Why does Netanyahu keep winning, and whatever happened to the Israeli left?

This Q&A is adapted from one of four public conversations about the future of Israel being held every Wednesday at noon ET in a collaboration between JTA and the Israel Democracy Institute in the lead-up to Israel’s March 23 elections. The program is being funded by the Marcus Foundation. To register for the March 17 session, please sign up here.

Israel is about to hold its fourth elections in just two years, a sign of political instability. Yet in each of the six national elections over the last 12 years, the result at the top has been the same: Benjamin Netanyahu as prime minister. Meanwhile, the Israeli left has gradually disappeared.

What does this mean for Israel’s political future? And is there a way out of Israel’s political stalemate?

The Q&A below, which has been condensed and lightly edited, was adapted from a recent public Zoom conversation featuring Yohanan Plesner, president of the Israel Democracy Institute, and Ron Kampeas, JTA’s Washington bureau chief.

JTA: Why is Israel holding a fourth election in just two years, and can it avoid a fifth election?

Plesner: We are heading to a fourth election because Mr. Netanyahu was not able to achieve the majority he needed both to become prime minister and put in place the judicial changes that would enable him to subvert, undermine and suspend the legal process he is facing. On the other hand, no one else had the majority to form an alternative stable government. As long as there is no decisive outcome, we might end up going to cycle number five and six, as absurd and sad as it sounds.

So he’s got the wherewithal to get elected but not the wherewithal to protect himself from legal prosecution?

We’re two years into Israel’s worst political crisis in its history: virtually no legislation. No budget. No reforms. Very few key appointments of top civil servants. Decision-making has been suspended for two years, and for the last year we’ve had the worst economic crisis in a decade resulting from the COVID crisis.

Why aren’t the Israeli people taking our fate into our hands? Our prime minister is under indictment, but he’s using his personal clout and political savvy to address his legal needs. And there are inherent weaknesses in our electoral system, our constitutional system – the fact that we don’t have a constitution – and some loopholes in our legisla-

ation, for example the fact that even if you’re indicted you can continue to serve as prime minister. The outcome is virtual paralysis for the last two years.

Does the Israeli judicial system offer any exit from this deadlock — for example, forcing Netanyahu out if he’s convicted?

Not for the foreseeable future. Because even if there is a conviction in district court, there are Supreme Court appeals, and the legal processes take years.

How is this affecting voting patterns and the general discourse?

For Mr. Netanyahu, his key interest is no longer serving as the prime minister of everybody. His primary political goal is to hold onto his base, so he speaks to his base and his key political allies, the ultra-Orthodox parties. This brings about far more divisive rhetoric and political dynamics. He has a very solid base of about a quarter of Israelis that believe in his leadership capabilities and are persuaded that the indictment is politically motivated and can be overlooked.

On the eve of the 2015 elections, Netanyahu made a divisive comment about “Arabs coming to the polls in droves” that stirred outrage overseas. Now he’s making those kinds of comments all the time, warning of an invasion of Black converts from Africa, disparaging Reform Jews. It seems like he just doesn’t care.

Netanyahu’s perspective toward the Arab minority has changed, in a very interesting development. The strategic imperative of Netanyahu’s premiership, even since his first premiership in the 1990s, was to nurture, preserve and strengthen the alliance with the ultra-Orthodox and delegitimize the participation of representatives of the Arab minority.

It was a decades-long project that secured his grip on power. This project peaked in the 2015 statement about Arabs being bused to the polls. Even in September 2019, the main theme of the election was ‘The Arabs are going to steal the election.’ This project was successful: When the Blue and White party had a majority to form a government with the Arab Joint List, the alliance was perceived as insufficiently legitimate in the eyes of the broad Israeli public and this is why it wasn’t formed.

Now Netanyahu is changing his strategy and trying to lure votes of Arab citizens because he sees the numbers and the potential. We’re no longer in a campaign of Likud voters confronting Arab voters. This actually has an effect on public opinion. A record number of Jewish Israelis support and think it’s legitimate to have the Arab Joint List, the alliance was perceived as insufficiently legitimate in the eyes of the broad Israeli public and this is why it wasn’t formed.

How is this affecting voting patterns and the general discourse?

With respect to the Reform movement, this is a group that is persecuted in a repulsive manner by ultra-Orthodox representatives in a way that is completely un-Zionist and un-Jewish and uninclusive. Netanyahu is so dependent on the ultra-Orthodox that he basically granted them a monopoly on domestic issues, especially issues of religion and state.

Could the Arab parties join a Likud-led government without discrediting themselves?

About 85% of Israeli Arabs – who comprise 20% of Israel’s population – want their elected Knesset representatives to be part of a coalition government. This is a break from the past, when being part of a Zionist coalition was perceived as illegitimate. Now it’s different. Israeli Arabs increasingly want to be part of the state, and they understand this is their fate, future and fortune. Their representatives are responding accordingly.

On the one hand, if the center-left wants to be in power, they need some kind of an alliance with the Arab minority. On the other hand, it’s illegitimate in the eyes of many Jewish Israelis. Yair Lapid [leader of the Yesh Atid party] understood this complexity. He played a dual game. He said he wouldn’t ally with the Arab Joint List before the March 2020 elections and then he went all out to build this alliance in the post-election. Now Lapid changed his stance. He constantly says, “I think it’s legitimate, and I have all intention if need be to form a coalition with them.”

An exciting dramatic twist is the Islamist element of the Joint List, Raam. Not only
May 8, marks the end of WW2 in Europe and is popularly known as VE day. In October, 1945, several months after the war’s end, the Council of the Evangelical Church in Germany met and heard, “A Declaration of Guilt” by Pastor Martin Niemoller. In the past few years, there has been a remarkable rise in White Supremacy here in the USA. In commemoration of VE day, I should like to paraphrase his words in a message for our times:

“First they came for the African Americans, and I didn’t speak up because I was not an African American.

Then they came for the Hispanics, and I didn’t speak up because I was not a Hispanic.

Then they came for the Asian Americans, and I didn’t speak up because I was not an Asian American

Then they came for the LGBTQ community, and I didn’t speak up because I was not LGBTQ.

Then they came for the Jews, and by that time, there was no one to speak up for anyone.”

