

THE WEEKLY PRINT

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MAY 6, 2026

How Yossi Farro, the 22-year-old tefillin wrapper, chases influential Jews from coast to coast

The Chabad-raised New Yorker has been wrapping tefillin with tech founders, financiers and celebrities on the sidelines of the elite Milken Conference in L.A.

By Gabby Deutch

LOS ANGELES — Yossi Farro stepped onto the helipad, taking in the panoramic view of Los Angeles: the Hollywood sign in front of him, the skyscrapers of downtown L.A. behind him, all of it surrounded by mountains. But he was not there to take in the view, aside from assessing its value as a backdrop for an Instagram video.

Farro was standing atop a Wilshire Boulevard office building on Tuesday afternoon to wrap tefillin with two budding Jewish entrepreneurs in their 20s, and to record all of it for social media.

“What’s your message to the world?” Farro asked the two men, in a video that was posted to his 43,000 Instagram followers moments after it was recorded. “Be proud,” one said. “Try your best,” said the other, whose father owns the building.

“Amazing,” Farro said energetically to the camera. “Have an amazing day.”

Farro grew up in New York as a Hasidic Jew, part of the Chabad-Lubavitch movement. His long, wispy beard and no-frills outfit — black jacket, loose-fitting white button down shirt, black pants — stood in

contrast to the more fashion-forward looks of the men he was visiting that day.

But while Farro might look more Crown Heights than Beverly Hills, he has the camera-ready comfort that only a 22-year-old who has grown up being influenced by, well, influencers could have. It’s also safe to say his confidence comes at least in part from the Chabad movement, where from the time he was a teenager he was tasked with approaching strangers with a simple question: “Are you Jewish?”

The goal is to get them to do a mitzvah, which for men usually means wrapping tefillin, the practice of donning a pair of leather black boxes that contain passages from the Torah. It’s an act that Orthodox Jews perform daily.

“Join me as I Wrap the most Powerful Jews in the World,” Farro’s Instagram bio reads. Look through his stories, and you’ll see actors and startup founders and CEOs. When a major elite gathering is happening, expect to find Farro on the sidelines, such as this week’s Milken Institute Global Conference in Beverly Hills.

He didn’t get into the actual event, where tickets run into the high five figures. Farro doesn’t currently have a full-time gig; he told *Jewish Insider* he is inspired by the entrepreneurs he meets. In between brief run-ins with high-powered members of the tribe, he is sleeping at a friend’s place.

But Farro was spotted around L.A. all week long, spending time at nearby hotels and a Lag Ba’Omer party for Milken attendees. He wrapped tefillin with music executive and entrepreneur Scooter Braun, KIND Snacks founder Daniel Lubetzky and Mark Suster of Upfront Ventures, the largest venture capital firm in L.A. He posted a photo with Reddit founder Alexis Ohanian, whom he ran into outside a Beverly Hills hotel. Approaching some of the world’s most influential and successful people does not seem to scare Farro: After Oaktree Capital Management co-founder Howard Marks told Farro he is not Jewish during a run-in at a Beverly Hills Starbucks, Farro Googled him — and learned he was lying. They did not wrap tefillin together, but “we grabbed a picture and ended up

bonding over both growing up in New York.”

“I get a little nervous, but never too nervous to ask,” Farro said in an elevator down from the helipad. He was on his way to meet some other people to wrap, before heading to the airport to catch a flight to San Francisco to try to wrap tefillin with Joe Lonsdale, founder of Palantir and founder and managing partner at 8VC. (Farro met Alex Karp, Palantir’s CEO, a couple weeks ago.)

Farro’s tefillin-influencer journey began three years ago, when he was walking in Los Angeles and asked the rapper Lil Dicky to wrap tefillin. (Farro did not know who he

was.) Not long after, he ended up doing the same with the actors James Franco and Jeremy Piven.

His tefillin big break came one year after the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas terror attacks. For months he had been sending DMs on X to Bill Ackman, the hedge fund manager and Harvard alum who became a vocal critic of his alma mater’s handling of antisemitism. Farro got his phone number, and three weeks after making a pitch to wrap tefillin together, Ackman agreed to do it, on the anniversary of the attacks. Farro’s post on X with pictures from their tefillin date has more than 2 million views.

So how does a young Chabad guy who hasn’t even formally earned his “rabbi” title yet, let alone gotten a job, fly around the country to exclusive gatherings to get high-profile Jews to do a mitzvah that many non-Orthodox Jews know very little about? Persistence, confidence and a very high tolerance for awkwardness. Belief — in himself, and in God — helps too.

“What’s my message? Why am I doing it? Bring godliness to everywhere, spread light, spread faith,” Farro said. “Just remember, wherever you go, wherever you are, there’s always a higher power.” ♦

MAY 7, 2026

Tel Aviv peace summit offers alternative for Diaspora Jews looking to support Israel, but not its government

U.S.-based philanthropist who supported the It’s Time coalition conference says this kind of program is the best way to engage young Diaspora Jews who are increasingly disconnected from Israel

By Rachel Gutman

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

TEL AVIV — As the wars with Iran and Hezbollah still hang in the air amid fragile ceasefires, and with most of the country supporting a resumption of fighting on both fronts, the leaders of the It’s Time coalition pulled off an unexpected feat last week: hosting thousands of people at a sold-out peace summit, stressing the need to use diplomacy — not military might — to resolve conflicts.

Some 5,000 people filled the halls of Tel Aviv’s Expo Center at last Thursday’s third annual People’s Peace Summit, which was titled “It Must Be. It Can Be. It Will Be. Peace,” and thousands more joined via watch parties around the world.

As Jewish philanthropists and leaders struggle to engage the young American Jews who are increasingly losing their connection to Israel, the It’s Time coalition, a post-Oct. 7 network aimed at promoting peace and shared-society initiatives, is looking to offer a solution: fund the peace camp.

Sally Gottesman, a U.S.-based philanthropist who supports a host of progressive Jewish and Israeli causes, told *eJewishPhilanthropy* that she watched the summit live from her home in New York. Gottesman, one of the major backers of It’s Time, said that the summit served as important proof of concept and called on other Zionist Diaspora funders to get involved, warning that not doing so risked leaving a vacuum that would be filled by radical voices.

“The biggest problem the coalition has is [that] not enough people know about it. The other problem is that established Jewish institutions in the diaspora have not yet met the moment,” Gottesman said. “They’re shooting themselves in the foot by not wanting to talk about those things. That’s what young Jews want to talk about. So they’re either alienating people from being involved at all, or pushing them to the far left.”

With Israeli elections due by October, Offir Gutelzon, the founder of the U.S.-based protest movement UnXeptable, told eJP that this kind of peace summit, which runs counter to the prevailing political winds in Jerusalem, is critical for demonstrating to

Diaspora Jews that Israel and its government are not the same thing.

