

THE WEEKLY PRINT

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JULY 22, 2026

'Shame on you': Mamdani's viral anti-Netanyahu video sparks fear among Jewish groups

ADL CEO Jonathan Greenblatt called Mamdani's statement a 'dangerous dereliction of duty'

By Will Bredderman

A video New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani released late Tuesday night — in which the democratic socialist railed at length against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu but confessed he couldn't honor his campaign pledge to arrest him — triggered a wave of warnings from mainstream Jewish organizations that his singular focus on excoriating Israel from his official platforms places New Yorkers at risk.

The mayor's video — which has received in the neighborhood of 150 million views across all his office's social media channels, one of his most-viewed posts ever — ran with the tag "Benjamin Netanyahu is a war criminal" and denounced the Jewish state's leader as "the architect of a horrific genocide." Mamdani ultimately admitted in the video that his administration could not enforce an International Criminal Court warrant against Netanyahu should he attend the upcoming U.N. General Assembly.

The social media clip, which accused Netanyahu and Israel of various war crimes including targeting women and newborn babies, provoked widespread outcry from Jewish groups. They noted Mamdani had

omitted any reference to Hamas and the Oct. 7, 2023, attacks that touched off the latest round of conflict, and asserted he had neglected his responsibility as a local official elected to represent all communities in the city.

"This isn't just political theater. It's a dangerous dereliction of duty," Anti-Defamation League CEO Jonathan Greenblatt wrote on X, noting the spike in hate crimes targeting Jewish New Yorkers since Oct. 7. "He remains relentlessly obsessed with the world's only Jewish state — even as Jewish New Yorkers face record levels of antisemitism and the city confronts urgent problems that demand his attention."

Greenblatt further argued the video was the product of an "antisemitic worldview" and "the play-acting instincts of a perpetual student activist."

The UJA-Federation of New York said in a statement, "New Yorkers elected a mayor to lead this city — not to make Israel the centerpiece of your political grandstanding. At a time of rising antisemitism, repeatedly singling out and vilifying the world's only Jewish state for perceived political benefit is repugnant, puts Jews at greater risk —

and leaves many Jewish New Yorkers feeling targeted and unwelcome in the city we call home."

"Shame on you," the post concluded.

AIPAC said Mamdani's video was "based on a modern blood libel and outrageous lies."

Other groups including the Simon Wiesenthal Center, Orthodox Union and American Jewish Committee contrasted the mayor's pledges early in his administration to represent New Yorkers of all faiths and nationalities with his use of official city platforms to exclusively pillory Israel — with the OU calling it a "betrayal of his oath of office and his own commitment to protect all New Yorkers" and the AJC demanding he "stop putting a target on the back of the Jewish community."

"New Yorkers elected a mayor, not a prosecutor of foreign leaders," SWC wrote in a statement, arguing he had taken the issue beyond criticism of any one foreign statesman. "Mayor Mamdani repeatedly singles out Israel while using the prestige of his office to legitimize rhetoric that further isolates the Jewish state and deepens division here at home."

The SWC statement added: “He delivered a sweeping moral indictment of Israel while erasing the terrorist atrocities that ignited this war.”

Pressed with these concerns after an unrelated event at City Hall on Wednesday, Mamdani said he would hypothetically have liked to see ICC warrants enforced against leaders of Hamas as well. Asked if he saw the Oct. 7 attacks, the deadliest wave

of violence against Jews since the Holocaust, as genocidal, the mayor called them a “horrific war crime” and “something that should be deeply opposed with every single fiber of our being” — but declined to answer in the affirmative.

He maintained that criticizing Israel publicly was in keeping with his responsibilities to the city’s Palestinian American community, as well as a “universal politics.”

He also reiterated that he would not “be welcoming” Netanyahu to the city, and suggested New Yorkers might greet his arrival with protests.

“This is a city where if anyone feels a level of frustration or opposition, protest is something that we will always respect,” he said. “I leave it to New Yorkers themselves to make that decision.” ♦

JULY 20, 2026

It’s the generational wealth transfer, stupid: The key takeaway from the Giving USA report

Speaking to eJP, Giving Institute board member Avrum Lapin breaks down what the annual study of national charity trends means for Jewish organizations

By Nira Dayanim

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

While the Jewish community often thinks of itself as distinct and different, when it comes to giving, the trends and challenges in Jewish philanthropy are markedly similar to those in the wider community.

And yet, for Jewish organizations, there are particular lessons that can be gleaned from the broader patterns in American charitable giving — as seen in the latest annual Giving USA report, which was released last month.

Most significant of these is the profound shift underway as vast amounts of wealth move from the baby boomers to Gen Xers, two generations with vastly different outlooks and giving patterns, which Jewish organizations must prepare for, according to Avrum Lapin, president of the Lapin Group and a board member of the Giving Institute, which produces the report.

Those incoming Gen X donors tend to treat Jewish issues as “one item on a menu” of many worthy causes and have less “brand loyalty” to legacy organizations, according to Lapin. A debate over how best to direct funds amid rising antisemitism is also starting to reshape the community’s

funding landscape as Jewish philanthropy recalibrates after years of emergency giving.

Charitable giving in the U.S. rose again last year, continuing modest but steady growth, the report shows, with increased giving by foundations and a continued shift toward donor-advised funds. Bequests jumped nearly 20% in 2025, the third time in the last four years that bequest giving has increased by that much or more, though Lapin cautioned that the year-to-year numbers are still too volatile to be considered a trend.

As he does almost every year, Lapin spoke with *eJewishPhilanthropy* about the report, unpacking what last year’s numbers show, and what they still don’t, as Jewish philanthropy works through a period of unusually rapid change. Many of the trends that he identified have been brewing for years — the shift toward foundations and donor-advised funds, for instance — and yet they represent the fundamental landscape of the philanthropic field.

The interview has been lightly edited for clarity.

Nira Dayanim: *What trends in giving that revealed in the report do you think are most important for Jewish nonprofits and donors?*

Avrum Lapin: Over the past 40 years — with a couple of blips and drops along the

way — we’re seeing giving that mirrors GDP. The patterns you see in the general philanthropic marketplace are reflected in the Jewish community. More people are using philanthropic tools (like donor-advised funds). You see the growth in foundations over time — over a two-year period, I believe it’s about 9.5% growth in giving by foundations.

For the Jewish community, the issue isn’t giving, it’s where the giving goes. The Jewish community is an extremely philanthropic community. Over the past two to three years, we went from a peak in emergency funding to easing off after the Jewish Federations of North America emergency campaign ended. The impact on the marketplace was profound. The donors were older, and it kind of sucked the oxygen out of the community philanthropically for a time.