White supremacists will come for us if we do not take heed of other minorities. Their motto, “Jews will not replace us”. We protect ourselves, when we protect others.
would they agree to join a coalition with the center-left, but they've said they're game for any coalition, including a Netanyahu-led coalition. He has his interests and Raam has its interests. It's transactional politics.

Would Netanyahu ally with Raam? He will do whatever is necessary to stay in power. That's the difference between a politician who barcodes victory and a politician who offers excuses.

**What are the possible scenarios to come out of the March 23 elections?**

One, Netanyahu achieves an absolute majority in the Knesset – at least 61 out of 120 seats – with his natural allies: the ultra-Orthodox parties, Likud, Naftali Bennett [leader of the Yamina party], Bezalel Smotrich [leader of the Religious Zionist party].

Two, Netanyahu does not achieve 61 and there's some kind of broad right-left-and-center coalition of the Zionist parties that do not support Netanyahu: former Likud member Gideon Saar [New Hope party], Avigdor Liberman [Israel Beiteinu party], Bennett, Lapid, Meretz, Labor and Blue and White. All of those parties together form some kind of broad coalition. It could be a very short-lived coalition if differences within it break it up.

Three, continued deadlock: Neither side achieves 61. Netanyahu continues to lead an interim government and in September 2021 we'll be talking about a fifth election.

**Over the last 20 years there's been a dramatic diminishing of the Israeli left. Is that going to continue?**

The long-term trend is a decline in the share of Israelis who self-identify as left-wing, now around 15% of Israelis. There's been a dramatic increase in the last 20 years of those who define themselves as center, now 25-30%. And about 55% define themselves as right wing, roughly divided into one-third center-right, one-third right wing and one-third far-right. Plus there's the Arab minority.

Within the right-wing camp, about half are religious. The ultra-Orthodox, who comprise about 11% of Israel's population, is almost 100% right wing and mostly far-right. There's quite a significant correlation between level of religiosity and political behavior and identification.

The political changes over the last 20 years largely have to do with demography (natural growth of the Israeli right) and the demographic shift in the intifada. The second intifada, and to some extent the perception of the outcome of Israel's 2005 disengagement from Gaza, led to the demise of the left and rise of the center.

Meanwhile, the whole definition of what it means to be right, left and center is undergoing a radical transformation due to the unique Netanyahu situation. For example, how do you count Saar's voters? They are right wing, but right wingers who will never go with Netanyahu. And on questions of religion and state, the views of those voters overlap with the liberal views of those in the center left. The same goes for Liberman: a staunch right-winger who represents the secular right and has much criticism for Netanyahu's capitulation to ultra-Orthodox demands.

**Netanyahu closely identified with the Trump administration. How might this affect his relations with the Biden administration?**

Netanyahu has built a reputation within the Israeli public as a diplomatic heavyweight. Although he doesn't have the same level of coziness with President Biden, it doesn't mean Israelis consider him a lightweight in foreign policy.

Beyond the election, the relationship between Israel and the U.S. is way more than a relationship between two leaders. If Mr. Biden decides to move forward on the Palestinian issue in a way that Israelis would object to – something I don't really think would happen – Netanyahu would have the benefit of being seen as standing up to the U.S. administration and preserving the national interest.

The main issue that will define the relationship between the two administrations is Iran. There we expect real decisions to be made, and real interests are going to be affected. It's not only politics, it's real life. It's too early to say because we still don't know what will be the American policy, how the Iranians will respond and what will be the view in Israel – not only of the prime minister but also of the professional defense establishment.

**What are the repercussions of Israel not having had a budget since 2019?**

We do not have a budget for political reasons. Back in May 2020, when the prime minister formed the national unity government with Benny Gantz's Blue and White party, he realized that if he passes a budget he will have no way out of the agreement and will have to transfer the premiership to Mr. Gantz a year and a half later. Netanyahu had no intention of doing that and therefore did not pass a budget.

This has huge implications. The budget is basically the government's work plan. When there's no budget and no legislation, it means total paralysis: no reforms, no resource allocation, no supplementary allocations for infrastructure investment, for example.

We failed to use this crisis to put in place fundamental reforms in government, economy and society, to invest in human capital or physical capital, to account for how the post-COVID era will look and ensure that Israel adapts to it. Especially for the weaker echelons of society, the government wasn't there for them.

There are also some positives. The fundamentals of Israel's economy are strong. Israel's high-tech sector is a great exporter and strong producer, and it brought in record levels of foreign investment and provided record levels of services during the pandemic. This meant that the overall impact on the Israeli economy was relatively mild. The overall decline in GDP in 2020 was about 2.4%. The shekel got stronger. Our credit rating is high.

**Is there any hope for the once-dominant Labor Party, which until very recently was in danger of extinction?**

The Labor Party was near zero in the polls and split up, and then [party leader] Merav Michaeli brought them back to life. It's no longer the central party in Israel's political system but a party that can win some six seats out of 120, according to polls.

Michaeli has positioned the party with a very left-leaning list that competes with Meretz for the same shrinking pool of voters. That means Meretz is now fighting for its life. That could shove the Meretz party into the grave along with the hopes of the center-left to end Netanyahu's rule. Because if one of these parties fails to achieve the threshold necessary to enter the Knesset, the votes for that party effectively will be wasted, further weakening opposition to Netanyahu.

**Does continued Netanyahu rule threaten the relationship between Israel and American Jews?**

Assuming Netanyahu builds a coalition with his natural allies, something that in the past he always was very wary of doing. In 2009, rather than bringing in the far right he [with Netanyahu] the latter has strong inclusions of the ultra-Orthodox. If Netanyahu can win a majority of 61 for continued rule, he will have the benefit of being seen as standing up to the U.S. administration and preserving the national interest.

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For wherever you go, I will go; wherever you lodge, I will lodge; your people shall be my people, and your God my God. (Ruth 1:16b)

Shavuot commemorates our collective acceptance of Torah, the eternal inheritance by which our people has lived for millennia. We recall the communal Sinai moment and imagine ourselves at the foot of the mountain with every generation of Jewish people that ever was and ever will be. For some, this requires a suspension of disbelief, a faith in something that cannot be proven. For others, the revelation of Torah is real and concrete.

