

THE WEEKLY PRINT

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JUNE 25, 2026

In new book, former AJC chief David Harris traces antisemitism's past — and warns about its present

Harris told JI he's both 'a believer in the possibility of change' and has 'never been more worried in my adult lifetime than I am right now'

By Haley Cohen

David Harris spent more than two decades leading the American Jewish Committee, where he navigated crises facing the Jewish community and built bipartisan coalitions to advance the group's mission of supporting Israel and Diaspora Jewry.

His book, *Antisemitism: What Everyone Needs to Know*, published by Oxford University Press last year, is Harris' attempt to reach beyond the Jewish community — churches, classrooms and the “average New York Times reader.” His goal, he said, is to turn the “silent majority” into the “loud majority.”

Written in the shadow of the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas terror attacks in Israel, the book arrived at a moment of surging antisemitism in the U.S. and around the world. It traces antisemitism from its ancient roots through the Holocaust, the Soviet era and its recent resurgence — the post-Oct. 7 explosion on college campuses and beyond.

Harris, who quipped that he retired “for about 30 seconds” after serving as AJC's CEO from 1990–2022, sat down with Jewish Insider on Thursday to discuss the

book at a moment in which he said he has “never been more worried” about antisemitism — yet also remains optimistic about the Jewish future.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Jewish Insider: *Oxford University Press called you about writing this book in the fall of 2023 — weeks after the Oct. 7 attacks. You write that you were “honored but distressed by the need for such a book.” How much did the aftermath of the attacks reshape the book you thought you were going to write?*

David Harris: That call was not directly related to Oct. 7, it was too close to the attacks to even have associated [the rise of] antisemitism with it. Antisemitism was surging [already] in general. They needed a book that would be easily accessible to a high number of people, to be able to reach the average *New York Times* reader. It was also meant for high school and college classrooms and churches. They understood the emerging problem and this was their contribution.

I wrote the book over the span of close to two years during the post-Oct. 7 period. Two things impacted me: the speed and

virulence of which history was turned on its head. The worst day in Israeli and Jewish history since the end of World War II had before our eyes suddenly become directed at Jews, Zionists [and] friends of Israel who were suddenly seen as the perpetrators. Even with my understanding of the subject matter, I was stunned by how quickly and viciously it turned.

Number two is that I kept needing to add to the book because every day brought new events, insights and tragedies. At a certain point the publishers had to remind me this wasn't a newspaper, we have to close the book at some point. There's already room for a sequel, unfortunately.

JJ: *How are you reaching a wider, non-Jewish audience? Does the average American want to read about antisemitism? What has been their reaction to the book?*

DH: Because Oxford University Press [is a major publisher], it's not so easy for people who are otherwise ready to go after a book on antisemitism, such as the one that I wrote, to discredit or marginalize it with accusations like “Harris is a Zionist.” The publisher's label is enormously important for the book's credibility and reach.

Jews are also an important part of the audience. I learned from writing the book. Others can learn from reading the book.

I wrote this book with the hope that I'd be able to speak to non-Jewish audiences as well. So when one of the largest Methodist churches in the U.S., in Kansas City, with more than 30,000 worshippers a week, invited me to come speak, I was in my happy place. They invited me to come and could not have been more gracious. The response was very good. There was also a large gathering of interfaith leaders while I was in Kansas City. I want to reach well beyond the Jewish community because antisemitism is not a Jewish problem that can be solved by Jews. We need to engage good people, the silent majority, and help turn them into the loud majority.

It seems to me the larger goal, and this book is only a part of it, is to reach and mobilize the heart of America to understand the situation and the implications not just for Jews but for liberal values for all of us. It may begin with Jews, it never ends with Jews. The people burning the American flag are the very same people trampling on the Israeli flag and threatening Jews.

JJ: *Where do you see the line between criticism of Israel and antisemitism — and has that line shifted since Oct. 7?*

DH: For me, the line has not shifted. It's just been more revealed. In the book I quote Natan Sharansky, one of my heroes, who wrote a number of years ago there's "three Ds" to answer that question. When criticism of Israel evolves into delegitimization of Israel, demonizing of Israel and the use of double standards, it's clear people cannot hide behind their defense of just being critical.

It's a more elegantly linguistic way of being antisemitic while claiming you're only anti-Zionist.

JJ: *The book documents the near-total disappearance of 850,000 Jews from Muslim-majority countries since 1948. Why does that history get so little mainstream attention, and why does it matter now?*

DH: It's a question I know all too well because I'm married to one of those 850,000 Jews and have been for 51 years. I've seen this issue play out through my

wife's experience post-expulsion from Libya in 1967 and I've seen it play out in my global diplomacy where every time I raise this issue I'm usually met by an eye roll — a complete lack of interest.

One reason is the Palestinians have done an exceptionally good job of making the world believe they are the perpetual refugees and have elevated victimhood to a whole new level. Those 850,000 Jews really determined from the get-go that they were not going to create lifelong victimhood, they were going to build new lives. And they did very successfully, so they didn't become professional storytellers of their plight and loss.

But my wife says they are triple victims. First, they were expelled or forced to flee their country, their ancestral homeland. Two, the world looked away. Three, there is no trace of a 2,000-plus year history of the Jewish presence in Libyan history today. There is nothing, they've been completely wiped out. With the exception of Morocco, that is true for most of these countries which these refugees had to flee.

JJ: *There's a chapter detailing the campus antisemitism surge. Jewish groups told Jewish Insider two months after the Oct. 7 attacks that they were taking an engage-and-influence approach with diversity, equity and inclusion frameworks that have been used to exclude Jews from protected minority status on some campuses, which some attribute to the rise in antisemitism. Then in 2024, the same groups said they were reassessing their embrace of DEI. What is your approach? Is DEI fixable?*

DH: For many years Jewish organizations relied on one weapon with campuses, so to speak. That was called reason, sitting down with the president or provost and reasoning with them to help them understand why antisemitism is unacceptable. Clearly, after Oct. 7 that dependence on reason was proven to be totally ineffective in most places.

