Pro-Israel, Jewish groups react to ICC decision to investigate Israel for purported war crimes

BY JNS STAFF

(JNS) – Pro-Israel and Jewish groups weighed in on the recent controversial decision announced by the International Criminal Court that it would open its investigation into alleged war crimes conducted by Israel and the Palestinians since 2014.

AIPAC said that the ICC investigation into Israel represents “significant overreaches of the ICC’s mandate and jurisdiction that must be condemned by the administration and Congress.” The lobby group called on Biden to maintain sanctions on the ICC. It also pushed the administration and Congress “to the polls, it adds yet another contentious issue into the political arena.

Indeed, politicians on the religious right quickly condemned the decision by the court and vowed to introduce legislation to overturn the decision. Aryeh Deri, head of the Sephardi ultra-Orthodox party Shas, lambasted the ruling as “a fatal blow to Israel’s Jewish character and a complete destruction of the status quo in matter of religion and state that have existed for more than 70 years.”

Other right-wing parties highlighted the political ramifications. Likud condemned the ruling, saying that “the High Court made a decision that endangers the Law of Return, which is a cornerstone of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state. Only a vote for Likud will ensure a stable right-wing government that will return sovereignty to the people and the Knesset.”

Yamina leader Naftali Bennett accused the High Court of “intervening in government decisions and forgetting its role.” However, on the other side, secular parties, including those in the center, left and even right, praised the decision. “Israel must have complete equality of rights for all streams of Judaism – Orthodox, Reform, Conservative,” opposition leader Yair Lapid said. “We all need to live here together with tolerance and mutual respect.”

Similarly, Avigdor Lieberman of Yisrael Beitenu, a right-wing nationalist party, hailed it as a “historic” decision and promised that his party will “continue to battle religious coercion and to preserve the state of Israel’s character as a Jewish, Zionist and liberal state.”

Previously, Israel recognized Reform and Conservative conversions as part of the citizenship process and only if they were performed overseas. Now, this decision allows such conversions even if performed in Israel. Israel’s highest court claims that it was compelled to make this decision, rather than the Knesset, since the issue had been debated for years with a pronouncement never forthcoming.

Landmark decision recognizing non-Orthodox conversions performed in Israel sparks fierce debate

BY ISRAEL KASNETT

(JNS) – Israel’s Supreme Court handed down a decision on March 1 recognizing Reform and Conservative conversions for those seeking to obtain citizenship. The result has caused an uproar in Israel and within the Jewish Diaspora, with some saying it crossed a red line while others affirming that it is a decision that is long overdue.

The decision touches on some hot-button issues in Israel, including tensions between Orthodox and secular communities, which have reached a “fever pitch” during the pandemic, as well as the role of the Supreme Court and calls on the Israeli right to reign in its powers. More so, coming just weeks before Israelis head to the polls, it adds yet another contentious issue into the political arena.

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The decision touches on some hot-button issues in Israel, including tensions between Orthodox and secular communities, which have reached a “fever pitch” during the pandemic, as well as the role of the Supreme Court and calls on the Israeli right to reign in its powers. More so, coming just weeks before Israelis head to the polls, it adds yet another contentious issue into the political arena.
Throughout college, my experiences of demonizing an entire group of people. With education and self-reflection, I learned more about the world, including away from hate and antisemitism. On those statements and sharing my path with a picture of Palestinian terrorist Leila al-Arian, I felt I was wrong, and I blamed Jewish I went to Jerusalem to visit family. During my childhood, every other summer I went to Jerusalem to visit family. As I grew older and started to realize my family’s difficulties, I started feeling guilty that I was living more comfortably than they. My guilt at my privilege and my denial of my situation left me feeling sorry for someone else. As a teenager, I directed my frustration at the Jewish people, posting comments on Twitter about Israel’s policies. My views changed as I matured and learned more about the world, including the importance of understanding others. With education and self-reflection, I learned that I was unjustly blaming and demonizing an entire group of people. Throughout college, my experiences helped me realize how misguided my anger at the Jewish community was. Since 2017, various groups have been circulating my old tweets, which long ago ceased representing my thoughts and feelings. One tweet was a photo of a shirt with a picture of a Palestinian terrorist Leila Khaled on it, which I deny that if I reached my goal, I would use my training to provide care to refugees in the Middle East, and I learned that Barak had wanted. During one trip to Jerusalem, I and my cousin played basketball with some Israeli teenagers whom we met in a park. We talked about our experiences, and the obstacles we each faced because of our faiths. At that moment, it felt like I was reading someone else’s words. It filled me with guilt, and I associated with words that I spoke in the past. I spoke with my college and was advised not to respond to the publication. When those tweets were brought to my dental school’s attention in 2019 and 2020, I was again advised not to respond, and again and again the advice was the same: I truly am sorry for the pain my words have caused. I have wanted to publicly apologize for, and disavow, my teenage tweets for years now. Perhaps I should have taken this step earlier, against the advice I received. I recognize that the things I said years ago were hateful, and for the last six years, I have been committed to making a positive impact in my community and showing that those tweets do not represent who I am. I am someone who has misused beliefs, who through education and self-reflection has come to recognize that those beliefs were wrong, and who is trying to lead a life that will help others. Recently, I spoke with Hussein Abouk, the author of the recently released and now the Arab world seems to have hard to look away. The drama of a top The irony of these two contrasting situations perfectly seems to escape David Suissa (“Israel apartheid,” February 20), who labels Israeli society and the government’s efforts to police gender and race as anti-Semitic. The columnist added: “A hallmark of “Every serious moral philosophy, every decent legal system, and every ethical organization cares deeply about intention. It is the difference between murder and manslaughter. It is an aggravating or extenuating factor in judicial sentencing. To be considered in consideration in pardons (or at least it was) and now the Arab world seems to have moved past Palestinian injustices and to reject what he was taught, struggle of learning to reject what he was taught, difficult to justify the notion that intent shouldn’t matter. The columns of David Suissa and the debate about language in journalism. Matters are not easy. Maybe he was influenced by the canceled Bret Stephens column, which, according to reports, began as follows: “Every serious moral philosophy, every decent legal system, and every ethical organization cares deeply about intention. It is the difference between murder and manslaughter. It is an aggravating or extenuating factor in judicial sentencing. To be considered in consideration in pardons (or at least it was) and now the Arab world seems to have moved past Palestinian injustices and to reject what he was taught, struggle of learning to reject what he was taught, difficult to justify the notion that intent shouldn’t matter. The columns of David Suissa and the debate about language in journalism. Matters are not easy. Maybe he was influenced by the canceled Bret Stephens column, which, according to reports, began as follows: “Every serious moral philosophy, every decent legal system, and every ethical organization cares deeply about intention. 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In first U.S. tour, Israel’s envoy embarks on “personal journey” along civil-rights trail

