



October 7th Campaign Summary

October 14, 2024

Executive Summary

The Jewish Majority (TJM) designed and executed a strategic communications campaign to ensure that the media coverage of the one-year anniversary of the October 7th Hamas attacks contained discussion of the harassment, intimidation and antisemitism occurring in the United States. The media campaign included advocating for specific policy positions that are overwhelmingly supported by the Jewish community, such as increased funding for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program and the passage of the Antisemitism Awareness Act.

The campaign involved TJM recruiting local rabbis to produce 16 opinion pieces, working with copy editors to develop the pieces, and hiring a communications firm to get them placed. The goal of this pilot project was to have at least 75 percent of the pieces published. In the end, all 16 appeared in print.

These articles were picked up by 20 additional publications and 9 social media feeds with at least 100,000 followers.

Following the publication of each piece TJM reached out to local TV and radio to offer the rabbis for interviews, capitalizing on the earned media achieved through publication. This resulted in appearances on 11 radio shows or podcasts and 7 local TV news broadcasts.

Links to earned media are included with the byline above each article in the attached.

Links and PDFs for any of the following items can be found at

www.jewishmajority.org/october7.

Table of Contents

Page 4:	The Hill : Combatting antisemitism and ensuring that no one faces danger alone
Page 6:	The Atlanta Journal-Constitution : American Jews have faced heightened antisemitism since Oct. 7
Page 9:	Austin American-Statesman : I'm a rabbi in Austin. Our pain since Oct. 7 has mostly been felt in isolation
Page 11:	Boston Herald : Maintaining hope on anniversary of Oct. 7
Page 13:	Chicago Sun Times : Oct. 7 attack on Israel opened floodgates to antisemitism and hate
Page 15:	Cleveland Plain Dealer : After the depravity of Oct. 7 comes realization that opposing antisemitism is a shared endeavor
Page 17:	The Washington Post : The high price of worshipping safely
Page 19:	The Dallas Morning News : October 7 anniversary: A show of solidarity in Dallas gives me hope
Page 21:	Houston Chronicle : One year after Oct. 7, antisemitism is still all too common
Page 23:	Los Angeles Daily News : On October 7, Sinai Temple will mourn, then we will dance again
Page 26:	Miami Herald : A year after Hamas attack, we praise Miami for its solidarity with Israel
Page 28:	The Minnesota Star Tribune : When a yarmulke feels like a target: Navigating Jewish life in a fractured world
Page 31:	The Philadelphia Inquirer : Commitment to peace
Page 32:	Richmond Times-Dispatch : One year later, Richmond Jews struggle to find safety, peace
Page 34:	The Seattle Times : Local Jewish community in need of support more than ever
Page 36:	St. Louis Post-Dispatch : Oct. 7, 2023: The day everything changed

1. Combatting antisemitism and ensuring that no one faces danger alone

The Hill | October 6, 2024

By: Rabbi Benjamin Goldschmidt

Earned media: [AOL](#), [Yahoo! News](#), [Real Clear Religion](#), [Jewish Insider](#), [eJewish Philanthropy](#), [Facebook](#) (1.6 million followers)

When I was a boy, an armed attack took place at my family’s Moscow synagogue. In those early post-Soviet days, my mother wouldn’t let me leave the house wearing my yarmulke, fearful I would be the target of slurs, or worse, against “dirty Jews.”

As the son of the chief rabbi of Moscow, I personally felt the effect security concerns have on communal life. For centuries, persecution, expulsion, pogroms and mass murder left Jews around the world with the quiet expectation of antisemitism — a sense that hatred was an inevitable part of life. History taught my ancestors that reality meant being enslaved, denied rights and citizenship, and marched to gas chambers.

I was told, though, that it wasn’t like that everywhere. That there was a place where all people were free and protected. Where Jews could walk the streets proudly without looking over their shoulders in fear. We all viewed America as the shining city on the hill: a place where Jews lived in peace, prosperity and more importantly — where they lived free from fear.

When I moved to the United States and later [became a rabbi](#) on the Upper East Side of Manhattan, I tasted freedom — but it was fleeting.

For my community, the promise of American liberty shattered along with the [rise of antisemitism](#) over the past few years. Within a week of the gruesome Hamas terrorist attacks of Oct. 7, hostile and angry demonstrators in Times Square celebrated the murder of Israelis and threatened violence against American Jews.

In the months that followed, a congregant was spit at while carrying his prayer shawl on the Upper East Side. A young man was punched at a rally by Hunter College, just two blocks from our synagogue. And young parents had to shut themselves inside with their children when a mob shouted antisemitic threats outside their Park Avenue windows.

Today, freedom from fear is no longer a collective guarantee for every New Yorker. For the Jews of the city, safety from violence and antisemitism has become a personal responsibility born by individuals.

This has led to some difficult decisions. Do we allocate synagogue resources to fund a teen holiday program or hire another security guard to prevent a shooting at services? How

much more do you need to charge for Sabbath Dinner in order to cover security? How much of an [antisemitism tax](#) is warranted to be able to attend synagogue?

These are painful questions to answer. My congregation pays for armed guards every Sabbath and invests deeply in keeping our community safe. Most communities have added security fees to their membership dues. But we shouldn't have to. No New Yorker or American should have to purchase their peace of mind or pay for their sense of security.

I thought I'd left the fear and anguish of being a vulnerable Jew in Russia. But as I watch my congregants walking into our synagogue flanked by NYPD officers with guns, I catch my breath, as my mother did, back in Moscow. That scared intake of air is the most un-American sound I know.

But there's more that we can do to help New York City and cities across our country live up to its promise of freedom. We must insist on a reclamation of the values that make us who we are — the preservation of freedom and unity. We must demand policies that will help address antisemitism and protect our communities from hate, like increasing federal [security funding](#) for religious institutions to protect against terror and violence. In 2024, more than half of all requests were left unfunded, leaving the financial burden of safety on individual Jewish communities.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.) should also move quickly to bring the [Antisemitism Awareness Act](#) to the Senate floor. Seventeen Jewish [Organizations](#) have urged passage of this legislation, which would clearly and accurately define antisemitism. United States Special Envoy for Monitoring and Combating Antisemitism Deborah Lipstadt [called the definition](#) “one of the most fundamental tools we have to combat” Jew hatred.

As we move forward, I am optimistic. I see people who never once voted in prior elections getting involved. I see people who only previously voted at the top of the ticket learning about candidates for district attorney, state legislature, school board and other local positions. I see a galvanized young generation of Jews who are willing to fight to make sure that we live up to the American promise where we not only survive, but we thrive.

Combatting hatred and ensuring that no one faces danger alone requires the collective spirit of America. When we embrace unity and shared responsibility, we strengthen the very vision of America that I was raised to admire — of liberty, justice and safety for all. Together, let us protect that vision and keep our city on the hill shining bright.

Rabbi Benjamin Goldschmidt was raised in Russia where his father served as chief rabbi of Moscow. He is the founding rabbi of the Upper East Side's Altneu Synagogue.

2. American Jews have faced heightened antisemitism since Oct. 7

Atlanta Journal-Constitution | October 6, 2024

By: Rabbi Peter Berg

Earned media: [WABE public radio](#), [WABE podcast](#), [Art19](#)

Some dates are seared into the collective consciousness. Franklin D. Roosevelt correctly noted that Dec. 7, 1941, when Pearl Harbor was attacked, would be a date that would live in infamy. Nov. 22, 1963, the day John F. Kennedy was assassinated, became so ingrained that Stephen King used it as the title of a novel. And for many of us, Sept. 11, 2001, continues to bring back memories of terrorists killing thousands and toppling the World Trade Center.

But if you ask most people in Atlanta about [Oct. 7, 2023](#), you probably will get a blank stare. It was fairly typical here — a crisp autumn Saturday with bright blue skies and a high in the 60s, perfect for college football. Nothing that memorable.



Ask someone who is Jewish, though, and it is a different story. That day, when Hamas terrorists invaded Israel, killed 1,200 people and took 250 hostages into Gaza, is burned into our memory.

We soon learned how the terrorists [tortured](#) and [sexually assaulted](#) the

victims. The [terrorists recorded their atrocities](#) and seemed joyful as they murdered innocent men and women, the elderly and children.

We were shocked as we saw a resurgent wave of antisemitism here in the United States. Less than a week after the attacks, we were seeing the [proud display of swastikas](#) and other forms of harassment and intimidation.