What instead is more effective is taking the gloves off — lawfare. I particularly applaud the students at Harvard, Penn, George Washington University and other schools who took the lead here. While sitting on campuses, they were suing those campuses for violation of their rights. The

organizations that got behind the students, groups like the Lawfare Project and Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law and law firms that have stepped up pro bono, all deserve huge credit.

I retired for about 30 seconds after I stepped down from my position at AJC. I joined the Institute for the Study of Global Antisemitism and Policy because I thought they were really onto something regarding campuses that no one else that I knew was looking at carefully, long before Oct. 7, and that was foreign funding — where was it coming from? What was its intent? Why were universities in many cases violating American law by not reporting those gifts? Today it's part of the national discourse to follow the money. These ecosystems directly and indirectly penetrated campuses at many levels, student organizations, faculty and staff, liberal arts, social sciences, Middle East study centers. They penetrated over many years in a very systematic and focused way.

The combination of deep research and the ability to get the research into policymakers, in the university world and the political world together with lawfare are the strategies that I think are most effective.

The students on campus are the frontline warriors of the Jewish people. They deserve the absolute backing of the American Jewish community.

JJ: *You led AJC for more than 20 years — you've seen Jewish organizational leadership up close across decades of crises. How do you assess how today's Jewish leaders have responded to the post-Oct. 7 surge in antisemitism, and what would you tell them to do differently?*

DH: Our community is several steps behind where it should be. We are at war. It's a war designed to drive a wedge between the U.S. and Israel. It has fueled antisemitism and in many cases attacked and isolated Jews. Unlike in Israel, I don't see the war mindset, plans and leaders here. I sometimes wonder, if the American Jewish community had been asked to organize D-Day, could the community have actually come together and created a single, comprehensive plan and followed it? I'm not sure. Based on the post-Oct. 7 situation here in this country, I worry we are not

where we should be — where we need to be.

JJ: *You built AJC's influence partly through bipartisan relationships. Is that model still viable, or does the current political environment force Jewish organizations to choose sides?*

DH: It certainly elevates the importance of groups like the Republican Jewish Coalition and the Democratic Majority for Israel. Support for Israel, in both political parties, can obviously no longer be taken for granted. That's especially true now in the Democratic Party, all the more so after the primary election in New York earlier this week.

But there's also an emerging cultural war inside the Republican Party. While I operated for nearly 50 years in the nonpartisan space, and positioned AJC as a nonpartisan organization with outreach at the highest level to both parties, today I would say it's particularly important Jewish groups are operating inside multiple parties in a very partisan way.

It's clear that we have enormous work to do in the Democratic Party. It was not long ago that [Sens.] Bernie Sanders (I-VT) and Elizabeth Warren (D-MA) were the outliers when it came to Israel and the Middle East. Fast forward a couple of years and they are now the clear majority. Every Jewish organization looking for a Democrat from Washington lines up to invite Sen. John Fetterman (D-PA). If he's not available, they're all baffled as to who else to invite from the contingent of Democrats in the U.S. Senate.

The question for the 501(c)(3) groups that are nonpartisan is, what do they bring to the table? In an earlier era, Jews were seen as a very important constituency with many voices, reach and impact. I'm not sure what the power equation is today for nonprofit Jewish organizations and why people in Washington should listen to them as they would have a few years ago.

The challenge for Jewish organizations is how to restore their indispensability to

the national conversation. Posting on X, issuing statements, if no one is reading them or thinking about the messaging then what's been accomplished? There is a huge amount of work to be done. I hope and pray the American Jewish community is up to the task.

JJ: *After immersing yourself in this history, are you more or less optimistic than when you started?*

DH: I could not have spent 50 plus years in global Jewish advocacy without being a believer in the possibility of change for the better. I've seen it in my lifetime. I've seen the miracle of the rescue of Jews from the Soviet Union and the rescue of Jews from Ethiopia.

I also understand as a Jew I'm commanded to believe in the possibility of a better tomorrow and not to succumb to despair. Having said all of that, I would be totally dishonest if I didn't tell you that I've never been more worried in my adult lifetime than I am right now. ♦

JUNE 25, 2026

How Ritchie Torres dodged the DSA wave in New York City

The pro-Israel congressman raised early campaign cash, defined his opponent aggressively and prioritized strong constituent services

By Marc Rod

Rep. Ritchie Torres (D-NY) has long been a target of the far left in New York City, largely because of his outspoken support for Israel and his Jewish constituents.

But Torres emerged with a commanding victory over a far-left challenger in Tuesday's Democratic primaries, even as pro-Israel Reps. Dan Goldman (D-NY) and Adriano Espaillat (D-NY) were defeated by democratic socialist-aligned challengers. Brooklyn Borough President Antonio Reynoso, a progressive backed by party leaders, was also defeated by a challenger aligned with the Democratic Socialists of America.

Observers attribute Torres' landslide win against former New York Assemblymember

Michael Blake to a variety of factors, including the different demographics of his district — which includes the heavily Jewish neighborhood of Riverdale, as well as some of the poorest neighborhoods in the city— as compared to the other three districts, his strength as a member of Congress and as a campaigner and Blake's own weaknesses as a candidate.

Torres is popular in the district, has prioritized constituent services, has been a longtime presence in the district — as a city councilman from 2014 to 2020 before his time in the House — and maintains a strong reputation locally, Torres campaign spokesperson Benny Stanislawski said.

That's in spite of the online vitriol that's frequently directed the congressman's way

by the far left.

House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY), in an MS NOW interview on Wednesday, pointed largely to the demographics of the districts — wealthier voters taking more of an interest in Middle East policy issues — as the reason for the differential results.

“What's interesting is that, in some of those districts, which tended to be higher-income districts ... there was an outsized focus on issues connected to the Middle East, the Middle East,” Jeffries said. “In other districts, for instance, in the South Bronx, Ritchie Torres was running against somebody who was heavily critical of Ritchie Torres's position on Israel, and he won by fifty points.”

Strategists largely offered a similar assessment.

Torres is a strong fit for his district, as an Afro-Latino man who grew up in housing projects in the district, Hank Sheinkopf, a longtime New York Democratic strategist, said.

The voting population in Torres' district, overall, is less friendly to the far left than the other districts where left-wing candidates surged, and Torres retained strong support among both the Jewish community and older minority voters.

