

THE WEEKLY PRINT

AIPAC to end candidate endorsements, PAC contributions to allies • House Education Committee finds systemic antisemitism in Philadelphia, Berkeley K-12 schools • Syrian textbooks under al-Sharaa deny Israel's right to exist and promote antisemitism, report finds • JFNA announces \$35 million, 100-person initiative to combat antisemitism • Robert Kraft's Blue Square gala pulls in \$32 million as NYC's Waldorf glows blue • High Line Publishing launches with fanfare to counter barriers for Jewish authors • John Paulson makes record \$250M gift to Hebrew University in show of 'solidarity with Israel'

OCTOBER 21, 2026

AIPAC to end candidate endorsements, PAC contributions to allies

AIPAC leaders said that the United Democracy Project super PAC will continue, as the group urges its members to give directly to pro-Israel candidates

By Marc Rod

AIPAC announced on Wednesday that, after three cycles of direct political involvement through its political action committee AIPAC PAC, it will no longer issue endorsements or directly earmark contributions to candidates, but said it will remain involved in political organizing and fundraising in other ways, including with its influential super PAC.

The decision is a striking turnabout just five years after the group first launched its PAC and super PAC and began directly endorsing and fundraising for candidates. The United Democracy Project super PAC, which launched alongside AIPAC's PAC in 2021 and has spent tens of millions across numerous races, will continue its engagement.

In the current election cycle, AIPAC endorsements and donations have become a cudgel against lawmakers from the far left and far right, particularly with the emergence of anti-Israel activist groups targeting lawmakers for receiving money tied to Israel advocacy groups. A growing number of Democratic lawmakers — including some pro-Israel members like

Sen. Cory Booker (D-NJ) — have also said they will reject donations from all outside political action committees, including AIPAC, or rejected AIPAC contributions specifically.

AIPAC paused fundraising for 18 House Democrats earlier this year after they voted to cut U.S. aid to Israel, leaving 178 Republicans and 72 Democrats with active fundraising links on AIPAC portal.

"To win the fight for the future of the country and the U.S.-Israel alliance, we must build a more strategic, consequential, and nimble political operation. We will prioritize increasing direct, organized contributions from individual Americans to candidates — expanding upon our current efforts — and maximizing the emerging political fundraising tools," a letter sent from AIPAC leadership to its members states. "Endorsements, direct PAC contributions, and earmarking will no longer be part of our approach so we can expand individual giving and utilize new tools to help our friends win."

The decision came as a result of an evaluation by AIPAC's board and a several-

month strategic review, according to the letter.

Previously, earmarked donations made to candidates through AIPAC's portal would show up on candidates' fundraising reports as donated by the individual through AIPAC.

The AIPAC leaders added that "staff and local leaders will continue working" with members on fundraising and will recommend contributions to candidates "who are worthy of your support" — an approach reminiscent of how the group operated before it launched its PAC in 2021, even as the group is maintaining its deep-pocketed UDP super PAC, which has played a pivotal role in numerous primaries since its inception.

"Our measurement of success is the strength of the U.S.-Israel relationship," AIPAC spokesperson Deryn Sousa told *Jewish Insider*. "Our members have always been our greatest strength. ... We're putting more time and resources behind what's most effective: AIPAC members' direct contributions to candidates and increasing their impact over the next two years."

Sousa said that AIPAC members

contributed over \$90 million to candidates this cycle, including earmarked donations through the AIPAC portal, compared to over \$3 million in direct donations from the PAC itself. PACs are capped at providing \$10,000 in direct donations per candidate each election cycle, a relatively small amount in the current fundraising environment.

She added that the UDP super PAC is “one of the most important tools that AIPAC members use to help defeat anti-Israel candidates.”

Currently, AIPAC’s endorsement portal only includes sitting lawmakers, though the group has issued candidate endorsements in some open races.

The letter, signed by AIPAC President Bernie Kaminetsky, Board Chair Michael Tuchin, President-Elect Yehuda Neuberger and CEO Elliot Brandt, stated that the shift would allow AIPAC to “capitalize on new innovations and deliver even greater political impact to influence policy,” as well as allow AIPAC supporters to be “most effective” and “adapt quickly.”

But the AIPAC leaders also acknowledged the headwinds that the group has faced, calling the 2026 election “one of the most challenging environments in recent memory” and assessed that the “challenges we are confronting will continue to grow in the years ahead, and the 2028 cycle will demand an even stronger commitment by our activists to pro-Israel politics.”