Sadly, The Temple, where I serve as senior rabbi, has a long history of dealing with antisemitism. Our congregant Leo Frank was lynched in 1915, and our building was bombed in 1958 by white supremacists upset that our then-rabbi, Jacob Rothschild, was a vocal civil rights supporter.

In the wake of Hamas' attacks on Israel, we've had congregants receive antisemitic leaflets at their homes, and I've counseled several college-age congregants who are dealing with antisemitic harassment on campus. In May, when students at the Savannah College of Arts and Design decided to protest their school's ties to Israel, they didn't assemble in the middle of the campus or in a focal point of their community, but instead they gathered [in front of the school](#) and [directly facing my synagogue](#). Predictably, they were screaming "From the river to the sea," a term Congress [deems antisemitic](#).

We can do more to protect our students. The Antisemitism Awareness Act should be picked up by the Senate and quickly passed. The bill would interpret Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to protect Jewish students to the extent that they face discrimination based on perceived racial, national or ethnic characteristics. It is overwhelmingly [supported](#) by the Jewish community, and its House companion bill passed [by a vote](#) of 320-91.

In ways our non-Jewish friends might not realize, this has been an incredibly challenging year. Many synagogues had intense security even before congregants were murdered in a synagogue in [Pittsburgh](#), or murdered in a synagogue in [California](#), or taken hostage at a synagogue in [Texas](#). With [increased threats](#) against the Jewish community this year, we've had to dramatically increase our security spending.

We're fortunate that we haven't had to pass additional security fees on to congregants, but I know other synagogues have. Still others had to put programs and priorities aside to ensure their safety. This is a trade off that is unsustainable; for smaller synagogues, it is unworkable even today. The Nonprofit Security Grant Program, which provides funding for religious institutions and nonprofits to supplement their security, has fulfilled only 43% of funding requests this year. As Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, D-N.Y., [said](#), "We must continue to advocate for more dollars until all the need is met."

I remember feeling dismayed watching the SCAD protesters that May morning. But a pastor from a church across the street walked over, hugged everyone and just stood with us. I was so appreciative of that and wished that type of support happened more frequently.

Though Sen. Rafael Warnock, Sen. Jon Ossoff and Gov. Brian Kemp have reached out on numerous occasions to see how we are doing, so few others outside the Jewish community have checked in over the past year. When I asked why, they told me, "I didn't know what to say." The broader communal response to both what happened Oct. 7 as well as the rise of antisemitism was, and continues to be, silence. So many people have said nothing to this day.

So what can you do to help? For a start, reach out to your Jewish friends and tell them you understand how horrific Oct. 7, 2023, was for them. Tell them that you deplore the rise in antisemitism and that you challenge it whenever you see or hear it. Tell them you have their back. Mostly, just tell them that you understand that for Jews, everything changed one year ago.

Peter Berg is the senior rabbi of The Temple in Atlanta.

3. I'm a rabbi in Austin. Our pain since Oct. 7 has mostly been felt in isolation

Austin American Statesman | September 30, 2024

By: Rabbi Eleanor Steinman

Earned media: [Yahoo! News](#), [Twitter](#) (340k followers), [Facebook](#) (330k followers)

After Hamas attacked Israel on October 7 last year, many Austin Jews turned to Temple Beth Shalom, where I am the senior rabbi, to mourn and come together. But too many others have stayed away, afraid that such a clearly Jewish building could be a target.

When Jewish residents of Austin turned out to support Israel at an Austin City Council meeting this spring, they were spat upon. Others have had anti-Jewish slurs hurled at them, or anti-Jewish stereotypes dropped into casual conversation.

Jewish teenagers have told me they are constantly being baited by their peers or made to answer for a conflict they have no part in. For many, it's the first time in their lives that they've felt attacked for their religion. Previously they could choose whether and how to express their background. Now they are being publicly identified and forced to defend their faith.

For those in college, it can be much worse. We have students at universities who, before entering a building, were confronted with, "Are you a Zionist? Are you a Jew?" Parents who sent students off to school this fall are asking about their children's safety, and they are terrified.



As a rabbi, I have held a lot of congregants' pain, sadness and angst since that terrible October day last year. Unfortunately, outside of my community, I've largely held these feelings alone.

The post-October 7 isolation many in the Jewish community have experienced has been one of the hardest aspects of the past year. As a Jew who supports Israel, I have felt totally excluded as a

lesbian woman from LGBTQ spaces. The silence and erasure of Jewish pain by former allies has been overwhelming.

Often the attitude expressed is that there's Palestinian pain and there's Jewish aggression. But in reality, there is Palestinian pain *and* there is Israeli Jewish, Druze and Arab pain. There are millions of people who have suffered intense trauma and dislocation on both sides of the war.

I feel it all, but too often I see no sympathy offered for the catastrophic loss and suffering in Israel. No acknowledgement of the hostages or hopes that they will be freed. No understanding that Israel continues to feel vulnerable as Hamas has vowed to repeat the attacks of October 7. No appreciation for my community's risk from calls to "globalize the intifada."

It hasn't helped that a group claiming to speak for Jews – Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) – embraces the same one-sided view in which only Israel is to blame. This is a fringe position and in no way represents the Jewish community. Given that [85% of American Jewish](#) adults believe it is important for the U.S. to support Israel, groups like JVP shouldn't be given a megaphone by others.

This is not to say the Jewish community hasn't been warmly embraced by some. Several public figures have stood shoulder to shoulder with us and worked to keep us safe. But there should be more. I received wonderful support from fellow clergy of other faiths who did reach out – but they number less than five.

I hope that as we mark the anniversary of October 7, more leaders will reach out to have conversations that don't ignore the situation in Israel and Gaza but allow us to live in community together. It would mean so much to hear them say, "I see that you and your community are in pain. You are not alone."

The Jewish community needs strong partners who are willing to listen and engage. Together we need to find new ways of holding one another's pain and learning from each other respectfully and peacefully – ways that allow us to see the humanity in one another.

I'm ready. Who will join me?

Eleanor B. Steinman is senior rabbi of Temple Beth Shalom in Austin.

4. Maintaining hope on anniversary of Oct. 7

Boston Herald | October 7, 2024

By: Rabbi Joel Sisenwine

Earned media: [WBUR public radio](#), [WBUR YouTube](#), [Jewish Boston](#), [Twitter](#) (140k followers), [Facebook](#) (160k followers)

On the morning of Oct. 7, 2023, I received a cryptic text message from a congregant who was in Israel. “This is far worse than anyone is acknowledging at this point,” it said. I made my way to Temple Beth Elohim, where I have served as Senior Rabbi for the past 25 years. But this morning, the morning of our joyful holiday Simchat Torah, was different.

Without stoking rumors, I told them a little bit about what was happening, not fully knowing the extent of the atrocities. We celebrated the holiday in prayer, held by the power of community. Tragically, many of the rumors circulating that morning would be proven true: families murdered in the most barbaric ways, women raped and children, even babies, kidnapped.

But what I have come to learn over the past year is that the war that Hamas started on Oct. 7 would not be limited to the Middle East. Here in Massachusetts, the Jewish community has also been embattled amidst a noticeable increase in antisemitism online, on campus, and in our city streets, leaving our community feeling increasingly alone in the country that we love.

A prominent U.S. senator came to our synagogue the Friday night after Oct. 7. I was deeply appreciative of her presence as it provided us comfort. And yet, I was surprised when a member of her advance team did not realize that our synagogues now require security for ensuring our safety.

In fact, like many other synagogues we have had to significantly increase the amount of money that we spend on security, and we’ve had to raise congregational fees to meet this mounting expense. This amounts to a de facto tax on the Jewish community if we want to worship and gather safely. I know we are not the only Jewish community that has had to contend with this challenge, and yet fewer than half of nonprofit security grant applications were funded in 2024.

Fortunately, our synagogue community has felt buoyed by our neighbors, the churches, friends and civic organizations who have



come to our support. Many of my Christian colleagues in Wellesley immediately reached out, just as they had done after the terrorist attack on a synagogue in Pittsburgh.

I am grateful for the Boston City Council, who denounced anti-Semitism and this year recognized Jewish American Heritage month. Yet, I must admit I was troubled when the city council weighed in on a foreign policy matter by calling for a temporary cease-fire, a political decision that could potentially harm Israel's survival. More than contributing towards peace, it only left us feeling more isolated and alone.

