

THE WEEKLY PRINT

In final weeks of Arizona governor's race, Lake's outreach to Jewish voters yields mixed results; In L.A. mayoral race, competing visions of the golden dream; Kanye was invited to tour a Holocaust museum. Would it have worked?; Kushner hails Saudi Arabia as another startup nation; Israeli entrepreneur looks to sell electric trucks in Saudi Arabia; and How Jewish aid groups helped Florida and Puerto Rico.

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In final weeks of Arizona governor's race, Lake's outreach to Jewish voters yields mixed results

The results have been varied for Kari Lake, an outspoken election denier who has struggled to distance herself from antisemitic figures

By Matthew Kassel

Until recently, it had seemed as if Kari Lake, the telegenic Republican nominee for Arizona governor, was building a meaningful support base among prominent Jewish leaders in the Copper State, even as she has frequently struggled to distance herself from a growing number of white nationalists and antisemites connected to her campaign.

The Trump-endorsed former news anchor and far-right election denier has drawn scrutiny for posing with a Nazi sympathizer and — more recently — receiving an endorsement from the controversial founder of a social media platform for extremists, whose support she rejected. In August, however, Lake came under additional fire for backing an Oklahoma state Senate candidate who — despite a well-documented history of antisemitic and homophobic remarks —

she had praised as a “fighter” and “patriot” targeted by “the Soros media.”

Facing backlash, Lake, 53, quickly rebounded the following month, when her campaign announced the formation of a new group called the “Jewish Voices for Kari Coalition.” Touting support from several active members of Scottsdale’s conservative Jewish community, the statement included an enthusiastic comment from Pinchas Allouche, the widely respected rabbi of an Orthodox Jewish congregation in Scottsdale, Congregation Beth Tefillah. He described a productive “roundtable” discussion, covering such issues as education, antisemitism and Israel, whose water technology advancements Lake has applauded as a model for Arizona.

But such goodwill had largely evaporated by early October, after her campaign ran a half-page print advertisement in a local

paper, *The Jewish News of Greater Phoenix*, including a photo prominently featuring Allouche standing alongside Lake and in front of a “Jewish Voices for Kari” poster emblazoned with the Star of David. The ad, which apparently suggested that Lake had earned Allouche’s endorsement, caused an outcry within Arizona’s tight-knit Jewish community, not least because congregational rabbis do not typically back political candidates.

That Allouche had been publicly linked to a candidate who, by varying degrees, has aligned her campaign with a range of extremists was even more distressing, said Denyse Lieber, a resident of North Scottsdale who — in a recent letter to Allouche shared with *Jewish Insider* — claimed he had blurred “the line that separates ‘church and state,’” while allowing himself “to become one of” Lake’s “props.”

In an urgent statement to the *Jewish News* published a couple of weeks after the ad had run, Allouche emphasized that he had never endorsed Lake's campaign, saying he was "deeply disappointed by" the effort to portray him as a supporter and insisting that he "will forever remain apolitical."

Adam Kwasman, a former Republican state lawmaker who chairs Lake's Jewish coalition, said the photo "was a mistake" that the Lake campaign has "fully acknowledged." But the campaign does not appear to have addressed the ad publicly, and a spokesperson for Lake did not respond to requests for clarification from JI.

The consequential, if convoluted, sequence of events has largely gone undetected by Arizona's broader electorate as well as mainstream media outlets in Arizona and beyond — as many statewide Republican candidates have come under scrutiny for alleged instances of antisemitism.

Meanwhile, Lake has consistently courted controversy for a range of outlandish statements on abortion, immigration and the 2020 presidential election, whose outcome she continues to reject. The charismatic former longtime TV anchor at Channel 10, the local Fox News affiliate in Phoenix, has frequently proven adept at exploiting even the perception of scandal, including last year, when her widely publicized resignation from the news industry quickly led to an unlikely bid for the governorship.

But with just a few weeks remaining until the November election, local political observers say the embarrassing mixup with Allouche — among other recent missteps — may provide Lake's Democratic rival, Katie Hobbs, with some much-needed ammunition to fortify an offensive push while expanding support from Jewish voters in Arizona.

"I am sure Katie will capitalize on the opportunity by reaching out to the Jewish community and articulating her inclusive vision," said Adam Goodman, a board member with the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Phoenix. "Arizona's Jewish community rarely votes as a block, but Katie has an opportunity to unite us behind her message. That could be decisive; but the race is so tight even the

beekeeper's coalition could be decisive."

There is little doubt that Hobbs could use a boost, however slight. While public polling suggests the high-profile race remains closely divided, Hobbs has faced mounting scrutiny for refusing to participate in a televised debate while shirking interviews with reporters. Such decisions, among others, have been used by Lake as well as her Republican allies to relentlessly cast Hobbs as missing in action, if not unqualified for Arizona's top job. "Where is Katie?" Lake asked tauntingly in a recent tweet.

In a statement to JI, Hobbs, a former Arizona legislator who now serves as secretary of state, kept the focus on Lake's extremism, casting her connections to the far right as a threat to Jewish community members amid an uptick in antisemitic hate crimes that she vowed to aggressively counter as governor.

"Kari Lake has surrounded herself with antisemites and white supremacists during her entire campaign and when she's been rightfully held accountable for it, she's deflected and failed to distance herself from their horrific rhetoric and actions," Hobbs, 52, said earlier this month. "At a time when we're seeing a dangerous rise in antisemitism across the country, we need leaders who are willing to wholly reject this when they see it and be outspoken in protecting the Jewish community."

Two weeks ago, Hobbs met with Allouche for a long-anticipated discussion, as the rabbi seeks to show he is a neutral arbiter following the botched campaign ad. In a Twitter post featuring her own photo with the rabbi, Hobbs said she was "grateful for the knowledge and reflections" he "shared with" her, adding: "I look forward to working together to stand up to antisemitism in every form."

The meeting took place at the rabbi's behest, he explained in an email exchange with JI. He had reached out to the Hobbs campaign "multiple times," he said, "and they finally responded, agreeing to a one-on-one meeting," on Oct. 12. The rabbi said he did not "have any public comments to make about" his conversation with Hobbs, "except to say that she pledged her support for the Jewish community and for her fight against the BDS movement and antisemitism," alluding to the Boycott, Divestment and

Sanctions movement targeting Israel.

For Hobbs' opponents, BDS represents a potential vulnerability, even if it has yet to break through as an issue of consequence, in contrast with Arizona's state treasurer race, where the two candidates are bitterly divided on such matters.

