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READER EDITION

November 14, 2025

ISRAEL BRIEF

Friday, November 14

Chayei Sarah: property deeds and security drills in Hebron—and jihadists who love a Shabbat with symbolism.

◇ URIEL ZEHAVER

THE BOTTOM LINE Iran's UN gambit and the silence on Sudan are two edges of the same blade: regimes and their enablers betting that Western institutions care more about narrative than about behavior. Tehran expects that a well-timed legal tantrum can blunt the strategic effect of losing its underground enrichment halls; the UAE expects that being useful against Iran buys it indulgence to arm a genocidal militia in Africa. For Israel, the lesson is harsh but unsurprising: the UN will happily entertain Iran's complaints even as IRGC agents hijack tankers and arm terrorists, and the protest class will keep treating Israel as the world's unique sin while ignoring mass graves their own allies helped fill. That doesn't mean walking away from every forum, but it does mean treating them as battlefields, not courts, and building coalitions with the states—India, Ukraine, Taiwan, the Kurds—who actually know what it is to be on the receiving end of the same predators.

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THIS week's parsha opens with the first title deed in Jewish history: Avraham insists on buying the Cave of Machpelah in Hebron so nobody can question our ownership later. Two millennia and change on, Hebron and the Bethlehem–Hebron belt are again live terrain: a 50-man Hamas network just rolled up around Bethlehem, an ISIS cell exposed in Beit Safafa, and an IDF drill running through Shabbat in Kiryat Arba–Hebron as Chayei Sarah crowds arrive.

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Gaza's "ceasefire" is still a contact line, Hezbollah is rebuilding for the next round, and Iran just hijacked a tanker while writing complaint letters to the UN.

Our enemies love Shabbat mass-casualty theater, especially when the calendar and the map rhyme—so we rest, but we do not go blind.

Flash Brief

- **Gaza:** Hamas tightens economic control and taxes, militias police IDF-held zones, Rafah tunnel-men still unresolved. *See The War Today.*
- **North:** Israel prepares Beqaa strikes after Toul hit; Hezbollah rebuilds while Lebanon and UN claim calm. *See The War Today.*
- **Judea and Samaria:** Bethlehem Hamas network rolled up; further raids near Qalqilya, Al-Bireh and Karnei Tzur ambush succeed. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Jerusalem:** ISIS-inspired Beit Safafa cell exposed planning "end of days" attacks on Jews; indictments expected. *See Inside Israel.*
- **Hebron sector:** IDF drill in Kiryat Arba/Hebron runs through Shabbat amid Chayei Sarah crowds and rising threats. *See Developments to Watch.*
- **Diplomacy:** UN Gaza draft folds in "statehood"; Russia counters with demilitarization-free text; Indonesia trains 20,000 ISF troops. *See Israel and the World.*
- **Iran/Axis:** Tehran hijacks a UAE tanker in Hormuz while demanding UN sanctions over June nuclear strikes. *See Developments to Watch.*

Overview

CHAYEI Sarah is about doing the hard thing in public so the claim can never be questioned later: pay full price, sign the deed, bury your dead where you intend to live. Today's map is the same argument with louder weapons.

Gaza has two governments pretending to be one; Lebanon has one militia pretending to be a state; Judea and Samaria now host both Hamas cells and ISIS dreamers; and the UN is back to writing fantasy resolutions with other people's blood.

The rest of this brief walks the fronts that actually move—Rafah's tunnel pocket, Hezbollah's Beqaa workshops, the southern terror belt around Bethlehem and Hebron—and what they mean for a Shabbat that is quiet on paper but anything but simple.

The War Today

Rafah Tunnel-men and Fake Disarmament Test the Gaza Architecture

Hamas is using the ceasefire to rebuild power, not relinquish it. In Hamas-run Gaza, the group has moved from mass executions of “collaborators” to quiet, grinding control—monitoring every truck, reinstating fees on fuel and cigarettes, fining merchants, replacing dead governors and politburo members, and continuing to pay tens of thousands of loyalists while Gazans complain they’re broke and winter is coming. In IDF-held zones, a different experiment is underway: clan militias like Abu Shabab and al-Astal run “safe areas,” coordinate with Israel and the U.S. CMCC in Kiryat Gat, secure food distribution and fight Hamas daily, while Washington quietly tests whether they can be scaled into a local security architecture because nobody is volunteering to send a real ISF. Underneath all this sits the Rafah tunnel pocket: 100–200 Nukhba terrorists who *chose* to remain on the Israeli side of the Yellow Line, almost certainly as an attack asset, and are now being treated in Doha and Ankara as bargaining chips—Hamas tries to wrap their fate into a new “mini-deal” while slow-rolling the return of murdered hostages’ bodies and selling every staged “discovery” as humanitarian goodwill.

