

THE WEEKLY PRINT

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NOVEMBER 9, 2021

A triathlete runs (and swims, and cycles) to daylight

After the darkness of PTSD brought on by his army service, Yuval David Shimoni is competing in Israel's first Ironman and helping others heal through sports

By Tamara Zieve

Yuval David Shimoni is literally running for his life these days. And swimming. And cycling.

When he competes Friday in Israel's first-ever Ironman triathlon, he will be continuing his slow but steady recovery from the psychological trauma he suffered following his harrowing experiences in the IDF.

In his agonizing journey toward healing, one that took him to the brink of suicide, David Shimoni said, sport helped save him. The discipline required in an event like the triathlon — a mix of long-distance running, swimming and cycling — provides him with positive challenges, gives him faith in himself and the strength to succeed through hard work and self-improvement. Regular therapy and a soldiers' triathlon support group have also helped along the way. "I'm still in the process of returning to myself," David Shimoni, today a therapist who is guiding others on their own paths to recovery, told *Jewish Insider*.

For David Shimoni, 41, the path that has led him to the shores of the Sea of Galilee, where the Ironman will take place, has been

a torturous one.

Four years ago, he hit rock bottom when he was tied to a bed in a psychiatric ward in Tel HaShomer Hospital in Ramat Gan. This was a pivotal wake-up call following a hellish journey through post-traumatic stress disorder, which all but destroyed his life, after his time as a combat soldier in the Second Lebanon War.

David Shimoni's army service in the Paratroopers' Unit passed smoothly, but in the summer of 2006, while in the midst of the exam period at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, he was called for reserve duty to fight in a deadly and messy war against Hezbollah in Lebanon.

In the middle of the 34-day-conflict, David Shimoni's unit entered Lebanon. The house where they were holed up was hit by two missiles, killing nine members of his unit and wounding several others. David Shimoni was physically unscathed. But he said that a some seven-hour wait for the rescue-and-evacuation force to arrive, and what followed, caused him deep psychological trauma that would manifest itself several years later.

"After they evacuated the dead and the wounded, we were instructed to stay there. We were covered in blood, we had no food, no water and we didn't know why we were staying — we hadn't been given a new mission," David Shimoni told *Jewish Insider*. The long days that followed in Lebanon almost broke him.

"It felt like the state had betrayed us and left us on our own, and as the days went past I felt like it was only a matter of time until I died, and I decided I wasn't going to return to Israel — I'd come to terms with death," he said — a feeling that came back to haunt him years later when he began to have suicidal thoughts.

After the missile strike, his unit spent most of their days hiding in bushes and the nights at observation posts. "There was a lot of confusion [surrounding the war], and we felt it in a direct manner," he said.

After his unit returned to Israel, he thought "the nightmare was over." He finished his university exams and took a flight to China, where he lived for several years. It was during that time that the flashbacks began, mostly coming to him at

night.

"It was hard for me to fall asleep, and when I did manage to sleep I had nightmares. I was really scared of the nights," he recalled. Shortly after, the anger attacks began and David Shimoni felt himself deteriorating. He returned home to Israel but he started isolating himself from his loved ones.

"I felt really lonely and I felt like no one understood me and everyone else was stable in their lives," he said. He felt like he was a burden to others and subsequently disconnected himself socially. He started taking psychiatric medication and sleeping pills. "This was my escape space," he said. At some point, he started using drugs, first soft ones and then harder ones.

"For me, the medicine was the same as the drugs, it had the same effect. It caused me to deteriorate. I felt like I was in control of my life — I didn't understand what I later understood, that I was totally on a downhill path and on the way to total collapse," he said.

"Psychological wounds can totally paralyze you," David Shimoni remarked.

He stopped working and the symptoms, the depression and the despair got worse, snowballing into acts of self-harm. David Shimoni was suicidal. "My romance with death started in the war. The answer became death," he explained. "It created a type of comfort — you know there is that solution. My will to die became more precise, I thought about it all the time. I felt a black hole in my stomach."

David Shimoni said he made all the "required preparations" for his suicide, but kept postponing it. He was married with twins, and battled between thoughts that his loved ones would be better off without him and the reality that he would be abandoning his children.

"I can't say why it didn't happen," he reflected. A fear that the suicide attempt might fail or of the pain it might cause him were factors. "But luckily it didn't happen, and this is one of the things that strengthened me and turned me into who I am today."

Today, David Shimoni is not only healthy and happy, but helping others on their own paths out of depression to recovery.

His own healing was helped along by Prof. Shaul Schreiber at Ichilov Hospital's

Day-Care Psychiatric Department, who taught him to believe in and love himself again. Now, David Shimoni works as a therapist, both privately and on a volunteer basis, helping others to believe in their own strengths to pull themselves out of their personal crises.

Crucial in his recovery process has been his involvement in a triathlon group, part of the Brothers for Life NGO that supports IDF veterans who sustained physical or psychological injuries as combat soldiers. "Psychological wounds can totally paralyze you," David Shimoni remarked.

He said the group, which he joined two years ago, gives a sense of belonging to people who have felt alone for years.

"After years of feeling alone, like you don't belong and nobody knows what you're going through... you can start to feel comfortable, that it's kind of normal, and that you are understood. And when others understand you and you feel like you belong, then you can really spring forward."

"I'm still in the process of returning to myself," he noted. He's already completed two triathlons and sees the Ironman as "the peak of the peak" — a much longer race than the ones in which he has already competed.

The race in Tiberias, organized by the Tel Aviv-based Comtecgroup and the Sylvan Adams Foundation, will see athletes swimming a 1.2-mile loop in the Sea of Galilee, cycling 56 miles to Kfar Nahum, and running 13.1 miles along the western shore of the lake. Over 2000 athletes from 35 countries are expected to compete in Tiberias in what is a half-Ironman, hosted by the municipality in collaboration with the ministries of tourism and culture and sport, as well as the Israeli Triathlon Association.

"It's a great privilege to take part in the first Ironman in the country I fought and was injured for. It's a double victory for me," David Shimoni said.

"Today as a private therapist and a volunteer in the NGO, I bring [to my work] how much I believe in sport as a replacement to addiction. I try to pass on how much I believe in sport — I see how it works," he said, adding that he has seen firsthand how the connection to sports fills a void for people who have felt disconnected for so long.

Physical activity, he added, helps a

person set goals and aim higher, both in the task at hand and in life in general. "A few years ago I wasn't able to look ahead to my future or my children's future, and today I can look ahead and I think a lot of that is thanks to sport, and this specific sport."

After the Ironman in Israel, David Shimoni hopes to complete an Ironman race abroad one day, but his priority is to continue in his work as a therapist. "I aim to continue to grow, not only in sport but also, primarily, as a human being and as a therapist...and also to continue to develop the soul." ♦

Dana Cowin's second course

The longtime Food and Wine editor weighs in on women in the culinary space, pandemic home-cooking and her favorite Jewish foods

By Gabby Deutch

For most Americans, early COVID-19 lockdowns meant plenty of free time, and three meals to fill each day without the possibility of going to restaurants. Home cooking became a near-universal hobby: First there was banana bread, and then sourdough starter. Food writer and TV host Samin Nosrat convinced thousands of people to cook lasagna simultaneously through a New York Times livestream.

Former longtime *Food and Wine* editor Dana Cowin experienced this, too. Used to elaborate nights out at the world's best restaurants, Cowin was not an exceptional home cook. She published a cookbook in 2014 premised on the fact that she was, actually, a terrible chef.

"We were all stuck at home, trying to figure out what to cook for dinner," Cowin told *Jewish Insider* in a recent phone interview. "I for one really needed shortcuts because cooking — though obviously I've been in the food world for decades, I'm more interested in having other people cook and learning from them than doing everything myself."

To bolster her cooking and to support women entrepreneurs in the food space, Cowin created Giving Broadly, a website serving as a guide to, and one-stop shop for, products from female-owned brands. It features interviews with all of the "makers" behind more than three dozen companies, including links to purchase products. The site has a wide array of offerings, including Soom tahini from Amy Zitelman, jerk seasoning from Fauzia Abdur-Rahman and Masala Mama Indian sauces from Nidhi Jalan.

"Giving Broadly, which is all packaged products to make your cooking better, was a dream for me, trying to help these women and then putting it out in the world so that

other people would be exposed to their stories and the food so that they can either give them as gifts or make better food at home themselves," Cowin explained.

Giving Broadly is the latest women-centered venture from Cowin, who has spent the five years since she left *Food and Wine* magazine helping promote and coach female chefs and creators. Giving Broadly was a spin-off from her podcast, "Speaking Broadly," where she has interviewed diverse culinary figures like the American-Israeli cookbook writer Adeena Sussman and the Palestinian-American chef Reem Kassis.