In addition to the Exodus verses of the Ten Commandments, and the Deuteronomy account of the three pilgrimage festivals, and the prophetic vision of Ezekiel, the Book of Ruth stands at the center of Shavuot. Ruth’s loyalty and pledge to the Children of Israel mirrors our own pledge in receiving Torah, and her story is tied to the agricultural celebration that culminates in the final counting of the Omer on Shavuot.

The Book of Ruth holds another invaluable lesson for twenty-first century Jews. Ruth stands out as the paradigmatic Jew-by-choice, one whose connection to the Jewish people is purposeful rather than through the accident of birth. She clung to her mother-in-law, finding strength in her new family and attaching herself in every way to the destiny of her people. Today, as Jewish affiliation and identity is entirely optional, we are all inspired by the model of Ruth. Whether by birth or adoption, we who cling to the Jewish community are all Jewish by choice and we are all invited to stand at Sinai on Shavuot. It matters not how one comes to be part of the Jewish people, what matters is that we show up and participate and tie our destinies to each other.

It is a remarkable thing to be part of a family, to share in the stories and the treasures of generations past. On Shavuot, as heirs of Ruth and her grandson King David, we commit ourselves again to accept this Torah for all time. Torah is our family business, and we are all shareholders.
As you know the Friends Campaign for Jewish Family Services starts in the month of May. 100% of your donation goes directly to helping Jewish individuals in this community. There may be reasons why you may not want to donate to this campaign such as you are paying for college tuition, saving for a vacation, have too many bills and think you can’t afford it. However, you might be surprised to learn that, ultimately, it might be you who reaps some of the best rewards of your donation. Here are some positive effects of giving to charity like the JFS Friends Campaign.

Experience More Pleasure
Donating activates the pleasure centers in the brain. Donating money simply makes you feel better, which is something we can all benefit from.

Help Others In Need
We don’t live in a perfect world, and there’s never going to be a perfect time to give—but there are always people out there in need of help. The reality is that when you donate your money, you help others who need it.

Bring More Meaning To Your Life
When you donate money to charity, you create opportunities to meet new people who believe in the same causes that inspire you. That, and making a real impact on those causes, can infuse your everyday life with more meaning. If you’ve been stuck in a rut, whether personally or professionally, sometimes the simple act of donating cash can do the trick and reinvigorate your life.

Promote Generosity In Your Children
When your kids see you donating money, they’re much more likely to adopt a giving mindset as they grow up.

Motivate Friends And Family
When you let your friends and family know of your charitable donations, they may find themselves more motivated to undertake their own efforts to give. It takes a village to help this community with life’s pressures and problems. Encouraging individual and families around you to donate is a very positive and tangible effect of your own giving.

Improve Life Satisfaction And Feel Happier
People who give more to others in both time and resources experience greater satisfaction in life than people who do not. While life satisfaction is one thing, general happiness is another. People who gave to others tend to have higher feelings of joy and contentment than individuals who did not give to others.

Improve Personal Money Management
If you donate to the Friends Campaign that can motivate you to be more attentive to your own finances in an effort to ensure you don’t default or fall behind on your bills. Anything that gets you to pay closer attention to your bank account is a good thing—especially when it helps those in need.

Improve Your Health
People who donate have overall health benefits such as resilience, lower blood pressure and reduced stress.

Give, If You Can’t Volunteer
This might not necessarily be a positive effect of charitable giving, but if you’re too busy to volunteer or otherwise donate your time, giving money is the perfect workaround. Never think that you can’t improve someone’s life or the world itself if your personal or professional schedule won’t allow the time. Writing out a check is a simple way to show you’re willing to help others in any way you can.

Please consider a gift this year.
HELLO MAY

Finally it’s May!
Beit Ha’am is still closed but I’m beginning my outdoor visits with colorful flower pots in hand. Since flowers were such a welcome surprise last year I’m doing it again a second time. Potted flowers, with their bright colors, signal warmth and friendship. You are my dear friends and I have missed you during our long Ohio winter. I have called some of you to set up visits in May and June. If you like, some of you may prefer to call me at 330-445-2412 to request a certain day and time. If so please call. We can meet in your yard, a coffee shop, or an outdoor restaurant.

I hope you will feel comfortable joining me on our outings. If you have any suggestions or concerns please call me. Also, if you have a trip to suggest I’d love to set it up. Again, my number is 330-445-2412.

Hugs, Lynda

SAO TRIPS

JUNE

Wednesday, June 2, at 11:15am
Gervasi on the Piazza. The patio has been enlarged. Join me and your friends for our first outing of the year. Wear your mask until the food is served and use hand sanitizer. RAIN DATE: Thursday, June 3 at 11:15am

Tuesday, June 22, at 1:30pm
McKinley Museum in Canton, Keller Gallery. (Elevator access)
Enjoy a docent tour with Kimberly Kenney who will share the traveling exhibit from the Smithsonian...“Righting a Wrong: Japanese Americans and World War II” Senior admission $9. Masks and social distancing required. Men and women encouraged to attend. Taggarts Ice Cream Parlor is a possible stop afterwards.

OUR VAN
There is no transportation charge for our two June trips. The van is sanitized after every use. Masks are required and you must sit in the same seat both coming and going. Our van makes drop-offs and pick-ups at your front door or meet us at Beit Ha’am, for the van to Gervasi or Museum parking lot. Call to reserve your seat.

EMAIL
Email is the most effective way to communicate. If you are not receiving emails from me please send me your email so that I can add you to my contact information.
Send it to lherbert@jewishcanton.org

Contributions

To Carole Sheidlower in honor of becoming a Great Grandmother from Libby Hendler
To Howard & Linda Smuckler in honor of becoming Grandparents from Libby Hendler
To Estelle Blau in honor of becoming a Great-Grandmother from Libby Hendler
IMO Jack Goldman from Bev Gross
IMO Barbara Herst from Bev Gross

BIRTHDAYS

May

Jerry Frisch • Lynda Herbert • Bob Reaven
Toby Roth • Rita Schaner • Rabbi John Spitzer
Thank you for Your Support!

Jewish Family Services would like to thank those in the community that contributed to the Fishel and Allan Rudner Matzo Fund. The Fishel and Allan Rudner Matzah Fund is a family tradition that began a long time ago. We are very grateful to Marilyn Feldman and the members of the Jewish Community who have continued this Mitzvah and provided help to less fortunate members of our community in their celebration of Passover.

