

# *Looking Back Moving Forward*

**December 2017**

## **A Message from the President**

On behalf of Chairman of the Board of Directors, Mr. Manochehr Nazarian, Executive Board, members, staff and volunteers of the Iranian American Jewish Federation, I wish everyone a happy, healthy, prosperous and peaceful year.

In the year 2017 we walked together as a united community and celebrated our cultural practices and religious rituals, extending our greatest pride of being Jewish Iranians to the next generation. We rejoiced along with hundreds of friends, to celebrate the [reunification of Jerusalem](#). We honored the legacy of our beloved [Habib Elghanayan](#) and screened a revived film, portraying [Ben-Gurion's](#) vision as the Father of Israel. We contended the concepts and display of anti-Semitism and strived to collectively support our ancestral homeland. We stood by less fortunate members of the community, identifying and addressing the crises that hindered their lives and directed them to a path of independence.

With the approach of the New Year 2018, we look forward to uniting and collaborating with the other Iranian and non-Iranian organizations to create

educational and recreational programs for the community. We look forward to our coordinated efforts in educating our brothers and sisters of other faiths and build bridges of friendships based on historical facts. We ask that you will direct us to the type of programs that is most suited to the needs of the community, help us with planning the future events by completion of the attached [survey](#).

Looking into the future, with gratitude and hope, I wish each and every one of you happiness by experiencing and cultivating social and spiritual growth, living with insight, grace and love.

Happy New Year  
Susan Azizzadeh

### **5th Annual Persian American Women's Conference**

PAWC held its 5th annual conference “CREATIVITY: Impacting Our World through Art” on May 18, 2017 at the Beverly Hilton.

This event featured the Duchess of York, Sarah Ferguson, as the keynote speaker, the Honorable Lili Bosse, Mayor of Beverly Hills, as well as accomplished members of our community: Tala Madani, highly acclaimed artist, Roxana Rastegar, well known artist and producer, Angella Nazarian, bestselling author, Angela Larian, well noted sculptor and Shaina Pakravan, filmmaker.

Persian American Women's Conference, founded by Dr. Mojgan Hakimi, is held every year and provides an extraordinary opportunity to highlight and showcase the accomplished and talented women who inspire and empower attendees to create positive changes in their personal lives, community and the world. Dr. Hakimi also served as the chair of this year’s conference. This well received gathering hosted 670 participants.



### **Jerusalem of Gold: Celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Six Day War and the Reunification of Jerusalem**

The Iranian American Jewish Federation hosted at its Hollywood Temple Beth El the official State of Israel event in Southern California celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Reunification of Jerusalem.

Titled “Jerusalem of Gold”, the event took place on a historic day, June 7th, 2017, and drew a capacity crowd of close to 700 representing the various elements of the Jewish community (Israelis, Russian, Iranian, ...) as well as the Christian community (Evangelical, Greek Orthodox, Mormon, Catholic, ...). Many others joined in the celebration, including Korean, Armenian, Mexican and others from the great tapestry of Los Angeles.



Co-hosted by the Israeli Consulate General to the West Coast and the Simon Wiesenthal Center and its Museum of Tolerance, the event inspired and exceeded by Zohreh Mizrahi and Ari Bussel, drew top local officials and diplomats. A special proclamation by the City of Los Angeles was presented during the event, in which it was “resolved, that by adoption of this Resolution, the Los Angeles City Council joins Israel, the Jewish people and all over the world in proclaiming that the City of Angels is saluting the City of God, Jerusalem, Israel’s eternal capital.”

Signed on this resolution are Los Angeles Mayor, the entire membership of the City Council, the City Attorney and City Controller. The Mayor, City Controller, City Attorney and two members of the Council are Jewish.

Present during the event was Lili Bosse, Mayor of Beverly Hills, herself the

daughter of Holocaust Survivors. On behalf of the City of Beverly Hills, Mayor Lili presented individual proclamations issued for 85 Survivors, and promised along with all the participants: "We will never forget you!"

Throughout the Middle East and Africa Christians and other minorities are being raped, sold to slavery, executed en masse (including Muslims in the hands of other Muslims) and murdered, and holy places (churches, mosques, etc.) are desecrated, burned to the ground and destroyed. Jerusalem is the only place where freedom of religion and protection of religious rights and institutions is by law and practice.

Jerusalem is the only place that for the past 50 years church bells can be heard, as well as the Muezzin call to prayer. Jews walk freely, living their daily lives side by side other minorities. Jerusalem is the only place in the entire region and beyond where the Christian population experiences a net positive growth; where minorities feel safe and welcome.

