

## THE WEEKLY PRINT

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MARCH 25, 2022

## The Nigerian startup hoping to solve Israel's tech-worker shortage

*The war in Ukraine has shown how Israel's high-tech industry relies on foreign workers — and how many more are needed. African coders hope to meet that need*

By Gabby Deutch

A few days ago, Yuval Moed, the CEO of an Israel-based tech company, received a WhatsApp message from an employee of his in Ukraine.

"Guys, today I have an air raid alert in my city almost all day, so I didn't have much time to do [work]," the man wrote, Moed told The Circuit. "I hope tomorrow will be a calmer day and I can do more."

Moed's employee is one of some 15,000 Ukrainians working for Israeli tech companies, a crucial resource for a tech workforce that is brushing up against its limits in Israel. For years now, Israeli companies and even the Israeli government have warned that the "Start-up Nation" is slowing down due to a shortage of software engineers in Israel. While many Israeli companies that employ Ukrainians are connecting them to humanitarian resources, helping them flee and otherwise supporting them amid Russia's invasion of their country, the situation in Ukraine has reminded Israelis that more tech workers are needed in Israel, and fast.

"There is a lot of sympathy," said Moed, CEO of EazyShow, a secure customer

communications platform. "We are trying to stick with those guys and not go elsewhere for now." His company plans to stand by their Ukrainian employees throughout the war.

But even before war broke out in Ukraine, Israel knew it needed ways to find more people to work as software engineers. A report released in April 2021 by the Israel Innovation Authority and Start-Up Nation Central found that 60% of Israeli startups were struggling to recruit for their research and development teams. "Israeli tech's glass ceiling isn't money, but manpower," Assaf Rappaport, co-founder and CEO of the cloud security company Wiz, told Calcalist last year.

"The high-tech talent shortage is no secret," said Andrew Jacobson, a project manager with Israeli-American venture capitalist Michael Eisenberg. "Even billboards on the Tel Aviv Ayalon highway advertise these days not for products to sell to customers, but their company to sell to potential employees."

The Israeli government has announced plans to give out more visas to foreigners who seek to work in tech, and programs

exist to train Arab Israelis and Haredim to work in the field. Israeli companies have also begun to understand that they can tap into the tech workforce in other regions beyond just nearby Eastern Europe. Africa, where dozens of countries are just one or two time zones away from Israel, has proven to be an attractive option.

"Lots of big tech companies have been there already for years, so a lot of engineers are credentialed and are qualified to do this kind of work. It's only one time zone away from Israel," said Jacobson.

Cooperation between Israel and Africa is not new, particularly in fields such as agriculture and energy. But there has been limited collaboration to date when it comes to technology startups. In recent years, the tech sector in Africa has exploded, and many young Africans with a background in software engineering have sought opportunities in other countries and on other continents.

According to a 2021 report from Google and Accenture, 38% of African software developers surveyed worked for a company located outside of Africa. One-third of those surveyed said they learned to code in order

to pursue international opportunities.

“The practical reality is that, yes, we now have a gap in the workforce for the digital economy globally, and Africa needs to fill that gap to some extent,” said Iyinoluwa Aboyeji, a general partner at the venture capital firm Future Africa.

Aboyeji, who lives in Nigeria, understands the African tech sector better than almost anyone. He is one of the continent’s most successful young entrepreneurs, having launched two major startups: The first, Andela, taught tech skills to Africans and helped them get jobs around the world (and is valued at \$1.5 billion). The second, Flutterwave, is a payment platform system that is currently Africa’s highest-valued startup, with a \$3 billion valuation.

Future Africa says it is the only African VC with an office in Israel, and Aboyeji views the Israeli tech ecosystem as both a model for Africa and a source of collaboration.

“We are trying to build connections between Israel and Africa from a business perspective,” Aboyeji told The Circuit in a Zoom interview. “Just like Israel has its research in agriculture and defense and deep science to offer the world, Africa has a lot of creative and talented people to offer the world. So we’ve been trying to establish that pipeline of deeply innovative and creative Africans going to work for Israeli companies so they can be even more deeply innovative and creative.”

Aboyeji rode out the pandemic in Lagos. The first trip he took when lockdowns ended was to Israel. “I’ve heard about Israel, I’ve been reading ‘Start-up Nation’ for a long time. But I didn’t really understand until I got there how concentrated the number

of Israeli companies that are at scale, at NASDAQ, was, and how big of a problem talent was,” said Aboyeji. “This is a country that’s a five-hour flight from us and literally almost the same time zone. I thought that it was a natural fit.”

Through Future Africa, Aboyeji is an investor in a company that is working to address two problems: the glut of African tech workers who need employment, and the shortage of skilled employees in more-developed tech ecosystems like Israel. TalentCo, an early-stage company that is still raising money and does not yet have a public-facing platform, thinks it can help solve both of those problems by connecting African software engineers with tech companies around the world.

“The world is just starting to realize that Nigeria and Africa really give great technical talents, and we are more or less just being the right partner to get the right vetted technical talents that can work with” international companies, said Joshua Ayo Omomia, TalentCo’s CEO. TalentCo is not only working with Israeli companies, but for now, “there is a heavy focus on Israel, because we see a large opportunity to really just plug in these new talents there.”

TalentCo is currently wrapping up placements for its first few fellows, Omomia said. They will continue to live in Africa, but TalentCo envisions a situation where the African coders will travel to Israel and meet their Israeli colleagues, and the Israeli entrepreneurs will also travel to Africa to get to know the continent’s tech scene.

“We prepare the engineers to be ready to engage with the Israeli ecosystem as ambassadors,” said Aboyeji, explaining

that the benefits go beyond just getting the African coders a job: They get to be ambassadors in Israel for Kenya or Nigeria or South Africa, and they also get an education-by-fire from some of the top startups in the world. “We’re saying, Hey, would you like to work with the world’s best startup ecosystem? Would you like to work with Israel, Israeli entrepreneurs?” And these are hand-selected for that experience,” he added.

Like Andela, Aboyeji’s earlier company, TalentCo will provide resources to the African engineers it chooses to work with — WiFi, office space, even housing for workers when necessary. And while the African software engineers will fill a need the Israeli companies have, Aboyeji argues that African coders have a unique way of doing things that could appeal to startups looking for a creative touch.

“African engineers can take some creative liberty and attempt to improve the product to the extent that you allow them, so that’s an exciting thing,” he said.

Many of the Israeli companies that will use TalentCo are looking to scale, to grow beyond just the Israeli market. Omomia, TalentCo’s CEO, seeks to appeal to the sense of competition among those companies’ founders who want to be the next unicorn: “In Israel, people [and] companies are starting to catch up to the fact that there are great talents here in this part of the world, and they don’t want to miss out.”

The train is leaving the station, argues Omomia, and Israeli entrepreneurs should hope to be on board when it does. ♦

MARCH 28, 2022

## Chuck Edwards walks a fine line in challenge to Cawthorn

*Edwards is taking on Cawthorn in North Carolina in the newly drawn 11 District*

By Matthew Kassel

Chuck Edwards, a Republican state senator in Western North Carolina, readily acknowledges

that he once had high hopes for Rep. Madison Cawthorn (R-NC), the freshman congressman who emerged

from relative obscurity last election cycle to become the youngest House member in at least several decades.

