

THE WEEKLY PRINT

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Krafting a new angle on Anne Frank

Israeli-American journalist Dina Kraft is already well-known for her in-depth news reporting; now she's a New York Times best-selling author for her part in writing a memoir with Anne Frank's best friend

By Ruth Marks Eglash

Dina Kraft is already well-known in Israel as a veteran journalist. In her long and illustrious career, Kraft has reported for the *Associated Press* from South Africa and *The New York Times* from Israel. In 2020, she won the B'nai B'rith World Center-Jerusalem Award for Journalism in Diaspora Reportage and has been awarded places in prestigious media programs such as the Nieman Foundation for Journalism at Harvard University and the DART Center at Columbia Journalism School.

Now, Kraft can add one more accolade to her extensive resume: the book she ghost-wrote together with Anne Frank's best

friend, Hannah Pick-Goslar, became a *New York Times* bestseller last week.

My Friend Anne Frank, which hit bookshelves earlier this month to rave reviews, has already racked up no shortage of media coverage. From *Time* magazine to the *Washington Post* and even a slot on the BBC's "Breakfast Show," it is steadily making its way up the rankings for non-fiction books, but in her interviews, Kraft remains focused on telling the story of Pick-Goslar – who died last October – and on sharing her legacy.

"For lack of a better word, it feels like this has all been *bashert*," Kraft, who is

the opinions editor at the English edition of *Haaretz*, told *Jewish Insider*, using the Jewish word for "destiny."

"I spent years writing Holocaust-related stories and, being the daughter of a family that fled Nazi Europe to the furthest corner of the globe – New Zealand, where my mother grew up – it felt like really something I was sort of working towards my whole life without realizing it," she added.

Kraft told *JI* that she first met Pick-Goslar, who is mentioned by Anne Frank several times in *The Diary of a Young Girl* as part of her close circle of friends, on assignment for AP in Jerusalem. Pick-Goslar moved to

Israel after the war and Kraft, who was born and made *aliyah* in 1996, was already very familiar with Anne Frank and her diary.

"I was really happy to interview [Pick-Goslar] then because I, like many kids growing up in the U.S., had read Anne Frank's diary," Kraft recalled. "I felt very, very connected to it, to the point where I felt like Anne Frank was my friend, and reading the diary, I felt like there was a real synergy between us."

"I also got in trouble for talking in class all the time and I could also be kind of cheeky," she said. "I felt a very strong attachment to Anne Frank while I was reading it, to the point that when I finished the book and read the last page with the description of her being deported, I literally wept into my pillow."

After interviewing Pick-Goslar as a younger journalist, Kraft, 51, said she would often think about her over the years and particularly her description of a chance – and last – meeting with Frank while the two young women were interned in the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp.

In January 2022, Kraft was contacted by an Israeli literary agency about ghostwriting the story of a 93-year-old Holocaust survivor.

"They didn't know anything about her except that she must have an important story to tell, otherwise Penguin Books wouldn't want to invest in writing her memoir," said Kraft. "Then I asked [the agent], 'do you think it could be Hannah Pick-Goslar?'"

"I think this gives you a different perspective on the story of Anne Frank, it gives you a story from the outside in," explained Kraft. "Plus, you're seeing the world that they came from, this beautiful leafy southern Amsterdam neighborhood that felt safe and coddled and warm even as the winds of war were approaching."

Kraft notes that while there's been a "commodification of Anne Frank" and her story remains one of hope, with some pithy quotes, it is also a story of destruction even though we don't get to see the destruction through Frank's eyes.

Pick-Goslar's story, in contrast, takes readers through the harrowing experience of being a young woman who survives the horrors of a concentration camp.

"At some point, it was very hard for Hannah," said Kraft of the hours and hours

of interviews she held with the aging survivor, both on Zoom and in her Jerusalem home. "I was careful not to retraumatize her when we went into these difficult stories. I tapped into my journalism training relating to covering trauma, which is to remind the person you're interviewing that we're in the here and now, we're in your living room, and this is safe."

"But it was still difficult material," she continued. "We would both end up exhausted, and she would say, 'I have to go take a nap down' and I would say, 'Oh, my God, so do I' and I would just lie down and close my eyes for a few minutes because it was just hard to absorb some of the details."

Like Frank's family, Pick-Goslar's arrived in Amsterdam after fleeing Nazi Germany in 1933. In the suburb of Rivierenbuurt, the two girls struck up a close friendship, and according to Pick-Goslar's account, the pair were inseparable, enjoying a carefree childhood of games, sleepovers and treats with the other children. Pick-Goslar recalls in the book being at Anne's 13th birthday party, where the famous diarist received her notebook, and visiting Anne's house a few weeks later when the Frank family mysteriously disappeared, supposedly escaping to Switzerland.

Kraft described Pick-Goslar's shock when she finally met up with her friend again – at the fence in Bergen-Belsen.

"It was a very cold, rainy and freezing night and she went to the fence on pain of death; if she'd been discovered she would have been shot on the spot," relayed Kraft. "She thought her beloved friend, Anna, was safe in Switzerland, but when she went to the fence that night, a person [an old neighbor from Amsterdam] answered her and said 'Oh, you must be here for Anna, I will fetch her for you.'"

"Hannah and Anne recognized each other's voices, and they exchanged news. Anne was very broken, very distraught, a different person from the one we see in her diary and from the one Hannah knew in Amsterdam," described Kraft, who also used letters sent by Otto Frank and others to Pick-Goslar after the war for additional texture.

Kraft said that one of the main takeaways from telling the story of Anne Frank's best friend was a point that Pick-Goslar made to her several times over the course of their

meetings: "How often, in an instant, a state-protected world can vanish from beneath your feet."