This is the theme being highlighted, under the banner "The City of Angels Saluting the City of God." A unique evening celebrating a Jubilee of humanity flourishing.

The event took place 50 years to the day since the liberation of the Temple Mount by the Israeli paratroopers (the third day of the Six Day War). The blowing of the Shofar was re-enacted by Rabbi Menachem Weiss, Cantor Eitan Aharon and a representative of the younger generation, Yair Vahedi. Philanthropist Mireille Wolfe, herself a Holocaust Survivor, told the audience of her father's blowing of the Shofar to his last day, as well as the lessons of the Holocaust. This would have been her last public appearance.

The entire evening was a celebration in Shir ve Hallel, song and praise to God the Almighty. This was a show of unity, both internal within the Jewish community and

with other communities of faith, and represented the culmination of months of work by the Jerusalem of Gold Committee, a joining-together of many elements to create and execute the main official event of the State of Israel in Los Angeles for this historic day. (In Jerusalem, the Knesset held a special celebration, as it does every decade on this day.)

This year is most significant and unique for Israel, marking:

- \* the 120th anniversary of the First Zionist Congress in Basel,
- \* the 100th anniversary of the Balfour Declaration (November 2nd),
- \* the 70th year of the UN Partition Plan (November 29th),
- \* the 50th anniversary of the Six Day War (June 5th),
- \* and 50 years for the reunification of Jerusalem.

The Iranian American Jewish Federation took an active role from the first gathering of the Jerusalem of Gold Committee, committing itself to assist in any way possible. Susan Azzizadeh and other members of IAJF participated in all the preparatory meetings of the Jerusalem of Gold Committee, reminding the Jewish and Israeli community-members: We are all one!

Together, we convened and declared: "There is no other place like Jerusalem, Jerusalem of Gold, the City of God!"



### **Inspiring and Uplifting High Holiday Services**

As in previous years, the Iranian American Jewish Federation Beth El Synagogue presented High Holiday services to community members.

We worshiped in an atmosphere of camaraderie, shared spiritual growth and felt the enrichment derived from sitting with fellow congregants and being inspired by services officiated by Rabbi Dr. Isaac Norman, and our devoted Hazzanim. Also, our distinguished member, Dr. Abrams addressed the congregants on Yom Kippur.

Hundreds of congregants joined our services during these days of introspection, new beginnings and the empowerment of a spiritual rebirth.

### **A Celebration of the Life & Legacy of Haj Habib Elghanayan**

Thirty-eight years after the cruel and tragic execution of Haj Habib Elghanayan, the

Iranian American Jewish Federation proudly celebrated his life and legacy, honoring and paying tribute to his historic contributions to Iran and Iranians of all faiths.

This glorious gathering of more than 1800 on October 15, 2017, at the Saban Theater in Beverly Hills was open to the public, including every age, nationality and religion. Dignitaries from Azerbaijan, Croatia, Czech Republic, Egypt, Japan, Israel and the United States along with Elghanayan's family were in attendance.



Esteemed speakers, old colleagues, journalists, religious leaders, friends and family highlighted Elghanayan's great leadership, achievements and services to advance commerce, industry, technology, education, welfare and healthcare throughout Iran.



In her inclusive speech, Mrs. Azizzadeh highlighted the historic impact of the Iranian Jews in Iran for over 2700 years. She also stressed the late Elghanayan's altruism and sacrifices as the leader of Iranian Jews for two decades as well as the importance of recognition of the groundbreaking services and contributions of Haj Habib Elghanayan, in particular encouraging coming generations to learn from them.

Distinguished speakers and community leaders, Mr. Nasser Oliaee, Mr. Menashe Amir and Mr. Nourollah Gabay, Ms. Sholeh Shams, and Mr. Jack Rochel praised his wisdom, knowledge, leadership, and love for humanity and introduced and explained his enormous role in bringing industries like plastic and aluminum to Iran and the evolution of our country.



In an informative documentary film made by Mr. Abbas Hojatpanah, the life and achievements of Haj Habib were portrayed with original photos and testimonies, concluding with his tragic and shocking execution. A complimentary copy of the CD was offered to the attendees.

For the first time in history, silver coins were minted with the image of Haj Habib Elghanyan to commemorate this treasured man.

Rabbi David Shofet recital of the mourner prayers was shared by the entire audience while standing. Mrs. Azizzadeh joined Rabbi Shofet on stage and invited the audience to partner with the Emergency Fund Committee of the Iranian American Jewish Federation to help the needy as a tribute to the memory of Haj Habib who always assisted whoever reached out to him.