"I did indeed create Giving Broadly during the pandemic, but it follows this deep interest that I have in women in hospitality, and helping people to find their path," Cowin said.

For more than three decades, Cowin was on a relatively straightforward career path. After a handful of positions at magazines including *Vogue*, *House and Garden* and *Mademoiselle*, she spent 21 years as editor-in-chief of *Food and Wine*. She oversaw the design of glossy magazine spreads, spoke at prestigious culinary events around the world and occasionally judged cooking competitions; it was a good gig, even as advertising revenue and subscription numbers began to drop precipitously in the precarious and dwindling print media market.

"The business pressures were such that when I was in so many meetings, they were all about cutting, cutting, cutting," Cowin recalled. "None of it was about growing. None of it was about reimagining. None of it was about, How do we make this amazing? It was, How can we do it with fewer people? And of course, limitations can create opportunities. But not for me at that point in time."

She also left because she was bored. "I could not do another Thanksgiving cover.

I was out of ideas," she said. "Thanksgiving was always the greatest issue because you got to reinvent something, and it's so exciting and new. Everyone's gonna read that issue. And it was like, I can't do it."

Her first gig after leaving the magazine, as chief creative officer of Chefs Club International, an international restaurant group, did not go how she hoped.

"It was horrible," Cowin acknowledged. "The job was like the bad boyfriend after the solid marriage — like, I'm so done with this marriage, and then you're like, 'Playboy!' There wasn't even the fun playboy part of it."

She no longer updates Giving Broadly, but the project was emblematic of the other projects she now works on. Cowin still puts out her podcast, and she also consults for women in the hospitality industry and invests in women-owned businesses: "I hate the word coach, but it's more like a creative innovation advisor for people who are trying to figure out what to do next," she explained.

Cowin's three decades in the culinary magazine niche were not marred by especially memorable or major instances of sexism directed at her. But she saw the industry recognize and honor men far more frequently than women. And with a few years of hindsight, she sees how even well-intentioned programs from *Food and Wine* put male chefs at an advantage.

"The sexism that I think we saw most rampant is how hard it is for women to get to those top positions," Cowin noted — things like her former magazine's best new chef award. "There was a feeling for a long time that the reason that women weren't in the top positions," Cowin explained, was "that they had chosen different ways to be in the food world. They've chosen to do pastry, they've chosen to run a business, they've chosen to do catering," three areas that are less visible and less prestigious than being head chef at a gourmet restaurant.

“What emerged over time is that they made the choice, but it was also because they were completely shut out. And there was no accommodation for parenting, which is still a tremendous issue in the industry,” said Cowin.

She left the magazine industry before the racial justice reckoning last summer that was sparked by the police killing of George Floyd. *Bon Appetit* in particular was racked with staff discontent and turnover after a photo emerged showing then-editor Adam Rapoport dressed for Halloween in a stereotypical depiction of a Puerto Rican man. But Cowin said that, while she thought about diversity during her tenure as editor-in-chief at *Food and Wine*, she knows she could have worked harder at it.

“I asked all those questions, but I was too satisfied with the answers that I got,” she admitted. Since then, she has aimed to make diversity central to her work. “If you look at the podcast I’ve made, I’m only doing stories of people who are extraordinary. But I’ve worked harder at finding people across a really diverse universe.”

As a person who spent decades trying to identify trends, Cowin previously might have focused on a new French restaurant or other traditionally “gourmet” cuisines. But lately, “we’ve just moved really far away from the white tablecloth model,” Cowin said. “I am interested in trying things I haven’t

tried. I am interested in exploring and exposing either cultures or foods or people who haven’t gotten very much attention, which isn’t trend-averse, but it’s prioritizing exposure and other things over what’s hot.”

Cowin has been described as “one of the country’s leading tastemakers,” and she described that process of spotting the next trend as “instinctive.”

“I’m like, ‘Oh my god, this is gonna be the next thing,’” Cowin explained of her creative process.

She can remember only one major miss in her career: vegan food.

“I was on a panel [20 years ago] and someone said, ‘What do you think of vegan food?’ And I said what everyone at *Food and Wine* said — who are, like, the authorities — and they’re like, ‘The vegan food that’s not just straight, great vegetables is just awful. And I don’t see that gaining so much traction.’ And I was so wrong, obviously,” Cowin recalled.

Cowin’s discovered a love of food all on her own. “Food just wasn’t the center of anything,” said Cowin. “My mother didn’t cook. My father kept a very strict diet.” She had one cousin who sometimes cooked on holidays, when the cousin would serve “venison that had just been shot and that had, like, bullets in it.”

As a college student at Brown University, her grandma would send her a gift card to

eat at a restaurant once a semester. “That was pretty special,” said Cowin.

Now, it’s sometimes a chore to get her family to care about New York’s hot restaurants. “My husband, not at all. He could not care less,” Cowin said, although “he really loves scotch and he loves wine and so he was really engaged in that part of the food scene.”

One of her college-age children “has a standing order of, ‘I have to go to Zabar’s,’ which is near us, to buy particular matzah balls, and *their* chicken broth, not just a standard chicken broth,” Cowin said. Other classic New York Jewish foods are family favorites — Russ & Daughters bagels, herring and cream sauce (though Cowin says that’s mostly her guilty pleasure, not her family’s), rugelach, challah that’s “squishy.”

These days, with Manhattan’s restaurant scene bustling again, home cooking is not a priority for Cowin. But sometimes, she still relies on her go-to pandemic meal, of “everything roasted.”

It’s “the dish that I’ve perfected over the pandemic in, like, 95 different versions,” Cowin said: chicken, vegetables, potatoes, “and then either some amazing incredible sauce that went on after roasting everything in the oven, or tossing with olive oil and different kinds of peppers.” ♦

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Looking to find common ground with American liberals, Israel’s deputy FM heads to D.C.

Israeli Deputy Foreign Minister Idan Roll is hoping to promote what he sees as liberal values during his upcoming trip to Washington

By Ruth Marks Eglash

When he heads to Washington, D.C., this weekend on his debut visit to the United States as deputy foreign minister, Idan Roll will be a man on a tightrope.

One of Israel’s more liberal politicians and the government’s youngest high-ranking official, Roll, 37, may be the poster

child for a more diverse and pluralistic Jewish state. He is openly gay, married to one of Israel’s biggest pop stars, Harel Skaat, and the father of two children born via surrogate.

But when he meets with American legislators and Jewish groups with the goal of highlighting Israel’s liberal side, he’ll have

to carefully balance between what “liberal” means in an Israeli context, and what “progressive” means in an American one.

In recent weeks, Israel has upset leaders in the U.S. by announcing plans to expand settlements in the West Bank and declaring a ban on six Palestinian NGOs for alleged ties with a terrorist group. There is another

clash looming, as the U.S. has said it intends to re-open its shuttered Jerusalem consulate that traditionally served as a liaison with the Palestinian Authority, even while Israel vehemently objects.

"I want to start a conversation," Roll, who arrives in D.C. on November 14, told journalists at the Jerusalem Press Club last week. "Israel is changing and, I believe, we are doing a much better job at promoting liberal values."

Roll, a member of Foreign Minister Yair Lapid's centrist Yesh Atid party and former head of its LGBTQ group, believes that despite claims Israel has grown increasingly conservative in recent years, its new, eclectic government "has a lot to offer the world."

"We are making tremendous strides in the fight against the climate crisis, something that was overlooked for too many years. We are also doing many innovative things to promote LGBTQ rights and women's rights... we just need to do a better job in conveying the things that we are doing," said Roll.

Among his responsibilities at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Roll has taken up the challenge of reaching out to young leaders around the world, focusing on the United States, and he is aware that his outreach comes at a time when progressives in other places are fiercely critical of Israel and its policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians.

"I understand the way Israel is perceived and I understand our challenges, but I believe in respecting people's views, and I care about people's opinions," Roll said in the briefing. "As someone from a centrist party, I believe in compromise — I will tell you about my perspective and you can tell me yours. I don't believe there have been enough opportunities for that to take place."

Yossi Klein Halevi, a senior fellow of the Shalom Hartman Institute, said that even though Roll represents Israel's liberal flank, he might still struggle to find common language with some American liberals, including Jews, and particularly with progressive leaders.

"Many Israelis who are progressive on social issues tend to be center or center-right on security issues and this contributes to the growing disconnect between parts of Israeli and American society that should be in conversation," Klein Halevi told *Jewish Insider*.

"Israelis don't realize how deeply the delegitimization of Israel has gone in certain circles, and for growing numbers of American progressives, it does not matter if you are an LGBTQ Israeli with impeccable social liberal credentials, the very fact you are from an 'apartheid state' places you beyond the pale," Klein Halevi said.

