

Israel Connection

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No Longer in Hiding

WHEN WE HEAR THE WORD "PURIM," the first image that pops into many of our minds is one of children decked out in costumes. We tend to think of Purim as a fun holiday filled with carnivals and kids' games, but often lose sight of its deeper history and contemporary Jewish meaning.

While the earliest known reference to Jews wearing costumes on Purim comes from the writing of Rabbi Yehuda Minz of Venice, the custom of pretending to be someone else on Purim goes all the way back to the Book of Esther. Esther, despite reaching the pinnacle of power, hides a significant part of her identity. She hides being Jewish.

Esther feels compelled to hide her Jewishness in order to save her people from the decree of Achashverosh and his lieutenant, Haman. Despite amassing great political influence, Esther wears a costume, the clothes of a Persian queen, to blend in and not draw



In the story of Purim, Esther uses her relationship and influence with the king to save the Jewish people. Now is the time to use our relationships with Congress to ensure Israel stays safe and America remains strong.

attention to her Jewish heritage.

The Rabbis in the Talmud (B. Chullin 139b), referencing Deuteronomy 31:18, note the similarity between the name "Esther" and the word "astir"

("hidden"), thus connecting her name and her actions. Thankfully, we no longer need to remain hidden. As American Jews, we no longer feel the need to be like Esther and hide

ourselves. We possess the political and economic freedom to reveal ourselves and make our thoughts known throughout all aspects of political life—including at the highest levels of government.

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Israel, the nation-state of the Jewish people, faces numerous dangers, including the continued threat from the place formerly known as Persia, as Iran continues its quest toward a nuclear weapons capability. It is incumbent upon us to lift our voices to our members of Congress and convey the importance of American leadership in helping to ensure Israel's continued safety and security.

New Faces in Congress

THIS PAST JANUARY, more than 70 freshmen members of Congress moved into their Capitol Hill offices to serve as new representatives of the American people. The dramatic influx of new faces in the House and Senate reflects the current trend of

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The U.S.-Israel relationship spans far beyond today's top news stories. Both countries are engaged in an ever-widening array of cooperative initiatives which help to improve the lives of citizens in each democracy and the wider world.



REVEALING THE RELATIONSHIP:

Israel Beyond the Headlines



supply. "We are incredibly grateful for the friendship and expertise the Israelis brought to West Virginia," Rabbi Urecki said, "and we are continuing to work to find ways to help one another."

MEDICAL MIRACLES

Doctors throughout Israel are working with colleagues in the United States and around the world in the common quest to cure cancer.

One Israeli company, EventusDx, developed the world's first blood test for breast cancer, while another, Real

Imaging, invented a radiation-free alternative to mammography that provides a computer generated assessment of health status without human interpretation.

While breakthroughs in initial diagnosis are vital to preventative care, Israeli company InSightec has revolutionized tumor removal procedures through the development of an ultrasound technology that destroys targeted tissue through the noninvasive use of heat. A similar technology developed by Israel's IceCure destroys breast cancer tumors using cold air, known as cryoablation. And at

Technion – Israel Institute of Technology, researchers recently discovered a method of overcoming the drug resistance mechanisms of many malignant tumors.

SAFE SURFING

Israel has become one of the world's foremost experts in cyber security. The Advanced Technology Park at Ben Gurion

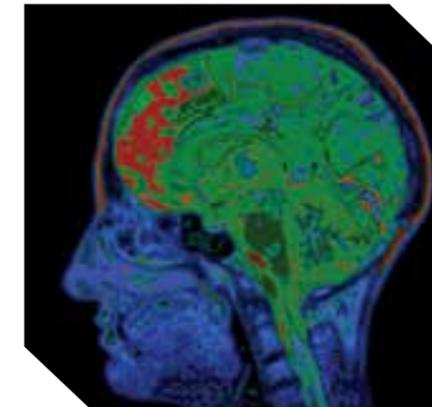


University of the Negev in Be'er Sheva is one example of the country's groundbreaking progress in this critical field. Israeli PhD and undergraduate students at BGU recently found that 5-to-10 percent of Facebook profiles are fraudulent—often used for disreputable purposes.

After substantiating their findings, the students invented a tool to help protect teens from online predators. By creating a unique new algorithm with the ability to flag potentially suspicious web accounts, these cyber experts were able to help parents keep their kids safe through an internet add-on or special Facebook application. The finding is just one of countless Israeli innovations working to protect people from cybercrime.