“Right now, many younger observers look at Israel and see only [Prime Minister Benjamin] Netanyahu, [Finance Minister Beza-lel] Smotrich, and [National Security Minister Itamar] Ben-Gvir,” said Gutelzon, whose organization was launched to oppose the government’s judicial overhaul plans. “We are not our government. Showing the world a massive, vibrant peace camp is the antidote to that despair. Peace and democracy are the two oars required to propel Israel forward toward the vision of its Declaration of Independence and its true purpose.”

The It’s Time coalition was established in the wake of the Oct. 7 terror attacks, with a founding mandate to end the war in Gaza — and make it the last. Beginning with 50 founding organizations, it has grown to over 80 groups spanning Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel alongside international partners.

The New Israel Fund, which Gottesman also supports, is a major backer of the coalition as well. Mickey Gitzin, acting CEO of

NIF, told eJP that he was most excited about the global watch parties.

“The global Jewish community is seeking genuine partnership with Israelis. It is not finding that partnership through government or official channels, and so it must build those connections elsewhere, through initiatives like this,” Gitzin said. “The connection between Israelis and liberal Jewish communities is not just important — it is essential. It is, quite simply, like air to breathe.”

In addition to Gottesman and NIF, the summit’s principal funders included the European Union, the Robert Weil Family Foundation, a number of anonymous Israeli donors and other European institutional funders.

What those donors are funding was on full display last Thursday. The hall in Tel Aviv was packed with what one attendee described as “Beatles-mania energy.” “When the main event ended, the late-night halls were still full of high schoolers and pre-army program students who simply didn’t want to go home,” Tami Yakira, one of the event organizers, told eJP.

The conference, which was also spearheaded by columnist Mika Almog, highlighted the losses on both sides of the conflict, with one installation, “A Child is a Child,” displaying the names of every child killed in the war — in Gaza, in the West Bank, in Israel. Many of the speakers exemplified this as well, including Thair Abu Ras, a fellow at the Forum for Regional Thinking

who lost approximately 40 family members in Gaza, and Mai Peri, whose grandfather Chaim Peri — an Israeli peace activist — was taken hostage in the Oct. 7 attacks and murdered in Hamas captivity.

Knesset members from progressive parties also attended the conference: Gilad Kariv and Naama Lazimi, from the Democrats Party, and Ahmad Tibi and Ayman Odeh, from the predominantly Arab Joint List. Yair Golan, leader of the Democrats Party, sent a filmed address. Canadian Ambassador to Israel Leslie Scanlon, EU Ambassador to Israel Michael Mann and Nicolas Kassianides, France’s consul general in Jerusalem, all attended as well.

“It was reaffirming to see the base that believes peace is still possible getting together,” Don Futterman, Israel director for the Moriah Fund, told eJP. “One message came through loud and clear: With this government, nothing will happen. Until we get a new government, there won’t be any change.”

Speaking on the sidelines of the gathering, Futterman also noted that there was still more work to be done in developing the pro-peace camp, reflecting on who was not in the room. “There’s a liberal religious community, a moderate religious community. There are liberal and moderate Mizrahi communities that were barely represented — and often are underrepresented in these forums,” he said.

For Diaspora Jews who believe that diplomacy is the best way to achieve peace for

Israel, Gottesman argued that funding such efforts also contains a degree of self-interest, as global antisemitism has risen alongside Israel’s wars in Gaza, Lebanon and Iran.

“My Jewish safety is really dependent on Israel. If there were peace tomorrow, anti-semitism would fall,” Gottesman said. “I’m worried about where It’s Time and these organizations are going to find their donors,” she said. “The right is moving to the right, and the left is moving to the left.”

Part of the challenge, she argued, is generational. Gottesman recalled a comment that was made during a recent gathering by a young woman: “In my grandparents’ generation, Israel was a miracle. In my parents’ generation, Israel was seeking peace. In my generation, Israel’s an oppressor,” she said. “I don’t think the next generation sees this as a very hopeful use of their funds or their time,” she said.

For Sandra Weil, of the Robert Weil Family Foundation, a supporter since It’s Time’s first summit, the coalition is as much about the work to be done in Israel as it is about a partnership with world Jewry. “The first [summit], it was so close to Oct. 7. It was just a call to meet — and cry,” she told eJP. “The more we’re still in the same mess, the more important the work becomes. More and more organizations turn to them [It’s Time]. Even politicians are realizing that this is an important voice.” ♦

MAY 5, 2026

How Rahm Emanuel is recalibrating on Israel ahead of 2028

In an interview with Jewish Insider, Emanuel outlines his views amid changing winds in a Democratic Party increasingly antagonistic to the pro-Israel perspective that had long been central to his identity

By Matthew Kassel

Last November, Rahm Emanuel, the tough-talking Democratic operative and prospective presidential candidate, took the stage of the Jewish Federations of North America’s annual conference in Washington to deliver a blunt word of

warning about Israel’s declining reputation in the United States and around the globe.

“I don’t mean to be the party pooper, but look, this is not going to be helpful if we’re not going to be honest with each other,” he said on an opening panel, urging the crowd

to reckon with a marked downturn in support for the Jewish state over its war in Gaza, particularly among younger voters. “Israel is extremely unpopular.”

Emanuel, a veteran Jewish politician and party official who had recently concluded a

tour as U.S. ambassador to Japan in the Biden administration, acknowledged his message might not ingratiate him to the thousands of Jewish communal leaders in the audience who were no doubt deeply familiar with the issue he was highlighting.

“This may be the last time I’m asked to speak to you. I get it,” he said with a hint of indifference. “But we have to be honest about the task we have” for those “who believe that there is something special” to the U.S.-Israel relationship. “We have our work cut out, and it’s not here to get applause,” he told the crowd.

In hindsight, Emanuel’s frankly worded comments marked something of a turning point in his approach to Israel and the Jewish community, foreshadowing more recent remarks in which he has voiced harsh criticism of the country’s military tactics in the wake of Hamas’ Oct. 7 terror attacks and championed new policy proposals against American military aid to Israel.

Yet even as he builds a profile as a potential candidate willing to tell the Democratic Party hard truths and challenge orthodoxy on a range of issues from trans rights to child social media bans to age limits for politicians, Emanuel, 66, was reticent in exploring his views on Israel in more depth during an interview with *Jewish Insider*, which he had resisted for nearly a month.

“What I said couldn’t have been clearer,” he told JI last Thursday, referring to his recent comments on “Real Time With Bill Maher” calling for an end to U.S. military aid to Israel that raised eyebrows in the Jewish community. “There will no longer be U.S. taxpayer subsidies for the purchase of U.S. military equipment. Israel will be like every other ally. They can buy what they want, and they have to live within the restrictions.”

“You can decide to slice it, dice it, but that’s what it is,” he said.

While U.S. military funding to Israel has increasingly faced pushback in the Democratic Party, particularly on the far left, Emanuel’s argument that Israel no longer needs the sort of special treatment that he helped promote in the Obama White House has been striking to watch precisely because he has long been a staunch defender of the Jewish state and its founding ideals.