The group said that securing the U.S.-Israel relationship going forward will require “[m]obilizing greater resources” for AIPAC, pro-Israel candidates and UDP.

Without providing specifics, the group stated that it has “seen a surge of new fundraising strategies that have changed how candidates raise and utilize resources” that were “inconceivable” when the PAC first launched and “present significant opportunities” to support pro-Israel candidates.

“We assess that these innovations are the beginning of a trend, and more new tools will be introduced in the next cycle,” the letter continues.

Sousa, the AIPAC spokesperson, told JI that the 2024 and 2026 cycles have been AIPAC’s biggest fundraising cycles in history and that the group aims to grow even further in the next cycle.

“The only tactic we’re married to is the most effective one ... We have a highly engaged and motivated activist base, and the pro-Israel community is ready to stand with its friends in Congress,” she said. “It’s always been that our activists have the biggest impact, and they are going to double down on their political contributions to candidates.”

Sousa emphasized that AIPAC had helped 290 candidates win this cycle and defeated 29 anti-Israel candidates — though the group suffered several high-profile defeats, including in the Michigan Senate Democratic primary, where its

affiliated super PAC spent over \$30 million supporting Rep. Haley Stevens (D-MI), and in a New Jersey congressional race, where its engagement indirectly helped a far-left anti-Israel Democrat emerge as an unlikely member of Congress.

Though UDP was involved in both races, AIPAC’s PAC did not issue public endorsements in either one.

Groups like TrackAIPAC and other anti-Israel activists had already begun targeting individual pro-Israel or Jewish donors — even when they contributed to candidates separately from AIPAC — and labeling their donations as AIPAC money. AIPAC’s decision to end earmarking contributions for candidates may put that practice of targeting Jewish donors, which garnered accusations of antisemitism, into sharper relief.

The new AIPAC strategy will also allow its supporters to continue contributing to candidates who have said publicly that they will reject contributions from AIPAC, or from PACs in general.

But it will also likely force a shift in AIPAC’s messaging on its bipartisan political work; the group previously boasted about being the top fundraiser for Democrats, as well as members of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, the Congressional Black Caucus, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus and the Equality Caucus to push back on left-wing attacks. ♦

OCTOBER 21, 2026

House Education Committee finds systemic antisemitism in Philadelphia, Berkeley K-12 schools

The report found that the National Education Association provided funding to two groups promoting ‘antisemitic resources’ in the classroom

By Marc Rod

A House Education & Workforce Committee investigation of K-12 schools found widespread issues with antisemitism and anti-Israel advocacy in school curricula in the Philadelphia and Berkeley school districts. It also found that

the National Education Association, the country’s largest teachers’ union, had funded purveyors of antisemitism.

The committee report described the issues in the two school districts as not isolated classroom incidents but systemic

patterns of behavior pushing biased definitions of Israel and relying on antisemitic activists and organizations for educational materials.

“The Committee’s investigation reveals a troubling pattern in American public

education. In school districts on opposite sides of the country, as well as within the nation's largest teachers' union, the Committee uncovered evidence that political activism has increasingly displaced educational neutrality and contributed to an environment in which antisemitism is minimized, excused, and even permitted to flourish," the report concluded.

"Parents send their children to school to learn reading, writing, and math — not to be taught to hate Israel or embrace radical political causes. Yet that's exactly the kind of material our investigation uncovered," the committee's chairman, Rep. Tim Walberg (R-MI), said in a statement. "Jewish students deserve to feel safe in their classrooms, and parents deserve to know what their children are being taught. Schools that receive taxpayer dollars must be held accountable when they fail to protect students from antisemitism."

The committee is also continuing an investigation of Fairfax County Public Schools in Virginia.

The committee found that the NEA provided funding for Rethinking Schools and the Zinn Education Project, which the report describes as "a leading purveyor of antisemitic resources in K-12 schools" which rationalized Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attacks on Israel, provided resources demonizing Israel and guidance for teachers to rebut "false accusations of antisemitism" and criticized the Anti-Defamation League.

It also accused the NEA of addressing antisemitism only in the context of white nationalism.

The investigation condemned Berkeley's work with the Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Consortium, which the report said "resulted in lessons littered with antisemitic resources along with the activist ideology that fuels contemporary antisemitism," including materials that erased Israel from maps, praised antisemitic and anti-Israel figures and referenced resources produced by individuals who support terrorism.

