

THE WEEKLY PRINT

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OCTOBER 12, 2026

For some Jewish Democrats, Michigan's debate was the 'final straw' for El-Sayed

One Jewish community leader said that the debate had 'reinforced' Jewish community members' 'deep concern' about El-Sayed and his political ideology

By Marc Rod

Last Thursday's Michigan Senate debate, where Democratic nominee Abdul El-Sayed framed Israel as a threat to the United States comparable to Iran and said he would not vote to send defensive aid to Israel even if it were under fire, proved to be a breaking point for some Jewish Democrats who were holding out hope that the Democratic nominee would moderate his views in the general election.

Community leaders said that they're hearing from some previously undecided Jewish Democrats that, after they debate, they now plan to back Republican Mike Rogers.

"I think for a lot of pro-Israel Jewish Democrats, Abdul has made it easy. He's not really made any accommodations whatsoever, and the debate was just the latest example," said David Kramer, a prominent Michigan Democratic fundraiser and vice chair of the Michigan Democratic Jewish Caucus.

He told *Jewish Insider* he's heard from members of his community that they felt the debate demonstrated that El-Sayed is "not giving an inch and he's absolutely showing who he is."

Kramer had previously said he wasn't willing to vote for El-Sayed without changes to his rhetoric and platform.

"I've talked to a couple of people who were wrestling with the same choice as I am, who have said that based on the debate, that was kind of a final straw, and they are going to vote for Rogers," Kramer told *JJ*.

Another Michigan Jewish Democrat told *JJ* that they are hearing similar feedback in their network.

El-Sayed's campaign did not respond to a request for comment.

Kramer said, "I think there were well-intentioned voters and community leaders, and even elected officials, who were hoping we'd get him to a better place, and he'll need us, and he'll want to embrace us, and it's quite evident, at this point, that he's not doing anything."

Joan Lowenstein, a member of the Michigan Democratic Party Central Committee and president of the Jewish Federation of Ann Arbor, said she's also heard from people in her community that the debate was a turning point. "I think people who did watch the whole thing really didn't get anything new about what

El-Sayed thinks, or what he was willing to do for Jewish safety — not at all."

Lowenstein said the debate had "confirmed what I think about El-Sayed," describing him as evasive and lacking in substantive policy proposals. On Israel, she said that his responses show a "lack of understanding that you would expect a senator to have" about foreign policy issues.

Kramer and Lowenstein are members of the Nonnegotiable Michigan campaign that has sought to pressure El-Sayed to make commitments to supporting Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state and to Jewish safety in the United States.

Dennis Bernard, the national chair of government relations at the Jewish Federations of North America, who supported both Rep. Haley Stevens (D-MI) and Rogers in their respective primaries, said that El-Sayed's response on whether Israel or Iran is more dangerous to the United States was "the defining moment for our community. ... It's an astounding comment."

"At this point, if you still haven't decided that there is enough out there as a Democrat not to vote for him, nothing's

going to convince you,” he said. “There were still a lot holding out. ... After that debate, those who will go for Rogers have made their decision. El-Sayed did not help himself in our community. It was not a good performance. He had to have a better answer.”

Anecdotally, Bernard said that there’s intense discussion in the Jewish community about the race, with his social circle unanimously questioning how any Jewish voter at this point could support El-Sayed. Bernard said that he’d spoken to six lifelong Democrats on Saturday who were all planning to vote for Rogers. Bernard also said he’s never heard so much discussion in the Jewish community about ticket splitting.

Rabbi Aaron Starr, of Congregation Shaarey Zedek in Southfield, Mich., speaking in his personal capacity, said the debate left him “frustrated and sad” with both candidates spending more time “criticizing each other with personal attacks than helping us understand how they will help us work toward a better tomorrow for our children.”

“Dr. El-Sayed’s inability to affirm my basic needs has led me, and many others in my community, to confidently decide we simply cannot vote for him,” Starr continued, referring to the Nonnegotiable campaign’s core principles. Starr is a leading organizer of the Nonnegotiable petition.

He said that El-Sayed’s comments during the debate “reinforced” Jewish community members’ “deep concern about his candidacy, and reminded us that if Dr. El-Sayed’s position takes hold in the Democratic Party, Israel’s enemies will be emboldened, American Jews will be even more vulnerable, and America will be pulled into even more war — not less, as Dr. El-Sayed claims to want.”

Starr said that he was “horrificed, though not surprised” at El-Sayed’s hostility toward Israel and “refusal to condemn the Iranian regime and its proxies.” He added that “Dr. El-Sayed gave voice to centuries-old libels against the Jewish people by suggesting Israelis somehow manipulated an otherwise innocent America into a war. In this way, he denies America’s agency in

choosing to defend itself and its allies against nuclear threats and belligerency.”

Zach Nessel, the secretary of the Michigan Democratic Jewish Caucus, who spoke to JI in his personal capacity, said that he thought El-Sayed’s answer to the question about Israel and Iran showed he is “not really taking our national security seriously” and “doesn’t want to upset people who don’t have America’s national security interests top of mind.”

Nessel, the son of Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel, who is supporting El-Sayed, said he’s still undecided and doesn’t believe in sitting out elections, but feels “unenthusiastic” about both candidates.

He said he also found El-Sayed’s frequent attacks on AIPAC and its donors to be hypocritical when he has refused to address his own donors’ and associates’ support for groups including Hamas and Hezbollah, something that Rogers repeatedly hammered him on during the debate.

El-Sayed denied Sunday that any of his family have ties to the Muslim Brotherhood, and asserted that Rogers had only raised the issue to stoke Islamophobia.

“Now, I don’t think one man is perfectly represented by his donors, but it seems to be certainly very problematic,” Nessel said.

Decky Alexander, the chair of the Michigan Democratic Jewish Caucus, who plans to vote for El-Sayed, said she was broadly disappointed by the debate, calling it “a lot of theater” rather than a substantive exchange of ideas.

She acknowledged that many in the Jewish community did not think the “rhetoric around Israel and Iran in particular was helpful in this moment, particularly for Jews that are on the fence.” She said she was also “uncomfortable” with what she heard at the debate but said that the debate does not tell the “whole story.”

She added she thinks that El-Sayed’s joint event with Sen. Elissa Slotkin (D-MI) the previous weekend was ultimately more impactful for Jewish Democratic voters than the debate. “They want to hear from somebody ... that affirms their own perspectives and values,” she said, describing Slotkin as a strong “ambassador” for El-Sayed.