BY LARRY BROOK

(Southern Jewish Life via JNS) – For his first official trip abroad as Israel’s ambassador to the United States, Gilad Erdan said he wanted to make a “personal journey, listening and learning” about the history and the incredible contribution of the African-American community to this country. That led him to tour Charleston, South Carolina, and Selma, Ala., during a three-day visit that ended on February 23.

“You can go visit museums and read books about the same as when you really hear the personal stories of people and their ancestors,” he said.

Erdan’s first stop was the Charleston Project, which “aims to promote positive Christian engagement in the Near East.” In its announcement of the visit, the project said it is “honored to host the ambassador and eager to help usher in a positive relationship between Israel and the African-American community.” The goal, it added, was to bring Erdan “face to face with individuals who are on the ground making positive changes within the African-American community.”

In addition to Erdan, officials from the Philos Project and Consul General Asaf Sivan-Dodon from the Israeli Consulate in Atlanta were part of the delegation.

The journey began in Charleston with Erdan and Israeli Ambassador to the United States Gilad Erdan talking about the community’s resilience following the ‘terrifying shooting’ and how they offered support after the Tree of Life Synagogue shooting in Pittsburgh in October 2018, related Erdan.

The church and the local Jewish community still participate in joint programs. Among the stop was the McLeod Plantation Historic Site, where Erdan toured slave cabins and was struck by the impressions of child-size fingerprints in bricks made by enslaved children.

“None of us has to suffer such inhumanity, anywhere, anytime,” he reflected.

At Magnolia Plantation, guide Joseph McGill responded to a question from Erdan by saying that slaves there “perpetually so we could be here today and live the lives they couldn’t live, and tell the stories they couldn’t tell. We are their voices.”

Sen. Tim Scott (R-SC) welcomed Erdan to Charleston. State Sen. and Mayor John Tecklenburg presented the ambassador with the key to the city in “a gesture of friendship and as a pledge of hope and future collaboration.”

There were gatherings where a number of African-American leaders in Charleston spoke about their personal stories, and Erdan said a highlight was learning from Aunt Pearlie Sue, a Gullah-Geechee storyteller, who sang and spoke about the history of slavery and the struggle for freedom.

“We have a lot in common,” said the Israeli ambassador. “They, too, like us, were persecuted and murdered, and their rights were denied for many years. I looked in their eyes when they told me how their family suffered and I saw their deep pain, and today I understand better their ongoing struggle for equality.”

He then continued on to Alabama, where he walked across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, the site of civil-rights confrontations in 1965 that ultimately led to the Selma to Montgomery March in March 1965.

“The events that took place on this bridge have inspired countless people in Israel and everywhere around the world. They have inspired me,” he said.

Selma Mayor James Perkins thanked Erdan for his visit, noting that the Israeli was helping Selma by bringing attention to the city’s story. He urged, “Let’s continue this conversation. It is a very important one.”

Robert Nicholson, president of the Philos Project, said one can’t understand America without understanding African-American history, and one can’t understand American history without African-American history, and one can’t understand African-American history without Selma.

In Selma, Erdan said the Jewish and African-American communities have a lot in common, “as a community that holds the key to the city in ‘a gesture of friendship’ and as a pledge of hope and future collaboration.”

Israel’s envoy, Erdan, said that the visit was a time of ‘insight’ and courage.

The more important point, he writes, is that “insisting on this taboo makes it look like Black people are numb to the difference between usage and reference, vague on the notion of given names and association rather than to making distinctions.”

It would be useful to see more reporting and courageous commentary on this subject. New tabs that are silencing people through fear of losing their jobs is not just a “problem” — it is an alarming trend and condition that must be exposed through maximum sunlight.

And speaking of exposure, I would hope the Times will flip-flop yet again and decide to publish Stephens’ column. Even a meltdown can use some sunlight.

David Sassa is editor-in-chief and publisher of Tribe Media Corp., and the Jewish Journal. He can be reached at david@sassajewish.com.

This article was first published by the Jewish Journal.