"Yes, you have to be vigilant, but this is also what happens when people are silent," she continued. "There was evil in their world, but there were a lot more people who just kept their mouths shut. The silence and the complicity of silence is something I think is the cautionary tale of this book." ♦

Ramaswamy alleges 'open questions' over Zelensky's 'treatment of religious minorities,' including Jews

The 37-year-old 'anti-woke' crusader was unable to cite any specific examples to support his claim

By Matthew Kassel

Vivek Ramaswamy, a long-shot Republican presidential candidate whose unorthodox views have drawn headlines, suggested without evidence on Thursday that Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky had mistreated Jews and other religious minorities amid Russia's invasion.

"I'm going to say some things that maybe are outside of the establishment-approved Overton Window here, but I think we have gotten into this weird habit of holding out Ukraine and Volodymyr Zelensky as some paragon of democratic ideals," he told *Jewish Insider* in an interview. "I would just say that there are open questions about his treatment of religious minorities, including but not limited to Jews in Ukraine, that I think should be among the reasons we should stop short of holding him out as some sort of hero."

The 37-year-old "anti-woke" crusader was, however, unable to cite any specific examples to support his claim. Instead, Ramaswamy criticized Zelensky for dissolving Ukrainian political parties with ties to Russia and combining national TV channels into one state platform under martial law. "That much I'm on firm factual footing on," he said, insisting that such measures alone "create the risks for" anti-Jewish bigotry.

"The idea of banning political parties or consolidating state media into one arm, I think, is a risk factor that everyone who cares about democracy, including but not limited to those who are concerned about antisemitism, should worry about," he said. Left unacknowledged was that Zelensky is himself Jewish and a frequent target of antisemitic conspiracy theories promoted

by Russia.

Attention-grabbing assertions are typical of the voluble Republican candidate now seeking the nomination in an increasingly crowded field. In recent weeks, Ramaswamy, an author and entrepreneur currently polling in the low single digits, has positioned himself among just a few primary rivals to have expressed skepticism of supporting Ukraine in its war against Russia.

He has pledged to cease U.S. funding for Ukraine and proposed a deal in which Russia would agree to end its military alliance with China and withdraw its nuclear weapons from Kaliningrad, among other concessions. Meanwhile, the agreement would "cede most of" the occupied Donbas region in eastern Ukraine to Russia and impose "a permanent moratorium on Ukraine joining NATO."

While some critics have questioned the plan and accused him of promoting a policy of "appeasement," Ramaswamy, who has never held elective office, characterized his approach as a kind of "prioritization" in conversation with *JI*. "Preventing China from going after Taiwan — or, for that matter, protecting Israel — are far higher priorities than protecting Ukraine. That's the bottom line," he said. "And I think that the top U.S. military threat right now is the Russia-China alliance." Even if Ukrainians would unlikely be willing to recognize his proposal, he expressed confidence that the U.S. can successfully end the war "on terms that would actually cause" Russian President Vladimir Putin "to exit his alliance with China."

In a statement outlining the plan, Ramaswamy predicted that his approach

to the conflict "will become the key distinguishing issue" in the Republican primary, where most candidates have stressed their continued support for defending Ukraine. The exceptions include former President Donald Trump and Gov. Ron DeSantis of Florida, who recently argued that protecting Ukraine from Russian aggression was not a vital national interest.

The Florida governor, whose remarks elicited fierce blowback from conservative foreign policy hawks, has frequently drawn criticism from Ramaswamy. Earlier this month, for instance, he took aim at a bill DeSantis had touted, on a recent trip to Israel, that criminalizes unwanted displays of "religious or ethnic animus" on private property as felony hate crimes. The legislation, which was largely motivated by rising incidents of antisemitism across Florida, received unanimous support from both chambers of the state legislature in April.

But according to Ramaswamy, the governor had signed a "hate speech" law "at his donors' request," he alleged weeks later on Twitter. "I respectfully disagree: the right answer to bad speech isn't less speech. It's more speech. That's the American way."

In opposing the legislation, Ramaswamy aligned himself with a small number of figures on the extreme right, including Laura Loomer, a conspiracy theorist and former congressional candidate in Florida who has attacked the bill as "unconstitutional." Ramaswamy, for his part, said he had arrived at a different conclusion. "I did not make an argument about constitutionality," he told *JI* on Thursday. "I was drawing a legitimate policy contrast from Ron

DeSantis, which is, it's just a fact that I'm a free-speech absolutist." The government, he said, "should not be in the business of viewpoint discrimination."

Still, he fell back on a constitutional argument to bolster his point. "I think the Skokie case was decided correctly," he said, referring to the landmark Supreme Court decision allowing a Nazi demonstration in the Chicago suburbs 35 years ago — over the objections of Holocaust survivors who lived in the area. He made no distinction, however, between the Skokie verdict, which concerned a march on public land, and the bill DeSantis had signed, which addresses threats on private property.

Ramaswamy clarified that his unfavorable view of the Florida bill should not be interpreted as an endorsement of hateful beliefs. "I stand fiercely against bigotry and hatred and harassing speech," Ramaswamy emphasized. "But the right answer to that is to defeat the bad speech on the merits through free speech and open debate, which I have no trouble doing."

His "litmus test" for evaluating the Florida bill is based on a simple formulation, he said. "If there's something you can place — a book or a flier or anything — that has one set of views printed on it in a certain context, but not a different set of views, and it's the subject of a government drawing the distinction between the two, that's a hate speech regulation or a viewpoint discrimination law, and I stand against it."

He acknowledged that there is "room for reasonable debate" and that he was not trying to engage in a "personal attack" against DeSantis — even as he has otherwise called the governor "uncourageous" and "sloppy" in his effort to compete with Trump's top rival. The DeSantis team did not respond to a request for comment from JI.