Still, Kwasman, the chairman of Lake's Jewish coalition — which, amid the recent fallout, seems to have gone silent in the final weeks of the race — accused Hobbs of casting an irredeemably misguided vote nearly seven years ago, when she was among a small handful of state legislators who, in 2016, objected to anti-BDS legislation seeking to bar companies contracting with the Arizona state government from participating in boycotts of Israel.

"Her record is extremely radical, especially when it comes to Israel," Kwasman, who overlapped with Hobbs in the state legislature, told JI last month. "That was a vastly bipartisan bill that sailed through the House and Senate and was signed by Gov. Ducey," he added, referring to Doug Ducey, the retiring Republican governor, who is term-limited. "She voted against the bill."

A spokesperson for Hobbs defended the vote, noting that "the legislature's own nonpartisan lawyers said the bill the Republicans were offering was unconstitutional." While the bill did garner overwhelming support from both parties, it was later blocked in federal court on free speech grounds, "which is why Katie voted against it," according to a campaign representative. The legislation was subsequently tweaked, signed into law in 2019 and ultimately upheld in federal court following a final appeal.

By that time, Hobbs had already ascended to higher office, where she rose to prominence as an outspoken defender of Arizona's presidential election results. But Hobbs' campaign confirmed to JI that she "opposes the BDS movement and would veto any bills that seek to promote it."

Alma Hernandez, a state representative from Tucson who is supporting Hobbs, said she was unconcerned by the BDS vote, echoing the sentiments of several Jewish leaders who recently spoke with JI. While acknowledging that she would have supported the bill herself, Hernandez, a

Jewish Democrat who is among the most vocal supporters of Israel in Arizona's legislature, speculated that Hobbs had probably voted "no" because of what she characterized as "a lack of education around" the issue. "I hope now that she knows the issue a little better, she would support this bill."

More broadly, Hernandez suggested that such issues were a deflection from concerns associated with Lake's campaign, which have even turned some Republican leaders in Arizona — united in a coalition called "Republicans for Katie Hobbs" — against her. "The record shows that she's not anyone who has ever supported antisemites," Hernandez said of Hobbs, in a veiled dig at Lake. "That's what's important to me."

Thomas J. Volgy, a professor of political science at the University of Arizona in Tucson, said Lake's brand of reactionary right-wing populism "is now baked in across the landscape" in Arizona, where GOP candidates at the state and federal levels have embraced a range of extreme positions.

In an effort to counter a rightward turn, the Jewish Democratic Council's political arm is running ads in Arizona to "emphasize the danger of Republican extremism," Halie Soifer, the JDCA chief executive, told JI. Last month, the JDCA endorsed Hobbs, "who has spoken out against the Arizona Republican Party's antisemitism and extremist attacks on our democracy and community," as Soifer put it. "We encourage all Jewish voters in Arizona to support Democrats up and down the ballot in order to defend our democracy, rights and safety."

Not everyone, of course, will heed that call, even among the sizable minority of Jewish voters in Arizona who largely identify as Democratic, as they do across the country.

David Wanetick, president of the Republican Jewish Coalition's state chapter in Arizona, said Lake's recent indiscretions had left him unfazed and in no way diminished his enthusiasm for her campaign. "I'm still very supportive of Kari Lake, and I think a large part of the Jewish community is," he claimed, while insisting that there is a "double standard" applied to GOP candidates when accusations of antisemitism arise.

Speaking with JI on Monday, Wanetick,

an original member of Lake's Jewish coalition, dismissed her endorsement of Jarrin Jackson — the Oklahoma Republican with a history of bigoted comments against Jews and other minorities — as an "inadvertent mistake" because "there is no way you can vet someone's past thoroughly in a short period of time." When Lake was apprised of Jackson's problematic background, "she renounced her support and moved on," he recalled, "and that was it."

It wasn't *exactly* that simple, however. Initially, for instance, Lake had been noncommittal in rescinding her support for Jackson, who has claimed "the Jews" are evidence that "evil exists," among other offensive statements. "If his reported comments are true, I obviously rescind my endorsement," Lake said in August, drawing immediate blowback for her evasively worded statement, which had not acknowledged the veracity of Jackson's past statements, even as she denounced "that kind of derogatory language."

Through a spokesperson, Lake's campaign later said, with no further clarification, that she had officially pulled the endorsement, though for some critics, the delayed response — and the lack of force with which it had been delivered — was unforgivable. The JCRC of Greater Phoenix, for its part, said Lake's "tepid renunciation" was "wholly insufficient."

That Lake would promote her newly launched Jewish coalition, just a couple of weeks later, was tantamount to "chutzpah," the JCRC further alleged at the time. "We are still waiting for Kari Lake to denounce herself Jackson's antisemitic words," the nonprofit said. "She may not control what he does, but she can and should resolve any doubt as to where she stands on his hate-filled views."

Ron Ober, a Jewish community leader and political consultant in Phoenix who has helped raise money for Hobbs' campaign, agreed with that view. "Words matter," he told JI recently. "It's like saying there's good people on both sides at Charlottesville. I mean, come on, give me a break."

Lake's campaign did not respond to an interview request from JI.

This past July, by contrast, Lake had been more direct in rejecting an endorsement from Andrew Torba, a self-

identified Christian nationalist who runs Gab, a far-right social network where antisemites and other extremists are known to gather. "It goes without saying, the Kari Lake Campaign for Governor absolutely denounces bigotry in all its forms, especially antisemitism," a spokesperson told the *Arizona Mirror*. "We have never sought this endorsement."

But left unacknowledged at the time was that Lake continues to maintain a Gab account, even if she has not posted since Jan. 6, when she linked to a campaign website page outlining her border policy. Lake had drawn criticism when she first joined Gab at the beginning of 2021, inviting followers to "join" her on the site, which she praised as civil. "So much less vitriol than Twitter and easy to use," she claimed. Lake also paid to verify her account, according to *Phoenix New Times*, an alternative weekly she previously derided — after facing media scrutiny for joining a separate far-right social network, Parler — as "a rag for selling marijuana ads" whose reporters are "20-year-old dopes."

It is unclear if Lake was aware of Torba's well-known reputation as an avowed antisemite when she first joined Gab, whose users have included the gunman who killed 11 people and wounded six at the Tree of Life Synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh. The Anti-Defamation League has described Gab as "rife with white supremacist" and "antisemitic bigotry." Torba, for his part, has frequently expressed antisemitic views — recently arguing, for example, that Jews are not welcome in the conservative movement unless "they repent and accept Jesus Christ as their lord and savior."