Alexander said she and others in the

community feel that the current political moment is existential in two respects: both for the pro-Israel Jewish community and for other elements of American society.

Lowenstein also said that she had received the anti-El-Sayed mailer that AIPAC’s United Democracy Project began circulating to Michigan Jews at the end of last week, describing it as an effective and targeted message, particularly coming in tandem with the debate.

But others take a different view, and said they haven’t heard much movement — in either direction — following the debate.

“From the people that I’ve spoken to, they all said that Rogers didn’t say anything new,” said Rabbi Asher Lopatin, who said previously that he’s voting for Rogers but is no longer discussing his personal views on the race, given his nonpartisan role as director of community relations at the Jewish Federation of Greater Ann Arbor. “On the other hand, the people that have reservations about Abdul El-Sayed, they also feel he avoided questions ... he didn’t change his opinion at all. So there wasn’t any real movement on either side and it really hadn’t changed anything.”

He said that people who were struggling with their votes prior to the debate are still struggling, and some are still holding out hope for a change from El-Sayed.

Several Jewish Democrats also said that El-Sayed’s explanation that he didn’t issue a statement honoring the third anniversary of the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas attacks on Israel to avoid turning the event into “political theater” was unsatisfactory.

“It was a sorry excuse not to stand up for our community three years after the Oct. 7 attack,” Nessel said, adding that El-Sayed’s failure to speak up cast doubt on other comments asserting that he wants to protect and stand up for the Jewish community. “It’s a really simple ask, just to remember the tragedy of Oct. 7 and condemn Hamas for killing 1,200 Jews and kidnapping 200 more.”

He said he thinks that El-Sayed stayed silent because “I don’t think anything he would say would have been true to his values and probably would have been inflammatory.”

Starr offered a somewhat different view.

"While at first I felt resentment at his lack of communication on Oct. 7, I actually appreciate Dr. El-Sayed's explanation about why he chose not to address the Jewish community," Starr said. "He recognized that because he couldn't say anything that spoke to the anguish in Jewish hearts, he was better off not saying anything at all. That said, his inability to speak genuinely with sympathy to us on that heartbreaking day does reinforce why so many Jewish Michiganders are unable to vote for him."

Alexander said that she called El-Sayed's campaign to ask about the lack of a statement on Oct. 7 and said she hoped for a "recognition of the impact of this day on his Jewish constituents" but also said that it was likely a "no-win situation for him" politically.

"Is it the thing that is going to deter me from not voting for him?" she continued.

"No, because I also understand he's in this really complicated, political space that I am just not in."

Lowenstein told reporters before the debate that she had been looking for Rogers to make commitments on civil rights and other issues she sees as tied to her Jewish values, and emerged somewhat encouraged by his responses, including his willingness to reform Immigration and Customs Enforcement and to separate from the Trump administration's stance on tariffs.

Nessel said he was disappointed in the performance of both candidates, saying that neither had done a good job of arguing their points or explaining their policy positions. He said that the debate could have been a "productive conversation and it just simply didn't happen," though he credited Rogers as being more willing and

able to discuss policy specifics than El-Sayed.

"I might not agree with his ultimate conclusions when it comes to certain policies, but the fact that he expresses working knowledge and being able to at least understand the issues and explain it to the public is helpful," Nessel said.

Bernard said he felt that El-Sayed appeared off balance and unwilling to address specifics, though he said that he "also would have liked to see Mike a little more senatorial."

Lopatin said that hearing Rogers make a clearer declaration that he will not be a "rubber stamp for Donald Trump," particularly when it comes to defending democracy and the Supreme Court, could be helpful to Rogers in reassuring Jewish Democrats still hesitant to pull the lever for him. ♦

OCTOBER 14, 2026

How Israel's parties say they would rebuild support in America

Likud insists Netanyahu can work with any White House, while opposition parties argue a new government is needed to win back Democrats and the broader public

By Lahav Harkov

American views of Israel, particularly among progressives, have become increasingly negative in recent years, a trend that has impacted Democratic primaries ahead of the midterms this year, boosting candidates that are explicitly anti-Israel or who boast about rejecting AIPAC.

The Trump administration and Republicans on the Hill have maintained a close, positive relationship with Israel, but some of the American right's vanguard and institutions have expressed views of concern to the Jewish state.

But the U.S.-Israel relationship has barely played a role in the Israeli election. Voters have consistently put security and the economy or cost of living at the top of their concerns in polls, but they're almost never asked about Israel's international standing.

One survey by the Israel Democracy Institute taken in late August and early September found that about half of Israelis said U.S.-Israel relations are very or fairly important to them in choosing a party, while 55% of Jewish Israelis said so. Voters for former Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman's Yisrael Beiteinu (73%) and B'Yachad, the party led by former prime ministers Naftali Bennett and Yair Lapid, (66%) were most likely to view the issue as important.

Jewish Insider asked parties consistently polling above the electoral threshold for their strategy to turn the tide and improve U.S.-Israel relations, especially as the future of U.S. aid to Israel has become a flashpoint.

Likud (led by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu):

Boaz Bismuth, chairman of the Knesset Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee and

No. 21 on the Likud list, said that "when the Likud forms the next government together with its partners, it will maintain its principles and values and protect the state. That will not change, whoever is in power in America, whether Republican or Democrat."

"Netanyahu has proven his capability of working with Democrats and Republicans, working with Presidents Clinton, Obama and Biden, and with President Trump ... He knows the job. He protects Israel's interests, whoever sits in the White House. ... It was not always easy working with the Biden administration during the war [in Gaza], yet America has proven to be the best partner ever, not only because of shared interests, but because we share the same enemies, and we are fighting the same enemies."

Asked about a possible turn against Israel in Congress after the midterms,

particularly if Democrats regain the House and Senate, Bismuth added: "We see these apocalyptic prophesies, but in reality, in my committee, I know the events behind the scenes, and we can continue to trust our American allies just as they can trust us. ... In meetings Netanyahu has with U.S. congressmen who come to Israel, he gives the same attention to Democrats as Republicans."

Lianne Pollak-David, No. 25 on the Yashar list, called the data showing 60% of Americans have negative views about Israel "scary," and said, "We must take this very seriously."

The best way to improve the relationship, Pollak-David argued, is to elect a different government. "American Jews and the American public understand the gap between the Israeli people and the government that led them until now, which followed the most extreme voices and did not represent the Israeli spirit or the deep values of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state."