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This article was first published by the Jewish Journal.
News in Brief

From JNS.org

MyHeritage genealogy website adds millions of Lithuanian Jewish records

The Israeli genealogy website MyHeritage announced on March 9 that several millions of Lithuanian Jewish historical records have been added to the website database as part of its partnership with a U.S. nonprofit organization. LituV SIG is the primary online genealogy resource site for Lithuanian Jews, also known as Litvak. The records in the collection published by MyHeritage were originally translated and indexed by Litvaksig and represent almost all of LitvakSIG’s body of work over more than 20 years. The Lithuanian Jewish records are currently searchable for free on the MyHeritage platform, however, a subscription is required to view the full records and access indexed matches. MyHeritage, the world’s largest genealogy platform for discovering family history, has billions of historical records and family-tree profiles. It also has one of the largest consumer DNA databases with 4.8 million customers.

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Pledge or Donate online at www.jewishnepa.org/donate.
BY MARSHALL WEISS

(The Dayton Jewish Observer via JNS) – Just in time for Passover, kosher-certified coconut cookie maker Paula Shoyer’s “The Instant Pot Kosher Cookbook” is now in print from Sterling Epicure. With 46 kosher-for-Passover recipes, Shoyer offers apps to sabotages to appetizers, sides to main courses and desserts – a number of which are vegetarian, vegan and gluten-free — this is the time to pull out that Instant Pot you received as a gift and were afraid to use.


She calls the Instant Pot Revolution – “ideal for anyone who wants food fast with less cleanup.” Shoyer adds that it’s a great way to handle vegetables, for every burner going and three more pots waiting to take their turn. Now I can check off items on my cooking “To Do” list much faster with a pressure pot.

Recipes that used to take hours, she says, now take a fraction of the time.

In “The Instant Pot Kosher Cookbook,” Shoyer provides detailed instructions on how to handle vegetables, in addition to safety rules and insider tricks. Each recipe indicates Instant Pot pressure time, which buttons to use and release type.

For those who keep kosher, Shoyer says you’ll need at least one pot just for Passover. For year-round use, opinions vary among rabbis about whether an Instant Pot may be used for both dairy and meat. Though she has different ones for dairy and meat year-round in her kitchen, she notes that “you should always consult your own rabbi for any specific questions about food preparation.”

Here is a full kosher-for-Passover (and gluten-free) menu from “The Instant Pot Kosher Cookbook."

GEORGIAN QUINOA WITH BEETS AND WALNUTS (VEGAN/Parve)

Serves 6-8

In the summer of 2018, food writer Jessica Haffin took a trip to Tbilisi, Georgia for her piece on kosher street food tour of Tbilisi, Georgia and we shot a video of the tour. She took me to a bakery, a borsa place and a fruit shop. My favorite savory stop was Barbecue, a small restaurant where I tasted this salad. They also serve a sabich bowl of warm hummus, fried eggplant, chickpeas and tahini that rocked my world.

Hands-on time: 5 minutes, quinoa and beets need 10 minutes to cool.

Time to pressure: 8 to 9 minutes
Cooking time: 0 minutes
Button to use: Pressure Cook
Release type: Natural Release for 10 minutes
Advance prep: May be made two days in advance
1 cup quinoa, rinsed and drained
1 Tbsp. olive oil
1¾ cups water
5 cups beets, peeled and cut into 1½-inch pieces (wear gloves)
1 cup red quinoa
¼ tsp. black pepper
½ tsp. cumin
1 Tbsp. lemon juice, from half of 1 lemon
1 tsp. salt
¾ tsp. black pepper
½ cup walnut halves, chopped roughly
Press Cancel and remove the lid. Stir and then place the quinoa and beets into a large bowl and let cool for at least 10 minutes. Add the oil, celery, green onions, parsley, lemon juice, cumin, salt, pepper and walnuts. Mix well.

Serve at room temperature.

WHOLE PERUVIAN SPICED CHICKEN (MEAT)

Serves 4-6

This super-easy spice combination is easy to double or triple, and to have on hand for chicken, steak or fish.

The mix of spices comes from our wonderful nanny, Betty Sapo. She is from Arequipa, Peru, and has nourished our family for many years.

Time on hand: 17 minutes
Time to pressure: 10 minutes
Cooking time: 25 minutes
Release type: Natural Release for 15 minutes
Buttons to use: Sauté and Pressure Cook
Advance prep: May be made two days in advance
4 tsp. cumin

See “Cookbook” on page 10

BY RABBI RACHEL ESSERMAN

Several years ago, I attended a Passover dessert cooking class at my synagogue. We broke into small groups to cook under the guidance of Rabbi Rachel Esserman, who trained in France.

“Your family have a joyous Pesach”

Happy Passover

Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Wishing the

Scrabble

Jewish Community a Happy Passover

Kathy Brown, Advertising Representative

BY REPORTER STAFF

Many websites offer information about the Passover holiday:

The Orthodox Union at www.ou.org/holidays/passover/

Chabad at www.chabad.org/holidays/passover/default_cdo/jewish/Passover.htm.

Union for Reform Judaism at https://urj.org/special-events/passover


RitualWell offers readings for the seder at www.ritualwell.org/passover.


PASSOVER MUSIC SUGGESTIONS FOR THE HOLIDAY:

Google at www.google.com/search/client/firebox-b-1-dqkar+music+passover.

Spotify at https://open.spotify.com/playlist/39gxfthO7T4FAd4qPM

Youtube at www.youtube.com/results?search_query=passover+songs.