He added: "Israel has been subsumed into the American culture war and we are on the wrong side — we are still playing the game of trying to make a compelling political argument but that is not what it is about anymore. No matter how strong our arguments are, we are culturally toxic for many progressives."

Roll said he was aware of the tensions. "It is not about winning an argument, the majority of Congress and members of the Democratic Party care about Israel and just want to know more. As someone who got into politics to promote liberal values, I think myself, this government and this ministry have a lot to offer, and we share the same values as the U.S."

But the deputy minister himself waded into the looming dispute on the re-opening of the U.S.'s Jerusalem consulate by stating recently that he was sure it would not happen. Asked about the basis for such a statement, Roll said: "The American administration understands the complexity on our side."

"We have the deepest respect for the U.S. administration, and we are talking to them about this all the time," he added. "They understand our side and we will see how this unfolds."

On Israel's decision last month to ban six NGOs due to alleged ties with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Roll explained "there is concrete evidence showing what these organizations did with money donated to them by European donors."

He outlined details of a trial involving a Spanish woman, Juana Ruiz Sánchez, who was charged earlier this year by an Israeli military court with funneling large sums of donations from European governments to the banned Palestinian militant group.

"It is our obligation to make sure that money being donated to better the lives of civilians is not used for terror attacks," said Roll, highlighting security concerns

surrounding the much-sought evidence of these alleged ties. "We know that money donated was used for terror attacks.... we will share more details in the near future."

Roll will meet with the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations, representatives from the Washington-area Jewish community and students and rabbis, according to an individual familiar with Roll's schedule. A spokesperson for Roll told *JI* that the deputy foreign minister will hold "meetings with high ranking officials in the White House and State Department along with members of Congress from across the board," but declined to name the legislators and officials with whom Roll is scheduled to meet.

As Roll's team works on finalizing his schedule, a question about whether he will reach out during his Washington visit to members of the so-called 'Squad' — a small group of Democratic members of the House of Representatives known for their far-left views, as well as their contentious position on Israel — gives a good indication of how the deputy minister views the situation: "No one is blacklisted," he said. ♦

At RJC, a glimpse of a party trying to capitalize on recent gains

Former President Donald Trump took a backseat at the weekend's conference as Republican rising stars talked up the party's chances of victory in 2022

By Marc Rod

LAS VEGAS — Buoyed by GOP victories last Tuesday, the Republican Jewish Coalition leadership conference — a key stop for potential 2024 presidential candidates and other party luminaries — held in Las Vegas over the weekend offered a model for the party's midterm strategy.

The conference — a “kosher cattle call,” in the words of former White House press secretary and RJC board member Ari Fleischer — showed a Republican Party that is embracing the policies of former President Donald Trump, but which is trying to move past him as the party's singular center of gravity.

Multiple attendees who spoke to *Jewish Insider* were upbeat about the party's chances of picking up big wins in the 2022 midterms following last week's GOP victories. Rarer were those who were enthusiastic about the possibility of Trump running for the presidency again in 2024, although, as one attendee noted, none of them are likely to be able to influence the former president's decision.

“This is an incredible day, an amazing turnout, incredible amount of energy,” RJC Executive Director Matt Brooks told reporters. “The results from Tuesday, it's got everybody excited... And we're thrilled to be able to bring people together to continue... to build on the increasing support for the Republican Party within the Jewish community.”

A similar message came through in speeches from rising GOP stars and party mainstays throughout the weekend, who seemed uniformly confident about the party's prospects next year. Trump largely took a back seat during the weekend's events as speakers talked up their own records on issues like foreign policy and education and

bashed President Joe Biden and Democrats.

But nearly every speaker, even those most critical of him, was sure to mention and praise the former president, at least in passing. And his aggressive style of politics was clearly on display in some of their remarks. Frequent attacks on Democrats, particularly the far-left “Squad,” consistently garnered cheers from the audience. And chants of “let's go Brandon” — a shorthand insult to Biden — started by a contingent of college students in attendance interrupted speeches throughout the weekend.

The conference included a deep lineup of potential 2024 presidential candidates, including former Vice President Mike Pence, Sens. Ted Cruz (R-TX) and Rick Scott (R-FL), former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N. Nikki Haley, Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, South Dakota Gov. Kristi Noem, former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie and former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo.

Among the popular speakers at the conference — garnering the most and loudest applause — were Pence, Cruz and Haley.

All three played to the top issues for many in the RJC's audience, focusing on the 2015 Iran nuclear agreement, aid to the Palestinian Authority and the Abraham Accords.

“Thank you for the privilege of serving in the most pro-American, pro-Israel administration in American history,” Pence said in comments that offered no hints as to his potential future plans. “Under the Trump-Pence administration, if the world knew nothing else, the world knew this: America stands with Israel... President Joe Biden has turned his back on Israel.”

Cruz praised Trump but emphasized his own role in some of the former president's signature foreign policy moves — relocating

the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem and pulling out of the Iran deal, decisions that are highly popular with the RJC crowd.

The Texas senator said that some officials in the Trump administration opposed both moves, but he helped convince the former president to ignore those who disagreed.

“I engaged actively, directly and repeatedly with the president,” Cruz said of his advocacy on the embassy issue. “I urged the president, I said, ‘Look, if we want to see peace, nothing produces peace more than clarity, than absolute clarity.’”

On the Iran deal, Cruz stressed his role in supporting the withdrawal from the 2015 agreement. “Once again I repeatedly went to the president in the Oval Office saying sending billions of dollars to the Ayatollah Khamenei who chants ‘Death to America’ and ‘Death to Israel’ is a recipe for destruction and death,” Cruz said.

Haley turned heads with a broadside against pro-Israel lobbying powerhouse AIPAC, saying the organization's bipartisanship is causing it to “lose sight” of its core mission, rattled off a litany of grievances from her time at the U.N. and argued that the Biden administration can't be counted on to defend Israel from Iran.

Pompeo, who spoke to a closed-door audience on Thursday evening and did not deliver public remarks, also received an enthusiastic reception, according to attendees at the private dinner.

Trump's own prerecorded virtual speech, in which the former president appeared to stick mostly to prepared remarks, made few waves, particularly in comparison to his more controversial appearances at the RJC in 2015 and 2019.

“No president has ever been a better friend to the State of Israel and I am proud of that,” Trump said in the prerecorded

remarks, adding that “Biden is bowing down to the Iranian leadership and threatening Israel security and safety like never before.”

Trump’s brief remarks were not advertised as part of the program ahead of the conference and were slotted into the middle of the conference’s third day, between a national security panel with two Republican members of Congress and a speech by DeSantis.

Other speeches from rising stars, including DeSantis, offered a clearer picture of the party’s likely playbook for 2022 following Glenn Youngkin’s victory in Virginia’s governor’s race last week.

They focused their speeches on issues such as education and pandemic-related restrictions, more briefly noting traditional Jewish community issues like the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement and concerns over left-wing antisemitism.

Noem, who gained national attention last year for her fierce opposition to pandemic-related restrictions, appeared to have dialed back her rhetoric.

“We live in a country that is addicted to being offended... I’m going to ask you to get over yourself,” she said. “There are people in your life that you have quit talking to. You think they are so far gone... I need you to get over yourself and start talking to people again.”

“The last thing I want to ask you to do before I leave is be happy,” Noem added as she closed out her speech.

Chris Sununu, the governor of New Hampshire who is considering running for Senate in 2022, echoed this theme.

“We cannot be a party that just says, ‘We’re not Joe Biden, Joe Biden’s awful’... everybody knows how awful Joe Biden is,” Sununu said. “You have to be for something. You have to drive forward. That’s what Glenn Youngkin did.”

“When we do it with a smile, when we do it with the positivity, that’s when we inspire the next generation, that’s when we can recruit, that’s when we get the passion going, and that’s when we can be sure we’re going to kick some ass in 2022,” Sununu continued.

Sununu was also more explicit that his party needs to move on from relitigating the results of the 2020 election.

“If you are sitting here talking about

2020, or you are worried about who’s going to run in ‘24, you are missing the boat,” he said.

Christie, once a firm Trump backer who has since distanced himself from the former president, made the clearest plea for his party to move on from Trump-style politics.

Christie told the audience “don’t rationalize and accept anything less than truth-telling, sincerity, honesty and integrity and a plan for tomorrow.”

Christie’s speech garnered tepid applause from the audience.

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) emphasized that the party should focus on 2022 before worrying about its 2024 nominee, but also boosted several of the party’s 2024 hopefuls.

“Israel has no better friend than Mike Pence,” Graham said at the top of his remarks. “Conservatism has no better friend than Mike Pence, and no more decent person has ever held office in this country than Mike Pence.”

He also praised fellow South Carolinians and potential 2024 hopefuls Haley and Sen. Tim Scott (R-SC).