Ross Trumble, a spokesperson for Lake's campaign, said Lake was unfamiliar with such remarks upon joining Gab nearly two years ago. "Kari Lake was not aware of Torba's comments when she signed up and, as noted, stopped using Gab when she learned of them," he told JI, without specifying when Lake had in fact learned of Torba's past statements.

Trumble did not respond to repeated requests for clarification on a range of questions, including why Lake's Gab account — still verified with a blue checkmark — remains online.

In July, Doug Mastriano, the Republican gubernatorial nominee in Pennsylvania

who has faced charges of antisemitism, came under fire for his close connection to Torba and Gab, which he had paid \$5,000 for campaign consulting services. Amid the resulting blowback, Mastriano appeared to delete his Gab account, where he had been an active user.

There is no evidence, meanwhile, to suggest that Lake shares a similar history with Torba, though she was clearly aware of his existence before he endorsed her campaign. Last year, she shared one of his Gab posts on her own page, promoting a series of failed Supreme Court cases challenging the presidential election results

in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Georgia.

J. Edward Wright, director of the Arizona Center for Judaic Studies at the University of Arizona, said he could not safely intuit why Lake had opted to disavow Torba and, finally, Jackson in recent months. “Whether that decision was driven by real conviction or political expediency, only candidate Lake knows,” he told JI in a recent email exchange. “Her connection to bigots like Torba and Jackson shows, however, both her lack of effort to educate herself about these people before she supports them and her blindness to their deeply flawed character and disgusting bigotries.”

Perhaps more troublingly, “I personally think that a good number of the people who might consider voting for Lake will not be deterred by those affiliations,” Wright suggested. “Moreover, I think that many people will happily vote for her precisely because of her affiliations with such hate-mongering individuals and groups. That is a frightful statement about the state of our democracy and the lack of genuine civility that characterizes a significant portion of the Arizonan and American electorate.” ♦

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In L.A. mayoral race, competing visions of the golden dream

Rick Caruso, a former Republican and a political outsider, is taking on progressive Rep. Karen Bass to lead Los Angeles. Their Jewish outreach strategies offer a hint at the different coalitions they’re trying to win over.

By Gabby Deutch

Last Tuesday, a group of Israeli Americans arrived at Los Angeles City Hall for a tour of the seat of government of the country’s second-largest city. They did get a lesson in how municipal government works, but not the buttoned-up, mundane version one might expect of city council.

The group’s long-planned visit coincided with an outpouring of local outrage after *The Los Angeles Times* released a tape of a meeting in which the since-ousted Los Angeles City Council president, Nury Martinez, spoke disparagingly of Blacks, Mexicans, Koreans, Jews and Armenians. The afternoon of the Israelis’ tour, the city council was meeting for the first time since

the tape leaked — and dozens of angry Angelenos showed up, chanting “fuera” (out) and “shut it down.”

“It was literally a circus,” said Dillon Hosier, CEO of the Israeli-American Civic Action Network (ICAN), a political advocacy group that works with Israelis in the U.S. The tour was one of several Hosier has organized to help Israeli immigrants in L.A. “get acclimated to what it means to lobby and to talk to elected officials,” he explained, and last week, they got a different kind of lesson in the messiness of American democracy.

The back-room conversation captured on tape has shaken up the city’s local government and its high-profile mayoral race in the final weeks of what was already

a heated and expensive campaign. The two candidates — Karen Bass, a longtime activist and public official who has served in Congress for more than a decade, and billionaire real estate developer and political newcomer Rick Caruso — both condemned Martinez, along with the labor leader and two other city council members who were in the meeting.

Bass has responded to the shake-up by touting her experience building interracial coalitions, going back to her work as a community organizer bridging ties between the Black and Latino communities in the 1980s. Caruso has asserted that the tape proves the city’s local government is corrupt, and only someone like himself, who isn’t

part of the political machine, can fix it and rebuild trust.

"The focus in the campaign has changed," said Dan Schnur, a longtime L.A. political observer and a professor at both the University of Southern California and the University of California, Berkeley. Until now, the race has largely centered on public safety and homelessness, amid rising crime and one of the largest unhoused populations in the country. "The choice between experience and an outsider is still exactly the same."

Bass came out ahead of Caruso in the June nonpartisan primary, defeating him 43% to 36%. But she did not win a majority, as her campaign had hoped for, which would have avoided a run-off.

"He definitely has the celebrity factor, because he's a big developer that has projects that are really large-scale that are attractive, both to Angelenos and to tourists," said state Sen. Sydney Kamlager, an ally of Bass who is running to succeed her in Congress.

Bass has blasted Caruso for spending tens of millions of dollars of his own money in the race, alleging that his outsized spending and the resulting relentless advertisements on the airwaves are unfair. He spent \$40 million during the primary, and as of late September, Caruso had already spent an additional \$20 million in the general election campaign, according to campaign finance reports. Bass has spent \$6 million in the race through September.

"It's not unfair at all. She's had 20 years in office," Caruso, 63, told *Jewish Insider* in a phone interview last week. "To get your message out is incredibly expensive, and I view it as an investment in the future of this city. It is a lot of money. But let me tell you what is even more important: the freedom that I get that I'm not beholden to anybody other than the residents of Los Angeles."

For Bass, criticizing Caruso as an out-of-touch political novice trying to buy the election is part of her stump speech. On one afternoon in August, she told a group of Latino community activists that "the power of the people is stronger than the power of the dollar." Later, at the brightly painted restaurant Hecho en Mexico, she echoed the line to an enthusiastic crowd: "\$40 million could not win the election, because we can win the election with the power of the

people."

In interviews with *Ji*, both Caruso and Bass touted their commitment to reaching the many diverse segments of L.A.'s population.

"Bass' campaign has drawn most of its support from African Americans and white liberal and moderate voters, white Democrats," said Raphael Sonenshein, executive director of Cal State LA's Pat Brown Institute for Public Affairs, which has conducted polling in the race. "[Caruso] is going to make a heavy push for Latino and AAPI [Asian American and Pacific Islander] voters."

The candidates' outreach to Jewish voters reveals important differences in whom they view as their winning coalitions.

