

New Jersey Jewish News Online Greater Middlesex County Feature

Synagogue hosts lecture marking Israel-India ties



Pramit Pal Chaudhuri, foreign editor of the *Hindustan Times* and currently the Bernard Schwartz Fellow of the Asia Society in New York, with Rabbi Melinda Zalma of Congregation Beth Mordecai in Perth Amboy. Chaudhuri took part in a June 10 program at the synagogue celebrating the 15th anniversary of the establishment of formal relations between Israel and India.

by [Debra Rubin](#)
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06.26.07

Rabbi Melinda Zalma of [Congregation Beth Mordecai](#) in Perth Amboy has had a longstanding interest in India.

"I've been to India twice," said Zalma. "Once was for my husband's friend's wedding — it was actually a Muslim wedding — and the other was for my own honeymoon."

So it was only natural that when Pramit Pal Chaudhuri, the foreign editor of the [Hindustan Times](#) and a leading figure in policymaking circles, came to New York, the rabbi would invite him to speak to her congregation.

Chaudhuri, whom the rabbi considers a family friend, spoke to the congregation June 10 to mark the 15th anniversary of the normalization of Indian-Israeli relations.

"It's important that we learn about other cultures, and there is a huge Indian community in Middlesex County," said Zalma. "It is important that we learn to make connections with our neighbors."

Beyond cultural differences, Chaudhuri told the gathering, both India and Israel are home to ancient civilizations and the birthplace of major religions. Both countries were born out of British imperialism in 1948 and both have sizeable Muslim populations within their borders.

The two countries are also democracies that have faced internal and external security threats from Islamist terrorism and sabotage from other countries.

Despite these shared factors, it took decades for India and Israel to establish diplomatic ties.

Chaudhuri currently holds the yearlong Bernard Schwartz Fellowship of the Asia Society in New York. As a fellow, he is working on United States-India relations, India's role in a globalizing world, and the role of technology and innovation in the new Asia.

He is a graduate of Cornell University.

"Pramit covered Israel for many years and met the last four Israeli prime ministers," said Zalma. "The congregation found it very interesting and asked a lot of good questions. No one in my congregation has been to India, and they found it fascinating."

Zalma said the program went so well she is planning to forge additional ties between the Jewish and Indian communities and is looking for other synagogues and Hindu temples to partner with the synagogue for such events.

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