ASSESSMENT

Gaza now has two governments—Hamas taxing cigarettes and staging hostage “finds” in the west, Israel and U.S.-vetted militias keeping order under rifles in the east—and every so-called peace plan is trying to pretend this is one coherent project. The Rafah tunnel men are the purest stress test: Hamas wants “safe passage” and “defensive” weapons; Western diplomats are tempted by the old formula of let’s not disarm, and say we did; Israel insists the sequence is bodies first, surrender or exile later, and, certainly, neither guns nor glory. The longer Phase Two stalls—no serious ISF contributors, Russia pushing a UN text with no demilitarization and no Yellow Line, Hamas reasserting tax authority—the clearer the choice becomes: either Gaza’s “day after” is enforced with real disarmament and local anti-Hamas forces backed by an IDF that can still “mow the grass,” or we get another JCPOA-style illusion where everyone claims success while Hamas quietly reloads under a new logo.

Media Sources: Algemeiner, Jerusalem Post, JNS, Times of Israel.

Hezbollah Rebuilds for Civil War as Israel Prepares for the Next Round

Along the northern front, Hezbollah is trying to do three things at once: rebuild its arsenal, deter Israel, and quietly threaten Beirut with civil war if the government leans too far toward disarmament. Israeli and U.S. assessments now describe a “historic crossroads”: IDF strikes and sanctions have shredded much of Hezbollah’s high-end capability and leadership, Iranian funding is thinner, and Lebanon’s Shiite public is both broke and exhausted—enough that respected Shiite figures are publicly attacking Naim Qassem’s “resistance” letter and calling for disarmament and a new political framework. At the same time, Hezbollah is running its repair shops around the clock—fixing damaged rockets with lathes, re-arming via Syria’s black-market caches, recruiting new Radwan fighters with salaries Lebanon’s army can’t match, and pushing small arms and drones in through improvised routes while Israel hammers anything it can find from the Beqaa to Toul. A recent

car explosion in southern Lebanon that locals first blamed on Israel was actually a failed Hezbollah weapons-smuggling mishap—another reminder that the group’s real footprint south of the Litani is far larger than the fiction peddled by President Aoun and UN talking points. Israel, for its part, is already preparing a limited but sharp air campaign against weapons-manufacturing and assembly nodes in the Beqaa and Beirut region, even as it works the U.S.–French coordination track and watches Macron’s envoy, an unhappy U.S. Treasury delegation, and a disappearing Saudi envoy bounce through Beirut with nothing tangible to show for their frequent flyer miles.

ASSESSMENT

Hezbollah’s current rebuild isn’t just about fighting Israel tomorrow; it’s also about holding a gun to Lebanon’s head today—signaling that if Aoun and the LAF move seriously on disarmament, the group can light the fuse of another civil war. That’s precisely why Israel cannot treat “we blew up some shells in a field” and a few staged LAF demolitions as compliance and walk away. The window of opportunity is ugly but real: Shiite anger, U.S. financial pressure, Gulf money held back, and a Hezbollah that is weaker than it looks on TV. If Jerusalem, Washington, and what’s left of the Lebanese state line up, this can end with Hezbollah half-disarmed by politics and half by targeted strikes; if not, Israel will end up doing the whole job from the air while the same politicians who refused to enter a single Shiite living room run to the cameras to talk about sovereignty.

Media Sources: Ynet, Israel National News.