The report also found that the Liberated Ethnic Studies curriculum also offered the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions

movement against Israel as an example of "embodied solidarity," as part of a unit on solidarity and social movements.

The committee found that the district's "Israel/Palestine" lesson plan overlooked terrorism against Israel while criticizing Israeli military operations in Gaza and defended chants calling for the destruction of Israel.

The committee also highlighted that Berkeley school district employees worked with — and at least one teacher and student group raised money for — the Middle East Children's Alliance, which is allegedly tied to the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, a U.S.-designated terrorist organization.

In an Arab American Heritage Month teaching guide, the district promoted a children's book that praises and defends "intifada" and featured a group that, according to the American Jewish Committee, "makes bizarre and radical claims about antisemitism," including criticizing Jews for seeking law enforcement protection in response to violent hate crimes.

Based on internal communications, the committee found that employees circulated pro-Hamas teaching resources; criticized those supporting Israel after Oct. 7; rejected the idea that Jews are indigenous to Israel or that the State of Israel is a necessary refuge for Jews; and otherwise disseminated anti-Israel and antisemitic resources and narratives.

The investigation found that the School District of Philadelphia utilized history curricula and teaching guides that lionized or whitewashed anti-Israel and antisemitic groups and figures including Edward Said, the Nation of Islam and CodePink, as well as utilized materials from at least one antisemitic source that praised "jihad."

The investigation also found that Philadelphia teachers and staff, including those involved in drafting school curricula, had spread antisemitism online, including the director of the district's social studies curriculum, Ismael Jimenez.

The report states that Jimenez "rationalized violence against Jews" and hosted a professional development series featuring an anti-Israel activist. Another

teacher involved in writing curricula said online that "all resistance is righteous." The review also found that district curriculum specialists circulated biased anti-Israel materials internally following the Oct. 7 attacks.

The district also relied on materials from a group of district employees which had declared that [a]ll resistance is righteous."

The district told the committee that it is making changes to how it writes curricula, including terminating Jimenez, standardizing its curriculum based on the guidance of national experts and conducting a "comprehensive review" of the curriculum. But the committee said that other employees involved in spreading antisemitism have not been "adequately disciplined."

The district is also conducting a review of antisemitism complaints, including social media posts by faculty and staff, over the past two years.

In a transcribed interview with the committee, the Philadelphia superintendent, Tony Watlington, said it is inappropriate to describe Israel's founding as racist and "problematic" to compare Israel to the Nazi regime, but that he was not sure if either sentiment was antisemitic. He also said he did not understand what it meant to apply double standards to Israel.

But he said that an internal review had found that there had been a hostile environment for Jewish students in the district in some cases in 2022 and 2023.

The report also criticized the district for its work with the Council on American-Islamic Relations.

Watlington said he was not aware of CAIR's antisemitic or anti-Israel activity or its alleged connections to terrorism but found the group "to be authentically interested in the well-being and support of our students and interested in helping the School District of Philadelphia to become the fastest-improving large urban school district in the country."

And, while describing posts by teachers supporting terrorism and condemning Zionists as disturbing and unacceptable, he said that he does not have the authority to determine whether they violate district policy.

In a statement, the School District of Philadelphia said that antisemitism “has no place in our schools” and that it takes concerns about antisemitism “very seriously.” But it characterized the report as a partisan hit-job.

“The School District of Philadelphia has cooperated extensively with the Committee’s inquiry, and objects to the blatantly partisan framing of the District, days before Election Day,” District spokesperson Monique Braxton said in a statement. “The report distorts and mischaracterizes our record. In fact, the District has taken serious steps to combat all forms of hate in our schools, including a new record management system, revised policies, mandatory annual training for staff, and appropriate disciplinary actions. We remain committed to fostering a safe and welcoming environment for our students and staff.”

Board of Education President Reginald Streater said in a statement that the board also does not agree with the committee’s

findings and offered support for Watlington.

Amy Spitalnick, the CEO of the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, which has worked with the NEA to address antisemitism, criticized the committee’s conclusions.