Mrs. Azizzadeh acknowledged and appreciated the efforts and assistance of Mrs. Sholeh Shams, Editor in Chief of Rahavard quarterly publication in producing the

tribute book which was distributed at the night of the event. Shahbanoo Farah Pahlavi, had also sent a message to acknowledge and appreciate Haj Habib Elghanian as an honest patriot and philanthropist who contributed immensely to advance commerce and Industry in Iran. she also commended IAJF for protecting Iranian culture and honoring those who served their people out of their love for Iran.

On behalf of Elghanayan family, Mr. Shahab Moreh, his grandson; Mrs. Shahnaz Ghodsian, his niece; and Mr. Karmel Elghanyan, his son; spoke of the amazing role model Haj Habib has been and will continue to be. The surprise conclusion of the program was Haj Habib's favorite song, "Habibam ro Mikham", performed by esteemed singer, the late Marzieh, and sang by two of Elghanayan's great grandchildren, Jasmine and Jason Cohanim.

A beautiful reception was arranged by IAJF and the family before and after the program.



## “Ben-Gurion: Epilogue” Inspires the Community

On November 16th, 2017, the Iranian American Jewish Federation presented a special program, screening the documentary film, “Ben-Gurion: Epilogue”, Best Documentary award winner of the Israeli Film Academy for 2017. The evening was a collaboration of IAJF, Nessah Educational and Cultural Center, Sinai Temple.

With the gracious and generous sponsorship of the Neman Brothers, and tireless efforts of Yoel and Sherry Neman, more than 1800 members of the Iranian and non-Iranian community members attended, with the proceeds benefitting the Emergency Fund. Mr. and Mrs. Neman have continually supported this committee and this screening was the second fundraiser they have held to help the needy in the community. Many community members and vendors assisted in realizing this educational and informative evening.



Mrs. Dina Kadisha Aspen, a renowned documentarian, opened the program and spoke of her late grandfather, Isaac Parviz Nazarian, a Zionist at heart who followed the philosophy of Ben-Gurion, inspiring everyone in his family. Dora Nazarian Kadisha was instrumental in introducing this documentary to the community and the Los Angeles Jewish Film Festival. Mrs. Dina Kadisha Aspen, the Mistress of the Ceremony, introduced Mrs. Azizzadeh, the IAJF president who acknowledged the generosity and altruism of the Neman brothers. The chair of the

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planning committee, Mrs. Susan Eshaghian and the volunteers were acknowledged and thanked for their dedication and diligence in organizing this event. A special gratitude was expressed to Mrs. Asher Eshaghpour, president of Nessah Synagogue, and Angela Maddahi, the president of Sinai Temple of Los Angeles for their partnership and efforts in promoting this event. Both Rabbi David Shoffet and Rabbi David Wolpe were thanked for excitedly endorsing the film.

Mrs. Azizzadeh, to the surprise of the audience, acknowledged the vision of Zionist, Abraham Rad, which was initially called "42-6". She introduced Mr. Rad's daughter, Mrs. Nahid Rad and granddaughter Claudine, who were well received and applauded.

*The Ben-Gurion: Epilogue* portrayed a blueprint of the vision and mission that the father of Israel, he had drafted and with his devotion to the idea of establishing the country of Israel, turning a small agricultural land into one the strongest and most technologically advanced countries in the world. Mr. Rick Richman, philosopher, historian, and author of *Racing Against History* conducted a meaningful Q&A with Yariv Mozer, and discussed the artistic avenues through which he travelled in order to create the film.

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### **A glance at Emergency Fund activities in 2017**

With the help of the philanthropists and generous donations made by community members, Emergency Fund committee continues to provide social service, financial and psychosocial assistance to the needy members of our community.

In 2017, the less fortunate families have received food coupons on Passover, Yom Kippur and when needed during the year. EF continues to assist with rental cost, living expenses, education and provides referral to mental healthcare providers. More than previous years, we have been able to refer individuals for job training and thus, placement.

The Emergency Fund fundraisers' proceeds in the months of October and November, grew the fund much stronger and also brought awareness to the efforts and success of the Emergency Fund, which is only possible with the financial and

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altruistic assistance of the community and the time and professional contributions of a team of volunteers who identify the underlying crises and challenges and guide the needy to self evaluation and provides encouragement, inspiration and coaching.

One hundred percent of all donations are devoted to helping our community in need and is tax deductible.

Susan Azizzadeh  
President, Co-Chair

Elie Alyshmerni  
Co-Chair