Emanuel, whose middle name is Israel and who speaks fluent Hebrew, holds a uniquely personal connection to the Jewish state. His late father, an Israeli immigrant born in Jerusalem, served in the Irgun, the Zionist paramilitary force that fought for Israeli independence. As a child, he spent summers in Israel and later volunteered as a civilian assistant to the Israel Defense Forces during the Gulf War. His son celebrated his bar mitzvah in Israel.

Emanuel, a moderate former congressman and mayor of Chicago, pointed out in the interview that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had himself proposed winding down U.S. military aid over the next 10 years, saying in January that the country had “come of age” and “developed incredible capacity” to continue on its own.

Emanuel, however, said that he would instead suspend the assistance “immediately,” characterizing his position as “part of an overall policy” tied to Israel’s strategically secure position in the region as well as its political isolation on the world stage — both of which he argued have never been greater than now.

“If you or anybody thinks you’re going to continue the American taxpayers paying for this, good luck passing that in the U.S. Congress. You’re asking a president of the United States to spend X amount of political capital to do something that even Israel’s own prime minister acknowledged isn’t going to happen,” he said, referring to continued U.S. military aid.

The Jewish state “has made a decision to only lean on its defense and not lean on its diplomatic front,” he told JI, adding that Netanyahu had chosen to “walk away” from pursuing a two-state solution, support for which has declined in Israel since the Oct. 7 attacks and ensuing war in Gaza.

In his view, the U.S. should continue to stand with Israel only if its efforts in the region help contribute to peace. “Every risk you will take, the State of Israel takes, for peace, then America will stand by you,” he said. “We understand there’s risks. We have stood by Israel through thick and thin.”

“But,” he said, “when one friend in that relationship abandoned something that’s contrary to our interests and contrary, in my view, also to Israel’s interests,” it is

reasonable, he suggested, to rethink that alliance.

“There will no longer be U.S. taxpayer subsidies for the purchase of U.S. military equipment. Israel will be like every other ally. They can buy what they want, and they have to live within the restrictions,” Emanuel said of his vision of the future of military aid to Israel.

His comments indicate that he is now embracing a fundamental reassessment of the U.S.-Israel alliance, abandoning even the pretense of tough love that once characterized his approach, among other moderate voices in the Democratic Party.

For example, Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, a centrist Jewish Democrat who is also weighing a presidential campaign in 2028, recently reiterated his support for continued U.S. aid to Israel but said that it should be seen as “leverage” to exert pressure over the country’s use of American-made weapons.

“Rahm’s move tells you a lot about the politics of the Democratic Party on Israel now. And that is a sign of how Israel’s image has changed in the country,” said Dennis Ross, a former U.S. diplomat and Middle East negotiator who overlapped with Emanuel in the Obama administration.

Despite his strong attachment to Israel, Emanuel is reckoning with a changing party no longer broadly sympathetic to the pro-Israel perspective that had long been central to his political identity, even as he has tussled with Israeli leadership during his time as a public figure.

Last Friday, for example, Emanuel signaled he would back Graham Platner, the far-left Senate candidate in Maine now poised to become the Democratic nominee, even as the Marine veteran has called to block U.S. military aid to Israel while facing controversy over a Nazi tattoo he recently covered up.

“Whether it’s people chanting ‘Jews will not replace us’ in Charlottesville, ‘or somebody bombing Gov. Shapiro’s home, or somebody painting Nazi insignia on my fence, or the candidate saying ‘I did not know that was a Nazi’ insignia on his chest, ‘we’re going to have to confront this,’

Emanuel told JI the day before announcing his support for Platner, while touting his record of fighting antisemitism.

"I've dealt with it when I ran for Congress," he said on the phone from Chicago, noting that he was outside an Anne Frank exhibition opening in his home city. "And I've also been upfront when I think a decision is going to lead to the strategic and diplomatic isolation of, not only the State of Israel, but, more importantly, the Jewish people."

Still, Emanuel seemed reluctant and even somewhat frustrated to answer further questions seeking clarity on the implications of his new approach to Israel and how he arrived at his position. He refused to confirm explicitly, for example, if he would back defensive aid for Israel's Iron Dome missile defense system, which has recently emerged as a subject of intense debate in some corners of the Democratic Party.

It is a significant contrast with where Emanuel stood during his time as Obama's chief of staff. In the White House from 2009-2010, Emanuel was one of Obama's top consiglieres on policies relating to Israel. He was involved in initial funding to boost Israel's Iron Dome system, an effort that culminated in a 10-year memorandum of understanding between the two countries that provides \$3.8 billion in annual aid through 2028, which the White House touted, at the time, as "the largest single pledge of military assistance in U.S. history."

In 2009, Emanuel shared more reassuring words in his address to the JFNA's annual gathering, praising Netanyahu while citing his own familial ties to Israel as well as what he had called the "privileged point of view" from understanding the Jewish state's "value as a homeland."

"Those who have questioned" whether the Obama administration's opposition to Israeli settlement building in the West Bank and outreach to the Arab world "implies diminished support for Israel, that is not the intent," he said, filling in for his boss. "It is not the case and it never will be. The truth is the opposite. Only through dialogue will Israel achieve the peace it seeks."

Emanuel now takes a more jaundiced view of Israeli diplomacy, fueling his calls

for an end to U.S. aid. "Under Prime Minister Netanyahu, in the last three years, you've lost Europe, you've lost the American public, and you picked up Somaliland," he scoffed to JI, referring to Israel's decision to formally recognize the secessionist region in the Horn of Africa last year. "As my grandmother would say, 'Such a deal.' That is your only diplomatic achievement."

Julie Fishman Rayman, senior vice president of policy and political affairs at the American Jewish Committee, called Emanuel's views "disappointing and worrying," arguing that U.S. security assistance to Israel "is not just vital to deterring further attacks and ensuring the survival of the state of Israel, but is integrally tied to safeguarding American interests in the region."

Emanuel argued that his position on U.S. aid is a logical extension of sentiments he had conveyed in 2009 while in the Obama administration, when he repeatedly clashed with Netanyahu over settlement expansion in the West Bank, which the White House cautioned would jeopardize prospects for achieving a two-state solution.

"I went straight to the prime minister to his face and said, 'What you're doing is going to lead to the great isolation of Israel,'" Emanuel recalled, noting, as he often does, that Netanyahu called him a "self-hating Jew," underscoring the highly personal tenor of their long-testy relationship. "Look, I have a longstanding relationship," he explained. "I'm honest about it."

But even as he argues that Israel is today "a different country from a sense of wealth and capacity," he has strained to harmonize the motives now animating his current approach. He has dismissed speculation over the sincerity of his stance and whether it is rooted in a good-faith view of Israel's economic standing or if it is instead a more cynical political calculation tailored to a rising anti-Israel faction in the Democratic Party.

Though in contrast with high-profile voices on the far left, Emanuel has shied away from charged rhetoric about genocide in Gaza, saying it is a legal question, as well as accusations that Israel had tricked President Donald Trump into war with Iran, which he says ignores U.S. agency in the

conflict. He has said it is a "mistake" to restrict arms sales to Israel, suggesting that he is not aligned with related resolutions that were introduced by Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) last month and notably drew backing from most Senate Democrats.

