

The General Assembly

Featured Sessions

As of October 31, 2025

MONDAY, NOV. 17th | 11:00 AM - 12:15 PM

The Power of Local and State Advocacy in Combating Hate

This session will explore the critical role state and local governments play in combating antisemitism, emphasizing the need for robust legislation, education initiatives, and community partnerships to address rising hate incidents. Presenters will discuss successful state and local-level strategies, including the establishment of task forces to combat antisemitism, legislative initiatives taken to push back on antisemitism and hate, and responses to antisemitic incidents and attacks that we have seen in recent years. Attendees will gain insights into how localized efforts can create meaningful impact, reinforce national commitments, strengthen partnerships with key stakeholders, and ensure Jewish communities feel safe and supported across all regions.

- Eileen Filler-Corn, President, EFC Strategies LLC and Public Affairs Advisor, Jewish Federations of North America
- Attorney General Jason Miyares (R-VA)
- Rep. Simon Cataldo (D-MA), Co-Chair of the Special Commission to Combat Antisemitism
- Moshe Davis, Executive Director, Mayor's Office to Combat Antisemitism
- Erica Winsor, Public Affairs Director, The Jewish Federation of Greater Houston

Stemming the Tide of Antisemitism in K-12 Schools

While campuses have been a public flashpoint for antisemitic and anti-Israel protests, the true battle of ideas starts in elementary school. Antisemitic curricula, spread by extremist organizations, ideologues, and even teachers' unions, preach antisemitic conspiracies in the language of justice to the youngest of children. Antisemitic bullying and intimidation can be found in schools nationwide. The Jewish community and our allies are standing up. Join us for a conversation on the emerging best practices that safeguard Jewish students and to understand how Jewish leaders can participate in building networks that ensure we combat the emergence of antisemitism in the next generation.

- Noam Weissman, EVP Open Dor Media
- Jenna Potash, Senior Director of Public Affairs, UJA Federation of Greater Toronto

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- Dr. Ben Jacobs, Program Director, Israel Education; Research Associate Professor, Experiential Jewish Education, The George Washington University
- Hindy Poupko, Senior Vice President, UJA-Federation New York

Activating Jewish Civic Leadership for Today's World

In an era marked by global uncertainty, social division, and rising antisemitism, Jewish civic leadership has never been more essential. This session will explore how today's Jewish leaders can bring the community's values, networks, and influence to bear on the defining issues of our time to ensure the security and vitality of Jewish life. Participants will hear from leaders who are building bridges across communities, shaping civic life, and driving meaningful change.

- Evan Bernstein, Vice President for Community Relations, Jewish Federations of North America
- Gary Torgow, Chair, Board of Trustees, Jewish Federations of North America
- Julie Tilson Stanley, President and CEO, Jewish Columbus
- Susan Shulman Pertnoy, Immediate Past-Chair, Jewish Federation of Palm Beach County
- Shira Hutt, Executive Vice President, Jewish Federations of North America

Start-Up Donation: Creating Opportunities for More Israelis to Give

Israel's philanthropic landscape has changed dramatically in recent years, with leading tech entrepreneurs thinking about impact, innovation, efficiency, and the ROI of purpose. Informed by Jewish values and a heightened sense of communal responsibility, new philanthropic models developed by these "Tech Jews" are now helping address the enormous needs that have emerged since October 7th. Join us to hear about these models and the exciting new opportunities for partnership with Federations and the North American Jewish community that are emerging as a result.

- Jeff Schoenfeld, Vice Chair, Jewish Federations of North America
- Yadin Kaufmann, Founder and Chairman, A Good Option/Tmura
- Izhar Armony, Chairperson, Habaita/Homeward
- Irina Nevzlin, Chair of ANU - Museum of the Jewish People

Antisemitism and Helping Professions

Antisemitism has surged across society, impacting even mental health and social service spaces. Some Jewish clients report being judged or dropped by therapists who view Zionism as a problem or a "mental illness" to be treated. Jewish providers have faced blacklists and harassment within their professional spaces. This session will examine how such bias enters the helping professions, the legal



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and ethical duties to provide fair care, and what communities can do to ensure Jewish clients feel safe and respected.