As for his own approach to combating a national surge in antisemitism, "we need to find and revive our national identity," Ramaswamy asserted. "I think something else has gone badly wrong when people start to resort to the old, tired trope of blaming one group of people who have been a punching bag for much of modern human history."

The rise of anti-Jewish prejudice "is a leading indicator of a broader decay in a

society," he explained. "That deeper cancer in our country is that we are lost. We have lost our sense of purpose, we have lost our sense of identity, of who we are as Americans," he added. "I think we need to go upstream and fill that void with something deeper — a vision of American national identity that dilutes this poison to irrelevance."

To Ramaswamy, a model for his own personal behavior comes from the Jewish community itself. The Cincinnati native said he has long been affiliated with Shabtai, a Jewish leadership society at Yale University, where he received his law degree before founding the pharmaceutical company Roivant Sciences in 2014. His reverence for what he described as "open debate" and respectful disagreement was "one of the core tenets of what Shabtai stood for" and part of what drew him into the organization. "I became one of the most active members during my years at Yale and since then have been one of the biggest backers."

The Hindu son of Indian immigrants said his experience connecting with Jewish community members at Shabtai events had contributed to a long-standing respect for what he described as "the shared values of the Jewish tradition," citing "faith in a true God and the family foundations that come along with that." Ramaswamy said he particularly admired "the importance paid to tradition," which underscored "that we have traditions for a reason."

"You can take religious and even ancient traditions that originated somewhere other than the United States and make that come alive here in the U.S.," he said. "That's something that I think the Hindu American community does not, to date, do well, but has given a lot of inspiration to my wife and I and the way we raise our kids and the example we set."

He expressed hope that his candidacy would resonate with Jews from both parties. "The way I talk about domestic issues at home from meritocracy and nondiscrimination to foreign policy and America actually standing up with a spine," he said, "should be, I hope, appealing to many Jewish voters."

In the context of his crusade against environmental, social and governance investing, Ramaswamy, the author of 2021's *Woke, Inc.: Inside Corporate America's*

Social Justice Scam, claimed he has been a fierce opponent of boycott campaigns targeting Israel. "Companies should have no place engaging in selective political engagement here, which is clearly bigoted anti-Israel content masquerading as social responsibility," he said of the ESG movement, which has faced allegations of anti-Israel bias. "I think that's noxious."

He said he would remain "an unapologetic supporter of Israel," which he recalled visiting multiple times on business trips. "The way I think about our commitment to Israel is it's grounded in the most solid foundation, which is national self-interest," he explained. "The bedrock of stability in the Middle East starts with Israel."

More broadly, Ramaswamy suggested that he would follow the example of Trump — whom he recently promised to pardon if elected — on Middle East policy. He commended the former president for "finally having the spine" to relocate the U.S. Embassy in Israel from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. "That was a move that I applaud, that I stand behind, that I do not apologize for," Ramaswamy told JI. He also praised "what Jared did with the Abraham Accords," referring to Jared Kushner, a close friend as well as Trump's son-in-law and former senior advisor. "These are major, major accomplishments."

But Ramaswamy became circumspect when asked if he believed that Trump had helped fuel antisemitism by welcoming extremists into his movement — most prominently last November, when he dined with the artist Ye, formerly known as Kanye West, who has praised Hitler, and Nick Fuentes, an outspoken Holocaust denier, at his Palm Beach residence. "I can't speak to the particulars of who he met and who he didn't," Ramaswamy said cautiously. "But I tend to think that actions speak louder than words."

In addition to his administration's record of accomplishments in the Middle East, Trump deserved recognition for working with "a diverse coalition that included Jewish leaders" during his four years in the White House, Ramaswamy said. "I think that you'd be hard-pressed to say that that's the antisemitic president," he reasoned. "It's like, if the glove does not fit, you must acquit."

And the glove does not fit, is what I would say, so you must acquit, is where I land.”

Still, he added a caveat. “I would make a lot of judgments that are different than

Trump’s judgments,” he clarified. “That’s why I’m running for U.S. president.” ♦

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Entering House race in Maryland, Lesley Lopez seeks to ‘build on’ Trone’s work

Lopez tells JI she’s not yet ready to lay out an approach to the BDS movement or other key Middle East policy questions

By Matthew Kassel

The race to succeed Rep. David Trone (D-MD) is becoming increasingly competitive as several new candidates have recently launched campaigns for the open House seat covering western Maryland.

Lesley Lopez, a state legislator from Montgomery County, was the second Democrat to enter the primary earlier this month, weeks after Trone announced he would run for the Senate seat being vacated by retiring Sen. Ben Cardin (D-MD).

“I saw this as an opportunity to really build on some of the great work he’s doing,” Lopez, 39, said in an interview with *Jewish Insider* on Tuesday. “I really respect how Congressman Trone has created a great standard for constituent services and been a leader on opioids.” Through his position on the House Appropriations Committee, “he’s brought a lot of great money back to the district that’s made a difference,” she added. “I’ve worked with his office a lot.”

But Lopez was unable to clarify her positions on one of Trone’s top issues: Israel. The three-term congressman, an AIPAC “minyan” donor, has been a staunch supporter of pro-Israel causes during his time in the House, where he is among the most outspoken critics of the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement.

For her part, Lopez said she was not ready to explain her approach to the BDS movement or other key Middle East policy questions such as U.S. security funding to Israel. “I just don’t really know enough to even know what I don’t know yet,” she

acknowledged. “I would need to do a little bit more research before really going into the details.”

Lopez said she is now in the early stages of engaging in outreach to inform her views on such issues. “Those conversations are ongoing, and they’re a part of me just developing more of an understanding of the nuances,” she told JI, but declined to share specifics. “I certainly believe in a two-state solution. But outside of that, I think there’s obviously a lot of nuance to the situation and a lot of information to process.”