Blake didn't benefit from the same institutional DSA backing that others received. Blake himself is not a DSA member and is "not particularly DSA-adjacent, although he's tried to position himself there since the mayoral primary," Jake Dilemani, another New York Democratic strategist, said.

"[The DSA] supports candidates who they think have the best shot at winning based on who the candidate is, but also who or what the district is," Dilemani said. "They pick carefully where they engage, and I think a combination of, potentially, they couldn't find a legitimate candidate for them to run, coupled with the district is not as favorable to a DSA candidate as some of the others, they wanted to use their resources wisely."

Strategists said Blake is also known as being a politically unreliable striver — he pivoted during his recent mayoral campaign and congressional bid against Torres from being a supporter of Israel and ally of AIPAC to staunchly anti-Israel, for instance — who has run for a slew of different offices.

"I don't know that anyone particularly took his candidacy all that seriously. He's run for nearly every single office there is, with the exception of maybe king of England," Dilemani quipped.

Blake also faced a barrage of attacks and scrutiny from the outset of his congressional campaign, something that was not the case for other candidates like Darializa Avila Chevalier, who defeated Espaillat.

"Torres is a better pol[itician] and a smarter campaigner. He just is," Sheinkopf said. "The other guys ... didn't define their opponents. Torres knew that anything was possible. He has a smarter way of looking at New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani, and he did what was appropriate to protect himself."

Sheinkopf also speculated that Mamdani didn't want to take a chance on Blake when he had other, easier targets that were more fertile ground for his brand of politics. DSA-style politics have typically thrived among

younger populations newer to the area, a smaller contingent in Torres' district.

Sheinkopf noted that Torres also significantly outraised Blake — he stockpiled millions in campaign cash even before Blake emerged as his leading rival.

And, strategists said, Torres' outspokenness on behalf of Israel has been somewhat less prominent over the past year, even as the congressman's views and positions have remained largely the same. Torres offered some criticism of Israel last year, similar to that expressed by some other pro-Israel Democrats.

"It's smart on his part," Sheinkopf said. "He understands that survival is important. Has he betrayed the pro-Israel community and the Jewish community as others have? The answer is no. Is he being smart about it? The answer is yes, and we should respect him for that."

Strategists said Torres can't count on his strong victory on Tuesday deterring future efforts to challenge him.

Dilemani emphasized that "two years is an eternity in politics," and that it would be foolhardy to try to predict what might happen in the next race.

"The DSA people have no sense of what fits and what doesn't fit ... they will do it again because they can," Sheinkopf said. ♦

JUNE 22, 2026

Montgomery County, Md., exec candidates clash over antisemitism records as Jewish vote looms large

While all three of the leading candidates have denounced Jewish hate, progressive Will Jawando has taken a more hostile stance towards Israel, leading his opponents Andrew Friedson and Evan Glass to jockey for the more moderate vote

By Christina Sher

Ahead of Tuesday's primary election for executive of Montgomery County, Md., progressives have largely broken for Montgomery County Councilmember Will Jawando, leaving the more moderate Councilmembers Andrew Friedson and Evan Glass to jockey for the remaining

undecided voters.

In a tight three-way race, the vote of the Jewish community — which is, according to a source familiar with the race, expected to account for more than one-fifth of primary turnout in the county with Maryland's largest Jewish population — could be especially critical. Jewish leaders

have raised the alarm on antisemitism in the deep-blue county — which saw the highest rate of incidents in the state in 2025 — and the particular issue of antisemitism in the area's public schools.

Ron Halber, CEO of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Washington, told *Jewish Insider* that

Jawando, Glass and Friedson “have all denounced antisemitism during their eight-year terms in the council” and said he hopes that other community leaders “awake from their slumber” to speak out against hate without needing to be prompted by the Jewish community.

“As County Executive, I will work with our Jewish leaders and faith leaders and leaders of all our communities to ensure that we protect our diversity,” Glass told JI, while Friedson said being executive would give him “a greater bully pulpit,” in addressing antisemitism in schools.

Earlier this month, the advocacy group EndJewHatred sent a letter to school district officials, including Jawando, who is chairman of the county council’s education and culture committee. The group called for the district to adopt the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance’s working definition of antisemitism and to adopt lesson plans to address current trends in antisemitism.

In a forum hosted by the JCRC last month, all three candidates pledged to address the rise of antisemitism within the local K-12 school system if elected as executive.

All of the front-runners voted in favor of the IHRA definition when it was adopted unanimously by the council in 2022, after months of community protests, two postponements and a council session disrupted by audience protest.

But “people who are running in this race were not helpful in that effort,” Friedson told JI. A Jewish communal activist said that “Will has stood up against antisemitism, but even if you review the way he spoke before the IHRA vote definition was taken, he was conflicted.” Jawando had said he thought the council “missed an opportunity here to find common ground.”

Rabbi Adam Raskin of Congregation Har Shalom in Potomac, Md., just outside of Washington, was in the council chamber the night the IHRA resolution passed, part of a cohort of Jewish leaders convened by the JCRC to help shepherd it through. “He encountered a tremendous amount of resistance,” Raskin said of Friedson.

Friedson himself said he had

“experienced quite a bit of antisemitism as part of that conversation,” telling JI that “there was a screaming crowd in the council chambers as we were taking this up, and it was heartbreaking to me.” Jewish day school students were in attendance when “other members of the community were screaming.”

“We need to ensure the safety of our Jewish residents, and we also need to ensure that everyone has the right to peacefully protest,” Glass said of the IHRA unrest.

During his time in office, Friedson has championed the county’s Nonprofit Security Grant Program, a relatively rare local initiative designed to supplement the federal program, which has been criticized for failing to meet the needs of faith-based institutions. Jewish groups have been among the top beneficiaries of the Montgomery County program, which saw nearly \$1.2 million has been awarded across 90 institutions in Fiscal Year 2026.

“Colleagues did not agree with me at first, including the colleagues who are running in this race,” Friedson told JI, “and I regrouped and was able to work together with Asian American leaders” on the initiative.