Emanuel's allies said in recent interviews that they were not surprised with his approach, saying that he has been building to this moment for some time. "Do I agree with him? Not necessarily," former Rep. Steve Israel (D-NY), who served with Emanuel in Congress, told JI. "But this is not a breakthrough position. He's expressed those concerns for years."

David Axelrod, a former chief strategist to Obama, likewise agreed in a text message to JI that "Rahm's basic concerns about where Bibi is leading are not new," using Netanyahu's nickname. "Rahm, like a lot of us, has always believed a two-state solution was the only road to peace and Bibi has been deeply, irretrievably opposed and actively hostile to the notion."

"You ask these questions like somehow I've changed. The prime minister used to articulate a two-state solution. He was for it. He's the one that's changed," Emanuel said of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

One prominent Jewish Democrat, who asked to remain anonymous to discuss a charged issue, called Emanuel's stance a practical response that "takes the wind out of the sails of the far left and the far right," which have politicized funding for Israel. "As long as we're giving aid to Israel, Americans will feel like they have a say in Israeli policy and how that investment is managed."

But if that is Emanuel's aim, he has not made it clear. In conversation with JI, he was hesitant to clarify his own positions when pressed. Asked if he would back Iron Dome funding, he said he had been "part of the financing" for a "joint project" that he called "key for Israel's security" when it was first developed with the United States.

He declined to elaborate further about such aid. "U.S. taxpayers should not be in the position of subsidizing a country," he reiterated. "You know my history with the

Iron Dome,” he said. “I’m done. I’ve answered it.”

Though some allies of Emanuel are willing to indulge his views more favorably than other 2028 prospects with thinner resumes related to Middle East policy, a range of Jewish and pro-Israel organizations are now pushing back on his recent turn against U.S. military aid.

“It’s in America’s interests to keep our word and help a democratic partner shield innocent civilians from missiles,” Deryn Sousa, a spokesperson for AIPAC, told JI, referring to the Iron Dome. “Reneging on the Obama administration’s signed agreement with our closest ally in the Middle East would send a devastating message to our allies, empower our enemies and do nothing to advance peace.”

Brian Romick, president of Democratic Majority for Israel, said that “Israel’s situation is not comparable to our other close allies.”

“Unlike Japan, South Korea and Germany, Israel does not have permanent U.S. troops on the ground,” he told JI recently. “It’s also surrounded by enemies who actively want to wipe it off the face of the earth. U.S. security assistance reflects that reality and the significant strategic benefits the aid provides.”

Michael Makovsky, president and CEO of the Jewish Institute for National Security of America, told JI in a recent interview that he disagreed with Emanuel, even as he acknowledged the sentiment as a “legitimate view.” Still, he added that it is “in the U.S. interest” to continue providing military aid to Israel, “which anyway all goes to buying U.S. weaponry.”

Even some pro-Israel Democrats sympathetic to Emanuel and his perspective said his comments on military aid raise more questions than they answer. One influential Jewish Democrat who has long been acquainted with Emanuel, speaking

on the condition of anonymity to address a sensitive topic, expressed concerns that ending aid to Israel could stoke further calls from the far left to condition military funding or block future weapons sales outright.

For his part, Emanuel avoided commenting on the question of Israel’s qualitative military edge, which the U.S. is legally obligated to ensure but allies say could suffer without military aid. “I feel like we’re taking the same question from 50 angles,” Emanuel told JI. “I want Israel to fight for peace the way it’s proven that it’s fought in the last three years. That’s what’s missing,” he said last week.

“You ask these questions like somehow I’ve changed,” Emanuel said earlier in the call. “The prime minister used to articulate a two-state solution. He was for it. He’s the one that’s changed.” ♦

MAY 6, 2026

CNBC anchor Sara Eisen confronts antisemitism — on air and online

Eisen, who has been moderating panels at the Milken Institute conference, said the rise in anti-Jewish hate has been the ‘sideline conversation’ all week

By Gabby Deutch

LOS ANGELES — CNBC anchor Sara Eisen is a fixture at the annual Milken Institute Global Conference in Los Angeles, where she moderates marquee events, such as a one-on-one interview on Tuesday with Ken Griffin, CEO of the hedge fund Citadel.

But the real reason that Eisen — along with scores of billionaire investors and business executives — comes to Beverly Hills for the exclusive annual gathering is for the conversations happening far from the main stages. And much of the conversation Eisen is hearing this week, she told *Jewish Insider*, has to do with the dramatic rise in antisemitism in recent years.

“To a large extent, I reflect a lot of what the sources that I speak to [say]. That’s in-

vestors, and it’s business leaders, and it’s private equity leaders,” Eisen said in an interview during the conference, after she wrapped up moderating a conversation with the CEO of Carlyle, the co-president of Morgan Stanley, the chairman and CEO of State Street and the CEO of the California Public Employees’ Retirement System.

“A lot of these people, Jewish and non-Jewish, talk to me about it. They know about my background. They know my perspective. They see what’s happening in the political world. They see what’s happening in geopolitics,” she continued. “This is the sideline conversation.”

The issue isn’t new for Eisen. Her grandfather was a Holocaust survivor, and he talked openly about his experiences. “I have

always been someone with a really strong Jewish identity,” she said. But something began to change for her after the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attacks in Israel, and it seeped into her professional work.

“I think for a lot of us, after Oct. 7, it was a wake-up call that we need to speak out more about these issues. I try to use my platform to bring awareness and education to issues like antisemitism, because I care about it,” said Eisen.

During a guest appearance on “The View” in March, she criticized former Trump administration official Joe Kent, who resigned from his position as director of the National Counterterrorism Center in March, for blaming Washington’s war with Iran on Israel.

“It is a very old-school, antisemitic trope to blame the Jews and to blame Israel. It’s as old as time,” Eisen said on “The View.” “It is a classic case of quintessential antisemitism, and by the way it is a dangerous time to do that because the Jews are under attack, and we’re fortifying our synagogues and our schools.”

In an April interview with Sen. Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Eisen pressed Warren on her support for Maine Senate candidate Graham Platner, despite the fact that the Democrat had a tattoo of a Nazi symbol and praised military tactics used by Hamas. “I’m just curious why you think he’s your ‘kind of man,’” Eisen said, referencing Warren’s description of Platner at a recent campaign event.

Warren defended Platner, noting that he apologized for the tattoo and his history of insensitive remarks. Eisen drilled down on Platner’s praise of Hamas tactics: “You guys want to be the party of inclusivity, right?”

“I want to be the party that stands up for hard-working people,” was Warren’s response. “I want us to be the party that actually delivers on lowering costs and that expands opportunities, and that’s what Graham Platner wants to do, and I’m there to stand with him and to help in that fight.”

Eisen is known as a no-nonsense TV anchor with an occasional snarky streak and an aptitude for finance and economic trends. She covers the news, and lately, she sees antisemitism in the headlines — and feels a particular obligation to cover it.