This year was very successful despite all the limitations of observing Passover with family and friends. Our clients were delighted to receive the Temple Israel pre-packaged assortment of Passover items including chicken and sides. It was a very big hit and enjoyed by all! We were thrilled to provide a way for everyone to enjoy the Passover holiday in a meaningful delicious way!

Our families were extremely appreciative of the generosity and thoughtfulness ... below are some comments:

“I want to take this opportunity to say thank you for your generous assistance to my family for Passover. We greatly appreciate it because it really helps us celebrate the holiday and have a seder.”

“We wish to thank you for the Passover gift that we received from you. It will make our Passover joyous and fulfilling.”

“I want to thank you for the generous gift of the Passover meal you have sent us. The meal was delicious; moreover, your generosity is deeply moving. You are truly practicing tikkun olam.”

2021-2023 SJN Community Directory

The 2021-2023 Community Directory will go to press in August.

Each community member will receive a letter in the mail, with the current information as it appears in our database.

In an effort to update our database, we are asking everyone to return their letter, confirming your information or updating it by May 31.

If you do not receive a letter, please contact Vicki Kline 330-445-2407 to have a duplicate form sent. WILL NOT ACCEPT CHANGES OVER THE PHONE. You may fax, email or mail us, your changes. Our Directory is only as accurate as the information we receive.

One directory per household is mailed free of charge to local members. Due to the cost of production, there will NOT be extra copies available.

Who receives the Federation Directory:

- The Directory is included as a benefit with your minimum Campaign Gift of $36.
- We include the names of the synagogue members as a courtesy listing
- For 2021, we are asking that everyone return the listing letter, regardless of whether there is a change in their contact information. The Directory will be mailed after the High Holy Days, 2021.

Please consider becoming a Friend of the SJN Directory this year with your gift of $18 single/$36 couple.

Janie Zoldan Community Enhancement Fund

On behalf of the entire Zoldan and Altman families we wish to thank the Federation and the Wollinsky Trust for establishing the JANIE ZOLDAN COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT FUND.

This fund will insure that the relationship Janie so loved with her hometown Jewish community of Canton will continue for generations. Our family’s only wish is for others to continue to benefit from the kindness and compassion that this Jewish community provides to our members and extended families wherever they may be.

Michael Zoldan
(JTA) — If we learned anything from 2020, it was that trying to predict the future on Jan. 1 is a foolish exercise. Yet here we are, taking stock of what we learned in this tumultuous, terrible year and starting to think about what's coming next.

Will Zoom become a permanent fixture of Jewish life? What will happen with anti-Semitic attacks once people start spending more time out of their homes? Will Joe Biden bring back the White House Seder — and will Doug Emhoff, the first Jewish second spouse, be involved?

I became JTA’s audience engagement manager this month with the goal of deepening our relationship with readers. One big goal of my job is to take readers behind the scenes and let them get to know the people who are writing and reporting the news they're reading.

So I reached out to JTA’s reporting and editing team, plus some of our correspondents covering Jewish life around the world, for their reflections on 2020 and their insights about what to look for in 2021. Here’s what they told me.

Want to add your predictions? Join the conversation on Facebook or Twitter.

Ben Sales covers anti-Semitism and is based in New York City.

What's your takeaway from 2020? I learned a lot about the staying power of hateful ideas like QAnon, the influential conspiracy theory that is a modern version of the age-old ideas that Jews are conspiring to control the world and harvest the blood of children. These smears were in vogue as far back as the Middle Ages, but millions of people still believe them today — just in a new form.

What's on your radar for 2021? I'm trying to never predict the news because I'm always wrong, but it's sadly safe to say that some people are still going to hate Jews in 2021. I'll be looking out for what shape that will take. If and when COVID fades, will street attacks on Orthodox Jews pick back up from 2019? Will anti-Semitic claims that Jews spread the virus fuel a new wave of attacks? Will far-right groups, embittered by Trump’s loss, act on their extremism? Will the progressive Democrats who are critical of Israel become more prominent under a new political administration? And what will that new administration do to combat the rising threat of white supremacist groups?

Shira Hanau covers Orthodox communities and is based in New York City.

What's your takeaway from 2020? Something I learned from my beat this year is how easily seemingly small decisions by elected officials can harm long-term relationships with communities. We saw this when New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio tweeted at “the Jewish community” after a large funeral in Williamsburg didn't adhere to social distancing guidelines, and we saw it again when protesters for racial justice were allowed to gather to march (even if they were attacked by police) at the same time that synagogues could not gather in large numbers for prayer services. Those incidents contributed to anger at the government and, in one case, to the burning of masks in the streets. These kinds of small acts led to months-long resentments that may well last the pandemic.

What's on your radar for 2021? The most controversial issue that I think will play out in the Orthodox world is vaccination. There's long been a strong anti-vax element in parts of the Orthodox community, one that has even contributed to some recent outbreaks of measles. The big question in 2021 is whether that element drowns out efforts to encourage vaccination, which is needed to return safely to pre-pandemic life.

The effect that the pandemic has had on synagogues also can't be understated. Will people who have chosen to attend services online keep doing so? What will be the economic fallout for synagogues? And will anyone ever want to sit through a long sermon again?

Ron Kampeas is the Washington, D.C., bureau chief.

What's your takeaway from 2020? Like a lot of professional Jews, I’m aware of how easily vicious and toxic myths can take hold. You don’t get through studying Jews and the 20th century without an awareness of how deep a capacity for irrational thought runs among men and women. That said, living it in real time this year and watching reasonable people buy into myths about QAnon, the pandemic and Black Lives Matter, among others, was eye opening. Truth is not as powerful as I believed, and that is sobering for a newsperson.

What's on your radar for 2021? I'm paying close attention to what the Biden administration does when it comes to foreign policy. President-elect Joe Biden has said he will rush to reenter the 2015 Iran nuclear deal. Iran’s regime, so far, has indicated that it would welcome reentry and return to the terms that limited uranium enrichment, which it abandoned after President Donald Trump pulled out in 2018. Will Iran be as accommodating in February as it is promising now? The regime is unpredictable, hard-liners reportedly have the upper hand and there are no guarantees. Biden moreover wants to negotiate, after reentering the deal, the areas that critics said were neglected in 2015, including Iran’s missile program and its adventurism in the region. Would Iran agree to negotiating those differences? Would that help calm Israeli and Sunni Arab states, which oppose the deal? Other questions on foreign policy: Does Biden press Israel into talks with the Palestinians? Will there be more normalization agreements announced with regional Arab countries?

