JEWISHINSIDER
NOVEMBER 6, 2026 ♦ 26 CHESHVAN, 5787

THE WEEKLY PRINT

Democratic sweep raises questions for U.S.-Israel ties and Iran war • Democratic Senate sweep puts Schumer back in the saddle • Jewish groups split over Trump's announcement ending Israel aid • Philly Jewish restaurant owners say they won't be scared off by antisemitic boycott campaign • Inside the slow, convoluted demise of a beloved L.A. Jewish day school

NOVEMBER 5, 2026

Democratic sweep raises questions for U.S.-Israel ties and Iran war

Analysts say the incoming majorities could push to link arms sales to Israeli conduct and move quickly on war powers to end the conflict

By Matthew Shea

Democrats' sweeping victories in Tuesday's midterm elections have raised questions about the future of the U.S.-Israel relationship and President Donald Trump's approach to the war with Iran, as the incoming Democratic majorities in both chambers prepare to wield greater influence over American foreign policy.

The election comes as Democratic lawmakers increasingly scrutinize the U.S.-Israel relationship, advocating for restricting American arms sales and military assistance. JI reported in September that Democrats have been preparing a range of legislative proposals that could significantly alter U.S. policy toward Israel, including restrictions on military assistance and arms sales and sanctions targeting settlement activity and settler violence in the West Bank.

Dan Shapiro, a former U.S. ambassador to Israel, told *Jewish Insider* that in the next Congress, some Democrats will seek to impose greater pressure on Israel over such issues. But he also emphasized that the incoming majorities include a larger number of moderate-minded lawmakers who could temper the party's approach.

"These are big majorities. They include people from moderate swing areas of the country, people who are not as focused on this issue, and that will give the leadership some ability to help define a constructive way of making changes to the relationship," he said.

Matt Kenney, vice president of government affairs at the Jewish Institute for National Security of America, said he expects Democrats will "exert pressure" on Israel in the pursuit of "priorities like reigning in violence in the West Bank, opposing the annexation of the E1 corridor and providing humanitarian assistance to Gaza."

"Pro-Israel Democrats like Florida's Debbie Wasserman Schultz, expected to chair the House Foreign Affairs Committee's MENA subcommittee, and returning Virginia congresswoman Elaine Luria will push to maintain strong U.S. support for Israel, but against increasing political headwinds within the caucus," he added.

Chuck Freilich, a former Israeli deputy national security advisor and an associate fellow at the Middle East Institute, warned that the Democratic victories could deepen existing "severe strains" in the relationship.

"There may be direct linkages between, let's say, how Israel pursues policy, especially in Gaza, but towards the West Bank in general, the whole Palestinian issue in general, and arms sales," he said.

"I think at best we'll go back to the 1970s, when every arms sale was deeply contested, when Israel had to come and beg and really make a difficult case," he continued. "For the last few decades, arms sales have been basically automatic. The linkages, the conditionality, could become worse."

Meanwhile, Trump's announcement on Election Day that he plans to end military aid to the Jewish state by the end of the year and Vice President JD Vance's post-election blame on the U.S.-Israel relationship and the Iran war as top factors in the GOP's defeat have underscored shifting attitudes toward Israel within elements of the Republican Party as well.

The new congressional balance of power could give Democrats greater influence over negotiations concerning the future of U.S. security assistance to Israel, Kenney said, particularly as the current 10-year memorandum of understanding, signed under former President Barack Obama, approaches its scheduled expiration in 2028 — if it isn't already terminated by Trump at the end of 2026.

Trump indicated that Israel would be allowed to continue purchasing American weapons, while also framing the assistance as a political liability for the GOP amid growing Democratic criticism of the funding.

Freilich warned, however, that changes to the bilateral relationship could extend beyond military assistance and weapons transfers.

"We may see less support for Israel in the U.N. and other international organizations, and critically in the Security Council," he said. "Even a limited change has critical ramifications for Israel, because the relationship with the U.S. is one of the most important pillars of Israeli national security."

The Iran war has also become a major source of strain in American attitudes toward Israel, analysts argued, particularly amid perceptions that Netanyahu persuaded Trump to enter the conflict.

"A lot of people bought the line that Netanyahu talked Trump into it. I think that was a grossly overstated, misleading narrative," Freilich said. "But it has a lot of support in the U.S. A lot of people believe it, and not just progressives. A lot of centrist Democrats and Republicans believe it."

The conflict, now in its eighth month, emerged as an issue in the midterms primarily as a driver of high fuel prices. Shapiro offered a sharply critical assessment of Washington's position in the conflict following the election.

"I think Iran feels like they don't need to be flexible in negotiations. They feel like the pressure is on the United States to get out of the war," Shapiro said. "They feel like they will be able to reassert control of the Strait of Hormuz once we conclude our operations."

"[Iran has] given nothing on the nuclear negotiations until now, and I think they have gained the upper hand here by the United States pursuing a fruitless war that it should never have pursued, and now by the demonstration that the American people want to end it," he continued.

Elliott Abrams, who served as special representative for Iran during Trump's first administration, offered a similar assessment of how Tehran could interpret the midterms.

"Iran will probably be emboldened by the election results, thinking of them as a defeat for Trump and a statement of public opposition to his Iran policy," Abrams said. "That will make negotiations harder, or perhaps make the terms of any deal better for Iran if the administration badly wants a deal."

Analysts said the incoming Democratic majorities could use their power to force an end to the war by enforcing already passed war powers resolutions and by withholding government funding.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) claimed on Wednesday that Democrats "have some Republicans" already willing to crossover to pass a war powers resolution.

Shapiro agreed, "If the war is still going on when the Democrats take the majority in January, I expect very quick action on war powers and conceivably on ending funding to support the war."

"I can't say for sure, and I'm sure those decisions haven't been made. And there's still time for the war to wind down before they're sworn in. But yes, this will be as high a priority as anything — is ending this war ASAP."

Kenney similarly assessed that Democrats will pursue an end to the Iran war as a top priority and also suggested that the party "will kick-start that effort by seeking to run Secretary of War Pete Hegseth out of town."

Democratic lawmakers swiftly signaled plans to target and investigate the Trump administration following Tuesday's victories, with several posting messages on social media suggesting that subpoenas and other congressional oversight actions would be forthcoming under Democratic control.

Michael Koplow, chief policy officer at the Israel Policy Forum, also anticipated congressional efforts to restrict the administration's military operations, but warned that Democratic majorities alone would not guarantee their success.