Inside Israel

Police Scandals and West Bank Cells Stress Israel’s Internal Armor

Israel’s internal security architecture is fighting a three-front crisis: police integrity at the top, Hamas infrastructure in Judea and Samaria, and public resentment over decisions that look like moral confusion under fire. Lahav 433 chief Meni Benjamin was hauled into a PID interrogation for alleged breach of trust—an unprecedented shock for the elite unit—only for Likud MK Tally Gotliv to blow the gag order wide open and accuse the justice system of a political “witch-hunt,” dragging the probe straight into the partisan trenches. Simultaneously, the Shin Bet, IDF and police ran 15 operations across Bethlehem and southern Judea and Samaria, arresting 40+ Hamas operatives ready for immediate shooting attacks—already a major signature move of Director David Zini’s early tenure and a sign the terror center of gravity may be shifting south from Jenin. Battalion 636 ambushed and eliminated two Molotov-armed terrorists approaching Karmeit Tzur, while the IDF’s new 96th Division trains to prevent a synchronized uprising from taking advantage of the Gaza ceasefire.

Inside the ranks, morale is fraying: an IDF reservist who spent 400 days fighting in Gaza and Lebanon blasted his commanders for forcing soldiers to escort humanitarian aid to the same population whose rulers are still trying to kill them—calling it “immoral” and a betrayal of the soldier’s burden.

ASSESSMENT

Israel's internal system is being asked to police, protect, and self-clean simultaneously—always a dangerous combination. The PID's targeting of Lahav 433's chief, the MK's defiance of the gag order, the growing West Bank threat networks, and the moral injury inside combat units all feed the same risk: a society that loses faith in its guardians just as its guardians navigate a multi-theater war. The center will hold only if the state separates accountability from theater—real oversight for police abuse, real backing for the IDF and Shin Bet, and no more performative “aid management” that treats soldiers like props. The next terrorist cell will not wait for Israel to get its internal coherence back.

Media Sources: Israel National News, Jerusalem Post.

Closure for a Hostage Family; Uncertainty in Jerusalem

The body of Meny Godard z”l, murdered on October 7 and dragged into Gaza, was finally returned to his family—an agonizing reminder that three murdered hostages still lie in Hamas's hands and that no government can survive appearing passive on that front. Hours later, a new national poll dropped a different kind of shock: Naftali Bennett's comeback party is now polling neck-and-neck with Likud at 24 seats each, with the anti-Netanyahu bloc hitting 62 seats—enough to form a government. For the first time since the war began, the successor question is real.

At the same moment, the government-backed NIS 3.25 billion benefits package for career soldiers was blasted by former generals as a “worthless” plan that fails to fix the manpower crisis—officers pushed out at 35–40 with no pension path, no job prospects, and no incentive to stay through the war's hardest phases. The IDF needs battalion-grade leaders; the current model produces burnout and exits.

Meanwhile, the announcement of a \$1.6B deep-tech chip foundry in Ashkelon—a strategic defense-sector project—shows how industry is racing ahead even as manpower pipelines stagnate. Security reform and economic investment are happening on parallel tracks; they are not yet synchronized.

Bottom Line: Politics, memory, and manpower intersect: the return of Godard z”l underscores the stakes of national resilience; the career-army crisis exposes the cost of a decade of budgetary sleight-of-hand; the Ashkelon chip foundry shows national strategy shifting south; and Bennett's polling surge signals voters searching for a change from the status quo. Whoever leads the next government must work to regain public trust, foster unity, and strengthen institutions—whether that's a coalition with a refreshed mandate or someone new.

Media Sources: Israel National News, JNS, Times of Israel.

Israel and the World

UN Talks “Statehood” While Israel Counts Weapons and Hostages

Israel’s ambassador in Washington, Yechiel Leiter, is selling Trump’s 20-point Gaza plan as the main diplomatic highway: disarm Hamas; de-radicalize Gaza; install a technocratic authority and an International Stabilization Force (ISF); rebuild under strict sequencing. The latest US-draft UN Security Council text now bakes that into formal language, for the first time putting “Palestinian self-determination and statehood” in the body of a Gaza resolution rather than the annex, while promising a US-run “political horizon” dialogue once PA “reform” and Gaza redevelopment are underway. Russia has responded with its own draft that strips out demilitarization and opposes an Israeli presence on the Yellow Line, framing it as a more “balanced” approach—code for undercutting enforcement while locking in Israeli retreat. Into this mix, Indonesia just announced it has 20,000 troops prepped for a Gaza ISF, insisting their role will be “health and construction,” while Washington’s own line—via Secretary Rubio—is that the ISF “shouldn’t be a fighting force” because Hamas has “agreed to disarm.” Jakarta likes the two-state language, has no relations with Israel, and wants credit for showing up where Arab armies don’t.