“I think that the world’s changed,” Eisen said. “There is now this raging outburst of antisemitism, and it’s a societal issue, and I have a background and a perspective on it. And I think it feeds directly into stories we’re doing about the economy and society and geopolitics.”

Reporters, Eisen argued, should not pretend they do not have backgrounds that affect the issues they cover. For her, that

means talking about being Jewish, and spotlighting the rise in antisemitism. It stands out at a time when questions like the ones she asked Warren are not necessarily echoed by other top reporters at national outlets.

“As journalists, we’re also people. We have families, we have religions, we have backgrounds, we have history. I try not to inject those opinions, but I do think perspective matters,” she said. “Nobody wants to be interviewed by robots.”

The result is even more social media vitriol than she has always received as a prominent media figure. Only now, it’s antisemitic.

“I feel the heat, and that’s definitely a calculated risk, and it’s unfortunate and it’s unpleasant,” said Eisen. “But I also feel like if, if we’re not asking these questions and we’re not speaking up about these issues, then then nobody will. So we need to.” ♦

MAY 7, 2026

Hussain Abdul-Hussain on his anti-Israel upbringing to then making ‘The Arab Case for Israel’

Lebanese-Iraqi writer and analyst Hussain Abdul-Hussain discusses Hezbollah, Lebanon’s future and the personal journey that transformed him from an anti-Israel youth into a prominent Arab advocate for normalization and peace with Israel

By Lahav Harkov

Writer and researcher Hussain Abdul-Hussain has an unusual story: A Shia Muslim raised in Iraq and Lebanon and taught to hate Israel and the West, he is now a research fellow at the Foundation for Defense of Democracies living in Washington, and the author of a book called *The Arab Case for Israel*.

It was his years in Lebanon that gave him unique insight into the country’s political workings, which now play a major role in its tenuous ceasefire with Israel.

“Lebanon was a thriving state when the Arabs were fighting Israel state-to-state, when it was a symmetric military-to-military war,” Abdul-Hussain told *Jewish Insider’s* Lahav Harkov and Misgav Institute for National Security and Zionist Strategy Execut-

ive Director Asher Fredman on the “Misgav Mideast Horizons” podcast this week.

“What happened is that, after 1967, when the Arab armies were defeated, the Arabs switched from military-to-military to asymmetric war, with armed factions like Hamas, or the PLO before Hamas, or Hezbollah [against Israel],” he said. “They decided when to fight, how to fight, where to launch attacks, and these were in Jordan and Lebanon. ... Jordan decided [to say] ‘We are a state and we will not allow these armed factions to run our affairs’ ... They ejected them in 1970. Lebanon, unfortunately, came under enormous pressure from all kinds of Arab capitals. ... Everyone forced Lebanon to accept [PLO leader Yasser] Arafat and his

armed factions to operate out of Lebanon and launch attacks on Israel.”

“Since then, the Lebanese state has not been able to restore its sovereignty to pre-1969 days,” Abdul-Hussain argued. “After Israel ejected Arafat in 1982, Hezbollah inherited the mantle. ... We have an issue of chronic weakness of the Lebanese state facing armed factions.”

Lebanese President Joseph Aoun is “probably the only elected Lebanese official to state on the record that Hezbollah is treasonous and wages war on behalf of Iran,” Abdul-Hussain said. In addition, there were reports as talks began last month that Aoun would be willing to meet with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

However, Aoun said more recently that Lebanon would not be able to negotiate with Israel until its fight against Hezbollah ended.

“Hezbollah and Iran don’t want any kind of direct talks with Israel,” Abdul-Hussain pointed out.

Egypt and Saudi Arabia, he noted, have also been advising the Lebanese government not to negotiate normalization, a topic that was one of Israel’s conditions for entering the talks.

Riyadh’s motivation, according to Abdul-Hussain, is for Arab states to line up behind the Gulf state and wait for it to make peace with Israel — a move that Saudi Arabia has conditioned on the creation of a pathway to Palestinian statehood.

“This is leverage for the Saudis; it’s not in the interest of Lebanon,” Abdul-Hussain said. “These are factors that come in so the Lebanese state remains weak and unable to take on Hezbollah.”

Abdul-Hussain credited the Trump administration for “giving Lebanon more attention than any administration since the early days of Ronald Reagan. ... I’m happy that someone sees Lebanon as it is, not as we imagine it to be or just dismiss it and say “This is too complicated for us and we’re not going to go into it.”

That attention is “a golden opportunity ... to help disarm Hezbollah and live at peace with Israel, Syria, Turkey, Iran, everybody else,” he said. “If the Lebanese don’t grasp it, I’m not sure there will be another opportunity in the coming future.”

Abdul-Hussain said that Aoun’s recent message that he will not shake hands with Netanyahu at the outset of negotiations does not diminish the major step he took toward peace talks with Israel.

“For a Lebanese president to say that we are parting ways with the Arab League and Saudi Arabia and that we are ready to shake hands with the Israeli prime minister if there is an agreement – that is huge,” he said.

As for France, which has often intervened on matters related to Lebanon, but is not involved in the talks with Israel, Abdul-Hussain said, “France has not paid a penny to Lebanon in a long time ... but for some reason they keep sitting at the table deciding Lebanon’s fate. My guess is that they enjoy the spotlight.”

The French and the Saudis try to intervene in Lebanon “for their own ego,” Abdul-Hussain argued, but France is “more dangerous,” because it “tries to curry favor with Iran by taking Hezbollah’s side in Lebanon. The French would tell the Iranians, ‘Listen, we will not go against Hezbollah ... [or] whatever Hezbollah policy. But keep in mind that when the time comes and there are no sanctions and you need to give contracts away, the French took your side. The French do this all the time. They did it with Saddam Hussein.’”

A more recent example Abdul-Hussain cited was when the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain brought a draft resolution to the U.N. Security Council stating that the Strait of Hormuz is an international waterway and countries should be able to use military force to open it; “The French took the side of the Chinese, Russians and Iran” against it, he said.

“Why would France do that?” he said. “OK, you don’t like Trump, you don’t want to open your airspace to Trump. But if you are about international law, this is as [legitimate] as it can get. So what do the French do? They hedge against the West. ... and this is what they’re doing in Lebanon.”

Abdul-Hussain said he was “thrilled” to hear Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. Yechiel Leiter say that he “would like to keep the French as far away as possible from pretty much everything, but particularly when it comes to peace negotiations.”

Abdul-Hussain’s book, *The Arab Case for Israel*, was published in February and features not only his arguments in favor of supporting Israel, but how he came to hold such views after receiving an anti-Israel education.

“My dad is from Iraq, from Baghdad, and my mom is from Baalbek in Lebanon,” Abdul-Hussain recounted this week. “I grew up in both countries. After second or third grade, we left Iraq permanently, during the war with Iran. ... Of course, the 1980s in Lebanon is when Israel invaded [Lebanon] and when Hezbollah was being put together, and the days of the civil war.”

Abdul-Hussain recalled growing up in Iraq “shouting slogans against Khomeini and against Israel, and then ... [in] Lebanon shouting pro-Khomeini slogans against Saddam Hussein, but still against Israel.”

