in a post-Oct. 7 Israel. Revelations about the Ra'am party's financial and historic ties to Hamas will also likely come up in the campaign.

As of now, the Knesset's three Arab parties have said they will run in a single Joint List this year, as they did in 2015-2021, increasing Arab voter turnout and their representation in the Knesset. Ra'am is the only one of the parties that has to date been willing to sit in a coalition, and unlike Abbas, the other party leaders, Ayman Odeh and Ahmed Tibi, do not accept Israel as a Jewish state.

Because of those realities, Bennett and Lapid's Together party will likely have to make a concerted — and perhaps quixotic — effort to win over right-leaning voters if it wants to increase its bloc and unseat Netanyahu. That task will be easier said than done. ♦

APRIL 21, 2026

In new book, Rachel Goldberg-Polin recounts the before and after (and ever after) of her son's life and death

'When We See You Again,' Goldberg-Polin told JI, is 'a pain-filled love story, or it's a love-filled pain story'

By Melissa Weiss

On Oct. 10, 2023, Rachel Goldberg, an American Israeli woman from Chicago, told a roomful of reporters in Tel Aviv about her last communications — two text messages — from her son, Hersh Goldberg-Polin, that she had received three days prior.

"The first one said, 'I love you' and immediately at 8:11 also it said, 'I'm sorry,'" Goldberg said. "And so I knew immediately wherever he was, it was a terrible situation." Hersh, she would soon learn, had been kidnapped by Hamas terrorists near the Nova Music Festival and taken into Gaza.

As Goldberg spoke about the text messages, a man speaking loudly at the back of the room was shushed by someone near him. It would be among the last times anyone would try to speak over Rachel Goldberg.

She would soon become known as Rachel Goldberg-Polin, or, almost as often: Hersh's mom. And for more than 300 days, she and her husband, Jon, traversed the globe as they worked to secure their son's freedom from captivity in Gaza before he was killed in August 2024 by his Hamas captors.

In the months after their son's death, the Goldberg-Polins, who had for nearly a year been the faces of hope and persistence, became the faces of a unique kind of grief — one that they experienced in the public eye.

Goldberg-Polin recounts some of those moments in her new book, *When We See You Again*, a chronicle of her life before, during and after her son's captivity and murder.

"I think people don't know what to expect," she told *Jewish Insider* days before the release of *When We See You Again*, which comes out on Tuesday. "I know that, because people are writing, 'Oh my gosh,

I'm so excited,' and I'm thinking, 'Oh gosh, you are not excited. This is, like, not a fun read.'"

When We See You Again is separated into five parts, beginning with "The Before" and "The After," which follow the Goldberg-Polin family's life in the U.S. and then in Israel, where they moved in 2008, through Hersh's murder, until the final day of the shiva.

The later parts — "Lost in The After," "Still in The After" and "Ever After," which comprise the majority of the book — detail Goldberg-Polin's life as a bereaved mother navigating the world as one of what she calls "The Broken."

"I don't think of this book at all as a memoir or a tell-all," she told JI. "It's like little Tupperware of pieces of a life that was, and then figuring out a life that is, and how do you do this? How do we do this, breathing in a world where we no longer have air?"

She had started writing because she found it therapeutic. "I couldn't bear the intensity of the suffering that I was carrying; [it] was making my knees buckle and my soul buckle," Goldberg-Polin explained. "And I just really couldn't shoulder it on my own, and so I was just writing." It felt, she said, like "when you're just drowning because there's too much [and you have] to just get it out, to spill it out."

Between the stories and anecdotes from the nearly 11 months she and her husband spent advocating for the release of the hostages, followed by the year of mourning after Hersh's death, Goldberg-Polin intersperses vignettes from her childhood in Chicago, details about the family's life as they adjusted to life in Israel and the Jewish teachings that have guided her.

She even reflects on the decision to change her last name to match her son's, comparing it to the moment the biblical

Jacob's name was changed to Israel, after a tussle with a mysterious figure that causes him to walk with a limp for the rest of his life.

"I think of Jacob becoming Israel as I limp forward," Goldberg-Polin writes, "noting all of the ways I, too, have been transformed, but also searching for the blessing this crisis must give me, looking for opportunities for birth and light."

Something that has touched her in the 20 months since Hersh's death is the vast number of people who have experienced loss who have made contact with her.

"Since Hersh was killed, we've had thousands and thousands and thousands of people from all different backgrounds and all different faiths and all different brands and all different spectrums who have reached out to share their pain and not commiserate, but sort of to come together in this enterprise of the human condition of loss."