“As the Jewish organization that has partnered directly with NEA on extensive antisemitism programming over the past year, a number of the report’s claims are news to us and the thousands of educators who have been part of our programs — programs that explicitly address antisemitism in all of its forms, including as it relates to Israel,” Spitalnick said. “A report that intentionally misrepresents or ignores the work done to date only serves a political agenda rather than advancing the interests of Jewish students and educators.”

She also acknowledged that “there are real challenges as it relates to countering antisemitism and advancing Jewish inclusion in our schools and unions, and so much more work ahead.”

“That requires action by the unions and by school districts — and it also requires the federal government to restore the very programs it’s gutted that should be protecting our students, such as Title VI and the Office of Civil Rights,” she said.

But other Jewish leaders took the committee’s findings as a damning indictment of the schools’ leadership.

“The Committee’s findings expose a stunning failure of oversight in Philadelphia’s public schools. Students were assigned materials that excused political violence and portrayed Israel and the United States as terrorists. The district’s decision to overhaul how social studies curricula are developed is an important acknowledgment of the problem,” David Bernstein, CEO of the North American Values Institute, told *Jewish Insider*. “But the damage has been done. The real test will be whether it will hold those responsible accountable and ensure that students receive accurate, balanced instruction.” ♦

OCTOBER 21, 2026

Syrian textbooks under al-Sharaa deny Israel’s right to exist and promote antisemitism, report finds

A review of 130 textbooks by IMPACT-se found antisemitic depictions of Jews and glorified violence, despite al-Sharaa casting himself as a pragmatic statesman

By Matthew Shea

Syria’s national school curriculum under President Ahmed al-Sharaa promotes antisemitic depictions of Jews, denies Israel’s right to exist and glorifies violent struggle against the Jewish state, despite the Syrian leader positioning himself as a pragmatic statesman with no hostility toward Jerusalem, according to a new review of the country’s textbooks following the fall of former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

The study, titled: “The New Syria: Education Under al-Sharaa Review of Syria’s National School Curriculum, 2025-2026,” published by the Institute for Monitoring Peace and Cultural Tolerance in School Education (IMPACT-se), evaluated

130 textbooks across grades 1-12 in Syria’s 2025-2026 national curriculum. It marks the first full analysis of instructional materials issued under President Ahmad al-Sharaa’s administration following Assad’s ouster in December 2024.

Researchers Matan Perchikov, Itam Shalev and Dr. Yonatan Negev compared the post-overthrow materials with their Assad-era predecessors. They concluded that while the new government has replaced Ba’athist-era secular nationalism with Sunni Islamist ideology, longstanding hostility toward Israel and Jews remains deeply entrenched.

“The post-Assad era presents Syria with a rare opportunity to create an education

system based on inclusion and tolerance,” said Marcus Sheff, CEO of IMPACT-se. “Instead, these textbooks show a very concerning shift from one damaging ideological framework to another ... This report should raise serious concerns among international leaders who hope to see Syria emerge as a partner in building a peaceful Middle East.”

The findings come as al-Sharaa, a former commander in al-Qaida’s Syrian affiliate who later led Hay’at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), has sought to build diplomatic ties with Western and regional powers to secure international aid and sanction relief. His government has also repeatedly insisted that it seeks to make peace with Israel,

claiming Jerusalem has been obstinate in negotiations.

The report concludes that the persistent indoctrination against Israel and Jews in Syrian classrooms starkly contrasts with al-Sharaa's public rhetoric of political pragmatism, presenting a key test for international diplomats engaging the post-Assad government.

According to the report, Israel's legitimacy is rejected outright across all grade levels in Syrian textbooks. Maps omit the State of Israel, labeling the entire territory as "Palestine" or "Occupied Palestine," while text lessons refer to Israel as the "enemy," "thieving," "filth" and a "terrorist entity."

In a sixth-grade social studies textbook, Israel is described as the "thieving Zionist Entity" and students are asked to analyze why the "terrorist entity" lacks the core characteristics of a legitimate state.

A 12th-grade history textbook challenges Jewish national identity, characterizing Jews as a "hodgepodge of peoples" rather than a single nation. "The Zionists lack most features of nationhood: they do not belong to shared roots, nor speak a single language, nor belong to one geographical environment or one history," the textbook asserts, according to the report.

In Islamic education and social studies units, anti-Jewish stereotyping extends to early Islamic history, depicting "treachery,

backstabbing, disloyalty and hostility as inherent and enduring characteristics of Jews."

