

JEWISH UNITED FUND CELEBRATES



CELEBRATING ISRAEL@70

David Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, declared the nation's independence on the fifth day of Iyar, 5708, according to the Jewish calendar (corresponding to May 14, 1948). Israel will celebrate its 70th Independence Day (Yom Ha'atzmaut) on April 19, 2018.

What is Israel? How will our Jewish community—and JUF News—mark this milestone throughout the year?

The answer to the first question is multifaceted and complex, for “Israel” means many things.

The State of Israel (*Medinat Yisrael* in Hebrew) is what 6.5 million Jews and 2 million people of other faiths and ethnicities call home. It’s where they go to work, attend school, fall in love, sing songs, laugh, and cry. Want a snapshot of how favorably Israelis view life in their nation? Consider this: the 2017 World Happiness Report ranked Israel eleventh out of 155 nations, just behind top 10 Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, Finland, Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and Sweden.

Eretz Yisrael, the ancient Land of Israel, is the timeless homeland of the Jewish people (who also are collectively known as Israel). It is the physical, spiritual, and metaphysical space, which, along with the God of Israel and the Torah of Israel, form the basis of Jewish religion, civilization, and identity.

Israel has been a sacred place of devotion to Jews for three millennia, to Christians for two millennia, and to Muslims for more than one millennium. It is the place where Zionism, the national liberation movement of the Jew-

ish people, fulfilled both the dream and the promise of Jewish self-determination. Israel also is the place where Palestinian Arabs lay political claim, in a dispute that has its origins in the defeat of the Turkish Ottoman Empire 100 years ago, at the end of World War I.

For Chicago’s Jewish community and for JUF, Israel in all its dimensions has been a focus of pride, connection, support, and celebration even before the achievement of Jewish statehood. Through the work of JUF, tens of thousands of Chicago-area Jews have visited Israel, helped build up the people and the land, explored its diverse culture, celebrated its unparalleled contributions to the Jewish people and to humanity, and bolstered mainstream understanding and appreciation of a strong US-Israel relationship.

So how will we mark the milestone of Israel@70? The answer to that question is simple. Throughout the year, JUF News will publish feature articles, announcements, and calendar items that provide a unique window into Israel, along with information about JUF Israel@70 community events. We will highlight the bonds of connection that have been forged and continue to flourish, linking our community and the people of Israel in all areas of life, from arts and culture, to science and technology, to Jewish peoplehood and identity.

Join us on this journey of discovery, which begins this month with *Ambassador Dan Shapiro: From Illinois to D.C. to Israel*. ■

~Aaron B. Cohen, JUF Senior Advisor, Communications

AMBASSADOR DAN SHAPIRO: FROM ILLINOIS TO D.C. TO ISRAEL



Photo credit: Hillel Kuttler

In an interview with JUF News in Raanana, Dan Shapiro discussed his transition from ambassador to think-tank analyst.

By HILLEL KUTTLER

SPORTING A RED POLO SHIRT and gray leisure slacks, Dan Shapiro is back to being a regular guy strolling toward an outdoor table at a coffee shop here, unencumbered by the more formal attire he’d worn most workdays as the United States’ ambassador to Israel.

When Donald Trump became president last January, Shapiro officially left the job he’d held since 2011, which followed two years of advising President Barack Obama as director of the National Security Council’s department on the Middle East and North Africa.

These days, Shapiro, a Champaign, Ill. native, works part-time as an analyst for Tel Aviv University’s Institute for National Security Studies, while also consulting for several clients.

One of Washington’s revolving doors involves non-career diplomats and policymakers—while an expert on the region, Shapiro was a political appointee—working for think tanks when presidential administrations change.

That’s what Shapiro is doing—but he’s the rare one who’s staying on in the country to which he was posted.

The reason, Shapiro explained over iced coffee on an August morning in the Tel Aviv suburb of Ra'anana, is because his eldest daughter Liat, 17, isn’t due to

graduate her Israeli high school until June 2018. Shapiro and his wife, Julie Fisher, didn’t want her to have to leave so close to graduation.

So, the Shapiros—Liat’s sisters are Merav, 12, and Shira, 10—packed up their possessions and moved from the ambassador’s official mansion in Herzliyah Pituach to a rented home in this town where a large population of English-speaking immigrants reside, including many of the family’s friends from the synagogue they attend in nearby Kfar Sava. By next summer, they’ll be back in America: either in Washington, where Shapiro had worked for two decades as an advisor to several members of Congress, or in Chicago.

For now, they’re enjoying living in Israel as normal people.

“We loved the role of ambassador and ambassador’s family: meeting prime ministers and presidents and activists in every field,” Shapiro said. “Now, we’re experiencing Israel very differently, with no security and no staff. We can get in our own car and go north and do some hiking, just as us, with no one watching.”