"The alliance with the U.S. is Israel's greatest strategic asset. We don't take it for granted and we need to rebuild its foundations for the next generation. First and foremost, we need to bring back what was once a holy principle, bipartisan support, and go back to a special relationship based on shared values and deep cooperation that does not only depend on the personal connection between the heads of state," she said.

Pollak-David called to "rehabilitate the connection with the broader American public and start turning Israel from a country that is increasingly seen as a burden by the American public into a strategic partner that is an asset. ... Practically, that means a new model for security ties, gradually moving from aid to partnership in research and development and joint investment. We already started with Pax Silica [a U.S.-led initiative to secure supply chains needed for AI development with allied nations], but we need more."

She also said Israel should send missions of young leaders, academics and others to meet with American Jewish communities, noting that polling also shows Israel's favorability is in decline among young

American Jews. "The current government is ignoring ... the influence that everything that happens here has on [Diaspora Jewry], their personal security and antisemitism. We can't control it, but there is no doubt the things are related."

B'Yachad (led by Naftali Bennett):

MK Shelly Tal Meron, No. 29 on the list, also emphasized a need to return to a more bipartisan approach to the U.S.

"There is no question that the U.S. is Israel's biggest, most important ally," she said. Threatening our relations with the U.S. is a serious threat to our national security. During the last term, there were a lot of things said by different representatives of the government that insulted some of the people in the U.S. – more with the Biden administration than Trump."

Meron argued that former Prime Minister Yair Lapid, No. 2 on the party list, would know how to repair the relationship as foreign minister. "He went to Lindsey Graham's funeral – a great loss to the U.S.-Israel relationship – and made a point of speaking to Democrats, because we need to get everyone back on board supporting us."

She also called for work to be done to improve Israel's image among young Americans: "We need young influencers and people who are eloquent and know how to speak the language. ... We need to get back to the basic values that we want to represent to the world and the U.S. ... We need to go back to telling the liberal, democratic Israeli story that a lot of people around the world are not seeing."

Meron also said that Israel needs to repair ties with American Jews, and have its representatives "respect them and respect the way they practice Judaism," referring to derogatory remarks by Cabinet ministers about Reform Jewry.

The Democrats (led by Yair Golan):

Knesset candidate Emilie Moatti, former head of the Knesset Subcommittee on International Relations and No. 14 on The Democrats' list, said that the current government turned Israel "into a central obstacle to the future of the Middle East. Every U.S. administration saw us as a top ally in the Middle East, [but this government] totally burned ties with the

Democrats. Even Trump ignores us and set facts on the ground with his 20-point plan for Gaza, about Saudi Arabia [and its civilian nuclear program], and I am concerned he will do that soon in Iran."

Moatti pointed to U.S. Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee's condemnation of violence by Israelis against Palestinians in the West Bank, saying: "The Democrats condemn the violence by Jewish settlers in the territories. ... The minute a change government [led by parties in the current opposition] rises, the violence in the territories will stop. It can end within 24 hours. It's a matter of making a decision, and I'm certain it will be made."

Moatti also emphasized a need for greater engagement with the Palestinians: "In the past, American deals with the Saudis were contingent on normalization with Israel ... If the government continues to think the Israel-Palestinian conflict isn't a factor, here comes the Trump administration, which is super-friendly to Israel, to say it's impossible."

She also expressed concern about losing liberal Diaspora Jews: "Protecting the well-being of Diaspora Jews is also Israel's responsibility, and we cannot make them choose between being Jewish and being [American], British, French, Belgian. Liberal Jews are living with a feeling that the government of Israel is pushing them into a corner again and again."

Yisrael Beiteinu (led by Avigdor Liberman):

Liberman released a lengthy statement last week in which he predicted the next U.S. administration will recognize a Palestinian state on pre-1967 lines and support U.N. Security Council sanctions on Israel if the next government does not change the way it relates to the conflict with the Palestinians.

"It didn't happen before now because Israel successfully neutralized this dangerous stance with its strong approval rating among Americans and as such had broad political support in both parties," he wrote. "But politics has an iron law: The moment you lose public support, you lose political support. Today, our situation in American public opinion is at an unprecedented low. ... What Netanyahu is

doing today is, in effect, knowingly helping bring about the establishment of a Palestinian state.”

“Israel’s endgame and goal must be eliminating Hamas in Gaza and dismantling the Palestinian Authority, including the Oslo Accords, but since there are no vacuums ... we must coordinate in advance with the international community who takes control of Judea and Samaria and Gaza,” he added, saying he thinks Jordan is the right answer.

Liberman also called to establish an emergency team to raise awareness and improve Israel’s image in the world, with members from the Israeli government and Diaspora communities.

Otzma Yehudit (led by Itamar Ben-Gvir):

Yishai Fleisher, 12th on the party’s list and the longtime international spokesperson for the Hebron community, told JI: “I think that [National Security Minister] Ben-Gvir is basically a centrist Republican in terms of his policies, and they make sense when you put it into that kind of framework and not how it’s been

portrayed by the international community. It’s simple: law and order; bad guys behind bars; Jews have guns; cut down on illegal construction; stop the jihadist onslaught we see around the world that they want to do here. That itself creates a relationship, because we have Texan values, basically.”

“These are very simple policies, but for some reason the international condemnation has gotten [in the] way, so people have lost the simple understanding of these policies and what they’re about, which is law and order.”

Religious Zionist Party (led by Bezalel Smotrich):

Smotrich, the finance minister, spoke about U.S.-Israel relations at the National Conservatism Conference in Jerusalem last week, saying that “the historic alliance between the countries is built on shared values, on faith and biblical tradition, on love of liberty and on the struggle against enemies who threaten the free world. Israel values America’s friendship and the support it has received over the years.”

“Because of that, the time has come to

deepen the alliance and move from a relationship of dependence to partnership between two independent nations,” he stated. “Israel can and must take greater responsibility for its security, to develop its military and economic independence and stand up for its national interests by itself.”

Speaking to conservatives, Smotrich said that “Israel has an interest in the success of national conservatives in the U.S., as opposed to streams that seek to dismantle ... families and nationalism, erase borders and blur the difference between democracy and terror. The world needs a strong, patriotic America that is connected to its values. We must strengthen our ties with the administration, with the central conservative camp and the American public to show that Israel is a strategic and security asset.”