The two-term legislator is one of five Democrats now competing in the primary, including Mia Mason and George Gluck, both former congressional candidates; Stephen McDow, a Maryland businessman and self-described Blue Dog Democrat; and Joe Vogel, a Montgomery County lawmaker and Jewish activist who has called himself a pro-Israel progressive.

Lopez said she considers herself a “pragmatic progressive,” claiming that “every bill” she had passed in the state legislature drew backing from members of both parties. “That’s going to be really important in this district,” she said, “being able to advance these ideals in a way where you can gain bipartisan support and work across the aisle with folks.”

Among other efforts, Lopez cited bills in which she worked to address healthcare shortages, ban the sale of ghost guns and improve hate crimes reporting. “I’ve been working on issues in the state legislature that lend themselves to a lot of federal

policy,” she told JI. As a member of Congress, for instance, Lopez said she “would follow the same path of looking to partners within law enforcement and within the various communities that get targeted by hate crimes.”

Lopez said she has worked with the Jewish community “pretty extensively” during her time as a lawmaker. “It’s been a really effective tool, I’ve seen, to reach different populations by reaching out to leaders of the faith communities to do constituent services,” she said, recalling that she had conferred with a local rabbi as well as an imam, a priest and a reverend to write a prayer she delivered on the chamber floor. “That’s kind of a nice thing, a symbolic thing that shows the unity between all of those communities.”

Lopez grew up in Southern California and comes from what she described as “a long line” of military veterans, including a great uncle who served as an interrogator during the Nuremberg trials. “He’s an inspiration to me in a lot of ways,” she said.

Lopez, who now works as a media and communications consultant, graduated from U.C. San Diego and received her master’s of public administration from The George Washington University. Before entering politics, she held various positions in broadcast journalism. Later, she served as a communications director for the Congressional Hispanic Caucus and as a press secretary for Rep. Henry Cuellar (D-TX), among other roles.

In 2018, Lopez was elected to Maryland’s

House of Delegates, where she has been president of the Women's Legislative Caucus. She is currently a member of the Health and Government Operations Committee.

Lopez believes she is well-positioned in the primary, alluding to a list of nearly 40 endorsements from local elected officials that she expects to roll out over the next few months.

But the race could draw some candidates with potentially wider name recognition, including former Frederick County Executive Jan Gardner and April McLain-Delaney, a deputy assistant secretary in the U.S. Department of Commerce and

the wife of former Rep. John Delaney (D-MD). Tekesha Martinez, the mayor of Hagerstown, "will have an announcement about her plans by the second week of July," her adviser, Brett Guessford, told JI on Tuesday.

Len Foxwell, a Democratic strategist in Maryland, said the district "has a propensity for electing centrists" like Trone and Delaney, who held the seat between 2013 and 2019.

The House Republican campaign arm sees the race as competitive, even as it has yet to attract any marquee candidates to the primary in Maryland's 6th Congressional

District, which extends to rural and conservative portions of the state.

Like Vogel, Lopez won't have to give up her current seat if she loses because she is only at the beginning of her second four-year term. If elected, her top priorities in Congress, she said broadly, would include healthcare reform, infrastructure investment, reproductive choice and combating the opioid crisis.

Meanwhile, as the race progresses, Lopez said she is "in the process" of arriving at her own positions on issues relating to Israel and the Middle East. "I want to make sure that I'm not rushing." ♦

JUNE 21, 2023

Majority of Arab youth in UAE, Egypt and Morocco strongly support normalization with Israel, according to new poll

Arab Youth Survey finds less support in Shia-majority Bahrain for warmer ties with Israel

By **Tori Bergel**

Arab youth in the United Arab Emirates and Morocco, two signatories to the Abraham Accords, strongly support the normalization of ties with Israel, according to the 2023 Arab Youth Survey. Young Arabs in Egypt also strongly favor normalization with Israel, while the majority of respondents in other Arab countries from Algeria to Iraq to Saudi Arabia, and including Bahrain, another signatory to the Accords, oppose warmer ties with the Jewish state by large margins.

When it comes to the views of Arab youth about Israel more generally, 86% of respondents view the Jewish state as an enemy of their home country.

Two-thirds of those polled in the survey, which was released yesterday by the global communications firm ASDA/A BCW, said that current "tensions" between Iran, Israel and "some Western countries" — such as the U.S. — will eventually result in war. The U.S., however, continues to hold sway over

the region in the eyes of young Arabs, who named it No. 1 among countries felt to have "the most influence on the Arab world."

Regarding Russia's war against Ukraine, the majority of young Arabs saw diplomatic negotiations as ultimately leading to a resolution. On the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, however, young Arabs, especially in North Africa and the Levant region, do not see a resolution coming soon, and only one-third of all respondents feel the situation is getting "adequate attention and focus" from the Arab world.

For this year's Arab Youth Survey, the 15th to date, researchers conducted 3,600 interviews with individuals ages 18-24 between March 27 and April 12 in 18 countries and 53 cities across the Middle East and North Africa, to gauge the overall attitude of the "Arab world's largest demographic." The survey's margin of error is 1.6%.

On the normalization question, 75% of young Arabs in the UAE, 73% in Egypt

and 50% in Morocco "strongly support" or "somewhat support" ties with Israel. In Bahrain, the figure dropped to 30%, with 53% "strongly opposing" or "somewhat opposing" normalization with Israel. Of the other 14 countries included in the survey, most saw opposition percentages in the 80s and 90s, with respondents in Iraq and the Palestinian Territories both 100% against warmer ties.