In a press conference over the weekend, Rep. Lee Zeldin (R-NY), the likely frontrunner for the Republican nomination for governor of New York, seemed to recognize that his path to victory in the traditionally blue state does not lie with Trump.

Asked if he’d like the former president to come to New York to campaign with him — something Trump did not do for Youngkin in Virginia — Zeldin did not offer a firm answer.

“With regards to anyone, when you talk about endorsements, there are people who that endorsement means an awful lot to and we’re gonna be smart in how we approach this campaign, understanding that the end of the day we might be battling for votes in Flushing, Queens, amongst Democratic Asian-American parents who care deeply about their son and daughter’s education... or the Hispanic Americans in the South Bronx who aren’t looking back, they’re looking forward,” Zeldin said, listing off areas that are typically Democratic strongholds.

RJC leadership also appeared keen to keep their focus on 2022.

“This election is about 2022. It’s not about elections that have come before 2020, and it’s not about 2024,” Fleischer said in a

press conference. “The election Tuesday night in Virginia, in New Jersey, on Long Island, across the country, showed that it’s about the here and now. That it’s not about President Trump or anyone else.”

Fleischer added that Trump was not the focal point of many of the races on Tuesday.

In addition to the slew of prominent Republicans who took the stage during the conference, a range of other candidates milled around the conference rubbing elbows with potential donors. Ohio Senate candidates J.D. Vance and Bernie Moreno, Georgia Senate candidate Herschel Walker, Missouri Senate candidates Rep. Billy Long (R-MO) and former Gov. Eric Greitens, and Nevada Senate candidate Bill Hockstedler were spotted at the conference throughout the weekend.

The convention also featured numerous tributes to Sheldon Adelson, the Republican mega-donor and avid Israel supporter who died last January. Adelson was a major backer of the RJC and owned the Venetian Hotel, which has hosted the RJC conference for years.

Adelson’s widow Miriam, who has largely halted her spending since her husband’s death, met on the sidelines of the conference with Republican leaders to pledge that she’ll continue to be a major funder of Republican politics. ♦

In Israel, Arkansas governor talks self-driving delivery trucks and missile defense

Gov. Asa Hutchinson, who also teased a return to national politics, is in Israel for the Smart Mobility Summit in Tel Aviv and meetings with Israeli officials

By Ruth Marks Eglash

Arkansas Gov. Asa Hutchinson drew a direct line between the start-up nation and America's biggest retailer, Walmart, on Tuesday, speaking at the international Smart Mobility Summit in Tel Aviv and touring its innovation expo.

A day earlier, in Bentonville, Ark., home to the retail giant's corporate headquarters, Walmart and Silicon Valley firm Gatik announced the successful pilot of autonomous, self-driving trucks — with no human on board — to ferry shipments from warehouses to its retail stores.

"Something I am concentrating on is smart mobility, from autonomous vehicles to drone deliveries, which Walmart is also engaged in, and Israel has startup companies in all of those areas," the governor told *Jewish Insider* in an interview at the expo on Tuesday. "One of the things I am taking back with me is how Israel has become a leader in innovation and invests in new technologies that benefit the entire world. We must invest more."

Hutchinson, who arrived in Israel Sunday and met with Prime Minister Naftali Bennett, President Isaac Herzog, Foreign Minister Yair Lapid and Transportation Minister Merav Michaeli during his stay, told *JI* that the focus of his trip was on strengthening partnerships and learning from Israel's booming technology and innovation sector.

In his address at the conference, Hutchinson spoke about the Walmart-Gatik pilot, declaring it "the world's first fully driverless delivery service." He outlined how he cut through bureaucracy and changed legislation in his state to allow driverless vehicles to become a reality, addressing supply shortages and reshaping the future.

The governor then toured the summit's

exhibition hall, viewing the latest in autonomous vehicles, cybersecurity software for automobiles, sharp-vision road safety cameras and delivery drones. He listened to pitches and collected business cards.

Some 5,000 people from about 60 countries participated in the two-day event, which featured presentations from Bennett, Michaeli, Minister of Energy Karine Elharrar and Minister of Innovation, Science and Technology Orit Farkash Hacoen, as well as representatives of the traditional vehicle industry and the smart mobility world.

As the governor of a deep-red state with a sizable evangelical Christian population, Hutchinson is well attuned to the issue of Israel's security. The state plays a key role in building Israel's renowned Iron Dome missile-defense system.

Hutchinson, himself an evangelical who has visited Israel three times previously, said he believes that supporting Israel is "a fundamental part of American culture, history and of the ties that we have between Judaism and Christianity."

"From a practical standpoint, Israel is our strongest ally in this region, a very dangerous part of the world and it is a friendship that helps keep America safe," Hutchinson said, pointing to his state's law that prohibits investment in companies that advocate a boycott of Israel, including Unilever, the parent company of ice cream maker Ben & Jerry's, and its involvement in producing the Iron Dome.

"We're in the supply chain," he said of his state's alliance with Raytheon Missiles and Defense, which last year partnered with Israel's Rafael Advanced Defense Systems, to build Iron Dome batteries in East Camden, Ark.

"The prime minister said to me, 'Make

sure you tell the people in Arkansas how much we appreciate their support for our defense,'" Hutchinson said of his meeting with Bennett.

He said that several Israeli leaders also expressed concerns about the Biden administration's plans to reopen the U.S. consulate in Jerusalem, which traditionally worked with the Palestinians but was shuttered by former President Donald Trump in 2019.

"It is understandable that this is being met with objections," Hutchinson, a Republican who served in Congress from 1997-2003, added. "I, of course, appreciated President Trump's decision to move the embassy to Jerusalem. That is the right pattern for the United States."

Hutchinson, who is term-limited and will leave the governor's mansion in 2023, told *JI* that he definitely plans "on being engaged in the national debate, on the direction of my party, as well as our country" after completing his second term. ♦

Backed by Trump, Harriet Hageman looks to unseat Liz Cheney

The former gubernatorial candidate is hoping an endorsement from the former president will carry her to Washington

By Matthew Kassel

Even amid shifting intra-party dynamics within the GOP, Harriet Hageman believes that Republican voters throughout deep-red Wyoming are firmly united against Rep. Liz Cheney (R-WY), the embattled political scion who has positioned herself as the leading exponent of anti-Trump conservatism in the House.

Hageman, a longtime trial attorney and GOP activist in Cheyenne, describes encountering a deep and growing well of anti-Cheney sentiment as she embarks on a bid to unseat Wyoming's lone congresswoman. "Liz Cheney is not liked in Wyoming," Hageman, 59, charged in an interview with Jewish Insider on Friday, arguing that the congresswoman has been absent from the state in recent months. "That's why she doesn't come to Wyoming."

For her part, Hageman — who resigned from her position as a national Republican committeewoman days before entering the race in September — seems unusually confident about her prospects. The first-time congressional candidate has reason for optimism thanks in large part to an endorsement from Cheney's chief adversary, former President Donald Trump, who performed well among Wyomingites in the 2020 presidential election, garnering nearly 70% of the vote. He maintains strong support throughout the state.

Hageman is no doubt banking on that goodwill as a leading foot soldier in the former president's effort to enact vengeance against the 10 House Republicans, including Cheney, who voted for his impeachment last January following the deadly riot at the Capitol. With just under a year until the primary, the Cowboy State showdown is emerging as a high-profile battle in an ongoing clash between establishment

Republicans and Trump loyalists that has only intensified since the election.

In a statement two months ago, Trump lauded his hand-picked challenger as "all in for America First," while deriding Cheney as a "warmonger and disloyal Republican" as well as the "number one provider of sound bites" for Democrats.

"Here's a sound bite for you," Cheney shot back in a sharply worded Twitter message: "Bring it."

The three-term congresswoman insists she has no intention of stepping aside, as two of Trump's top targets, Reps. Anthony Gonzalez (R-OH) and Adam Kinzinger (R-IL), have announced in recent weeks. Stripped of her House leadership status and censured by the Wyoming GOP over her impeachment vote, Cheney, 55, has made clear she is standing her ground. The congresswoman now serves as vice chair on the House committee investigating the Jan. 6 attack.

The power of Trump's endorsement remains something of an untested proposition since he vacated the White House. Despite his mixed record with two recent special House primaries in Ohio and Texas, the former president has yet to prove his clout in more consequential races with deeper ideological fault lines. Hageman's showing next August, then, could provide a more meaningful gauge of Trump's influence as he teases a presidential rematch in 2024.

At this early stage, however, the race is difficult to read, with no publicly available polling and endorsements yet to flow in from other national Republican figureheads. The field of challengers is also somewhat divided, which may work to Cheney's advantage, even if she prevails with just a plurality of the vote. Still, three candidates have dropped out of the race since Trump

made his pick, winnowing the field in Hageman's favor.