She feels especially close to the families of the five others who were killed alongside Hersh in that tunnel in Gaza — a group of young people now referred to as the "Beautiful Six": Eden Yerushalmi, Carmel Gat, Almog Sarusi, Alexander Lobanov and Ori Danino. When they were found after their executions, Yerushalmi's body was leaning on Hersh's lap.

"There are literally five families on earth who've walked the path we've walked, and I'm grateful that I know they just breathe the way I breathe, so I don't even have to talk to them every day in order to know that they get it," she said. "They they know my torture, they know my torment, they know my pain. They know my misery."

As someone who spent the majority of her life as a private person, she has struggled with the fame that has come with her public fight, which often includes being

recognized while out and about with her family. Sometimes it's a wave from a stranger. Other times it's a conversation.

"When people do approach us and say these heartfelt, gorgeous words of comfort and connection, I am truly thankful for the benevolence," she said. "It's me that's broken. It's not them. They're being human. I am trying to figure out how to behave in a normal way."

"When people say, like, 'We're with you,' I literally act like a crazy person. Because I am a crazy person. I'm a crazy person. I actually thought, well, I have a disorder, and what is the etymology, the root of 'disorder'? It is 'not in order.' I'm not in order. You know what? Burying Hersh was out of order for me. I didn't want that order."

Those who know Goldberg-Polin have known since Oct. 7, 2023, not to ask her, "How are you?" (In the book, she shares that she and her father will jokingly ask the other the question and prompt them, "Lie to me," garnering the response, "Dandy!")

For her, the book is the answer to that question. "This book is saying, 'I know you don't see it, and I really don't blame you for not seeing it, and I didn't see it.' I haven't seen it before. I've met people who are bereaved, who are grieving, who are suffering, who are mourning, and I didn't say the right thing because I didn't get it either."

"If someone was born blind," she continued, "they don't know what the color blue is, and it's very difficult for someone who knows what the color blue is to describe it

to someone who has never seen it. And the book is my attempt to describe blue. It's my attempt to describe pain."

"This is simply me giving over my love and my pain, and I hope that maybe people just understand me a little bit more, maybe understand people who are suffering and really in grief and mourning more, and I don't know that it has to do anything beyond that."

Ultimately, Goldberg-Polin said, "I think that it's a book about two things. I think it's about love and pain. It's a pain-filled love story, or it's a love-filled pain story, and that's what the book is." ♦

APRIL 30, 2026

L.A. school district recognizes Jewish American Heritage Month after Noa Tishby push

The second-largest school system in the country also embraced curriculum based on Tishby's YouTube series teaching kids about Judaism, antisemitism, the Holocaust and Israel

By Haley Cohen

The Los Angeles Unified School District unanimously passed its first-ever resolution recognizing May as Jewish American Heritage Month, embracing a new educational curriculum on Judaism and Israel provided by Israeli activist and author Noa Tishby.

Designed for middle and high schoolers, the curriculum is based on Noa Tishby's eight-episode YouTube series, "What is?," which explores topics including Judaism, antisemitism, the Holocaust and Israel.

"We decided the series needed to be a curriculum in schools," Tishby, founder of the nonprofit media company Eighteen and Israel's former special envoy for combating antisemitism, told *Jewish Insider*. When she found out that the LAUSD had never recognized JAHM, Tishby reached out to a Los Angeles educator to create a curriculum based on parts of her video series.

Tishby, who lives in LA, then connected with LAUSD School Board Member Nick

Melvoin to draft the resolution, which was co-sponsored by Board Member Sherlett Hendy Newbill and Board President Scott Schmerelson.

The resolution passed with full support on April 21.

LAUSD, the second largest school district in the country after New York City, honors cultural heritage months including Black History Month in February, but has never formally acknowledged Jewish American Heritage Month. Several other school districts, such as NYC Public Schools and Berkeley Unified, also promote curricula, books and resources to celebrate the month.

"I think at this time with rising antisemitism and knowing that education is the best antidote, it was important to commemorate May as Jewish American Heritage Month and make sure it's more than symbolism, with those resources that Noa created," Melvoin told JI. "There are [exist-

ing] resources even prior to the resolution around the contributions of Jewish Americans. But I thought at this time, given the climate [of antisemitism], it's important to be more explicit about it."

As a supplement to the curriculum, the Jewish Federation Los Angeles plans to promote a poster series celebrating Jewish Americans to be distributed to public schools.

A spokesperson for the Weitzman National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia told JI that the museum, which spearheads Jewish American Heritage Month, is "thrilled to hear that LAUSD, one of the largest school districts in America, is adopting JAHM, a federally recognized annual celebration that is held every May and powered by The Weitzman. This move is especially meaningful as we celebrate America's 250th [anniversary]."

Tishby recalled being "shocked" that she only learned about the month's existence a

few years ago, despite President George W. Bush issuing the first presidential proclamation designating it as such in 2006.