"I had supported Congressman Cawthorn," Edwards, 61, said in a recent interview with *Jewish Insider*. "I had introduced him to friends. I had made contributions to his campaign. And I wanted to see him be successful."

But Edwards says he has now lost faith in Cawthorn's ability to govern now that he is mounting a primary challenge against the 26-year-old GOP firebrand in North Carolina's newly drawn 11th Congressional District.

"I feel that Western North Carolina can do better," Edwards said of Cawthorn, who has almost continuously drawn controversy for his extreme right-wing rhetoric since he assumed office in 2021, most recently for comments in which he called Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky a "thug," drawing sharp rebukes from fellow party members. "Right now, the U.S. House floor is not a training camp for folks to learn how to lead legislatively."

Edwards has been a vocal critic of Cawthorn's behavior since the Capitol riot last year, when he accused the first-term Republican of "inflaming" political tensions and, in a subsequent statement, said he was "extremely concerned" with "Cawthorn's conduct" after the congressman was caught on tape encouraging supporters to "lightly threaten" House members in an effort to overturn the presidential election results.

Despite such attacks, Edwards had not necessarily expected to find himself taking on a sitting member of Congress when he announced his House bid last November, just weeks after Cawthorn filed to run in a district to the east. In late February, Cawthorn returned to the 11th following a final round of redistricting.

His about-face set up what is expected to be a heated intraparty primary battle as the congressman squares off against a crowded field of Republican challengers in the deeply conservative district.

Edwards, viewed as one of the most viable contenders competing in the May primary, is among more than a half-dozen Republican challengers, including hotel manager Bruce O'Connell, Navy veteran Wendy Nevarez and former GOP district chair Michele Woodhouse, who has castigated Cawthorn as a "broken-promises politician."

But even as Edwards expressed similar dissatisfaction with Cawthorn in conversation with *Ji*, he was, for the most part, relatively cautious while assessing the congressman's tumultuous first year in office. "I want to stay focused on what my campaign is about," Edwards said, "and allow the voters to compare Congressman Cawthorn's record to my record."

Such hedging underscores the unique balancing act Edwards now finds himself navigating as he goes up against Cawthorn, who is among the most high-profile Republicans in the country and, notwithstanding recent admonishments from his colleagues in the House and Senate, appears to remain popular with the Trump wing of the party.

"He's got a fine line to walk," Chris Cooper, a professor of political science at Western Carolina University who specializes in local elections, said of Edwards. "He needs to demonstrate that Cawthorn is not the right candidate but simultaneously not alienate the people who just voted for Cawthorn. I think it's tough."

Not that Edwards has been pulling his punches entirely. "If you're paying attention," Cooper told *Ji*, "it is clear that he thinks Madison Cawthorn's actions are not appropriate for a member of Congress."

In recent months, Edwards has put forth a litany of statements that have functioned as veiled criticisms of Cawthorn's behavior. He has, for instance, declared his support for "the brave people of Ukraine" while calling Russian President Vladimir Putin a "thug," and, in his first campaign ad earlier this month, emphasized what he described as his "mountain values" — an implicit jab at Cawthorn's recent gambit to switch districts.

"I was extremely surprised when he left this district," Edwards told *Ji*, without casting direct judgment on Cawthorn's decision. "And then I was even more surprised to see that he had changed his mind and decided to come back."

Edwards steered clear, however, of criticizing former President Donald Trump. "I always appreciated President Trump's frankness, his love of this country and his unwavering support for policies that put America first," Edwards said. "We all have our own style, and I believe we have to be true to ourselves in utilizing that style to get

the work of the people done."

Either way, Edwards indicated that he was in no rush to notch an endorsement from Trump, who has previously expressed his support for Cawthorn but has yet to officially weigh in on the primary. "I'm seeking the endorsement of the people of these mountains," Edwards declared. "That's the only endorsement that's important to me."

While Edwards casts himself as an even-tempered alternative to the brash incumbent, he and Cawthorn are largely aligned on policy, including on immigration, budget matters and the Middle East.

"We've got an open border to our south, we've got runaway debt, the folks in D.C. are spending money like drunken sailors, and there seems to be no discipline, or no will, to bring that under control," Edwards told *Ji*, adding that inflation is "spiraling out of control" and a "declining economy" is imperiling "our national security."

Edwards suggested that his experience as a state legislator, as well as a businessman, makes him a more qualified candidate than Cawthorn. The North Carolina native, who has served in the state Senate since 2016, lives in Hendersonville, where Cawthorn also resides, and is the owner of six McDonald's franchises throughout the district.

"We need solid, business-minded people like myself with conservative principles, with a history of getting things done, to address the problems of today," he said. "I know what it takes to make a difference in government."

But Edwards was somewhat less well-versed on foreign policy. While he touted his support for Israel and described the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement as antisemitic, he was unclear on the details of the Iran nuclear deal that Trump abandoned in 2018.

"I've been involved in state politics for the last six years," Edwards said, adding that he was "not familiar with the details" of the Biden administration's efforts to renegotiate a nuclear agreement with Iran. "What I can say is that we need to stand strong and insist that Iran not be able to advance their nuclear technology."

More broadly, Edwards said that "every congressperson needs to be intimately

familiar with” foreign policy, “particularly before they run off making inflammatory statements criticizing any particular country or the people of any particular country.”

Asked if he was referring to Cawthorn, Edwards demurred. “I would just reiterate the same statement that I made,” he said.

In the interview with JI, Edwards emphasized that he would “stand up against antisemitism” if he is elected to the House, noting that he had already taken such action as a state senator by supporting a bill that was signed into law last year and mandates that public schools in North Carolina teach students between grades seven and 12 about the Holocaust.

“We’ve got to continue to educate America’s youth on the history of antisemitism, Israel and the Jewish people,” Edwards said. “I’m committed to stand up to antisemitism wherever I see it. I believe that it is every leader’s responsibility to stamp out racism in any form.”

Cawthorn, for his part, introduced a House resolution last July condemning the uptick in antisemitic violence that followed the conflict between Israel and Hamas.

But his relationship with Jewish constituents in the district has been somewhat strained since he assumed office, thanks in part to an old Instagram post in which he appeared to glorify Adolf Hitler, whom he described as “the Führer,” during a visit to the Eagle’s Nest, the site that once served as Hitler’s mountain chalet.

Before he took office, Cawthorn drew

further scrutiny when he admitted, in an interview with JI, that he had tried to convert Jews to Christianity. Weeks after being sworn in, the congressman also invoked a poem about the Holocaust while hawking campaign merchandise on Twitter.

Last February, Cawthorn met with Jewish leaders in the district, which includes the liberal redoubt of Asheville, to address their concerns.

A spokesperson for Cawthorn’s campaign did not respond to a request for comment from JI.

In a statement in late February, Cawthorn said he was “excited to run for reelection in North Carolina’s newly solidified 11th congressional district and represent nearly all of my current constituents in the 118th Congress,” adding: “Western North Carolinians want a fighter in Congress. With their support, I look forward to returning to Washington as a sophomore member and helping enact major change with a historic Republican majority.”

With no publicly available polling, the race remains difficult to parse, though experts have suggested that Cawthorn will be tough to beat, even if the race advances to a runoff should no candidate secure more than 30% of the vote in the May primary.