"There are practical limitations in both cases" of war powers and funding "since they will not have veto-proof majorities and [the Department of Defense] will be able to shift funding around without a real concern that Democrats will refuse to fund the department entirely," he continued. "The administration has also routinely ignored Congressional spending directives, and I don't expect that to change overnight."

Abrams also questioned how far the incoming Democratic majorities could go in challenging the administration without sufficient Republican support.

"Democrats in Congress may try to constrain Trump, but it will be difficult," Abrams said. "They do not have the votes to override vetoes; it's hard to see a dozen Republicans joining them in the Senate on something like a bill stopping supply of certain weapons systems to Israel." ♦

NOVEMBER 5, 2026

Democratic Senate sweep puts Schumer back in the saddle

Democratic dominance in the midterm elections has given the embattled Senate Minority Leader strange new respect from his critics

By Will Bredderman

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-NY) spent much of 2026 looking like a dead man walking — bleeding support from longtime Jewish backers for his endorsement of anti-Israel candidates, as left-wing figures circled over his seat and crowed about plans to strip him of influence in the party's conference.

But experts told *Jewish Insider* that Tuesday's midterm elections revived and recharged the Empire State senior senator's powers, and even resuscitated the once-remote chance he might seek re-election when his current term ends in 2029.

Leon Goldenberg, an Orthodox Jewish community activist said before the election that many in the community felt abandoned by Schumer, who long touted himself as a *shomer Yisrael* — guardian of the Jewish people. "The anger in the Orthodox community is just unparalleled."

And one political strategist emphasized that when Democrats last held the majority, Schumer failed to advance landmark legislation on antisemitism, in part due to fears of splitting the Democratic caucus.

These comments came in reaction to Schumer's work to elect Democratic primary candidates who defeated his more-moderate preferred contenders: Graham Platner, the Nazi-tattooed far-left Senate candidate in Maine who made hostility toward Israel part of his campaign pitch; Abdul El-Sayed of Michigan, who said of a terror attack on a synagogue that "hurt people do hurt people"; and Angie Nixon, the Democratic Socialists of America member who won an upset victory for the party nomination in Florida.

All three candidates, meanwhile, had either declined to endorse Schumer to hold onto his job in a future Democratic majority or vowed to oppose him.

But Platner dropped out of the race following a rape allegation, and Nixon lost outright. El-Sayed kept Michigan's seat in Democratic hands, but only after a bitter intraparty fight that exposed deep divisions within the party.

Meanwhile in Republican-friendly battlegrounds like North Carolina, South Carolina and Iowa, centrist Democrats triumphed with Schumer's support, giving the party at least 54 seats next year.

"I'll be reelected majority leader," Schumer confidently told reporters on Wednesday, brushing aside questions about newly elected Democrats and current members of his caucus who say they'll withhold their support or demand concessions in exchange.

Five Democratic senators-elect, El-Sayed (D-MI), Troy Jackson (D-ME), Peggy Flanagan (D-MN), Juliana Stratton (D-IL) and Adam Hamilton (D-KS) have said they won't support Schumer, while Sens.-elect Talarico (D-TX) and Chris Pappas (D-NH) have been noncommittal and have broadly called for new leadership.

Despite criticism of his strategy during the first two years of the Trump administration from some current members of his caucus, most sitting Democrats are expected to back Schumer. Some, like Sen. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), whom many progressives off the Hill would prefer as majority leader, want agenda-related commitments before voting for Schumer.

The national results left Jewish observers marveling that the Brooklyn-born lawmaker and 45-year Hill veteran had lost none of his vaunted political skills — and insulated himself against attacks from both pro- and anti-Israel forces.

"There are people who will always say that Chuck Schumer is not sufficiently pro-Israel, from New York and from Los Angeles, and wherever there are significant Jewish populations. It's the nature of the beast," said veteran political consultant and Modern Orthodox rabbi Hank Sheinkopf. "He's on a roll. There's no way that they're going to get rid of him. The people in the Midwest will protect him. He ran a brilliant operation."

Sheinkopf further argued that not only would progressives like El-Sayed represent a tiny fraction of a solid Democratic majority, but that President Donald Trump had actually helped Schumer control restive elements in the conference by announcing on Election Day he'd agreed with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to end U.S. aid to the Jewish state. This, Sheinkopf said, would effectively deprive the far-left of their strongest rallying cry.

Another New York expert predicted that Schumer, a master of the backroom, could draw on long-standing relationships and federal resources to placate those angry over his concessions to the far left.

"He will definitely bring home substitute things for the community, as frustrating as he can be sometimes," said the source, who requested anonymity to discuss the powerful senator freely. "His ability to navigate behind the scenes and legislate and play the politics game, the inside game, is still unmatched. He's probably the best person to have ever done it."

Nonetheless, the source was disheartened at the general loss of support for Israel in the Democratic ranks. Though the election results likely strengthen Schumer's position in the Democratic caucus overall, he will likely not be in the driver's seat when it comes to Israel policy, a Democratic strategist emphasized before the election.

Schumer is one of a small handful of Democrats to have never voted with Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) to block certain arms sales to Israel. But even battleground moderates like Talarico and Sen. Jon Ossoff (D-GA) have clashed with AIPAC and

opposed at least some offensive weapons exports to the country.

But this trend, along with increasing animosity toward Israel from Vice President JD Vance and other right-wing figures, may only compel Jewish institutions to rally around Schumer as a bulwark against the nation's foes.

"I think the people who play the game know he's the best that we're going to get out of a Democratic leader right now," the source added.

Schumer's flagging poll numbers in his home state have ignited a shadow race to replace him, with newfound Israel critic Rep. Pat Ryan (D-NY) and New York City Councilmember Chi Osse — a member of the Democratic Socialists of America — all but openly toying with a run for his seat in 2028. Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-NY) has also been touted on the left as the progressive star who could oust Schumer in a primary, even as sources tell JI she plans to run for president.

But Sheinkopf argued that the Democratic victories, coupled with successful wielding of Senate control, could reinvigorate Schumer's support and forestall his anticipated retirement at the end of his term.

But not everyone JI consulted was so sanguine about Schumer's future. One Democratic strategist — who before Election Day labeled the Democratic leader "irrelevant" — argued his Senate race successes had only won him a short reprieve from the party's fringe.