Meanwhile, Hageman has struggled to match Cheney's robust fundraising operation, notwithstanding some donations from major Republican business leaders including Peter Thiel and Timothy Mellon. While Hageman pulled in just over \$300,000 in the first three weeks of her candidacy, according to the latest filing from the Federal Election Commission, that number is dwarfed by Cheney's sizable haul. The congresswoman has raised more than \$5 million since January, ending the most recent quarter with \$3.7 million in cash on hand.

Hageman also enters the race with some baggage, both as a former Cheney supporter and as an outspoken Trump critic who once sought to deny him the nomination.

In a 2016 speech, she described the congresswoman as a "friend" and "proven, courageous, constitutional conservative," according to footage recently unearthed by CNN. Hageman has donated to Cheney's previous campaigns and at one point served on her leadership team.

Hageman and Cheney have longstanding familial ties. More than half a century ago, their fathers — the late James Hageman, a long-serving Republican state legislator in Wyoming, and Dick Cheney, the former vice president who once occupied the same congressional seat now held by his daughter — were Young Republicans together.

While Hageman said their parents "knew each other" in the 1960s as young conservative activists, she swiftly dismissed the suggestion that her connection with Cheney was in any way more meaningful. "I never met Liz Cheney until 2013," Hageman told *J*, acknowledging that she supported Cheney's brief Senate bid that year as well

as her successful House campaign. But Hageman argued that they have never been close. “There is this idea that Liz Cheney and I have this long-standing relationship,” she scoffed. “The last time I texted with her was in February of 2020.”

Cheney was unavailable to comment for this article but has previously described Hageman’s candidacy as a case of “tragic opportunism.”

An equally likely source of tension is Hageman’s past involvement in a last-ditch maneuver to block Trump’s nomination five years ago at the Republican National Convention in Cleveland, where she was in attendance as a delegate for Sen. Ted Cruz (R-TX). The effort was recently detailed in a New York Times article. But Hageman, who once described Trump as “racist and xenophobic,” according to the Times, claimed that she has been misrepresented.

Either way, Hageman, who actively courted Trump’s endorsement this summer, said the former president is fully supportive of her candidacy. “I can assure you that he’s not worried about this issue of whether I was a Ted Cruz delegate or what The New York Times or CNN may say about what allegedly happened in 2016,” she told *JL*. “I think that some people want to wig out about the ancient news of five years ago,” she added, “because they think that they might be able to drive a wedge between President Trump and myself or President Trump’s supporters and myself.”

Hageman, a Wyoming native who was raised on a ranch outside Fort Laramie, gained prominence as a land and water resources lawyer with a libertarian conservative bent. In 2018, she ran an aggressive campaign for Wyoming governor but only placed third with about 22% of the vote. During the race, she also failed to secure Trump’s endorsement, which went to Foster Friess, the late Republican donor and businessman. Mark Gordon, who was then the state treasurer, ultimately prevailed.

Hageman argued that Cheney is out of touch with Wyoming voters. As evidence, she noted that Cheney holds no seat on the House Committee on Natural Resources, which Hageman views as a dereliction of duty in the sparsely populated state where land and resource issues feature prominently in local policy debates. Cheney,

however, has introduced a number of bills addressing such matters in recent months.

Despite her unsparing assessment of the congresswoman, Hageman was still ready to criticize one of Cheney’s biggest enemies in the House, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA), the far-right conspiracy theorist who earned Trump’s endorsement during her bid for Congress in 2020. In a heated altercation on the House floor last month, Cheney accused Greene of being a “joke,” alluding to past social media comments in which the first-term congresswoman had suggested that California wildfires were caused by a space laser controlled by a Jewish banking family.

In conversation with *JL*, Hageman claimed to have “just heard about” Greene’s comments, which were made public months ago. Still, she vowed to oppose such rhetoric if elected, even from members of her own party. “If they’re espousing antisemitic views, hold them accountable,” Hageman said. “But I don’t agree with them.”

But Hageman and Cheney are fundamentally divided on the most salient issue in the race: the 2020 election. While Cheney is among the most outspoken critics of Trump’s baseless effort to cast doubt on the election results, Hageman refused to acknowledge that Trump had lost. “What I will say is, I think that there were some serious irregularities, especially in the swing states, and I think we need to get to the bottom of it,” she told *JL*. “I think we need to make sure that we have the integrity in the elections that we’re entitled to.”

The interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.

Jewish Insider: *Why are you running?*

Harriet Hageman: There are several reasons why I’m running, and one of them is that, as you know, Wyoming only has one congressional representative, and we really do need to make sure that we get it right. I believe that Wyoming is entitled to a representative that is not only from Wyoming but someone who is effective and is involved with and understands and is willing to fight for the issues that are important to Wyoming. Most of my professional career has been in addressing

issues and fighting for issues that are very, very important to Wyoming. I represent farmers and ranchers, municipalities, some of our most important businesses in the state of Wyoming. When I look at what’s going on in Congress, when I look at what has happened with Liz Cheney and where her priorities are, I just do not believe that Wyoming is being well-represented right now.

Just as an example — I think that this kind of speaks volumes — 48% of our surface estate is owned by the federal government, and 52% of our mineral interest is owned by the federal government. We have an enormous federal footprint in Wyoming. In addition to that, we’re the ninth largest state but we’re the least populated, so water and natural resources are absolutely critical to our future and they’re critical to our jobs and they’re critical to our families. So, historically, our congressional representative has been on the Natural Resource Committee, and Liz Cheney chose not to do that. She’s not on the Natural Resource Committee, and as such, Wyoming is right now not being represented at all on all of the issues related to the Bureau of Land Management and the U.S. Forest Service.

She’s on the Armed Services Committee. Well, that may be a committee that helps Virginia and D.C., but it is not something that benefits Wyoming, and we’re suffering the consequences of it. There was just a bill that came out of the Natural Resource Committee — with no Wyoming representation, by the way — that would substantially increase the taxes on some of our most important natural resources. That’s an example of the problems that you have when you have your congressional representative not keeping their eye on the ball.

JL: *It’s interesting that you addressed natural resources because you’ve mostly seemed to criticize Cheney for her vocal opposition to Trump, who has endorsed you. How much would you say your case for being elected hinges on Cheney’s resistance to Trump as opposed to other more local issues?*

Hageman: Well, again, her priorities are not Wyoming’s priorities. For almost the last year, Liz Cheney’s priorities have been feuding with and attacking President

Trump. President Trump won the state of Wyoming by over 70%. In fact, he outperformed Liz Cheney last November in terms of our electorate. The people of Wyoming are very, very strong supporters of President Trump for many reasons, including the fact that he kept his promises. He closed the border. He addressed immigration. Energy independence: We are the largest coal producer in the nation and we are the third-largest oil and gas producer in the nation. The natural resource aspect of this, and energy independence, is incredibly important to the state of Wyoming, not just because we're producers, but at the same time, because of the types of industries that we have. We use a lot of energy as well, our farmers and ranchers, in terms of the diesel that they use in their tractors and what they have to do for their pickups as they check cows and move cattle and fix fences and that sort of thing. So, being energy-independent was very important to the state of Wyoming, and President Trump was largely responsible for that, and I think that President Trump is probably more popular here now than he was even a year ago.

That is something that's important from the standpoint of, we sent Liz Cheney to Washington, D.C., to be an ally of President Trump, and she went to Washington, D.C., and began a feud with him, really, starting in November of last year. It's been a full year. She was one of the first people in Congress to come out and demand that President Trump concede, claiming there weren't any issues with the election and that Joe Biden was the legitimate president. Right out of the box, she came out against Trump, and then what she has done in relation to the Jan. 6 commission is also something that has people in Wyoming absolutely up in arms. The fact is, she, with nine of her cohorts, in terms of the Republicans and the Democrats, they voted, without due process and without evidence, to impeach President Trump. It went to the Senate, as per our Constitution, and the Senate acquitted him and refused to convict. It's over. That whole discussion is done. There isn't a reason to go on about this. It's over. It's been decided. That's the end of the discussion, period.

But what she has spent the last 10 months on is on the Jan. 6 commission, working very closely with the Democrats, as well as

Nancy Pelosi, and what she's done is she's given cover for the absolutely disastrous policies of the Biden administration. She is not focusing on the issues that are important to Wyoming. She's working with the Democrats on the commission. So it's an important issue. But I also am running because of my own background and leadership. So while I am running against Liz Cheney, I am also running for Wyoming, and because of my background — what I've done with the water and natural resource work, with the policy work I've done over the years, with my knowledge and information about the regulatory state — I have the skill set to go back to Congress and be an effective congresswoman for the state of Wyoming and for the United States in general. It's not all just about running against Liz Cheney. I'm also running because I believe that I am the best candidate to go to Congress and fight the battles that need to be fought.