"I was blown away," she told *JL*. "Jewish American Heritage Month is suffering from very low PR, and it's not celebrated as much as it should be. We're trying to make it more visible ... There's never been an LA resolution that actually acknowledges this month at all."

The resolution comes as the LAUSD, which serves more than 560,000 students across Los Angeles County, has been accused of failing to address antisemitism — including in teachers' unions. The district was named in a February lawsuit that highlighted several complaints from Jewish parents and children in districts across California.

While the resolution cannot require schools to implement the curriculum, Mel-

voin said he's "pretty confident" that many will adopt it. "This is where collaborations with folks like Noa and her network and parent leadership [helps]," he said.

"We want to make sure the Jewish community, which stands with others historically through celebrations and commemorations, also has an opportunity to be celebrated and appreciated," said Melvoin. "There was no pushback. The board passed it unanimously, and the district staff will work to implement it by making sure there are resources available to districts and schools."

"In L.A., there was a sense that Jewish educators and parents didn't have to be vocal, because we felt comfortable," he continued. "Since Oct. 7, and even before, Jewish educators and parents have felt galvanized to demand better."

Given the heavy workload teachers already face, Melvoin said the resolution is not "explicit with [demanding how much time] they must spend covering this. But the spirit of the resolutions is this is something that will be commemorated [every] May."

"If we hear anecdotally from teachers and parents that it wasn't as celebrated as it needs to be, then next year I'll be a little more prescriptive about what needs to happen," he said.

Tishby added, "As a Jewish community, we have not taken a seat at the table. We have kind of kept to ourselves, and I don't think that's true for where we are right now. We need to claim our seat at the table, and a part of that is to acknowledge that just like any other ethnicity, race or minority, we have this month, and we would love to teach you about us." ♦

APRIL 28, 2026

Judge Roy Altman, in new book, takes on Israel critics, one legal claim at a time

Altman, a Venezuelan-born Jewish jurist, decided to apply the same legal methodology that judges, lawyers and juries have deployed in courtrooms for centuries to address legal accusations being wielded against Israel

By Haley Cohen

While TikTok and X algorithms make it harder than ever for Americans to distinguish fact from fiction, a courtroom setting changes everything. Summoned to the jury box, citizens are "given the tools they need as human beings to be able to assess questions properly," U.S. District Judge for the Southern District of Florida Roy Altman told *Jewish Insider*.

Altman, a Venezuelan-born Jewish jurist, decided to apply the same legal methodology that judges, lawyers and juries have deployed in courtrooms across America for centuries to address six legal accusations being wielded against Israel by its detractors.

Those include claims that Israel's founding was illegitimate or aberrational; that

Israel has prevented the establishment of a Palestinian state; that Jews are colonists in the land of Israel; that Israel was occupying Gaza (and had turned Gaza into an open-air prison or a concentration camp) before the Oct. 7, 2023, terrorist attacks; and that the Jewish state has committed genocide and apartheid.

Altman explores each of those claims in a new book called *Israel On Trial: Examining the History, the Evidence and the Law*, released on Tuesday. Each of those claims about the State of Israel, which the book describes as "compelling — almost intoxicating" arguments, gets its own chapter, which reads like a legal brief that is written for a lay audience. Each culminates with a conclusion, grounded in the law.

Altman sat down with *JL*, just ahead of the book's release, to make the case for examining Israel through a legal lens.

This interview has been condensed and edited for clarity.

Jewish Insider: *How does making the case for Israel using courtroom standards and the rules of evidence differ from the way traditional advocates for Israel — political activists, Jewish organizational professionals, politicians, etc. — make their case?*

Roy Altman: Each of these claims is at their core a legal claim that requires legal analysis just like any contested legal claim in any courtroom across America. So I thought to myself, why not just apply the same legal methodology that judges, lawyers and juries have been applying in every courtroom and law office around this coun-

try for 250 years, a time tested methodology that we know we trust because we use it when truth telling matters most in our courtrooms?

Legal questions allow us to pair back the vitriol, emotion, bias and prejudice. That's what we do with jurors every day in this country. For hundreds of thousands of years, human beings have been accustomed to living in small groups. It was really important in the context of that environment to tell the truth and for the group as a whole to be able to decide whether the person was telling the truth. We did that by using three basic tools. [First,] deciding things as a group, which is helpful because one person might have a bias or prejudice, but when everyone is together those biases are thinned out. Second, we did it face to face. Third, we did it one issue at a time. Using those three techniques over hundreds of thousands of years we developed some time-tested rules for deciding whether something was credible.