As in previous surveys, the UAE was very highly regarded by respondents. For the 12th consecutive year, Arab youth chose the UAE as the country they'd most want to live in, as well as the country they'd most want their own to emulate. Reasons included the UAE's growing economy, entrepreneurial opportunities and successful leadership. More than four in 10 young Arabs associate the UAE with a "safe and secure environment." ♦

First-of-its-kind delegation sends IDF officers to U.K. to learn about Diaspora Jewry

In an initiative funded by the Israeli government and philanthropy, 63 mid-career personnel visit London's Jewish community

By Judah Ari Gross

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

A group of 63 Israel Defense Forces officers returned to Israel on Monday following a first-of-its-kind eight-day delegation to London as part of a new joint initiative organized by the military, the Gesher organization, Israel's Diaspora Affairs Ministry and AMI – the National Alliance Strengthening Israelis' Connection to World Jewry.

"We're used to going abroad and telling people, 'This is why Israel matters, so come donate, come support us, come help lobby for us,'" Shlomit Mali, the CEO of AMI, who led the delegation, told *eJewishPhilanthropy* on Wednesday. "This was the opposite: We didn't come to tell, we came to listen."

While there are a growing number of initiatives to bring Israeli leaders to Diaspora communities, this trip represented the first such delegation made up solely of IDF officers. Mali said the vast majority of the participants – 56 of 63 – held the rank of major, while the different groups that the delegation was broken up into were each led by a lieutenant colonel. A number of more senior officers, including a brigadier general, also participated in the delegation.

The delegation was funded jointly by the IDF, through the Defense Ministry budget, and AMI – the National Alliance Strengthening Israelis' Connection to World Jewry, which is itself jointly funded by the Israeli government and private philanthropy, primarily the Maimonides Fund and the William Davidson Foundation.

Mali said this delegation was a pilot program with plans to expand the initiative to potentially eight trips each year by IDF officers to Jewish communities around the

world. The organizers specifically chose to open this type of trip to majors because they are still "connected to the ground," with regular contact with rank-and-file soldiers, "but they are also on track to hold higher ranks," Mali said.

In a statement, Gesher explained that the goal of the trip was to both deepen the participants' connection to Jews in the Diaspora and to strengthen the "feeling of significance and dedication toward IDF service."

Ahead of the trip, the participants had two one-day seminars preparing them for the delegation, and they will have another debriefing session next week, Mali said.

In London, the delegation visited a number of Jewish communities, Jewish schools and British universities to speak with Jewish students. They also visited the House of Lords and met two Jewish lords and a Jewish baroness. "We heard what it's like dealing with antisemitism. We heard about demographics. There was a panel with liberal Jewish communities and a panel with Haredi communities. We visited three synagogues on Shabbat," Mali said.

While the focus of the trip was primarily to listen to British Jews in order to understand their experiences, challenges and considerations, the participants did also speak at some of the schools they visited to describe "the IDF's challenges and significant activities."

"Officers and commanders went out to understand the challenges facing the Jewish people in the Diaspora, what they deal with and particularly to ask what we in Israel can do to strengthen this connection to them. This is a breakthrough for the State of Israel and the IDF," Ilan Geal Dor, the CEO of Gesher, said in a statement.

Mali said the organizers chose London

after considering a number of other potential locations. "It's a very interesting, varied community so we decided to start there," she said, adding that in the future delegations will visit other countries and cities as well.

Mali said that many of the participants have personal connections to Diaspora Jewry – some made aliyah when they were younger and others have close relatives living outside of Israel. Though the overwhelming majority of the participants were Jewish Israelis, some were not, coming from either Israel's Druze or Bedouin communities.

"It was a very strong [experience] for them as well," Mali said, noting that they had chosen to join the delegation and "fully participated" in the discussions.

"The connection to Diaspora Jewry is a critical facet of the State of Israel's national security," Maj. Gen. Yaniv Assur, the head of the IDF's Manpower Directorate, said in a statement. "Soldiers from 69 different countries and Jewish communities serve in the IDF."

Mali said the officers participating in the program told her that it was an eye-opening experience for them.

"Most Israelis don't know anything about Diaspora Jewry. They don't know where exactly they live, how they live, how many there are," she said. "One officer came up to me and said, exaggerating a little, 'I thought there were 10 Jews in the world. Now I found out there are vibrant, lustrous communities.'" ♦

Ari Folman's newest film takes pride of place in Jerusalem's newly renovated Tower of David Museum

The award-winning Israeli filmmaker tells Jewish Insider how he summarized the 3,000-year-old history of the holy city in just three minutes

By Ruth Marks Eglash

How do you capture thousands of years of history in just three minutes?

Ask award-winning Israeli filmmaker Ari Folman, who undertook the near-impossible task of creating a short, animated film telling the entire story of Jerusalem from the time of King Solomon's First Jewish Temple up to the modern day.

The quirky, colorful visuals, replete with jolly priests, angry warriors and even a steam train chugging gaily through the Jerusalem hills, serves as the first exhibit at the recently renovated and revamped Tower of David Museum. Folman's film offers visitors a short history lesson with a modern twist, not only capturing 3,000 years of the holy city's history but also winning over the hearts of visitors immediately upon arrival at the new-look museum.

"Every second counts," Folman, best known for his Golden Globe-winning animated feature film, "Waltz with Bashir," told *Jewish Insider* – before noting that the film is actually 3 minutes and 1 second.

"When I go into a project of any kind, it does not matter if it's three minutes or 90 minutes, I try to be clueless – I don't come into it with any agenda or plan," Folman, 60, continued, who first turned down the project after curators suggested that the film be displayed with a small monitor beaming the images on a standard white wall.

"That was just not interesting," said Folman, who pushed the museum's artistic director to utilize the building's ancient Jerusalem stone and project the film inside on the "big, fantastic wall that they have there."