He attended the American University in Beirut, where he was exposed to less conservative Muslim ideas of “all kinds, Marxist, socialist, anarchist, you name it” but still anti-Israel.

Abdul-Hussain became a reporter at the now-defunct *Daily Star*, a leading English-language newspaper in Lebanon, rising to the position of managing editor.

When Israel withdrew from southern Lebanon in 2000, Abdul-Hussain was covering the events and drove to the border.

“At the time, the border was just a flimsy barbed wire. You could see Israelis on the other side, and I stood there and I watched Israeli families in Metula and all these towns ... mothers driving their children to school, men working the fields, some guy driving a tractor. This was the first time that I saw Israelis as humans ... as people like us, and this made me so curious,” he recalled.

Abdul-Hussain was able to pick up Israeli radio stations from Lebanon, and began to learn Hebrew in that way, because “If you lived in Lebanon, you had no access to anything Israeli. The only access you had is anti-Israel books by Edward Said, [Norman] Finkelstein, [Noam] Chomsky. You can buy *Mein Kampf* anywhere.”

Listening to Israeli radio, Abdul-Hussain found that “These guys are not really obsessed with killing all the Arabs and taking all the land and establishing Greater Israel from the Nile to the Euphrates and all the conspiracy theories that I had learned.”

In 2004, he moved to Washington to work for the newly-founded Al Hurra, the U.S.-backed Arabic language news channel meant to support the spread of democracy in the Middle East, and has lived in the U.S. ever since.

“After I came to the U.S., I had unlimited access to everything Hebrew and Jewish and Israeli and I understood this is a totally different story from the one I was taught,” he said.

Abdul-Hussain makes the case that “Whatever happened in the past, whatever injustice has befallen the Arabs and the Palestinians, moving on and seeing Israel as an asset is much more in the Arab interest than trying to wind the clock back to a time when Israel didn’t exist.”

“I show the numbers, the receipts as we say here in Washington,” he added. “Look at the Abraham Accords countries and their

trade and economy. Look at the cold peace with Egypt and Jordan and their trade and economy, which is much less than the Abraham Accords countries. Then, look at Lebanon

and Syria, who are still at war and miserably behind the others.”

Abdul-Hussain pointed at a trend by which “The more peaceful you get with your

surroundings, the better your economy thrives and blooms. This is the idea of the book.” ♦

MAY 6, 2026

Jewish leaders warn of new front in anti-Israel campus activity: targeting Hillels

Efforts to delegitimize Hillels tell Jewish students ‘that their identity is suspect and that their safety and belonging is up to the vote of their fellow students,’ AJC’s Laura Shaw Frank said

By Haley Cohen

In the aftermath of the New School student government’s vote to defund and sever ties with Hillel, Jewish leaders are warning that the latest front in campus anti-Israel activity is designed to delegitimize the world’s largest Jewish campus organization.

“Hillel is a space of Jewish belonging on campus. It is a place Jewish students need, and particularly need right now. For anyone to call into question a place that Jewish students go for their needs is beyond the pale. This absolutely crosses a red line,” Laura Shaw Frank, vice president of the American Jewish Committee Center for Education Advocacy, told *Jewish Insider*.

Last week, the New School’s student senate approved a resolution to strip funding and cease collaboration with Hillel, alleging that Hillel violated international law by running programming in Israel, including Birthright trips and volunteer opportunities with the Israel Defense Forces.

While the New School’s administration rejected the vote, the move marked the first time a student government has moved to officially cut ties with the organization that acts as a hub of campus life for Jewish students — although many have called on their universities to end partnerships with Hillel, particularly after the Oct. 7, 2023, terrorist attacks in Israel and the ensuing war in Gaza.

Now some in the Jewish community believe that student governments on other campuses will imitate the behavior.

“We’re very heartened by the New School making clear this is not going to happen

and we’re pretty confident other university leaders would do the same,” said Shaw Frank. “At the same time, it has to be made clear that Hillel is one of the key places on campus that Jewish students go for support, Jewish identity and celebration, and this kind of message is that their community spaces are conditional, that their identity is suspect and that their safety and belonging is up to the vote of their fellow students.”

“None of those things are acceptable, so we will be doing everything in our power to ensure that any kind of trend in this direction is shut down. It’s completely unacceptable and antisemitic.”

Shira Goodman, the Anti-Defamation League’s vice president of advocacy, labeled the incident at the New School “an escalation,” voicing concern that campus organizations are targeted solely for supporting Israel.

“We’ve seen in the last two years calls to dissociate from Hillel; that was among some of the encampment demands and there have been protests blocking access to Hillel and Chabad events,” Goodman told JI. “We hadn’t seen a campus resolution like that so we’re certainly worried that it will become a bigger trend.”

Those concerns come as campus antisemitism and anti-Israel activity — which reached historic levels during Israel’s war with Hamas and has quieted down since a ceasefire was reached in the fall — appears to be ramping up again as the end of the academic year approaches.

The outgoing chair of University of Michigan’s faculty senate, who has a history of anti-Israel advocacy, attacked Israel at a commencement ceremony on Saturday in comments that deviated from his prepared remarks. The university apologized for his behavior.

Last month, UCLA’s student government condemned a campus event featuring former Israeli hostage Omer Shem Tov, labeling the speaker selection as “selective platforming of narratives that obscure the broader reality of ongoing state violence” and “a troubling disregard for Palestinian life.” UCLA said it stood by Hillel for hosting the event.

On Monday, the ADL sent a letter to around 150 campuses expressing concern about the resurgence of antisemitic harassment, including the recent reestablishment of encampments at Occidental College and Smith College. (Both were quickly dismantled.)

Goodman was skeptical that resolutions aimed at shutting down Hillel will be successful or that they could replace campus Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions efforts. While BDS initiatives had largely disappeared prior to Oct. 7, the months following the Hamas attack and the start of the war in Gaza sparked a resurgence in efforts to enact them on various campuses.

“Given that most of those resolutions have been unsuccessful in getting campuses to divest — although some have led to being able to present to investment committees — I think these will also be unsuccessful,” she said.

Still, both types of resolutions lead to a hostile campus climate for Jewish students, she said.

“These student government bodies are supposed to be places that deal with student organizations, funding, policies that impact students and they’re spending a lot of time on these issues that don’t impact students daily lives and are becoming increasingly hostile to the Jewish students on campus.”

Shaw Frank and Goodman both said that a silver lining of recent campus turmoil is that institutions are now better equipped to handle antisemitism than they were in 2024, when anti-Israel encampments first roiled campuses nationwide and university administrators floundered in shutting them down and negotiating with student protesters.

“I think with respect to the demonstrations that took place in 2024, it was very

clear to campus administrators that their campuses were being shut down and they were unable to continue their work as institutions of learning,” said Shaw Frank. “Employing time, place and manner restrictions as we and other Jewish organizations called for largely solved the problem.”