"[The left] will leave him be and he will leave in two years," said the Democratic advisor. "Today is Chuck Schumer's best day. All downhill from here." ♦

NOVEMBER 3, 2026

Jewish groups split over Trump's announcement ending Israel aid

RJC said the move was expected, while AIPAC said it supports the current MOU and JDCA, DMFI and ZOA all expressed concern

By Marc Rod

Jewish and pro-Israel groups offered mixed reactions on Tuesday to President Donald Trump's Election Day announcement that the U.S. and Israel had agreed months ago to wind down U.S. aid by the end of the year, with several expressing concerns or reservations about the premature termination of the 10-year memorandum of understanding on U.S. aid to Israel.

The implications of Trump's announcement are somewhat unclear, particularly for the 2027 appropriations bills currently making their way through Congress, which include the expected $3.8 billion in aid and cooperative missile defense funding to Israel.

AIPAC said in a statement on Tuesday that it continues to support the current U.S.-Israel MOU, indicating that the pro-Israel group — for which supporting aid to Israel is a central policy goal — is not in favor of terminating the agreement early.

"As negotiations continue, we support the current MOU, which is set to expire next year. By working closely together, the two democratic allies help keep each nation secure, promote regional peace and stability, and grow both economies," AIPAC said in a statement.

The group indicated that it wants to see discussions of ending aid incorporated into broader negotiations around the next MOU. "We support the ongoing discussions between the United States and Israel on a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that would further strengthen the U.S.-Israel partnership that benefits both countries."

Trump's announcement could complicate passage of the 2027 appropriations bills, but could avert a fiery debate in a potentially Democratic-controlled Congress next year over funding for the final year of the MOU.

Republican Jewish Coalition CEO Matt Brooks said that the announcement did not come as a surprise.

"The U.S.-Israel relationship, under President Trump's leadership, is stronger than ever. The process of [weaning] foreign military assistance to Israel is not unexpected and is something that has been openly discussed in partnership and coordination between the governments of the United States and Israel," Brooks said. "Ultimately what will come out of this will be to the benefit of both countries and strengthen our cooperation even further."

Brian Romick, CEO of Democratic Majority for Israel, said that Trump's announcement ending the MOU two years early "with no details and no plan before Congress, captures everything unserious about this administration's approach to the world."

"For decades, America's word meant something. When we made a commitment to a partner, we kept it. Serious countries don't run foreign policy by phone-in," he said.

Romick said that, since Congress is responsible for appropriating aid, "any possible change should be put in front of Congress as a real plan, debated in the open and put to a vote."

He drew links between the announcement and the U.S.' withholding of aid to Ukraine and Taiwan, describing it as a signal to U.S. adversaries. He also described the end of aid as potentially

harmful for the American economy, given that Israel is required to spend the funding it receives in the U.S.

Jewish Democratic Council of America CEO Halie Soifer suggested that the announcement had caught Israeli officials off guard and that Republicans should speak out against the move.

"For those who do claim [the election is] about Israel, however, where's the outrage that he surprised Israeli officials by announcing on Election Day that he's ending all US aid — which has always been the litmus test for being 'pro-Israel' — before the MOU expires?" Soifer said. "Republican silence and hypocrisy in the face of Trump's erratic policymaking, including on Israel, tells you how compromised they are in terms of values."

Mark Dubowitz, CEO of the hawkish Foundation for Defense of Democracies, said the decision doesn't serve American interests.

"Imagine cutting military aid to a vital ally that delivers enormous security and strategic benefits to America — all to appease the far left and far right," Dubowitz wrote on X. "First Israel. Then Jordan and Egypt. Next, the billions we spend maintaining American forces in South Korea, Japan, and Europe. This is American retreat. And Iran, China, Russia, North Korea, and the Muslim Brotherhood regimes in Turkey and Qatar are cheering."

The right-wing Zionist Organization of America, which has generally been strongly supportive of Trump, said in a statement that it is "concerned" about Trump's announcement and the premature termination of aid, as well as why the U.S. would terminate aid to Israel but not to Egypt, Jordan, Pakistan, Lebanon or the Palestinian Authority.

ZOA President Mort Klein also said the group is concerned the announcement will harm the U.S. defense industry as well as national security, and urged Trump to reconsider.

"We very much appreciate that President Trump also said today that the U.S. would help Israel if the country needed assistance. But we are concerned that ad hoc aid may not adequately substitute for agreed aid under the MOU," Klein said. "We are concerned that the early aid cutoff sends a message to Jew-haters that their outrageous, false condemnations of the Jewish state pay dividends and influence U.S. policy. We cannot allow campaigns of hate to have any impact on our policy."

The announcement itself is consistent with comments by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the past year, but experts told *Jewish Insider* that the timing of it in connection to the midterm elections was cause for frustration and concern.

Capitol Hill reactions to the announcement, which came on Election Day, have been minimal. Rep. Abe Hamadeh (R-AZ), who is cosponsoring a resolution calling for the end of U.S. aid to Israel, said in a statement, "President Trump is right: the future of our relationship with Israel has to be Trade, not Aid."

Rep. Ro Khanna (D-CA), who has become a major opponent of U.S. aid to Israel, said, "Trump, desperate to stave off a Blue tsunami, now says zero aid to Israel. Establishment Dems, who lost to him twice, told us that was too radical."

He credited a series of mostly Democratic Socialists of America-affiliated lawmakers and candidates expected to win on Tuesday for "showing us the way."

Rep. Thomas Massie (R-KY) downplayed Trump's announcement as a "desperate Election Day lie" and the funding as "pennies on the dollar" in light of U.S. spending on the Iran war "on behalf of Israel." He also said that "[t]he same American taxpayer funds will just flow through as military assistance/coordination instead of as a separate line item in the appropriations bills."

Victoria Coates, vice president of the Heritage Foundation, which was an early advocate for phasing out U.S. aid, said, "However the process is structured it's a good idea for the relationship between the U.S. and Israel to mature from patronage to partnership, which will be to our mutual benefit!"

Coates noted that Heritage had suggested a structured phase-out that would initially surge aid before winding it down.

Meanwhile, anti-Israel voices on the far left and far right who've called for an end to U.S. aid to Israel say that the announcement doesn't go nearly far enough, while also claiming credit for the decision.

"Selling American weapons to a foreign government engaged in war crimes is just as immoral and illegal as giving those weapons away for free," the Council on American-Islamic Relations said in a statement. "Because federal law prohibits providing weapons to foreign militaries engaged in human rights abuses, ending free military aid is not enough. Our nation must completely stop arming and otherwise enabling the Israeli government's unjust wars and crimes against humanity."

Others such as the IMEU Policy Project, TrackAIPAC, A New Policy, Code Pink and Matt Duss, a former advisor to Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), dismissed the announcement as a smokescreen that would actually lead to increased aid to Israel through joint military development projects.