It was a complicated project, Yoav Cohen, once a student of Folman's and now the museum's artistic director, told JI. Together, the pair had to work to map the wall – literally measuring the rough, protruding stones – so that Folman's illustrator could then fit her drawings perfectly in and around them.

"We wanted the images to interact with the stones themselves because each stone has its own content," said Cohen, a visual design graduate from Bezalel School of Art and Design. "The stones tell the history too; they are physically part of the museum, and they are the same stones that are found in the Western Wall."

"Jerusalem stone has a lot of history," he emphasized, describing a process of 3D scanning, and digitalizing them for the illustrator to use.

Cohen said that Folman's work, which is the first to greet visitors at the newly reopened museum, is among the most important. Not only does it incorporate modern technologies to tell the well-worn story of an ancient city in a new and fresh way, but it also gives visitors a taste of what is to come in the \$50 million museum redesign.

Eilat Lieber, the museum's director and chief curator, said the goal of the redesign was "to tell the stories of Jerusalem in a multidisciplinary approach."

"Some visitors are intrigued to see ancient authentic artifacts, others models, but for a whole generation, multimedia is a language that can be understood and can create an active engagement and exploration of Jerusalem," she explained. "The creativity of artists has allowed us to produce and

illustrate actual scenes from the past and make them relevant to younger visitors."

Lieber added that "through video mapping, we were able to use the authentic citadel as a canvas with no need for intervention, connecting the past with the present."

"The museum is very didactic, and I wanted there to be a fun, cool entrance where you walk in and have a feel-good atmosphere," said Folman of his creative process.

"I didn't want there to be this heaviness where we're going to teach you about the history of Jerusalem," he added. "It's a welcome and if you come with kids, they are attracted to the wall and can watch it in loops – this was the idea."

To boil down Jerusalem's long, intricate story into just over three minutes, Folman started by examining the visuals from each period.

"You know, there's the First Temple, the Second Temple, the Romans, the Byzantine, the first Muslim era, the Middle Ages, and I needed the curators to think in visual icons as well," explained the filmmaker. "I had them flood me with visuals from each and every period and slowly this started a process where I too could think of the different periods of time in elements of visuals."

Then something curious happened – Folman noticed a pattern.

"I saw repetition," he went on. "Something is dictated, then there's a new invasion, then there's a war, then they take over, sometimes they take over for 400 years and sometimes for 80 years. Then you need

to make the separation from one period to another and to categorize in order to make everything special.”

Folman is no stranger to turning well-worn histories and even controversial matters into stories that speak to a visual savvy generation. In “Where is Anne Frank?,” released in 2021, Folman takes on Frank’s imaginary friend, Kitty, whom he brings to life in contemporary Amsterdam as she tries to find out what happened to Anne and the rest of the Frank family.

In contrast, “Waltz with Bashir” is an animated documentary that explores Folman’s own experiences as an Israeli combat soldier during the first Lebanon War. The film, which initially drew criticism from

both Israelis and the Arab world, follows the protagonist as he questions the role of his army unit in the massacre of Palestinians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in 1982.

In interviews at the time, Folman said the goal of the controversial film, which won Israel a Golden Globe for Best Foreign Language Film in 2008, was to influence young Israelis not to go to war.

“All wars are useless,” he told NPR in an interview at the time. “Sometimes in films, we tend to glorify them by making all of those great characters and they show you it’s all about bravery and brotherhood of man. And I don’t believe in that.”

Folman does not see his work at the museum, which is a celebration of Jewish

life – as well as other religions – in the long and storied history of Jerusalem, as contradicting his more critical position in “Waltz with Bashir.”

“Why would I see a contradiction?” he said when asked if there might be a contrast. “I’m not anti-Israeli. ‘Waltz with Bashir’ is my account of being a soldier – it is a very personal movie – but I’m very connected to this place.”

“I don’t see [the film at the museum] as a patriotic kind of work, it just portrays the history of Jerusalem as best I could, because it’s a fascinating history and we cannot ignore that,” he said. ♦

JUNE 18, 2023

UAE’s PureHealth, Israel’s Sheba Hospital sign cooperation pact

A team from the Gulf state’s largest health care provider visits Israeli medical center to discuss joint plans on research, training and medical tourism

By Jonathan H. Ferziger

The article first appeared in The Circuit.

PureHealth, the largest healthcare company in the United Arab Emirates, and Israel’s Sheba Medical Center signed an agreement last week to conduct joint research, collaborate on staff training and combine efforts to promote medical tourism.

The two institutions approved a memorandum of understanding outlining their intention to work together across a range of medical fields. Israel’s ambassador to the UAE, Amir Hayek, told *The Circuit* that the preliminary agreement demonstrates a growing momentum for the Abraham Accords, which normalized relations between the two countries in 2020.

“We are talking to each other about everything,” Hayek said in an interview from Abu Dhabi. “We are open about everything and we are past the point of no return.”

The agreement follows a visit to Sheba, near Tel Aviv, and other Israeli health facilities last week by top executives and doctors from the Emirati organization, Hayek said. PureHealth is a \$5 billion subsidiary of Abu Dhabi’s ADQ sovereign wealth fund that was formed last year to consolidate the UAE’s major health institutions, including Abu Dhabi Health Services Co., The National Health Insurance Co., Tamouh Healthcare and the Abu Dhabi Stem Cell Center. PureHealth operates 25 hospitals and 100 clinics across the Gulf state.

“This collaboration marks a major milestone in our efforts to drive healthcare innovation and improve patient outcomes,” Rashid Al Qubaisi, PureHealth’s group chief corporate officer, said in a statement. “By combining our expertise and resources, we aim to foster breakthrough research, advance medical education, and establish

a robust framework for clinical services coordination.”