***JJ:** How do you see your prospects? It's a somewhat crowded field, which could help Cheney, even if she emerges with just a plurality in the primary. At least so far, Cheney has out-raised you, though it is early.*

Hageman: I think my prospects are very, very good. Liz Cheney is not liked in Wyoming, that's very clear.

***JJ:** You get that sense on the ground?*

Hageman: Oh, absolutely. Liz Cheney is not liked in Wyoming. That's why she doesn't come to Wyoming, and if she does come to Wyoming, it's a matter of meeting with two or three people in somebody's home here or meeting with four or five people at somebody's home there. She does not go to any events in Wyoming. She doesn't go to the football game. She wasn't at the homecoming parade. She has had no contact with the Republican Party since before January of this year. She has not come to any central committee meetings. She's not coming to the Reagan Day or Lincoln Day dinners. She's not attending events in Wyoming because she can't. People don't like her. And so, I think the prospect is very, very good. But something else to keep in mind is that when I announced on September 9, both at that time as well

as shortly thereafter, there were three gentlemen who dropped out of the race. So really, the field has been pretty well-cleared, and so I don't see Liz Cheney being able to get 50% of the vote.

***JJ:** It seems like there's something of a personal dimension to your challenge given that you and Cheney go back a bit and your families were close.*

Hageman: No, that's not true. That's not true. My dad and her dad knew each other in the 1960s. They were both in Young Republicans together. But you realize that Dick Cheney was out of Wyoming for a long, long time, right? I never met Liz Cheney until 2013. I didn't know her. And you probably can detect just a little bit of frustration in my voice with that, because I know there's a lot of people in the press that, I don't know if they think that this is a human-interest story or they think that this is a way to try to attack me with this idea that Liz Cheney and I were close. Liz Cheney is a political tourist in Wyoming. She didn't live here. She came here, and in 2013, she ran against Mike Enzi. She ran essentially as a Tea Party candidate in 2013, and I did support her. I met her at that time, and I supported her during that very short period of time that she was in the race.

Then she dropped out and I don't know that I had any further contact with her until she decided in either 2015 or '16 that she was going to run for Congress. So then, at that time, she asked me to introduce her at the state convention, and I didn't necessarily like her opponents because of some of the things that they had done as legislators here in Wyoming, and she was definitely a conservative candidate. I agreed to do that, and I supported her, and that's kind of the end of the story. There is this idea that Liz Cheney and I have this long-standing relationship. The last time I texted with her was in February of 2020, long before any of this stuff happened. So that gives you an idea. Even before all this stuff with President Trump, if I needed to get a hold of Liz Cheney for any reason, I went through her staff like any other constituent did.

***JJ:** What did you text about?*

Hageman: I don't know. I've got my phone up to my ear. I don't know. The last time I spoke to her was in November of 2020. When she came out and said that Donald Trump needed to concede, she got a lot of blowback from that, and so she started calling people in Wyoming and talking to them and texting with people, and I know that because I've seen the text that she was sending to other folks who that had supported her in the past, and she was trying to convince them of her position, and I was one of them that she called. I said, "Liz, I disagree with you. There do appear to be irregularities. We have the absolute right to get to the bottom of them, find out what happened here and make sure that we are protecting our elections and our election integrity." I said, "I don't see any reason whatsoever why we can't investigate what was going on." That was the very last time I ever spoke to her.

JJ: *Would you acknowledge now that Trump did lose the election and that Biden is the legitimate president?*

Hageman: What I will say is, I think that there were some serious irregularities, especially in the swing states, and I think we need to get to the bottom of it, and I think we need to make sure that we have the integrity in the elections that we're entitled to. There's been a lot of information that's come out, even in the last month, as to issues associated with that election. I'm sure that you're familiar with the Time magazine article from Feb. 4, 2021, that I have in front of me right now. The title of it is "The Secret History of the Shadow Campaign That Saved the 2020 Election," and in that article, they describe in great detail what the Zuckerberg Foundation did in order to influence the election in the swing states.

So, when you ask me that question — I know it's kind of a litmus test for a lot of people with the press — the way I'm going to answer it is to say that there are irregularities, we know there were things that happened in that election that shouldn't have happened, we need to make sure that they don't happen again, and we need to protect the integrity of our elections.

JJ: *Wyoming, as you've suggested, is*

a sparsely populated state. The Jewish population, as of 2020, was 1,150, according to one source. Since launching your campaign, though, have you engaged in any sort of Jewish community outreach, either at the state or national level? And do you expect to get support from Jewish leaders or pro-Israel advocates in this race, even as Liz Cheney has established herself as a pretty outspoken supporter of the Jewish state? Moreover, do you feel as if you and Cheney differ at all on foreign policy?

Hageman: What I would say is that I do believe strongly in protecting the United States's interests and Israel's interests. Israel is clearly one of our strongest allies and our best ally in that region of the world. It's the only democracy in that region of the world. I've always been a strong advocate for Israel. It has the absolute right to defend itself, and I can understand the policy decisions that have been made over the years in order to do so. Your question seems to be fairly broad in terms of whether I have the same foreign policy philosophy or platform as Liz Cheney. Well, as far as Israel, perhaps. I would have to look at exactly what she has said in that regard.

In terms of other things, I think that we need to make sure that if we are going to engage in foreign policy and in any kind of foreign war or anything else, it has to be in the best interest of the United States, and it has always been in the best interest of the United States to protect Israel. I feel very strongly about that. I thought it was fantastic when President Trump moved the embassy to Jerusalem. We had many different presidents over the years who said that they were going to do that. He was the first one who did. Obviously the Abraham Accords were a huge step forward.

It's interesting. Wyoming became a state in 1890, and in 1990, we had our centennial. All of the different ethnic groups in the state of Wyoming had different rooms or different areas of the Capitol basically laying out their history in the state of Wyoming. I'm basically a Northern European mutt. I'm Irish and Scottish and English and French and German and all of those different things. But there was a room, you know, of Swedish immigrants, and there was a room for Jewish immigrants. We have a long, long

history in Wyoming, and in fact, part of our ranch was originally homesteaded by several Jewish families.

JJ: *I'm wondering what relationships you've built, if any, with Jewish leaders in Wyoming, or at the national level, and what conversations you've had now that you're running for Congress.*

Hageman: I haven't yet. That's obviously a group of people that I will be reaching out to, just like I will be reaching out to a variety of other groups that I haven't yet had an opportunity to get in front of and to talk to and to address what their issues were. One of the reasons I related that story from 1990 is that was over 30 years ago, and it really struck me. It was an incredibly beautiful tribute to the many Jewish families that had helped to settle Wyoming and were business owners and ranchers and farmers and store owners and laborers. What they did is they just had this incredibly beautiful photographic history. All of the different various religions as well as ethnic groups had different rooms. They had the biggest room in the Capitol, our Jewish population did, and they had a photo history. They took down all of the artwork, and they put up their photographs everywhere. And they were the old, old photographs, as well as the newer ones. It was just this wonderful 130-year history in Wyoming and all of the contributions they've made. And as you can tell, 30 years later, that still sticks with me.

JJ: *I wanted to ask about Trump's endorsement. You opposed his candidacy in 2016 and were a part of the effort to deny him the nomination at the Republican convention in Cleveland.*

Hageman: Not true, not true. It's funny, one publication will publish a story, they'll ask for a quote or a comment, I'll give it to them, they don't publish the entire thing, and then the next publication takes a portion of that and pares it down even further to the point where what actually happened is nowhere even close to what was there. I was working with a small group of people during the 2016 Republican National Convention, and there were probably 10 or 12 issues that they were interested in. I had two issues I

was interested in. I wanted a rule change to stop crossover voting because that happens in Wyoming very regularly and it affects our elections here. The other one was to reward Republican success. My point on that was — with a state like Wyoming, where we have a Republican governor, our House and Senate are Republican, our federal delegation is all Republican — I wanted to increase the number of delegates that we got to the RNC as compared to some states that are a lot more liberal than Wyoming. Those were the two big issues that I was focusing on.

When I was asked about the issue of the crossover voting, the point that I was making was that, at the time, there were quite a few Democrats that were coming out and saying they were going to switch parties in the primary to vote for what they said was our weakest candidate, that they were going to support Mr. Trump at that time and try to saddle us with him. And then they would call him names such as that he was, you know, racist and he was xenophobic and he was blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And then, when he became our nominee, the Democrats would then turn around and point at all of us and say, “See, this is who you picked, so all of you are racist and sexist and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.” You know the litany.