ON THE JEWISH FOOD SCENE

Cocoanut cookies for Passover

Coconut cookies for Passover

BY MARSHALL WEISS

(Trinity Lutheran Seminary observer via JNS) — Paula Shoyer says she didn’t have Passover desserts at home growing up, but now there are a few variations of kosher for Passover coconut cookies. The company, Absolutely Gluten Free, offers gluten-free, kosher (certified by the Orthodox Union as kosher pareve for Passover), dairy free, vegan and all natural “Grain Free Coconut Chews,” which are made in a peanut-free facility. The individually wrapped chews contain sulfite-free raw coconut and are dipped in semi-sweet chocolate. The new flavors are key lime (which offered a very strong blast of key lime) and blueberry (which, although I didn’t get a great deal of blueberry flavor, were my favorite). The original flavors, which I have not tried, are cranberry and chocolate.

What’s fun is that the chews remind me of one of my favorite childhood foods. My grandparents spent a few months every winter in Florida. Of course, they sent us the obligatory package of citrus fruit. While I love oranges and grapefruit, we always had those in our refrigerator for when we were thirsty. And I remember how much I loved the coconut patties that were included with each shipment. Those patties consisted of a flat coconut patty, dipped in dark chocolate. These new chews are a nice change of pace from the standard canned macaroon. Anyone who needs a dessert with no dairy, no eggs and no gluten, and which is all natural, will find these cookies a great match.

Check out the Federation’s new, updated website at www.jewishnepa.org or find it on Facebook

Serves 4-6

4 tsp. cumin

See “Cookbook” on page 10

Visit passover-music-for-the-favorite-family-ritualwell.org/passover.

Happy Passover

My family have a joyous Pesach

Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Have a Joyous Passover

Doris Kaloski and family

Kosher Cookbook

MARCH 18, 2021 THE REPORTER

Have a Joyous Passover

Happy Passover

Rabbi Rachel Esserman

Wishing the

Scrabble

Jewish Community a Happy Passover

Kathy Brown, Advertising Representative

Online Passover information, music and events


ONLINE PASSOVER EVENTS:

The organization I2Ddoors will hold “Seder Cocktails: A Treat You Can’t Passover” on Tuesday, March 23, at 7:30 pm. The virtual event is aimed for interfaith couples in their 20s and 30s. It will feature two kosher-for-Passover cocktails inspired by the flavors of the seder plate: Charoset Sangria and a Karpas Margarita. There is no cost to attend. For more information or to register, visit https://12doors.org/event/national-2021-03-seder-cocktails-a-treat-you-cant-passover-online.

Artists Standing Strong Together will host a live virtual storytelling event, “Food and Freedom: Passover in Stories,” on Thursday, April 1, at 6:30 pm. The event features storytellers Cindy Riva Marshak, Mark Binder, Muriel Horowitz and Dr. Harriette E. Wimms, among others. To register for the event, visit www.artiststandingstrongtogether.net/passover-show.
A 2005 petition put before the court demanded citizenship for several non-Israeli nationalst who converted in Israel and wished to claim citizenship under Israel’s “Law of Return.” The Knesset could not arrive at a conclusion due to disagreements between ultra-Orthodox and non-ultra-Orthodox lawmakers.

Nevertheless, while the political and social ramifications of the decision are significant, the Reform and Conservative movements in Israel, unlike in the Diaspora, are relatively small.

Yedidah Stern, president and CEO of the Jewish People Policy Institute and a member of the Faculty of Law at Israel’s Bar-Ilan University, told JNS that “from a practical point of view, this decision is almost negligible because we are talking about about 30 to 40 people a year. It’s not a big deal.”

The Union for Reform Judaism welcomed the decision, saying it “reflects the diversity and vibrancy of Jewish life in Israel and around the world. . . . We hope this ruling establishes a precedent that will lead to further recognition of the Reform and Conservative movements in Israel,” it said in a statement on its website.

Similarly, Masorti Movement head Rakefet Ginsberg praised the court’s decision, describing it as “just, understandable and clear. There is more than one way to be a Jew in Israel.”

Yet there are concerns that the decision could lead to an increase in non-Jews seeking conversion to Judaism as a means to gain citizenship in Israel.

The decision has caused a furor among Israel’s haredim, who maintain that only their representatives in the religious courts who abide by their stringent approach to Judaism should be allowed to perform conversions. Israel’s Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi David Lau said that those who converted to Judaism in a Reform conversion and the like “are not Jews. No High Court decision of any kind will change this fact. It is unfortunate that those who converted to Judaism completely based on their limited understanding and obvious ruling for Israel as well as for the Jewish law,” he said, warning that this decision could lead to thousands of non-Jews considering themselves Jews when according to Jewish law, they would not be.

For haredi Jews in Israel, the decision is problematic since they believe that converts and their descendents would not be considered Jewish; as such, it could cause future problems if they want to marry a Jewish person who, according to halachah (Jewish law), can only marry another Jew.

Stern, who said that the decision was a “necessary and obvious ruling for Israel as well as for the Jewish people,” also told JNS that “the important thing is the Supreme Court made a decision symbolically recognizing the authority of non-Orthodox rabbis to decide who is a Jew for the purpose of the Law of Return. Symbolically, it is important. Practically, it is not a big deal.

“As the nation-state of the Jewish people,” continued Stern, “anyone who is willing to become a Jew and convert by any recognized stream – Reform, Conservative or Orthodox – must be allowed to gain citizenship. The Supreme Court has already accepted conversion by private Orthodox courts,” he noted. “Once the state accepted the legitimacy of one private court, it must accept the rulings of the private courts of other streams. If Israel, as a liberal state, takes equality as a value seriously, it must give equal weight to different streams of Judaism.”