Furthermore, the curriculum systematically replaces the standard Arabic name for Jerusalem (al-Quds) with the Islamic term Bayt al-Maqdis.

According to the study, anti-Israel sentiment was also a cornerstone of education under the Assad regime, pointing to previous reports that identified a "denial of Israel's legitimacy as a Jewish nation-state" in Assad-era textbooks. The 2026 study reveals that under al-Sharaa's government, the curriculum not only retained its hostility toward Israel, but also expanded beyond the Assad-era into explicit religious antisemitism, with certain lessons from the Assad-era "carried over unchanged."

Palestinian violence against Israel — including suicide bombings — is also explicitly justified or glorified. A ninth-grade history textbook describes Second Intifada suicide bombings as "martyrdom operations" that embarrassed Israel and forced its complete withdrawal from the Gaza Strip.

A fifth-grade Arabic textbook includes a poem dedicated to Dalal al-Mughrabi, a Palestinian terrorist who led the 1978 Coastal Road Massacre that killed 38 Israeli civilians, including 12 children. The text idolizes al-Mughrabi as a "sword," a "flame"

and the "voice of a raging earthquake" who "raised the banner of liberation."

High school history textbooks similarly celebrate Izz al-Din al-Qassam — a Syrian-born Muslim preacher who led armed revolts and became the namesake of Hamas' military wing — describing him as "one of the first martyrs of the revolt."

Armed struggle is generally lauded: A 12th-grade Islamic education textbook defines jihad as an individual religious obligation whenever Muslim lands or holy sites are threatened, explicitly categorizing Palestinian and Syrian military struggles over Israeli-controlled territory as acts of religious jihad.

The broader ideological changes also extend to Syria's treatment of religious minorities. The report found that lessons emphasizing religious tolerance and equality had been removed or revised, while Sunni Muslim identity was increasingly presented as central to Syrian national identity. Christians remain acknowledged in the curriculum, but other communities, including Druze and Kurds, receive little recognition, according to the researchers.

The report also identified changes in Syria's portrayal of regional powers. Iran and Hezbollah, both allies of the former Assad regime, are now depicted negatively, while Turkey and the Ottoman Empire receive more favorable treatment. ♦

OCTOBER 21, 2026

JFNA announces \$35 million, 100-person initiative to combat antisemitism

Frontline, chaired by Julie Platt, is aimed at boosting local federations' advocacy and community relations teams

By Judah Ari Gross

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

Jewish federations across North America will be hiring 100 new employees focused on combating antisemitism through frontline advocacy and community relations, the Jewish

Federations of North America announced on Wednesday.

The new expansion is part of JFNA's Frontline initiative, a \$35 million venture that will provide grants to 120 local Jewish federations.

"Focused on local and state advocacy,

K-12 and higher education, and interfaith and intergroup partnerships, these professionals join the experienced teams already on the ground, adding the depth and breadth of support needed to push back against the hate that is rearing its head

in too many areas of civic life,” JFNA said in a statement.

The expansion — backed by 25 funders — comes amid a global rise in antisemitism in the wake of the Oct. 7 terror attacks and Israel’s war against Hamas in Gaza. The past three years have seen multiple deadly antisemitic attacks, including a shooting last December at Bondi Beach in Sydney, Australia, in which 15 people were killed at a Hanukkah event.

“In the aftermath of Oct. 7, our community was very disappointed to see that many people we thought were our allies stayed silent,” said Julie Platt, chair of Frontline and JFNA’s immediate past board chair. “We learned the hard lesson that our civic engagement efforts must be more

focused, more targeted, and more outcomes-based, and that is exactly what Frontline is designed to do.”

While there has been broad concern in the Jewish world about the rise in antisemitism, there are also those who oppose further investment in efforts to combat Jew hatred and call instead for funds to be directed toward Jewish education and identity-building.

Among other things, the Frontline funding will go to: JFNA’s strategic messaging initiative Project Halo; Student to Student, which connects Jewish teens with non-Jewish peers; One Mitzvah A Day, which gets Jews to thank public figures for actions that support the Jewish community; and general year-long training.