Since the signing of the U.S.-backed Accords at the White House in September 2020, trade between the UAE and Israel has exceeded \$3.8 billion and the two countries expect commercial activity to reach \$10 billion by the end of 2026. ADQ reached an agreement in December to buy control of Phoenix Holdings, Israel’s biggest insurer, for about \$675 million. The deal is under regulatory review in Israel.

In another agreement last week, Abu Dhabi’s G42 technology company and Israel’s Viola Ventures investment firm launched a joint business aimed at providing computer engineers and other skilled employees to businesses in both countries and around the world.

Sheba, Israel’s largest hospital, is already working with Bahrain’s King Hamad American Mission Hospital, sharing

advanced medical capabilities that are based on artificial intelligence, virtual reality and digital health care management. The UAE agreement “is of the utmost importance in creating a strategy whereby we will work to share our knowledge in the areas of research, clinical trials, and medical training,” said Yoel Har-Even, director of Sheba’s international division.

The UAE’s ambassador to Israel, Mohamed Al Khaja, who was present at the signing of the agreement, said it expressed

the need to “find and focus on the real benefits of peace, which improve people’s health, lives and standards of living.”

Recognizing that memorandums of understanding don’t always get implemented, Hayek said the two governments are determined to help Sheba and PureHealth develop their collaboration.

“This MOU needs to be turned into a business plan,” Hayek said. “We will do everything needed to help them, but I think that from this stage... they need to cooperate

between themselves and take it forward. We will follow up just to make sure that it happened.”

Sheba held a 75th anniversary fundraising dinner this month at which Mohamed Alabbar, founder of Dubai-based Emaar Properties and builder of the Burj Khalifa tower, the world’s tallest, addressed the crowd about the value of medical cooperation in advancing peace. ♦

JUNE 22, 2023

Groups launch new push to get couples to ‘Wine and Sign’ halachic agreements to prevent agunot

Series of events across Israel, funded by the Greater Miami Jewish Federation, looks to remove stigma from prenuptial and postnuptial agreements

By Judith Sudilovsky

The article first appeared in eJewishPhilanthropy.

Sweets and bottles of wine were laid out on the dining room table of Neil and Aliza Gillman as they welcomed married couples and soon-to-be married couples into their Jerusalem home earlier this month for the kickoff of a summer of “Wine and Sign” events for so-called halachic prenuptial and postnuptial agreements.

The Gillmans signed a prenup before their wedding in Israel almost 19 years ago. But Aliza said they understood that the postnuptial agreement sponsored by the Center for Women’s Justice that was available for signing that evening – overseen by lawyers and with two male witnesses who are considered valid under Orthodox interpretations of *halacha*, or Jewish law – is more broadly respected and is more extensive in its coverage of issues.

“We signed our first prenup so many years ago it wasn’t so common then,” Aliza Gillman said. At the time, she told her soon-to-be-husband that the issue was not one

of not trusting him, but rather of being part of a “movement that makes this something standard so that when my children go to get married it will be natural. It is the only solution to the problem,” she said.

The problem she was referring to is the issue of *mesuravot get* — literally meaning women who are denied a *get*, either because the husband refuses to give her a divorce or is physically unable to give her a *get* because he is missing or incapacitated. In those latter cases, the woman is considered an *aguna*, literally a chained woman, though the term is often used whenever a woman is denied a divorce for any reason.

There is no consensus on the number of women who are currently being denied a *get* in Israel. The country’s Chief Rabbinate once published statistics on the phenomenon but stopped in recent years because its numbers were found to be misleading as they only included women whom rabbinic courts had ruled deserved a *get* and were being denied one, a designation that can take years to receive and excluded the vast majority of women whose husbands were refusing to issue a divorce.

According to Mavoi Satum, which assists women who are denied a *get*, each year an estimated 11,000 Jewish women over the age of 18 divorce in Israel, out of which nearly 20% experience varying levels of exploitation and *get* refusal during their divorce process. “Couples need to protect themselves and halachic prenuptial and conditional agreements offer such a solution,” the organization’s executive director, attorney Orit Lahav, told eJewishPhilanthropy.

These agreements are meant to prevent women from being denied a *get*, using various halachic and civil mechanisms to make it incredibly difficult for a man to withhold a *get* or a woman to refuse to accept one.

“At least once a year I have a friend who is getting divorced and is denied a *get* — religious, secular, with children, without children,” said Aliza Gillman, sipping a glass of wine as she and her husband prepared to sign the halachic postnuptial agreement as well.

The event at the Gillmans home in Jerusalem’s Armon Hanatziv neighborhood

on June 8 was part of a series of signing events organized by Mavoi Satum; the Center for Women's Justice, which both provides legal services to women in divorce cases and advocates for greater separation of religion and state in Israel; and the Eden Center, which provides resources and support relating to mikvahs, or ritual baths. The series is being funded by a \$34,700 grant from the Greater Miami Jewish Federation's Women's *Amutot* (Foundations) Initiative.

When the initiative announced its grants earlier this year, it said the recipients were "organizations in Israel that empower women to improve Israeli society through social, economic, religious, and political equality." In addition to the grant for the joint initiative by Mavoi Satum and Center for Women's Justice, the federation allocated another \$11,500 to Ohr Torah Stone's Yad La'Isha Legal Center, which also helps women being denied a get, for a similar effort to raise awareness of prenuptial agreements.

CWJ, Mavoi Satum, Yad La'Isha and the Eden Center are all primarily funded by donations from American Jewish organizations and foundations, including many federation-affiliated women's funds, like Miami's Women's *Amutot* Initiative.

The first event was held in English, but the four other events that are currently planned – another in Jerusalem and three in nearby communities – will be geared toward Hebrew-speaking Israelis.