Still, a Republican fundraiser who supports Edwards told JI that the state senator is strongly positioned to pull off an upset.

According to the latest filings from the Federal Election Commission, Edwards

began the new year with nearly \$330,000 on hand, \$250,000 of which he personally loaned his campaign. The cash infusion has put him ahead of Cawthorn, a prolific fundraiser who has pulled in nearly \$2.9 million since the beginning of 2021 but nevertheless entered the new year with just over \$280,000.

“Cawthorn is broke,” said the fundraiser, who requested anonymity to speak freely. “Edwards is a fundraising machine and I am seeing a major uptick in donor interest now that the district lines have finally been resolved.”

Edwards, for his part, said his campaign is “picking up momentum” with two months remaining until the primary. “The people of Western North Carolina recognize the need to have someone with accomplished conservative principles representing them in office,” he told JI, “and they have been very generous and willing to step up with their time and resources to help me get elected.”

“My interest in running for Congress is to serve the people of Western North Carolina, the people that I love and adore, the people of which I am one, the mountains that I love, and the communities that have so blessed me and my family,” Edwards said. “I’m not looking to further a political career or to build a social media following.”

“I can tell you,” he emphasized, “that I have absolutely no desire to visit the Eagle’s Nest.” ♦

MARCH 28, 2022

## Jared Moskowitz wants to succeed Ted Deutch in South Florida

*The Broward County commissioner is hoping voters see him as the Florida congressman’s successor while distancing himself from DeSantis*

By Marc Rod

**B**roward County Commissioner Jared Moskowitz entered the race for the Ft. Lauderdale-area congressional seat being vacated by Rep. Ted Deutch (D-FL) in force.

His campaign announcement in early

March was accompanied by a slew of endorsements, a list that has grown to 65 in the first few weeks of his campaign, including former Reps. Robert Wexler (D-FL) and Patrick Murphy (D-FL), the Democratic leaders of the Florida House and Senate, an

array of state senators and representatives and various other local officials and figures.

Moskowitz, the first and so far only Democratic candidate to enter the race for the 22nd Congressional District seat, is eager to cast himself as Deutch’s natural



successor, pledging to carry on two of the South Florida representative's top issues — Israel policy and gun control.

"Serving at the federal level is something that I've wanted to do since I was a little kid," Moskowitz told *Jewish Insider* in a recent interview. "With the challenges we're facing as a country, both internally and externally, I want to be in the room helping make those decisions for my community in the state of Florida and the country."

Prior to his current post, the 41-year-old Moskowitz represented Coral Springs in the Florida House and was the director of the Florida Division of Emergency Management from January 2019 to April 2021.

Gun control issues hold a special resonance in Deutch's district, which is home to Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, the site of a 2018 mass shooting in which 17 people were killed. Moskowitz is also a graduate of the Parkland school, and his son was a student at a nearby preschool during the shooting. His son's preschool teacher was the mother of one of the victims.

Several of the Stoneman Douglas victims' parents have endorsed Moskowitz.

The other major planks of Moskowitz's platform are "kitchen table issues" — such as rising gas prices and rent increases, the latter of which he described as an "economic catastrophe" for some families — and protecting democracy — which he said is "clearly under attack at home and abroad," specifically mentioning the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot.

Moskowitz's entry into the race did not surprise South Florida Democrats — more than half a dozen local politicians who spoke to *Jl* earlier this month said they expected him to throw his hat in the ring.

Should other Democrats enter the race, Moskowitz is likely to face scrutiny and criticism for his ties to Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, a Republican, who appointed him to his roles at Emergency Management and the Broward County Commission — already a source of suspicion for some Democrats.

Wexler lauded Moskowitz's Democratic credentials, saying he should be "judged on his performance, his record, his beliefs. And there's nothing more dangerous than guilt by association" saying he has "not... even a remote concern."

Moskowitz also defended his role in

DeSantis' administration.

"I was chosen because of competence," Moskowitz said. "I was chosen because I led the effort in the state and the legislature coming off of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas School shooting and passed a bipartisan gun safety and mental health school safety bill... with a Republican legislature, a Republican Senate, a Republican governor and cabinet... I was given a nonpartisan job to help people in their time of need."

The former emergency management director touted his work in that role to ensure minority, homeless and low-income communities had access to COVID-19 vaccines, and touted his efforts to create a program to vaccinate Holocaust survivors in their homes.

Moskowitz, whose father was prominent attorney, Democratic fundraiser and AIPAC activist Michael Moskowitz, said he grew up "in Democratic diapers," entrenched in pro-Israel politics.

Moskowitz's father was also cited frequently by local Jewish supporters in interviews with *Jl*.

Wexler, who had a long relationship with Michael Moskowitz told *Jl*, "Jared and his dad were as close as can be, and one of the reasons I was excited to support Jared was because of Jared in his own right, but I also know that Jared will think about his father every day when he's elected."

Moskowitz's family history also plays a central role in the aspiring congressman's support for Israel. Several of his ancestors were killed in Auschwitz or in pogroms in Poland, and his grandmother and great-aunt were both part of the *Kindertransport* out of Germany.

"When I was young, my parents wanted me to understand the history of the Holocaust and why it was important, and then transitioning into why Israel was so important to have a Jewish state because of what had happened," he said.

Moskowitz rattled off a long record of pro-Israel policies from throughout his time in elected office, including serving as a lead sponsor of Florida's anti-BDS legislation, a resolution condemning UNESCO's posture toward Israel and a resolution in support of former FBI agent Bob Levinson, who was allegedly kidnapping by Iran.

He also traveled to Israel with DeSantis

in 2019, signing a Memorandum of Understanding with an Israeli counterpart during the visit. That agreement, he said, facilitated the Israeli Defense Forces' assistance with rescue operations following the Surfside, Fla., condo collapse last year.

"[Israel] is not an issue that I just started caring about because I'm running for Congress, unlike some other people who may jump into this race," he said. "This is something that's been part of my fabric — this is something that Ted Deutch and I have been talking about since I was 20 years old."

Although he has not endorsed Moskowitz, Deutch — who was tapped to lead the American Jewish Committee following the retirement of outgoing CEO David Harris later this year — praised the Democrat in a statement to *Jl*.

"The U.S.-Israel relationship is personal to Jared, and he understands the importance of standing up and speaking out in support of Israel," Deutch said. "I'm honored that he turns to me for guidance on these issues that matter so deeply to my constituents."

Deutch has been one of the most vocal champions of Israel in the House — including a confrontation last year on the House floor with Rep. Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), during which he called Tlaib's comments about Israeli policy antisemitic. Moskowitz indicated that he wants to take up that mantle.

"When I mean I'm going up there and it's one of my core issues, it's not just to have a voting record. It is to be that outspoken voice," he continued. "There are big shoes to fill with Ted Deutch. No one is going to fill those shoes on day one. But I think I'm most positioned and poised to fill those shoes in due time."

"It may be having to [speak out] against people in your own party, which may be uncomfortable, but it may be required," he added.

Bernie Friedman, a former lobbyist for the Florida Association of Jewish Federations, worked with Moskowitz on Florida's anti-BDS legislation.