Democracy for the Arab World Now said that Congress needs to act immediately to strip any funding for Israel from the 2027 appropriations bills, as well as to ensure that the U.S. ends any arms transfers to Israel, beyond U.S.-financed aid.

Joe Kent, the former director of the National Counterterrorism Center who resigned in protest of the Iran war, described the announcement as an effort to absolve the U.S. of responsibility if Israel uses a nuclear weapon against or targets civilian infrastructure in Iran. ♦

NOVEMBER 3, 2026

Philly Jewish restaurant owners say they won't be scared off by antisemitic boycott campaign

The local Jewish Community Relations Council is planning a solidarity lunch at one of the restaurants being targeted by a group of anti-Israel activists

By Haley Cohen

When Marti Lieberman opened Mac Mart nearly 15 years ago, she never imagined her macaroni-and-cheese shop would one day be singled out by activists seeking to drive Jewish- and Israeli-owned establishments out of Philadelphia.

Now her restaurant is among six named in a flyer promoting a bicycle boycott rally by anti-Israel groups in the city's Rittenhouse Square neighborhood on Sunday.

The list of targeted businesses includes Israeli restaurants Dizengoff, Goldie and K'Far Cafe, sandwich shop Huda and Schlessinger's Deli, alongside Mac Mart. The activist groups' flyer declares that "these Zionist establishments must go," prompting condemnation from local Jewish organizations, which have called the campaign an effort to intimidate and exclude Jews from Philadelphia's economic and civic life. The rally is scheduled for the eve of the anniversary of Kristallnacht, the 1938 Nazi pogrom against Jews which included the looting and destruction of Jewish businesses.

Mac Mart has not previously been publicly singled out in this way, Lieberman told *Jewish Insider*. Though she has never brought her religion into her interactions with customers, she said she has no intention of concealing it. "I refuse not to wear my Magen David," she said. "It's on display for people and they can interpret it how they want."

"There are people who see the star and think I'm Israeli. These people are clearly not educated well," she said, adding that Israeli-owned businesses have been targeted at a much larger scale, pointing to prominent Israeli American chef Michael Solomonov and his Philadelphia-based restaurants, making the public targeting of her own small business particularly unexpected.

Lieberman said Mac Mart has already weathered its share of challenges outside of boycotts, including the COVID-19 pandemic, which prompted her to rethink the business and transform its former Rittenhouse storefront into a grab-and-go kiosk. The restaurant is closed on Sundays, meaning it will not be operating during the planned rally. But Lieberman said the public targeting is still troubling, particularly as a business owner who has worked to build a loyal customer base in the neighborhood.

Jason Holtzman, chief of the Jewish Community Relations Council of the Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia, told JI, "This feels different because they've extended it past Israeli restaurants. All these restaurant owners have in common is that they're all Jewish."

"This should be widely condemned by all of our local leaders — whether they're civic leaders or faith leaders, this is a time where we need the community to come together and say [Jews] belong here," Holtzman said.

In response to the rally, the JCRC is organizing a Friday lunch at one of the targeted restaurants, bringing together local leaders to demonstrate solidarity with the businesses. Holtzman said details are still being finalized and urged more elected officials to participate. "The best public statement they could make" is to attend the lunch, he said.

"We're telling people to go and eat at these restaurants, buy as much food as you can from them," said Holtzman. "Let's make some record sales."

Allan Domb, owner of Schlessinger's Deli — which his grandparents Joseph and Molly Schlesinger first opened in the 1920s — said he was similarly surprised to find his business included in the campaign. "I'm not sure why this group is targeting me over owning a delicatessen," Domb told JI.

"It clearly seems to me to be a high level of antisemitism because I'm Jewish," said Domb, a Democratic politician who served as an at-large member of the Philadelphia City Council from 2016 to 2022.

Domb said he has contacted the police captain in his district to ensure the deli is prepared for Sunday's demonstration, though he hopes the event will not lead to any confrontations. "I'm hoping there won't be any type of violence, but just in case we should be prepared," he said.

Domb plans to carry on with business as usual, serving the pastrami sandwiches, matzah ball soup and other deli staples that have made Schlessinger's a neighborhood fixture.

"Most of the time the initial noise is much greater than the reality," he said. "Not only are we going to stay open on Sunday, but I'm going to be there myself." ♦

NOVEMBER 5, 2026

Inside the slow, convoluted demise of a beloved L.A. Jewish day school

The Kadima Hebrew Academy came to rely heavily on a prominent Israeli American real estate developer. Were the millions of dollars Shawn Evenhaim put up a charitable gift or a loan? And did the school's board exercise proper oversight?

By Nira Dayanim

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

It was an offer that the Kadima Hebrew Academy couldn't refuse.

It was 2004, and the Los Angeles-based pluralistic Jewish day school was in a bind: The building in which the school was housed, an old surplus public school facility, was on a list of properties the Los Angeles Unified School District intended to reclaim. The cost of renting the property more than quadrupled, a sum the school couldn't possibly afford, creating a sense of urgency. The school would be forced to move.

"And then the next thing I knew," Barbara Gereboff, the head of school at the time, told *eJewishPhilanthropy*, "I got a phone call from Shawn Evenhaim."

That phone call and the deal that Evenhaim — a prominent Israeli American real estate developer for whom Kadima's campus is named — proposed for the purchase of a nearby property would eventually leave Kadima burdened with a debt that it never got out from under. Eventually, that debt reached some $15 million, roughly half of which is still owed back to Evenhaim, according to a draft of the settlement agreement reviewed by eJP.

As Gereboff recalls, Evenhaim said that he had the opportunity to bid on an old mental hospital on a seven-acre plot of land that was going under, located at 7011 Shoup Ave. in Los Angeles' West Hills neighborhood, a mile away from the property the school had been leasing. Evenhaim estimated that it would cost between $700,000 and $900,000 for a deposit "to secure" the property at the time, she said, and "more than that" to remodel it.

Gereboff was wary of the deal, she said, concerned that the school did not have an adequate "culture of giving" to support the purchase of a building.

Evenhaim reassured her. "He said, 'Don't worry, we'll work on it. I'll secure it so we have it.' And that's the beginning of the story," Gereboff told eJP. "What I don't recall is... I don't know where the minutes from the different board meetings at that time are, but I feel like nobody really took any oversight of it. Shawn ran with it and structured the deals the way he did."