- Dr. John Crouch, Cardiothoracic Surgeon, General Assembly Co-Chair
- Jenna Shapiro, Licensed Clinical Psychologist
- Danielle Gross, Licensed Mental Health Counselor
- Dr. Miri Bar-Halpern, Director of Trauma Services and Training, Lecturer in Psychology, Harvard Medical School
- Dr. Dean McKay, Professor of Psychology, Fordham University
- Ken Marcus, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, The Louis D. Brandeis Center for Human Rights Under Law

Expanding Access: Strengthening Jewish Education from Preschool through Day School

Jewish education is the engine of communal vitality, yet too many families remain on the sidelines. How can we expand and sustain a thriving continuum of Jewish education, from preschool through day school? This session will spotlight bold, innovative strategies that communities are advancing across North America. From addressing the shortage of high-quality educators to launching large-scale enrollment campaigns, from reimagining affordability models to building powerful community partnerships, panelists will share actionable approaches that are reshaping the field. Join us to explore scalable models that are transforming access, strengthening enrollment, and ensuring more Jewish families can find their place in Jewish education.

- Gail Norry, Co-Chair, Community & Jewish Life, Jewish Federations of North America
- Sarena Koschitzky, Vice Chair, UJA Federation of Toronto
- Orna Seigel, Executive Director, ElevatEd
- Paul Bernstein, Chief Executive Officer, Prizmah
- Wendy Platt Newberger, Director, Crown Family Philanthropies
- Ginny Galili, Head of School, Gross Schechter Day School
- Andrea Fleishaker, Deputy Director of the Jewish Life Department, UJA-Federation of New York

Belonging and the Surge: Moving Beyond the Buzzwords

In the wake of a significant surge in Jewish communal engagement following October 7th, our communities are presented with a pivotal opportunity to transform this momentum into lasting, inclusive connections. Yet, new data from the Jewish Federations of North America reveals that while



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the post-10/7 “Surge” initially sparked increased interest in the Jewish community among historically marginalized Jews their engagement has since declined more sharply, often due to uncomfortable experiences. This session will delve into data and lived experiences of specific pockets of our diverse Jewish community including Mizrahi and Sephardic Jews, Jews of Color, Partners in Multifaith couples, and Jews with Disabilities. We will discuss the evolving landscape of Jewish belonging in the 21st century, examining how intentional design and inclusive practices can foster deeper engagement across diverse demographics. Join us to gain actionable insights and tools to nurture a Jewish community where every individual feels seen, valued, and integral to our collective future.

- Mimi Kravetz, Chief Impact and Growth Officer, Jewish Federations of North America
- Sarah Levin, Executive Director, JIMENA
- Avi Rubel, CEO Honeymoon Israel
- Aaron Kaufman, Jewish Federations of North America
- Rabbi Angela Buchdahl, 2025 General Assembly Scholar-in-Residence

Iran's Global Reach and Its Impact on Jewish Communities

For decades, Iran has positioned itself as the central challenger to Israel and Jewish communities worldwide, a stark contrast from the wary alliance that existed between the two countries not so long ago. This session will unpack the ideological roots of that posture, examining how the regime’s worldview fuels both its regional ambitions and its hostility toward Jews across the globe. We will also look at how Iran projects power through its proxy networks, including Hezbollah, Hamas, the Houthis, and Iraqi militias, which advance Tehran’s goals through terrorism, cyber operations, and covert activity. The discussion will also explore how threats translate into the most immediate security risks for Jewish communities outside Israel, and how strong partnerships with local, state, and federal law enforcement can help mitigate them. Just as important, we will ask what more communities should be doing now to prepare for the possibility of Iranian-linked threats closer to home, ensuring that Jewish institutions remain protected and resilient in the face of rising antisemitism.