The Joint List declined to comment. Ra’am, Shas and United Torah Judaism did not respond to requests for comment. ♦

OCTOBER 9, 2026

First female Haredi candidate promises reform to ultra-Orthodox politics

Path-breaking academic Nechumi Yaffe is running for Knesset in a party of Orthodox Israelis who want to bring change to their community

By Lahav Harkov

Nechumi Yaffe, a norm-shattering Haredi woman, and her fledgling political party, Hatzibur HaHaredi, may be tilting at ultra-Orthodox windmills, but they are seeking nothing less than a wholesale transformation of Haredi society. Yaffe wants to pull the community out of poverty. She wants to alter its relationship to the army on the contentious issue of Haredi conscription. And she wants to “make higher education the default” in order to bring more men into the labor force.

Call it “repair, rehabilitation, healing,” she said, but don’t call it “change,” a word

she said was too threatening to a community bound by tradition and ritual.

Yaffe is the first woman to run for Knesset in a Haredi party, after a series of career firsts: She’s the first Haredi woman to receive a Ph.D. from Hebrew University, and the first Haredi woman faculty member at Tel Aviv University, where she teaches at the School of Public Policy, focusing on Haredi society. She also founded “Achdut,” a Haredi volunteer command center, after the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas-led attacks on Israel, coordinating over 100,000 volunteers.

Yaffe, who is 50, spoke with *Jewish Insider* on Wednesday about Hatzibur HaHaredi’s plans and why change

has been so difficult in the Haredi community. A graduate of the prestigious Gateshead Jewish Academy in the U.K., a Haredi teachers’ seminary, and with a post-doctorate from Princeton University, she spoke near-perfect English.

“I think the Haredi community needs to take more responsibility and take initiative and do its share,” she said. “Most Haredi people feel like victims and feel like they’ve been [persecuted] ... I think people have broad ignorance of what it means to be citizens and do their share. ... They were never taught civics and don’t understand their duties and obligations.”

Most Haredim, Yaffe argued, feel that

they contribute by learning Torah, which they believe leads God to protect Israel. They think they pay taxes, she said, because they have sales tax and that they are major consumers because they have many children, not understanding that far fewer of them pay income and municipal taxes than in general society, because of widespread poverty in their sector. The average Haredi household's consumption was 58% of the average Israeli household in 2024, according to an Israel Democracy Institute study. But when the broader public makes demands, Yaffe said, the Haredi population thinks, "what more do these people want from us?"

Meanwhile, those who should know better pursued "short-sighted, lazy policies" and ignored the needs of the Haredi population, she added.

"A bad political agreement was made for them," Yaffe said. "Haredi politicians [tell potential coalition partners] 'all we want is autonomy and we will vote any way you want.' Non-Haredi politicians would overlook what that really means for the economy and said 'let them rot in their ghetto.' All that came back to bite us. ... We have rapid growth in a community that doesn't understand what is wrong. They are not participating in the army or the economy. Their poverty is affecting the Israeli population. The autonomy is a threat to the entire country."

Hatzibur HaHaredi ("Haredi Public") are people who are "loyal to our Haredi identity, put Torah at the center of our lives ... but we want to take responsibility for the financial and educational future for our children and for the State of Israel. We want to be part of designing our future," Yaffe said.

The party's first priority is education, by promoting Haredi public schools that are affiliated with the Education Ministry. Currently, most Haredi schools are independent, meaning that they do not use a government-backed curriculum, though they still receive government funding, and very few prepare students for national high school matriculation exams.

"We want to change norms through resource allocation, to encourage people to move their kids" to the public schools, Yaffe said. "My vision is that [the schools]

become the mainstream, the natural automatic choice. Those who don't want their children to get a secular education should be the ones deviating from the norm."

Yaffe took issue with the current situation regarding Haredi conscription in the IDF, by which over 100,000 young Haredi men are considered to be illegal draft-dodgers who could, potentially be arrested.

"It's not conducive to making them love their country more or go to the army. It's making people illegitimate and not pushing them in the right direction," she said, calling for the government to "be very strategic."

She called to start with the young men who do not actually study in a yeshiva. The rabbis of those yeshivas know which students are falsely registered and which actually study, she said.

"They should be recruited ASAP," Yaffe said. "This should be done tomorrow. Thousands can be recruited. This will normalize the army" in Haredi society.

As for leading Haredi rabbis who have said that even those who are not actually learning Torah should not join the IDF, Yaffe said: "My research has shown that we always think the rabbis are the movers and shakers, but statistically, it's social norms. No one wants to be alienated from the community. We have to normalize the army as part of life."

Another major priority for Hatzibur HaHaredi is employment for men after yeshiva and military service. While about 83% of Haredi women work, only 54% of men do.

"We have to make higher education the default in order to realize their potential and create jobs for thousands of men who could be part of the labor force," she said.

Increasing employment will better integrate Haredim into society, Yaffe said.

"One of the main components of poverty is having no control over your life," she said. "When these men get jobs and have a salary, they can normally plan their monthly expenditures and gain control of their lives ... and then I trust people to get things right."

Yaffe compared the potential of Haredim in the workforce to major waves of Jewish

immigration "that revived and strengthened the country. The next wave will be Haredi immigration into Israeli society. We're going to take the talent and ambition of this community and harness it."

Yaffe also plans to fight for the rights of "neglected, overlooked and used" Haredi women. She believes that they are the party's "weapon," and will be a large part of their voter base.

"We are sent to work and bring in money, but have no legal protections," she said.

Haredi women are often employed as teachers, but their labor rights are frequently violated, and contrary to nearly all public school teachers in Israel, few Haredi teachers are union members. A common practice in Haredi schools – including those once managed by the current head of United Torah Judaism, Yitzhak Goldknopf – is to hire teachers as contractors and sign new contracts with them annually, so they do not receive tenure or raises. Yaffe also said that hiring and promotions are often based on personal connections.

"It's like a third-world country; it's so corrupt," Yaffe said of employment practices in Haredi schools. "The corruption needs to end, full stop. We need to get women into senior jobs and around the decision-making table."

While one may think that being the primary breadwinners would grant haredi women more power, Yaffe said that "the culture is that Torah is more important than money, and they don't have access to Torah [at the same level as the men]."

"It ends with us," Yaffe promised. "Women are making the money and don't get to make the decisions. That will end when women are around the table and see the mechanisms and say we won't play this game anymore."

Much of Israeli Haredi society has very closed social ranks, and those who break the norm are often ostracized. Haredi commentators have attempted to criticize Yaffe and others in the party as not really Haredi.