ASSESSMENT

On paper, this is a clean architecture: disarm Hamas, stabilize with a Muslim-heavy ISF, then allow for talk about a Palestinian state. In practice, it is still a reward for terror and peddles the same lie that there is a viable two-state solution with a people who want to exterminate you. The same Western reflex that let Hamas build tunnels with Qatari aid is still visible: an ISF that “doesn’t fight,” resolutions that talk “statehood” before a single rocket is surrendered, and Russian counter-drafts designed to hollow out enforcement. Israel’s real partner here is not the text but the timeline: if Washington and Jerusalem keep the focus on verifiable disarmament, the UN language becomes a tool; if they let the process drift, the ISF will end up guarding a slightly slimmer Hamas with better branding. Strategic patience only works if it is paired with brutal clarity on what gets enforced and who stays out—starting with Turkish boots and any ISF that treats Hamas’s fake “defensive weapons” distinction as anything but a scam.

Media Sources: Jerusalem Post, JNS.

Buying Our Gear While Demonizing Our Existence

Europe’s posture toward Israel now continues to infuriatingly straddle the fence. On one side, Italy’s Carabinieri just ordered female-specific ballistic vests from an Israeli firm, recognizing—quietly—that Israeli kit keeps their officers alive while the French government scrambles to walk back its own attempt to ban Israeli defense firms from the Milipol expo. On the other side, the same continent is busy turning Zionism into a police matter: Aston Villa’s home match against Maccabi Tel Aviv featured posters urging Brits to “call the anti-terror hotline” if they see a Zionist, and the BBC/NGO/legal ecosystem keeps laundering “anti-Zionism” as something other than Jew-hate with better fonts. In Paris, Macron just hugged Mahmoud Abbas and called him a “partner for peace”—ignoring 21 years of pay-for-slay, antisemitic textbooks, and squares named to honor Jew-killers. Bibi responded bluntly (and correctly) that you cannot build peace on lies and that the only actor consistently

defending basic Western norms in this story is Israel. Over in The Hague, the ICJ has elected Kenyan jurist Phoebe Okowa—who prosecuted the Namibia case branding Israel an apartheid state and claimed Israel’s UN entry was conditioned on creating “Palestine”—to the bench that will now sit in judgment on future Israel cases. And yet, not every institution got the memo: in New York, the Brandeis Center just forced the Association of Legal Aid Attorneys to pay \$315,000 and submit to external legal oversight after union leaders tried to purge Jewish members who opposed an anti-Israel resolution.

ASSESSMENT

The pattern is consistent: Europe and parts of the UN system want Israeli technology, intelligence, and deterrence, but also the cultural thrill of denouncing Zionism as a crime. The appointment of an ICJ judge who already labeled Israel “apartheid,” the fetishization of Abbas as some aging “prince of peace,” and British street posters equating Zionists with terrorists are not separate stories—they are one campaign to turn Jewish self-defense into something inherently illegitimate. The Brandeis settlement is a reminder that this can be fought and beaten when Jews and allies use the same legal tools against the people weaponizing them. Israel’s answer should be twofold: sharing intelligence and arms should be linked to basic respect and reciprocity and treat every institutional escalation—whether at the ICJ, in a union hall, or on a stadium lamppost—as part of the same front that must be confronted, not appeased.

Media Sources: Jerusalem Post, Times of Israel, JNS.