"It's sort of black-and-white, for Jared, on the pro-Israel issues, in the model of Ted Deutch," Friedman told *Jl*. "Jared is not going to engage in the politics of Israel... I think Jared, in my conversations with him, seems to take the philosophy that the

government of Israel takes a policy position and we support that position without trying to second-guess or micromanage it.”

Like Deutch, Moskowitz opposed the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, as well as the Trump administration’s decision to pull out of it. He did not offer a concrete position on the ongoing negotiations in Vienna, but said he’d be interested in a “stronger” deal.

He raised concerns about a “weaker” deal that could provide funds to Iran and insufficient snapback sanctions, and worried about an agreement that could give Russia a way around Ukraine-related sanctions.

In absence of a new deal, Moskowitz said ] it’s “so important to make sure that Israel has the advantage militarily not just to respond and protect the state of Israel, but also as a deterrent.”

He expressed support for a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians, calling for the U.S. to “help lead those discussions.” In order to be viewed as an “honest broker,” he added, the U.S. must continue humanitarian aid to the Palestinians, although he did add that he is concerned that some funding may be used to finance terrorism.

He said he “proudly” supports, and would work to expand, normalization efforts between Israel and Arab states, which he said have already “yielded tremendous

opportunities.”

As the lead Democrat on the state House’s Appropriations Committee, Moskowitz touts a record of work in support of the state’s Jewish community, including ensuring funding for security grants, Holocaust museums, the state’s Holocaust Documentation and Education Center and a kosher meal program for seniors. He also led a bill to create a Holocaust memorial at the state Capitol.

“He has always stepped up for Jewish Broward [County] on both a substantive and appropriations front,” Evan Goldman, vice president of community relations and government affairs for the Jewish Federation of Broward County, said. “You’ve got lots of different interests asking members to show leadership and Jared has never — not once — dropped the ball on Jewish interests.”

At Emergency Management, Moskowitz was also responsible for coordinating state and federal security grants for religious institutions and nonprofits.

“We’re talking about dozens and dozens of Chabad centers... that have been able to be helped directly as a result of his involvement,” Rabbi Yankie Denburg, director of the Chabad of Southwest Coral Springs, told JI.

He also praised Moskowitz’s office for going “above and beyond” in assisting with paperwork issues for some synagogues.

The Emergency Management office also provided funding to pay for free kosher lunches for Jewish day school students during the pandemic.

“He jumped in and right away just said, ‘Sure, let me see what I could do [to] help you out,’” Mimi Jankovits, the former executive director of Teach Florida, an Orthodox Union affiliate that advocates on behalf of private schools. “One woman called and told [the] people on my team that these meals were a lifesaver.”

At the federal level, Moskowitz called for increased federal funding for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program and Holocaust education.

“We really need to educate people on the history [of antisemitism] and what is happening out there and why we’re targeted and how long it’s gone on,” Moskowitz said.

He also emphasized that lawmakers on both sides of the aisle need to call out antisemitism, including from their own colleagues. Moskowitz argued that this is part of why forming cross-party relationships is important.

“I think one of the biggest threats not just to the State of Israel but to the Jewish people is [if] Judaism, the Jewish state, and being Jewish, [become] a partisan issue,” he added. “Everyone needs to be working together to combat antisemitism.” ♦

MARCH 30, 2022

## Shift in early primary states could amplify ‘Jewish voice’ in electoral process

*A proposal being reviewed by the DNC would hold the earlier presidential primaries in larger, more diverse states rather than the traditional Iowa and New Hampshire*

By Gabby Deutch

Jewish Democrats may get a much louder voice in the presidential nominating process if the Democratic National Committee adopts a proposal that would radically alter the presidential primary schedule.

American Jews have long turned out to vote in large numbers, but their influence has been limited in presidential primaries,

since the states that vote first — Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina and Nevada — are not among the largest Jewish communities in the nation. Iowa is one of the smallest.

For years, some Democrats have questioned why Iowa, a conservative and overwhelmingly white state, gets the coveted first slot with its complicated

caucus system. Presidential hopefuls spend a disproportionate amount of time barnstorming in Iowa, stopping by the state fair and other mainstays of the Hawkeye State. But while visits to synagogues and meetings with Jewish community members are a regular occurrence in the general election, they are exceedingly rare in the early primary states that set the direction

for the party's nominating process.

"It would be nice to have the Jewish voice reflected in the early primaries," said Jill Zipin, the co-founder of a group called Democratic Jewish Outreach Pennsylvania. In 2020, Pennsylvania's primary didn't take place until June. Sen. Bernie Sanders dropped out of the race in early April.

The proposal being considered by the DNC's Rules and Bylaws Committee would give the earlier primary dates to states that are more racially diverse and competitive in the general election, and it would add a fifth primary before the crowded "Super Tuesday" primary in early March. States would have to submit applications to the DNC highlighting their diversity and general election competitiveness to be considered for those spots.

"Obviously, the issue isn't just the Jewish vote," added Zipin. "It would be great to have our voices heard while being more reflective of the party itself, which is made up of persons of color, a Latino population; it's just a more diverse group than you would find maybe in these other states."

Halie Soifer, CEO of the Jewish Democratic Council of America, praised the proposal, saying it "underscores Democrats' commitment to strengthening our democracy and ensuring our institutions reflect America's diversity" and calling it "a welcome step toward ensuring that all Americans feel represented in the electoral process." About 70% of American Jews identify as Democrats.

"Jewish voters are not significantly represented in any one of those [early primary] states," said Matt Nosanchuk, president of New York Jewish Agenda and a former White House liaison to the Jewish community during the Obama administration. "In the flow of things, it's when the New York primary happens, the Florida primary happens, that you get more of a concentration of attention on Jewish voters."

In 2020, Florida's presidential primary took place two weeks after Super Tuesday. New York's wasn't until late June, months after the primary was competitive.

Florida, which has the country's third-largest Jewish population, knows what happens when states take primary scheduling into their own hands without

the approval of the national political parties. In 2008, Florida and Michigan held their states' primaries in January in a bid to give them more influence in the nominating process.

As punishment from the DNC and the RNC, who warned the state legislatures not to hold the primaries before Iowa, only half the delegates were ultimately allotted to each state. One sign that the new proposal might be successful is that the same person who now chairs the DNC's Rules and Bylaws Committee, James Roosevelt Jr., also oversaw the committee during the 2008 fiasco, when the DNC held its ground against Florida and Michigan.

"The fact that he's behind it... It's real if he's supporting it," said Nosanchuk.

But hurdles remain; a series of nationwide DNC town halls and meetings will take place over the next several weeks to gauge activists' opinions, and Iowa and New Hampshire, viewed as the states most likely to lose their standing, will surely not give up their coveted first-in-the-nation status quietly.

And it's not clear whether Republicans in each state would have to agree to the changes, or if Democrats and Republicans would hold their primaries on different dates. But the proposal has a solid chance of passing, particularly given calls for reform after Democrats bungled the 2020 Iowa caucuses with a glitchy app that was supposed to streamline processes.

One state already jockeying for a spot at the front of the pack is New Jersey. The head of the New Jersey Democratic Party wrote to DNC Chair Jaime Harrison earlier this month asking him to consider the Garden State for one of the early primary dates. "In many ways, we are truly a microcosm of the country," the letter states.