Glass, the first openly gay Jewish person elected to the county council, frequently leads with his Jewish identity on the campaign trail. His signature initiative on these issues is the Anti-Hate Task Force, a body he convened as council president that consists of a variety of identity-based cohorts, including one Jewish-specific. A source familiar with Glass’ campaign said he joined a synagogue after announcing his run for county executive.

Friedson and his family, meanwhile, are “three-generation members” of Har Shalom, according to Raskin. He has previously served on the boards of Jewish Council for Public Affairs and Hillel Maryland. “Andrew is motivated first and foremost by a sense of justice that was forged by his Jewish identity,” Raskin told JI, “both growing up in this synagogue and growing up with Jewish teachings and values.”

One Jewish activist who’s reached out to all three regarding collaboration on issues

of antisemitism shared that Glass’ staff has been fairly responsive, especially in comparison to Jawando’s team.

While the candidates have all spoken out against antisemitism, they hold diverging views on Israel. Jawando is supported by several anti-Israel organizations, including the Council on American–Islamic Relations, the Working Families Party and Our Revolution, as well as the Montgomery County Educators Association union, which Jewish leaders have condemned for its hostility towards Israel. The Jews United for Justice Campaign Fund also endorsed Jawando, after JUFJ fought to strip Israel-related language from the IHRA resolution.

Jawando did not respond to JI’s request for comment on the race.

In vetting candidates, “several organizations in their questionnaires specifically ask about foreign policy in Israel,” Friedson told JI. “They ask about support for Israel. They ask about all kinds of different things that are completely unrelated to the roles of county executive and county council,” he continued.

In September, Jawando made a statement against funding the Maryland Israel Development Center, an organization promoting bilateral trade and economic development. In emails with Saqib Ali, a former Maryland delegate-turned-activist in favor of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement, Jawando’s chief of staff wrote: “Will has committed to vote against any future funding for this organization.”

Jawando later clarified his position, saying, “We should never use Montgomery County tax dollars to support the development or production of offensive weapons,” declaring intent to look into how MIDC funds are used.

Around the same time, Jawando joined then-County Executive Marc Elrich on an economic development trip to China, subsidized by the Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation.

MIDC received roughly \$47,206 from Montgomery County in Fiscal Year 2026, out of the county’s nearly \$8 billion budget.

Glass has been deliberate about drawing a boundary between local governance and foreign policy pressures that have seeped

into the race. “I do not support all the actions that [Israeli Prime Minister]

Benjamin Netanyahu has taken, and that’s okay,” he told JI. “I’m running to be county

executive, not secretary of state.” ♦

JUNE 24, 2026

Prospective 2028 Democrats rally against Trump’s Iran agreement

Several Democrats considering presidential bids have cast the Iran agreement as evidence of weak leadership, arguing that Trump has been outmaneuvered by Tehran

By Gabby Deutch

Among the Democrats mulling a presidential run in 2028 — a group that is ideologically divided, each with their own diagnosis about what’s wrong with the Democratic Party and how to fix it — there was a unified reaction in February when President Donald Trump decided to attack Iran: opposition to a war they viewed as reckless and unconstitutional.

As those Democrats respond to the U.S.-Iran memorandum of understanding that Trump announced last week, another consensus is emerging, which holds that the deal is just another example of Trump’s ineffectual leadership — yet another instance, these Democrats argue, of Trump getting taken advantage of and undermining the American people.

“They’re negotiating a deal that, truthfully, every single detail we continue to hear just looks like the Iranians continue to do better than us. I think they should have been the one to write *The Art of the Deal*, not Donald Trump,” Maryland Gov. Wes Moore said in a TV interview on Tuesday.

Rahm Emanuel, the former U.S. ambassador to Japan, member of Congress and chief of staff to President Barack Obama, offered a similar quip at a recent *Financial Times* event after describing the deal as “the memorandum of misunderstanding.”

“While the president thinks he wrote a book called *The Art of the Deal*, they’re going to teach him a lesson, which is the Persian lesson: the art of the negotiation,” Emanuel said. “And he just got schooled, unbelievably.” He called the war with Iran

“the single worst — and there’s a lot of competition for it — American national security mess that I’ve ever seen.”

The MOU offered immediate sanctions relief for the Islamic Republic and launched a 60-day window for nuclear negotiations.

The 2028 contenders who have commented on the deal have generally done so without much detail. Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro criticized the agreement in an interview with CNBC on Monday, though he shared little in the way of specific critiques or concerns.

“I think what’s clear is the Trump administration, the president, specifically chose to enter this war and had absolutely no plan when he went in, and that’s why he’s got no idea how to get out,” said Shapiro. “The president created a mess, and now he’s dispatched JD Vance ... to try and figure out a way out of it, and seemingly both of them are getting played by the Iranians.”

A spokesperson for Shapiro declined to comment further.

Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker has used the deal as a political talking point. He was asked by reporters on Monday and Tuesday to respond to a social media post where Trump called on Pritzker to seek his help in responding to gun violence in Chicago. In response, Pritzker referred to Trump’s Iran negotiations as a reason why he would never want to ask Trump for help.

“This is the president who wants to blame everybody else for algae that showed up at the Reflecting Pool in Washington, D.C.,” Pritzker told reporters during an event in Illinois on Tuesday, “the same

president that thinks that after bombing Iran, that they should pick up the phone and call him, and indeed, who’s failing to put together an agreement that is anywhere near as good as the JCPOA [Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action], that was the agreement that he ripped up as president of the United States.”

Last week, he said at a *Punchbowl News* event that the deal sounds like it is “really just a cessation of hostilities and pushing off into the future negotiations about things.”

Some Democrats considering a 2028 run are avoiding the question entirely for now.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom, who on the day the U.S. began its campaign in Iran referred to the American actions as an “illegal, dangerous war,” has thus far not weighed on the MOU. Anthony Martinez, a spokesperson for Newsom, said that “Trump’s reckless war” has been costly to Americans. “That’s a bad deal for hardworking Americans, plain and simple,” Martinez said. He declined to comment on the MOU.

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear, Sen. Jon Ossoff (D-GA) and Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) have also criticized the war but so far refrained from discussing the agreement.