- William Daroff, Chief Executive Officer, Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations
- Yaakov Katz, Senior Fellow, Jewish People Policy Institute
- Marjan Greenblatt, Founder and Director, Alliance for Rights of All Minorities
- Behnam Ben Taleblu, Senior Director and Senior Fellow, Foundation for Defense of Democracies



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Countering Hate, Online and in the Press

Throughout the Jewish community, there is growing concern that news, social media, and other content-creating organizations are either unable or unwilling to cover antisemitism in America and the war in Israel fairly. The problem is not limited to traditional outlets such as newspapers, TV, and radio, but also more modern parts of our media ecosystem, such as podcasts, YouTube videos, Wikipedia, Artificial Intelligence, and the algorithm-defined pages on social media networks. This session will dig deep into the evolving media landscape, giving you the real story of what's happening on the front lines and behind the scenes, and how our community is fighting back.

- Niv Elis, Associate Vice President, External Communications
- Jacki Karsh, Reporter and Journalist, LA County Channel
- Warren Cohn, Media Advisor, American Middle East Press Association
- Jonah Kaplan, Investigative Reporter, CBS News and Stations
- Imran Ahmed, Center for Countering Digital Hate
- Ed Sussman, WhiteHatWiki

Master Class: Strategic Messaging and Countering the War of Narratives

In today's information battlefield, the fight for truth is as critical as the fight on the ground. Join former IDF Spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari for an exclusive master class on strategic communication and narrative defense. Drawing from his frontline experience leading Israel's messaging during one of the most complex and consequential periods in its history, General Hagari will share insights on how to communicate with clarity, credibility, and moral strength in the face of misinformation and hostility. Participants will gain practical tools for engaging effectively across media platforms, shaping public understanding, and strengthening Israel's story in a world where perception often drives reality.

- Rear Admiral and Former IDF Spokesperson, Daniel Hagari
- Lonnie Nasatir, President, Jewish United Fund/Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago

The Cost of Service: Building a Safety Net for Israel's Reservists

Behind every Israeli reservist called to serve is a family, a business, a classroom, and a community left behind — strengthening them all must be part of our collective response. Join us to uncover how powerful partnerships are reimagining what it means to support those who serve. Hear expert insights, gain a deeper understanding of the multifaceted challenges facing reservists and their families, and explore how holistic, coordinated interventions can strengthen both the resilience of individuals and the sustainability of Israel's reserve system.



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- Becky Caspi, Senior VP, Israel Overseas, Jewish Federations of North America
- Tal Hochman, Executive Director, Israel Women's Network
- Rachel Azaria, Founder and CEO, HaOgen for Reservist Families
- Dayelle Neuman, Chief Development Officer, The Jewish Agency



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MONDAY, NOV. 17th | 12:30 PM - 2:30 PM (LUNCH)

Jewish Agency Lunch

After two years of war in Israel, the country and its people are looking towards the next steps for healing and rehabilitation. The economy, resilience levels, and impacted populations are struggling. At the same time, Jewish communities around the world have dealt with unprecedented levels of antisemitism and threats to personal security. The Jewish Agency is at the forefront of contending with both of these arenas. Join us to hear from our Chair, Mark Wilf, and CEO, Yehuda Setton, as they share their reflections on the past year and vision for the future. ***By Invitation Only.***

From 1929 to October 7: Unpacking a Century of Disinformation

Award-winning journalist and bestselling author Yardena Schwartz joins the General Assembly for an in-depth conversation about her acclaimed book, *Ghosts of a Holy War*, which explores the lasting legacy of the 1929 Hebron Massacre and its haunting echoes today. Through vivid reporting, archival research, and deeply human portraits, Schwartz illuminates one of the most pivotal moments in Israel's pre-state history, and the role disinformation has played in fueling this conflict for the last century. At a time when rampant misinformation is fueling both record levels of antisemitism and anti-zionism within the Jewish community, this session will focus on the importance of knowing our history so we can reclaim our story.

- Philissa Cramer, Editor in Chief, JTA
- Yardena Schwartz, Journalist and Author

Voices from Campus: The Realities of Jewish Student Life Today

Across North American campuses, Jewish college students are navigating a complex moment—confronting challenges while also building proud, connected, resilient, and vibrant communities. Join us to hear directly from students as they share what it's like to live Jewishly on campus today. They'll reflect on both the obstacles and opportunities they encounter, the support that makes a difference, and the innovative ways they are creating spaces of belonging, leadership, and authentic Jewish expression. This conversation offers an important window into the evolving landscape of Jewish campus life, including a first look at new research into the preferences, needs, and experiences of Jewish college students—and how the wider community can help empower and partner with the next generation of Jewish leaders.