The community’s giving has been working its way back over the subsequent 15 months, from the last quarter of 2024 through 2025. I don’t have numbers on this, but I’m probably right that people returned to normal giving patterns, funding organizations they may have shorted during the emergency campaign for obvious reasons, and returning to the causes that represent their particular interests. Then the war in

Iran distorted things again and created a little bit of misdirection. But for the most part, giving in 2025 continued along the path of recalibration.

We're not here to talk about 2026, but for the Jewish community, giving locally is re-emerging, and giving to Israel is finding a new balance. In a past conversation, I compared it to a jigsaw puzzle, all the pieces were thrown into the air, and they're falling back — some into place, some not.

There's an undercurrent in the Jewish community — one we hear all the time — about the effectiveness of the “legacy organizations” and their approach to antisemitism, and where the community's investment should go. Some say we have to continue funding the Anti-Defamation League, the American Jewish Committee, local federations, Jewish Community Relations Councils, etc., and the people doing street-level work to combat or respond to antisemitism.

Others argue this isn't working, that legacy organizations don't have solutions for the kind of antisemitism we're focused on today. Instead of creating more committees, reports, analysis and research, that argument goes, we should invest in schools and local institutions. By empowering and strengthening the community's internal capabilities, that's the best way to combat antisemitism — training students to be better ambassadors.

ND: *One data point I found particularly striking was that bequests jumped nearly 20% last year. Do you view that as anomalous, or as part of the “great wealth transfer” pattern people have been anticipating?*

AL: There is a great wealth transfer going on, and it's not some recognizable, massive process where you see funds moving from one generational cohort to the next all at once. It happens donor by donor, family by family. Though I can tell you, on the ground, it is happening.

Does the rise and fall of bequests in a given year reflect changes in who's making funding decisions — one generation or another? Perhaps, but a lot of times those are timing issues. You might see things spike the following year; it depends on how much money goes into any kind of testamentary or estate planning in a given year. I believe

— though I may be wrong — that bequests actually went down over the two-year spread of 2024-25. But let's talk about the intergenerational transfer, because that's more important, and it also ties back to your earlier question about trends in giving.

As leadership and control of philanthropic decision-making passes from baby boomers to Gen Xers, understand that the post-Holocaust generation, people 75 and older, are still here and still involved in philanthropic decision-making. So you basically have three cohorts operating at once. We can talk about millennials separately — that's a whole different topic. But the transfer between baby boomers and Gen Xers is profound, and you see this in the Jewish community as well.

The baby boomer generation — individuals currently 60 to 75 or so — gave to the Jewish community, to a large degree, the way their parents did, and they also gave to everybody else. They supported the legacy organizations that were the foundation of the Jewish community: local federations, Israel Bonds, the American Jewish Committee, the American Jewish Congress, Hillel and other foundational organizations.

Gen Xers are making decisions differently. First, they are not giving to the Jewish community or to Israel first. It's a very generous generational cohort, but giving to Israel or to Jewish causes is one item on a menu, even amid the challenges of antisemitism people are facing.

This generation has access to institutional leadership and institutional philanthropy in a way their parents' generation didn't — and the analysis of how this plays out will need to happen over 2025-27: Will there be a return to the patterns of the older generation, which funded the emergency campaign? Or will this cohort continue the trend it followed before the emergency — supporting local organizations in addition to the Jewish community, and making decisions based on personal interest rather than the community's broader interests?

There is also absolutely no brand loyalty among Gen Xers. They'll support an organization today, and if a similar organization down the street is perceived to do it better, they'll redirect their money there. It's

loyalty to a product or an outcome rather than loyalty to the organization itself. Again, we don't know yet where all this is going. We see some return to pre-Oct. 7 patterns, but whether it goes all the way back, I don't know. Are Jews between 45 and 60 supporting the Jewish community? For sure. Are they returning to synagogues in many communities? Yes. But we don't know if it's a sustained trend yet — we'll need more time and reflection before we can say a trend has been redirected.

ND: *You mentioned how Gen X or even millennial philanthropists might engage with Jewish causes differently than their parents, as “one item on a menu.” Does the spike in bequests change your thinking on how urgently Jewish institutions need to adapt to that generational shift, or is it just too unpredictable?*

AL: I mentioned the baby boomers and the Gen Xers because the Gen Xers are the ones now emerging into leadership positions. The millennial cohort is a bit of a mystery — a challenge for the Jewish community.

The 20-somethings and 30-somethings have been profoundly affected by what's going on in Israel, in either direction, and they approach philanthropy differently. Setting the specific issues aside, the notion of social movements — being part of something that creates social change — is very much part of the millennial generation. That's thematically related to, but not quite the same as, what Jewish organizations do: creating change and making a difference in people's lives. But the millennial generation is caught up in the connectivity between volunteerism, social movements and philanthropy.

The overlay in the Jewish community: First, there's the push-pull of what's happening in Israel. I can tell you my own kids, both in their 30s, believe in and support Israel, but they're uncomfortable with what's going on, and they don't talk about it with their friends. That's not the situation we want to be in.

Expanding outward, on some level, this generation isn't going to be reached by legacy organizations — they're not going to join a young-leadership program at the local federation. But they will engage with something impactful in their community

that involves them and gives them context for being among other Jews their age with similar interests.

So the dichotomy between the legacy approach and the community-building approach really comes into focus with the 30-something, millennial cohort, because it matters whether they'll be as engaged in Jewish communal and philanthropic work as their parents, who are now in their 50s.

If the intergenerational transfer — however unorganized — is happening, whether it's institutions approaching sunsetting foundations or approaching individuals in their orbit who are at that age and stage of life about testamentary giving [something now, something later], I'd say it's imperative that organizations engage donors who are now 60 and up.

If you're dealing with someone who is 80, they've probably already made their decisions — they can adjust them, but they've largely decided. You want to approach people in their 50s and 60s who are thinking about wills, with kids still around the house — their estate planning looks much different than it will once their kids are grown and building their own families.

ND: *You mentioned that giving to foundations has decreased significantly, but giving by foundations has increased. What do you attribute the increase in giving by foundations to — spend-downs, or something else?*

AL: There are some notable foundations — the Russell Berrie Foundation a couple of years ago, the Marcus Foundation — Bernie Marcus, may he rest in peace — and other large players, including Michael Steinhart's, with all the issues that come along with that — that are spending down. Others are doing the same.

Is that part of it? Maybe in a small way, but not significantly. There are always institutional funders that do that. What we're seeing — and we'll have to see if it becomes a trend — I can't attribute the increase to any one thing, because in every three- to five-year cycle, there are foundations that announce they're sunsetting, so it can't be attributed to that alone.

Forget about the \$617 billion given in total — that doesn't affect bequests. The 20-some percent is a timing issue. Next year it could be 16%, the year after 30% — it depends on how much goes into deferred giving. But it could have some connection to the transfer of wealth and the aging of the baby boomers, who range from the low 60s — people still working — to those 15 to 20 years older, who are retired and live differently financially.