Bass, a progressive, has found common cause with liberal Jews on the city's West side. One of her closest Jewish supporters is Rabbi Sharon Brous, an outspoken Democrat who leads the pluralistic synagogue IKAR. In a statement, Brous called Bass "an incredible friend to the Jewish community." Bass has also been endorsed by nearly every Democratic official in the state, including current Jewish Reps. Brad Sherman and Adam Schiff, and former Reps. Henry Waxman, Mel Levine and Howard Berman.

Caruso, a moderate who was not registered as a Democrat until early this year, has close ties with several Chabad rabbis and has found a receptive audience among Orthodox Jews and Israelis.

"I don't think anybody will disagree that our local community is really a place that's going to be fully backing him," said Rabbi Zushe Cunin, who runs a Chabad center in Pacific Palisades, an upscale neighborhood whose commercial center was redeveloped by Caruso's real estate company. Cunin, who is not endorsing either candidate, has known Caruso for years; the developer once gave Palisades Chabad free space to use, and he has made regular appearances at local menorah lightings on Hanukkah. "He's not of our faith, but he was very respectful of the Jewish community," added Cunin.

Caruso has heard from some Jewish Angelenos that they feel "very unheard, especially with the growing rates of hate incidents," he told *Ji*. "I also hear the same thing in the Latino community with crime."

Both of the candidates are natives of Los

Angeles, and Bass, who is 69, grew up in the Fairfax neighborhood at a time when it was a hub of Jewish life in the city. She attended predominantly Jewish public schools; it was before busing became an official policy to integrate the city's school system, but her mother opted to drive Bass to better-performing schools.

"I didn't know it was a [majority] Jewish school until I went to school on Yom Kippur and there was nobody there," Bass, laughing, told *Ji* in August in the backseat of a campaign staffer's car, en route to an event in Boyle Heights, now a heavily Latino neighborhood where Caruso's grandparents, who were Italian immigrants, once lived. Bass first got involved in politics in middle school, serving as a student representative to the school board and then volunteering on Robert F. Kennedy's presidential campaign.

"The Jewish community where I went to high school, the parents were very political — far to the left," said Bass. "It was during the middle of the war in Vietnam, it was a lot of anti-war protests and all that, and the parents, the teachers and the students were all involved."

In L.A., 68% of Jewish voters identified as Democrats in a 2019 survey.

"I've always appreciated that she's had a very proactive approach of reaching out to the Jewish community and working with the community, which makes a big difference," said Andrew Lachman, an L.A. attorney who leads Democrats for Israel California and lives in Bass' congressional district. "For being someone who's generally progressive in her voting record, she's been a remarkable unifier and been willing to sit down with people to understand the issues and bring people together."

ICAN, the Israeli-American advocacy group, endorsed Caruso in the race. "Congressmember Bass' positions on Israel are concerning to our communities," said Hosier, referring to Bass' support for legislation that is more critical of Israel, such as her sponsorship of a 2019 bill, introduced by Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN), that would ensure U.S. aid to Israel does not lead to human rights abuses against Palestinian children.

"Our priority is to get Israelis more integrated into civic life in America," Hosier explained. "They see her [Bass'] position

on Israel from a foreign policy perspective as concerning as to how she would relate to them domestically on domestic issues, and Caruso understood that and kind of addressed those concerns and understood the unique immigrant identity of the Israeli community here.”

Lachman called Bass a “staunch supporter” of Israel, but pointed out that “she does take a social justice approach to it, so she’s a supporter of the two-state solution. But even in doing so, she’s generally voted the right way on a lot of things.”

The biggest reason ICAN opted to support Caruso is his stance on public safety. “We do have concerns about an elected official leadership having awareness about what it means to be Jewish, and what it means to be Jewish and Israeli in this community, and how things over there can affect us here,” Hosier explained. “Public safety was, I would say, the big defining factor for us.”

Concerns about antisemitism in the city have grown, especially since a group of Jewish diners was attacked outside a West Hollywood sushi restaurant in May 2021, during the 10-day war between Israel and Gaza.

“Hate crimes are up in every category here, and this is the liberal bastion. So anti-Asian hate, antisemitism, anti-Black, immigrants, trans, you name it,” Bass told JI. She called for an “aggressive response,” including encouraging minority communities to report the crimes to police. But, Bass noted, Jews generally already do so. “The Jewish community is highly organized, highly aware and has defense mechanisms in place,” she said, emphasizing that she would work to raise public awareness about antisemitism.

Caruso, who until this year chaired the University of Southern California’s board of trustees, has faced scrutiny in the Jewish community for his response to antisemitic incidents at USC. In 2020, several pro-Israel organizations held a protest at the Grove, the large retail and entertainment center Caruso developed, after USC student government vice president Rose Ritch stepped down from her position citing harassment she faced over her support for Israel.

In his role as USC board chair, Caruso released a statement last year condemning

antisemitism after a student senator came under fire for several incendiary tweets, including one that said, “I want to kill every motherf—ing Zionist.” Some Jewish alumni said Caruso had not done enough, since the student was not removed from her position in student government.

“I couldn’t get ahead of the president of USC, and the complexity that she was trying to manage is that you have so much diversity in a student population campus. But the lesson, I think, for all of us was ... condemn it very quickly,” Caruso told JI. “We need to be doing that in this city because our hate incidents, like I said, are up 200%, and that’s just unacceptable, not only for the Jewish community, but obviously for every community.” (Caruso was citing LAPD data showing that hate incidents — which are not necessarily all crimes — increased by 202% from 2020 to 2022.)

At a televised debate last week, days after the city council tape leaked, Caruso interrupted the moderator when she said that L.A.’s next mayor “will be either an African American woman or a white man” to offer a correction regarding his ethnic identity: “I’m Italian,” Caruso said. “That’s Latin.”

“I continue to be very proud of being Italian, and I raised it last night because on the heels of very senior elected officials making fun of people’s ethnicity and religion, including the Jewish religion, I want people to feel open and proud and vocal about whatever their heritage is, whatever walk of life they’re from,” he told JI the day after the debate. He grew up near his Italian grandparents, he said, noting that “there was a lot of Italian spoken around the dinner table.”

The increase in bias incidents is also one reason “we need more officers on the street,” added Caruso. Both candidates have pledged to hire more police officers, but the specifics of their plans differ.