"I think that New Jersey is this wonderful melting pot between New York and Philadelphia, cities and suburbs and farms, Black, white, brown, every nationality and ethnicity under the sun," said state Sen. Andrew Zwicker (D-NJ), who represents parts of western central New Jersey. Rep. Josh Gottheimer (D-NJ) agreed, telling JI, "With all that Jersey has to offer, it would be great to move the Garden State up as an early presidential primary state."

Unlike Iowa and New Hampshire, New

Jersey is not a cheap place to campaign. It's the most expensive media market in the country. But that could also, in some ways, even the playing field, argues Daniel Cassino, a professor of government and politics at New Jersey's Fairleigh Dickinson University.

"It's basically so expensive nobody can afford to run TV ads anyway," Cassino explained. "You have to do retail politics." ♦

# Meet the UAE's unofficial business ambassador

*Finding synergy between the Israeli entrepreneurial spirit and the thoughtful, strategic thinking of Emiratis could make for the 'best business partnership in the world,' says Sabah al-Binali*

By Ruth Marks Eglash

*This article first appeared in The Circuit*

Emirati investor Sabah al-Binali is a seasoned financial services executive, but 18 months after the Abraham Accords, he is adding another, albeit informal, role to his already impressive portfolio: business ambassador.

"People call me for advice from both sides," al-Binali, partner and executive chairman of OurCrowd Arabia, one of the largest global venture investing platforms based in Jerusalem, told *The Circuit* of his work connecting Israeli and Emirati companies. Trade and investments between the two countries are already flourishing, reaching an estimated over \$600-\$700 million within the first year. In September, Emirati Minister of Economy Abdulla bin Touq Al-Marri predicted that economic activity with Israel could reach more than \$1 trillion over the next decade.

"I get Emirati businessmen asking me, 'How do I manage this guy, he's calling three times a day?'" said al-Binali, who forged close ties with Jewish and Israeli peers as an undergraduate student at Princeton University. "I tell him, be direct, say, 'Don't call me three times a day, I'll get back to you about this point.'"

And he also has a message for Israelis eyeing business opportunities in the Gulf too: slow down – and prioritize hiring those with experience working with Emiratis, who can help to navigate cultural differences.

"I know I'm generalizing here, but Israelis have a strong entrepreneurial spirit and are quick decision-makers, while in the UAE, you have good, long-term strategic thinking," said al-Binali, adding, "If we can synergize this fast-decision-making entrepreneurial spirit with the thoughtful, strategic thinking, then it could be the best partnership in the world — it could be

unbelievable."

Finding a way to bridge these contrasting business styles is exactly what al-Binali, who took up the position of executive chairman just a few weeks after the normalization agreements were signed in September 2020, is trying to do for OurCrowd and for the Abraham Accords.

This week, foreign ministers from Israel, the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Egypt, as well as Secretary of State Tony Blinken, held a historic diplomatic summit in Israel's Negev desert.

Al-Binali, who is considered one of the most senior Emirati nationals operating on behalf of an Israeli venture capital firm, says the next step is creating similar interaction in the business realm.

But first, he told *The Circuit*, some key misconceptions and even a level of mistrust must be addressed and dispelled.

In August 2020, when he first began talking to OurCrowd CEO Jon Medved about taking on the unprecedented role, al-Binali told him, "If you're going to have this view that you go to the UAE to raise money, then I am the wrong person for the job, and you'll probably not raise even one cent."

"I think we've got to get away from this fantasy that the opportunity here is money coming from the UAE and technology coming from Israel," Binali continued. "Israeli startups are drowning in money and so, you know, without being cynical, if that's what people are looking at as the opportunity, I believe, they will be disappointed."

Instead, he said, the countries can be mutually beneficial to one another on multiple levels. al-Binali believes that Israel and the UAE can serve as a gateway for one another. The Emiratis, who are active in Africa and Southeast Asia, can open up new markets for Israel. And Israel's close ties with the U.S. are attractive for Emirati

companies.

On another level, the two markets can become a testing ground for new innovation. Al-Binali points out that similarities in size and scale between the two Middle Eastern states makes them ideal partners.

"Some Israeli startups are fortunate enough to start commercializing in the States, and obviously the big market is where everyone wants to go, but there are also many that just can't make that big jump from Israel to the U.S., so it makes sense for them to use the UAE as a gateway to other countries in the Middle East, Africa and South Southeast Asia," he said, giving the example of some medtech companies currently carrying out clinical trials in the UAE.

And as for the question of whether a slew of lucrative deals will open up markets in countries who have not yet normalized ties with Israel, such as Saudi Arabia, al-Binali is certain that it is only a matter of time.

"There's clear curiosity," he said, describing how businesspeople from those countries, including Saudi Arabia, are expressing an interest in meeting with their Israeli counterparts in the UAE.

"I've seen it in Dubai, Saudis who are visiting want to start having that discussion."

Despite the long antipathy between Jerusalem and Riyadh, al-Binali believes that a thaw is inevitable. "Look, I think it's going that way. I mean, let's look at what is happening now, you have [Israeli airline] overflight rights and that means the mind is open," he observed. "How and when we will get there is not clear to me, but I feel strongly that it is not a question of if; it depends on the Saudi leadership. They will decide based on their interests the best timing."

Between Israelis and Emiratis, al-Binali said, "there are still personal reservations on both sides, but in general, the societal move overcomes any personal reservations, and



people are just curious.”

As for his progress so far with OurCrowd, which is the first venture capital company to be licensed in the UAE, al-Binali said he has been afforded significant flexibility in developing operations in the Gulf, and that several big projects are already in the works, including a global AI innovation center and

a new incubator.

“Of course, there is potential for disagreements and working together is still a challenge, but I also believe there are some great opportunities,” concluded al-Binali, pointing to global events such as changes in the U.S. equity market, growing inflation and the Russia-Ukraine war. “You’re going

to see contraction, but on the flip side oil has just gone through the roof, which means the coffers of the sovereign wealth funds in the Gulf will be filled out, and there’ll be pressure on them to expand their investment programs.” ♦

MARCH 29, 2022

## The secret chords that sounded in the Sinai

*Matti Friedman’s latest book shines a light on Leonard Cohen’s tour across the front lines of the Yom Kippur War*

By Melissa Weiss

It is difficult to think about a present that doesn’t include the melancholy, haunting music of Leonard Cohen, the dark and sultry edges of “Hallelujah,” the words of a young man grappling with his faith in “Lover, Lover, Lover.”

But that present almost didn’t exist. In October 1973, the 39-year-old singer-songwriter was living on a Greek island, mourning what he considered to be the end of his career.

And then the Yom Kippur War began.

Cohen hopped a boat to the mainland, and then a flight to Israel, where he found himself wandering in and out of Tel Aviv cafes before being recognized by like-minded musicians. Cohen was soon on the road, where he and the other wartime entertainers — most of them Israelis — traveled from army base to outpost to camp to raise the spirits of disheartened fighters on the brink of catastrophic loss. Less than a year later, he would release one of his most acclaimed albums.

“I think that, for him, our crisis here in Israel was, in some ways, a way out of his own personal crisis, which might have been a more pressing crisis for Leonard Cohen,” Matti Friedman, author of the new book *Who By Fire: Leonard Cohen in the Sinai*, told *Jewish Insider* in a recent interview.