Most potential Democratic 2028 contenders view the Iran war as a hard-to-solve morass, with little offered in the way of alternatives to a war and deal that they oppose. Merely criticizing Trump for an unpopular war appears to be enough.

Shapiro acknowledged that he wants the U.S. to come out ahead in the war, but he

said he doesn't see how that will be possible with Trump leading the negotiations.

"I'm on Team USA. I want us to win, but this is the problem when you have a president who is just hell-bent on creating chaos around the world," Shapiro said on CNBC. "What we need instead is steady-handed leadership, and we don't have that right now."

Pritzker pointed to the 2015 Obama nuclear deal as the best-case alternative, although that deal is now defunct.

"It's a real question whether there's any advancement at all of U.S. interests," said Pritzker. "I think the question I think we're

all going to have to ask is, is this any better than the JCPOA that was already in place when Donald Trump tore it up in his first term?"

It was a line that former Vice President Kamala Harris, who is also mulling a presidential bid in 2028, echoed recently.

"This is a president who has proven himself to be entirely self-indulgent. And we will see what happens in the coming hours and days in terms of the negotiation. And really, it's a concept of an agreement," Harris said last week at a speech during a conference in Vienna. "Whatever is being negotiated, this president is going to declare

victory, and we'll end up where we were after the JCPOA and call that a victory."

Far-left lawmaker Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA), who has said he is considering a 2028 run, called the ceasefire between the U.S. and Iran "welcome news that Americans should support." But he said it "delivers Iran a better deal" than the JCPOA that Trump "spent years ridiculing." His message got a boost on X on Tuesday from former Secretary of State Tony Blinken.

"Wise words from my friend," Blinken wrote. ♦

JUNE 23, 2026

Starmer's resignation puts Burnham's record on Israel, antisemitism in the spotlight

Jewish leaders view Andy Burnham as an ally in the fight against antisemitism, but his expected bid for the premiership is renewing scrutiny of his views on Israel and Labour's post-Corbyn direction

By Gabby Deutch

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer announced his resignation on Monday, setting up a leadership battle within the Labour Party and raising the question of how his likely successor will deal with one of the issues that brought Starmer to office in the first place: combating antisemitism.

Starmer was elected as leader of the Labour Party in 2020, inheriting a party in disarray after it had faced electoral losses the year before and was navigating an internal crisis over former party leader Jeremy Corbyn's approach to antisemitism. In his victory speech in April 2020, Starmer pledged to address the deep-seated antisemitism that had led many Jews to exit the party.

Starmer's successor is likely to be Andy Burnham, a newly sworn-in Labour MP representing a district that includes parts of the Greater Manchester region. He spent the last nine years as mayor of Greater Manchester, the city with the second-largest Jewish community in the U.K. He

declared his intent to run for Labour leader on Monday and quickly earned the backing of Wes Streeting, a former health secretary who was rumored to also be considering a run.

In 2019, as Corbyn's leadership faced an antisemitism scandal, Burnham met with 80 members of the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the community's largest institutional voice.

"It is inconceivable to me that a party which has prided itself on its record on racism could have become embroiled in an antisemitism crisis," Burnham said at the meeting. "Racism needs to be dealt with firmly, quickly and decisively. I'm afraid that this hasn't been the response so far and I hope from this point forward this has been understood."

He said at the time that he still supported Corbyn, "but that support is not unconditional or unchallenged."

Jewish community leaders in Manchester have close ties with Burnham, whom they view as an ally. In particular, he

earned praise for strongly supporting the community after a terror attack on Manchester's Heaton Park Hebrew Congregation last year on Yom Kippur, in which two congregants were murdered.

"In the aftermath of the Heaton Park synagogue terrorist attack, which was incidentally my synagogue, he was an incredible support to the community," Raphi Bloom, director of fundraising and marketing at the Fed, a Jewish social services charity in Manchester, told *Jewish Insider*. "He has been an excellent friend to the Jewish community."

Burnham's record on Israel is relatively short — he has not brought Middle East politics into his mayoralty in the way that some other local leaders have focused on the issue. He spoke at a vigil days after the Oct. 7 attacks in 2023, but he also butted heads with the local Jewish Representative Council when he signed onto a petition calling for a ceasefire less than three weeks later.

"At a moment when we felt isolated and

vulnerable, he demonstrated that Greater Manchester's leadership understood the scale of the tragedy and how it affects Jewish people in the U.K.," Mark Adlestone, chair of the Manchester JRC, wrote in an op-ed in Britain's *Jewish News* on Monday. "However, it would be disingenuous to suggest there have not been times when there have been disagreements. Andy led a call from local authority leaders calling for a ceasefire post 7 October, whilst hostages remained in captivity."

Burnham also served in Parliament from 2001 to 2017, and when he unsuccessfully ran for Labour Party leader in 2015, he expressed strong support for Israel. "I've always been a friend of Israel and the Jewish community — that will never change," he said at the time, and promised that his first foreign trip as party leader would be to Israel.

But even his supporters in the Jewish community acknowledge that the politics surrounding the issue have changed a great deal since then. While remaining outspoken against antisemitism, Starmer has sought to cut off some arms sales to Israel. In September 2025, the U.K. unilaterally recognized a Palestinian state, and Starmer presided over sanctions against Itamar Ben-Gvir and Bezalel Smotrich, two far-right

ministers in Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet.

"I think he'll be strong on antisemitism, on Holocaust education and on tackling Jew hatred, but it remains to be seen about Israel. I don't think he'll change the government's position much, if at all," said Bloom, who directs the Fed's My Voice project, which preserves and shares the stories of Holocaust survivors. "We're not looking at Andy with rose-tinted spectacles when it comes to Israel, and we will deal with that when it happens as a community."

In the final days of his recent campaign for Parliament, Burnham was asked if Israel's actions in Gaza amounted to a genocide, a word Starmer declined to use. Burnham similarly declined to answer but hinted that he may be more willing to engage on the issue once he enters Parliament.

"I can't judge things of that enormity from where I am as mayor of Greater Manchester," he said. "But I do have concerns about the disproportionate nature of what has happened in terms of the destruction, and there has to be a full process of investigation and accountability."