“Federations have been deeply engaged in the work of community relations and civic engagement for decades. Today, we require new strategies and increased resources to address the dramatic rise of antisemitism that is permeating every facet of civic life,” Shira Hutt, executive vice president of JFNA, said in a statement. “Frontline is a game-changing initiative that will equip Federations with the talent, support and resources they need to confront the increasingly complex and growing challenges they face, whether in government, in educational institutions, in media or our other civic spaces.” ♦

OCTOBER 22, 2026

Robert Kraft’s Blue Square gala pulls in \$32 million as NYC’s Waldorf glows blue

Tom Brady, Jon Bon Jovi and Cardinal Dolan joined 800 guests for the largest single-night haul in the history of the Patriots owner’s group fighting antisemitism and hate

By Haley Cohen

Manhattan’s Waldorf Astoria was basking in blue light on Wednesday night as more than 800 guests gathered for the inaugural benefit gala of Robert Kraft’s Blue Square Alliance Against Hate. The sold-out event raised more than \$32 million to combat antisemitism and discrimination, according to the organizers.

The haul marks the largest amount the group has raised in a single night. With opening remarks by CNN commentator Van Jones, the program honored Bank of America Chair and CEO Brian Moynihan for his support of the organization’s work, and featured a video message from former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, a member of Blue Square’s advisory board, who shared her personal experiences confronting racism and hate.

Kraft, the New England Patriots owner who founded the organization, took the stage alongside former Patriots quarterback Tom Brady and Cardinal Timothy Dolan,

the archbishop emeritus of New York. The trio reflected the group’s effort to enlist figures from sports, religion and business in the fight against antisemitism and hate of all kinds.

Hate “starts with antisemitism, but it doesn’t end there,” Kraft told attendees. “I believe that silence is hate’s greatest ally,” he said. “Silence allows hate to grow unchecked, at devastating speed. That is the premise on which the Blue Square Alliance was founded ... I knew if we could find a way to reach people beyond the Jewish community, to educate them, inspire them and give them a simple way to stand with us, we could change the conversation around all hate.”

An eclectic crowd filled the ballroom, where household names sat beside prominent figures from New York’s Jewish community. Spotted in the crowd were singer-songwriter Jon Bon Jovi; Disturbed frontman David Draiman; CNN’s Wolf Blitzer and Bianna Golodryga; New York

City Police Commissioner Jessica Tisch; Speaker of the New York City Council Julie Menin; former CEO of UJA-Federation of New York Eric Goldstein; ADL CEO Jonathan Greenblatt; Yeshiva University President Ari Berman; Columbia University Hillel Executive Director Brian Cohen and Rabbi Berel Gurevitch, who leads Chabad West Village.

For all the differences in the room, from celebrities to rabbis to Wall Street executives, nearly everyone shared one accessory: the small blue square that is the organization’s symbol, pinned on lapels and gowns alike. The blue square pin has become a visible symbol of the group’s message, worn by supporters across religious and cultural lines. A video shown during the evening highlighted its reach beyond the Jewish community, including an Oklahoma City pastor who said he ordered 3,000 pins for his congregation.

Kraft founded the organization in 2019 as the Foundation to Combat Antisemitism,

launching the blue square campaign in 2023, looking to turn the blue square emoji into the symbol for Jewish solidarity and opposition to hatred against Jewish people. In October 2025, the group rebranded as the Blue Square Alliance Against Hate, reflecting its effort to build a broader coalition of allies while continuing to focus on antisemitism. The expanded push came amid a sharp rise in antisemitism in America following Hamas' Oct. 7, 2023, attack on Israel and the ensuing war in Gaza. The ADL recorded 9,354 antisemitic

incidents nationwide in 2024, its highest annual total in the 46 years it has tracked such incidents.

The gala also revisited the campaign that made the organization a familiar name beyond Jewish communal circles: its Super Bowl commercials.

Clips from the 30-second spots played at the event, as attendees chatted about the ads' power to bring the fight against antisemitism to one of the country's biggest cultural stages. The organization is perhaps best known for the high-profile

commercials, which have also at times drawn scrutiny. Its first Super Bowl spot, in 2024, featured a former speechwriter for Martin Luther King Jr. urging viewers to stand up to antisemitism.

A 2025 commercial starring Brady and Snoop Dogg broadened the message to standing up to hate of all kinds, while this year's "Sticky Note" spot depicted a Jewish student bullied at school and a Black classmate who covers an antisemitic slur on his backpack with a blue square. ♦

OCTOBER 21, 2026

High Line Publishing launches with fanfare to counter barriers for Jewish authors

J.K. Rowling's agent Neil Blair, who helped launch the firm, said he saw writers struggle to get published because 'their last name was Jewish or Israeli'

By Haley Cohen

A new publishing house made its New York City debut Tuesday night with a pitch for a different kind of literary establishment: one where Jewish and Israeli writers don't have to worry that their identities or perspectives will keep their books off the shelves.