Cnaan Liphshiz covers Europe and is based in Amsterdam.

What's your takeaway from 2020? I learned that some people’s responses to a pandemic accelerated by large gatherings is to hold large gatherings to protest.

What's on your radar for 2021? We ended the year with a dramatic court ruling that effectively bars kosher slaughter in Belgium. I predict that advocates of those bans will push for more countries to adopt them — and that other efforts to limit aspects of religious practice for Jews and Muslims will be emboldened. We could see progress in the movement to ban circumcision of boys — like animal slaughter, it's an issue that unites the far right and the far left in Europe in a way that makes life for Jews here difficult.

We're also going to continue to grapple with the ongoing loss of Holocaust survivors, which the COVID-19 crisis has accelerated, and ultimately their disappearance. New initiatives will continue to try to capture survivors’ stories before it is too late, while at the same time, how the Holocaust is memorialized will continue to be a political issue, especially as Hungary and Poland plan to open state Holocaust museums for the first time.

Marcus Gilban is a Latin America correspondent based in Brazil.

What's your takeaway from 2020? More Brazilian Jews than ever are making aliyah, and Brazil’s Jewish leaders must address this phenomenon or risk the community shrinking further. One thing I’ve observed in 2020 is that opportunity can arise if the communities in Rio and Sao Paulo, which traditionally have operated separately, work together.

What's on your radar for 2021? Like other Brazilians, Jews have been divided politically for years — a split worsened after then-presidential candidate Jair Bolsonaro visited Rio’s Hebraica club in 2017, and several other divisive episodes that followed. New leaders are taking over in several Jewish institutions at the regional, national and local levels. I’ll be watching to see whether they are able to unite Brazil’s divided Jews.

Jacob Judah is a United Kingdom correspondent based in London.

What's your takeaway from 2020? This year has not been easy for Britain’s Jews: The community has been badly hit by COVID-19, and worries about finances, friends and family are omnipresent. Yet I watched proudly as the community showed that it had not lost the fighting spirit and campaigning courage that it has built up fighting anti-Semitism at home, as it adopted the plight of Xinjiang’s Uyghurs and Muslim minorities as its own. Across the board – from communal newspapers to rabbis and national organizations – the Jewish community has become one of Britain’s most consistently outspoken champions for the rights and survival of Xinjiang’s oppressed.

What’s on your radar for 2021? Britain, trying to tie up the final strands of the Brexit process and now battling a new more transmissible strain of COVID-19, looks set for a bumpy start to 2021. But I think that Britain’s Jews will be among the first in Europe to return to a semblance of normality: As COVID vaccines are rolled out across the country, a glimmer of light suggests that perhaps — if
White supremacist propaganda nearly doubled in 2020 to most in a decade, ADL says

(JTA) — Last year, the United States saw the most white supremacist propaganda in a decade, with thousands of flyers, bumper stickers, banners and other propaganda reported across the country, according to the Anti-Defamation League.

The ADL's report, published Wednesday, counted 5,125 pieces of propaganda distributed by 30 white supremacist groups across 49 states in 2020. That's almost double the number recorded in 2019.

The vast majority of the propaganda the group tracked came from one Texas-based group that uses traditional American patriotic language and imagery in its materials — including the phrase "America First," used by Donald Trump and his supporters.

The rise in propaganda may be attributable to the presidential campaign and election, according to the ADL, a leading anti-Semitism and extremism watchdog. In the months leading up to the vote, government officials and groups including the ADL warned repeatedly of extremist activity surrounding the vote.

Those warnings came to bear with the Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, which led to five deaths. (That event, and the white supremacist groups and symbols present there, was not included in the 2020 tally as it took place in 2021.)

But while the "charged political climate" may have been conducive to propaganda, propaganda did not significantly increase as the election neared, and much of the content of the propaganda was unchanged from previous years and did not reference the vote or COVID-19, said Jessica Reaves, the editorial director of the ADL's Center on Extremism.

"We can't know for sure what moves the needle when it comes to propaganda numbers," she said.

Reaves said the pandemic had a "mixed" effect on white supremacist propaganda efforts. COVID-19, she said, "may have slowed distribution on college campuses, while it's possible lockdowns provided white supremacists with more cover and anonymity to post in cities and towns."

Despite the overall increase in white supremacist propaganda, the ADL found that it dropped by more than half on campuses, to 303 last year from 630 incidents in 2019.

The ADL said the largest white supremacist event of 2020 was a flash demonstration in Washington, D.C., in February, before the pandemic became the dominant national issue and the election campaign heated up.

The vast majority of the propaganda in 2020 — 80% — came from a Texas-based white supremacist group called Patriot Front, which employs red, white and blue in its materials and plays on traditional American patriotic language.

One of the group's stickers reads "Life, liberty and the pursuit of victory." Another

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The Greatest Gift of All

Over 3,330 years ago, G-d gave Moses the Torah on top of Mt. Sinai. The Torah is arguably the greatest gift G-d gave to the Jewish people, and each year on Shavuot we celebrate this incredible blessing.

As the Chadash school year draws to an end right before the holiday which brings such a gem of a gift to the forefront of our minds, I am overcome with all the gifts we have shared in this highly unusual virtual year.

I couldn't help but wonder as we gathered on Zoom for the first time and joined our virtual classroom breakout rooms, if this model would work for us successfully. Well, it did. It did way more than I ever could have imagined, and it did, because we are blessed in Canton, OH with the incredible gift of an amazing community.

Chadash is blessed with a dedicated and a talented faculty who ensured that despite a learning curve of technology, they would find a way to make online learning for our students engaging and fun. We are blessed with parents who committed to picking up supplies each month, overseeing their children's technology and getting involved when need be to make certain their children got the very most out of the weekly experience. We are also blessed to have such a caring education committee led by co-chairs, Jonathan Wilkof and Mike Magill and our beloved clergy, Rabbi David Komorosky and Hazzan Bruce Braun who were flexible to refine the worship experience but still created educational and spiritual content for students of all ages.