Starmer, in an emotional speech announcing his resignation on Monday, touted his record on antisemitism as one of

his signature achievements. Jewish communal leaders said they don't expect Burnham to return to the Corbyn era, but questions remain about his approach to the party's past fissures over antisemitism and Israel.

"He probably is more to the left than Starmer is, and so perhaps the people that he will surround himself with, some of them will be more to the left of Starmer, and how that plays out for the Jewish community and for Israel is unknown at this stage," said Bloom. "I'm 100% sure he won't be reopening the door to Jeremy Corbyn or Corbynistas to come back into the party."

Ella Rose-Jacobs, national chair of the Jewish Labour Movement, urged Burnham to follow Starmer's path.

"Keir Starmer did a lot of the institutional work, but any future leader of the party will also need to vanguard and safeguard the process and the progress that has been made. Progress can be backslid," Rose-Jacobs told JI on Monday. "The thing that I hope for the future government — and obviously there might be another contender in the race, we don't know that yet — is that it doesn't import the politics of foreign conflicts to our shores." ♦

JUNE 19, 2026

After 19 years at AIPAC, Tara Brown is building Momentum for Israel-Diaspora ties

The recently appointed CEO tells eJP that she hopes to quintuple the number of Jewish mothers participating in the group's programs, from 2,000 each year to 10,000

By June 19, 2026

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

For nearly 19 years, Tara Brown was a fixture of AIPAC's Mid-Atlantic region, running between fundraisers, the halls of Congress, AIPAC Policy Conference and all the coffee meetings in between — until last year, when she was appointed CEO of Momentum, a Jewish nonprofit that seeks

to empower Jewish mothers to connect with their Jewish identity through trips to Israel and post-visit engagement.

Brown stepped into the role at a fraught moment: Antisemitism continues to rise globally as more Jews feel disconnected from their own identity and from Israel, and the cost of Israel travel has climbed roughly 90% since 2019. Brown's answer is to think bigger and bolder.

Speaking to *eJewishPhilanthropy*, Brown said that her dream is to grow Momentum's flagship Israel program fivefold, from about 2,000 women a year to 10,000.

In a wide-ranging conversation, Brown broke down what it means to be in her role at this Jewish moment, addressed the complexities and cost of Israel travel today, debunked misconceptions about Momentum and laid out a vision for

American and global Jewry, as well as the role Israel and Momentum seek to play in that future.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

Justin Hayet: *What is the biggest misconception about Momentum's role in Jewish engagement?*

TB: This biggest misconception is that we are trying to make people more observant. We constantly hear that we're more religious and observant than we actually are. Look at our board, our staff, our trip participants — we're one big tent. One of the core goals in our mission statement is unity without uniformity: we want a unified Jewish people, but that doesn't mean one size fits all, so we have representation from every part of Judaism.

We want people to connect however works best for them and their families. [New York Times columnist] Bret Stephens gave a talk at The Streicker Center where he said the Jewish community should do 10% more — not 10% more financially, but 10% more *Jewishly*. That's our philosophy too. Every mom who infuses a little more Judaism and Jewish values into her home gives her kids a little more strength and confidence to be proudly, securely Jewish. We're not trying to make everyone observant; we want people moving at their own pace, toward stronger, more courageous Jewish identity.

Another misconception is that we're just about trips. After the trip, participants return to their communities as part of a Jewish sisterhood and spend the next year learning and working together, which not only strengthens their own Jewish identities, but also their local organizations. When Jewish women in leadership, and moms in leadership, come to Israel and catch that spark, it reignites something in them to do more, feel more, connect more and be part of this global Jewish sisterhood and community. When that happens, the whole alphabet soup of Jewish organizations gets stronger.

We do plenty beyond Israel. We run leadership summits around the globe throughout the year, rooted in Jewish values, to help women lead more effectively in their homes, communities, businesses

and organizations. Israel travel is our flagship program, but it's far from the only thing we do.

JH: *Critics say immersive Israel experiences are most impactful during "formative years" teens and college years. How do you respond to that?*

TB: We focus on moms specifically, but moms aren't actually our target audience. Their kids are. We focus on moms because the greatest social influencer of all time isn't TikTok, isn't Noa Tishby — it's the Jewish mom. When a mom decides she wants to raise her kids a certain way, or think differently about her own family's Judaism, it happens.

If we want strong, connected kids who understand Jewish values and grounded pride in and connection to Israel, this must be reinforced at home. Most of the women who come on this journey are religiously unaffiliated. When we survey them a year after they return [after the trip], 25% have since enrolled their kids in Jewish day school. That's a transformational, generational ripple effect and it is a direct outcome of their experience with Momentum.

JH: *Israel travel costs are up 90% since 2019. Couldn't everything you just described be done in America? Why does it have to happen in Israel?*

TB: Our mission is to empower a woman to change her family, her community and to strengthen Jewish communities around the globe. Israel is the birthplace of the Jewish people and the Jewish religion — the words "Israel" and "Jerusalem" appear more than almost any other word in Jewish scripture. You cannot separate Israel from Jewish life; people try and it's impossible.

When a woman is taking her first step, or her next step, in her Jewish journey, we believe it should start in the birthplace of Jewish life. The cost is real, especially now, in the middle of a war, with the shekel strong against the dollar.

And still, our data shows that a year after the trip, our women are more engaged, more philanthropic, taking more action regarding Israel, talking to their kids about Israel and Judaism, enrolling their kids in Jewish day school and Jewish day camp. These are exactly the things we all should

want for Jewish continuity, things these women wouldn't have done without this journey.

The stakes are simply too high. People are turning away from Judaism and from Israel at the exact moment we need strong Jewish communities, both in the diaspora and in Israel. I'll take that investment any day of the year.

JH: *After 19 years at AIPAC, you stepped into this role at a hard moment — for Israel, for American Jews, and for you personally. How does all of that shape how you lead?*

TB: I'm still a proud AIPAC activist, and I believe all American Jews should be involved in AIPAC and pro-Israel politics. And at the same time, we're facing a crisis, not just in American Jewry, but in Jewry across the globe with levels of hatred and violence against Jews are rising, at a time when many Jews feel as disconnected and uninformed about their Judaism and about Israel.