One challenge in mainstreaming the agreements is a reluctance to think about potential future problems at a time of beginnings and wedding excitement, Lahav said. On the cusp of marriage, it is natural to think "it won't happen to me" and that there is no need to sign a preventative agreement, she said, but everyone knows relationships change with time and difficult situations can arise down the line.

Signing in such a social event with other members of the community helps remove the "why," of signing, according to Rachel Stomel, a spokesperson for CWJ. When everyone else is doing it, it becomes a festive party event.

People have also become more inclined to protect themselves because there has been more media exposure about the tribulations people are made to go through

to obtain a get through the Chief Rabbinate, she noted. There is also a "ripple effect" on awareness in the community, Stomel added. "A lot of people have heard about the agreements, but being introduced to it by someone they already trust is a good thing," she said.

Israel, with its lack of civil divorce, is a rarity in the Western world, Lahav noted. The specific nature of divorce under the Chief Rabbinate's interpretations of Jewish law also tips the scales of power in those proceedings in favor of men, she said. A man is required to willingly grant a divorce to a woman, and if he does not do so, the woman has no direct recourse: she cannot remarry or enter an intimate relationship with another man; any child she has by another man will be considered a *mamzer*, roughly meaning an illegitimate child, which would prevent them (and their offspring) from getting married in the future. While women can refuse to accept a get from a husband, men can receive special dispensation to remarry, and any child they father would not be considered a *mamzer*.

"This inequality leads to terrible situations for thousands of Jewish Israeli women who remain trapped in unwanted and abusive marriages and often find themselves vulnerable to exploitation and blackmail in trying to gain their freedom within a court system that discriminates against women by law," Lahav said.

By signing a legal document agreement the responsibility to love and cherish each other is formalized, said Dr. Naomi Marmon Grumet of the Eden Center, which focuses on making the mikveh experience a personally meaningful and welcoming one for women. Though the center itself is not involved with the legal aspects of *agunot* and *gets*, it trains teachers of marriage preparatory lessons, and they bring in people to talk about the halachic prenuptial agreements.

"We as a community need to make a statement about having some sense of equality and partnership and how we protect each other. Over time things got a little out of kilter, and people have forgotten that the *ketubah* (Jewish marriage contract) was meant to instill those values," said Grumet.

Religious couples generally ask questions to make sure rabbis support the

agreements to confirm they are making decisions that are aligned with religious practice, Lahav said.

"The answer is that yes, many rabbis endorse the agreements, and, in the US, we even have a trend among modern religious rabbis who will not officiate a wedding without a signed halachic prenup agreement," she said.

Stomel explained that CWJ's prenup uses a subtle workaround to disincentivize refusing a *get*, while not explicitly and directly punishing a husband for doing so, which would fall afoul of the requirement that a man issue a divorce freely: Instead of fining the man for refusing to get divorced, the agreement penalizes the recalcitrant husband for staying married. It is an insignificant distinction in practical terms, but it means that "halachically it is kosher," Stomel said.

While there are slight differences in the halachic aspects of the pre- and postnuptial agreements, the civil aspects are the same, Stomel said, and include legal mechanisms to prevent *get* refusal and *get* extortion. These portions are enforced by Israeli civil courts.

In addition, the agreements prevent women from becoming *agunot* should their husbands become incapacitated or missing in cases of war or accidents. (This occurred in Israel in 1968 when the INS Dakar submarine sunk with 69 men on board; as their remains were never recovered, the widows of the 16 married seamen were left in a state of limbo for over a year until a rabbinic ruling was issued releasing them from marriage.) The documents allow for a *shaliach*, a representative, to present the wife with a *get* in such cases.

Shira Pasternak-Beeri and her husband Leonard, who served as one of the male witnesses at the "Wine and Sign" event, recently signed their own postnuptial agreement after a brush with disaster, she told eJP.

One day, a year and a half ago, Leonard had a heart attack and collapsed while playing a game of squash and was rushed to the hospital. "Suddenly I had the realization that this might be my life," Pasternak-Beeri said.

After he recovered, they signed CWJ's postnuptial agreement. "It was the biggest

present Leonard could give me,” Pasternak-Beeri said. “He said: ‘If I can’t release you then I want the *beit din* (rabbinic court) to release you.’” Since then he has also come as a volunteer halachic witness to the signing of the agreements.

Both the prenuptial and postnuptial agreements have halachic backing of prominent Israeli rabbis, she said. Stomel said the halachic portion of the post-nuptial is based on a similar document used by Rabbi Shlomo Goren, the first chief rabbi of the Israel Defense Forces, who wrote the ruling freeing the widows of the Dakar sinking. The army would require married soldiers to sign such a document before going to war, Stomel noted.

The Rabbinical Council of America, the Beit Din of America and Tzohar all offer similar prenuptial agreements.

“Different halachic prenup agreements exist, and while Mavoi Satum has a specific agreement we endorse, our approach is to encourage couples to sign any version since all the halachic agreements in circulation will provide a safety net of protection in cases of need,” Lahav said.

Zacharia, who asked that his last name not be used, had come to hear about the CWJ agreement, but left with his fiancé without signing because in the end he wasn’t assured that the format would be accepted by the rabbinate because it was written by a “feminist group.” He said he felt more

comfortable signing the Tzohar agreement, believing it would be more acceptable to rabbinical state authorities.

Because these various pre- and postnuptial agreements are still fairly new, there is not yet much data on how effective they have been in divorce proceedings yet, Lahav said.

“Marriage should be approached with all the excitement and promise it holds, but we can also be responsible and protect ourselves from potential risks that exist within the reality of the system in Israel today,” she said. “The halachic prenuptial agreements provide us with this protection from divorce refusal and becoming *agunot*.” ♦