Perhaps the Torah is the greatest gift given to our people by G-d, but I know that my greatest gift in this community is that I've been blessed with an extraordinary team. From the bottom of my heart, I am truly grateful and want to pass along a huge Todah Rabah for each person who contributed to another special year of Chadash despite its challenges. From the faculty and staff, we wish you all a wonderful summer, and I can promise, we'll dream it all up again for another meaningful 2021/2022 school year. L’hitraot!

Mia Olenick to celebrate Confirmation

Mia Olenick will celebrate confirmation on the last day of Chadash, the morning of Sunday, May 2, 2021 at 11:00 a.m. A member of Temple Israel, Mia is a 10th grader at Jackson High School. She is in the Jackson Academy for Global Studies and she absolutely loves it! Mia’s passion for travel has led her to many countries but Spain is her favorite so far. Hopefully Israel will soon be a destination. Mia enjoys writing and has participated in many writing contests. She can often be found jotting down a quick poem. Mia volunteers regularly and closest to her heart is the RAHAB organization. She assists in raising funds as well as helping sort and organize donations for women in need in Canton. In her free time Mia enjoys hanging out with her friends, skiing, CrossFit......and her hedgehog Penelope.

Mia is the daughter of Toni and Adam Olenick and the sister of Mason and Noah.

Contact Julie Zorn (chadash@jewishcanton.org) for the Zoom link to watch the confirmation service.
Congratulations to our 2021 Graduating Seniors!

Zachary Samuel Charlick
Son of Dayna & Dan Charlick
Graduating From Jackson High School
College is undecided as of print deadline

Matthew Joseph Garfinkle
Son of Carolyn and Paul Garfinkle
Graduating from GlenOak High School
College is undecided as of print deadline

Corinne Claudia Slesnick
Daughter of Erica and Scott Slesnick
Graduating from Hoover High School.
Taking a bi-year for study and work before deciding on a college.
STARK JEWISH NEWS • MAY 2021 • www.jewishcanton.org

Calendar

May Activities

Sunday, May 2  9:30 AM  Chadash Religious School and Confirmation
12:30 PM  TI Brotherhood Reverse Raffle

Tuesday, May 4  7:00 PM  TI History of Reform Movement

Wednesday, May 5  6:30 PM  TI Intro to Modern Judaism begins

Sunday, May 9  Mothers Day

Monday, May 10  Jerusalem Day

Tuesday, May 11  History of Reform Movement - Tuesday, May 4 – 7:00 p.m.
The Origins of Modern Orthodoxy - Thursday, May 13 – 2:00 p.m.
How Rabbinic Judaism Began and Evolved - Wednesday, May 19 – 11:00 a.m.
Julius and Ethel Rosenberg - Tuesday, May 25 – 1:00 p.m
Archives of former classes are also available on the Temple Israel website.

Tempel Israel Shavuot Services and Study Sessions

Temple Israel will observe Shavuot with two virtual gatherings.
Sunday, May 16 beginning at 7:00 p.m. will be a brief Erev Shavuot service followed by four learning sessions. This is the traditional Tikkun Leil Shavuot, during which we study in anticipation of the Shavuot festival commemorating our receiving the Torah at Mount Sinai.

This year’s online study sessions will be led by Rabbi John Spitzer, Rabbi Jon Adland, Ronit Sherwin, and Rabbi David Komorofsky.

Monday, May 17 at 10:00 a.m. will be a Shavuot morning service led by Rabbi Komorofsky, including Yizkor memorial prayers.
All are welcome to participate. More information is at www.templeisraelcanton.org/shavuot.

Intro to Judaism with Temple Israel

Temple Israel is offering its next series of online Introduction to Judaism class beginning Wednesday, May 5, 2021. The class will meet eight consecutive Wednesdays from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. via Zoom video conference. Taught by Rabbi David Komorofsky, this course introduces the basics of Jewish thought and practice. Interfaith couples, non-Jews considering conversion, and Jews looking for adult-level basics will find it meaningful. A mix of study, discussion and practical experiences, the course is designed for those interested in exploring a Jewish life. Topics include Jewish holidays, life-cycle events, theology, prayer, Israel, and history.

The course is open to all, no prerequisites, just your curiosity. This course can count towards the classwork component for the conversion process with Temple Israel for those taking the class locally.
Registration is open at www.templeisraelcanton.org/intro.

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features a map of the continental U.S. and says “Not stolen, conquered.” A third says “America first,” the slogan with anti-Semitic roots that was adopted and popularized anew by former president Donald Trump.
In November, the group held a 100-person march down a main boulevard in Pittsburgh, a city that has become a pilgrimage spot for white supremacists two years after the deadly 2018 synagogue shooting there.
Just like in 2019, the only state without reports of white supremacist propaganda was Hawaii.
Temple Israel Brotherhood’s Reverse Raffle is Back!

COVID cancelled the 2020 raffle, but we are back for 2021 with a socially-distanced format and the same great chance to win $2,000.

Instead of the normal steak dinner and in-person reverse raffle, Temple Israel Brotherhood will be conducting the raffle via Zoom on Sunday, May 2, 2021, at 12:30 p.m.

Ticket holders will get a wonderful deli lunch for two (or more) from Chef Rabbino and Corky & Lenny’s (corned beef or turkey, seeded or seedless rye, potato salad or cole slaw, and dessert) either for pickup or delivery by our membership that morning.

Your money still goes towards Chادash and other Brotherhood activities. Please take that phone call from Brotherhood members and support our school.

JEWISH LIFE continued from Page 8

hold our breath – things will be returning to normal by the summer.

Sam Sokol reports about Israel and is based in Beit Shemesh.

What’s your takeaway from 2020? Covering a pandemic and conducting repeated interviews with the families of victims drove home just how difficult and important, it is to retain journalistic objectivity even while tempering it with sympathy for those about whom we are writing. Dealing with harassment and personal threats as a result of my coverage, as well as having to report on attacks against fellow journalists (including some who are personal friends), reminded me that while we in the press are required to be detached, outside observers, we can all too easily become the story if something goes wrong.