And so I said, “That’s what they do, and that’s one of the reasons I want to stop the crossover voting.” That’s morphed into this idea that that’s what I was saying. That isn’t what I was saying, number one. Number two, I was a delegate for Ted Cruz, so I supported Ted Cruz at the convention. And keep in mind, when I was identified as a delegate, Ted Cruz was still in the race. I was a Ted Cruz delegate. We had 29 delegates to the RNC, and I think over 25 or 26 of us were Cruz delegates. Ted Cruz did very, very, very well in Wyoming. But number three, I did support President Trump in 2016. Once he was our nominee, I did support him.

JJ: *How did you come around to supporting Trump, and had it been a point of tension that you weren’t initially on board with him in the 2016 presidential primary?*

Hageman: I’ll answer those questions separately. Number one, election night in November 2016 was one of the greatest nights that I’ve ever had. When I sat there

and I watched TV and I watched, like, CNN and MSNBC, and I watched the total devastation for those poor people having to announce that Hillary Clinton lost and Donald Trump won? I mean, I can’t even describe for you how incredible that night was for me and the millions of people across the United States! That was a glorious, glorious night. But here’s the thing about President Trump, and here’s the thing about politicians in general — and now I’m going to be one: Politicians don’t always keep their promises. Politicians can say an awful lot of things, and as soon as they’re elected they don’t do what they said they were going to do.

For me, it’s a very easy explanation as to why I became a strong supporter of President Trump. So, when I did visit with him, I’m not going to go into all of my conversation with him. It was a private conversation. He was a very delightful man, he was a very gracious man, I enjoyed talking to him. I can assure you that he’s not worried about this issue of whether I was a Ted Cruz delegate or what The New York Times or CNN may say about what allegedly happened in 2016. I don’t know if you know, but I recently wrote a guest column.

JJ: *In the Casper Star-Tribune?*

Hageman: Yeah. I followed the same progression as most Wyomingites with Trump and Cheney, and it’s where I lay out what I did. President Trump sends me notes every once in a while. What he does is he takes something where I was interviewed or like this guest column, and he writes notes across it and sends it back to me. So he wrote on that editorial, “Harriet, this is fantastic. You are doing great, Donald J. Trump.”

JJ: *Are you expecting that he will campaign for you in Wyoming?*

Hageman: I sure hope so. The plan is that he is, and I sure hope that he does. What I’m saying is I think that some people want to wig out about the ancient news of five years ago because they think that they might be able to drive a wedge between President Trump and myself or President Trump’s supporters and myself. What’s happened in the last five years, I think people are worried

about a lot more important things than who I was a delegate for the 2016 RNC, number one. Number two, there was an evolution for an awful lot of people across this country in realizing who and what Donald Trump could be, and so I think that a lot of people kind of feel exactly the same way that I did. We didn’t know that he would be the kind of president that he was and that he would understand the Western issues the way that he did. But he sure did, and that’s why he has such strong support in the state of Wyoming, and that’s why I support him.

JJ: *Was it your first time speaking with him when you sought his endorsement before you announced your candidacy in September?*

Hageman: Yeah. It was nice. I enjoyed visiting with him. I’ve been traveling the country for decades giving a speech called “Regulation Without Representation,” and I’ve been talking about the expansion of the administrative state and what it’s done to our constitutional foundation, what it’s doing to us individually, and what it’s doing in terms of freedom and liberty and the things that I care so much about, whether it’s First Amendment issues or Second Amendment, Fourth Amendment, 14th amendment. It’s also the impact on our businesses and our ability to just take care of our families and be everyday good American citizens. And he was the first president in my lifetime that really understood the danger associated with the bureaucracy, the unelected, unaccountable bureaucrats.

JJ: *Is there anything that you feel you can do in Congress to address the rising incidents of antisemitism we’ve seen across the U.S., whether it’s using the bully pulpit or by other means?*

Hageman: I think that is of concern. I think that anytime people are targeted for their religious beliefs or their history or their ethnicity or their race is something that is not right. And you said it, you use your bully pulpit, you expose it, you challenge it, you make clear that it’s absolutely unacceptable, you don’t engage in it yourself, and you make sure that the people who do engage in that kind of behavior are called out.

You're very honest about who's propagating antisemitism, and you challenge it — I think just making very clear who's doing it and challenging it and not accepting it.

JJ: *On the far left, Reps. Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib have been accused of espousing antisemitic views. But one aspect of the critique of the far right is that Trump awakened some antisemitic impulses in the U.S. that we saw, to cite one big example, at the storming of the Capitol on Jan. 6, when one of the rioters was wearing a "Camp Auschwitz" shirt.*

Hageman: Who was that person? Do you know who they were?

JJ: *I don't have his name on hand. I know it's publicly available. But I'm not in front of a computer right now, so I can't look it up.*

Hageman: OK, well, I wasn't at January 6. I wasn't in Washington, D.C. I want to say that up front. You named two people on the left that clearly have espoused antisemitic views and really are unapologetic in their

attitude. We know that. But you don't name anybody on the right, and that's the reason I asked that question. You just kind of paint the entire right as, you know, that it's the right, that this is an issue, that President Trump awakened this antisemitic view on the right. I am a conservative woman in Wyoming, I have a lot of contact with people around the state, and I know a lot of Republicans. I do not know anybody who believes or holds antisemitic views.

So if you want to tell me a name and you want to say if that person was somebody who was there and was a President Trump supporter, you know, hold him accountable. But don't paint us as the right, that this is a right issue, because it's not. It isn't the way that we feel, and again, I don't know anybody who takes the attitude. We all condemn things like what Ilhan Omar and those people say. We do. We condemn that. So when you ask that question, I'm perfectly comfortable answering a question if you've got a name for me. But my view is everybody's responsible for their own conduct. It was Thomas Sowell who recently said we're quickly moving to a society where

nobody's responsible for their own actions, but we're all responsible for what somebody else said regardless of how long ago.

JJ: *I'll give you two names. One, Marjorie Taylor Greene, who has been accused of propagating antisemitic conspiracy theories, including one about the California wildfires and the Rothschild family.*

Hageman: I just heard about that.

JJ: *And Paul Gosar, who has appeared at at least one event with Nick Fuentes, who is a Holocaust denier. So those are two, to square it out. I don't know if you have any comment on them.*

Hageman: Hold them accountable. Just like you would Ilhan. If they're espousing antisemitic views, hold them accountable. But I don't agree with them. All I'm saying is I get that a lot where "the right does this" or "conservatives do that." Name names, and then we can address it. ♦

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An inside look at the Library of Congress's Hebrew treasures

Why collecting books in Hebrew and other languages is essential for the U.S. to be 'a country of great scholars'

By Gabby Deutch

Prior to March 2020, anyone could walk into the Library of Congress and take a tour of its magnificent Jefferson Building, the institution's ornate main building located across from the U.S. Capitol and next to the Supreme Court. It houses just a fraction of the Library's collection of millions of volumes, but the books stored in the Jefferson Building are some of the oldest and most precious.

Visitors enter into the soaring foyer and get to look at some of the Library's temporary and permanent exhibits, including Thomas

Jefferson's personal library — the gift that officially launched the Library of Congress after British troops burned down the small congressional library in 1812. But many of the treasures at the Library live behind closed doors, under lock and key and the watchful eyes of librarians with advanced degrees and decades of experience.

As the national library of the United States, members of the public are able to request to see these books. No advance notice is necessary. When a man and his teenage son were on a tour some years before the pandemic, the son asked what the

oldest book at the Library was. The docent told him about cuneiform tablets that are several thousand years old, and sent him to the African and Middle Eastern reading room, where he could ask to see the tablets.

"I brought two boxes down and showed it to them and gave them the abbreviated spiel about cuneiform tablets. The son was very interested in it," recalled Sharon Horowitz, a senior reference librarian at the Library. "The father said to me, 'What a great country, I can just come in here. I'm basically a nobody. And I'm here for a trip with my son, and I can ask to see this stuff.'"

The tablets are just a small piece of the Library of Congress's sprawling collection of books from around the world. At a time when millennia-old pieces of cultural history are being destroyed by everything from war to weather, the artifacts in the Library of Congress serve as a reminder of the crucial role the institution plays as a protector of books and civilizations.

Although tours have recently resumed at the Library of Congress, visitors can no longer show up at a reference desk unannounced, asking to see archival treasures. But in an interview last week in a sun-filled, empty reading room, Horowitz and Hebraic specialist Ann Brener showed *Jewish Insider* some of the Hebraic section's most important books, including some of the oldest printed Hebrew books to be found anywhere in the world. Many books in the collection bear the scars of Jews' painful journeys in Europe touched off by the Inquisition and the Holocaust.

"If you're going to be a country of great scholars, you can't really be parochial in your outlook, and the Library of Congress is now the largest library in the world, with all languages and all subjects," Brener said. The section is known for its Hebrew and Yiddish books, although it also has books in related languages such as Ladino and Aramaic. "You're asking why Hebrew, but the point is, why not?"