The tour has become a historical event of its own, encapsulated within a much bigger historical event, and despite the myriad writings, films and documentation surrounding the war, little was recorded

about Cohen’s tour through the desert. He is mentioned in passing in news articles from the time, and some who saw him perform have photographs, but no concert video exists.

Enter Friedman, the Israeli-Canadian writer and journalist, who has for years chronicled little-known events in modern Israeli history. His *Pumpkinflowers* reflects on his own experiences in the First Lebanon War; *Spies of No Country* spotlights the young Mizrahi men who undertook dangerous missions across the region to help secure Israel’s independence in the 1940s.

The former *Associated Press* reporter made *aliyah* in 1995, when he was 17, but grew up in Toronto. Cohen was from Montreal. “I grew up, of course, with Leonard Cohen playing in the background, a kind of childhood soundtrack,” Friedman said. “It’s really my parents’ music, but I just had ‘Sit Down,’ ‘Bird on the Wire,’ and those songs were always on. If you’re Canadian, and certainly if you’re a Canadian Jew, you don’t have a lot of cultural heroes. So Leonard Cohen looms very large.”

In 2008-09, Cohen staged a comeback tour to recoup some of the losses sustained after his manager — who later was sentenced to 18 months in prison for harassment — stole upwards of \$5 million from the singer. The tour stopped in Tel Aviv.

An Israeli newspaper covering the concert mentioned Cohen’s 1973 tour through the Sinai, sparking Friedman’s interest in a story that was nearly lost to

history.

“I understood that Israelis felt a deep personal connection to Cohen, that it was beyond this, ‘Look at this cool star coming from America.’ It really felt like they know him. In some ways they feel like he’s Israeli, which is very weird. It’s not true of all Jewish artists; they don’t feel that way about Bob Dylan, for example, or Paul Simon. They do feel that about Leonard Cohen, and it had something to do, I realized, with this shared experience that they had had with this guy.”

Friedman set off to learn more about Cohen’s Sinai tour, clipping news articles and eventually talking to soldiers who remembered catching — or just missing, as was the case with one exhausted medic who couldn’t summon the energy to chase the music he was hearing on the base — a performance. Interviews with once-young soldiers led Friedman to one person, and then another, and then another who caught a “show” — often no more than the musicians playing for a group of several dozen exhausted young Israelis.

*Who By Fire* — originally a line from the Yom Kippur liturgy “Unetanneh Tokef” and, millennia later, used as a song title on Cohen’s first album in the post-war years — is interspersed with entries from Cohen’s 45-page manuscript recollecting his trip as well as pocket diaries he kept during the tour. The singer’s estate gave Friedman permission to read and use Cohen’s journals. The entries, largely unedited, present an account of the singer’s travels through the Sinai

"It felt a bit weird, because I'm not sure what he'd think about people seeing, you know, behind the curtain, but I had the really incredible pleasure, for someone who loves Leonard Cohen, of looking through these notebooks, for example, and seeing drafts of his songs as they come out of his head," said Friedman. "I saw the draft of 'Who By Fire,' [as it's] being written down and the draft of 'Lover Lover,' literally the first time it is written on paper, and words are scratched out... 'Chelsea Hotel [#2],' there's a few rough fragments of 'Chelsea Hotel' where he is still messing around with the words. So that's an amazing thing."

The diaries also contained, Friedman noted, Cohen's "raw thoughts about this experience, before he had the opportunity to really polish them, or decide not to publish them, which is what ultimately happens. He writes a whole manuscript about the experience, which is a very strange and remarkable document that is written down

really in the heat of the moment. He comes back from the war, sits down and writes this account of it, which is not the average account of a war. It's not exactly a journal, but it feels very real, and very unfiltered."

Cohen's recollections were ultimately never published — until now.

"It was quite amazing to sit with it and to be able to quote it," Friedman added. "I just let Leonard Cohen speak to us about what this feels like."

*Who By Fire* provides an unfiltered window into Cohen's mindset and moments of self-awareness. At one point, he sees injured young soldiers being taken out of a helicopter and is overcome with emotion.

"Helicopter lands," Cohen wrote. "In the great wind soldiers rush to unload it. It is filled with wounded men. I see their bandages and I stop myself from crying. These are young Jews dying."

In the next sentences, Cohen faces reality: "Then someone tells me that these

are Egyptian wounded. My relief amazes me. I hate this. I hate my relief. This cannot be forgiven. This is blood on your hands."

Cohen would later say he wrote his hit "Lover, Lover, Lover" to soldiers on both sides of the conflict. But when the song was released, a line had been changed, and Cohen no longer sang of going down "to help my brothers fight." Those words, and the subsequent ones — "I knew that they weren't wrong / I knew that they weren't right" — didn't make the final cut.

The year after the Yom Kippur War, Cohen would release "New Skin for the Old Ceremony," featuring "Lover, Lover, Lover." The album relaunched his career and set him on a path to global celebrity.

"It's got some of his best songs on it. He's never going to make it easy for us," Friedman said. "He never says, 'The war restored my faith in my music.' He never says that. So we're kind of guessing. But I think it's quite clear that that's what happened." ♦

MARCH 29, 2022

## Sanctions alone won't stop Iran, Israeli strike may be necessary, Graham says

*Graham discussed Iran, plans for increased congressional oversight, Russia and Biden's comments about Putin in an interview with JI on Monday*

By Marc Rod

Sen. Lindsey Graham (R-SC) suggested that an Israeli strike on Iran could be the most likely way to prevent Tehran from acquiring a nuclear weapon in an interview with *Jewish Insider* on Monday from Jerusalem.

While "maximum pressure" sanctions "[make] it more difficult," Graham argued the only ways to stop Iran's nuclear ambitions are an unlikely "change of heart" by Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, an internal overthrow of the regime or a U.S.-supported Israeli strike against Iran's nuclear facilities.

"If you don't [understand] that, you're making a huge mistake," Graham said. "This is never going to end short of a nuclear weapon unless somebody stops them. And

those are the three ways that would stop the advance toward a nuclear weapon. The first one is one in a billion. The second one — who knows — if the Iranian people want to continue to live like this, that's up to them. But the third one [the Israeli strike] is probably the way this movie ends."

Graham detailed a plan to increase congressional oversight of Iran's nuclear program that he has been developing during his trip. He said he had asked Israeli officials on his previous visit to the country in February to put together a detailed list of red lines and major concerns regarding Iran's nuclear program.

The South Carolina senator said those conversations prompted him to craft legislation, tentatively titled the Iran Nuclear Weapons Monitoring Act, which will likely

require a report from the administration every 120 days about Iranian weaponization efforts, fissile material, missile technology, proliferation and violations of International Atomic Energy Agency inspection regimes. The legislation will also require collaboration with U.S. allies.

"This would be in place in perpetuity until the threat goes away to monitor the Iranian nuclear program," he said. "It's a directive to our government, in consultation with our allies, to stay on top of the Iranian nuclear program. And if we see areas of concern, the administration, whoever they would be, would be required to come up with an action plan. This approach, I think, is the best insurance policy to make sure that the Iranian nuclear program does not get out of hand."