What’s on your radar for 2021? Like last year, 2021 is beginning in Israel with an election looming that could determine whether the country’s longest-serving prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, stays in power. Netanyahu is facing what looks like his most formidable political threat with the formation of a new party led by a former ally, Gideon Saar, as well as serious legal troubles and deep public anger over his handling of the pandemic.

If Netanyahu loses power, the religious right in Israel could see its power blunted and the religious status quo in the country may be shattered in an unprecedented way. The Warner Bros. move and windy road back to normal in the arts, culture and food worlds in 2021 and beyond. The rabbinic leadership’s growing fears of young people truly do engage with the world in good faith. You content to preview for now — such as a Nicole Krauss novel that takes place in Israel or a Hanukkah album from Haim — but in our new world of pandemic delays and shifts, surprise releases are almost ensured. For pop and rap fans, there should be new Bleachers (Jack Antonoff) and Drake albums. Actor Timothée Chalamet should become more of a household name through his star turn in the sci-fi epic “Dune.” Same for Ansel Elgort, who will star in Steven Spielberg’s big-screen remake of “West Side Story.” I’m looking forward to “Red Notice,” a comedic thriller starring my favorite Israeli Gal Gadot, alongside Ryan Reynolds and Dwayne Johnson.

What’s on your radar for 2021? I think we all learned that online programming works incredibly well in some areas and fails completely in others. For example, thousands of people have engaged in new areas of Jewish learning and explored institutions they didn’t have access to before, like Jewish museums in foreign countries. But live performances — especially those of the most engaging, theatrical kind — don’t translate well through pixels.

That said, something fun that did emerge this year and should continue into 2021 is the celebrity-studded online Jewish event, often for fundraising purposes. For example, I was able to easily watch a cooking lesson from Michael Solomonov, hear Amaré Stoudemire tell his inspiring story and listen to Jason Alexander talk about Jewishness with Rachel Brosnahan. Look for this type of thing to become even more common.

Laura Adkins is the opinion editor.

What’s your takeaway from 2020? Happy stories don’t sell papers, but I’ve been inspired and amazed at how quickly this pandemic has brought to light “the helpers,” as Mr. Rogers would say, in science, health care, philanthropy, feeding the hungry, local acts of kindness and even government.

It’s also exposed trolls and plenty of bad actors. But this year reminded me of how much goodness there is in the Jewish community and world at large, and how many people truly do engage with the world in good faith. You just have to know how to spot them.

What’s on your radar for 2021? I recently predicted on Twitter — a bit tongue in cheek — that Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump would make aliyah in 2021. It was light-hearted and acknowledged that they have purchased a home in Florida, but generated a lot of discussion, as all things Trump-adjacent do. The family still enthralls and captivates our attention and imagination, and I don’t see that changing next year.

Philissa Cramer is the editor in chief.

What’s your takeaway from 2020? I’ve learned just how much JTA readers have to add to the excellent journalism this news organization has done for more than a century. Our efforts to engage our audience in new ways have included reader surveys, our Bonds of Life project, commemorating Jews who died of COVID-19 and content (like this!) that gives readers insight into how we report the news. I’m excited to deepen our relationship with our loyal and attentive readers in the coming year.

This was my first year in Jewish journalism, and I’ve learned so much from our reporters all over the world — about people like Zsolt Balá, a Hungarian-born rabbi praying alone in Germany; about ideas like the Kranjec Test, which seeks to elevate women's voice in Torah study; and about how we reinvent traditions, even in the midst of crisis, as community after community after community did this year, when everything changed.

Those are just a few of the stories that stuck with me this year; I could have chosen so many more. None of them would gain the recognition they deserve without a robust and independent Jewish press, powered by curious and compassionate reporters making another call and asking another question to get the story right.

What’s on your radar for 2021? Unfortunately, the crisis in journalism is not abating. Even with many promising experiments underway, local news remains under pressure, something we unfortunately saw this year as multiple Jewish newspapers folded, closed print editions or interrupted publication. At the same time, the polarization of debate and spread of misinformation has eroded confidence in journalism at a time when setting the record straight is more important than ever. Jewish media has not escaped this dynamic.

But I am optimistic about JTA and believe we can play an important role in bringing Jewish readers together. At a time when we are divided in so many ways and also cannot come together physically, the Jewish media can play a unique role in convening conversations that otherwise would be unlikely. In 2021, I am looking forward to expanding our reporting team, playing a role in serving local readers who might get lost in emerging news deserts and involving our readers in our storytelling in innovative ways.
Life Cycle Events

DEATHS
PLEASE NOTE: Because of space limitations, the Stark Jewish News will print only the immediate family members of our deceased community members. We receive obituary notices from Shaaray Torah Synagogue and Temple Israel of members who have passed away. When we are at "deadline" and there is a death, we will hold the information for the next issue.

Eugene J. Dougherty, husband of Sharon, father of Melissa (Jeremy) Woofter, Tedd (Christine) Dougherty, grandfather of Brandt, Paige, Connor and Madison, brother of Paul Dougherty, Edward (Kathleen) Dougherty, and Bryan (Vicki) Dougherty, passed away April 3.

Barbara Schamberg Strauss Cowan Herst, mother of John (Carisa Marie) Strauss and Patricia (David) Strauss Casden; step-mother of Bruce (Jodi) Herst, Jan Cowan Phillipsborn and Judy (Marty) Cooper passed away on April 6.

BIRTHS
Daylen Howard Prescott, son of Deanna and Adam Prescott, grandson of Linda and Howard Smuckler, great-grandson of Carole Sheidlower, born April 11, Columbus, OH

CJCF Endowments
(Contributions received as of publication deadline.) Endowment donations are a minimum of $10 for each person or event you wish to recognize.