Sanctions for Us & Silence for the Butchers of Sudan

Fresh off absorbing a joint US–Israeli strike package that shredded its nuclear facilities in June, Iran has now filed a letter at the UN demanding “appropriate measures” and reparations from Washington and Jerusalem for alleged war crimes—citing Trump’s own admission that he “was in charge” of the initial blow. Foreign Minister Araghchi wants sanctions, compensation, and criminal accountability for everyone involved in Operation Rising Lion and Midnight Hammer, even as Iranian proxies keep shooting at ships and smuggling missiles into every arena from Lebanon to Judea and Samaria. The same Security Council now considering a US draft that quietly ties Gaza stabilization to a “pathway” for Palestinian statehood and a Russian counter-draft that erases demilitarization is being asked to treat Iran as a victim; it’s the diplomatic equivalent of the arsonist suing the fire brigade. Meanwhile, a Forward column lays bare the moral theater behind Western protest culture: the UAE—America’s pampered “stability partner” with \$29 billion in US defense contracts—is arming Darfur’s Rapid Support Forces as they carry out a genocide that makes every accusation thrown at Israel look numerically modest. Human-rights outfits the protesters love to quote on Gaza—UN agencies, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty—have all documented Abu Dhabi’s role feeding the slaughter, yet the campus mobs and celebrity boycotters can’t be bothered to chant “Free Sudan” outside an Emirati consulate.

ASSESSMENT

Iran's UN gambit and the silence on Sudan are two edges of the same blade: regimes and their enablers betting that Western institutions care more about narrative than about behavior. Tehran expects that a well-timed legal tantrum can blunt the strategic effect of losing its underground enrichment halls; the UAE expects that being useful against Iran buys it indulgence to arm a genocidal militia in Africa. For Israel, the lesson is harsh but unsurprising: the UN will happily entertain Iran's complaints even as IRGC agents hijack tankers and arm terrorists, and the protest class will keep treating Israel as the world's unique sin while ignoring mass graves their own allies helped fill. That doesn't mean walking away from every forum, but it does mean treating them as battlefields, not courts, and building coalitions with the states—India, Ukraine, Taiwan, the Kurds—who actually know what it is to be on the receiving end of the same predators.

Media Sources: Israel National News, Jerusalem Post, The Forward.

Briefly Noted

Frontline & Security

- Canada's CSIS chief revealed the service has disrupted multiple “potentially lethal” Iranian plots on dissidents in Canada and foiled 24 violent extremist actions since 2022, including attacks targeting Jewish communities in Canada and New York. Tehran is clearly running the same intimidation playbook on North American soil that it runs in Europe and the Middle East—only now the host countries are finally admitting it.

Diplomacy & Geopolitics

- In a rare, blunt interview, Ambassador Yechiel Leiter praised Trump's Gaza plan for embedding Israel's core demands— Hamas disarmament, deradicalization and technocratic governance—while warning that Turkish troops in Gaza or F-35s for Ankara are nonstarters.
- A long profile tracks Ron Dermer's arc from Miami politician's son to Netanyahu's closest strategist, architect of the 2015 Iran-deal speech, the Abraham Accords, the Iran nuclear strikes, and the current Gaza framework—now stepping down after two decades as “the guy” in Washington.

Domestic & Law

- Veteran Hebron activist Shlomo Levinger says war fatigue among local Arabs has sharply increased willingness to sell homes, and that “ideological real estate” money from Jews is now the only limiting factor to expanding Jewish presence in the city. While diplomats debate maps in New York, Jews are quietly buying back Hebron house by house—turning demography and capital into a de facto sovereignty tool.

Economy, Tech & Infrastructure

- Researchers say a 4,300-year-old silver goblet from near Ramallah carries the earliest known visual “creation” narrative from the region—chaos versus order, a sun, a serpent, and a celestial “boat of light.”

Culture, Religion & Society

- A deep dive argues that Musk-era X has turned far-right antisemitism into a business model, with the algorithm rewarding fringe “independent” influencers like Carlson, Owens and Fuentes for ever more conspiratorial, Jew-baiting content.
- Six pro-Palestinian activists in Berlin were arrested after using a cherry-picker to climb the Brandenburg Gate and hang a “Never again genocide – freedom for Palestine” banner, lighting flares over one of Germany’s core national symbols.