Despite these challenges, our community won't be deterred. Temple Beth Elohim will continue to embrace our core values and commit ourselves to make this world a better place. We will continue to cook meals and distribute them to the thousands of individuals confronting food insecurity. We will continue to welcome refugees, having already welcomed families from Syria, Afghanistan, Venezuela and Ukraine, and few months ago, we also welcomed an LGBTQ+ family fleeing Algeria. I am proud of our work.

In the new Jewish year, we will visit the sick and care for the poor, hopefully with loving allies by our side.

I hope that people will speak out when antisemitism occurs, and name it loudly and clearly everywhere it arises. I also hope that our elected officials, religious leaders and the media stay attuned to the dangers we are now facing so that they too can be partners with us in the fight against hatred and antisemitism.

We are proudly American, and feel blessed by our country's gifts of freedom, peace and prosperity. I hope you will join us as we stand together for a better tomorrow.

Rabbi Joel Sisenwine is the Senior Rabbi of Congregation Beth Elohim in Wellesley

5. Oct. 7 attack on Israel opened floodgates to antisemitism and hate

Chicago Sun Times | October 4, 2024

By: Rabbi Michael Schwab

Earned media: [WBEZ public radio](#), [WBBM radio](#), [MSN](#)

As we approach the one-year anniversary of the terrorist attacks that sparked the war between Hamas and Israel, a battle rages closer to home and even right here in Chicago. Thankfully it's not a clash featuring terror tunnels, assault rifles, drones or bombs, but rather a fight between those who believe in a shared future and those who see this war as a zero-sum conflict.

One can mourn the 1,200 innocent Israelis slaughtered and the approximately 250 Israelis and other foreign nationals kidnapped by Hamas on Oct. 7, and also mourn the innocent Palestinian lives lost in the war. I know I do. It isn't a binary choice.

One can hope for the war to end as quickly as possible, with the safe return of the hostages and the removal of Hamas as a threat to Israelis and [Palestinians](#) alike, but one must also be clear-eyed that the Oct. 7 attacks occurred when Hamas [broke a ceasefire](#). And Hamas has [vowed to repeat the attacks](#) again and again.

I serve a large synagogue in Highland Park whose congregation spans the political spectrum from very liberal to very conservative. The vast majority of us want Palestinians to live with dignity, respect and self-determination. And we want Israel to live in peace and security. We are trying to do our part to support those affected by the war. We have attended rallies, written checks, and even hosted a girls' soccer team from northern Israel — refugees from Hezbollah's ongoing [rocket attacks](#) — who are Jewish, Muslim and Christian. We want a shared future.

Conversely, those who chant "from the river to the sea," an [antisemitic call](#) for the [destruction](#) of Israel, represent the zero-sum camp. In this view, there can be no shared future. Sadly, this phrase was heard all too often during campus protests that have roiled local universities. Seeing the way that our students have been marginalized on campus reinforces the need for the U.S. Senate to adopt the [Antisemitism Awareness Act](#), which would protect Jewish students from discrimination based on perceived racial, national or ethnic characteristics.

Of course, no conversation of the zero-sum camp, especially here in Chicago, can exclude the abhorrent, ethnically motivated [murder](#) of a Palestinian child, Wadee Alfayoumi, in Plainfield Township last October. Political, racial or ethnically motivated violence is never acceptable and must always and unequivocally be [condemned](#).

High cost of synagogue safety

I wish this had been the response from more in Chicago's non-Jewish community following the Oct. 7 attacks, the [Hezbollah missile attack](#) that killed 12 Israeli children on a soccer field, or Hamas' recent cold-blooded murder of six hostages, including [Hersh Goldberg Polin](#), whose family is from the Chicago area.

Over the past year we have received few words of solace or solidarity from local religious institutions, either publicly or privately. It seems that many religious institutions are afraid to offer even condolences for fear of "politicizing" the issue or upsetting some in their congregation. The very limited support from other faith communities concerns me because it signals that the Jewish community may stand alone.

Meanwhile, the ferocious wave of [antisemitism after Oct. 7](#), already increasing in recent years, has impacted us in serious ways. My synagogue has received multiple bomb threats this year, and our community is still traumatized by a national wave of attacks on synagogues dating back to 2018.

In preparation for our High Holidays, this year we have added even more security staff and precautions. The cost of maintaining this level of alert is enormous, often falling on the shoulders of congregants in the form of security dues or from funds allotted to programming. This is a burden our congregation, like many others, must bear just to exercise our right to pray freely.

Smaller congregations are often unable to absorb these costs. Programs like the federal and Illinois Nonprofit Security Grant Program can help alleviate the so-called "[antisemitism tax](#)." But most grant applications go [unfunded](#). Many in my community wonder if this is our new normal — always looking over our shoulders, needing armed security for our places of worship, and advocating for our safety at universities and in Congress.

In this moment of anxiety, I urge those in the Jewish community to stand strong and not give up. And to the non-Jewish community, I implore you: if you belong to a civic or religious organization, reach out to partner with a Jewish organization. Perhaps start by simply asking how they are doing. Learn about Israel and antisemitism. Find ways to constructively engage with the Jewish community and be part of the conversation. Platform voices that make it clear that this is not a zero-sum game.

We must build bridges, not reinforce divides. That is the only way forward.

Rabbi Michael Schwab is the senior rabbi of North Suburban Synagogue Beth El in Highland Park.

6. Drawing hope from tragedy - after the depravity of Oct. 7 comes realization that opposing antisemitism is a shared endeavor

Cleveland Plain Dealer | September 27, 2024

By: Rabbi Scott Roland

BEACHWOOD, Ohio -- Last month, the bodies of [six hostages](#), including one American, were found in a tunnel deep under Gaza. Five of the hostages had been abducted from a music festival and one from her home. They were [held in miserable conditions](#) for nearly a year before their captors murdered them in cold blood.

Learning of these six executions re-immersed me in the devastation that I felt nearly one year ago on Oct. 7, 2023.

The [rape](#), [torture](#) and [depravity](#) that Hamas demonstrated that day is overwhelming.

When I gathered with my congregation that night, I said that our response to the terror must be pride – pride in Jewish heritage and history and faith. Something awful

had happened. We were heartbroken. But we were there to observe a celebratory Jewish holiday and to be together as a community. So, I led my congregants in singing songs of Jewish peoplehood.

Maintaining that sense of strength this year has been a challenge as the Cleveland Jewish community has [experienced an outburst of harassment, intimidation and hate](#).

Now some members of the Jewish community understandably don't feel safe being identifiably Jewish. We have worked hard to protect them. Our synagogue, like most, has received Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) funds to enhance safety measures. On the morning of Oct. 7, we immediately increased protection at the synagogue, and have needed it elevated ever since.

The following Friday, Hamas [called for violence against Jews in America](#). That day, a caterer at our synagogue kept propping a door open. The officer on duty – one who was also there during the [Pittsburgh synagogue massacre](#) – was unsettled. He explained that we were on high alert. We don't leave doors open and unlocked in a synagogue.



Jewish day schools and preschools need armed security officers. Businesses have the burden of insurance, security equipment and more. I don't think that most people realize that, for Jews to go to synagogue and otherwise gather in Jewish settings, we incur a de facto [antisemitism tax](#). The costs are enormous and our security expenses have increased more than 500% in just the last five years.

There simply aren't enough funds from community institutions like the Jewish Federation or from government initiatives like the NSGP to cover everything. In fact, [only 43%](#) of applications for NSGP funding were fulfilled in the 2024 cycle.

The amount of security required for Jewish institutions is unusual — no other faith-based community is subject to this level of threat. When I participate in interfaith gatherings, I'm shocked to walk into a house of worship that is unguarded. I don't know that our non-Jewish friends understand what a privilege it is to be greeted at church by an open door.

The dangers facing the Jewish community have required [creative solutions](#) to address the [crisis of antisemitism on campus](#). But safety shouldn't be an individual responsibility, which is why the Senate must pass the [Antisemitism Awareness Act](#). This bill would give the U.S. Department of Education the ability to enforce anti-discrimination laws to protect Jewish students.

Passing this law is important for its content, but also because it shows that elected officials stand with the Jewish community. This is not Nazi Germany in the 1930s, and that is made clear thanks to the backing we get from political leaders and law enforcement. For every time my congregants and I experienced abuse for our support of Israel, there are also instances of strangers reaching out with encouragement and solidarity.