What happens in our courtrooms is we tap into those hundreds of thousands of years of human evolution. We bring people who at home, all the data shows, are really bad at discerning truth on their TikTok feed. That's because they violate all of the techniques that we use: they do it alone, over a screen with an overwhelming tidal wave of information at a time that your brain isn't equipped to handle.

In the jury box, we take 12 people who individually are really bad at discerning truth from fiction on their phones, and we sit them together and revert them in historical evolutionary time. We tell them they are going to make the most momentous decisions in our society, all together, face to face looking at the witnesses. And [they're dealing with] one issue at a time.

The judge and the lawyers give the jury that methodology, the truth guide called jury instructions, which are just a set of rules for assessing the credibility of people and the reliability of evidence that have been tested [based on] those three techniques. Those people are not biologically or psychologically different than they were when they couldn't tell truth from fiction on their phone. But when they get together as a group, I am constantly astonished by the

extent to which we give them extremely complicated work — patent cases, antitrust cases — and they get the answers completely right. It's not because they're smarter. It's because they are being given the tools they need as human beings to be able to assess questions properly.

These questions about Israel should be assessed properly, just like the questions in our courtrooms.

JJ: *What is your religious and cultural background with respect to Israel?*

RA: My father was in the Israeli Air Force. He went to Israel when he was 18 from Venezuela. My mother went to Israel when she was 17 from Colombia. Her father had a wife and five children in Poland, my mother's half-brothers and sisters, all killed in the gas chambers at Auschwitz. So my parents met and married in Israel and then moved to Venezuela where I was born. We moved to America when I was a kid. We grew up going to Israel in the summertime. It's a very special and inspiring place.

I'm a religious person, a man of faith. We have dinner at the house every Friday night. I went to Jewish day school, my kids went to Jewish day school, my dad went to Jewish day school, so it's a deep part of our identity.

JJ: *You began leading trips to Israel for federal judges in the wake of Oct. 7. Why do you organize these missions and what impacts have you seen from these trips?*

RA: One of the things we learned is that our judges are inspired by the resilience of the Israeli people. People who are willing to stand up and defend western values ... willing to do that with love for one another and optimism about their future.

The judges have come back and seen what the truth on the ground is. So many of these judges are not Jewish and have never been to Israel before. They go around their own states when they come back presenting to law clerks and friends.

Federal judges across America are not perceived as being political, we're neutral arbiters of contested claims. So when federal judges come back from any scenario and say this is what it's like, people tend to listen.

JJ: *Who are some of your mentors and role models among prominent lawyers and*

judges who have been strong American Zionists?

RA: The judge I clerked for, Judge Stanley Marcus, taught me that the American legal tradition really harkens back not to the English common law system, but the ancient Jewish tradition under the law.

We allow decisions to percolate through common law jurisprudence over many decades and centuries from people from different walks of life and diverse backgrounds making these decisions. When you're a lawyer you can look to this body of law. We don't say 'this is the right answer,' 'that's the wrong answer,' we say, 'Here are what the different scholars say, you pick the answer that's right for you.' That sounds just like the Talmud. That's also foundational to the character of America ... and the Israeli mindset.

Foundationally, philosophically, morally, Israel and America are two places where traditionally human beings are given the most important choices in their civil society, precisely because their governments trust them enough to make the right choices, because their populations are infused with this character of virtue.

JJ: *AI is being increasingly used by judges to help them sift through massive amounts of evidence and trial testimony and even help with crafting decisions. Can AI play a similar role in helping to defeat misinformation about Israel, especially on social media?*

RA: I think so, but AI cuts both ways. To the extent that AI is valuable, it's only as valuable as the inputs that are placed into it. To the extent that you've got millions of pieces of information that are false on the internet, all of those pieces of information are fed into the box that produces the knowledge base foundational to how large language models work. So we need to be careful about the things we put in because those will be outputs through AI on the backend.

People are no longer capable — because they're no longer scrutinizing the information being provided to them the way a juror would — and because the fake information is being provided in such a realistic way, to discern what is true from what isn't.

JJ: *Is a well-reasoned legal brief any match for posts on TikTok, X or the internet that*

are used by many young people as their main source of information?

RA: Standing on its own, absolutely not. The question isn't whether one book can counteract the millions of pieces of false information being relayed every day. The question is whether we can revert our people to a place where they care about making choices in the right way. It's not so important where you get your information

as long as you're scrutinizing the incentive structure of the people providing it to you.

We need to teach people, including our youngest people, the mechanisms and methodologies that we have used — corroboration, reliability and credibility — that we've been using for thousands of years in order to discern truth from fiction in an age of information warfare.

We're not saying you shouldn't use your phone or AI. The question is when you consume information through those media, whether you should be using the same time-tested reliability mechanisms we've been using for thousands of years. Those mechanisms are there for a reason. We know they work irrespective of where you get your information. ♦