Being the largest library in the world, with an unparalleled collection of books, was not the Library's original purpose. It was created to serve members of Congress, who remain the only people who can check out its books. "There is in fact no subject to which a member of Congress may not have occasion to refer," Jefferson said when he sold his personal library.

From the marketplaces of Iraq to the halls of Washington

The Hebraic section was established in 1912, when financier and philanthropist Jacob H. Schiff, a German Jewish immigrant, donated nearly 10,000 books and pamphlets to the Library.

Unless you were extremely wealthy, "there were many things you absolutely could not buy today," Brener explained, noting that the items had been collected

by a prominent bookseller named Ephraim Deinard. "He went wandering into the marketplaces of Iraq. He went to people's basements. That's how you collected manuscripts and books in those old days. It's all different now."

That early-20th-century donation was not just a lucky get for the Library. It came at a time of international expansion for the institution.

"This was a period when great international collections entered the Library. The emperor of Japan donated thousands and thousands of books. Just after the revolution in Russia, we got a tremendous amount of Russian books from the czar's library," said Brener. "Back then, they were just building up the cultural life in America and they wanted scholars to have access to things in other languages that they wouldn't have otherwise."

Now, the Library's collection of Hebraic books is maintained by "book dealers," who are Library employees (one in Israel and one in the United States) who each have a budget to purchase relevant books.

For staff of the Hebraic section, acquisitions have an additional complication: ensuring the books don't have "Nazi provenance" — that they were not stolen by Nazis during World War II. "The minute you get anything from Eastern Europe, Poland, Hungary, all the red flags go up," Brener noted.

Brener picked up a book of Yiddish poetry, "the most exquisite artist book, by a woman in Poland." (An artist book is the work of a visual artist who uses the form of a book as inspiration but interprets the term creatively.) The Library acquired the book just a few weeks ago, but because it was purchased by a bookseller in Hungary, the Library had "several committees to go through to make sure the provenance was OK," she noted.

A global Jewish language

The Library's collection spans geographies and time periods, with massive 15th-century tomes of Biblical commentary, religious texts from places like Bologna and Safed and illustrated Hebrew children's books from the early days of the Russian Revolution. What unites the books in the

collection is their use of Hebrew. Visitors to the Hebraic section won't find anything written in German or Polish, English or Arabic.

"Let's say that a merchant from Cairo had to talk with a merchant from Naples. What language do they speak? Hebrew. That was the common language," said Brener.

One 15th-century book at the Library is a medical textbook, printed in Hebrew and translated from Arabic, which had first been translated from Greek. The heavy volume is bound in leather that folds shut in the front, a style known as "envelope binding" that was common with Arabic books. "This is the only one we have in Hebrew," Brener remarked.

It is one of the earliest Hebrew printed books, one of just 175 or so known to be printed before 1500. Jews had read books and other documents before the advent of the printing press in the 15th century, but they were previously written by hand, an onerous process that made procuring books more difficult and expensive.

The medical book was printed in Naples in 1491, at a brief moment of respite for Jews in Europe. "It was an independent kingdom ruled by a king who's the cousin of the evil King Ferdinand, but he was the good cousin," said Brener, referring to the king who presided over the Spanish Inquisition. "He's the one who welcomed the Jews in when they were kicked out of his cousin's kingdom. Some went to Constantinople, some went to Naples. They established a golden age there. At one time there were three Hebrew printing presses in the city. Can you imagine?"

Brener then pointed to a 16th century book, another large volume and the first book printed in the Ottoman Empire in Hebrew. Printed in Safed, this was a commentary on the Book of Esther, which is read every year on Purim.

"We have a theory about why they chose the subject of Esther, of all things for, for a first book," Brener explained. "The people who were living in Safed, they had fled Spain. They had been forced to flee or forced to become Catholics, or to pretend that they were Catholics when they were really Jews. And I think they felt a deep connection to this Biblical story because it is really the story of Esther, and she was like them. She

was forced to hide her Judaism. She had to pretend to be something else.”

The Library also has handwritten books, and Brener delicately picked up a tiny prayer book from the mid-18th century in Mainz, Germany. Each page was about an inch-by-1.5 inches, with text that in some cases could only be read under a magnifying glass. The artist Joseph ben Meir Schmalkalden wrote and illustrated the book, a collection of nighttime prayers. It was purchased as a man’s gift to his wife. “We think she wanted jewelry,” Horowitz joked.

One of the Library’s most unique collections is a set of Hebrew children’s books published by a Russian printer following the Russian Revolution in 1917. By this point, use of Hebrew in Eastern Europe was a political proposition — Jews were immigrating to Mandatory Palestine, and the Zionist project required the revival of the Hebrew language.

Shoshana Persitz, daughter of one of the wealthiest Jewish men in Moscow, created Omanut (Hebrew for “art”) Press at the age of 24. “They were a family that were very passionately involved with the renaissance of the Hebrew language,” said Brener.

She began printing children’s books in the “brief period when the Jews felt like there was real hope for them — the czar is gone, they’re going to be equal citizens in this new Russian utopia that everyone was talking about,” Brener explained.

For about six months until the Bolsheviks nationalized the printing press in Russia, Omanut Press produced a beautiful collection of children’s books, the very first children’s books published in Hebrew. The books have bright colors and Jewish motifs. One tells the story of a dreidel, the Hanukkah toy; in another, a Tree of Life features prominently.

When the Bolsheviks arrived, Persitz and her colleagues “picked up the press, and their manuscript, and they fled to Odessa in the Ukraine.” The move bought them two more years, a period that saw Persitz collaborate with people who would become some of the best-known Zionist writers, such as Ahad Ha’am and Hayim Nahman Bialik.

“They’re Zionist in that they are preparing young children to feel at home in Hebrew, to make it into their mother

language,” said Brener. “She was doing beautiful children’s literature where there had never been children’s literature at all. It’s considered a national priority, which is why they’re able to get people like Bialik.”

Protector of literature

While the Library of Congress considers the collection of books like this to be in the national interest, the Library also serves another purpose: preserving texts that otherwise would have long been destroyed and forgotten. The cautionary tale is the fateful destruction of the ancient Library of Alexandria, which wiped out the world’s hub of scholarship. But smaller-scale versions of that tragedy continue to take place.

“Those children’s books have survived in the United States because when people are running for their lives, they don’t usually take children’s books with them,” Brener noted.

Nazis famously burned books and libraries. In the 1990s, Bosnian Serbs attacked the National Library of Bosnia-Herzegovina, which was destroyed completely in the resulting fire.

“Our colleague who is from Somalia, which was undergoing a terrible revolution — their libraries were entirely destroyed in past years. But here in the Library of Congress, those collections have survived,” said Brener. “Only here. And the same is true for other places.” Like, for instance, Ethiopia, which is undergoing a violent civil war. The Library maintains a large collection of Amharic books.

In the Hebraic section, Brener, Horowitz and their colleagues do not stop only with historical volumes. They have thousands of modern Hebrew titles, as well as art books by Israeli artists. Brener pointed to a large book by Israeli artist Avner Moriah — a limited edition illuminated Bible, with modern interpretations on famous stories like the Tower of Babel and the Golden Calf. She had displayed the book next to one of the earliest printed versions of the Bible, “a difference of about 500 and some years.”

It has become rather trendy for members of Congress and other political appointees to request a book like this for their official swearing-in. “It’s gotten to be a big status symbol to request a non-standard thing

to be sworn in on,” said Horowitz. “Some people request a very old edition of the Constitution. That’s apparently OK. Muslim members of Congress request very old editions of the Quran. So the Library of Congress, on swearing-in day, brings a whole cart of things.”

One of the most high-profile moments for the Hebraic Section came earlier this year, when White House science advisor Eric Lander requested a 1492 version of Pirkei Avot, the Ethics of Our Fathers, for his swearing-in with Vice President Kamala Harris.

“Our congressional liaison emails me and says, ‘We have a White House request for this book. I know it’s a rare book. You’re never going to loan it. But I have to ask for it anyway,’” she recalled. “But Dr. Lander had already emailed with Ann and permission was already given.”

At his swearing-in ceremony, Harris asked Lander to explain why he had selected the book.

“For me and thinking about an oath of office, I thought about values, and what are my values, the administration’s values, what are we all here trying to do?” Lander said. “There’s a very special concept in Jewish tradition called *tikkun olam*, the repairing of the world.” He pointed to the page to which the book was open, noting that “there’s a specific line that comes in the Jewish tradition that contains that obligation. And it’s right here at this point on this page.”

For most Americans, as long as the pandemic persists, watching YouTube videos of government swearings-in or browsing the Library’s website will have to suffice. But when the reading rooms reopens, Brener and Horowitz will stand by, ready to offer any ordinary visitor a glimpse of the collection’s Hebraic treasures. ♦