"The easiest way to refute criticism is to ostracize someone," Yaffe said. "I think it's hard to say that about me. I wasn't just a

teacher; I wrote the curriculum. My name is on their children's textbooks."

Yaffe said she has gotten "mixed reactions" and some people think she's "off," but that "most say [I am] trying to do something good."

She is used to deviating from the norm, since she turned to academia, but the criticisms are more difficult for other members of her family, who received phone calls telling them that she is "terrible and how dare [she] go against the establishment."

"Some people disapprove, but I don't care," she said. "I hope my kids are OK receiving criticism, because they may not

be as resilient as I am. ... It's not easy having this kind of a parent, but you can't choose your parents."

Earlier this week, leading Haredi Rabbi Dov Lando sparked controversy by saying that religious Zionist soldiers were killed in the war because of their "distorted Torah."

Yaffe was careful not to criticize specific rabbis, but said that Hatzibur HaHaredi is "demonstrating that there are enough Haredi people who want to do things differently and are proud to be part of this country. We want to serve. We are not alienated from the pain, sacrifice and heroism of our brothers who are keeping us safe and alive. We don't take this state for

granted and are grateful for the miracle of this country's establishment."

"We are trying very hard to do something different, and with God's help we will succeed," she added.

As to their consistently polling under the threshold, Yaffe said: "This is a country of miracles. We hope we'll be part of it and get in [to the Knesset]."

"This is a movement of repair, responsibility, of a shared fate [with the rest of the country]. We're here to stay. Eventually, we'll make it in and lead the Haredi community into normal lives," she said. ♦

OCTOBER 15, 2026

Artist, philanthropist Barbara Hines, who discovered Jewish roots late in life, opens first Israeli show

With ethereal paintings of Jerusalem, 'imbued' with the city's own soil, Hines showcases her bonds to the capital

By Judith Sudilovsky

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

Raised in a typical, secular Australian Christian home, artist and philanthropist Barbara Hines attended Sunday school at a local Methodist church and celebrated Christmas and Easter just like all her friends and neighbors in suburban Sydney. She knew she had been born in Germany, and that her parents had immigrated to Australia shortly after World War II.

But what she didn't know was that her parents, assimilated German Jews, were also Holocaust survivors and that 86 extended family members had been murdered by the Nazis. Her parents had chosen to keep the family's Jewish roots hidden from Hines and her sister out of fear and to keep them safe. She knew her father had been imprisoned by the Nazis, and his mother forced to wear a yellow star, but as a child who knew nothing about the Holocaust, she did not realize their

significance. She didn't know her mother was Jewish at all.

On Thursday, Hines, an internationally exhibited painter and philanthropist whose journey in discovering her Jewish roots began in midlife when her then-teenaged son began exploring Judaism, inaugurated her first solo exhibition in Israel, "Jerusalem in My Soul," at the Moshe Castel Museum of Art in the Israeli settlement of Ma'aleh Adumim. The exhibition features 30 ethereal paintings of Jerusalem, painted over the last decade, which she said aim to convey the ambiance and bond she feels for Jerusalem. Hines told *eJewishPhilanthropy* that she plays with light, shadow and shape to bring together mystical elements, architecture and history, and her deep connection to her rediscovered Jewish heritage.

"Going to University of Sydney, I didn't know what a Jew was. And then having suddenly been surrounded by a group of friends who all were Jewish...I thought, 'Why am I with these people? What is it

here [that is attracting me to them]?" said Hines, who studied psychology and education before moving to Germany, to meet relatives and work as a teacher.

It was then that she made her first trip to Israel and felt an inexplicably strong connection to the country.

Later, when she and her first husband, commercial real estate mogul and philanthropist Gerald Hines, were raising their two children in London, and her son, Trevor, began his own journey into Judaism during his studies at Westminster School, she began to connect with her Jewish roots. In a phone conversation from Australia, Hines' mother revealed that she was Jewish, as were her mother and grandmother, and therefore, according to *halacha*, so were Hines and her two children. They all three started observing Orthodox Judaism, and though her husband maintained his agnostic Christianity, he was supportive of their decision, Hines said.

As a young woman in her early 20s, she

had explored various religions, moving from yoga to Hinduism, Sufism and becoming a practicing Buddhist for over 20 years, even traveling with the Dalai Lama and serving on one of his boards, Hines said this week, sitting in her light-filled Jerusalem apartment that she shares with her second husband, Rabbi Natan Ophir, whom she married in May, following Hines' death in 2020 at 95.

It was during her first date with Ophir last year at the Moshe Castel Museum of Art that Hines was invited by its director, Hagai Sasson, to exhibit her work at the museum.

Though she saw the common denominator of trying to connect with the divine and make people strive to be better and take care of one another in all the religions, after much reading and studying and reaching out mainly to Chabad rabbis and teachers, she realized her strong connection with Judaism.

"It was a slow realization that this was my heritage, this is where I belong, and these are my people. It had been denied to me because of Adolf Hitler and the war. And I wasn't going to let Adolf Hitler decide my future," she said.

She recalled how she never felt settled anywhere when she and Gerald Hines traveled and lived around the world with their children, including Texas, Aspen, Colo., Paris and London. Her art accompanied her throughout their travels.

She now tries to imbue in her paintings

of Jerusalem her deep connection to the city by mixing soil from Jerusalem — from her Jerusalem garden and soil friends sent her when she was in the U.S. — into the pigments she uses in her creations, she said.

"My paintings are very ethereal and light and transparent. I paint in layers using a wonderful Swiss pigment called Lascaux, like the caves. Then I would add the soil into the darker parts [pigments]. I felt that was like imbuing the actual painting with Jerusalem," she said.

Though the results are markedly different, she finds in this process a similarity to the technique used by Moshe Castel, who mixed ground basalt rocks with glue, sand and natural pigments.

"Everybody sees something else in [my paintings.] They are often things I don't even intend to put in there. And they see it, and I think that's great because it strikes a chord in everybody," she said. "We're all at different places in our spiritual evolution. I hope it touches them and moves them in some way to seeing the great potential and as well as history, the past together with the future. I feel very blessed to be here in the present. It's our gift to be here, and it's part of the Aliyah process. Some people have a real calling to be here. Many people I've spoken to feel like me. They're just drawn here and they come for a visit, and they're still here 20 years later."