Rabbi David Stav, co-founder and the chairman of the Tzohar Rabbinical Organization, seemed to agree with Stern, telling JNS the decision “is not dramatic,” and only applies to those who are already married and living in Israel. “We are talking about maybe 30 to 40 people [per year],” he said. “Nothing much is going to change as a consequence of the decision.”

“What will change is the direction,” he said. “The Supreme Court is telling the state it has lost patience and is not waiting for it to make a decision.”

The court has signaled that because lawmakers have failed to act for 15 years on a law regarding non-Orthodox conversions. The problem, according to Stav, is that the haredi parties “want the authority for conversion given to very few people who belong to [their] fold and do not accept any diversity among the rabbis carrying out conversions.”

Tzohar blamed the haredim for their refusal to relinquish their monopoly on conversions, saying “we will have no one else to blame but those who were opposed to dialogue for allowing this to occur.

“Those very power-brokers who seek control over Israeli conversions completely based on their limited worldviews without any desire for dialogue are the ones completely responsible for this decision,” the rabbinical organization said in a statement, adding, “this process must be open to accepting the wider approaches to conversion that are wholly possible within the norms of Jewish law.”

Stav suggested opening conversion to different types of rabbis with local city rabbis and rabbinical councils being given the ability to carry out conversions. He also noted that this would alleviate a bigger problem in Israel. “Instead of talking about these 40 people,” said Stav, “we should talk about the 400,000 Russian immigrants who are still waiting for their conversion since most do not want to convert under the current situation.”
In tech first, robot uses dead locust’s ear to hear

By Naama Barak

(Israel21c via JNS) — In a scientific breakthrough, Israeli researchers have for the first time succeeded in using a locust ear as a robot’s sensor. The result: a robot that moves forward when you clap once and back when you clap twice.

The researchers from Tel Aviv University sought to examine how biological systems could be integrated into technological ones. They first built a robot that can sense earthquakes. The sky’s the limit,” explained TAU researcher Ben M. Maoz.

“Robots can sense earthquakes. The sky’s the limit.” explained TAU researcher Ben M. Maoz.

The principle they demonstrated can be used and applied to other senses, such as smell, sight and touch, he added. “For example, some animals have amazing abilities to detect explosives or drugs; the creation of a robot with a biological nose could help us preserve human life and identify criminals in a way that is not possible today. Some animals know how to detect diseases. Others can sense earthquakes. The sky’s the limit.”

This article was first published by Israel21c.
BY RABBI BARUCH BINYMIN HAKOHEN MELMAN, TEMPLE ISRAEL OF THE POCONOS
Vayikra, Leviticus 1:1-1:5:26

What are the real measures of greatness? How is true character measured? Leadership defined solely by power or, more importantly, by moral example? The word for general or chieftain in Hebrew is alaph. The elephant is so called that on account of him being the alaph (elephant) of the jungle.

While the lion may in fact be the king of the jungle, the elephant, by dint of his huge size, is indisputably the chief. And more than his size accounts for his greatness. His capacity for kindness and concern for the members of his extended family are the real measures of his greatness. If one stumbles or falls, the herd rallies around the wounded comrade and nurses him to health. No one is left behind. Rare is the elephant who is abandoned to fate. In this week’s parasha, Vayikra, we are struck by the fact that the elephant, who has always wisely seen their essential natures when giving them their names. Pk chaz? Go and see! How do the animals live. The elephant can stand brand new and yet be gentle and caring.

There is a talmudic concept called sagi nahor, by which a thing is suggested by referring to its opposite. Sagi nahor means “abundant light,” a deliberate reference to the whole beast. In this week’s parasha, this phenomenon of cursing God is only referred to by its opposite. Therefore, in talmudic literature, cursing God is usually referred to as “blessing” the Lord, and the parasha, which is teaching us to reach God via affinity with animals, is referring to the largest of all animals while using the small form of the alaph to suggest its opposite. In other words, perhaps the greatest strength is kindness. Shabbat Shalom!

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The report of the small alaph

(JNS) – A fortified building complex from the time of King David has been discovered in the southern Golan Heights, the Israel Antiquities Authority announced on November 11. The archaeologists who uncovered the complex during IAA excavations in Mosha HaSpin assess that it was a fort built by the Kingdom of Geshur (Iron Age, 11th–10th centuries B.C.E.).

The excavation – conducted ahead of the construction of a new neighborhood in Haspin – was carried out strategically on a hilltop above the Nahal El Al Reserve and encompassed by 5-foot-thick walls made of basalt boulders. “In the excavation, we were astonished to make a rare and exciting find: a large basalt stone with a schematic engraving of two horned figures with outstretched arms,” they said.

The IAA noted that a similar horned figure with outstretched arms was discovered on a colonic stone stele – uncovered last year during the Bethsaida Excavation Project, just north of the Sea of Galilee – next to a raised platform adjacent to the city gate. Since the HaSpin stone was situated on a shelf next to the fort’s entrance, with two such horned figures depicted on it, the archaeologists speculated that “a person who stole the impressive Bethsaida stele [may have] decided to create a local copy of it.”