The family’s changed reality is “very freeing,” said Fisher, who met her future husband when the two attended the Reform movement’s OSRUI camp in Wisconsin. “When we want to walk out the door, we walk out the door.”

Shapiro said he didn’t consider his ambassadorial duties “a bur-

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Photo credit: Zanir Choral Foundation.

Hyde Park gala concert to celebrate Israel's 70th year through song

By ABBY SEITZ *Israel Affairs Writer*

THERE ARE MANY WAYS to share Israel's history. At "Shir Hama'alot" (a Song of Ascents)—a gala concert celebrating Israel's 70th birthday—more than 100 singers will gather at the University of Chicago's Rockefeller Memorial Chapel to tell Israel's story through song on Jan. 28 at 3 p.m.

The concert is co-sponsored by the Jewish United Fund of Metropolitan Chicago and organized by the Rabbinic Heritage Committee of KAM Isaiah Israel, a synagogue in Hyde Park. The concert will feature The Hyde Park Jewish Choral Society, the Kol Zimrah Choir, the University of Chicago Motet Choir, and cantors from the Chicago area.

"Hyde Park is far from a lot of the Chicago Jewish community," said David Berger, the cantor at KAM Isaiah Israel. "This concert is a way of bringing together the North and South and a way of uniting the community geographically and spiritually."

Selections will include songs from early pre-state Israel, as well as contemporary music that is popular today, according to Berger.

"I believe strongly in putting forward elevated culture as part of the way we celebrate the state of Israel [and] as a way of celebrating Jewish culture," Berger said. "Hebrew and Jewish melodies, and the ideal sense of what it is to be Israeli, come together with great art. This concert is a celebration of those great contributions that have been made." ■



Tel Aviv sandwiched between the Ayalon freeway and the Mediterranean sea.

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den," but acknowledged having "definitely felt the release of that intensity" upon leaving the job. As an example, he cited the tension in Jerusalem in July, when Palestinians protested Israel's installation of magnetometers after Palestinians murdered two Israeli policemen on the Temple Mount.

"I definitely noticed the difference of being able to think about it and write about it, without the heavy responsibility of needing to support the real-time diplomatic effort to tamp down the tensions," he said of the crisis.

The INSS job, Shapiro said, enables him to examine issues with a longer-range view, rather than be consumed with the here-and-now. He's now studying the effects of three relationships—America-Israel, Israel-Palestinians and Israel-American Jews—on American national security.

Amos Yadlin, INSS's executive director, said he hired Shapiro because "there's no one better suited than Dan" to examine those relationships.

Yadlin said he was impressed by Shapiro's skill in representing an administration that "maybe was the best" yet in bolstering

American-Israeli security cooperation but that also was highly critical of Israel regarding the Palestinians and that reached an agreement with Iran to try to contain its nuclear-weapons program despite Israel's objections.

"Dan knew, on the one hand, how to represent his government and, on the other hand, how to prevent the [Israeli-American] crisis from escalating. Dan was smart enough not to escalate," Yadlin said.

Since leaving the embassy, Shapiro has written articles on Middle Eastern affairs for several Israeli and U.S. publications. Topics included pressuring the Palestinian Authority to cease its issuing of financial rewards to terrorists who murder Israelis, U.S.-Saudi relations, advice to American and Israeli officials prior to important bilateral meetings, and criticism of Trump's remarks on the neo-Nazis' mid-August march in Charlottesville.

An advocate for creating a Palestinian state to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Shapiro said he's now researching how several alternatives—including not creating a Palestinian state and a Palestinian confederation with Jordan—

might affect American-Israeli relations and U.S. national security.

His research involves interviewing experts and advocates for the other options and then doing "some sort of scenario planning," Shapiro said.

"I don't think any of [the alternatives] are better than a two-state solution. I think they're worse," he said. "I think the current policymakers should be focused on trying to keep that alive."

He added: "I'm very supportive and encouraging of what the Trump administration has done to [advance] the process."

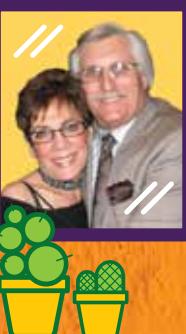
Another process Shapiro is committed to is the Chicago Cubs' evolving from lovable losers to the 2016 World Series champions. A passionate fan, Shapiro took his family to Wrigley Field in July while visiting relatives back home. The Cubs defeated the St. Louis Cardinals, 3-2.

"I took notice that they gave [championship] rings to everyone in the organization," Shapiro remarked.

Think tanks don't reward analysts with rings. An interviewer could easily imagine Shapiro being most happy accepting his next job offer from the Cubs. ■

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