Developments to Watch

Northern Front (Lebanon / Syria)

- **Toul Strike and Beqaa Prep** – An Israeli precision strike near Toul killed a Hezbollah operative by Al-Sheikh Ragheb Hospital, and Israel is now openly prepping a limited air operation against weapons-production sites in the Beqaa and Beirut areas. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

Gaza & Southern Theater

- **Sderot Sirens, False Targets** – Two rocket alerts around Sderot triggered interceptions against what the IDF now says were false targets. The system is deliberately hair-trigger on the Gaza border; Hamas and Islamic Jihad will keep probing for gaps, including via deception.
- **Phase Two Still in Neutral** – Israeli sources say there is zero real progress on Gaza “Phase 2”: no country has agreed to send forces, the Rafah tunnel-men standoff poisons the talks, and the ISF is still a PowerPoint, not a brigade. Until someone volunteers to actually enforce demilitarization, expect the IDF to remain the only serious security actor west of the Yellow Line. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

Regional Axis (Iran, Houthis, Militias)

- **Iran Hijacks UAE Tanker** – Tehran seized a UAE-linked oil tanker in the Strait of Hormuz, even as it whines to the UN about June strikes on its nuclear sites. This is textbook IRGC: play victim in New York while running gunpoint energy blackmail in the Gulf. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **ISIS Link in Delhi Terror** – Indian investigators now confirm the Delhi car-bomb cell was in contact with ISIS handlers. The same jihadist ecosystem feeding lone wolves in Beit Safafa and Arizona is still very much in business from South Asia to the Levant.

Judea & Samaria

- **Bethlehem Network Rolled Up** – IDF, Shin Bet and police arrested over 50 Hamas operatives around Bethlehem in 15+ raids, busting a hub that was already at “imminent attack” stage with rifles and infrastructure in place. This is a strategic hit on Hamas’s southern Judea–Samaria apparatus and a warning that the terror center of gravity is sliding south, not just sitting in Jenin. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**
- **ISIS Cell in Beit Safafa** – Four Arabs from Beit Safafa were caught planning an “end of days” war on Jews, consuming ISIS content and trying to buy weapons. Jihadist ideology inside Israel’s capital is a reminder that October 7-style fantasies aren’t confined to Gaza Telegram channels. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

Diplomatic & Legal

- **Russian Gaza Draft Guts Enforcement** – Moscow’s counter-proposal at the UN on Gaza pointedly strips out demilitarization, opposes Israel holding the Yellow Line, and hands “peace maintenance” to the Secretary-General instead of a real Board of Peace. It’s designed to lock in Israeli retreat while leaving Hamas’s teeth in place. **LIKELY TO ESCALATE**

Home Front & Politics

- **Bennett Knocks ISF Fantasies** – Naftali Bennett warned that putting Gaza under a multinational force involving Qatar or Turkey is “Oslo on steroids” and demanded full transparency on any security concessions. His line—IDF freedom of action or nothing—is likely to shape both coalition fights and any future election campaign.

Closing Assessment

THIS week hardened three things. First, Gaza’s split reality is no longer theoretical: Hamas is re-taxing and re-staffing in the west while Abu Shabab-type militias and the IDF improvise order in the east; any “international force” that walks into that without real disarmament will be guarding a figuratively slimmer Hamas with a nicer logo. Second, the northern file is narrowing to a yes/no question: either the U.S.–French clock and IDF strikes together push Hezbollah toward real disarmament, or Israel will end up doing alone from Beqaa to Beirut what Beirut refuses to do in a single Shiite living room. Third, the terror center of gravity is drifting south—Bethlehem, Beit Safafa, the Hebron ridge—precisely where our story starts.

As we go into Shabbat, here’s the blunt warning: jihadists like symbolism, they like crowds coming out of shul, and they like the illusion that “only” Gaza or “only” the north are hot. They’ve already tried to shift the narrative to allow for it—planting stories in the media with their cronies on out of control settler violence. So go to shul, sing Lecha Dodi, eat the kugel—and

keep your eyes open on the road, your phone charged, and your local security team's instructions in your head. Avraham didn't buy Ma'arat HaMachpelah to abandon it when the neighbors got noisy. Neither do we. We sanctify the day, lock the doors, keep the rifle dry, and assume someone is always looking for a gap.

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Mitzpe Institute is an intelligence and strategy organization focused on Israeli security, diaspora threat assessment, and the strategic challenges confronting the Jewish people and the West. We produce daily intelligence, forensic analyses, strategic assessments, and tactical briefings read by policymakers, military leaders, and institutional decision-makers across more than 90 countries and all 50 US states — from the Knesset and the US Congress to allied governments, major policy institutions, and Jewish organizational leadership worldwide.

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