Jewish National Fund-USA's Decades-Long Investment In Water Infrastructure Helps Israel Weather Unprecedented Crisis

Network of 250 reservoirs demonstrates the power of decentralized water infrastructure as microalgae bloom disrupts five out of six Israeli desalination plants



An example of a Jewish National Fund-USA-supported water reservoir

KTZIOT, ISRAEL, September 7, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- An unprecedented microalgae bloom that temporarily shut down five of Israel's six desalination plants has underscored the critical importance of the country's diverse and resilient water infrastructure — including 250 reservoirs built throughout Israel with philanthropic support from Jewish National Fund-USA donors.

The miles-long bloom disrupted facilities that collectively supply much of Israel's drinking water. According to the Israel Water Authority, desalinated water provides up to 80% of the country's drinking water. Although Israel's national water system largely maintained residential supplies by drawing from groundwater wells, the Sea of Galilee, and national reserves, farmers in peripheral regions faced significant irrigation restrictions.

> "This is what visionary philanthropy looks like...Our donors did more than fund infrastructure. They helped ensure that when the unexpected arrived, Israel was ready."
>
> *JNF-USA Chief Israel Officer, Tali Tzou Avner*

In the remote Nitzana area of the Negev, those restrictions threatened newly planted crops at a critical stage of development. During this challenging period, the Jewish National Fund-USA-supported Ktziot Water Reservoir supplied the water farmers needed to protect their fields, livelihoods, and their contribution to Israel's food supply.

With the capacity to provide 250,000 cubic meters — approximately 66 million gallons — of readily available irrigation water, the Ktziot Reservoir became what Ramat HaNegev Regional Council Mayor Eran Doron described as “a lifeline for an entire region.”



Pictured: Just one of the many philanthropic investments made by Alan Cohen in water security through Jewish National Fund-USA (L-R: JNF-USA Chief Israel Officer, Tali Tzour Avner; JNF-USA Donor Alan Cohen; Mayor Michal Uziyahu)

“This situation reminds us why Jewish National Fund-USA has always invested for the long term,” said Jewish National Fund-USA Water Task Force Chair Marc Kelman and Co-Chair Bob Lembke in a joint statement. “We do not wait for a crisis to begin imagining solutions. For over three decades, we have helped Israel develop reservoirs, wastewater-recycling systems, water research, and other infrastructure that strengthen the country in ordinary times and protect its people during emergencies. When desalination plants went offline, that vision became water in the fields, food for Israeli families, and security for an entire region.”
Jewish National Fund-USA has helped strengthen Israel’s water economy by supporting the development of alternative water sources, wastewater recycling, responsible aquifer drilling, river rehabilitation, agricultural research, and water-storage infrastructure.

The 250 reservoirs built throughout Israel with the organization’s philanthropic support store recycled wastewater and runoff water for use by local and regional communities. More than half of the water used for Israeli agriculture now comes from recycled water stored in reservoirs supported by Jewish National Fund-USA, easing pressure on the country’s drinking-water supplies and providing farmers with a more sustainable source of irrigation.

The recent disruption demonstrated why a resilient water system cannot rely on any single source or centralized technology. Israel’s desalination capabilities remain an extraordinary national achievement, yet reservoirs and locally available recycled water provide an essential additional layer of security when coastal facilities are disrupted by environmental, military, or technological threats.
In a letter to Jewish National Fund-USA’s Water Task Force, Doron wrote that the Ktziot Reservoir had proved itself to be “a strategic asset for Israel’s water and food security.”

“It is difficult to overstate the significance of this reservoir,” Doron wrote. “In the heart of the desert, the reservoir provides security and resilience in both routine times and emergencies. Its

impact reaches from the livelihood of an individual farming family in the Negev to the vegetables on Israeli tables and, ultimately, to the food security of the State of Israel."

Doron also thanked the Jewish National Fund-USA Water Task Force and donors Alan Cohen, and Valerie and Herschel (z"l) Richter, whose generosity helped make the Ktziot Reservoir possible.

The emergency has highlighted the need for further investment in pipelines connecting reservoirs to additional agricultural areas, as well as wastewater-treatment facilities and adjacent reservoirs located closer to the communities and farms they serve. Jewish National Fund-USA will continue working with its partners in Israel to advance water solutions that help communities withstand emergencies, expand agriculture, and build a stronger future in Israel's North and South.

"This is what visionary philanthropy looks like," said Jewish National Fund-USA Chief Israel Officer, Tali Tzour Avner. "A reservoir built years ago became the difference between crops surviving and fields running dry. Our donors did more than fund infrastructure. They helped ensure that when the unexpected arrived, Israel was ready."

To learn more about Jewish National Fund-USA's water initiatives, visit jnf.org/water.

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