A lot of the bequests of the post-Holocaust generation are coming into play, so I'd say there will be a steady stream. I can't tell you there will be sustained growth at 20-some percent — that's not a number you can predict — but it will continue.

ND: *With the top-line number up last year, even with federal cuts to nonprofits pulling things the other way — do you see rising need alongside rising philanthropic giving? Is that the same picture you're seeing in the Jewish philanthropic sector?*

AL: The top three classes of recipients are still religion, even though it's a shadow of what it was, and though it has increased.

I think the increases are more pronounced in the Jewish community, so that probably still holds the top spot. Education and human services tend to compete for second and third, depending on the year. After COVID-19, human services were much higher; I believe this [past] year, human services were still No. 2, followed by education. Education falling from the No. 2 spot is probably, as we discussed, a result of post-COVID changes and the federal budget cuts that began in early 2025.

In the Jewish community, I think you're seeing a reflection of that. The particulars may be a little different, but not by much — the general trends and challenges are pretty much the same, layered with the uniquely Jewish, Israel-related issues we discussed, and the reentry into something more predictable historically. We don't yet know where things will settle, but we're seeing some movement back. Then again, how did the war in Iran this year affect giving? We don't yet know. We'll have to see — the Jewish people could use a little peace and quiet,

which would give us an opportunity to get clearer numbers on this as well.

ND: *With all that in mind, what do you think is most important for Jewish nonprofits and donors to be aware of about last year's trends in giving?*

AL: The good news is that there were no radical changes in giving patterns. Certain things were accentuated: Giving by individuals increased, but incrementally — it's about 60-some percent now, versus 80-some percent 20 years ago. But 20 years ago, we didn't have as high a share of giving through foundations, and there were essentially no donor-advised funds, so individual giving accounted for a higher share. You almost have to combine individuals, donor-advised funds and family foundations and work it out from there.

The big picture is that patterns and trends of giving haven't changed radically nationally. Within the Jewish community, things are still evolving and unclear, and we can't make assumptions.

For the Israel-based organizations we work with, we're constantly telling them the expectations of five years ago aren't the expectations of today. You have to build relationships, make connections and get your message out — it's not a matter of showing up and going home with money.

On the domestic side, the challenge of antisemitism and the community's feeling of being besieged and hemmed in — without the sense of ownership of the American experience they might have felt 10 years ago — who would have imagined, 10 years ago, what we're dealing with now in terms of antisemitism? And yet we're at a stage where these things are becoming normalized.

We'll have to see how this internal conversation, between investing in the community, schools and synagogues versus investing in the broader communal structure, plays out. We're beginning to see some movement — not so much in 2025, because of the lingering effects of the emergency campaign and the community still emerging from it, but in 2026, it's definitely become an issue to contend with. ♦

JULY 21, 2026

Bernie Sanders' 2020 Jewish liaison says his old boss is promoting antisemitism

Joel Rubin: Sanders has endorsed 'the most categorically anti-Israel, antisemitic candidates that we've seen in a generation, if ever'

By Marc Rod

ASPEN, Colo. — Joel Rubin, a former State Department official who led Jewish outreach for Sen. Bernie Sanders' (I-VT) 2020 presidential campaign, is now excoriating his former boss and the movement he has built for elevating stridently anti-Israel candidates — most notably former Maine Senate candidate Graham Platner.

The anti-Israel and antisemitic wave that's taken hold on the left as a result of the efforts of Sanders and his allies, Rubin said, is bad for the Jewish community and politically unwise for the Democratic Party and for the U.S.' own strategic interests.

"I think what Sanders and the Sanders operation have done is shove into our system the most categorically anti-Israel, antisemitic candidates that we've seen in a generation — if ever, certainly within the Democratic Party — and it's by design," Rubin said in an interview with *Jewish Insider* last week on the sidelines of the Aspen Security Forum. "It's not by accident, and it's very disruptive intentionally. The goal is to undermine Democratic unity and even rationality on Israel at this stage."

He said that Sanders and his allies have directed anger and frustration toward Israel into a "highly unproductive debate about whether or not Israel should exist and whether or not we should support it or have any relationship" — rather than a "constructive" discussion of how the U.S. can work to resolve issues with a longtime ally and partner that plays an important role in American national security.

Sanders, Rubin said, has become an "outright hostile actor."

Sanders did not respond to a request for comment.

Rubin has been particularly critical of Sanders and progressive strategists for the "creation" and promotion of Platner, whom

Rubin called a manufactured "fake test tube [candidate]" out of "central casting for the left."

He said that he's angry with Sanders, as well as other Platner backers including Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA) and Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), for continuing to promote Platner even through a litany of controversies, starting with his Nazi tattoo.

Rubin said Sanders and his allies, and the candidates they have promoted, have taken a similar approach in campaigns around the country, counting on a backlash toward Israel and the pro-Israel Jewish community to launch them into office.

"I'm extremely disappointed. I feel like it violates the goals of promoting peace in the Middle East and the two-state solution, and I believe that it exacerbates the pain and distress that the American Jewish community is experiencing right now in Israel policy," Rubin said. "I had higher hopes for a senator who is Jewish, and his team who knows very well what's out there."

He said that the American left is now following the model of former Labour party leader in Britain, Jeremy Corbyn — who faced a damning Equality and Human Rights Commission finding of antisemitism within the party under his leadership — and the movement is "no longer progressive — it's something much darker."

"It's a hate-based narrative they're promoting," Rubin said. He said that Sanders and others on the left are on a mission to break the Democratic Party's ties to the Jewish state and the U.S.-Israel relationship, with no argument for how that would produce a positive outcome.

When he worked for Sanders' 2020 campaign, Rubin said that he was "given latitude to communicate messages about him and his views on Israel and peace and anti-semitism that were positive," with a focus

on solving issues and creating solutions, while disassociating from "the most hateful voices."

"That's no longer the case. I don't know what's going on inside that operation. There is no line. There is no bottom. There is no low," Rubin said. "And what it's doing now is gutting American Jewish confidence in the Democratic Party, which is not a way to win elections, and it's unethical as well, considering American Jews have been a bedrock community supporting the Democratic Party."

He said the party should be pushing for policies that move toward peace, which is "not what these people are advocating for." He said that the effort is also playing into the hands of conservatives, allowing them to frame themselves as the only ones taking action against antisemitism.

"We need leadership, and the progressive community needs to stop scapegoating Jews for all problems in the world," Rubin said.

Progressives like congressional candidates Scott Wiener in California and Brad Lander in New York as well as Khanna are "desperately afraid of saying anything somewhat rational about Jews and Israel for fear of being attacked" — but are facing attacks anyway, discovering that it's impossible to satisfy far-left voices while they are pushed to take ever more extreme positions.