This summer, 22 years after Kadima struck that deal, the school closed its doors after a more than 50-year run serving L.A.'s Jewish community, particularly its Israeli expat community. Interviews with 13 members of the Kadima community — including heads of school, finance directors, board members and parents — as well as several external figures and independent experts, and a review of IRS documents, property records and a draft of a debt settlement agreement paint a picture of a convoluted arrangement that left the school in debt to Evenhaim, even as he has long since recouped the money that he paid for the property.

Evenhaim, one of the founders of the Israeli-American Council and its chair from 2012-2015, purchased the Shoup Avenue property for $6.95 million, selling four of the seven acres to Kadima for nearly the same amount, as he then redeveloped the remaining three acres into more than a dozen single-family homes, which he sold for millions of dollars.

Though the real estate developer is typically referred to by Kadima as a donor and benefactor — in some cases, contracts require the school to thank "Shawn and Dorit Evenhaim for their generous support" — his status with the school was at least equally that of a creditor, even as he did also make donations and interest-free loans to the school over the years.

The investigation also raised serious questions about the school's governance practices and its oversight, particularly as it relates to its fiduciary responsibilities. Interviews with former board members and officials indicate that the board entered into multimillion-dollar agreements that it did not entirely understand and that left the school hampered with debt that it could not feasibly repay.

"For a while, we said, 'Who the hell put this contract together? What were they thinking?'"

For instance, a Memorandum of Assignment, dated Aug. 1, 2005, outlined Evenhaim's financial stake in the property. Under the agreement, if the school sold the campus, Evenhaim would be entitled to receive 100% of a defined minimum amount from the sale proceeds, plus 55% of any proceeds above that minimum.

"For a while, we said, 'Who the hell put this contract together? What were they thinking?'" said Jerry Isaak-Shapiro, who was Kadima's head of school in its last year. "But you know, maybe they thought they needed it, and that was going to be the best deal they could find... I thought, well, the person writing this up didn't have the best interest of the school at heart, for sure. So I don't know who put it together."

Speaking to eJP, Evenhaim disputed these categorizations, describing himself as a charitable figure. While he does stand to receive millions of dollars in repayments from the school when it is sold, Evenhaim said that this was not a money-making scheme and that he lost out on greater profits that he could have earned with the property in order to help create a Jewish day school and made donations to Kadima over the years to keep it afloat. He has described the school's collapse as a result of poor fundraising and low enrollment.

As Gereboff describes it, at the time the deal was struck, the school was still doing its budgets on handwritten ledgers and didn't

have a development team or a principal. She trusted the board and its executive committee to handle the transaction as the school's fiduciaries, she said. But, according to those who joined the board later, the initial purchase of the school building is where its troubles started.

"The confusion was the power," said Suzy Bookbinder, who served as Kadima's board president in the early 2010s. "The initial board [was] irresponsible, horrible, but ...the boards that followed, they couldn't follow the trail. It was just so confusing."

Indeed, the scores of official documents reviewed by eJP show debts growing and shrinking over the years, seemingly at random, land valuations sketched out in pencil on legal pads and a glaring lack of clarity over what amounted to a charitable gift and what was a loan.

Bookbinder, a former chief development officer at the American Jewish University, De Toledo High School and a number of other Jewish nonprofits, along with several legal experts who spoke with eJP described the arrangement Kadima entered into with Evenhaim as highly unusual, with one saying that "odd is probably a soft way to approach it." The three attorneys — each of whom specializes in nonprofit management and reviewed many of the documents related to the school — spoke on condition of anonymity to discuss an organization that they are not directly involved with.

Founded in 1970 as the day school of Los Angeles' Congregation Beth Kodesh, the school was first a Solomon Schechter and then became a nondenominational day school. Over the course of its 56 years, Kadima moved four times before landing at its final location on Shoup Avenue in Los Angeles' West Hills neighborhood. In its early years, it was known for lobbying to create the first stamp produced by the U.S. Postal Service dedicated to Hanukkah. In its later years, it became particularly popular among Los Angeles' robust Israeli expat community, which is not necessarily religious, and was drawn to the school's focus on Hebrew and Israeli culture.

Shimrit Shalev, a member of the school's parent-teacher organization whose two sons attended the school for four years, described the school as a "mini Israel" and "a home" for the 180 Jewish Israeli families whose children were enrolled.

"You walk through the school, it's like you can see Israel in the walls," Shalev told eJP.

In May 2025, Kadima announced it had found itself in dire financial straits and ran an emergency fundraising campaign, which grossed some $700,000 in donations. The donations were primarily small gifts from members of the school community, Orly Levy, the school's current director of finance, told eJP, and aimed to cover end-of-year costs and keep the school open. The smallest gift was $25, Levy told eJP, and the largest was $18,000. This fundraising campaign, she said, was also novel for its urgency.

"We had various [fundraising campaigns over the years], we had galas. But not urgency like this," said Levy. Last year, when it became clear the school's future was in peril, some families decided to enroll their children in different schools, one mother of Kadima students, who asked to remain anonymous, told eJP. Those that remained rallied to raise money and "fight" to keep the school open another year, the mother said. That experience brought the school community closer together, said Shalev, creating "the strongest year."

"Even with all of the problems money-wise and closure," said Shalev, if the Kadima community "would do what we did the last year, maybe five or 10 years ago, maybe it would be helpful, but it was the end of the end of the end, so it was hard to lift up [our] head from that."

In April 2026, a year after the campaign (and publicly disclosing its financial woes), the school announced its impending closure. At the time, coverage by eJP and other Jewish publications linked the school's closure to its overdependence on Evenhaim. After speaking to over a dozen sources involved throughout the school's history, eJP has learned that this was only part of the story.

"It's a lot of paper shuffling, playing with numbers"

Before moving to its final home on the Evenhaim family campus in 2004, located on Shoup Avenue, Kadima had been operating out of an old Los Angeles Unified School District surplus facility.

When Gereboff, who served as Kadima's head of school from 1999 through 2009, learned that the school would have to move, she assembled what she described as a "think tank" of parents in the Kadima community who could help brainstorm the school's next steps.

Among them was Evenhaim, whom she knew because his wife, Dorit, worked in the front office, and because he was a real estate developer. According to the school's IRS Form 990s, Evenhaim served as the school's building and grounds vice president from 2004 until 2006, when he became its finance vice president. In 2006, Evenhaim became Kadima's board president, a position he held until 2009. He remained a trustee until 2024.

Documents obtained by eJP shed light on the convoluted financing structure through which Kadima purchased the Shoup Avenue property from Evenhaim.