High Line Publishing Studio is the latest in a growing number of publishing ventures seeking to create space for Jewish voices amid concerns about how those writers are treated by the mainstream industry.

High Line made its American launch at chef Eyal Shani's Port Sa'id restaurant, following its U.K. debut last month. The new venture features two distinct imprints: Antidote Books and Odessa Editions. The latter, led by London-based editor Jacky Klein, plans to publish Jewish and Israeli fiction and nonfiction on subjects ranging from Jewish history and antisemitism to philosophy, food and culture, with a global reach through distributor Hachette.

"We're not aiming to be a [marginalized] publisher — both in our books or in our distribution," Klein told *Jewish Insider* ahead of the launch, adding that the imprint is open to Arab Israeli writers and

non-Jewish authors whose work engages meaningfully with Jewish culture, history or ideas.

Antidote Books, led by Joel Simons, formerly of HarperCollins UK, is a nonfiction imprint looking to publish stories on technology, ethics, democracy, identity and power.

High Line is launched by J.K. Rowling's longtime literary agent, Neil Blair. Also helping to steer the venture's two imprints are High Line CEO Oliver Malcolm, Senior Vice President Lindsay Gordon and Executive Chair Adam Cannon. The studio is backed by long-term investment from a coalition of publishing, media and philanthropic investors, including Blair, but operates independently of Blair's literary and entertainment agency, The Blair Partnership.

Speaking to an invite-only crowd of journalists, philanthropists and authors — both prospective and established — Blair explained that his own frustration had inspired the venture.

"For quite some time, I've sensed that something wasn't right in the field of publishing," Blair said, describing what he

sees as a growing tendency for publishing houses in New York and London to favor authors whose perspectives align with conventional narratives. He said he had watched writers struggle to get published "not because of the quality of their writing or lack of original thinking," but because their views did not conform to those narratives — "or perhaps their last name was Jewish or Israeli."

Blair, who is Jewish and a self-described Zionist, said the issue got worse after the Oct. 7, 2023, terrorist attacks, and cited HarperCollins' efforts to halt publication of a book by former Mossad chief Yossi Cohen, as well as his difficulty finding a British publisher for released hostage Eli Sharabi's memoir about being held captive in Gaza, even as the book found a U.S. publisher and sold hundreds of thousands of copies, he said.

High Line's first book published in London will be Dara Horn's *The Final Solution to the Jewish Question: A Love Story for the Living*, Blair announced, describing the book's message — that "we don't bow to tyrants" — as aligned with the mission behind the new venture. In

attendance at Tuesday's launch was Horn, an award-winning American Jewish author whose work explores Jewish history and antisemitism.

The launch drew a who's who of the literary world, with publishing executives, editors and writers mingling over Shani's signature Mediterranean dishes and toasting to the new venture with cocktails named for each imprint. In addition to Horn, spotted in the crowd was Naomi Firestone-Teeter, CEO of the Jewish Book Council; Yael Bar Tur, co-host of the "Chosen People Problems" podcast; Jewish literary consultant Erika Dreifus; and

Rebbetzin Avital Chizhik-Goldschmidt, a journalist and co-founder of Altneu.

The launch comes amid a broader wave of Jewish-focused publishing ventures, including Meg Keene Books, a new fiction imprint at Wicked Son Press and Canary Publishing, a literary venture focused on Jewish and Israeli authors. The founders say they hope to address what they view as an industry-wide reluctance to publish Jewish stories, particularly those involving Israel, in the wake of Oct. 7.

There is no reliable industry-wide figure showing what percentage of Zionist or Jewish authors have been dropped, although author Meg Keene has collected

data specifically on Jewish fiction publishing, which found that between 2023 and 2024, there was a 76% decline in fiction deal announcements to large presses that mentioned Jews, Judaism or Israel.