Rubin argued that policymakers and advocacy groups like J Street, for which he was the founding political director, have a responsibility to lead and to set boundaries of what is and is not acceptable discourse on Israel, to stand up to the extremes and to strongly reject antisemitism. "Right now, nobody's stepping up," Rubin said.

J Street did not respond to a request for comment.

Rubin said that President Barack Obama, under whom he served, understood the importance of continuing the U.S.-Israel relationship and of treating pro-Israel American Jews as patriotic and leaders within the Democratic Party, even as he supported policies like diplomacy with Iran. He said that level of nuance and respect has vanished.

Rubin has never been aligned with AIPAC, and was critical of its strategies in this year's primaries, but said that the left is targeting American Jews and supporters of Israel writ large through attacks on AIPAC — a phenomenon he has personally experienced. He compared it to the targeting and marginalization of Jews in a variety of professional sectors over the past three years.

"Any person who's Jewish who expresses any level of support [for Israel], no matter where on the spectrum, is now a Jewish person who needs to be targeted for harassment, and is described as an AIPAC [supporter] trying to insidiously control the American political system for a foreign power," Rubin said.

"The American Jewish community doesn't deserve this," Rubin continued. "The Jewish American community on the Democratic side has been a foundational funder, organizer, elected leader, organizational leader, powerful leading voice of infrastructure in the liberal openness of American life in the last 50, 60 years, and now we're getting beaten up as if we were the opponent. It's totally offensive and it's politically dangerous for the Democratic Party to do that as well."

Speaking to JI as the House was voting on an amendment to cut \$3.3 billion in U.S. aid to Israel, Rubin warned of the "moral hazard" of the vote, arguing that many Democrats in safe blue seats would vote in favor of the amendment for political signaling purposes — "pandering to the base"

that is "very much moving into a hostile position" — knowing that the amendment was going to fail.

Rubin predicted, correctly, that moderate Democrats in purple districts, "the majority-makers," would take a more nuanced view focused on the impacts of the policy and oppose the amendment.

He praised House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries (D-NY) for opposing the amendment, but said that the Democratic Party is now in the midst of an "existential fight" over Israel as a result of Sanders and progressive activists making the Israeli-Palestinian conflict a "top-level issue" for the party and the left.

Rubin — who lives in Maryland — was also strongly critical of Van Hollen, saying the senator had "turned his back on the Maryland Jewish community," despite its strong support for him in the past, particularly in his 2016 Senate race.

"The Jews of Montgomery County — our lane, our world, East Kensington — were his foundation of political and financial support," Rubin said. "I can't find a person who isn't upset about what he's done to turn his back on us."

A Van Hollen spokesperson said in a statement, "Our office has heard from constituents from the Jewish community of Maryland who hold a wide array of views — including many that share the Senator's concerns about the actions of the Netanyahu government. The Senator appreciates the diversity of opinions his constituents hold on these and other issues and will always respect and support their right to express their views and have a dialogue."

Looking ahead to the 2028 election, Rubin said he's seeing a shift in the Democratic Party. While candidates used to travel to Israel to show their support for Israel and the Jewish community, he said that candidates are going to Israel for "stunts" and for

the purpose of "castigating the Israelis to curry favor with the base," referring to recent visits by Khanna and former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel, and predicted that other candidates would take a similar approach.

But he warned that this pandering to the Democratic base won't win Democrats the presidency.

"If we have a candidate that only talks to the base of the party, we are not going to win the middle ground states in the upper Midwest," Rubin said, arguing that a candidate like Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro, who has been criticized by the left for his support for Israel and Jewish identity, is far better positioned to win the White House.

Rubin also said that the U.S. should and must maintain its relationship with Israel going forward, calling it "our best ally in the Middle East" on a range of issues including fighting shared enemies, intelligence sharing and joint development of weapons systems — in addition to a range of economic and non-military benefits that are often overlooked.

He said that Democrats can be leaders in highlighting the non-military benefits of the relationship, from climate technology to a potential trade corridor through the Middle East and broader regional normalization and integration efforts.

He said that a Democratic president should harness those opportunities and move toward a similar relationship that the U.S. has with other allies like France or Japan, "a rich, diverse, legislatively supported, strong relationship that does include military-to-military cooperation, coordination and sales, but that is not the the whole relationship."

But Rubin said that the left and the Democratic base don't seem to have the appetite for any of that, and "that's bad for the United States." ♦

Adam Smith blasts progressive left for enabling harassment of pro-Israel lawmakers

Smith sparred with 'Breaking Points' co-host Krystal Ball over Palestinians' right of return, the 1948 War and illiberal tactics used by the far-left

By Emily Jacobs

Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA), the top Democrat on the House Armed Services Committee, accused the progressive left of acting in "illiberal" ways by perpetrating and ignoring the harassment of Democratic lawmakers and candidates in recent years.

Smith made the comments in an interview with the far-left "Breaking Points" podcast, released Tuesday, where he called out critics of Israel who refuse to recognize that Israel's creation came about in part because of the Palestinians' refusal to offer them the equal rights that leftists now demand Israel provide to them.

Smith and "Breaking Points" co-host Krystal Ball sparred throughout their 45 minute conversation, with the Democratic congressman arguing that progressive commentators have shrugged off the harassment of pro-Israel Democratic lawmakers by far-left actors while embracing candidates who believe Israel does not have the right to exist.

"The biggest thing that I want in all this is the ability to have a conversation, and this is where this is my biggest problem with the left," Smith said. "I have been unable to hold a town hall meeting for a year because a bunch of leftists show up and scream at me and don't let anyone else speak."

Rep. Adam Smith spoke to "Breaking Points" about his issues with the left acting in "illiberal" ways. "I have been unable to hold a town hall meeting for a year because a bunch of leftists show up and scream at me and don't let anyone else speak," he said. "You talk about... pic.twitter.com/11FfrQ9ig9 — Jewish Insider (@jewishinsider) July 22, 2026

Rep. Adam Smith spoke to "Breaking Points" about his issues with the left acting in "illiberal" ways. "I have been unable to hold a town hall meeting for a year because a bunch of leftists show up and scream at me and don't let anyone else speak," he said. "You talk about... pic.twitter.com/11FfrQ9ig9

"You talk about illiberal? OK, having people stand out in front of my house screaming death threats at me and threatening my wife," he continued. "The left goes, 'Oh well of course we don't support that. We're peace activists. We would never do something like that.' How about you just say, 'No, they did it. It's wrong. We're against it. We are going to be liberal. We're going to stand up for stuff.' I think that whole thing has created a major problem as well, and that's why I try to have these conversations."

Smith went on: "So much of the left, and certainly we experienced this in Seattle, became an academic exercise," he said. "They were spending all day long talking about the history of racism as opposed to going out into the community and saying, 'These are people who have been discriminated against. Let's get them access to capital so they can start businesses. Let's get them access to capital so they can get homes. Let's do workforce development so they can get jobs.'"