As shown in bankruptcy court filings, Evenhaim purchased the seven-acre property for $6.95 million at a court-supervised bankruptcy auction in May 2003. L.A. County Assessor records show the Shoup Avenue property was valued at $6.3 million until June 27, 2005.

In June 2004, city council records reflect that Evenhaim filed to parcel the land into two plots. One was rezoned for 20 lots of single-family homes, each of which eventually sold for between $700,000 and $1 million. The other was for the school.

In March 2004, Kadima offered to purchase four of the seven acres from Evenhaim for $13.2 million, a purchase that was finalized in June 2005. How that price was reached is unclear. After June 27, 2005, the valuation for the property jumped significantly, with county assessor records showing that the land was worth $10.5 million, while the hospital building on it was worth $2.7 million. However, a handwritten note in the school's 2004 financial statements breaks down the same $13.2 million as $6.5 million for the land and $6.7 million as an estimate of what it would cost to construct the existing building on the property from scratch.

The *Jewish Journal*'s coverage of Kadima's move to the new campus in 2004 describes a "$7.2 million donation" from Shawn and Dorit Evenhaim that allowed the school to purchase the four-acre property. However, a deeper inspection of the donation commitment reveals that this was not a true gift but rather a reduction in the sale price, albeit one that could be considered a charitable donation. Receiving

$13.2 million from the school for the property, the Evenhaims agreed to make a $7.2 million gift, but noted that if the gift were for any less, the sale price would be reduced for the same amount "dollar for dollar."

One year later, a 2006 bank-commissioned appraisal of the four acres and building, reviewed by eJP, put the property's market value at $9.4 million.

How did a property purchased for $6.95 million rise so significantly in value over the course of a year and then drop again shortly thereafter? One legal expert who spoke with eJP suggested that because land valuations are often subjective, the parceling and rezoning of land can inflate a plot's appraised value.

According to a source who was directly involved in the purchase at the time, although Evenhaim "fronted" the money for the school to purchase the property, it was well-known to those involved that Evenhaim planned to have the four acres that Kadima was buying get appraised at a higher rate. That way, Kadima would cover the cost he paid for the full seven acres, even though he was "carving off" three acres to develop for his own personal business, the source said.

A school board member at the time, who spoke to eJP on the condition of anonymity, said that decisions about the school's finances and the building acquisition were being made behind the scenes by the executive committee and Evenhaim. "I walk into a meeting, and it's like the decision has been made already," the board member told eJP. "So there is really no donation. There is nothing. It's a lot of paper shuffling, playing with numbers."

Asked about this, Evenhaim said that this arrangement — his selling the four acres to Kadima at its market value and keeping three acres for his business — "always the plan," which the school was fully aware of.

"If we would have developed the whole property, the value would have been much much higher than the school. But the reason we purchased the property was to create a Jewish school — a permanent Jewish school," Evenhaim told eJP.

He stressed that he did not intentionally have the land reappraised to alter the valuations for his benefit. He added that "we had to front the money for it" and that they also paid additional fees associated with the property.

Evenhaim told eJP that he purchased the plot at a discount as it was being sold in a bankruptcy auction, and that the original $6.3 million appraisal "sounds very very low," suggesting it was made as part of the bankruptcy court's proceedings.

"I don't remember that number ever. I remember the $13 [million] and $15 [million] and $16 [million], whatever the number that was appraised over the years, but I don't remember the $6 million appraisal at all," he told eJP. "So maybe it was before our time."

Evenhaim's position that he lost out on additional profits by selling the property to the school was also echoed by Arnold Rudnick, who in 2006 was brought on as the school's financial consultant when Evenhaim was Kadima's board president. Rudnick told eJP that Evenhaim knew of him and his background in finance through his wife, who was Evenhaim's longtime employee, most recently serving as his COO.

Rudnick later became the school's director of finance, a role he held at several points over the years. He also told eJP that Evenhaim effectively donated more than $6 million — the difference between what Evenhaim paid to buy the property at the bankruptcy auction and what he called the "fair market value" of the property. "You're right that he bought a property for $7 million," said Rudnick. "That he had the potential to develop and sell for $30 million, and instead, he donated the fair market value of that property that let them finance at almost 50% [the true cost]."

Rudnick and others who spoke with eJP about the Kadima closure bristled at the criticism of Evenhaim by some board members in light of the sacrifice that he made in terms of potential profits. "Your headline should be, 'No good deed goes unpunished,'" Rudnick said.

One attorney who spoke with eJP pushed back on the lost "potential profits" argument as the seven-acre plot was zoned for institutional use and would thus not have easily been converted entirely into single-family homes, even as a part of the property was.

Some former board members were dismissive of Rudnick, referring to him as "Shawn's guy," as his wife was a longtime employee of Evenhaim and thus had a financial incentive to agree with him.

Asked by eJP whether the school had a formal conflict-of-interest policy or how it navigated the potential conflict created by his wife's employment, Rudnick did not have a definitive answer but noted that everyone on the board knew that his wife worked for Evenhaim.

"I've been transparent to everyone I ever met at Kadima, to all of the auditors, and they know me," he said. "The fact that my wife works with Shawn is irrelevant to my opinion, other than the fact that I get to see the level of ethics he brings to the world."

"A noose around the school's neck from Day 1"

In conversations with eJP, legal experts described this arrangement of Evenhaim selling the property and making a related donation to the school as suspicious, emphasizing that the land purchase transaction should be kept separate from donations, as it raises questions about how accurately and fairly the price was set.

In May 2005, the City of Los Angeles acted as a middleman in issuing Kadima $9.1 million in tax-exempt bonds to cover the cost of the building and its renovation, described as a $16.3 million undertaking.

According to documentation of the transaction, the school initially borrowed $1.8 million from Evenhaim, for which it initially only paid interest to him, until the bond reached maturity. The remaining $7.3 million bond was secured through Bank of America with Evenhaim and Jerry Arnold — the school's president at the time — as guarantors. The school possessed $7.2 million in equity — the amount of the Evenhaims' cash donation.

Asked why the school's campus was named for a loan, instead of a philanthropic gift, Gereboff told eJP that she thought at the time that the Evenhaim family had given Kadima the ability to "move forward in some way."

She noted that, at the time, she and the board were in dire need of a property, even as they were aware that Evenhaim had not given a true donation, but rather a loan. "People were just excited that we had an opportunity to have a piece of land...that we weren't going to be forced out in the middle of the year and trying to figure out what to do with 300 plus kids," she said.

Some board members told eJP that they also believed that Evenhaim would eventually forgive the loan.