Another of her exhibitions, "A Celebration of Survival," which was commissioned by Houston's Holocaust

Museum, is now a permanent exhibit at the Dallas Museum of Biblical Art.

Continuing her husband's tradition of philanthropic endeavors, which includes the Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design and the Chabad Jewish Community Center in Aspen, Hines donates all proceeds from the sales of her paintings to Jewish educational institutions, including *yeshivot* and *ulpanot*, with a main focus on advancing Jewish education for girls and women. Following her own battle with breast cancer, Hines also supported the creation of the Barbara Hines Building at Aishel House at Texas Medical Center, a hospitality service offered by Houston Chabad for out-of-town hospital patients and their relatives. Much of the art in her new exhibit was flown in from the Aishel House, with Hines replacing the pieces with laser-copied and repainted duplicates.

The "Jerusalem in My Soul" exhibit runs through Dec. 31.

"This city is divinely inspired and blessed and protected. It's been destroyed many times. The First, then the Second Temple, and then all of the wars," Hines said. "When people ask me about [current] politics, I say, this is a storm in a teacup. I feel we've gone on for thousands of years, and we will continue because I think we're here on a mission and we're inspired and protected by the divine." ♦

OCTOBER 15, 2026

Wikipedia failed to address coordinated anti-Israel campaign, new ADL study finds

Wikipedia has failed to systematically review or correct edits to pages on Hamas, Zionism, the Oct. 7 terror attacks and Israel's war in Gaza, even after banning editors involved in the alleged campaign, according to the report

By Haley Cohen

A year after the Anti-Defamation League exposed what it described as a coordinated campaign to inject antisemitic and anti-Israel narratives into Wikipedia entries, 91% of one banned editor's contributions to six prominent

articles on issues related to Israel remain in the live text, according to a new report.

The report, released Thursday by the ADL Center for Technology and Society, found that Wikipedia has failed to systematically review or correct edits to

pages on Hamas, Zionism, the Oct. 7, 2023, terrorist attacks and Israel's war in Gaza, even after banning editors involved in the alleged campaign.

The online encyclopedia is maintained by volunteer editors, some of whom spend

years mastering the site's complex guidelines to keep its content accurate and up to date. On Wikipedia, coordinated editing occurs when multiple accounts work together to shape an article's narrative. This typically involves repeatedly altering text, reversing other editors' changes or steering discussions toward a preferred viewpoint. While coordinated editing is standard practice, it can violate site rules when used to manipulate content or circumvent its consensus-based editorial process.

The ADL's analysis focuses specifically on activity involving articles about Israel, Jewish history and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It found that while coordinated editing activity declined by about 95% since last year, 11 new editors continue to shape articles on Israel and the Palestinians, warning that the disputed content can also influence search results and AI-generated responses.

The ADL examined revision histories and editing patterns across prominent Wikipedia articles and their associated discussion pages, tracking the contributions of banned editors and identifying accounts that continued to shape content on Israel- and Palestine-

related topics. The report analyzed 229 articles edited by at least two of the identified accounts.

Among the report's examples, the ADL found that an October 2023 restructuring of Wikipedia's " Hamas " article moved the bulk of material about the group's antisemitism, use of human shields and human rights abuses to a separate, less-read article titled " Criticism of Hamas ."

On a " Gaza war " article, editors removed thousands of words documenting the Oct. 7 attacks, including evidence of sexual violence. The report also highlighted disputed language in a " Zionism " article that described the movement as achieved " through colonization , " as well as edits that maintained a skeptical framing of sexual violence during the Oct. 7 attacks and questioned the circumstances of the Bibas family's deaths in captivity.

The report follows the ADL's March 2025 investigation, which documented coordination among approximately 30 editors who sought to reshape articles on Israel, Jewish history and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict by emphasizing criticism of Israel while downplaying Palestinian terrorist violence and antisemitism.

An ADL spokesperson told *Jewish Insider* that Wikipedia has not engaged with the group since the 2025 report. The Wikimedia Foundation, the nonprofit that operates Wikipedia, did not respond to a request for comment.

In 2024, a group of Wikipedia editors voted to rate the ADL as an unreliable source on matters related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and antisemitism, which led to concerns about reliability and editorial integrity at the world's largest encyclopedia in the public eye.

ADL CEO Jonathan Greenblatt called on the Wikimedia Foundation to audit the published work, and for companies that build search and AI products to stop presenting contested framing as settled fact.

" Banning individual editors was never going to be enough , " said Greenblatt. " The pages that millions of people read, and that AI tools learn from, still bear the marks of a systematic disinformation campaign that Wikipedia itself has sanctioned but never cleaned up. The most visited online encyclopedia that claims neutrality has to be willing to repair its own record. " ♦

OCTOBER 13, 2026

Scholten, Gottheimer and Bret Stephens join Dan Senor before packed Michigan crowd

At Temple Israel, the lawmakers and the New York Times columnist discussed the rise of antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment with the Call Me Back host

By Marc Rod

More than 1,100 people gathered Monday night at Temple Israel in West Bloomfield, Mich., for an event organized by local Jewish groups featuring Reps. Hillary Scholten (D-MI) and Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ) alongside commentators Dan Senor and Bret Stephens, discussing the rise of antisemitism and anti-Israel sentiment in political life.

Though the Michigan Senate race wasn't directly addressed, the event came ahead of

the election in less than a month, in which Israel and the Jewish community have been central topics of discussion. During the event, Scholten and Gottheimer discussed the rising antisemitic and anti-Israel trends in their party and why they've remained outspoken against them.

The event was jointly organized by the the Jewish Federation of Detroit, the Anti-Defamation League's Michigan office and the local American Jewish Committee chapter, billed as exploring "some of the

most urgent questions facing the Jewish people today from the rise of antisemitism and the meaning of Zionism to the increasingly challenging climate for political discourse in the United States."

Temple Israel was the site, seven months to the day before Monday's event, of a Hezbollah-inspired terrorist attack. Scholten told the audience, during a Q&A session alongside Gottheimer moderated by Senor, that she felt "emotional" arriving

at the synagogue, according to clips of the event reviewed by *Jewish Insider*.

"I want to say to this Jewish community here tonight that we're with you," she said. "It's so important for us to communicate to you that we are with you in this moment. ... People are scared right now. I hear from our Jewish community, especially our young people who have experienced the horrors of a post-Oct. 7 moment on their college campuses."

She said that the Jewish community feels outnumbered, "and that is one of the main reasons why I have felt so compelled to not be shy in speaking out in this moment. ... I want American Jews, Michigan Jews, to feel like they have an ally and a champion."