Smith disputed Ball's assessment that Israel had become a litmus test in Democratic primaries, instead arguing that "the belief that we have not effectively fought" President Donald Trump and the failure of both parties to address income inequality were "driving the anti-establishment feelings in primaries."

Israel is "not the most important issue," Smith said. "It's not even close to the most important issue in these primaries." Still, he

acknowledged that Israel was "becoming more important" to voters.

The Washington Democrat also explained his reversal on Sec. 224 in the National Defense Authorization Act, which passed the House on Wednesday afternoon. Smith told Ball he changed his opposition to oppose Sec. 224, which expands U.S.-Israel defense co-development programs, because he disagrees with how Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government has conducted itself in recent years.

On his similar switch-up in supporting Rep. Thomas Massie's (R-KY) amendment cutting off all \$3.3 billion in aid to Israel, Smith argued that he struggled with his support for "what Israel has historically been" and recognition of "the reality of what Israel is living in" with the actions of the Netanyahu government.

Smith added that while he voted for the Massie amendment because of his opposition to Israel's conduct in its war against Hamas in Gaza, he reiterated he also has "concerns about Hamas, about Hezbollah, that people don't seem to share."

Smith said he was unlikely to support future U.S. aid packages for Israel until the Israeli government were to "actually go forward with something where they create a reasonable alternative for the Palestinians in Gaza, if they actually stop what they're doing in the West Bank and get to peace in Lebanon, that may change. I don't see that happening."

The two sparred over the consequences of the Palestinian people being granted the right of return to Israel, with Smith arguing that, "You have a situation where Israel is threatened on all sides — and I know it's not saying they don't have a right to exist, just that they have to let all the Palestinians back in, and then effectively the Jews no longer control Israel."

“The practical result of this is — and there should be equal rights within Israel — but if Israel allows it they cease to exist as a country,” Smith said.

Smith continued: “Maybe that’s just what has to happen in the minds of some people, but understand the consequences of it, understand why Israel was created in the first place, so that the Jews would have some place to go. And to just blithely say, ‘Well, yeah, it’ll go away and it’ll be fine.’”

“Let’s say this plays out how you describe and there is no ‘Jewish ethnostate.’ The consequence of that is there is no Jewish state,” Smith argued. “You have the Palestinians and they would now be governing that area, and that means Hamas would be governing that area. Do you have any problem with that? Do you have any problem with Hamas suddenly becoming a

much more powerful entity and having the country ‘from the river, to the sea?’”

Ball said she wasn’t convinced that the series of events Smith was laying out “would be the reality” and said she did not understand how the House Democrat could “get away from how illiberal it is to not support equal rights for people regardless of if they’re Jewish, Arab, Muslim, Christian, etc.”

“Totally with you, but Hamas doesn’t support equal rights either,” Smith responded.

The pair did find common ground on their opposition to continued U.S. aid to Israel over its conduct in Gaza. Smith also said he supported the concept of a two-state solution, but acknowledged that it’s not currently viable.

Smith also outlined the history of Israel’s creation, often expressing frustration that

Ball wasn’t aware of basic facts surrounding the history of the creation of Israel.

“I know people say, ‘Well, this is a war to drive the Palestinians out,’” Smith said of Israel’s 1948 War for independence. “It was also a war to eliminate Israel, to basically kill Israel in the crib in 1948. They fought and they fought and they fought and they fought and at no point was there ever anything carved out for the Jews, and so the Jews have been fighting an existential fight.”

After Ball expressed confusion at how Smith could consider himself a classical liberal while supporting Israel’s existence as a Jewish state, the House lawmaker said in an exasperated tone: “There’s no liberal option on the table here. That’s what I’m telling you. You keep saying, ‘No illiberal Jews, illegal Jews we cannot have. Illiberal Palestinians are fine.’” ♦

JULY 17, 2026

In rare gathering, non-Orthodox Diaspora rabbis, Israeli religious Zionist leaders share post-Oct. 7 experiences

The meeting was organized ahead of the Tisha B'Av fast day, which among other things, mourns the destruction of the Second Temple because of baseless hatred

By Judah Ari Gross

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

The conversation could have just ended in the same tired old arguments. One pointed, rhetorical question, one dismissive rejoinder, and participants would have been back to the same debates about universalism and particularism, about the morality of war, about loyalty and grievances and politics and threats. But it didn’t happen. Instead, they listened to each other, empathized with one another and then sang together.

In an all-too-rare occurrence, roughly a dozen American non-Orthodox rabbis and a similar number of figures from Israel’s religious Zionist community gathered on Thursday night in Lady Sarah Cohen Hall at Tel Aviv’s Anu Museum of the Jewish People.

The meeting, spearheaded by Tracy Frydberg, the director of the Tisch Center for Jewish Dialogue, was held ahead of Thursday’s Tisha B’Av fast, when Jews mourn and contemplate, among other things, the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem, a tragedy that is traditionally attributed to *sinat hinam*, baseless hatred, when Jews turned against each other on sectarian grounds, allowing the Romans to swiftly conquer them.

Opening the event, Naama Klar, director of the museum’s Koret International School for Jewish Peoplehood, asked the attendees why “baseless hatred” is so widely understood to be the reason why the Temple was destroyed, when the Talmud provides other explanations. “Because it’s the right answer,” Klar quipped, saying that connectivity was and remains a critical component of the Jewish People’s continuity.

The evening’s event — titled “Tisch B’Av” and organized to coincide with the end of the Hartman Institute’s Rabbinic Leadership Initiative, which brought many American rabbis to Israel — aimed to strengthen that connectivity by bringing together two groups that often do not see eye to eye with each other and, in some cases, refuse to even share a stage with one another. At times, this is due to progressive Jewish leaders not wanting to speak alongside far-right Israeli figures, but more commonly it is because of Orthodox Israelis refusing to recognize and, in their view, legitimize non-Orthodox Judaism. (*Disclosure: Frydberg consulted with this reporter ahead of time about whom to invite to the event.*)

This was not the case at the event, which featured an onstage discussion led by Frydberg between Rabbi Elliot Cosgrove, of the Conservative Park Avenue Synagogue in

New York City, and Rabbanit Yafa Giser, the founder of Yesodot, which connects religious values with democratic ones, who is also a resident of the West Bank settlement of Ofra. The two were selected to speak as Giser recently wrote an opinion piece in the religious Zionist *Makor Rishon* newspaper about the need for her community to engage with and appreciate Diaspora Jewry, which she said was inspired by Cosgrove's essays and speeches.