And so, if I can tear through the headlines and all of the incidents that seem scary and intimidating, I do still have hope. If our country can continue to work together on priorities like protecting houses of worship and the Antisemitism Awareness Act, America will continue to strive for its highest ideals.

Rabbi Scott Roland leads Congregation Shaarey Tikvah in Beachwood, serves as president of the Greater Cleveland Board of Rabbis and is a member of the Jewish Federation of Cleveland's Board of Trustees, where he serves on their security and overseas connection committees.

7. The high price of worshipping safely

The Washington Post | October 6, 2024

By: Rabbi Susan Shankman

Earned media: [Today's Opinions](#), [Jewish Insider](#)

In the aftermath of the Oct. 7, 2023 attacks, when Hamas murdered about 1,200 people in southern Israel and took about 250 more captive, Washingtonians united in grief and resolve. Our political leaders, non-Jewish clergy and friends provided an outpouring of support.

I'm grateful for this backing. I also wish that more people understood the immense strain facing the Jewish community here. In recent years, a long list of violent attacks on Jews has included the [Pittsburgh synagogue massacre](#), the [Poway synagogue shooting](#) in California, the shooting of a congregant outside a [synagogue in Miami](#), the [Monsey Hanukkah stabbing](#) in New York and the [Colleyville synagogue hostage crisis](#) in Texas.

Here in Washington, since Oct. 7, congregants at a synagogue in Georgetown were accosted with a foul-smelling spray by an assailant yelling "[gas the Jews](#)" and [multiple synagogues](#) in the [metro](#) area have been vandalized, some of them multiple times.

The threat to congregants' physical safety takes a tremendous emotional and mental toll. When people walk into Washington Hebrew, the synagogue where I serve as senior rabbi, we want them to feel confident they're entering a safe environment offering a distinctive experience, not going through airport security.

Churches in Washington don't generally require security. Most don't have guards permanently stationed on-site or police officers making regular patrols. Their entrances aren't designed to stymie terrorist attacks or their sanctuaries to protect those inside from violence.

The need for continuous security takes a financial toll on Jewish congregations as well, in building and personnel costs surpassing hundreds of thousands of dollars annually. Washington Hebrew's security expenses more than doubled after Oct. 7, and unfortunately, we had no choice except to raise our security fees to defray the cost. For many synagogues, security costs are their largest single budget item.

The Jewish community in the United States, like any other minority group, shouldn't have to absorb unsustainable costs to safely gather. The federal [Nonprofit Security Grant Program](#) has tried to help, but more must be done. Only [43 percent of grant applications](#) were fulfilled in the 2024 cycle. Without additional funding, I fear some

congregants won't be able to pay the necessary synagogue security fees, or that some congregations will have insufficient security.

I make it a point to regularly thank the police officers we hire to keep us safe. Recently, I spoke to one and noted that he and his fellow officers must be exhausted. He assured me that they were fine, that this is what the police are built for. And, he told me, this is about family. Many of the officers who protect our buildings have been with us for 20 years. Their duty to protect the synagogue feels personal to them, which speaks to the strength of our community.

Today feels like a different world for Jews in America, yet we need to keep bringing people together. We want our synagogues to be safe spaces where people can come for a sense of hope and to find the joy in Judaism because those opportunities strengthen us in those moments that shake our foundations.

Rabbi Susan Shankman, *Washington*

8. October 7 anniversary: A show of solidarity in Dallas gives me hope

The Dallas Morning News | October 7, 2024

By: Rabbi Ari Sunshine

Earned media: [TV: CBS News Texas](#), [Balita USA](#), [Twitter](#) (820k followers)

It is exactly one year since the horrific attacks in Israel began, in which 1,200 people were brutally murdered and 250 were taken hostage into Gaza, [including babies and the elderly](#).

I vividly recall that morning one year ago. It was a Saturday, the Jewish Sabbath, and that night would begin one of the most festive Jewish holidays of the year, honoring the completion of our annual cycle of reading the Torah.

None of my experiences during my more than 20 years in the pulpit could prepare me for how to celebrate a joyous festival in the immediate aftermath of the greatest mass murder of Jewish people since the Holocaust. We decided to honor the dead with special prayers, and to honor the living by proceeding during our holiday celebration on Oct. 8 to dedicate our brand-new playground, the David A. Segal z”l Family Simcha Play Center. By investing in the joy of our children, we refused to let the terrorists win. I remain proud of our commitment to our children’s and our people’s future at a time when others sought to destroy it.

My synagogue is excited to spend our resources on places for our kids to play and grow. However, all too much of our time, energy and dues, which run into the thousands of dollars per family per year, are focused on security. It’s no wonder. Many here in North Texas remember when a gunman took [a rabbi and three congregants hostage](#) in Colleyville in 2022. This followed the [fatal attack on a synagogue](#) in Poway, Calif., and the horrific [Tree of Life Synagogue massacre](#) in Pittsburgh, where 11 congregants were murdered.

These threats have only increased in the past year. According to a [Federal Emergency](#)



[Management Agency](#) press release in June, “The rise in hate crimes and other forms of targeted violence has increased sharply since the Oct. 7, 2023 terrorist attacks against Israel.”

FEMA also addressed how the government is helping to keep my community safe: “In light of the changing threat environment, the Nonprofit Security Grant Program

has become a more important resource to faith-based institutions and nonprofit organizations to strengthen their security posture.” These NSGP funds are critical to ensuring that Jews in Dallas can gather safely, but more money must be allocated to [meet the demand](#) caused by this surge in attacks on the Jewish community.

On college campuses more should be done as well. This past year, the University of Texas at Dallas campus [was taken over by several protests](#), which featured graffiti vandalism that contained [antisemitic rhetoric](#) and often condoned violence. One of my children attending an out-of-state university has also faced similar protests on her campus. Many young Jews in our community have expressed feeling unsafe and marginalized.

These are issues we’ve had to address with our high school students as well. In our religious school classes for teens, we devoted several sessions to explaining what happened on Oct. 7 along with its broader historical context. We’ve prepared them for the unfair burden thrust upon them in this environment. At one point, I remember telling them, just as I have said publicly to our adult synagogue community:

“I know you didn’t ask for this, but you are now ambassadors for Israel and the Jewish people. That is a role that you must now play, because there are not enough people standing up for why Israel — the only Jewish state in the world — has a right to exist, and why that state has a right to defend itself and its citizens from harm. Our homeland of Israel has been at the heart of our Jewish souls, scripture and prayers for multi-thousand years, and it remains vitally important to Jewish people around the world today. We cannot let that be ignored or forgotten.”

But I also told our students and adult congregants that we aren’t alone. In the wake of the Oct. 7 attacks, my congregation is grateful that the broader Dallas community has stood by our side. Immediately following the horrific event, the Dallas [City Council](#) unequivocally condemned Hamas’ attacks on Israel and [thousands of people](#) gathered to show support, including Mayor Eric Johnson and faith leaders like my friend and colleague the Rev. Richie Butler.

When Dallas City Council member Cara Mendelsohn’s [home was vandalized](#), including graffiti with a symbol [used by Hamas to mark targets](#), Mayor Johnson correctly called it out as [blatant antisemitism](#). These powerful displays of unity have reinforced that we do not stand alone, and that we draw strength from our allies across faiths and backgrounds.

As I reflect on this past year, this solidarity gives me the most hope. It reminds me that no matter what happens in a war half a world away, in Dallas we know that targeting a faith community is never an acceptable response.

Rabbi Ari Sunshine is a senior rabbi of Congregation Shearith Israel in Dallas.

9. One year after Oct. 7, antisemitism is still all too common

The Houston Chronicle | October 6, 2024

By: Rabbi Brian Strauss and Rabbi David Lyon

Earned media: [TV: CBS News Houston](#)

Several years ago, a young man from our Jewish community here in Houston wanted to give back and help make the world a better place, so he decided to join an overseas volunteer program after he graduated from college. When it came time to sign up, however, COVID had shut down the organization's operations. So he enlisted with the Israel Defense Forces instead to help keep the people of Israel safe.

He had only a few months left in his service in an elite IDF combat unit on Oct. 7, when Hamas invaded southern Israel and began slaughtering civilians. He happened to be in the middle of a training exercise that morning, so his helicopter was quickly redirected to one of [the many Israeli communities that was under terrorist assault](#).