Graham said he is still developing the specifics of the legislation but sees it as a more viable path than other possible proposals and believes there will be “a lot” of bipartisan support for his approach. He also said it is “essential” with or without a new Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

“I settled on the [monitoring] approach a couple of days ago because drawing red lines in statute and requiring sanctions and the use of force gets to be too complicated,” he said.

He also argued that the forthcoming legislation would fill gaps in the JCPOA’s weaponization monitoring.

“My first night here, I couldn’t sleep. I kept thinking, ‘Well, what are we trying to do? We’re trying to monitor the program,’” he said. “The JCPOA doesn’t monitor... the weaponization, it just monitors enrichment. I want to monitor the nuclear weapons arena.”

The South Carolina senator, who met with Israeli Foreign Minister Yair Lapid and leaders from the Mossad and Shin Bet, Israeli government experts on the Iranian nuclear program and former Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, said that the Israelis showed him “multiple smoking-gun evidence” seized by Israel that he believes proved Iran is lying about its nuclear program and is seeking a bomb.

Graham blasted the Biden administration’s efforts to reenter the 2015 nuclear agreement, comparing them to “finding plans to Auschwitz in 1937 and still doing the Munich agreement” because “it is clear to anybody who is not deaf, dumb and blind on the issue that the Iranians are trying to build a nuclear weapon” — both as a weapon against Israel and to protect the Iranian regime.

Along with Sen. Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Graham has proposed creating a regional nuclear fuel bank — supplied by an outside power — for Middle Eastern countries, including Iran, to advance civilian nuclear weapons programs and barring Iran and others from conducting their own enrichment. But Graham acknowledged that this course is unlikely.

“I don’t think that’s remotely possible as long as [the Ayatollah] is in power,” he said. “So what happens here is you create a

system to watch him like a hawk and when they take the steps that would lead to a weapon, you have enough notice to take corrective action... military strike by Israel supported by the United States.”

Graham also said a “maximum pressure” sanctions campaign is the “best way to go” if the Iranians reject his proposal.

Graham also touched on the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and appeared to defend President Joe Biden’s off-the-cuff comment made over the weekend that Russian President Vladimir Putin “cannot remain in power,” which set off an international firestorm.

“If you’re upset with Biden calling for Putin to go — question for the French and everybody else: Are you willing as part of a negotiated settlement to provide security guarantees to Ukraine from future invasions by Russia?” he said. “If you’re not willing to do that, then I think more conflict is inevitable.”

The South Carolina senator has been outspoken about the conflict, even calling for Putin’s assassination on Twitter, but was largely uncritical of Israel’s role in the crisis.

Israel served as a mediator between Russia and Ukraine in the weeks since the conflict began. It built a field hospital in Ukraine, but has declined to provide weapons to Ukraine or join some Western sanctions.

“I think Israel is making a really good-faith effort to make sure that Israel doesn’t become a safe haven for oligarchs,” Graham said. “They have really been generous on the nonlethal front... What I’ve learned on this trip is that Ukraine from early on asked Israel to be a mediator. And I’m OK with the war ending. I just don’t want Ukraine to be sold out. So Israel’s sort of been between a rock and hard place.”

He suggested that Israeli officials could have been more outspoken against Moscow, noting that Israel refrained from cosponsoring a U.N. Security Council resolution condemning the invasion last month.

“The big mistake, in my view, was not being clear about the invasion. It’s one thing to mediate, it’s another thing to be clear,” he said. “They were trying to make sure they could be an honest broker, but there was an opportunity to tell Putin and the world,

‘What you did was wrong.’”

Graham said he’s afraid that a peace agreement could “sell out” Ukraine by legitimizing Russia’s takeover of parts of eastern Ukraine, further fueling Putin’s ambitions to pursue a renewed Russian Empire or Soviet Union.

Graham’s trip coincided with Secretary of State Tony Blinken’s stop in the region for the “Negev Summit,” a meeting of leaders from Israel, the U.S. the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Egypt. Graham praised the Biden administration for “nurturing” the recent normalization agreements between Israel and several Arab states. ♦

# eBay 'reviewing' policy on selling property belonging to Holocaust victims

*The online shopping platform is under fire for selling artifacts that belong to Jews killed during WWII*

By Lianne Kolirin

In the face of fresh allegations that eBay is profiting from the sale of historical Holocaust-related items, a spokesperson for the online platform told *Jewish Insider* this week that it is reviewing its policy on Holocaust-related items available for purchase on the site.

Nearly a decade ago, eBay issued a public apology after an investigation by Britain's *Mail on Sunday* newspaper revealed it had been selling the items, including a uniform and a pair of shoes purportedly belonging to concentration camp victims, as well as yellow Star of David armbands.

Now, amid new charges from New York-based social media influencer and self-proclaimed "heirloom hunter" Chelsey Brown that the online retail giant is openly selling documents, mementos and other personal items acquired from victims of the Holocaust, eBay is making a distinction between those "historical" items and "hateful" items like swastikas, which it claims are banned on the site.

The spokesperson told *Ji*, "eBay generally does not prohibit historical documents, including letters and postcards. In response to Ms. Brown's correspondence, we are reviewing our policy to update the relevant sections to clarify what is prohibited. eBay does not allow the sale of items that promote or glorify hatred, violence, racial, sexual, or religious intolerance, or promote organizations with such views. As such, most items with swastikas or that promote Nazis or Nazism are prohibited. To ensure we prohibit hateful items, while allowing legitimate historical and educational items, we engage with a wide range of experts from NGOs and third-party groups."

Brown called out the huge tech company after it repeatedly failed to respond to her

complaints about the sale of Holocaust artifacts online, while leading Holocaust educators have described the practice as an "appalling trade."

Brown, 29, is an interior designer who in her spare time uses genealogy to track the "rightful" owners of old letters, photographs, postcards and other personal items that she comes across while thrifting. Her TikTok, which boasts more than 100,000 followers, alternates posts about home design and WWII-era items she discovers for sale.

"Sometimes I'll use eBay to find old letters or photo albums, and that's when I saw an ad for a Holocaust letter pop up. This was back in September. That's when I deep-dived into the horrific world of how Holocaust documentation is sold on eBay."

Frustrated and upset by what she saw, Brown wrote to eBay in February reminding them of their 2013 apology and highlighting items that were still openly on sale from accounts in countries such as the U.S., the U.K. and even Israel.

She wrote: "My goal is to get these artifacts that belonged to the victims of the Holocaust back to their rightful families. I do this pro bono, and have returned hundreds of artifacts and heirlooms to families using my own money, without repayment of any kind."

She has returned hundreds of items to date, including most recently a letter sent by a woman to her sister in July 1945 revealing that she had survived the Holocaust — but that the rest of their family had perished.

Brown purchased the letter, and other related documents, from an antique dealer in New York City. She subsequently managed to trace the author's closest living relatives, to whom she returned the items.

She has since come across dozens of listings of similar items on eBay. She first

wrote to the firm on Feb. 11, then followed up several days later.

In her email, she accused the firm of earning "thousands, or more likely, millions off of Holocaust documents, items, and mementos which directly disrespects the victims of the holocaust, those living and deceased."