Gereboff added that the property was named the "Evenhaim Family Campus," but the school building itself retained naming rights in an effort to provide an opportunity for another philanthropist to step in and support the school.

Between 2008 and 2009, the last year Evenhaim was board president, Kadima's tax returns show a steep decline — $3.15 million — in the land's book value, and therefore the school's equity, from $10.5 million to $7.35 million, cited as an "impairment loss," an accounting term for writing down the value of an asset. Rudnick and Evenhaim both suggested that the decrease in value was likely due to the 2008 financial crash, but couldn't recall exactly why the school's value decreased by $3 million.

According to the school's tax returns, the total value of the four acres and renovated school dropped permanently from $16.8 million to $13.2 million.

Although the estimated value of the property had significantly declined, documents show that by 2013, the school still owed $9 million for the property and its renovations, and over $3 million in additional loans from Evenhaim, an untenable amount of debt for a school that size, said Bookbinder, who was president at the time.

"It was a noose around the school's neck from Day 1," said Bookbinder, who was Kadima's board president between 2012 and 2013. "I don't know any Jewish day school that could have handled it, not even De Toledo High School with a true charitable multimillion-dollar donation to name the school, or Milken, or any of the schools that have been named." In those cases, the schools were named for people who made "multimillion-dollar donations — they weren't A bonds and B bonds where the donor received the money and then used that money to do his real estate development."

Speaking with eJP, Evenhaim maintained that he had effectively donated the property, but had to "finance" a portion of it and guarantee the loans because the school "was not financially stable" at the time. Asked if he profited, broke even or lost money in the deal, he told eJP, "we didn't break even, we lost money. When I'm saying we lost, we didn't lose; we donated... and we got the campus name after us. That was the reason."

"I don't remember the numbers, but I remember it was a very, very substantial amount for us at the time. We were pretty young," Evenhaim said of the deal. "We didn't plan on making such a big commitment, but we were stuck with it in a way because everyone promised us that 'We'll fundraise,' and that did not mature."

Ten years ago, the letters of credit for the bonds came due, according to Bookbinder. When that happened, she said, Evenhaim informed the board he planned to pull out as guarantor and asked them to sell the property. The board responded by hiring a lawyer and proposed declaring bankruptcy, prompting Evenhaim to guarantee the loans, said Bookbinder. As she recalls, Evenhaim then pledged $1.2 million over three years as a donation to close the budget gap.

"I said we need a three-year runway, $400,000 a year, $1.2 million to get back on track. He agreed to that, but I found out after we left... that $1.2 million donation turned into part of the money that he's saying he loaned the school and that the school is supposed to pay him back," she said.

Evenhaim disagreed with Bookbinder's recollection, saying that in addition to the loans, he donated millions to the school.

"I probably donated at least that much money," he said, referring to the $1.2 million loan. "I'm not talking about loans. ... The donations are way in addition to that, and it's in the millions," he said.

The school's tax returns show that for many years, when Evenhaim fronted operating costs, he created a rising line of credit for the school that by 2024 totaled more than $7 million. Evenhaim noted that this credit was offered without interest, which in itself represents a donation to the school.

According to members of the school leadership, the line between loan and donation was often unclear, and though they believe Evenhaim gave some true donations to the school, they were unable to identify exactly how much.

Evenhaim told eJP in July that he donated approximately $5.3 million to Kadima and provided a $5.5 million interest-free loan, but three months prior, Evenhaim told eJP he donated $10 million to Kadima over the years and provided an additional $6 million in loans. Because the bookkeeping was at times inconsistent — and because gifts were unnamed in the school's tax returns and eJP was unable to review the relevant audits before publication — eJP could not determine an objective number.

For nearly 20 years, according to members of Kadima's leadership past and present, Evenhaim remained involved in the school's decision-making, even while he was operating as its de facto creditor. Though public perception reflected that he had donated large sums of money to the school, they say that perception was outsized.

"I just can't emphasize enough how much control Shawn exhibited over the board and the school. Even though he wasn't formally a privileged member, he was," Michael Cohn, a previous board member, told eJP. "I remember saying to the board not to treat him like a benefactor. That he's a creditor, plain and simple."

According to the school's tax returns, Evenhaim remained listed as a trustee on Kadima's board of directors until 2024, the most recent year that eJP could review.

Because Evenhaim also guaranteed the bonds, said Cohn, members of the board had the sense that he could at any point force a sale and "get his money out."

Cohn added that the school's board "could have been a little more assertive and not let him dictate the terms of anything financial with the school, which is what he did."

"You need to know when it's over"

According to Isaak-Shapiro, who became Kadima's head of school in August 2025, he was warned by the search committee that the school was experiencing financial challenges, including a budget deficit. He was not aware of the large bonds, he said, and that they were going to be due within his first year.

"And I certainly didn't know about Shawn telling the bank that he would discontinue being the guarantor of the large bond," he told eJP.

Last year, Kadima received notice from the bank that Evenhaim had again declined to guarantee the bonds, said Isaak-Shapiro, and the bank did not allow them to find a new guarantor. Due to the size of the debt, said Isaak-Shapiro, none of the other banks

the school approached were willing to accept other board members as guarantors.

"You can put fault on all sides, the professional side, the donor side, the board side, but in my 40-year experience, the donor in this case is the one that initially put the school into an unwinnable situation"

For a number of years, Evenhaim recruited his connections to donate to the school, a number of sources from within Kadima's current and former leadership, as well as Evenhaim, told eJP. But after Evenhaim left the board, many donors cut their ties to Kadima, citing the end of Evenhaim's official involvement with the school. According to members of the school's leadership, this added to Kadima's financial difficulties.

"Some [former funders] were a little bit more nasty about it," said a source who spoke with eJP on the condition of anonymity to discuss a sensitive matter. "Saying, 'So what if a Jewish school closes,' some just [said], 'Oh, we're friends [with Evenhaim], we don't want to step on his toes.'"

In a correspondence with Isaak-Shapiro in December 2025, a representative of the Adelson Family Foundation, which had in the past supported the school, declined Isaak-Shapiro's request for donations. "Our past gifts were based on Shawn Evenhaim's relationship to the school," the email said.

Evenhaim denies that he told any of his connections to stop donating to the school, citing donor reciprocity as the reason for the end of their support. He emphasized that he fundraised "probably an additional few million dollars" for Kadima through his connections.