FOOD BANK
In Memory of Eli Weinstock from Bev Gross, Joyce & Jerry Ortmann
In Memory of Jack Goldman from Joyce & Jerry Ortmann
In Memory of Jack Goldman from Bonnie & Gary Podis
In Honor of Jeff Sklar's birthday from Ruth & Bob Altman
In Honor of Libby Hendler's birthday from Shirley Wachtel

JANIE ALTMAN ZOLDAN JEWISH COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT FUND
In Memory of Janie Zoldan from Diane & Bob Friedman, Sharon & William Luntz, Beverly & David Worshil

JEWISH FAMILY SERVICES
In Memory of Jack Goldman from Estelle Blau
In Memory of Lois Leb from Estelle Blau
Honor of Chelle Cohen's dedication to JFS & devotion to Canton Jewish Community from Bonnie & Gary Podis

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AGUDAS ACHIM

Orthodox
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Saturday, May 1
The thirty fourth day of the Omer
Shabbos Parshas Emor
Shacharis & Mussaf 9:00 a.m.
Earliest Mincha 1:58 p.m.
Sunset 8:22 p.m.
Shabbos ends 9:08 p.m.
Maariv 9:15 p.m.
Havdalah 9:35 p.m.

Sunday, May 2
Rabbi Scheinbaum's class via Zoom 11:00 a.m.
The thirty fifth day of the Omer

Monday, May 3
The thirty sixth day of the Omer

Tuesday, May 4
The thirty seventh day of the Omer
Shacharis 7:15 a.m.
Mishnah class via conference call 4:45 p.m.

Wednesday, May 5
The thirty eighth day of the Omer
Rosh Chodesh Sivan

Thursday, May 6
Torah class (the book of Kings) via Zoom 4:45 p.m.
The forty first day of the Omer

Friday, May 7
The forty second day of the Omer
Mincha & Kabolas Shabbos 7:30 p.m.
Candle lighting 8:17 p.m.
Sunset 8:35 p.m.

Saturday, May 8
The forty third day of the Omer
Shabbos Parshas Beha'aloscha
Shacharis 7:30 a.m.
Candle lighting 8:19 p.m.
Sunset 8:37 p.m.

Sunday, May 9
Rabbi Scheinbaum's class via Zoom 11:00 a.m.
The forty fourth day of the Omer

Monday, May 10
The forty third day of the Omer

Tuesday, May 11
The forty fourth day of the Omer
Shacharis 7:15 a.m.
Mishnah class via conference call 4:45 p.m.

Wednesday, May 12
The forty fifth day of the Omer
Rosh Chodesh Sivan

Thursday, May 13
Torah class (The book of Kings) Canceled
The forty sixth day of the Omer

Friday, May 14
The forty seventh day of the Omer
Mincha & Kabolas Shabbos 7:30 p.m.
Candle lighting 8:23 p.m.
Sunset 8:41 p.m.

Saturday, May 15
The forty eighth day of the Omer
Shabbos Parshas Bamidbar
Shacharis & Mussaf 9:00 a.m.
Earliest Mincha 1:59 p.m.
Sunset 8:36 p.m.
Shabbos ends 9:24 p.m.
Maariv 9:35 p.m.
Havdalah 9:49 p.m.

Sunday, May 16
Rabbi Scheinbaum's class via Zoom 11:00 a.m.
The forty ninth day of the Omer
Erev Shavuos
EREV SHAVUOS
Candle lighting 8:19 p.m.
Mincha 8:25 p.m.
Sunset 8:37 p.m.
Nightfall 9:25 p.m.
ALL NIGHT STUDY

Monday, May 17
FIRST DAY OF SHAVUOS
Shacharis 5:30 a.m.
Sunrise 6:07 a.m.
Mincha (Earliest Mincha 1:59 p.m.) 8:25 p.m.
Sunset 8:39 p.m.
Maariv 9:15 p.m.
Nightfall 9:27 p.m.
Candle lighting after 9:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 18
SECOND DAY OF SHAVUOS
Shacharis 7:00 a.m.
The book of Rus (Ruth) 7:45 a.m.
Yizkor 8:25 a.m.
Mincha (Earliest Mincha 1:59 p.m.) 8:25 p.m.
Sunset 8:39 p.m.
Maariv 8:40 p.m.
Yom Tov ends 9:27 p.m.

Wednesday, May 19
Esru Chag Shavuos

Thursday, May 20
Torah class (The Book of Kings) via Zoom 4:30 p.m.

Friday, May 21
Mincha & Kabolas Shabbos 7:30 p.m.
Candle lighting 8:23 p.m.
Sunset 8:41 p.m.

Saturday, May 22
Yahrzeit for Mr. Orian Joseph Masselli
Shabbos Parshas Nasso
Shacharis & Mussaf 9:00 a.m.
Earliest Mincha 2:00 p.m.
Shabbos ends 9:32 p.m.
Maariv 9:40 p.m.
Havdalah 9:55 p.m.

Sunday, May 23
Rabbi Scheinbaum's class via Zoom 11:00 a.m.

Tuesday, May 25
Shacharis 7:15 a.m.
Mishnah class via conference call 4:45 p.m.

Thursday, May 27
Torah class (The Book of Kings) via Zoom 4:30 p.m.
Yahrzeit for Mr. Richard Henning

Friday, May 28
Mincha & Kabolas Shabbos 7:30 p.m.
Candle lighting 8:29 p.m.
Sunset 8:47 p.m.

Saturday, May 29
Parshas Beha'aloscha
Shacharis & Mussaf 9:00 a.m.
Earliest Mincha 2:01 p.m.
Shabbos ends 9:39 p.m.
Maariv 9:45 p.m.
Havdalah 10:01 p.m.

Sunday, May 30
Rabbi Scheinbaum's class via Zoom 11:00 a.m.

SHAARAY TORAH

Conservative
432 30th St. N.W. • Canton, 44709 • 330-492-0310

Saturday, May 1
Shavuos – 2nd Day

Friday, May 7
5:45 p.m. Family Service with Rabbi David Komerofsky and Shelley Schweitzer
6:15 p.m. Kabbalat Shabbat Service with Rabbi David Komerofsky and Shelley Schweitzer

Friday, May 14
6:15 p.m. Kabbalat Shabbat Service and May Birthday and Anniversary Blessings with Rabbi David Komerofsky and Suzanne Stieglitz

TEMPLE ISRAEL

Reform
432 30th St. N.W. • Canton, 44709 • 330-455-5197

Friday, May 21
6:15 p.m. Kabbalat Shabbat Service and Torah Reading with Rabbi David Komerofsky and Sandy Adland

Friday, May 28
6:15 p.m. Kabbalat Shabbat Service with Rabbi David Komerofsky and Zachary Charlick
A Day at Beit Ha’am