The IAA explained that Bethsaida, a fortified city, was connected by fortified routes and it was the capital of the Aramean Kingdom of Geshur, which ruled the central and southern Golan 3,000 years ago. The Bible recounts that the kingdom enjoyed diplomatic relations with the house of David and that one of David’s wives was Maacah, the daughter of Talmi, king of Geshur. According to the IAA, while cities of the Kingdom of Geshur, such as Tel En Gev, Tel Hadar and Tel Sorag, are known to have existed along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, hardly any such sites from the Iron Age have been found in the Golan Heights. The discovery of the Haspin complex is thus spurring new research in the area.

The discovery has also led to changes in the construction plan for the new neighborhood in Haspin, to prevent damage to the ancient complex – the remains of which will be developed along the El Al River’s bank. The fortified building complex uncovered in the Golan Heights in November. (Photo by Tidhar Moyal/Israel Antiquities Authority)
U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on March 10 complimented the Trump administration for the Abraham Accords that normalized relations with Israel and several Gulf countries. "This was a significant step in bringing about a peaceful coexistence," he said before the House Foreign Affairs Committee on the Biden administration’s foreign-policy agenda when U.S. Rep. Darrell Issa (R-CA) asked him what he thinks his predecesso, Mike Pompeo, did correctly. In his response, Blinken referenced technological advances and the U.S.-brokered Abraham Accords. "Trying to help bring the State Department into the 21st century, using technology and empowering some of our people with technology, [which is] something we really want to follow through," he said. "And as we were talking about earlier, I think the initiatives to the United Nations, which he assumed last September."

Erdan became Israel’s ambassador to the United States on Sept. 15 in Washington, DC. Sudan and Morocco were a very good thing and something we want to "And as we were talking about earlier, I think the initiatives to the United Nations, which he assumed last September."

His goal was "to listen, learn and connect with all parts and build stronger ties on behalf of the state of Israel." Added Erdan: "Uniting Jews and black Americans, creating equal has guided me through my life." Errored was a 2017 change to the zoning requirements that imposed unreasonable burdens on the growing Orthodox Jewish population in the township. Particularly problem-atic was a 2017 change to the zoning requirements that housing of worship needed to be built on properties of at least 10 acres. "Federal law protects religious communities against unequal treatment and unwarranted burdens," said Rachael A. Honig, Acting U.S. Attorney for the District of New Jersey. "Zoning regulations that impose unreasonable restrictions or prevent religious faiths from having a place to worship violate RLUIPA.

The resolution entered today, this office takes another step to put an end to unlawful zoning practices and vindicate the civil rights of minority religious communities in ... New Jersey. We expect to do the same for the Orthodox Jewish community of Lakewood, NJ, who have been migrating to neighborhoods in Toms River in recent years. However, they have been largely unable to find large-enough parcels of land to build synagogues.

Resident of “South Park” get vaccinated for COVID, courtesy of Israel

Just weeks after “Saturday Night Live” aired a “news” segment that said Israel was only vaccinating the “Jewish half” of the country, another comedic television program, “South Park,” is being praised for its take on Israel’s vaccinaiton program. “Hey, NEDC is this how you do pandemic humor when it comes to Israel,” tweeted Gilad Erdan, Israel’s ambassador to the United States and the United Nations, with a clip from the cartoon. In the episode “South Park: Vaccination Special,” which launched on March 10, characters are seen trying to get a COVID-19 vaccination. One man who is tired of waiting says that “you now in Israel they vaccinate everybody. Israel is way cooler than this lame place,” to which he is told, “so then go to Israel.” “I tried,” the man responds. “I couldn’t get in.” Later in the episode, an “Israel Airlines” plane doors in a nondescript town. When the plane lands in front of the “South Park” school. When the doors open, a man starts throwing out boxes full of the vaccine. Characters, including one wearing a yarmulke, are then seen injecting themselves with the vaccine.

UCLA student gov’t passes resolution accusign Israel of “ethnic cleansing”

The student government at the University of California, Los Angeles passed a resolution on March 3 that accused Israel of being “in the “ethnic cleansing“ of Palestinians. Titled “A Resolution Calling for the UC to Divest from War,” it urged the academic institution “to sever itself from companies that engage or aid in the oppression of any people” and called on the school to divest from Israel’s “war industry.” It also stated that divestment is a tactic in fighting against injustices, such as “South African apartheid” and the “alleged“ ethnic cleansing in Palestine by the Israeli government. The resolution supports an older resolution passed by the UCLA student government in 2014 that promotes the BDS movement. Aaron Ahdoot, president of Brains for Israel Public Affairs Committee at UCLA, called the Jewish Journal “that solution was passed unanimously. “We had no idea this resolution was coming up and were not alerted by anyone ahead of time,” he said. “The language of the resolution was not released ahead of the council meeting, making it impossible for any of the students to speak out on it.” Rabbi Aaron Lerner, executive director of Hillel at UCLA, wrote in an e-mail to community members that the resolution was “the South Park.<br>

If Your Goal is to: Then You Can: Your Benefits may Include:

Avoid tax on capital gains Contribute long-term appreciated stock or other securities A charitable deduction plus no capital gains tax

Defer a gift until after your lifetime Put a bequest in your will gifts of cash, specific property, or a share of the residuary of your estate Exemption from federal estate tax on donations

Receive guaranteed fixed income A charitable gift annuity Current & future savings on income taxes, plus fixed, stable payments

Avoid capital gains tax on the sale of a home or other real estate Donate the real estate sell it to a charity at a bargain price An income tax reduction plus reduction or elimination of capital gains tax

Avoid the double taxation on IRA or other employee benefit plans Name a charity as the beneficiary of the remainder of the retirement assets after your lifetime Tax relief to your family on inherited assets