His chopper was the first to arrive on the scene. It was fired upon as it closed in on the area and had to make an emergency landing. When he got off the helicopter, he was immediately shot. The bullet cut into his flesh but miraculously missed his heart. The medic next to him was able to keep him alive until he could reach a hospital, where he went through multiple surgeries. After months of rehab and completing his military service, he came back to Texas to continue his academic studies.

There are clearly many remarkable aspects to his story, but one of the most disheartening is the reason we didn't name the young man and that he doesn't want to describe his experience publicly: After risking his life to save civilians from a terrorist assault, he's afraid of the personal attacks and social ostracism he could face on campus as [antisemitism has roiled universities](#) here in Texas.

What does it say about our world when this is the response to someone who by any measure is a hero? And what does it say about our own state when scorn and hate greet members of the Jewish community who work to protect their fellow Jews?

The scope of the challenge is astonishing. As the CEO of the Conference of Presidents of Major American Jewish Organizations William Daroff pointed out in a [recent op-ed](#), [Hillel International](#) has documented over 1,800 antisemitic incidents on college campuses since Oct. 7, the highest number ever recorded in a single academic year. "This staggering statistic represents countless Jewish students who face harassment, intimidation, and violence simply because of their identity," Daroff wrote.

More can be done to keep our students safe. The U.S. Senate should [listen to the Jewish community](#) and pass the [Antisemitism Awareness Act](#), which already passed the House of Representatives earlier this year in an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote. The act would give the Department of Education the ability to enforce federal anti-discrimination laws in order to protect Jewish students.

Away from campus, the Houston Jewish community has experienced support and solidarity from many of our local officials, fellow clergy and non-Jewish neighbors over the past year. In particular, the Houston Police Department has been extremely dedicated to our security and well-being. These are people who truly care about us and ensure we're safe. Many have even learned some Hebrew and Yiddish words of greeting.

Still, there's a limit to what public services can provide. Given the very [serious threats to Jewish safety](#) here in Houston, we are forced to devote huge amounts of our budgets to creating a safe environment for our members, whether it's installing fences and cameras along the perimeter of our properties or panic buttons in the sanctuary in case of an emergency. We also hire off-duty police officers to be present whenever people are in the building.

And yet, each Sabbath, we have congregants who join our services online instead of coming in person. Many of these people don't feel safe entering a Jewishly identified building. Congress has designated funds for security enhancements to help nonprofit organizations at high risk of a terrorist attack by creating the Nonprofit Security Grant Program, but according to the Jewish Insider, [fewer than half](#) of applications for that funding were fulfilled in the 2024 grant cycle. We need to do better.

During the Jewish High Holidays season our security costs only increase. We are blessed with large communities, but in the past that means we've each had to spend over \$100,000 per synagogue just on security for these services. That's only a fraction of our annual security costs, and this year it will surely be higher. It's a price we must pay for the much more valuable cause of gathering and praying together.

When we do assemble, we will tell our congregants that we need to stay the course as a community. We need to stay unified. We need to give people a sense of security, a sense of confidence, a sense of hope. And we need to keep finding ways to contribute to making the world a better place.

Brian Strauss is the senior rabbi of Congregation Beth Yeshurun, the largest Conservative synagogue in the United States. David Lyon is the senior rabbi of Congregation Beth Israel and president-elect of the Reform movement's Central Conference of American Rabbis.

10. On October 7, Sinai Temple will mourn, then we will dance again

Los Angeles Daily News | October 7, 2024

By: Rabbi Nicole Guzik and Rabbi Erez Sherman

Earned media: [TV: NBC News Los Angeles](#) [San Gabriel Valley Tribune](#), [Daily Breeze](#), [Whittier Daily News](#), [Press Telegram](#), [Pasadena Star News](#)

“Rabbi, where should my child go to college?” This is a question we did not learn how to answer in rabbinical school. This is a question for college counselors, not religious leaders. But, after the fifth time we received that question during this past admissions season, we recognized what they were really asking: “Rabbi, where will my child feel safe to be a Jew?”

October 7th transformed our lives as Jews in Los Angeles. That Saturday, we changed the sermon on the spot. Instead of our prepared remarks, we read text messages we had received from our former executive director, who was trapped in a bomb shelter outside of Tel Aviv not knowing if the terrorists were heading toward him.



Hundreds of our community members spent the day checking in on relatives in Israel in similar conditions. One congregant’s cousin, Niv Raviv, was murdered in Kibbutz Kfar Aza. We soon learned that Amiram Cooper, whose niece is a member of our synagogue, was kidnapped from Kibbutz Nir Oz. Amiram’s great-nephew’s bar mitzvah had been held at Sinai Temple just a few years ago.

Amiram became our family and stayed in our hearts this year. We had a chair for him at the Passover table, and we prayed for his safe return. In June, Amiram was declared dead. His body still has not been returned to his family.

Here in Los Angeles, our synagogue physically changed. On October 14th, we took 240 seats in our sanctuary, usually filled each Shabbat, and placed pieces of paper on each with a name and with an age. As the year progressed, as some hostages returned alive and other hostages returned dead, we removed those names as we learned each story in real time.

As the days turned into months, anti-Zionism and antisemitism became indistinguishable, especially on college campuses. Students and their parents began to tell us about their fears.

One mile from our synagogue's doorstep, protesters [physically blocked Jewish students from attending classes on the UCLA campus](#) while hundreds of students encamped on the main university quad and called for divestment from Israel. An occupational therapy graduate student at USC told us she walked into her art therapy class to find a Palestinian flag on the wall bearing the words, "From the river to the sea." [Congress overwhelmingly deems the slogan antisemitic](#) because of its "[goal of the eradication of the State of Israel](#)" and "[calls for the removal of the Jewish people from their ancestral homeland](#)."

As we entered the winter months, President Joe Biden arrived in our neighborhood for a fundraiser. In a local park just a block from our synagogue, [a large, intimidating crowd](#) gathered from the Palestinian Youth Movement – young people in keffiyehs with signs calling the president "genocide Joe."

As the protest dispersed, throngs of people walked towards our synagogue. With heavy armed security, our synagogue was spared. But the church across the street was [tagged with graffiti](#) like "F**K The IDF" and "from the river to the sea." That night after Shabbat services, fearful for our own physical safety, we were personally escorted to our home with two armed guards by our sides.

It was Chanukah, a time when usually we would light the menorah candles and place them in the window for their light to shine to the park outside. That evening, for the first time in our lives, we lit the candles and closed the curtains. Our children asked, "Why are we doing this?" And we had to answer, "There are people outside that do not like us."

Days later, Sinai Temple received bomb threats, disrupting the workday for our synagogue and our schools. Earlier in the year when a "[day of rage](#)" was declared, students were afraid to attend our religious school; only 30 percent of our student body showed up. A non-Jewish employee in our synagogue informed us that his non-Jewish roommate told him he needed to quit because he was working for Zionists.

Now we are about to commemorate the one-year anniversary of October 7th. We will mourn, but we will also dance. In commemoration of Amiram Cooper and Niv Raviv we will dedicate two new covers for our sacred Torah scrolls in their honors, and we will dance with them.

Sinai Temple continues to demonstrate our resiliency through our support each other and Israel. Each Shabbat, we have welcomed guest speakers to educate our community. We have hosted October 7th survivors, IDF soldiers, American volunteers, hostage families, Christian allies and the CEO of the Nova Festival exhibition, all of whom give us hope and strength.

We have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on security, ensuring our community is physically safe from hate, to make sure that our sanctuary will be just that – a sanctuary from hate and evil.

We often think of that question: “Where should I go to school?” Our answer is different from what it was last year. We tell those who ask us, “Go to a place where you wish to be a Jewish leader by desire, and not by need.”

Sinai Temple is a place that produces those leaders. Through our newly launched Beren Scholars Program, our 11th and 12th graders will meet with renowned national leaders who will teach how to combat antisemitism as they enter the college campus, workforce and beyond.

October 7th changed how we live our lives as Jews. But October 7th did not change our resiliency, our courage and our light that we as a Jewish people have to offer the world. As the survivors of the Nova festival often say, “We will dance again.” This is not a motto; it is our truth.

Rabbi Nicole Guzik and Rabbi Erez Sherman are the senior rabbis at Sinai Temple in Los Angeles.