In her remarks, Giser, who personally recruited many of the Israeli participants for the event, noted that Orthodox refusal to engage with non-Orthodox Judaism is waning. "Nearly everyone I invited [to this event] responded in the affirmative," she said. Those who didn't attend, she added, cited scheduling issues and not ideological disagreement.

Both Giser and Cosgrove stressed that the need for maintaining Jewish unity is the central challenge facing the community today. "The task at hand is not, so much, to stand on principle — though a principle it is — but the task at hand is to keep the Jewish People together," Cosgrove said.

After their shared remarks, the attendees split into small groups for discussions about their personal experiences during and after the Oct. 7 terror attacks, as well as broader thoughts about the meaning of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish People and what Israeli Jews and Diaspora Jews can teach one another.

The participants did not come from the extremes — the farthest left of the American rabbinate and the farthest right of Israeli society — yet they did represent markedly different, even opposing, political and religious outlooks within the Jewish community.

One discussion group consisted of Rabbi Sharon Brous, the founder and CEO of Los Angeles' Ikar community; Rabbi Judith Schindler, a Reform rabbi, professor and social activist; Rabbi Azi Horvitch, who previ-

ously worked as a visiting Orthodox campus rabbi at Princeton University and now leads a congregation in northern Tel Aviv; and Rabbi Doron Perez, the head of the religious Zionist Mizrahi movement and president of the World Zionist Organization.

In their discussion, which this reporter also participated in, Perez shared his family's experience of having his son, Capt. Daniel Perez, being taken hostage on Oct. 7 and only learning, 163 days later, that he had, in fact, been killed in the attacks, and then having to wait another year and a half for his remains to be returned for burial.

Brous and Schindler, who were not initially familiar with Perez's story, let out audible sighs and leaned in close as Perez described his family's travails for more than two years until Daniel's body was returned and his appreciation that if his son had to die, that at least he did so after fighting valiantly for more than two hours and saving hundreds of people through his actions, according to army estimates. They asked how his experiences changed his relationship to the state — it did not increase or decrease his commitments to Zionism and Israel, but it did make them "more real," he said.

Perez, in turn, asked Brous and Schindler about what they went through post-Oct. 7, seeing erstwhile colleagues and friends from interfaith initiatives and social justice activism suddenly abandon them. The American rabbis also described their struggles keeping together their communities as their members grappled — and still grapple — with Israel's prosecution of the war against Hamas in Gaza and the Palestinian civilian death toll, as well as the policies and rhetoric of Israeli leaders that are at odds with their own values and push them away from Israel.

At any point, their conversation could have turned into a debate, even a nonconfrontational one — about who is responsible for the deaths of Palestinian civilians or whether Diaspora Jews are justified in feel-

ing alienated from Israel — but it didn't. Instead, they just listened to each other.

And the same was true in other groups as well.

"We were sharing our lived experiences," Cosgrove told eJP after the event. "No one was confrontational."

Cosgrove said his group included a rabbi focused on interfaith work from a West Bank settlement and another rabbi whose mixed Arab-Jewish community of Lod was rocked by internecine violence in 2021. Cosgrove described struggling with his support for Israel, while also "trying to make sense of an Israel... that doesn't seem to love us as much as we love it."

"[The Israelis] didn't pounce and say 'Well, why didn't you say this?' Nor did the Americans say that to them," he said.

At the end of the discussions, Brous compared the night's event to Mishnah Middot 2:2, which describes how, while most pilgrims to the Temple Mount walked around the courtyard counterclockwise, those in mourning or otherwise "broken-hearted" would walk in the opposite direction, allowing their pain to be seen and acknowledged by the community.

She also acknowledged that the event could have ended as just yet another shouting match and thanked Frydberg and Anu for "trusting us that we could do this."

Brous concluded by leading the group — men and women, Reform, Conservative and Orthodox, Diaspora Jews and Israelis, leftists and settlers — in the traditional Hebrew hymn "*Acheinu*," which translates to "our brothers."

"Our brothers, the whole House of Israel, who are given over to distress and captivity, who stand either on the sea or on dry land: May the *Makom* (God) have mercy upon them, and bring them out from distress to relief, and from darkness to light, and from subjugation to redemption, now, swiftly, and soon." ♦

Washington state's Jewish Democrats fight for a place in a party they no longer recognize

In one of the bluest states in the country, Jewish Democrats feel increasingly estranged from a party they helped build — but the answer, they say, is to lean in

By Danielle Cohen-Kanik

SEATTLE — David Kaplan has been attending Washington state Democratic conventions since he was 6 years old.

He was brought to his first convention in 1960 by his mother, who was, as Kaplan put it, a “Warren Magnuson Democrat,” while his father was a “Henry Jackson Democrat.” The two legendary former Washington senators who served from roughly the 1940s to the ‘80s differed on several issues, including Cold War and defense policy, “but one common denominator has always been support for Israel,” Kaplan said.

Six decades later, that consensus feels to him like a relic of a bygone era.

The past few years of rising tensions in the Democratic Party over Israel and antisemitism have been marked for many Jewish Democrats in Washington — one of the country’s bluest states, which has a Jewish population of about 90,000 — by disappointment, anger and a growing sense of isolation within a party they have spent decades supporting.

But the answer, they say, is not to walk away; rather, it’s to try to reclaim influence from within.

That effort begins with rebuilding the party’s own Jewish infrastructure. The Washington State Democratic Party’s Jewish caucus has gone “by the wayside, because it takes a lot of organizing and energy to keep it up,” said Linda Clifton, a longtime member of the caucus.

“It’s all volunteer [work], and people had other jobs and other things they had to pay attention to. I think we need to revive it, and there’s been some effort to do that ... but I think people are so disheartened that that becomes very difficult,” she continued.

At the state party’s June convention, delegates adopted a resolution condemning “genocide and apartheid in Palestine” and calling for an arms embargo on Israel. They

also adopted a plank in their party platform calling out a “dramatic resurgence in antisemitism in recent years on all sides of the political spectrum” while claiming it has risen “due in part to actions taken by the Israeli government.”

And in its foreign policy section, dedicated overwhelmingly to Israel and Palestinian issues, the platform states that the party “reject[s] racist political ideologies rooted in supremacy, including forms of Zionism,” and calls for an end to the “mass civilian casualties, destruction, displacement and starvation of Palestinians in Gaza and [the] West Bank,” among other stances critical of Israel.

“My only issue with the platform, honestly, was that it singles one country out and that, to me, crosses the line,” said Kaplan, a founding member of the party’s Jewish caucus. “But I can tell you that I was not one of the volunteers for the platform committee, so I can’t point fingers.”

Kaplan’s deep engagement in the party has provided him a front row seat to its shift over time. These days, “I have my local Democrats piling on,” he said, referencing his representative in Congress, Rep. Pramila Jayapal (D-WA), the former chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus. “On many levels, I admire her courage and her principles. But I get her emails where AIPAC becomes the straw man for everything that’s evil.”