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This session will feature college students participating in a special General Assembly track, a partnership between Hillel International and the Jewish Federations of North America, together with Adam Lehman, President and CEO, Hillel International.

Navigating Today's Challenges: Confronting Antisemitism in a Changing Landscape

At a time when antisemitism is rising across every sector of society—and when more organizations than ever are working to confront it—Jewish leaders face difficult questions about strategy, focus, and partnership. How should the community prioritize its efforts and resources? What happens when key institutions—from the National Education Association to the FBI—become sources of tension? In this timely conversation, we will explore how Jewish leadership is navigating today's rapidly shifting landscape to shape a coordinated response to the complex challenges facing the Jewish community today.

- Heidi Gentwerk, President and CEO, Jewish Federation of San Diego
- Eric Fingerhut, President and CEO, Jewish Federations of North America
- Jonathan Greenblatt, CEO, ADL



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Supporting the Emotional Well-being of Jewish Families

How are Jewish families grappling with today's complex landscape and how are parents managing their own well-being as they navigate what it means to raise Jewish teens in this time? This session will explore the emotional well-being of parents of Jewish teens today, grounded in national research, including a preview of initial findings from BeWell's first study on the experiences and needs of parents raising Jewish teens, and JFNA's latest survey on Jewish life. Together, we'll reflect on how post-October 7th realities are impacting parental well-being and explore how the Jewish community can best respond to parents' most pressing needs, empowering them to help families thrive.

- Sara Allen, Associate Vice President, Community and Jewish Life; Executive Director, BeWell, Jewish Federations of North America
- Zachary Nichols, Lead Researcher, CASJE
- Shuli Karkowsky, Chief Executive Officer, Moving Traditions
- Michelle Labgold, Chief Planning Officer, Greater Miami Jewish Federation

Addressing the Root Cause: The Need for Systemic Change on College Campuses

The university encampments of 2024 exposed a torrent of antisemitism embedded in universities around the country. Through advocacy, intervention, and improved policies, higher education spaces are now quieter, but the antisemitism that enabled the protests still simmers under the surface. What needs to be done next to address the root issues and to stop them from impacting future generations?

- Emily Briskman, Vice President, JUF Campus Affairs & Executive Director, The Hillels of Illinois at Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago
- Dr. Gunther Jikeli, Director, Borns-Jewish Studies Program and Erna B. Rosenfeld Professor at Indiana University's Institute for the Study of Contemporary Antisemitism Indiana University
- Rebecca Brown, Vice Chancellor for Strategic Initiatives and University Governance, Washington University in St. Louis
- Tao Tan, Affiliate Scholar, Center for the Future of the American University, American Enterprise Institute



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What Comes Next? Israel Education, Engagement, and the Path Ahead

At a time when the relationship between Jews and Israel is being tested and transformed, what tools will shape the future? This session brings together leading philanthropists, educators, and organizational visionaries to ask the central question: what comes next? We'll surface the core forces shaping our communities – how connection and pride have deepened despite external noise, and how new opportunities are emerging to engage diverse and evolving communities across the Surge. Together, we'll explore how Israel education, community engagement, and leadership strategies can strengthen belonging, resilience, and collective purpose. This conversation will set the tone for how the Jewish community charts its next chapter – grounded in data, vision, and shared action.

- Jamie Simon, Chief Executive Officer, Foundation for Jewish Camp
- Jon Falk, Vice President, Israel Engagement and Confronting Antisemitism, Hillel International
- Mark Charendoff, President, Maimonides Fund
- Meredith Dragon, Chief Executive Officer, Jewish Federation of Greater MetroWest New Jersey
- Mimi Kravetz, Chief Impact and Growth Office, Jewish Federations of North America
- Anna Langer, Vice President, North American Israel Strategy, Jewish Federations of North America
- Lauren Steinberg, Managing Director, K-12 and Campus Engagement and Strategic Initiatives, Jewish Federations of North America

The Druze Experience in Israel's Next Chapter

Amidst the shifting dynamics of Israeli society and the broader region over the past two years, the story of Israel's Druze community offers powerful new perspectives on identity, loyalty, and opportunity. Explore how recent developments have reshaped the Druze experience; what lies ahead for this proud and unique minority; what doors are opening in education, leadership, and civic life; and how our communities and new partnerships can help turn potential into progress.