Give your personal residence or farmland, but retain life use Create a charitable gift of future interest, called a retained life estate Tax advantages plus use of the property

Give income from an asset for a fixed term for personal use Purchase a charitable gift annuity or create a charitable remainder Tax advantages & possible increased rate of return

Create a hedge against inflation over the long term Return all the principal and interest at some future time Create a charitable remainder unitrust Variable payments for life plus tax advantages

Create a hedge against inflation over the long term Convert to a fixed amount of cash Create a charitable remainder unitrust Variable payments for life plus tax advantages

Check out the Federation’s new, updated website at www.jewishnepa.org or find it on Facebook
Cookbook

SPAGHETTI SQUASH WITH FRESH CHERRY TOMATO SAUCE (VEGAN/PAREVE)

Serves 6-8

I try very hard not to waste produce. This recipe was created when I had fading cherry tomatoes in my fridge that needed to be used up. Try to find ways to cook ingredients you already have before going out to buy more. I realize that this recipe has a step outside of the Instant Pot, but my goal was to have the sauce ready by the time the squash was cooked.

Hands-on time: 15 minutes

Time to pressure: 6 minutes

Cooking time: 9 minutes

Button to use: Pressure Cook Release type: Quick Release Advance Prep: May be made two days in advance

1 cup water

12 oz. spaghetti squash, about 2/3 lbs., cut in half horizontally and seeds scooped out

1 Tbsp. extra-virgin olive oil

3 large cloves garlic, finely minced

2 lbs. cherry tomatoes, different colors preferably, halved the long way

¾ tsp. kosher salt

Generous pinch Aleppo pepper or freshly ground black pepper

Place the water into the inner pot and insert the steam rack. Place the squash halves on top of the rack. Secure the lid, ensuring that the steam release handle is in the Sealing position. Press the Pressure Cook button and set the cooking time for 25 minutes.

When the squash cooking time is complete, turn the heat off and let sit for another 15 minutes to naturally release the pressure. Turn the steam release handle to the Venting position to quickly release the remaining pressure.

Remove the lid. Turn the sauce back on to medium heat. Use a fork to scrape the threads of the squash into the frying pan. Stir occasionally. The mixture should bubble the entire time. Add the salt and pepper, and turn off the heat.

For more information contact Mark Silverberg at Mark.Silverberg@jewishnepa.org or call 570-961-2300, ext. 1.

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- charitable lead trust
- gift of IRA or pension plan assets
- grant from your foundation
- reserved life estate in your residence
- bequest

Using appreciated property, such as securities or real estate, affords you the opportunity to eliminate the income tax on the long-term capital gain, will in some instances generate a full income tax charitable deduction and will remove those assets from your estate for estate tax purposes.

For more information contact Mark Silverberg at Mark.Silverberg@jewishnepa.org or call 570-961-2300, ext. 1.
Czech Republic opens branch of its embassy in Jerusalem

The Czech Republic opened a branch of its Israeli embassy in Jerusalem on Monday after a ceremony attended by Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babiš and Israel’s Minister of Foreign Affairs Gabi Ashkenazi. “We, the Czech Republic, are opening here in Jerusalem our second embassy and this is the representation,” said Babiš. While Babiš noted that the country’s official embassy remains headquartered in Tel Aviv, the development serves as an indication of the Eastern European country’s tacit acceptance of Jerusalem as Israel’s capital. “We will have a full-fledged diplomatic mission here in Jerusalem,” Babiš said, “and we are coming from the economic and diplomatic cooperation to the consular agenda and other topics. It will have its permanent staff and will work under the lead of our embassy in Tel Aviv.” Babiš added that “it represents another milestone in our cooperation and gives evidence that we see the importance of this great city.” The Czech Republic announced in December that it planned to open the branch in Jerusalem. In 2018, Czech President Miloš Zeman announced a three-step plan to relocate the country’s embassy to Jerusalem. Zeman, who has limited powers as president, faced opposition from Babiš, who cited European Union policy against opening diplomatic missions in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, the Czechs opened a cultural and economic office in November 2018, which has now been upgraded to the Jerusalem branch. Ashkenazi praised the opening, saying it shows “additional proof of the depth and the scope of the friendship we share with the Czech people, and the Czech Republic and government.” He also said he appreciates the Czech government for “leading the change in Europe toward the city of Jerusalem as a whole and toward the connection with the Jewish people.”

Israeli real-world data shows vaccine is 97 percent effective

The Israel Ministry of Health, Pfizer and BioNTech said on March 11 that data from Israel’s national vaccination campaign demonstrates that their vaccine is 94 percent effective. “We are pleased to have this level of data that continues to show the remarkable success of the nationwide vaccination campaign with the COVID-19 vaccine,” said Professor Yeheskel Levy, director of Israel’s Ministry of Health. “Incidence rates in the fully vaccinated population have massively dropped compared to the unvaccinated population, showing a marked decline in hospitalized cases due to COVID-19.”