11. A year after Hamas attack, we praise Miami for its solidarity with Israel

Miami Herald | October 4, 2024

By: Rabbi Jeremy Barras

Earned media: [TV: NBC News Miami](#), [AOL](#), [Yahoo! News](#), [Twitter](#) (530k followers), [Facebook](#) (420k followers)

Within days of Hamas' invasion of Israel on Oct. 7, 2023, Israeli Consul General Maor Elbaz-Starinsky in Miami spoke at Temple Beth Am in Pinecrest, where I serve as senior rabbi.

Hundreds of South Florida residents, including Miami-Dade Mayor Daniella Levine Cava, gathered to hear him mourn those murdered by the terrorists. It was a solemn evening.

As we would learn, the Oct. 7 attack wasn't just about a distant conflict. There were many families here impacted directly by Hamas' brutality. Following his remarks, Elbaz-Starinsky went to [inform](#) a local family that their brother, a [38-year-old father of four](#), had been killed fighting Hamas.

Hollywood Mayor Josh Levy's relatives—a 3-year-old boy, twin 6-year-old sisters and their parents—were also murdered as their house was burned down by Hamas terrorists who [shot them dead as they fled the smoke](#).

When I woke up on Oct. 7 and saw the headlines streaming out of Israel, I knew nothing would ever be the same for the Jewish community. I prepared to address my congregation during the Sabbath prayers. I asked a friend who lives in Sderot, an Israeli city about one mile away from the Gaza border, what was happening.

He told me, "We're under siege.". Later, I would see the [videos of Hamas fighters](#) piled in pickup trucks, just like ISIS, roaming through Sderot's streets looking for Jews to kill.

One year later, despite the scars and sadness, our community has emerged as a model for combating the [resurgence of antisemitism](#) across the United States. When a man [vandalized](#) a kosher bagel shop in Miami, Mayor Francis Suarez and



U.S. District Judge Roy Altman personally helped [erase](#) the graffiti. When bomb threats were [emailed](#) to more than 50 Florida synagogues, Gov. Ron DeSantis responded, “Florida is prepared. We have put our money where our mouth is and if you are going to try to bring that to our state you are going to end up hitting a brick wall,” he warned.

Indeed, Florida has invested in the protection of its Jewish citizens. Just weeks after Hamas’ horrific attacks, Florida’s legislature [passed](#) a bill providing \$45 million for Jewish institutions at risk of violent attacks or hate crimes.

Sadly, these federal funds are wholly insufficient; [57 percent](#) of applications for Nonprofit Security Grant Program funding were unfulfilled in the 2024 grant cycle.

On campus too, Florida has been a model for the rest of the nation. When anti-Israel protesters harassed Jewish college students around the country, our state showed it would not sanction this bigotry. Police [arrested](#) criminal protesters, and the University of Florida suspended some of these students and [banned](#) them from campus for three years.

Now it is time for the U.S. Senate to pass a federal law—the [Antisemitism Awareness Act](#)—that would give the Department of Education the ability to enforce federal anti-discrimination laws in order to protect Jewish students.

I’m proud of our solidarity with Israel. Just ten days after the Oct. 7 attack, Miami-Dade announced it would [purchase](#) more Israeli bonds to help the Jewish state. While some American city councils were passing [resolutions](#) demanding that Israel leave Hamas in a position to repeat the attacks, Florida cities were passing [resolutions](#) calling to defend Israel.

And, when the Miami Marlins [celebrated](#) Jewish Heritage Day, local cantors sang the Star-Spangled Banner and Hatikvah, Israel’s national anthem. Jewish pride filled the stadium, the crowd was singing and there were no protests — something unthinkable in many American cities.

Miami has been a welcome bright spot amid the blight of anti-semitism surging across the U.S.

As Jews deal with their open wounds on the one-year anniversary of Hamas’ Oct. 7 massacre, compounded by increased attacks on Jews in America, I know our city will continue to shine as an example of mutual respect, tolerance for others and intolerance for bigotry and hate.

Rabbi Jeremy Barras is Senior Rabbi of Temple Beth Am in Pinecrest. He currently serves as a member of the Central Conference of American Rabbis’ (CCAR) Board of Trustees and on the executive board of the Rabbinical Association of Greater Miami.

12. When a yarmulke feels like a target: Navigating Jewish life in a fractured world

Minnesota Star Tribune | September 27, 2024

By: Rabbi Avi Olitzky

On Sept. 11, 2001, I was a student in New York City. That day began like any other — routine classes, the hum of the city in the background — until everything shattered. I remember the confusion first, then the sirens, the hurried whispers of classmates, and the abrupt shift from mundane to unimaginable. We stood glued to the TV screens as the towers fell, disbelief slowly turning to horror. I can't think of that infamous date without a deep, physical reaction — a quiver in my lip and a tremor in my body.

On Oct. 7, 2023, I was in synagogue celebrating Simchat Torah, a joyous Jewish holiday. That day, Hamas invaded southern Israel, murdering and torturing Jews in a massive terror attack that has been called Israel's Sept. 11. The emotional toll of Oct. 7 is immense, creating a bitter pit in my stomach eerily echoing the way I feel when thinking about Sept. 11.

But whereas the vulnerability I felt after Sept. 11 was one that seemed shared by all Americans, the profound safety concerns that have emerged after Oct. 7 are more personal. The Hamas attacks have cast a long shadow over the Jewish community in Minneapolis, marking a period of intensified harassment and antisemitism.

To give one egregious example from this past year, in January the Minneapolis City Council hosted a meeting in which antisemitism was on full display during consideration of a resolution on Israel. Signs were displayed with slogans such as "Both sides are thirsty / Israel for blood / Gaza for water" and comparing Israelis to Nazis.

As the local Jewish Community Relations Council [documented](#), "Council Member Robin Wonsley activated the crowd by falsely and repeatedly accusing Israel of genocide and comparing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to America's legacy of slavery and racism against African Americans."

I, along with dozens of other local rabbis, [fought back](#) against the considered resolution, noting that "Hamas has immorally chosen to embed their military operations, underground tunnels, and equipment in mosques, schools, hospitals and U.N. buildings, using non-combatant Palestinians as human-shields. Thus attacks on these military targets result in the tragic loss of Palestinian lives and infrastructure."

I, like many other Jews, now find myself hesitant to publicly wear my yarmulke, a symbol of my Jewish faith that should inspire pride but now evokes a sense of anxiety. My wife and I

even took the difficult step of advising our boys to wear baseball caps instead of yarmulkes, a choice driven by the recognition that being identifiably Jewish can be dangerous in a period of [surging antisemitism](#).

And like many other Jews, we have ensured that we have passports for our children, not for international travel and vacations, but because as Jews we fear we might need to leave in the middle of the night, as our ancestors in so many places have been forced to do. This precaution speaks to the pervasive fear of being targeted that has become all too common. When we recently went to get the passport photos, we asked our daughter not to wear her Jewish star necklace in the picture, God forbid it would compromise the purpose.

Unfortunately, the St. Louis Park educational institutions that should be a source of community and greater understanding in the wake of Oct. 7 have too often fallen short of these goals. This past spring, for instance, Minneapolis Jews were shaken by a deeply problematic entry in the [St. Louis Park High School yearbook](#). The entry said that “on October 8, 2023, Israel formally declared war on Hamas,” without any mention of the horrific terrorist attack the day before. This omission erased the tragedy that began the conflict and left Jewish families in our community feeling betrayed and hurt.

The incomplete and misleading narrative in a school publication highlights how easily harmful distortions are spread, even in trusted institutions. The incident led to widespread demands for accountability and a commitment from school officials to address the oversight, but the damage was already done. This is but one example that underscores the ever-present need to ensure that educational environments are places of truth and safety for all students.

Amid this turmoil, the unwavering support from our friends has been a beacon of hope. It has reminded us of what makes America special for Jews and for people of all different faiths, colors, identities and backgrounds. Our non-Jewish neighbors have shown extraordinary solidarity, offering a sense of safety and belonging that is both comforting and inspiring. In the wake of the Oct. 7 attacks, my wife reached out to them, expressing our gratitude and requesting their vigilance.

“Hi friends — As I am sure you all know, there is a lot going on right now in the Middle East that is causing pain and strife for Jewish people. As a result, it has become increasingly dangerous and scary to be Jewish, not just in other countries but here in the U.S. as well,” she told them in an email. “Avi, the kids, and I have felt incredibly welcomed and safe in our neighborhood since the day we moved in, and we love that we all look out for each other. We are just asking that you all look out for us a little more in the coming days and weeks.”