Back in the 1980s and 1990s, when Bass was working as a community organizer, “the only thing policymakers were doing was locking everybody up, and that’s, I feel like we’re in one of those moments again, that the electorate is frustrated. They’re demoralized. They don’t see a way out, and so the default is just bringing the hammer,” she noted. She believes that arresting people,

without changing the city’s approach to mental health and economic inequality, won’t actually stop crime, but she opposes the “defund the police” movement.

“Because crime has increased, I can’t say that I would cut money from the police. But what I can say is that I will bring in much more money for the communities,” particularly in supporting and helping young people so they don’t turn to gangs, Bass said at the Boyle Heights event.

Caruso, who was endorsed by LAPD’s police union, has more of a classic tough-on-crime approach, although he, too, calls for increased training for LAPD officers, especially around unconscious bias. He also points to his experience as president of the city’s police commission, the body overseeing the police force, at a time when crime decreased in the city. He was endorsed by Richard Riordan, a Republican who was elected mayor in 1993 during a period of concerns about drugs and crime.

“L.A. is much different than it was 30 years ago, so the tough-on-crime, lock ‘em up message that worked for Riordan is not one that Caruso can employ. He has a much more complicated challenge,” said Schnur, the USC and UC Berkeley professor.

In the past, L.A. has elected mayors in political off-years (current Mayor Eric Garcetti was first elected in 2013 and reelected in 2017), but the city has since aligned its election schedule with federal elections.

“If this was a stand-alone election, on city issues, I think [Caruso] would have a very good chance of winning,” said Cal State LA’s Sonenshein. But because there’s also a gubernatorial race and congressional elections, “you’ve got the overturning of *Roe* vs. *Wade*, which basically is blotting out the sun in American politics right now and is going to continue to do that. You’ve got Democratic versus Republican. All those issues play overwhelmingly to Bass’ favor. And the city is much more Democratic and liberal than it was when Mike Woo lost to Richard Riordan.”

Caruso’s overarching pitch is that the city needs a new leader, someone who knows how to manage big budgets and big projects, to fight crime and to come up with new solutions to the city’s homelessness crisis. “I view things through the lens of a

business person. Let's find what's actually working and expand on it," noted Caruso. "She's never been a chief executive. She's never had management responsibilities. There's no way she could do this job. It's just impossible," he said of Bass.

President Joe Biden appeared with Bass last week, and Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT) plans to campaign with her soon. Bass served as speaker of the California State Assembly during the Great Recession, and she worked with then-Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, a Republican, to solidify a budget deal that ended a state financial crisis. She chaired the Congressional Black Caucus for two years, and currently serves as chair of the Africa subcommittee in the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

"I want to bring Africa here," said Bass, who described her perspective as "internationalist." "We have a very backward view of the continent of Africa. We view Africa, in my opinion, like we view inner-city America, which is, you know, helpless, hopeless and needs charity, as opposed to a partner." The hardest part about leaving Congress, she said, is wrapping up her work on Africa. (She won't mind leaving the "Neanderthals" she served with behind, Bass added.)

When asked whether any particular issues led Caruso to take up the mantle of public service, he said he was motivated by a general desire to help the community rather than a commitment to any one issue. In the 1980s, he served as a commissioner for the city's Department of Water and Power, and he and his wife have donated tens of millions of dollars to educational institutions in the city.

"I have this core sort of value that I really do love people, and I love bringing joy in people's life. It's what has fueled my properties that I built," he explained. "I think of public service that way. There's an opportunity to enrich lives and make people's lives better. I've been very fortunate in my life, and abundantly blessed, and I do believe that there's a duty, but also I have a passion for giving back, and that's what excites me about being mayor."

Both Bass and Caruso say they would declare a state of emergency related to the city's homelessness crisis, and they each want to build more housing. Ten years ago,

roughly 32,000 people were unhoused in L.A. County; this year, that number ballooned to more than 69,000 people. On the drive to Bass' campaign event in August, she paused occasionally to point to encampments on sidewalks and under overpasses. "Look at all this," she said, shaking her head. "This is incredible."

"The only way to deal with that and deal with the fact that L.A. has become unaffordable, [is] we have to build more housing," Bass pledged. But she acknowledged that she'll face difficulties from people who don't want housing built near them — the so-called NIMBYs, or "Not In My Backyard" proponents.

"I have to lead an effort and bring people together so that we change the spirit of the city, so that they are more welcoming of people, as opposed to the folks in the affluent areas wanting to wall themselves off, and not wanting anybody to move into their area," Bass said. She's engaged in a delicate dance: Some of those affluent liberals are reliable supporters and, more importantly, her key donors. (Voters "recognize the incredible human toll that the crisis takes, but in some ways they've become very fatalistic about it," Schnur noted.)

Bass' argument against Caruso is, essentially, that someone so wealthy can't possibly understand the everyday trials of people living in poverty in L.A.

"We have this really rich guy who's running," Bass said at the Boyle Heights event, "and I don't believe that people who don't know how we live and what our lives are like are going to actually help us."

Caruso's response is that Bass has been active in L.A. politics for decades, and homelessness has only gotten worse. "What we're doing is we're spending a billion dollars a year, and we're doing it through the lens of a broken government, and nothing's getting better, and it won't get better under Karen, even if she's well-intentioned," Caruso said. "If you're in the system like Karen Bass is, like [current Mayor] Eric Garcetti is, you will never fix the problems because the system doesn't allow you to fix the problems, and you can never go against the system."

In the final weeks of the election, it's anyone's race, according to a late September poll from UC Berkeley's Institute of Governmental Studies that showed Bass

leading Caruso by just three points among registered voters. When the poll looked only at likely voters, Bass was ahead by 15 points.

Bass and Caruso are out making their final pitches to voters, and they showed up at synagogues during the Jewish High Holidays to reach this demographic that votes at a higher rate than the general public, according to a 2019 survey of Jewish voters in L.A. Bass went to two Reform congregations — Stephen Wise Temple in and Leo Baeck Temple — on Yom Kippur and Rosh Hashanah. Caruso, for his part, also visited Stephen Wise, as well as the Conservative Temple Beth Am and Eretz Synagogue, an Orthodox synagogue serving the Persian community in the San Fernando Valley.

The two candidates don't even agree on their favorite delis.

"Factor's," Bass said definitively, referring to Factor's Famous Deli, a Pico-Robertson mainstay that she went to often growing up. For Caruso, it's Langer's Deli. "Now that I've mentioned that," he said. "I'm craving a pastrami." ♦

Kanye was invited to tour a Holocaust museum. Would it have worked?

Asking that public figures visit Holocaust museums is common practice across the Jewish world. But such visits don't always change minds.