- Dr. Sawsan Kheir, Fellow, Haifa University
- Huda Kowas, Economic Development Manager, The Jewish Agency for Israel
- Ofer Bavly, Vice President, Jewish Federation of Metropolitan Chicago

From 9/11 to 10/7 and Beyond: Jewish Security Across North America.

The unprecedented and devastating Hamas-led terrorist attacks on October 7, 2023, not only changed the security psyche and posture of Israel, but also Jewish communities around the world, unleashing an unprecedented number of threats and incidents directed at the Jewish community. Two years later, the



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recent attacks in Boulder and Washington, DC, and the ongoing impact and record level of antisemitism and hate against Jewish communities in North America show no indication of subsiding. Join leaders to hear first-hand the assessment of the current threat environment and security landscape, discussing – from the international, national, and local Federation perspectives – of what we continue to face and how, by working together, we can continue to live securely.

- Yossi Cohen, Former Head of Mossad
- Jeffrey Finkelstein, President and CEO, Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh
- Renee Rockford, President and CEO, Jewish Colorado
- Michael Masters, National Director & CEO, Secure Community Network
- Eric Fingerhut, President and CEO, Jewish Federations of North America

The Future of Israel's Recovery

No Israeli community has been left untouched in the aftermath of October 7, yet the path to recovery looks different across the country. Explore the key role of Israel's municipal leaders, together with eye-level knowledge of their communities, can lead to effective, tailored, and resilient rebuilding. Join us to examine how local authorities — as key connectors between citizens and the state — are best positioned to identify needs, direct resources, and spark innovative solutions for their communities. This conversation will ignite fresh thinking about how our communities' support can align with Israel's diverse regional realities and help shape a more effective and curated response to Israel's needs.

- Rebecca Caspi, Senior VP for Israel Overseas, Jewish Federations of North America
- Hadas Minka-Brand, Executive Director, JDC-Israel
- Haim Bibas, Mayor, Modi'in
- Tzvika Brot, Mayor, Bat-Yam Municipality
- Elad Kozokaro, Chief Executive Officer, Community Centers Network Kiryat Shmona

The World Court of Opinion: Israel After October 7th

After October 7th, victims and their advocates have turned to the courts to seek justice, filing lawsuits against Hamas, Iran, the United Nations, and university-based student organizations, such as those at Columbia, that are accused of fueling or excusing terror. This session will spotlight how survivors' voices are driving new legal standards and how domestic and international courts are becoming critical battlegrounds in the fight against terror.

- Ted Deutch, CEO, American Jewish Committee



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- Prof. Ruth Halperin-Kaddari, Founder & Head, Ruth and Emanuel Rackman International Center for the Advancement of the Status of Women and Families at Bar-Ilan University; Co-Founder, The Dena Project
- Anne Bayefsky, Director, Touro Institute on Human Rights and the Holocaust; International legal scholar; Former delegate, UN conferences for Canada and NGOs
- Jason Torchinsky, Partner, Holtzman Vogel

From Donors to Day Schools: Leveraging Public Policy to Strengthen Our Communities

This panel will cut through the noise of the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBA) and zero in on what matters most for Federations. Featuring leaders in fundraising, Jewish education, and national policy, we'll unpack how the law reshapes charitable giving, opens new scholarship opportunities for Jewish day schools, and heightens challenges in health and human services to meet our community's needs. The discussion will highlight practical takeaways—how Federations can recalibrate fundraising strategies, advocacy priorities, and communal allocations to navigate this new landscape.