The name of the industry's newest company serves as a fitting metaphor for Blair's ambitions: The launch party took place just blocks from Manhattan's High Line, the elevated park that inspired the name. "When you walk it, you see the city from a totally different point of view," Blair said, adding that's the perspective High Line Publishing hopes to bring to its authors' stories. ♦

OCTOBER 17, 2026

John Paulson makes record \$250M gift to Hebrew University in show of 'solidarity with Israel'

School will rename its Mt. Scopus campus in his honor; funds to mainly support engineering, medical programs, trauma research and a new think tank

By Justin Hayet

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

Hedge fund manager John Paulson announced a \$250 million gift to Hebrew University of Jerusalem on Saturday night, the largest donation in the school's 101-year history. The university will rename its Mount Scopus campus in honor of Paulson and his wife, "The Alina and John Paulson Campus, Mount Scopus, Jerusalem."

Paulson, who founded the Paulson & Co. hedge fund, unveiled the gift at the university's board of governors gala. "This gift is also meant to show support and international solidarity with Israel," Paulson, founder and chairman of the Paulson Family Foundation, said in a statement provided to eJewishPhilanthropy.

"A small country, Israel faces enormous challenges defending itself at this time. If there was ever a time to step up and support the country and its institutions, this would be it. As a vibrant, democratic,

pluralistic, and advanced economy, we should all be proud of what Israel has accomplished," said Paulson, who converted his fund into a private family investment office in 2020.

The gift ranks as the third-largest individual gift ever made to an Israeli university, behind the \$400 million bequest by San Diego philanthropists Dr. Howard and Lottie Marcus to Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and a \$260 million anonymous donation to Bar-Ilan University. However, it follows previous donations to Hebrew University worth some \$46 million, bringing his total donations to nearly \$300 million.

It is also the latest in a three-year surge of mega-gifts from Jewish philanthropists to Israel's leading universities and hospitals.

Earlier this week, food processing magnate and philanthropist Steven H. Lavin also pledged \$30 million to Hebrew University for a program to significantly increase the number of medical school students that it can train.

The gift will fund four priorities: a new

Faculty of Engineering, an expansion of the university's medical and biomedical programs, research on trauma and post-trauma recovery and a new think tank linking faculty expertise with public needs in Israel and abroad.

The engineering faculty will pair engineering with computer science, medicine and life sciences. On the medical side, the university plans to scale up a medical education model it has been piloting while building out biomedical research and Israel's long-term health care capacity.

The gift is Paulson's largest gift to an Israeli institution. His biggest overall remains the \$400 million he gave to endow Harvard University's School of Engineering and Applied Sciences in 2015, which put his name on its engineering school.

Paulson made his mark on New York City philanthropy in 2012, when he gave \$100 million to the Central Park Conservancy. That same year, he anonymously pledged another \$100 million to New York University for a 735,000-

square-foot academic complex. NYU revealed him as the donor when the John A. Paulson Center opened in 2023.

He has backed Hebrew University before, giving \$27 million in 2023 and \$19 million earlier this year for science and technology facilities on the Edmond J. Safra Campus, including the Paulson Bar-El Building for Computer Science & Engineering and the John Paulson Building for Electrical Engineering.

Paulson framed the gift partly as a value play for donors, arguing that a Hebrew University education costs far less than one at a comparable American school while its faculty produces research on par with elite institutions. “Given its quality and productivity, I can think of no more

deserving university for philanthropic support than Hebrew University,” he said, pointing to the university’s 10 Nobel Prizes, two Turing Awards, a Fields Medal and more than 10,750 registered patents.

Hebrew University President Tamir Sheafer cast the gift as a signal to other Jewish philanthropists. “In these challenging times, John’s visionary support serves as an inspiring beacon to friends and leaders across the global Jewish community — demonstrating the vital importance and enduring impact of investing in Israel’s academic and scientific foundation,” Sheafer said in a statement.

Paulson joins a growing list of donors making eight- and nine-figure commitments to Israeli institutions. Last

year, Blackstone President Jon Gray and his wife, Mindy, pledged \$125 million to grow Tel Aviv University’s medical school.

Hospitals have drawn similar support. WhatsApp co-founder Jan Koum gave \$200 million to Jerusalem’s Shaare Zedek Medical Center for a new tower earlier this year. Also earlier this year, Mexican Israeli philanthropist Daniel Jusidman and his Jusidman Family Foundation committed NIS 200 million (\$68.5 million) to a new rehabilitation hospital in north Tel Aviv. Last year, following an Iranian missile attack Canadian-Israeli billionaire Sylvan Adams donated \$100 million to Soroka Medical Center. ♦