Kaplan is no apologist for AIPAC, though he once served on its regional board, nor Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu — “I actually think he’s evil,” he said — but “in a world that contains all sorts of bad sh*t, why [Israel] is singled out ... It transcends policy differences. It becomes less-than-subtle antisemitism, and I’m struggling with it mightily as a Democrat.”

“I’ve been as active as you can be in Washington Democratic politics. I never before had to worry about whether my local [rep-

resentatives] harbored antisemitic beliefs or had them use AIPAC as a straw man,” he said.

Clifton, too, is dismayed by the rising hostility in a party that she’s been engaged in for decades. She said she sees it most clearly in her home 43rd Legislative District, which is based in some of the most progressive neighborhoods of Seattle, including the University of Washington campus.

“The [Democratic Socialists of America] has really organized here, and one of the main impetuses for that organization was [former] Councilwoman Kshama Sawant,” Clifton said. Sawant, a far-left socialist who promoted several anti-Israel measures during her tenure on the Seattle City Council, is now running as a long-shot independent candidate against Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA).

“She’s been very effective in building a constituency within the 43rd that is pretty young and pretty hostile to the interests of the Jewish community,” Clifton said of Sawant, “so it’s been much, much more difficult to remain an active member of the 43rd. It just hurts.”

Where she used to regularly attend the organizing meetings for the 43rd District Democrats, “I just got really tired of being the only vote on one side of an issue on a Zoom call. So I’ve really pulled back,” she said.

The Washington State Democratic Party begins at the most local level with precinct committee officers (PCOs), who are elected every two years — oftentimes uncontested — to represent a voting precinct. Democratic PCOs are officers of their party and vote on a wide range of party business, including endorsements, resolutions, local party leadership and convention delegates.

About organizing efforts at the state party convention, another longtime activist said the state’s Jewish Democrats “are not in the room, or not noticeably so as Jews,” instead

focusing their advocacy on other policy priorities like education, healthcare and housing. “As Jews and as an organized Jewish community, we need to decide if the party platform matters, and if so, we need to be involved in the grassroots of the Democratic Party.”

“It doesn’t take many people, but it does take some,” the activist added. They emphasized the ease with which people can run for and be elected as a PCO. “If 100 Jews signed up as PCOs, that would change the party over the next two years and the next decade,” they said.

Kaplan had similar advice for his fellow Jewish activists: “In terms of getting involved, I recommend people become PCOs. It’s actually a relatively easy gig. Just join. Just show up!”

As far as the Jewish caucus goes, he said, “I wish we could be more proactive, you know, as a formally recognized constituency caucus within the Washington State Democratic Party.”

The Jewish caucus activists spoke highly of the state Democratic Party chair, Shasti Conrad, praising her outreach efforts. “She is doing the best she can to thread this needle and have differing opinions come together under a bigger tent to hash things out,” Kaplan said.

Conrad told JI in an interview, “I have always strived to try to build a party that is as inclusive as it can be, and it’s been really important to me, particularly as our first woman of color chair, that we build a party that does feel like it has people from diverse backgrounds who are able to be their full selves in the party.”

“Especially since Oct. 7, 2023, that really has focused largely on the Jewish community, alongside the Muslim community and Palestinians as well. We have really tried to sort of hold space for people that have been impacted on all sides of the conflict,” she continued.

Since she became chair in 2023, Conrad said she realized that the state party structure, which is broken into 49 legislative districts, “may have made it a little bit more challenging for particular communities” to organize and promote their priorities “because they get sort of split across geographic lines.” To help alleviate these issues, the party will look to “make sure that we are in-

cluding the constituency caucuses in the drafting of the platform” for the 2028 convention.

Conrad said antisemitism is “something that I want to disavow as loudly and clearly as possible.”

“There is no room for antisemitism in our party. We have been trying to fight against it as it has really become a sort of central organizing point, I believe, for the Republican Party.”

Conrad said that at the Democratic National Committee, where she also currently serves as one of five vice chairs, she was one of the first officers to co-sponsor the creation of a DNC Jewish caucus. “I’ve done a lot of organizing alongside our Jewish caucus, and I’ve learned a lot and grown, and it’s been one of the most important parts of my learning.”

Asked about the state party’s inclusion of foreign policy in its platform, Conrad said the party is “responsive to what our delegates feel strongly about,” emphasizing that the platform is drafted before every convention by the relevant committees made of local activists and voted on by delegates. “I don’t feel like many international leaders are looking to see, you know, ‘What do the Washington state Democrats think about X, Y and Z?’ I don’t think that’s often the case, but I do think that we hear from our delegates and from our grassroots members that these are issues that are very important to them.”

Outside the party structure, some Jewish community members have turned to electoral politics to advance their priorities. Washingtonians for a Brighter Future, a PAC formed in 2024, calls itself the “political action arm of the Jewish community and its allies in Washington state.”

“The Jewish community in Washington state is under attack,” said Nevet Basker, one of the PAC’s co-chairs. “It’s under attack from many, many places, including by people who are hostile to Israel, but they take it out on the Jews here,” she said, referencing the November 2023 vandalism of Herzl-Ner Tamid Conservative Congregation on Mercer Island, an area that serves as a hub of Jewish life in the state.

She also raised the forthcoming 20th anniversary on July 28 of the deadly shooting at the Seattle Jewish Federation — an event

that still weighs heavily on the area’s Jewish community — which was carried out by a man who reportedly shouted during the attack, “I am a Muslim American, angry at Israel.”

In order to receive WBF’s endorsement, candidates must “make a public statement supporting the Jewish community and opposing antisemitism ... We have a lot of friends who are shy, who will say, ‘Oh yes, I heard about the attack in Colorado, and I called the rabbi to express my support.’ And we say, ‘That’s lovely of you. Thank you for calling the rabbi. Will you put out a public statement?’ And they will say, ‘No, that’s not my lane.’”

Basker’s message to these candidates? “We’re not interested in being the person that you are secretly dating, but won’t introduce to your friends.”

Sam Jefferies, chair of The Kids Table, a PAC created in 2025 to support “pro-Jewish” candidates in the state, told JI, “Jews helped build the Democratic Party and contributed to political and policy victories at every level of government for more than a century. At this moment of crisis, the party should be standing firmly and unequivocally with Jews across Washington state and rejecting extremism at every turn. It isn’t.”

For all their efforts to organize, reclaiming a place in the party is not simply a matter of Jewish Democrats showing up. It requires them to navigate a political environment where they often feel both committed to the process and isolated within it. Kaplan recalled the 2024 state party convention, where he said the Jewish caucus was “not prepared.”

“As we walked in, we were given pieces of paper or leaflets from, you know, white college kids in keffiyehs, and there were three resolutions” targeting Israel. As the discussion around the resolutions began, “I came to the realization, quite honestly, that half the people that I would work with and have known for years, even Jewish ones — I wouldn’t trust them to know where Anne Frank lived.”