- Edward J. Beckwith, Partner, Baker Hostetler; Co-chair Tax and Charitable Giving Committee, Jewish Federations of North America
- Ellen Horowitz Matz, Director, Education Tax Credit Programs, Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia
- Margo Paz, Director, Advocacy & Government Relations, UJA-Federation of New York
- Dennis Bernard, Chair, Government Affairs Subcommittee, Jewish Federations of North America

Coming Home: LGBTQ+ Jews Returning to Jewish Communal Life

In the wake of rising antisemitism and growing exclusion from broader queer spaces, many LGBTQ+ Jews are returning to Jewish communal life, seeking not just safety but spaces where all parts of their identity can be seen, held, and celebrated. This moment presents both a challenge and an opportunity for Jewish leaders: how do we build communities that foster belonging while also navigating the emotional, political, and generational complexities within LGBTQ+ Jewish life? This session will explore the social and spiritual forces behind this renewed engagement, the mental health realities many LGBTQ+ Jews are carrying, and the diverse and at times deeply polarized perspectives within our communities around Israel, the war with Hamas, and the Jewish communal response.

- Jeff Schoenfeld, Vice Chair, Jewish Federations of North America



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- Nate Looney, Director, Community Safety and Belonging, Jewish Federations of North America
- Douglas London, Managing Director and Partner of CCS Fundraising
- Asher Gellis, CEO JQ International
- Jaimie Krass, President and CEO, Keshet

Master Class: Strategic Messaging and Countering the War of Narratives

In today's information battlefield, the fight for truth is as critical as the fight on the ground. Join former IDF Spokesperson Rear Admiral Daniel Hagari for an exclusive master class on strategic communication and narrative defense. Drawing from his frontline experience leading Israel's messaging during one of the most complex and consequential periods in its history, General Hagari will share insights on how to communicate with clarity, credibility, and moral strength in the face of misinformation and hostility. Participants will gain practical tools for engaging effectively across media platforms, shaping public understanding, and strengthening Israel's story in a world where perception often drives reality.

- Rear Admiral and Former IDF Spokesperson, Daniel Hagari
- Renee Kutner, President and CEO, Jewish Federation of Greater Atlanta

Harnessing the Surge: New Pathways to Jewish Engagement

The data is clear, since October 7, there has been a surge in both Jewish engagement and the desire for deeper connection across nearly every segment of our community—from young adults and midlifers to parents of young children and those in interfaith relationships. Yet in many communities, this surge can be difficult to detect, especially when measured through traditional metrics. This session will explore how and where engagement is happening, and why it often takes new forms. Over the last year, these trends have accelerated, revealing both new opportunities and long-standing gaps. We'll highlight emerging models—both institutional and grassroots—that reflect this shift, and hear from experts sharing case studies, challenges, and practical insights for building more responsive, welcoming Jewish communities.

- Gil Pruess, Chief Executive Officer, Jewish Federation of Greater Washington
- Sarah Abramson, President & CEO at One Table
- Rabbi David Eliezrie, Director at North County Chabad Center
- Adina Poupko, Executive Director, The Natan Fund
- Taylor Epstein, Associate Vice President, Federation Growth, Jewish Federations of North America



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Engaging Our Jewish Teens: Today's Challenges and Opportunities

Join professionals from around the field to discuss their work engaging Jewish teens. Together, we'll examine new survey data and statistical analysis of teen attitudes towards antisemitism, programming opportunities, Jewish identity, and more. We'll also hear from professionals on the ground working with teens day in and day out to hear stories of success, challenges, and opportunities in this fascinating moment. Come prepared with questions and leave inspired to support the next generation of Jewish communal leaders.

Speakers:

- Rabbi Andrew Terkel, Executive Director, Student to Student, Jewish Federations of North America
- Dr. Samantha Vinokor-Meinrath, Senior Director, Knowledge, Ideas, and Learning, The Jewish Education Project
- Brett Lubarsky, Director of Combined Jewish Philanthropies, Boston Jewish Teen Initiative
- Devora Simon, National Director JSU, OU-NCSY

Service and the Surge: Responding to Crises & Strengthening Jewish Life

From Israel to Ukraine to crises closer to home, Jewish communities worldwide are facing extraordinary challenges that demand urgent, thoughtful responses. At the same time, we are witnessing a powerful surge of interest in meaningful engagement – an opportunity to strengthen Jewish identity and peoplehood through hands-on action and service. This session will highlight diverse models of Jewish volunteerism today, from global missions and immersive Israel educational travel experiences reshaped by service post-October 7 to local initiatives that are transforming how Federations and communities mobilize volunteers in their own backyards. Panelists will explore how ethical, values-driven service not only addresses urgent needs but also fosters deep, lasting connections between North American Jews and global Jewish communities.