She added that the current situation “is much smaller” than it was two years ago. “Most students are no longer active in this space on campus, even in places that were hotbeds of protests in 2024. The protests are much more anemic now. We know that students who see themselves as activists tend to choose places like student government. A small number of students have a disproportionately powerful impact,” said Shaw Frank.

Jewish leaders are looking to university administrations to take decisive action in protecting Jewish students.

“We want to make sure that they use the policies that they enacted, or decided to enforce, after 2024 and that they continue to do that, they continue to be clear that there are consequences for violating university policies and that all students can access their educational and extracurricular activities equally,” said Goodman.

Shaw Frank added, “This is a moment when university leadership must not only speak out very clearly to state this is unacceptable, but also ensure that their codes of conduct and guidelines are up to date and their departments of student life are educated about antisemitism.

“We urge universities to ensure that it is very clear to their student governments and student bodies what types of resolutions are OK and what are not OK.” ♦

MAY 6, 2026

Inside the Cooperman Family Foundation’s \$10 million gift to Birthright Israel

Jodi Cooperman, who oversees the family’s Jewish giving portfolio, hopes donation will inspire others to give, to ensure the longevity of the free Israel trips

By Justin Hayet

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

At a packed gala last night in Livingston, N.J., the Leon and Toby Cooperman Family Foundation announced a \$10 million gift to the Birthright Israel Foundation.

The event, held at the Crystal Plaza, drew nearly 400 guests and raised an additional \$2.7 million from Birthright donors and friends of the Cooperman family. Birthright Israel CEO Elias Saratovsky praised the Coopermans at the gala, saying the family represents the “very essence of what Birthright Israel stands for — continuity, connection, and the power of investing in future generations.”

The donation is emblematic of the Cooperman family’s philanthropic giving

for Jewish and Israeli causes, with a focus on preserving the Jewish future and offering equal opportunity to all, according to Jodi Cooperman, the daughter-in-law of hedge fund manager Leon Cooperman, who manages the Israel and Jewish giving portfolio of the foundation.

Ahead of the gala, *eJewishPhilanthropy* spoke with Jodi Cooperman, who for years has also served as board president of the Interfaith Food Pantry of the Oranges in New Jersey, to discuss how her family is navigating the evolution of their giving across three generations.

During the conversation, Cooperman shared that her father-in-law, Leon, set a process in motion in 2024 that ultimately passed the baton to her. In doing so, he entrusted her and her two daughters, Court-

ney and Kyra, with the privilege and responsibility of managing the family’s multi-million-dollar giving to Jewish and Israeli causes. She discussed how she and her two daughters are navigating the complexities of multigenerational philanthropy and are doing so without full-time foundation staff in the U.S. or Israel.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Justin Hayet: *You and your daughters stepped into a massive and sudden leadership position in your family’s foundation in early 2024 right when Israel and the Jewish world were facing a major crisis. How did you navigate being handed the reins of your family’s philanthropy at such a critical moment?*

Jodi Cooperman: I've been involved in my in-laws' foundation for 16 years. [And] in January 2024, with health challenges and running a business, my father-in-law turned to me and said, "I am turning over our Jewish philanthropy to Courtney and Kyra and you." That came to us as a surprise, during a moment when everyone didn't know what to do: how can we help? With Oct. 7, the world is turning on us. At a time when no one could figure out how to help, we were gifted this incredible responsibility to really make a change.

We wanted to figure out a way that we could be proactive. So we designed our pillars of what we wanted to focus on.

We got on a Zoom with family in San Francisco, Denver and New Jersey to put out all of the things we wanted to think about. At that moment in time, we could've decided that everything was going to Israel emergency funding because of the war. We were very clear that we need to focus on the Jewish future, and if we only focus on the emergencies, then the Jewish future won't have all of the important organizations to sustain itself. [Though] we did support emergency funding through the [UJA-Federation of New York's] Day After Fund.

To ensure we were building for the long term, we established core areas of focus. One primary pillar centers on helping Israel become the best version of herself by strengthening democracy, supporting education, and working with organizations that focus on a shared society. Another key focus is the broader Jewish future, directly investing in the institutions of daily Jewish life — such as synagogues, JCCs, PJ Library, and Hillels — alongside rich Israeli programming. We also chose to focus heavily on Birthright, specifically because of its unmatched capacity to reach the most lives. We view it as a critical starting point that has clearly helped this generation connect to Jewish life.

JH: *Much of the recent donor narrative has been defensive, with funders withdrawing support from higher education institutions that no longer feel safe. Why is now the time to move from critiquing external institutions to doubling down on building the Jewish future from within?*

JC: We have changed some of our focus away from American universities and places that do not have our backs, but we can only control what we can control. We need to focus on where we can have an impact, and by focusing on something like Birthright, we want to make sure that kids are not on a waitlist. We want to ensure that every kid who wants to go can go. All of the studies are showing that of the kids out there speaking out for Jewish students on campuses, the majority of them are the kids who went on Birthright trips.

We feel very strongly that treating the fight against antisemitism as its own stand-alone focus is not the best way to fight antisemitism. We have been saying it for two years, and Bret Stephens said it in his "State of the World Jewry" address. As a Jewish person, if your whole reason for being is to fight antisemitism, then you lose the meaning of what it means to be Jewish and what you are actually fighting for. When you feel secure in your Jewish identity and feel knowledgeable, it is a lot easier to speak up against antisemitism.

JH: *With the current funding landscape for Jewish organizations shifting, why was this the right moment for your family to make a major, public commitment to Birthright?*

JC: Now is the time as a family because of the way we are working together in this multigenerational work. I am working with my daughters, but really, I am focused on carrying out the legacy that my father-in-law has created with a strong Jewish commitment. And Birthright is something that we can all support. It is something we can support across all generations, and we want to make sure it is there in the future.

Historically, Birthright has relied on one major donor [Miriam Adelson], and when she pulled a lot of funding, it left Birthright needing to fundraise in a way they never had to before. Birthright needs to find a way to make sure that all Jewish people have a stake in it — to get more people involved as donors. I am hoping that by leading by example with a large gift, we can help other people step up to support Birthright at whatever their capacity is. For every kid who has gone on a Birthright trip, it would be great if they viewed it as a gift given to

them, and they should help pay it forward for the next generation.

JH: *In legacy families, the "generation gap" is often a deep challenge, especially on the Israel front. How does your family navigate different political or tactical perspectives, and how did Birthright become the ultimate shared lever for all three generations?*

JC: We have deep respect for each other. We listen to each other, and the listening piece is really important. Our family has different political perspectives. The beautiful thing about working with my daughters is hearing from the next generation because they are living it. They are hearing from their peers, and they bring that perspective. And then my father-in-law has his perspective.

The ability to listen to what is important across generations is what matters. We are all in it together, but we have a lot of respect for the fact that my father-in-law worked so hard to make this money and [we] give it away. Respecting our differences and learning from each other is key. [For instance] the concept of a "shared society" was not something I was originally familiar with, and Courtney brought that to the table as we carefully learn more about the landscape.