Taking matters into his own hands, Kaplan stood to speak against one resolution calling on the Democratic Party to support restoring funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency — funding which the Biden administration had paused earlier

that year due to findings that some UNRWA employees had participated in the Oct. 7 attacks.

"I remember it's the first time I've ever been afraid to speak, so I was really

nervous," Kaplan said. "I remember not getting the reaction that I would have expected to get, not being heard, and it was very painful at that moment. I vowed I was never coming back."

The resolution passed, but Kaplan went back for this year's convention anyway. "I still believe the Democratic Party is the best place to be," he said. ♦

JULY 21, 2026

Ed Miliband's appointment as U.K. foreign secretary indicates tougher British policy toward Israel to come

The Jewish former Labour leader has supported Israel's security but has declined to identify as a Zionist

By Matthew Kassel

Ed Miliband's appointment on Monday as U.K. foreign secretary is raising questions about how the former Labour chief will influence Israel and Middle East policy under Andy Burnham, the country's new prime minister.

Miliband, 56, had served as energy secretary under former Prime Minister Keir Starmer, who announced his resignation last month and officially departed 10 Downing St. on Monday. As the first Jewish leader of the Labour party, which he helmed from 2010-2015, Miliband has long balanced his commitment to Israel's security with vocal criticism of the Jewish state that has fueled some tensions with British Jewish leaders.

The naming of Miliband to lead the Foreign Office has been seen as a sign that Burnham plans to adopt a tougher stance toward Israel as prime minister than his predecessor — who had already sought to cut off some arms sales to Israel while imposing sanctions on far-right Israeli ministers and recognizing a Palestinian state in a series of moves that soured ties between the U.K. and Israel.

In the days before his recent election as Labour leader, Burnham, the former mayor of Manchester, apologized for his party's initial response to Israel's military campaign in Gaza after the Hamas attacks of Oct. 7, 2023, saying that it had been "too slow to call for a ceasefire," and suggested he would implement further sanctions on

Israel and its government along with a possible trade ban on settlements in the West Bank.

For his part, Miliband, in a statement on Monday, spoke more broadly about his approach to the Middle East, vowing the new government would "seek to end the conflict in Iran," while "working tirelessly to seek a sustainable peace in Palestine and Israel, including an end to the terrible suffering of the people of Gaza and security for the people of Israel."

During his past tenure as Labour leader, Miliband "certainly wasn't an instinctive supporter of Israel, but he also wasn't as hostile as some expected given his background," Arie Kovler, a political analyst in Jerusalem who previously served as the director of policy and research for Britain's Jewish Leadership Council, told *Jewish Insider*. "But that was a decade ago. Attitudes to Israel have hardened across British politics and the Labour Party with it."

Kovler added that he would expect "the Burnham government to be tougher on Israel, and for Ed Miliband as foreign secretary to be quite comfortable moving forward an agenda of, for example, sanctions on settlements and broader arms embargoes while still publicly affirming that Israel's an ally with a right to defend itself."

In 2014, Miliband joined most of his party's lawmakers in what was viewed as a largely symbolic vote calling to unilaterally recognize a Palestinian state — a position

formally adopted by the U.K. last September.

Prior to that vote, Miliband had publicly rebuked then-Prime Minister David Cameron, a Conservative, during Israel's Operation Protective Edge in Gaza, for his "silence on the killing of innocent Palestinian civilians caused by Israel's military action," which he called "wrong and unjustifiable."

Despite his critical stances, Miliband — who drew some praise from the British far left on Monday — has defended Israel's right to self-defense and said that "there is no place in politics for those who question" the country's existence, underscoring his personal ties to Israel, where his grandmother took refuge after surviving the Holocaust.

"My relationship with my Jewishness is complex," he wrote in a 2014 essay. "But whose isn't?"

While Miliband has called Israel "a homeland for the Jewish people," he has expressed ambivalence about referring to himself as a Zionist, declining to identify explicitly as such.

"I want you to know that if I become prime minister in less than a year's time, I will be proud to do so as a friend of Israel, a Jew and, most of all, someone who feels so proud to be part of the community gathered here," he said in a 2014 speech to Labour Friends of Israel, after he had returned from a trip to Israel.

In his statement posted to social media on Monday, Miliband invoked his family

history, noting that his parents “came to Britain as Jewish refugees from the Nazis.” His father, Ralph Miliband, was a renowned Marxist theorist, and his mother, Marion Kozak, who died in May, was a Holocaust survivor who became a staunch supporter of Palestinian rights. His brother, David, was foreign secretary from 2007-2010 under former Prime Minister Gordon Brown.

Miliband’s new role as foreign secretary provoked barbed reactions from some British Jewish leaders before he was even officially named to the position, replacing Yvette Cooper in part of a broader Cabinet shakeup led by Burnham, who on Monday rose to the prime ministership.

Stephen Pollard, the former longtime editor of *The Jewish Chronicle*, said in a lengthy post that Miliband’s appointment was the “most nauseating political appointment of my lifetime.” He harshly criticized Miliband for leading the Labour party in a 2013 vote against U.K. military action to oppose former Syrian dictator Bashar Al-

Assad after he had used chemical weapons on his own people, calling it a “disgraceful” effort that emboldened Russian President Vladimir Putin to invade and annex Crimea the following year.

Edmund Fitton-Brown, a former British diplomat who is now a senior fellow with the Foundation for Defense of Democracies think tank in Washington, said that Miliband’s “record on Syria suggests that he will be a skeptic on any new military engagements in the region, and that he and Burnham will therefore be even less inclined than” Starmer and Cooper “to join the U.S. in its current campaign against Iran.”

In gauging Miliband’s “leanings regarding Israel, Gaza, Palestine and the Middle East relative to his colleagues and former colleagues,” Fitton-Brown told JI that “he is much less rabid than Jeremy Corbyn,” the former Labour leader who had faced accusations of antisemitism, “but more anti-Is-

rael than either of his predecessors,” including Cooper and David Lammy.

“This may suggest that Andy Burnham, who may be described as left of Keir Starmer on this issue, will shift the U.K. government into a slightly more anti-Israel position than Starmer allowed, although he will want to avoid accusations of being soft on antisemitism,” Fitton-Brown explained.

Jonathan Freedland, a Guardian columnist in London who co-hosts the “Unholy” podcast, which covers Israel and Jewish life, told JI that Miliband “has deep personal and family ties to Israel, and when he was Labour leader more than a decade ago he said those ties informed his view of the region.”

“Clearly,” Freedland said on Monday, “the context now is very different — opinions have hardened against the current Israeli government and I would expect Ed Miliband to reflect that change and to do so trenchantly.” ♦