But as I thought about my own Jewish journey and the legacy I wanted to leave for my daughter, and this opportunity — to empower Jewish women to strengthen their Jewish communities as well as Jewish communities across the globe — this felt like a natural next step. I want there to be generations of people, in America and beyond, who understand why we're a special people, and who understand Israel is the backbone of who we are as a people.

We want to show our participants there's more to being Jewish than fear. We have thousands of years of resilience and strength behind us, and an obligation to show that to Jewish women across the globe, so they can pass that legacy on to their kids.

JH: *Where do you see Momentum in five years?*

TB: This isn't just about trips. We're transforming individuals, families and communities, and we believe that the ripple effect can eventually reach a tipping point that transforms the Jewish world. We think that the tipping-point number is 10,000 Jewish moms a year reengaging their journey and traveling to Israel through Momentum.

Right now, even before the war affected our numbers, we're bringing a little over

2,000 women a year — so we're talking about scaling fivefold. It's a lofty goal, but we are living in a pivotal part of Jewish history that demands big dreams. We'll need to do some things differently, and we'll need more funding, but we're committed to hitting that mark. Will it happen in five years? I hope so, because I don't think time is on our side.

JH: *Momentum recently started bringing Jewish educators to Israel. Can you tell us more about this, and what does that reveal about your strategy?*

TB: We found that even in Jewish day schools, teachers were often talking about Judaism and Israel in ways that could be stronger. So we started bringing educators to Israel — we ran a pilot last year and learned a lot from it.

Because these educators also have to meet the “mom” criteria, the impact doubles: They bring what they learn home to their own families, and they bring it into their classrooms, amplifying the effect for their own kids and their students.

With antisemitism rising, we found that

a lot of teachers don't know how to talk to students about hatred and violence toward Jews. Before the trip, when we surveyed educators, only 19% said they felt confident discussing antisemitism with their students. After the trip, that number jumped to 70%; this is a 51-point increase. Given everything happening right now, having teachers who feel equipped to have that conversation matters enormously. ♦

JUNE 24, 2026

Seeing Stars: Inside the Jusidman Foundation's big bet on Bedouin leadership in Israel

Desert Stars aims to boost Israel's long-struggling Bedouin community through education and leadership training programs

By Rachel Gutman

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

THE NEGEV DESERT — On a bright day in June, a group of high school students ambled out of a sparkling new building and stood chatting on freshly planted grass. Among them was Rabie Salm Abu Medegam from the Bedouin city of Rahat, a bespectacled, open-faced and exuberant senior who chatted breezily with visitors in a mixture of perfect Hebrew, English and Arabic. He spoke about how important it was for him to use his voice to raise up his community, and about an anti-bullying project he and some friends had started at their school.

Last week, Abu Medegam graduated from Desert Stars, a Bedouin leadership organization whose new Jusidman Campus for Bedouin Leadership sits in the northern Negev. The brand-new campus — gleaming with new buildings and state-of-the-art classrooms with clear walls, nothing like the overcrowded and under-resourced schools that are common in the area — is the embodiment of a vision that Igal Jusidman, president of the Jusidman Foundation, has been pursuing for more than a decade.

“The Bedouin community is at the very bottom of any socioeconomic measurement you can find,” Jusidman told *eJewishPhilanthropy*. “It's not a huge problem today, but it will grow exponentially. It's a recipe for disaster.” The goal of the Jusidman Foundation, he said, is a stronger, more secure Israel — one that is both Jewish and democratic. “We want to see a strong Israel. A secure Israel. And we understand that we need to do something about it.”

According to Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics, of the estimated 300,000 Bedouin living in the Negev, over half are under 18 — and by 2035, the community is projected to constitute half the region's population. The gaps they face are staggering: The Knesset's Research and Information Center recently found that roughly one-in-six Bedouin Israelis aged 16-17 has dropped out of high school — roughly five times the rate of Jewish Israelis. The most recent study, conducted in 2021, found that roughly 60% of Bedouin men and 25% of women are employed; while the rate for men is similar to that of other Arab Israelis, the rate for Bedouin women is nearly half that of Arab Israeli

women overall and less than a third of the rate of Jewish Israeli women. The majority of Bedouin Israelis in the Negev live in poverty, in towns contending with overcrowding, poor health, rising crime and murder rates, and limited access to quality education. Many of their communities are also not recognized by the state, creating infrastructure and security problems. Entrenched tribal systems control schools, resources, and appointments, leaving no unified leadership able to advance the community as a whole.

Desert Stars was founded in 2013 with a gap-year leadership program for young Bedouin men. The model was distinctive from the start: rigorous Hebrew-language instruction, preparation for higher education and an extended outdoor leadership component — long hikes, group challenges, physical hardship — designed to instill the belief that participants could accomplish things they never imagined possible. A women's gap-year program, Raidat, followed. Then a high school.

The Jusidman Foundation's partnership with Desert Stars unfolded over time. “Normally, when we go into a program, it's like a partnership — a long-term

partnership. We don't marry the first one we meet in the street," Jusidman said. He spent two to three years following Desert Stars and its co-founders — Matan Yaffe, a fifth-generation Israeli and former IDF officer, and Mohammed Al-Nabari, a Bedouin community leader and former mayor — before bringing his father, Daniel Jusidman, in as a funder. "I wanted to understand that it's a great organization with a good future, that it's doing something very important, and doing it very well," said Jusidman.

Yaffe is also the founder of a new political party, El HaDegel (To the Flag), a new Zionist political party founded by IDF reservists and civil servants, hoping to fight for universal military conscription, among other aims.

The Jusidman Foundation was established in 2010 by Igal's father — a prominent Mexican businessman and philanthropist who built one of Latin America's largest hardware companies before dedicating himself to philanthropy in Israel on a sweeping scale, most recently pledging NIS 200 million (\$67 million) toward Israel's largest rehabilitation hospital. The foundation has long focused its priorities on reducing socioeconomic gaps in Israel through education. When the family began mapping the landscape of Israeli society, two communities stood out as strategic priorities: the ultra-Orthodox and the Bedouin. With the Bedouin, the trajectory was clear: the birth rate is among the highest in the country, and the gaps are widening. The window to act, Igal Jusidman believes, is now.