By Ben Sales

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

Near the beginning of Kanye West's weekslong antisemitic tirade, the Holocaust Museum LA turned to a familiar approach: inviting him to see the worst consequences of Jew-hatred, and the conditions and conspiracies that led to the Nazi genocide.

It didn't work. West, who goes by Ye, declined the invitation, and the museum instead received a stream of hate online.

"We reached out to his former reps at CAA," Beth Kean, the museum's CEO, told *eJewishPhilanthropy*, referring to the talent agency, Creative Artists Agency, that until this week represented West. "We like to look at this as a teachable moment — you know, come look at the facts... We got some hate remarks, people saying they stand with Kanye, very similar to the banner hanging on the 405 [freeway, hung by neo-Nazis] that said 'Kanye was right about the Jews.'"

Asking that public figures — especially those accused of antisemitism — visit Holocaust museums is common practice across the Jewish world. Foreign dignitaries make a *de rigueur* visit to Yad Vashem, Israel's Holocaust memorial and museum, when they travel to Israel. After antisemitic street attacks surged in New York City in 2019, the city allocated funding for middle and high school students to visit the city's local Holocaust museum.

TV host Nick Cannon and NBA player Meyers Leonard both visited Holocaust memorials after making antisemitic statements.

But such visits don't always change minds on their own. In 2018, after accusing the Rothschilds of controlling

the weather, Washington, D.C., Democratic Councilmember Trayon White visited the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum — but left halfway through the tour. In 2021, Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) visited the same museum and apologized for repeatedly comparing COVID-19 mandates to the Holocaust — then resumed making the comparisons weeks later.

Sara Bloomfield, the longtime director of the USHMM, told *eJP* that "Holocaust education can contribute... to developing anti-antisemites, but I also think we need to be realistic" about the limits of one visit to a Holocaust museum for someone who is already antisemitic.

The museum had 1.7 million annual visitors before the pandemic, and while Bloomfield said visits are valuable for "people who might be susceptible to antisemitic views," particularly young people, she doesn't see the museum on its own as a cure-all for millennia of antisemitism, which she feels "requires multiple approaches."

"I think once somebody has fixed antisemitic views... my sense of it is that it's a very hard thing to change, and I personally would highly doubt that a visit to a Holocaust museum can do that," she said. "For an antisemite to rethink their views, it's most likely a very long and probably a private process."

Regarding the high-profile visits of public figures, she added, "We make no claims for what any visit will accomplish. That's not for us to do. These visits are private affairs. We don't publicize them. If other people want to publicize them, that's their private business. Our goal is just education. We're not here for publicity or moral cleansing."

Ambassador Deborah Lipstadt, the

U.S. special envoy to monitor and combat antisemitism and one of the world's most prominent Holocaust historians, addressed the limits of Holocaust education in combating antisemitism during a speech in France this week. "I'm not sure it's the great inoculator that we think it is," she said. "And yet it is crucially important to teach it."

She added that the history has "got to be taught in a context of the facts, but also how the Shoah began with words."

Kean stands by the impulse to invite West, both because of his outsize following on social media — he has 30 million Twitter followers, roughly double the number of Jews in the world — and because she wants to make sure he understands the way statements like his created a fertile ground for genocide. The Holocaust Museum LA serves 50,000 visitors per year and is embarking on a major expansion.

"He's perpetuating false narratives, and the people who are following him — they're ignorant, they don't know, they're not educated about this," she said. "When you have such a big platform like that you have to take responsibility and be held accountable for your actions... People like Kanye probably don't even understand that these words, the stereotypes, the antisemitic tropes, these false narratives, the propaganda that promotes racism, the violence, it's a slippery slope."

Aviva Miller, U.S. director of the Auschwitz Jewish Center Foundation, which brings tour groups to a rehabilitated synagogue, museum and campus in the Polish town adjacent to the infamous concentration camp, said that despite the potential pitfalls, nothing illustrates the danger of hate more acutely than visiting Holocaust museums or concentration

camps themselves.

"When it's in your face, and you're physically in front of it, you can't run away from it," she said. "When you sensitize people to the fact that somebody who you say was on top of the world was once murdered and tried to be obliterated from the face of the planet, and you see it in your face, it's really hard for you to then come out against them and say, 'Yeah, but they run the media.'"

Miller isn't worried that relying on

Holocaust education as a tool to combat antisemitism could lead to Holocaust denial. "I'd rather someone be using the word 'Holocaust' as an opening line to say, 'What is that?'" she said. And while she acknowledges that people who visit Holocaust museums may still retain antisemitic attitudes, she hopes it opens the door to change.

"I would hope it would have a transformational effect on some aspect of what their fear is about," she said. "You see

that Jews were rounded up, put on trains and sent to gas chambers. Do you really want to go and hate them so much?"

Kean is no longer holding out hope that West will walk through her museum's doors. But in the wake of the controversy, some visitors did lift her spirits: Two teachers brought their classes to the museum last week, unannounced.

"The teachers felt this urgency," she said. "Like, 'I gotta bring my students to the Holocaust museum.'" ♦

OCTOBER 25, 2022

Kushner hails Saudi Arabia as another startup nation

At Riyadh economic conference, former White House adviser recalls success in bringing Arabs and Israelis together, as Biden officials stay away

By Jonathan H. Ferziger

The article first appeared in The Circuit.

In the absence of any Biden administration officials, veterans of the Trump White House took to the stage at Saudi Arabia's flagship international conference on Tuesday to remind investors of their accomplishments in connecting Israel and the Arab world.

Jared Kushner, who as a White House senior advisor brokered the Abraham Accords on behalf of former President Donald Trump, his father-in-law, went so far as to hail Saudi Arabia as a "startup nation," using the nickname Israel earned by generating thousands of technology companies. Kushner, who now runs a private equity firm backed by \$2 billion in Saudi investment, is reportedly putting some of the cash in Israeli startups.

"The Abraham Accords peace that

was made in 2020 has unleashed a lot of connectivity in the region," Kushner said at the Future Investment Initiative conference, an annual economic meeting that has been dubbed "Davos in the Desert" and brought 7,000 participants to the plush Ritz Carlton Hotel in the Saudi capital here.

"You see this region now, where Israel, which is a startup nation and the [United Arab Emirates], which is a startup nation, and even Saudi Arabia, which is a startup nation, are starting to think about their future generations," Kushner said. "I think you're going to see over the next decade a lot of progress and growth coming from this part of the world."