German court rules former Nazi concentration-camp guard, 96, “ unfit to stand trial

A court in Wuppertal, Germany, ruled on March 10 that a 96-year-old former Nazi concentration-camp guard is “unfit to stand trial,” though noted that there is a “high degree of probability” that he is guilty of the crimes. The man, identified as Hans-A. H., was accused of having “aided and abetted [the] murder [of several hundred people]” at the Stutthof camp in Nazi-occupied Poland where roughly 65,000 people died during the Holocaust, court judge and spokesman Christian Lange told CNN. He was a guard at the camp between June 1944 and May 1945. There is also “strong evidence” that he oversaw the transportation of almost 600 prisoners to the gas chambers at the Auschwitz-Birkenau concentration camp. Lange said due to the defendant’s inability “to conduct the defense in an understandable and comprehensible manner,” he ruled that H.-A. H. is “not fit to stand trial.” The court data shows that vaccinations prevented symptomatic disease, severe cases and death with 97 percent effectiveness, according to a statement released by the companies and the Health Ministry. More than five million Israelis, or about 55 percent of its population of roughly nine million, have received at least one dose of the vaccine, and nearly four million, or 43 percent, have gotten the second shot. The analysis was derived from data collected by Israel’s Health Ministry from Jan. 17 until March 6. “Israel’s strong health system has been an essential element of societal mobilization and awareness allowed us to achieve high national uptake of the COVID-19 vaccine in a short period of time,” said Professor Yeheskel Levy, director of Israel’s Ministry of Health. “Incidence rates in the fully vaccinated population have massively dropped compared to the unvaccinated population, showing a marked decline in hospitalized cases due to COVID-19.”

Israel Aerospace Industries, UAE weapons company to meld anti-drone system

Israel, aerospace giant announced on March 11 that it has signed a memorandum of understanding (or MoU) with the United Arab Emirates’ weapons-maker Edge to develop an advanced anti-drone defense system. The anti-drone system would be “tailored to the UAE market,” with wide-ranging benefits to the Middle East region and beyond, the state-owned IAI said in a statement. Israel and the UAE officially normalized relations on Sept. 15 as part of the Abraham Accords. The system would include technology such as jamming and cyber-takeover capabilities, including radio frequency, laser and electromagnetic and laser devices designed to destroy a drone. The Iran-backed Houthi movement in Yemen has been launching missile and drone attacks against Saudi Arabia. A drone carrying explosives and a ballistic missile was launched on Monday by the Houthis at Saudi Arabian oil facil- ities, according to Israeli military. The Saudi-led military coalition intervention in Yemen is a “decisive step toward ending the Israeli Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz at the signing ceremony in Nicosia. Steinitz called the MoU “great news for the citizens of Israel,” according to a ministry statement. “The Euro-Asia Interconnector undersea power cable will allow us to receive electricity back from the power grids of the European continent in times of emergency, and more importantly will also support our ability to significantly increase reliance on solar power generation, and help us meet the government’s 2030 solar energy targets,” he said. Cypriot Energy Minister NatsiPasidis said that the MoU marked “a decisive step toward ending the Israeli Energy minister added that the MoU marked “a decisive step toward ending the

Israel study finds vaccinated mothers pass coronavirus antibodies to newborns

A new Israeli study found that breastfeeding mothers vaccinated against the coronavirus are able to pass on antibodies to their babies through breast milk. “Encouraging event details weekly to those who wish to receive them.

Check out the Federation’s new, updated website at www.jewishnepa.org or find it on Facebook

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International Council of Jewish Parliamentarians evoked to track antisemitism

World Jewish Congress and Sen. Jacky Rosen (D-NV) announced on March 9 the re-establishment of the International Council of Jewish Parliamentarians to respond to the global rise in antisemitism. The newly re-launched ICJP will convene for the first time in May with the Israeli Knesset. Rosen told JNS.org, “coming forward to working alongside Ambassador Lauder and Jewish parliamentarians to combat the evils of antisemitism, racism, bigotry and xenophobia,” she said. “I look forward to working alongside Ambassador Lauder and Jewish parliamentarians to combat the evils of antisemitism, racism, bigotry and xenophobia,” she said. “I look forward to working alongside Ambassador Lauder and Jewish parliamentarians to combat the evils of antisemitism, racism, bigotry and xenophobia,” she said. “I look forward to working alongside Ambassador Lauder and Jewish parliamentarians to combat the evils of antisemitism, racism, bigotry and xenophobia.”

Israel, Cyprus, Greece to link power grids via undersea cable

Israel, Cyprus and Greece signed a Memorandum of Understanding on March 8 regarding a project to link their power grids via the construction of the world’s longest and deepest undersea power cable. The project, called the “Euro-Asia Interconnector,” will help Israel build on more options for renewable energy, contribute to energy security and reduce the need for fossil fuels, said Israeli Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz at the signing ceremony in Nicosia. Steinitz called the MoU “great news for the citizens of Israel,” according to a ministry statement. “The Euro-Asia Interconnector undersea power cable will allow us to receive electricity back from the power grids of the European continent in times of emergency, and more importantly will also support our ability to significantly increase reliance on solar power generation, and help us meet the government’s 2030 solar energy targets,” he said. Cypriot Energy Minister NatsiPasidis said that the MoU marked “a decisive step toward ending the
Why do we have to wait so long to eat?

Why do I have to sing?

Why do we have to have matzah the whole week?

Why do I have to sit at the kids’ table?

Why am I always the youngest?

Why can’t we help people?

On Passover, kids rarely stick to asking just the four questions. This year we’re asking an extra question, too. Will you help us make a difference in the lives of Jewish children, here at home and around the world?

By giving to Federation you feed hungry children. You connect children to Judaism—through after-school programs, Jewish summer camp and Birthright. You provide counseling to troubled teens. You help children with special needs. And more.

So this Passover, our fifth question is, “Will you help make a difference in the lives of Jewish children?” Please answer “yes” and give as generously as you can. Visit JewishNEPA.org and donate today.