She requested that our neighbors drive a bit slower past our house and glance to make everything looked O.K. and there was nothing suspicious. And she invited people to reach out. “Check in on us if it feels right to you. It is exhausting to be Jewish right now and we can use all the extra love and support we can get.”

This collective effort might seem small, but it symbolizes a powerful act of solidarity and protection. Our neighbors responded with overwhelming kindness, some offering to walk by more frequently, others sending messages of support, and a few even leaving small tokens of care on our doorstep. Their gestures, no matter how small, have made us feel truly supported and safe. It is in moments like these that the strength of community becomes clear, and the commitment to one another becomes a source of profound reassurance.

Still, as we approach the anniversary of Oct. 7, I am scared. I am scared for Israel. I am scared for my Jewish brothers and sisters all over the world. I am scared that the wrong delivery person will see the mezuzah on my door. I am scared — but I hold on to hope. Through unity, vigilance and mutual support, we can navigate this turbulent period and strive toward a future in which safety and understanding prevail. It is the collective effort and compassion of our communities that will guide us through and help build a more inclusive and secure world for all.

Rabbi Avi S. Olitzky served as senior rabbi of Beth El Synagogue in St. Louis Park.

13. Commitment to peace

Philadelphia Inquirer | October 8, 2024

By: Rabbi Eric Yanoff

The Hamas attacks on Oct. 7, 2023, shattered normal life for the Jewish community. Yet, amid our mourning, we faced another unsettling reality: a [surge in antisemitism](#) here at home. College students reached out to me, expressing fear and confusion as they encountered hostility on campuses. They were advised to hide symbols of their Jewish identity — fraternity letters, yarmulkes, or anything with Hebrew on it. We can do more to protect them. Both U.S. Sens. John Fetterman and Bob Casey (along with Casey's election opponent, David McCormick) are strong proponents of the [Antisemitism Awareness Act](#), which would give the U.S. Department of Education the ability to enforce federal antidiscrimination laws to protect Jewish students. This bill should be brought for a vote in the Senate as quickly as possible.

In addition, more federal funds are needed to support the [Nonprofit Security Grant Program](#). Many residents of Pennsylvania know that our commonwealth is infamously home to the [deadliest antisemitic attack](#) in U.S. history. After Oct. 7, as threats grew, we were forced to increase security measures. The hefty security fees many synagogues pass on to congregants amount to an [antisemitism tax](#). Yet, [fewer than half](#) of funding requests for the grant program were fulfilled in the 2024 cycle.

Finally, to our friends, neighbors, and allies: Your support matters more than you may realize. Solidarity isn't just about grand gestures, it's about acknowledging shared humanity and refusing to be indifferent in the face of bullying. As we move forward, let us work together to build bridges of understanding. By uniting against hatred, we can foster a community where everyone feels safe, valued, and heard. Together, we can ensure that the lessons of Oct. 7 ultimately lead to a renewed commitment to peace and unity.

Rabbi Eric Yanoff, *Congregation Adath Israel, Merion Station*

14. One year later, Richmond Jews struggle to find safety, peace

Richmond Times-Dispatch | October 6, 2024

By: Rabbi Dovid Asher

Earned media: [TV: ABC News Richmond](#), [MSN](#), [Blue Virginia](#), [Facebook](#) (103k followers)

“I love you.” “I’m sorry.” Those were the last messages Hersh Goldberg-Polin, a United States citizen, sent to his family before being abducted by Hamas terrorists from a music festival on Oct. 7, 2023. One month ago, after 330 days of tortuous captivity, [Hamas executed Hersh](#) along with five other hostages.

The Oct. 7 massacre devastated Jews around the world and instantly became a focal point for antisemitic fervor, but Hersh’s kidnapping struck particularly close to home — before moving to Israel, Hersh and his family were dedicated members of our Richmond Jewish community.

The Goldberg-Polins lived a few blocks away from Keneseth Beth Israel, where I have been the rabbi since 2011, and were members of the synagogue. Many in our congregation remember the family fondly, including how a young Hersh starred in a synagogue play.

The shock of [Hersh’s captivity and execution](#) was perhaps the most local connection to what has been a year of horror and trauma. Oct. 7 began as a normal Saturday. It was the sabbath — when observant Jews don’t use electronics, including phones. Disconnected from technology, the horrific news came crashing in waves. Four people killed. Then 40. Then 250. We knew it was bad, we just didn’t know how bad. Later, we found out that Oct. 7 was the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust — 1,200 killed and 250 taken hostage.

Days later, as we stumbled through the haze of shock and grief, protesters down the road at Virginia Commonwealth University reopened our fresh wounds. They donned the same kinds of keffiyehs and masks worn days earlier by Hamas, and lionized the same terrorists who committed widespread murder and rape in southern Israel. Some Jewish students went into hiding, fearing for their safety.

My community tried to strike a balance between showing support for our brothers and sisters in Israel and the emotional well-being of our congregants. We displayed posters with the faces of the hostages being held in Gaza, humanizing the victims. But parents struggled to explain to their young children why these faces were on the walls, let alone why [Hamas would steal children](#) out of their homes. We replaced the pictures with a less-triggering sign marking the number of days of their captivity.

In the weeks following the attack, when we felt the most vulnerable and alone, the Richmond community showed up. We received bouquets of flowers, cards and support. Gov. Glenn Youngkin, Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney and hundreds from the community came to stand with us in solidarity.

But not all of the comments have been so caring. Our synagogue is situated on a busy street and congregants walking to services have been subjected to verbal harassment from passersby. The tranquility of our sabbath has been punctured by shouts of “you’re killers” and “free Palestine,” as if this is a normal response to individual Americans wanting to practice their faith.

We know that all too easily this type of harassment can escalate to physical violence. In just the last several years we’ve seen Jews taken [hostage in a synagogue in Texas](#), and we’ve seen shootings at synagogues in [Pennsylvania](#), [Florida](#) and [California](#). Just weeks ago an individual was charged for planning to attack [a New York City Jewish center](#). “We are going to nyc to slaughter them,” the suspect is alleged to have written.

When I first came to Keneseth Beth Israel, our doors were open. Following a surge in antisemitism in 2014 we began to lock the doors during services. Then we got armed security. Now, physical security is a growing concern.

But this comes at a steep price, literally. The increased security measures, now a necessity, are stressing the synagogue’s budget. We are considering raising dues, but that would increase barriers to our community celebrating their identity and their faith. Richmond’s Jews shouldn’t be taxed because people want to kill us.

While federal and local grants help defray security costs, funding is limited and requires significant man-hours to ensure paperwork is filled out correctly and security measures are installed. And this year fewer than half of such [Nonprofit Security Grant Program requests](#) were funded.

I am a proud Virginian, a proud American, and a proud Jew. Richmond’s Jews shouldn’t have to hide their identity to feel safe.

As the Jewish community’s wounds are ripped open on the one-year anniversary of the Oct. 7 massacre, we should all unite around shared objectives. Educators and parents should teach their children tolerance for all minorities, and local and federal governments should provide additional money and support to defend American Jews against the resurgent scourge of antisemitism.

15. Local Jewish community in need of support more than ever

The Seattle Times | October 4, 2024

By: Rabbi Jacob Herber

Earned media: [WTMJ radio](#), [Political Power Hour podcast](#)

Hayim Katsman died a hero. As a Hamas terrorist invaded his community and murdered civilians, his final act was to use his body to [shield](#) his neighbor from a hail of bullets. Sadly, the young man who had committed his life to Israeli-Palestinian peace and coexistence was murdered on Oct. 7, 2023.

Katsman's tragic and heroic death struck a nerve here. In 2021 he completed his Ph.D. at the University of Washington and had taught Hebrew locally at a synagogue. He was more than just a number, one of the 1,200 murdered by Hamas in a single day last year; he was a part of our community.

It has been difficult for Americans to fathom the depth of the depravity of the [murders](#), [rapes](#) and [kidnappings](#) last Oct. 7. It has been difficult as well for Jewish Americans to adapt as a new wave of antisemitism was unleashed. Across the United States, people felt emboldened to attack Jews. Our community [was on edge](#) and soon felt that pain directly.

Just before Thanksgiving, Jewish communal institutions were [targeted](#) with suspicious packages to intimidate our community. My synagogue in Mercer Island was [covered](#) with red paint and anti-Israel messages, causing tens of thousands of dollars in damage. Targeting a religious institution for the actions of a foreign government is textbook bigotry and it must never be tolerated.