The appearance by the 41-year-old founder of Miami-based Affinity Partners served to emphasize the absence of any representatives from the current White House and the simmering hostility between

President Joe Biden and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman. Former Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin, who also runs a fund backed by Saudi investors, was scheduled to appear at the conference on Wednesday.

While startups founded by Saudi entrepreneurs are few, the kingdom's \$620 billion Public Investment Fund has backed some of the world's biggest young companies, including WeWork, the provider of shared-office space created by Israeli-American Adam Neumann that was valued at \$47 billion before its IPO was withdrawn in 2019. The share sale finally took place a year later and its stock is now worth about \$2 billion.

Biden called the Saudi prince a "pariah" during his presidential campaign and later released CIA material connecting him to the killing of Jamal Khashoggi, the Saudi

royal court adviser who later became a government critic and a columnist for *The Washington Post*. The U.S. president traveled to the kingdom in July in a bid to patch up the relationship, but the feud reemerged this month when Saudi Arabia and Russia cooperated to slash oil production from countries in the OPEC+ bloc, raising fuel prices across the world.

When he was president, Trump said the relationship with Saudi Arabia, the biggest U.S. arms customer, was too important to be derailed by the Khashoggi killing. Kushner cultivated a personal relationship with the prince, often referred to by his initials, MBS, and was said to communicate with him frequently through text messages.

While Saudi Arabia has yet to sign the normalization agreements with Israel that the Trump administration brokered with the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan, the kingdom allows some Israeli companies to quietly operate within its borders.

"I think the crown prince understands that in order to transform the Saudi economy from an economy that has been almost wholly dependent on oil to one that has a vibrant tech sector, he needs to connect his people to the country that has the most vibrant tech sector in the Middle East, which is Israel," Mark Dubowitz, CEO of the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, a Washington research institute, told *The Circuit*.

"What we're talking about is a process," Dubowitz, who is attending the conference, said. "Step by step, the kingdom is moving to greater and greater normalization with Israel."

The conference, started by the prince in 2017 to showcase his ambitious "Vision 2030" plan for diversifying the economy and weaning it from dependence on oil, has been a magnet for some of the world's most influential business leaders, although many stayed away after the Khashoggi killing. Among those attending this year were JPMorgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon, Goldman Sachs CEO David Solomon and Blackstone Group CEO Stephen Schwarzman. ♦

OCTOBER 27, 2022

Israeli entrepreneur looks to sell electric trucks in Saudi Arabia

Asher Bennett, brother of the former prime minister, joins growing stream of Israeli entrepreneurs seeking business in the kingdom that still resists diplomatic ties

By Jonathan H. Ferziger

The article first appeared in The Circuit.

It sounds counterintuitive, even like the start of a gag: an Israeli tech entrepreneur comes to an Arab desert kingdom that is the largest oil producer in the Middle East, and whose entire economy runs on crude, and he's hawking zero-emission e-trucks.

But Asher Bennett, the brother of former Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett and the founder of the London-based e-truck maker Tevva Motors, may be looking down the road clear-eyed and he may just have the right vehicle, and the right technology, at the right time. Even Saudi Arabia is setting new

environmental standards to reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

"There's a lot of interest in the Gulf for our technologies, so I'm here from time to time," Bennett told *The Circuit* on the second day of the Future Investment Initiative conference, often called "Davos in the Desert" because it's patterned after the annual World Economic Forum event in Davos, Switzerland. "I was invited here last year and it was an eye-opener," he said in an interview at the King Abdulaziz Convention Center, the site of the conference here in the Saudi capital.

Israeli companies are increasingly being

allowed to operate in the Saudi kingdom despite the fact that it has not joined the 2020 Abraham Accords, which normalized diplomatic relations with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan. Like Bennett, who has American parents, many Israelis are dual citizens and face few restrictions on entering the country. In other cases, Saudi officials have granted special visas to admit Israelis, particularly tech executives, without a second nationality.

At least four Israelis were invited to speak at this week's conference, including Samer Haj Yehia, chairman of Bank Leumi and an Arab citizen of Israel; and U.S.-

born Jonathan Medved, founder and CEO of the venture capital investing platform OurCrowd.

The new unofficial policy toward Israelis reflects the drive by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, recently appointed prime minister, to overhaul the country's economy and wean it off dependence on oil. Known as MBS, the prince has in the past expressed admiration for Israel's tech industry and said he sees Israel as a "potential ally." Still, the country adheres to the Arab League position of not establishing official ties with Israel until its conflict with the Palestinians is resolved.

Bennett, 53, said he developed an interest in e-vehicles through his service as a

naval officer on an Israeli submarine, which was propelled by batteries attached to a large electric motor. Unlike other successful Israeli companies such as Mobileye, the maker of sophisticated navigation systems and software for self-driving cars that was bought by Intel for \$15 billion, Tevva builds vehicles, he said.

"I'm the Israeli tech entrepreneur who figured out the one business step that we're not good at in Israel and that's automotive, the hardware side," he said. "We don't build cars in Israel, we don't teach the engineering side in Israel, so I moved to the U.K."

Tevva, which developed a dual-motor system that includes a hydrogen fuel cell to extend the vehicle's range, produced a small

fleet of trucks for the UPS package delivery service in London. "The average car drives one to two hours a day where the average truck goes out for eight, nine or 10 hours a day," Bennett said. "Batteries alone don't do it, so we mix batteries with hydrogen fuel cells. We can go much farther but also make it more economical."

Tevva, which means nature in Hebrew, has raised more than \$90 million in investment, including a \$57 million funding round that closed in November 2021. Bennett declined to disclose the total amount. He said investors come from Europe, the U.S., India and the Gulf. ♦

OCTOBER 25, 2022

How Jewish aid groups helped Florida and Puerto Rico

In addition to meeting immediate material needs, Jewish aid workers placed a focus on victims' mental health.

By Daniela Cohen

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

Just before Rosh Hashana began, psychotrauma therapist Gaby HilkowitzRurka left her home in Israel, headed for Puerto Rico as part of a United Hatzalah team providing an emergency response to Hurricane Fiona. One day when it started to pour, she recalls a young boy approached her and said, "This is exactly what makes me so scared and nervous. This reminds me of the hurricane," Hilkowitz Rurka recalled to *eJewishPhilanthropy*.