JH: *A gift of this scale requires immense confidence in the organization. What is it about Birthright's current leadership and educational approach that made your family feel ready to partner with them?*

JC: I feel like Birthright cuts across all Jewish and political beliefs, and it is something I believe everyone can get behind. They have 26 years of data that proves their success. My love for Birthright grew multi-fold because of listening to Zohar [Raviv, vice president of Educational Strategy]. Understanding his approach and educational philosophy gives me the most confidence in Birthright that I've ever had. It was very important to me that Courtney had the chance to meet Zohar recently to see how they develop their trips. If I hadn't met Zohar and heard from him directly, I am not sure we would have encouraged this gift.

I [also] met with Elias [Saratovsky, president and CEO of Birthright Israel Foundation,] for the first time last winter. To have the CEO of Birthright be a participant from the very first year of the organization is

incredibly meaningful. He gives me confidence that he is looking out for our Jewish future.

JH: *Your father-in-law, Leon, has always pointed to “being a mensch” as his North Star — a value deeply reflected in programs like the Cooperman College Scholars in Newark, N.J. In 2026, what does being a mensch actually look like for a philanthropic family?*

JC: Being a mensch also applies to how we work with organizations. I feel very strongly that I want to be supportive of organizations, and I don’t want them to spend all of their time making fancy PDFs for me.

The conversations I have with people are what are truly meaningful to me. Building real relationships is very important. I just learned of a concept called “trust-based philanthropy” over lunch with a friend who runs a foundation, and it was great to find out that my style has a name; the way I go about doing this work, which feels very intuitive to me, actually has a framework.

We don’t have outside people vetting organizations; this is what the family does. My father-in-law wants the money to go directly to the organizations instead of paying for a large foundation staff.

[This motto was put into action when] my in-laws created the Cooperman College Scholars program, which is based out of Newark. It offers scholarships to about 80 kids a year. This is something they created on their own to help first-generation families.

[Leon’s] roots as the son of a plumber from the Bronx are always close to his heart, and his respect for the places that helped him become so successful is a core part of his menschy behavior. The program is now in its 12th year. For Leon, being a mensch means giving others the same opportunity to succeed that he had. ♦

MAY 6, 2026

Endowing scholarship for late husband, Sandberg offers Ramah to campers with ‘most significant need’

The donation, made in honor of the former Facebook COO's late husband, will provide full tuition to 30 campers each year in perpetuity

By Jay Deitcher

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

This summer, 1,250 kids will trek to Camp Ramah in California to plunge into pools, belt out camp songs and play endless rounds of gaga. Several of them will have the opportunity thanks to Sheryl Sandberg, the former Meta COO and author of the best-selling book *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*.

Last Thursday, Sandberg announced the Dave Goldberg Scholarship, in honor of her late husband, the former chief executive of SurveyMonkey, who died 11 years ago at 47 from a cardiac arrhythmia while vacationing with his family in Mexico. The endowment ensures that 30 campers in need can attend Camp Ramah in perpetuity and comes at a time when demand for summer camp — along with the cost — have skyrocketed.

“This is a gift that allows Ramah in California to live toward our deepest aspirations,” Rabbi Joe Menashe, CEO of Camp Ramah in California, told *eJewishPhilanthropy*. “As costs escalate and tuitions rise

in camps, schools, universities, across the world, we’re able to ensure that families who have the most significant need and may have never considered Jewish camp as a possibility can now not just consider it, but can feel welcome and embraced in the process.”

Camp is a generational experience for Sandberg and her family. Growing up, Sandberg attended the Union for Reform Judaism’s Camp Coleman in Cleveland, Ga., which she credits with shaping her Jewish values and identity. Her late husband attended Camp Ramah in California, as did their children.

According to last year’s Foundation for Jewish Camp census, attendance at Jewish summer camp is at an all-time high, but so is the cost of running a camp, with last year’s expenses increasing 5% over the year prior. The price of everything has risen: staffing, security and food.

Still, attendance at camps across the country has soared, in large part due to the vast number of scholarships offered to campers by the camps themselves, local federations, philanthropic partners and

FJC. According to the census, without assistance, 37% of families said they couldn’t afford camp. This mirrors the experience of campers at Camp Ramah of California, one of many Conservative-movement affiliated Ramah camps, where a third of attendees received scholarships for the camp, which costs \$6,730 for a four-week session.

“Sheryl started this scholarship because Camp Ramah is where Dave built friendships that lasted decades, where he developed independence, and where his Jewish identity took root,” Inbar Kodesh, chief of staff to Sandberg, told eJP. “She wanted other kids — especially those who, like Dave, need a scholarship to attend — to have that same experience for decades to come.”

The scholarship, announced on Facebook, was made alongside Goldberg’s brother, Rob, and Sandberg’s current husband, Tom Bernthal, the founder and former CEO of the strategic consulting agency Kelton Global.

Camp Ramah is where Goldberg “developed a sense of independence that shaped the rest of his life,” Sandberg said in

her Facebook post. “If you ever got Dave talking about camp — the late nights, the inside jokes, the competitions he swore he won — the kid in him came right back.”

Goldberg especially enjoyed sharing his camp memories with his and Sandberg’s children, who formed their own cherished experiences at the camp. “The friendships they made. The Shabbats under the trees. The games and the songs and the prayers,” she said in the status of her children’s stories, which often reflected her late husband’s.

The scholarship came together after Menashe reached out to Sandberg while planning for the camp’s 70th anniversary, which falls this year. Sandberg has supported the camp behind the scenes for years, ensuring the camp had the resources “to be able to support our families who really have the least,” he said.

The scholarship is a way “to honor [Dave’s] memory, knowing that there will be

hundreds of kids and families touched by this over the decades to come,” he said, “and it [will] inspire other [philanthropists] to hopefully look at Jewish summer camps and other Jewish educational institutions to follow suit.”

In 2014, Sandberg signed the Giving Pledge, a commitment by ultra-wealthy individuals to give half their wealth to charity. She is also a supporter of Birthright Israel — speaking at its Excelerate26 Summit in March — as well as BBYO. In honor of her parents, she has also given \$2.5 million to the Anti-Defamation League and \$5 million to United Hatzalah.

In addition to the camp scholarship, Sandberg has honored Goldberg in numerous ways including: the Dave Goldberg Scholars Program, which provides 15 college scholarships, and Option B, a grief-support organization named after the book

of the same name that Sandberg co-wrote about navigating her own loss.

Menashe gets teary-eyed thinking about the scholarship, he said. “I’m inspired, personally as a human being, as a Jew, as a donor, and, riffing off of Sheryl’s language from her famous book, *Lean In*, this does seem like a time to lean in, and she is again modeling and teaching us how to do so.”

Goldberg’s memory is a testament to the way camp connects generations, he said.

“Jewish camps are places that are steeped in history and nostalgia,” Menashe said. “So frequently, kids that come into camp have the very trajectory of their lives changed and shaped by their Jewish camp experience without having any idea upon whose shoulders and shoulders of shoulders and shoulders of shoulders they are standing.” ♦