- Juliana Kohl Gendelman, Co-Chair, Community and Jewish Life, Jewish Federations of North America
- Amy Weiss, Director of Jewish Communal Engagement and Learning, Olam
- Cindy Greenberg, CEO, Repair the World
- Adam Minsky, President and CEO, UJA Toronto
- Andrew Belinfante, Interim Co-Executive Director, JDC Entwine



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Embracing Jewish Racial Diversity

As Jewish life evolves in the 21st century, shifting demographic trends redefine social and cultural identities, reshaping how we perceive and measure communal belonging across schools, synagogues, federations, and Jewish community centers. In the aftermath of the October 7th massacre, as Jews seek communal belonging from within and civic belonging in broader society, we stand at a pivotal moment. Join leading experts as we delve into complex discussions about the racial and ethnic diversity of the Jewish community, and strategies for building an inclusive and thriving Jewish community that embraces the richness of our diversity and ensures a strong, united future.

- Isaiah Rothstein, Rabbinic Scholar and Public Affairs Advisor, Jewish Federations of North America
- Rabbi Bob Kaplan, Senior Advisor, JCRCNY
- Yolanda Narva Savage, URJ-RAC

What's Next For The Middle East in a Post October 7 World

Since October 7, the Middle East has been thrust into renewed instability, testing existing alliances and reshaping the landscape of Israel-Arab relations. As regional actors reassess their interests, questions around normalization, security cooperation, and long-term diplomacy have taken on new urgency. At the same time, the war has complicated prospects for Israeli-Palestinian dialogue—raising critical questions about what a future path to peace might look like. This session will examine the shifting geopolitical realities facing Israel and its Arab neighbors, and explore what may lie ahead for the region—from renewed tensions to emerging opportunities for partnership, engagement, and coexistence.

- Ghaith Al-Omari, Fellow, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy
- David Makovsky, Fellow, The Washington Institute for Near East Policy
- Lahav Harkov, Senior Political Correspondent, Jewish Insider

The Future of Israel's North: A Vision for Renewal

In the wake of crises, there lies opportunity — and nowhere is this maxim truer than in Israel's northernmost city, Kiryat Shmona. Explore how this resilient border community can serve as a living laboratory for recovery, renewal, and long-term transformation. Join us as we unpack a holistic vision to “build back better” — one that weaves together education, economic investment, population growth, and strategic partnerships — to set a new standard for national resilience and regional equity.

- Sarah Mali, Director General, Jewish Federations of Canada-UIA
- Yotam Degani, Chief Development Officer, Community Centers Network Kiryat Shmona



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- Tal Shaked Cretella, VP Strategy and External Relations, Rashi Foundation
- Ori Gil, Director General at JDC Elka, JDC

Healing a Nation: Addressing the Mental Health Crisis in Israel

Since October 7, Israelis have undergone multiple and compounding traumatic experiences. Today, Israel faces a national crisis. A weak system before the war, Israel's mental health system is undergoing significant changes to address the historic need. How are the government, NGOs, and philanthropy looking to address short and long-term needs? How can technology be harnessed to serve individuals? How might we take concrete steps today to mitigate future deterioration? This session will focus on exposing the magnitude of the issue and approaches for addressing needs as part of Israel's rebuilding process.