Scholten is the only sitting Democratic member of Michigan's congressional delegation who hasn't yet endorsed Democratic nominee Abdul El-Sayed.

Asked why she's staked out such a strong position, in such a difficult political environment, Scholten said, "I'm not a radical. In fact, I am radically not radical, and it almost seems like in today's politics, to be not radical is almost a radical position. Everyone is trying to pull you farther and farther to the extremes, but it is actually a very bold and noble position to stake out this position in the center."

She said that she wishes there was "more respect across the board from our colleagues to say, 'I was elected to serve my constituents with the values that I bring to this position,' and more intellectual curiosity, instead of just an immediate rejection or retribution of the position that we have taken out."

Scholten said she believes the Democratic Socialists of America and DSA-aligned candidates are gaining steam because they are emphasizing issues like healthcare, jobs and fighting corruption, "and people don't even recognize the underlying current of the U.S.-Israel relationship or the antisemitism that is a part of that. I know we see that across Michigan."

Scholten said that she sees First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt as a model for how Democrats can respond in a moment when a growing DSA bloc is set to enter Congress.

Roosevelt, she said, "really took on communism" without resorting to McCarthyist tactics, staking out a position in defense of strong New Deal-era social programs while rejecting radicalism.

Scholten applauded Rep. Haley Stevens (D-MI), in whose district the event took place, and Stevens' likely successor, state Sen. Jeremy Moss, who Scholten said was in the audience Monday evening.

Gottheimer praised Scholten for having the "courage" not to cower in the face of "major blowback" as support for Israel has become highly unpopular among the Democratic base, particularly as a lawmaker who's not Jewish.

He attributed the shifting tides on Israel policy among Democratic elected officials in part to pressure and harassment from vocal anti-Israel activists, which can be particularly effective with lawmakers for whom the issue is not top of mind and don't have Jewish or other constituents invested in it. Other pro-Israel colleagues have offered a similar diagnosis.

"All you had to do is say this magic word [genocide] and it would all go away," he said. "That's how this thing started. And then the disinformation gets out there and, of course, it's everywhere."

Gottheimer described socialists as a separate entity trying to hijack the Democratic Party by playing on real anxieties about the economy, and then, "in a crafty way, [they] threw the Jewish thing into there, and they kind of melded it together" — blaming economic problems on U.S. aid to Israel.

"But this is not about money to Israel when you protest outside a temple, or boycott a Democratic member of Congress from buying coffee at his coffee shop in his own district," Gottheimer continued. "It has nothing to do with your position on Israel. That's just finding a great scapegoat."

Ultimately, he said, it became easier for Democrats to stay silent. "You're kind of nuts right now in Democratic politics for running around and talking about this stuff in the way that we do. It's not popular, right? You get harassed for it. People cancel fundraisers."

He said that some once-dependable allies have said they'll stick with him on key

votes, but have been unwilling to speak up boldly and publicly.

He warned that the same trends are growing in the GOP.

Gottheimer emphasized the need for the Jewish community to remain strong and optimistic even in the face of hardship.

He said that the current environment has shown the community who its friends and allies are, as well as bringing the Jewish community closer together. He said that figures like himself and Scholten are "not going quietly" and intend to fight back in the face of attacks from socialists.

"We [the Jewish community] know we've got to look out for each other, and that only we can overcome this by working together. We got to stay focused. [Enemies of Israel and the Jewish community] spent a long time — decades — focused on how they're going to tear it apart," Gottheimer said. "We were a little asleep at the switch, I think, but now we're up and we're focused and we know what we need to do to actually overcome it — overcoming socialism and overcoming antisemitism."

In a statement to *JI*, Gottheimer thanked Scholten for inviting him to the event and emphasized that "silence is not an option" in the face of antisemitism.

"This is a moment of consequence, and we all have to stand up, speak out, and say plainly that hate has no place in our country. I'll always stand with the Jewish community against antisemitism, and I'm proud to be in the room with so many others who feel the same way," Gottheimer said.

Prior to the Q&A with the two members of Congress, Senor delivered prepared remarks and then conducted a separate Q&A session with Stephens. In his opening remarks, Senor pushed back against the accusations of genocide against Israel, describing them as a modern iteration of the ancient blood libel.

The genocide accusation has been deployed, Senor said, to attack every Jew and Jewish institution, including the preschoolers at Temple Israel, and to declare Israel's existence fundamentally illegitimate. And, he said, political leaders have joined in by parroting the genocide accusation.

Brian Hermelin, the president of the Detroit Federation, told JI that the idea for the event came from a conversation between himself and Senor.

“He wanted to come have a conversation with the community, not to advocate for any particular candidate, but to talk about the seriousness of the issues that we’re facing around antisemitism, around the blood libel of the genocide lie and put it in historical context for the community to understand,” Hermelin said. “This has a lot of historical precedent that hasn’t bode well for the Jewish community, and we should be paying attention.”

Hermelin said the event was “really well received” and that it was particularly poignant to host it at Temple Israel on the seven-month anniversary of the terrorist

attack, marking the first time that some attendees had returned to the synagogue since the attack happened. “For the community, it was important, it was meaningful to be there,” Hermelin said.

Bringing together the Federation, AJC and ADL to host the event provided a “united front” among the major Jewish advocacy organizations and demonstrated that “everybody realizes the seriousness of the decisions that we have in front of us,” he continued.

He said that Senor and Stephens had discussed the “obsessive focus on Zionist participation in political life” in the current moment, and how that is a unique facet of the current electoral cycle.

Meanwhile, elsewhere in the state, the pro-El-Sayed coalition Michigan Jews for

Democracy held an event night with Brad Lander, the progressive Jewish Israel critic expected to join the House next year, and former Rep. Andy Levin (D-MI).

Decky Alexander, the chair of the Michigan Democratic Jewish caucus and one of the hosts of that event, said that the goal of the event was to create an intimate space for traditional Democratic Jewish voters who are unsure how to vote to talk through their feelings and concerns.