"[We tell them], 'It's so normal to feel like this. Obviously, you went through a

very difficult situation and your brain is still hyper-aroused,'" Hilkowitz Rurka said. "So, we normalize it for them, so they get to start understanding what's happening with their brains and their bodies."

When disaster response teams arrived in Puerto Rico and the west coast of Florida in September and October, shortly after Fiona and Hurricane Ian, respectively, made landfall, they were focused on meeting immediate needs — extricating those who were trapped and providing food, shelter and medical care. But during the little more than a week when its teams were in each location, Hatzalah, a nonprofit headquartered in Jerusalem, also attended to what it says

is an important, if sometimes neglected, aspect of disaster relief: providing tools for people to cope mentally and emotionally in the aftermath of trauma.

"Everyone always treats the physically wounded, but no one ever deals with the mentally wounded," Gavy Friedson, mission commander for United Hatzalah in both Puerto Rico and Florida, told eJP. "All of a sudden, [if] someone sees someone get hit by a bus, they'll run to the person who was hit, but they'll forget about the six people who saw the person hit by the bus."

Local Jewish community leaders have continued relief efforts after the disaster response organizations have left, and are

also caring for their neighbors' mental health. Rabbi Yitzchok Minkowicz, director of Chabad Lubavitch of Southwest Florida in Fort Myers, which took a direct hit from Ian, told eJP that nearly a month after the Category 4 hurricane made landfall in Florida, he is focused on providing his community with moral support. Going door-to-door in his neighborhood, he said the devastation is tangible.

"Everything from the house – books, floors, clothing, everything's outside," said Minkowicz. "And I go into people's houses to give them strength. Any neighbor, Jew or non-Jew, I go into their houses, and I say, 'Hey, what can I do for you?' And they say, 'Listen, Rabbi, just come and check and make sure I'm sane tomorrow.' It's very rough."

After an initial assessment, the focus of Hatzalah's psychotrauma professionals is on stabilizing people, Hilkowitz Rurka explained. "You want to help them feel more grounded and feel like they belong and feel like they aren't helpless. They can do something. You want to help them with a racing heart, with anxious thoughts, basically making them feel more strong and more able to do things."

The Hatzalah team uses various models to do this, including a method called the Six C's created by trauma expert Moshe Farchi, president of the Israel-based International Center for Functional Resilience. Farchi's method is focused on quickly shifting a person from a passive state to being able to actively function right after a traumatic event.

Hatzalah attended to victims' physical as well as mental health. Working with the local Chabad in San Juan, the United Hatzalah team visited locations throughout the island, providing water, food, medicine and humanitarian aid, particularly on Puerto Rico's western side, where the impacts were most severe, Friedson told eJP.

"Some villages were completely flooded out. A lot of people lost their homes," said Friedson. "[There was] a lot of devastation in those areas in Puerto Rico – no power, no water, anything you'd expect from the aftermath of a hurricane. So, it was very hard to see in some of those areas."

When Hurricane Ian hit, United Hatzalah dispatched a team to Florida, where it

provided similar assistance, working with local first responders who recognized the group from their work in Surfside last year after the collapse of the Champlain Towers South apartment building.

Part of the work involved encouraging those who felt they had nowhere to go to evacuate, said Friedson. The team spent days in Hertz Arena, a shelter in a sports stadium near Fort Myers. When they left after a week, he said 130 bodies had been recovered from the area.

In total, Hatzalah estimates that it aided 500 people in Puerto Rico and more than 1,000 in Florida, spending \$35,000 on each mission out of its budget of approximately \$35 million. It sent 12 people to Florida and had a team of 13 in Puerto Rico.

Minkowicz's Chabad, like Hatzalah, is aiming to tend to people's material as well as emotional needs, and is still providing daily hot meals for the community, working out of the one local building that was not damaged. It is also now starting work on repairing its flooded preschool, ritual bath and guest houses, in order to accommodate people who need a place to stay.

"The way it works is, you have to get rid of the water and the mold," said Minkowicz. "When the flood is two feet, you usually go up an extra two feet, you go up four feet, and you cut out the sheetrock and you have to air the place out, you have to get rid of any mold, there are special chemicals you use, etc. So, it's a big, big process and that's phase number one. Then you have to rebuild."

He is grateful for the \$77,000 Chabad has raised so far – 42% of its goal. "I always tell people we have one donor, and that's God. God is sending the money on his clock," said Minkowicz.

The timing of the hurricane also increased the need for supplies, coming in the middle of the Jewish High Holiday season. Minkowicz said community members have stepped up: A bank executive drove for two hours with her kids to donate toys for the preschool, and Rabbi Josh Broide of Boca Raton Synagogue also provided catered meals to Fort Myers Chabad for more than 100 people on the first and last nights of Sukkot.

Locals in Puerto Rico were also supportive of the Hatzalah team, Friedson said. For example, Luis Vásquez, the security

guard at the hotel where they were staying and a paramedic, volunteered to assist the psychotrauma unit with translation and any medical needs that arose.

"He's like Israel's newest ambassador right now in Puerto Rico," said Friedson. "He loves United Hatzalah. He has the Israeli flag of the United Hatzalah, and he put it up in his room in his house and he brings it everywhere he goes. It's just amazing to see what we've managed to do as a country many miles away, the impact we have on the ground, just helping people on a mental level and a physical level."

Because Hatzalah's team was on the ground for only a short time, it tried to leave people with tools they could use themselves. This included teaching children and their parents games and breathing techniques to calm their nervous systems. For example, the aid workers taught victims to close their mouths around a straw and breathe in for a count of four, hold the breath for a count of four and exhale for a count of six. The longer exhalation helps calm the nervous system.

"It really helps at the time, they can actually feel better within a minute or two of doing it," said Hilkowitz Rurka. "We teach them that in the night or in a week or two, they might still feel anxious, and they might still feel those butterflies in their stomach. And this is one of the techniques that they can [use to] help calm themselves down."

Another part of United Hatzalah's work is helping first responders to deal with their own high stress levels as well as learn additional techniques to support the people they are helping.

Friedson was touched by the community's expressions of gratitude for Hatzalah's work. In the town of Anesco, in Puerto Rico, people sang songs of appreciation in the church, and a family that had lost its home gave two of the psychotrauma specialists each an avocado.

"They wanted to feel like they were doing something for us," said Friedson. "They were able to give us just a simple avocado, which is everything to them. It's their food. It symbolizes so much hope and resilience. And by generously giving it to our team, it was really just a powerful moment for all of us to experience." ♦