Beyond the bonds, Bookbinder attributes a part of the school's financial struggles to the school's decision to lower tuition by 43% for K-8 in 2017, an effort she described as heavily driven by Evenhaim. Isaak-Shapiro described Evenhaim's push to lower tuition as "faulty thinking" aimed at increasing enrollment, which ultimately left money on the table and harmed the school's financial outlook.

"Shawn directly suggested that the school adopt... a much lower tuition, in the thought that if you make it less expensive, people will be more prone to come on board, and then once they see how great the school is, they'll stay," said Isaak-Shapiro. "There's a lot of data, I mean, genuine data, not just anecdotes, that suggest that that's really faulty thinking."

In 2008, when Evenhaim was president of the school's board, at the height of the recession, the school lowered tuition by about 20% for the 2009-2010 school year, in an effort to increase enrollment, encouraging board members to make up a part of the gap. "Most schools in the last few years have continued to increase tuition," Evenhaim said at the time. "We've pushed a large part of our community away because it just wasn't accessible anymore."

In 2017, the school reduced the cost of tuition by 43% for K-8, and by 11% for children in early education. Evenhaim hailed the decision in the local Jewish press. "My goal is to create a model where the school sustains itself and we're not relying on a few donors but are creating families who are not just sending kids to Jewish education," said Evenhaim at the time, "but are becoming supporters of Jewish education."

"I can't be responsible for something that I know is failed and will fail very soon completely. You need to know when it's over, and it was over, and they didn't want to realize it."

Reflecting on the school's closure, Evenhaim maintains that the school closed not because of the debt, but because the board never reached the fundraising and enrollment numbers that it needed to be sustainable and was overdependent on his donations, often on short timelines.

"They all fail because part of the responsibility, which they don't realize, as board members, is the financial stability of the school," he said. "But the school failed not because of that. The school failed because it lost students over the years, and it couldn't increase its enrollment."

He also contested that pulling out of guaranteeing bonds impacted the school's viability. "I can't be responsible for something that I know is failed and will fail very soon completely," he told eJP. "You need to know when it's over, and it was over, and they didn't want to realize it."

Bookbinder, Cohn, Isaak-Shapiro and other members of the school community who spoke anonymously with eJP believe that Evenhaim's influence and involvement in the board contributed to a "self-fulfilling prophecy," where the school was presented publicly as a failed or faulty endeavor while they were hampered with debt accrued in a deal that financially benefited Evenhaim 20 years prior.

"You can put fault on all sides, the professional side, the donor side, the board side, but in my 40-year experience, the donor in this case is the one that initially put the school into an unwinnable situation," said Bookbinder.

Even with its challenges, said Bookbinder, before last year, the school never defaulted on its loans. According to Isaak-Shapiro, had the school continued, they were anticipating a 12%-15% increase in enrollment for the coming year.

When Shalev told her sons, ages 7 and 9, that the school would be closing, she said, they brought their allowance money to her and asked if it would be enough to save the school.

"They told me, '*Imma*, do you think that this will help the school not close?'" said Shalev, using the Hebrew word for mother. "It was seriously one of the saddest moments to tell them that even if we're gonna gather the money, it's not gonna help."

In August of 2025, three months after their emergency campaign, Kadima's leadership approached the Jewish Federation Los Angeles to request a loan. The federation decided against the loan after doing its due diligence, the federation's CEO, Rabbi Noah Farkas, told eJP. In February, the school approached the federation again and informed them that they would not have the funds to make it to the end of the year and to pay their teachers. According to Farkas, the federation provided them an interest-free loan of $500,000 — an unprecedented step for the federation — he said, on the condition that they do not try to continue for another year.

"Our recommendation was that they should not open the school again if they don't have a plan... a real business plan with real metrics," said Farkas. "We felt it was unfair to Jewish teachers who are under contract to force them to sign an employment contract and then go into a second year, and then suddenly not have a job over the summer, or not have prospects for a job."

The federation also created a fund to help families exiting Kadima afford tuition at another Jewish day school in the city.

"Fifteen or 20 families," have taken the federation up on that offer, said Farkas. While there is a "transition" happening, said Farkas, members of the school's leadership told eJP that the loss of the specifically Israeli character of the school is driving between 80% and 90% of students toward public schools.

This fall, most former Kadima families decided together to send their kids to Lashon Academy, a Hebrew-language charter school that opened a location in the West Valley in September. Because the charter school is public, the families are pooling money to hire private security for the campus, one mother said.

"Even now that we're leaving, they still want to be with their friends. So they're asking, "Where are my friends going because I want to go there?" said Shalev. "They want to stay together. And for me, that shows how deep the connection was, and how it's a family. It's a family."

According to Shalev, though, her older son will be attending Lashon Academy to remain with his friends, and her younger son will be attending Ilan Ramon Day School, because she feels he's too young to pull him out of Jewish education. "Even if we have Hebrew in there, it's still not Jewish," she said. "Kadima was the only one like that, and that's the saddest part, I think, in all this."

In the draft of the sale agreement obtained by eJP between Evenhaim and Kadima's board before the school entered escrow, upon the school's sale, $7.5 million is owed directly to Evenhaim. This is in addition to the remaining $5.8 million balance on the bond for the school's purchase. The $7.5 million owed to Evenhaim was the sum of $1.8 million bond that paid for the school's renovation 20 years prior, and $5.5 million in additional loans since.

The school owed $1.4 million in outstanding operational expenses, including delayed payroll for teachers and employees and $200,000 to three members of the board who had loaned money to close the school's financial gap. The draft also included a confidentiality agreement and the requirement to thank the Evenhaims.

"It's very important that the community knows what went on here, if only as a cautionary tale for other communities to be wary of how they go about their business."

Asked why he believes the school closed, Isaak-Shapiro described a "perfect storm," citing the tuition model that was instituted and the presentation of declining enrollment as a "foregone conclusion," which led to the "self-fulfilling prophecy" of closure. While low enrollment played a part, he said, it was already improving.

"What led to it was some well-intentioned, but poor decisions, a bond coming due, the guarantor ceasing his guarantee at the same time, and some very serious financial hurdles that were a holdover for the last couple of years," he said. "I'm loath to put anything at the feet of an individual. I think there are forces in a community that are due in part to an individual, but they're larger than that."

What happened at Kadima, said Isaak-Shapiro, should be viewed as a "cautionary tale" for other nonprofit organizations.

"I do believe that the organized Jewish community needs to have a very serious conversation about philanthropy, about making deals with institutions and individuals for short-term gain that sometimes produce long-term problems," said Isaak-Shapiro. "It's very important that the community knows what went on here, if only as a cautionary tale for other communities to be wary of how they go about their business." ♦