MINDFUL INNOVATION

The danger of head injuries to American athletes is a growing problem. Scientific evidence has proven that even mild traumas can cause harmful, long-term brain damage. And until recently, there was no existing diagnostic capability to assess mild brain injuries.



The Brain Imaging Research Center at Ben-Gurion University changed that. Researchers discovered that through dynamic contrast-enhanced magnetic resonance imaging (DCE-MRI), doctors could quickly detect damage to a patient's blood-brain barrier (BBB) immediately following a trauma.

This new imaging method provides a more detailed image of the brain, allowing doctors to detect any abnormal vasculature created from damage to the blood-brain barrier. Today, the Israeli study can play a major role in helping physicians choose the best course of treatment and determine when an athlete should return to the playing field.



New Faces in Congress

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increased congressional turnover in the United States, with nearly half of today's Congress having been elected since 2010.

These patterns have major implications for pro-Israel political activists country-wide, as most freshmen run for Congress—and ultimately win their seats—by campaigning on domestic policy issues rather than foreign affairs.

Fortunately, pro-Israel advocates understand that the process of engaging members of Congress on the U.S.-Israel relationship begins well before Election Day. These relationships are harnessed from the beginning of the campaign trail.

As a result, America's newly elected policymakers have already built personal relationships with members of the pro-Israel community. Most have published position papers in support of the U.S.-Israel alliance, while nearly 30 percent of incoming House members have traveled to tour Israel firsthand.

Together, we have a vital role to play in building upon these relationships in the months and years ahead. We must work to ensure that Israel remains a top priority for our legislators in Washington. By expressing our views and playing an increased role in the political process, we can work to safeguard and strengthen the U.S.-Israel relationship regardless of who holds office.



Year in Review

CONGRESS STANDS WITH ISRAEL IN 2014

PRO-ISRAEL ACTIVISTS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

work with members of Congress to help ensure that our legislators grasp the importance of a strong U.S.-Israel alliance, and that America always stands with the Jewish state. In 2014, these efforts produced tangible and meaningful results at a time when Israel has needed our support most.

MARCH 18

83 senators send letter to president on Iran

The letter delineates the necessary terms for a final agreement with Iran and stresses the essential role of Congress.

395 House members send letter to president on Iran

Matching the Senate, the letter outlines acceptable terms for any final agreement on Iran's nuclear program.

JUNE 11

88 senators sign letter to president opposing unity government with Hamas

The letter expresses dismay over Palestinian moves to form a unity government backed by Hamas, affirming that it undercuts American efforts to promote peace negotiations.

JULY 9

344 House members sign letter to president on Iran

The letter calls for greater consultation between the administration and Congress on a potential sanctions relief package that may be part of a final deal.

JULY 10

House passes \$2 million for U.S.-Israel energy and water cooperation

The House passes the fiscal year 2015 Energy and Water appropriations bill, which includes \$2 million for continued U.S.-Israel energy cooperation.

JULY 11-17

Congress passes resolutions supporting Israel's right to self-defense

Both the House and Senate pass bipartisan resolutions supporting Israel's defense against rocket attacks by Hamas.



JULY 22

House votes 404-0 to sanction Hezbollah

The Hezbollah International Financing Prevention Act seeks to cut off Hezbollah from the international financing system.

JULY 29-30

Congress calls for demilitarized Gaza

Both the House and Senate pass resolutions calling for a durable cease-fire that would lead to a demilitarization of Gaza.

AUGUST 1

Congress approves additional \$225 million for Iron Dome

The Senate (by unanimous consent) and the House (by a vote of 395-8) pass an emergency appropriation of \$225 million for Israel's Iron Dome.



AUGUST 1

OCTOBER 1

354 members of Congress send letter to Secretary Kerry

The letter expresses concerns with Iran's repeated refusal to cooperate with the IAEA and reiterates the need to fully understand Iran's past nuclear weaponization efforts.



JULY 10

NOVEMBER 24

Members speak out on extension of Iran talks

Scores of members of Congress issue statements expressing concern with the extension of the P5+1 talks with Iran, and the need to increase pressure on Tehran to accept a good agreement.



DECEMBER 3

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Congress passes the U.S.-Israel Strategic Partnership Act

The House gives final approval to landmark legislation laying the foundation for increased cooperation. The approval follows unanimous passage by the Senate and original passage by the House (410-1).



DECEMBER 13

DECEMBER 13

Congress passes 2015 spending bill with key pro-Israel provisions

Congress approves \$3.1 billion in security assistance to Israel, along with \$619.8 million for joint missile defense programs, as part of the FY 2015 omnibus appropriations bill.