- Renee Wizig Barrios, President & CEO, The Jewish Federation of Greater Houston
- Rina Goldberg, AVP, Israel and Overseas, Jewish Federations of North America
- Gila Tolub, Executive Director, ICAR Collective
- Jonathan Huppert, Professor, The Center for Trauma Recovery at The Hebrew University

Redefining Jewish Life Through the Lens of Economic Reality

In this session, we'll examine new 2025 data, learn best practices, and join in a discussion on what it would mean for Jewish federations and lay leaders to see class as more central to Jewish life and communal planning. We will explore how our communal narratives about money and class exacerbate stereotypes and obscure the real experiences of Jews across the economic spectrum. The session will include case studies from Los Angeles and Palm Beach. With 29% of Jews struggling or unable to make ends meet, the question is central to how we understand and access Jewish life.

- Rabbi Shira Stutman, Rabbi, Aspen Jewish Congregation
- Rachel Sumekh, Executive, TEN Together Ending Need
- Jon Hornstein, The Harry and Jeanette Weinberg Foundation
- Becky Sobelman-Stern, Executive Vice President and Chief Impact Officer at the Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles

What's Jewish about Fundraising?

As Jewish leaders, we know that fundraising is about more than just dollars—it's about building community, trust, and shared purpose. This session will dive into the rich tapestry of Jewish values that can guide and energize our Jewish communal fundraising work.

- Rabbi Mike Uram, Chief Jewish Learning Officer, Jewish Federations of North America



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- Sherri Katai, Chair, National Women's Philanthropy
- Igor Alterman, President & CEO, The Jewish Federation of South Palm Beach County

Engaging Jewish Identity in the Digital Age

In today's attention economy, social media is no longer just about posting on Facebook or tweeting headlines. It's about navigating a constantly evolving digital ecosystem where stories are crafted, distorted, and consumed in real time. This workshop will explore how platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are becoming primary arenas for shaping Jewish identity, advocacy, and public perception. From algorithm-driven virality to the emotional power of short-form video, we'll examine the current state of play and what it means for how the Jewish community tells its story—and who gets to tell it.

- Noah Farkas, President and CEO, The Jewish Federation of Greater Los Angeles
- Dana L. Walker, Ph.D., COO of Urban Legend
- Jordyn Tilchen, Jewish/Pro-Israel Advocate and Jewish Vertical Lead at Urban Legend

Security for All: Building Bridges and Securing Civil Society

Attacks on a Latter-Day Saints church in Grand Blanc, Michigan. Shooting at the Annunciation Church School in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Bomb threats at Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Murders of young staff from the Israeli Embassy in Washington, DC. Amid a time of rising hate and violence, Jewish Federations have been working side by side with other religious and cultural communities to keep each other safe. The Tepper Foundation has accelerated this process through its groundbreaking Emergency Security Grant Program, which underwrites security improvements at centers of Jewish life while fostering bridge-building with other communities. This session will focus on the needs of our friends from other communities and opportunities to keep each other secure physically and supported emotionally.

- Ann Pava, Chair of Community Relations Subcommittee, Jewish Federations of North America
- Pastor Juan Rivera, Senior Pastor of Victory Church and Vice President of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, Senior Advisor to Eagles' Wings
- Dr. Brian Johnson, Former President of Tuskegee University and Warner Pacific University; co-founder of Christian-Jewish Campus Dialogues
- Laura Cherner, JCRC Director at the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh



The General Assembly

Banned, Then Celebrated: The Battle to Tell Jewish Stories in a Post-October 7 World The Road Between Us: A Conversation with Barry Avrich

Join acclaimed filmmaker Barry Avrich for an intimate and revealing conversation about the making of *The Road Between Us*—a powerful film that tells the story of the heroism and survival of the Tabon family on October 7. What began as a creative journey became a powerful lesson in resilience when the Toronto International Film Festival initially rejected the film, sparking conversations about bias, courage, and the boundaries of storytelling in today's cultural climate. Avrich will share how he navigated the emotional and professional challenges of that moment—transforming setback into opportunity—and ultimately saw his film celebrated and honored on the same stage that once turned it away. This session will delve into the intersection of art, truth, and advocacy, offering a candid look at what it means to tell a Jewish story in a world that often resists hearing it.

- Sara Lefton, Chief Development Officer, UJA Toronto & Executive Director, Jewish Foundation
- Barry Avrich, Filmmaker
- Rena Kopelman, JFNA Board member; Film and Television Producer