Despite eBay's pledge to remove items belonging to Holocaust victims, many similar items still populate the site, according to Brown, whose own family tree includes numerous people who were killed in the Holocaust. Recent listings include a yellow star armband for \$899.99, a letter sent from Auschwitz for \$747, a collection of yellow stars for \$4,950 and a collection of documents relating to a family of survivors from a German concentration camp for \$1,999.99.

One live listing by a seller in Florida features 17 letters sent between 1943 and 1945 for \$3,600, reduced from \$4,000. In the description the seller states: "This is a beautiful correspondence of 17 letters all from the same prisoner in the concentration extermination camp of Auschwitz in Germany occupied Poland."

Further down the seller notes: "This is truly a museum quality correspondence and very very rare."

"Unfortunately, Holocaust artifacts are sold for ridiculous prices, are auctioned for thousands of dollars, or sold underground. It's something not many people discuss — but it's a real problem in the world of family artifacts," Brown explained to *Jewish Insider*.

When Brown reached out to eBay in February, she gave the company weeks to respond. When they failed to do so, she posted about the issue to her social media.

She posted a short clip of herself appearing to total up the many such



transactions that eBay has benefited from over the years, captioned: “Me trying to calculate how much money eBay profits off of Holocaust documentation and letters from victims.”

In an accompanying message, she described how she was recently contacted by someone on Instagram who came across her grandmother’s Holocaust diary on the site. But when the individual contacted the seller, they refused to lower the price and instead sold it to somebody else.

Responding to Brown’s post on Instagram, the woman wrote: “It’s absolutely disgusting how little they care about the families of Holocaust survivors. The work you do is so important and even if we can’t get these items back knowing that someone cares makes all the difference.”

Brown explained to JI, “These artifacts should go back to the families first, and if that’s not an option, then to historians or a museum. But always the family first.”

“eBay should be ashamed for not only letting sellers profit off of the torture of these victims, but for them to profit off it as well,”

she added.

Robert Rozett, senior historian at Yad Vashem, denounced the general phenomenon of trading in Holocaust artifacts. “Yad Vashem is opposed to the commercialization of documentation and artifacts relating to the Holocaust, and certainly anything that glorifies Nazism and similar ideologies from that period,” he said in a statement to JI.

“The proper place for authentic items from the Holocaust is in collections like that of Yad Vashem,” he added. “In such collections the items are not only preserved for posterity, they are made available for research and other legitimate purposes, and may be displayed with proper historical information and contexts, all of which prevents them from being misused.”

Olivia Marks-Woldman, chief executive of the U.K.-based Holocaust Memorial Day Trust, criticized eBay and others who sell “Holocaust memorabilia.”

She said: “It is deplorable for anyone to seek to make money by selling Holocaust memorabilia. It is also disrespectful and

demeaning to victims and their surviving family members.

“I believe online platforms like eBay have a responsibility to prevent this appalling trade,” Marks-Woldman continued. “Holocaust memorabilia are precious and priceless, but any such items should be found only in designated museums where they serve as witnesses to history.”

The London-based Wiener Holocaust Library is one of the world’s leading and most extensive archives on the Holocaust, the Nazi era and genocide. Its senior archivist, Howard Falksohn, told Jewish Insider that the organization rarely buys material as it mostly relies on donations.

He was critical of the private sale of such artifacts. “I have never really agreed with it,” he said. “It just encourages people to perpetuate this rather sordid enterprise. If people didn’t get involved in bidding in the first place there would be no demand for it and no incentive to carry on with that kind of trade.” ♦

MARCH 30, 2022

## Dan Shapiro departs State Dept’s Iran team for Atlantic Council

*Shapiro is one of the most prominent Democrats to enter the growing field of think tanks and NGOs focused on the 2020 Abraham Accords*

By Gabby Deutch

After a six-month stint as an advisor to the State Department’s Iran team, former U.S. Ambassador to Israel Dan Shapiro is leaving the Biden administration for a position at the Atlantic Council focused on the Abraham Accords.

Contrary to reports suggesting Shapiro left the administration over disagreements on Iran policy, he told *Jewish Insider* on Tuesday that he is “absolutely not” leaving because of any policy differences. “There’s no story there.”

Instead, he will be taking on a position at the Washington-based think tank that will allow him to bring his decades of government

experience and scores of Middle East and Washington contacts to bear in building and expanding the Abraham Accords. Shapiro continued to live in Israel after his posting ended in 2017.

A close advisor to former President Barack Obama, Shapiro is one of the most prominent Democrats to enter the growing field of think tanks and NGOs focused on the 2020 agreements that normalized relations between Israel and several Arab countries. Last year, Jared Kushner launched the Abraham Accords Peace Institute, which is helmed by former senior National Security Council staffer Rob Greenway.

“The Abraham Accords were a

very important breakthrough, and credit, obviously, to those in the Trump administration who worked on it,” said Shapiro.

He is tasked with continuing and building upon the so-called “N7 Conference” that took place in Abu Dhabi in October, referring to the seven countries in attendance who had normalized ties — Israel, Bahrain, Morocco, Sudan, the United Arab Emirates, Jordan and Egypt.

His work is “all in the service of trying to expand this sort of multilateral forum,” explained Shapiro. He pointed to Monday’s “Negev Summit” with the foreign ministers from the U.S., Israel, Bahrain, Morocco, the

UAE and Egypt as a success, but the type of gathering that may be inaccessible to other public officials in those countries who want to forge Abraham Accords-related partnerships.

“It’s not so easy for a typical member of Knesset, or a deputy minister or a minister who’s not the foreign minister to plug into opportunities to work with a range of new partners who they’ve never met before, and they have no history of working together,” noted Shapiro. “That’s what we’re trying to do.”

One of Shapiro’s objectives is to include Palestinians in events, like the N7 Conference, that are related to normalization. “They may resist, but they should be encouraged and invited to come and participate, to come and see how Palestinians’ lives can be improved, and how being at the table helps maybe unstuck a stalemate in Israeli-Palestinian discussion,” said Shapiro. “I think a number

of these Arab countries can be contributors to that.”

In 2013 and 2014, Shapiro worked with then-Secretary of State John Kerry on an Israeli-Palestinian peace proposal that quickly stalled. He has spoken critically of the Trump administration’s peace proposal in 2020.

Shapiro argued that normalization, and the resulting shift in regional dynamics, “should be thought of as a very potent potential source of positive energy on the Israeli-Palestinian track, and maybe at the moment the only potential source of positive energy given the limitations of the leadership dynamic between the Israeli and Palestinian leadership.”

In the Biden administration, Shapiro advised Special Envoy for Iran Rob Malley on cooperation with Israel and other regional allies. In some ways, he will continue that work outside of government

by strengthening the ties between Israel and partners in the region on a range of matters that include defense, and countering the shared Iranian threat.

Limiting Iran’s nuclear ambitions requires a return to the 2015 Iran nuclear deal, which is currently being negotiated in Vienna, in addition to regional security cooperation, Shapiro argued. He hopes to continue to work toward both, even after he has left the State Department.

“Trying to restore mutual compliance with JCPOA to keep the nuclear threat at bay is a critical element of our policy, and it should be supplemented — should have as an equal pillar a full investment in the strengthening of this regional coalescence of this new camp,” he told JI. “That can be done somewhat from in[side] government, and it also can be done a lot from outside of government.” ♦