About 10 years ago, Yaffe began talking to the Jusidman Foundation about a dream: a permanent campus that would become Israel's first Bedouin youth village, modeled on the long-established Jewish Israeli youth village concept. In November 2025, the Jusidman Campus for Bedouin Leadership opened its first phase after nearly a decade of planning. Israeli President Isaac Herzog attended the inauguration, telling the students he believed one of them would someday win a Nobel Prize.

The campus now serves 330 students in grades 7 through 12, drawn from across

Bedouin society — from Rahat, the largest Bedouin city in Israel, to unrecognized villages with no running water, paved roads or bomb shelters. The school year opens with intensive Hebrew immersion; students arrive speaking almost none and leave fluent. The results are impressive: 92% of students earn their *bagrut*, Israel's matriculation certificate, with a 0% dropout rate, compared to a 60% *bagrut* rate nationally among Bedouins.

According to Menucha Saitowitz, the organization's director of development who is an Orthodox Jewish resident of the city of Beersheva, the secret to the success of Desert Stars isn't just about good test scores. Rather, the program teaches kids about their identity as Bedouins, gives them a sense of belonging in their community and country, and the belief that change is possible. "We have to encourage them to want to be part of Israeli society — and to feel welcomed into it," she told eJP.

The curriculum moves through what she calls concentric circles of belonging. Students first explore Bedouin society itself — visiting different villages, meeting tribal leaders, encountering communities they'd never seen even though they grew up nearby. "I hear it every year," Saitowitz said. "Somebody who grew up in Rahat has never been to an unrecognized village. They don't know what it is, they don't know the customs." From there, the circles widen: Arab society in Israel, then wider Israeli society — secular Jews, the Haredim, Ethiopian Israelis, Russian speakers. "Instead of Jews and Arabs, it becomes: Israel is made up of hundreds of different groups, and Bedouin society is one of them."

According to Desert Stars' own 2024–25 attitudes survey, participants' sense of belonging to Israeli society more than doubled over the course of the gap-year program — from 21% to 46% among women, and from 22% to 63% among men. Desire to get to know Jews better rose from 65% to 96% among women, and from 44% to 74% among men. Among alumni, 97% report having close friends from other tribes — a striking figure in a society where neighborhoods and schools are typically segregated by clan.

Khitam Abo-Badr, who founded the women's gap-year program and now works in resource development at Desert Stars, experienced the barriers the organization works to dismantle firsthand. She grew up in an unrecognized village, the daughter of a mother who could not read or write. "My mother understood that education would make us into something," she said. Under her mother's encouragement, all eight of her siblings, along with two stepchildren, went on to earn university degrees.

Located mostly in Israel's South, the Bedouin community was uniquely bound up in the violence of the Oct. 7 terror attacks. Twenty-one Bedouins from the city of Rahat were killed in the Hamas attack and the rocket fire that followed; six members of the Ziadna family were taken hostage. Stories of Bedouin civilians and soldiers who rescued Nova festival survivors that day have since become widely known, including that of Remo Salman Elhozayel, a Bedouin police officer credited with saving roughly 200 Nova survivors, and Youssef Ziadna, who personally rescued festivalgoers in his minivan and was among the first recipients of President Herzog's newly created Medal of Civilian Bravery.

For many in the community, Oct. 7 marked a turning point — a sense of shared tragedy, and, briefly, a shift from feeling like outsiders to feeling truly part of Israeli society.

According to Saitowitz, in the semi-recognized Bedouin village of Kukhleh, in the immediate aftermath of Oct. 7, residents began putting Israeli flags in their yards for the first time in memory. "They were saying, yes, we are Israeli, we're proud," Saitowitz said of students from the village. "And then there was a housing demolition in the village. It completely deflated the whole village."

The initial sense of shared fate between Bedouin and Jewish Israelis gave way, in the months that followed, to unease in the increasingly complex political landscape: A harsh political environment, intensifying home demolitions under the hard-line National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir, and mistrust between Jewish and Arab Israelis.

Further complicating the picture, most Bedouin Israelis also have family in Gaza. “It’s very hard to see them [Gazans] as the other side when it’s somebody that you’re related to,” Saitowitz said. “If we don’t acknowledge that there are differences, we’re never going to be able to overcome them.”

“As a Bedouin, you feel hated by everyone — by Arab people and by Jewish people. And it’s really, really hard,” said Abo-Badr. She deleted her Facebook account after the war began. “I couldn’t see the posts from my Jewish friends. I lost a lot of friends because they were saying hard things — like ‘erase Gaza.’ I can’t hear violent speech from either side.”

The war has made Desert Stars’ work both more urgent and more complicated. At school, the criminal violence has been impossible to keep out. One student’s father was killed in a shooting in Rahat. The

school counselor lost her own son to clan violence. Students arrive carrying trauma that the formal curriculum cannot fully address. Desert Stars’ response is to create a space — perhaps the only one many of these young people have — where they can speak freely about what they’re carrying, without fear of social media exposure or retaliation. “If they talked about their feelings outside, maybe they would get arrested,” Khitam said. “So we allow them to bring it all here — even their hardest thoughts.”

For Jusidman, Oct. 7 opened a window. “It showed that we can be partners, that we can work together, that we care about each other. On the other hand, the divisions are deep and long-standing. The good things that happened between Jews and Bedouins after Oct. 7 aren’t going to suddenly heal them. It opened a window, and we have to work for it.”

The first phase of the Jusidman Campus is fully funded and debt-free. The next phase — dormitories, a career center, a cultural center with a mosque, and a dining hall — is still seeking a lead donor. Jusidman noted, with a hint of exasperation, that his father’s high-profile Israeli friends routinely call Desert Stars the most important program the family funds, yet few have been moved to write checks of their own. “Maybe we should start telling them: Put your money where your mouth is.”

For the graduating class of 2026, the money is well spent. Back on the lawn outside the new campus building, Rabie Salm Abu Medegam was asked what comes next, “I’m graduating, and I’m sad,” he said, “because I’m not sure if university will be like school — if it will give me what we get here. We get everything we need here. I’m sad I’m leaving.” ♦