The coalition, which is not formally affiliated with El-Sayed’s campaign but issued a recent petition in support of him, also recently held a similar event with Rep. Becca Balint (D-VT), another progressive Jewish House member. ♦

OCTOBER 15, 2026

Visiting Israel, Steven H. Lavin donates \$30M to Hebrew University to boost physician training

The food processing magnate brought along family, friends, colleagues for the trip, particularly his children so 'they could start to become more involved' in philanthropy, he tells eJP

By Judah Ari Gross

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

Food processor and philanthropist Steven H. Lavin was supposed to visit Israel last year, but last summer’s war with Iran forced him to push off the trip. For at least 20 years, Lavin has been seriously donating to causes in Israel — not counting “when I was in *cheder* and we had to put dimes into the JNF [boxes] for the trees,” he quipped — and since the Oct. 7 terror attacks, he has also been on the Israel allocations committee for Chicago’s Jewish United Fund, overseeing the entire federation’s support for Israeli organizations and initiatives.

Currently in Israel, Lavin, 71, the chairman of OSI Group, the main supplier of hamburger meat to McDonald’s, among other major food chains, announced a \$30 million donation to Hebrew University, for a program that is meant to significantly increase the number of physicians that its

medical school can train. To his chagrin, he said, the university is also awarding him an honorary doctorate in the humanities on Monday.

“I told them they could find somebody better, but they got upset, so my wife told me to behave,” he told *eJewishPhilanthropy*, speaking while visiting southern Israel. “That’s the truth. So I’ll take the degree. It’s very nice of them.”

In addition to Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Lavin — joined by his children, family and friends — is visiting a wide array of organizations, communities and initiatives that he and the Chicago federation have supported and may be supporting in the future. The group also included his sisters, friends from the Chicago federation, employees from the family’s foundation, a non-Jewish couple and other family members.

Lavin said bringing “the next generation” along for this trip was important for him “so

that they could start to become more involved in what’s happening in [terms of] philanthropy,” he said.

His \$30 million donation to Hebrew University, he said, comes as a result of a long-standing relationship with the school and its vice president for university advancement and external relations, Yossi Gal, and a desire to merge his support for Israel with his family’s existing contributions toward medicine.

“Because of the severe shortage and growing shortage of doctors — and psychologists and technicians — both before the war but also [even] more and more visibly in the aftermath of Oct. 7, we decided to focus on that area, as well as others, but that’s the primary focus right now,” Lavin said.

“Yossi Gal, who’s an old friend of mine, from when he was the former ambassador to France, which is where I first met him, he and I had many discussions — and with the

dean of the Faculty of Medicine — [about] how can how can we, the collective we as the Jewish People, can kick-start the effort to [increase] medical students in Israel,” he said.

Those discussions, he said, led to his support for the Hebrew University of Jerusalem Center for Advanced Medical Education, an initiative that aims to use artificial intelligence and other technological solutions to increase the number of medical students that can be trained in each cohort, “while keeping clinical judgment and compassionate care at the heart of medical education,” the university said in a statement.

For years, Israeli health experts have warned of a growing shortage of medical professionals in the country, with 3.5 physicians per 1,000 people (compared to an OECD average of 3.9) and only 5.6 nurses per 1,000 people (compared to an OECD average of 9.5). This has been growing as both older doctors retire — many of whom came as immigrants from the former Soviet Union — and as hundreds of Israeli physicians leave the country. Israel, which also tightened its regulations on which foreign medical schools it recognizes, has struggled to grow the number of physicians, launching several initiatives in a bid to do so. This includes opening several new medical schools — at the University of Haifa, Ariel University and Reichman University — and encouraging Jewish doctors from abroad to immigrate.

The new Hebrew University venture aims to use technology to boost the number of doctors it can train by removing as many human bottlenecks as possible, handing off training to digital solutions where it can, the school said.

“The Lavin family’s extraordinary generosity gives Hebrew University the opportunity to do something truly transformative: create a new model for medical education that responds to an urgent national need while setting a standard for the world,” said professor

Tamir Sheafer, president of Hebrew University.

In a statement, the university said that the new program will also better train physicians to use artificial intelligence in their work, to learn where it can be useful and where it is limited.

“The future of medicine requires more than teaching students to use new technologies. It requires us to rethink how physicians acquire knowledge, develop clinical judgment, demonstrate competence, and learn to place the needs of the patient first,” said Dr. Eli Pikarsky, dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. “By combining advanced technology with rigorous assessment, expert mentorship, and human-centered care, this center will allow us to educate more physicians to a higher and more consistent standard, and to share what we learn with medical schools around the world.”

Lavin said that he arrived at the issue of the physician shortage through his work on the Chicago federation’s allocations committee, which mapped the issues in Israeli society.

“Being on the allocations committee dealing with just post-Oct. 7 issues for the federation, a lot of work was done... to see where we need to help in Israel,” he said.

“That was one factor. The second factor is that my family has been involved with the medical field and vetting medical work,” he said. “So it’s a natural fit for us to look at medical [issues].”

Lavin added that creating a center like this required far less “red tape” than other initiatives, so this could get up and running quickly, “so therefore we can have an impact faster, which is what’s important to me as well.”

Lavin said that his family’s gift also required Hebrew University to work and share its findings with other medical schools, both in Israel and around the world, including Chicago’s Rush Medical

Center, which the family has supported for many years.

This was not the Lavins’ first donation to Hebrew University, having previously given \$18 million to establish the Sheldon Lavin Center for Safe, Secure and Sustainable Food Systems, named in honor of Lavin’s father.

“Generally, we’ve been very quiet. Usually, these things are anonymous, but this time Yossi twisted my arm to become more public on it,” Lavin said. “It may be more helpful, and other people might want to step up and join us.”

In the spirit of his requirement that Hebrew University work with other medical schools on the program, Lavin’s group has also been visiting a number of other Israeli universities, hospitals and nonprofits.

This includes a stop at Ben-Gurion University in Beersheva; the Ibim absorption center, which houses new immigrants from Ethiopia; Kibbutz Nir Oz and other communities that were hit in the Oct. 7 attacks; and the Israel-Egypt-Gaza border.

They also visited the Adi Negev-Nahalat Eran rehabilitation center, which Lavin said the family has been supporting for some 15 years. The group’s founder, Jewish Agency Chairman Doron Almog “and Didi, his wife, are very old friends of ours,” he said.

At the rehabilitation center, Lavin said that they visited a geriatric treatment area, which is one of the only such facilities in the region, and also stopped by a recently launched school training Israelis to create prosthetics.

“It’s important to go to these places and hear from people that are actually on the ground,” he said. “When you’re in any business, you want to hear from all the people. You don’t want to just hear from one person who reports up to you. You want to talk to the people that are actually facilitating getting the objectives met. That’s kind of what we do here.” ♦