Local leaders reached out to offer their support. The Muslim mayor of Mercer Island and his Jewish deputy mayor [condemned](#) the attack. That Friday night, U.S. Rep. Suzan DelBene and some leaders from other religious communities attended our service of comfort and solidarity. U.S. Rep. Adam Smith condemned the attack, and his house was [vandalized](#) shortly after. But overall, the outreach from other religious leaders was disappointing. We felt vulnerable, targeted and alone.

Seattle's Jewish community has reason to be worried. Temple de Hirsch Sinai was [defaced](#) on the eve of Holocaust Remembrance Day with neo-Nazi, anti-Israel graffiti. After Oct. 7, anti-Israel protests targeted Jewish neighborhoods, and some demonstrations at the University of Washington and in Seattle got ugly.

These incidents weigh heavily on a Jewish community still scarred from an episode in 2006 when a gunman forced his way into the Seattle Jewish Federation armed with two guns, ammunition and a knife. He [held a gun](#) to the back of a 14-year-old girl to get into the

building. The gunman reportedly said “I’m angry at Israel” before beginning his shooting spree. The gunman shot six women, including one who was five months pregnant, killing one and shattering the Seattle Jewish community’s sense of security.

Now, many congregants have considered taking the mezuzas off their doors or avoiding wearing anything that would identify them as Jewish in public. Our synagogue has increased our security measures with cameras and armed guards. We had to raise dues to cover repairs to our building and these other costs.

We are grateful for federal funds from the federal Nonprofit Security Grant Program, but current levels are insufficient. According to a [recent report](#), under half of NSGP applications were funded in 2024. In that report, the CEO of the Anti-Defamation League stated that “the demand for security resources currently far outstrips available resources.”

I implore our elected officials to do everything they can to designate funds to allow the Jewish community, like any other, to be able to gather safely without incurring an “antisemitism tax.”

These events have been devastating, but they have also made us stronger. After our building was vandalized, the father of a girl about to have her bat mitzvah spent hours removing the red paint. Nobody asked him to do it. He just showed up to help.

It was a powerful example of taking personal initiative to fix what’s broken. This is a model for our broader community. We can disagree on policy decisions, but when people are careless with their language it is easy for intended criticism of the Israeli government to [manifest](#) in hateful antisemitic speech, and ultimately actions, against Jews as a people.

It is never acceptable to harass someone walking on the street with a yarmulke, or threaten a Jewish place of worship. State and federal legislators, university administrators and all citizens must respond promptly and forcefully to address these incidents when they happen. And we need financial support to cover the added security costs to ensure that Seattle’s Jews are never attacked again.

Jacob Herber is the spiritual leader of Herzl-Ner Tamid Conservative Synagogue on Mercer Island and is a member of The United States Coast Guard Auxiliary and USCG Auxiliary chaplain.

16. Oct. 7, 2023: The day everything changed

St. Louis Post-Dispatch | September 19, 2024

By: Rabbi Jeffrey Abraham

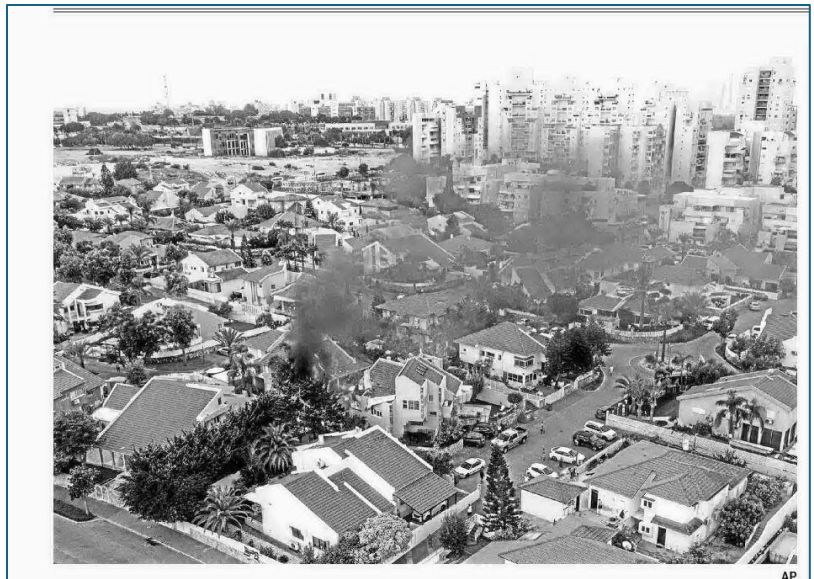
Earned Media: [TV: CBS News St. Louis](#), [TV: NBC News St. Louis](#), [97.1 FM radio](#), [Marc Cox morning show radio](#)

We gathered on that Saturday morning Oct. 7, 2023, at my synagogue, Congregation B'nai Amoona in Creve Coeur, for a baby-naming and a 90th birthday. We were there to celebrate the sweetness of new life and to rejoice in the longevity of another.

My community doesn't use electronics on the Sabbath, so we still didn't know what was happening an ocean away. As our service began and we marked one of life's most joyous milestones, the murmur amongst our congregants grew. Israel was under attack.

Looking back, those were some of the last moments when things felt normal for me, for my congregation and for the Jewish people.

As we approach the one-year anniversary of Oct. 7 — the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust — a vast majority of people will think of a war happening halfway across the world. But for Jews here in America, this past year has been a terrifying awakening.



We have witnessed an eruption of antisemitism that continues to rise, and according to FBI Director Christopher Wray, is at "historic" levels. In Missouri, there was a 317% rise in antisemitic incidents in 2023, a figure that had been growing even prior to the terror attacks in Israel and the war in Gaza.

Myriad distortions, tropes and Jew hatred have echoed in our community. How else can one describe agitators accusing Israel of "genocide" when the St. Louis County Council considered a resolution to observe International Holocaust Remembrance Day?

Or when two days after Hamas' attack on Israel, a bus stop in South City was covered in swastikas? Or when the president of the campus Student Government Association at St.

Louis University made pro Hamas posts on social media? Or when an elected representative to the U.S. Congress refuses to call Hamas a terrorist group? (Hamas has been a federally designated Foreign Terrorist Organization for more than 25 years).

This misguided thinking persists, in part when extremist fringe groups, that represent literally less than 1% of the Jews in St. Louis, are viewed as somehow speaking for us or providing a fig leaf for views opposed by our community. This tokenism not only harms us, but also damages the fabric of the entire city.

Perhaps what is worse than the venomous words of some is the deafening silence of far too many others. Leaders in our community who call themselves friends or allies, partners in social justice and community activism, have remained largely quiet. Maybe they have forgotten that while antisemitism starts with the Jewish people, it rarely ends there.

They may remain quiet, but we will not. When we were confronted with Rep. Cori Bush's hateful rhetoric, accusing Israel of "genocide" and "ethnic cleansing," our community exercised our right to organize. I along with a broad coalition of St. Louis rabbis in our personal capacities endorsed Wesley Bell for Congress. Our community mobilized, volunteered, and got out the vote.

But during a local Jewish voters' night, protesters tried to break down the doors to the office. They shouted threats as they banged on the windows. It became a pattern.

We're all petrified, constantly aware of our surroundings. Security has been bolstered significantly just so that we may be able to gather and pray in safety. It's been no different for the younger generation who feel like the threats reach them wherever they are — in their schools and on their cellphones, students have been on the receiving end of hate and intimidation.

Nevertheless, at every turn during this horrendous year we stood up and spoke out. We didn't ignore what we saw and heard, nor did we grow timid or tired. This year has taught us that we cannot afford to be anything less than bold — anything less than courageous.

I'm asking you, members of our beloved community, to do the same. Call out antisemitism when you see it, everywhere you see it.

Nearly one year later, the searing memories of Oct. 7 remain with us. And so too does the memory of our community joining as one to help ensure our future is a brighter one — a safer and a stronger one. We cannot do it alone though. We need allies by our side.

In Judaism, when one finishes reading a book of the Torah we say, "Chazak, chazak, v'nitchazeik": from strength to strength, and together we are strengthened.

Today, more than ever, we all must stand together against the forces of antisemitism and hatred. Truly then we will go from strength to strength, and together we are strengthened.

Abraham is the senior rabbi of Congregation B'nai Amoona in Creve Coeur.