

Days Before a Marriage Proposal, They Were Killed in D.C.

Sarah Milgrim and Yaron Lischinsky met while working at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, her father said. Mr. Lischinsky had just bought an engagement ring, an official said.

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Yaron Lischinsky and Sarah Milgrim met when she started working at the Israeli Embassy in Washington in November 2023. The Milgrim family

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Sarah Milgrim’s parents didn’t know that Yaron Lischinsky was planning to propose to her until after the couple was [killed by a gunman](#) in Washington, D.C., on Wednesday night.

Her parents had assumed that marriage was in the picture. Ms. Milgrim, who grew up in Prairie Village, Kan., had met Mr. Lischinsky shortly after joining the Israeli Embassy a year and a half ago to organize missions and visits by delegations. Mr. Lischinsky, a researcher at the embassy, had met her parents several times.

“He was incredible,” Ms. Milgrim’s father, Robert Milgrim, said in an interview. “He was very much like Sarah: passionate, extremely intelligent, dedicated to what he does, always on the cause of what’s right.”

A few months ago, Ms. Milgrim, 26, told her parents that she planned to travel with Mr. Lischinsky, 30, to meet his family in Jerusalem for the first time. What they didn’t know, and would only learn after the shooting, is that he had bought an engagement ring before the trip.

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With the couple set to fly to Israel on Sunday, Ms. Milgrim’s mother, Nancy Milgrim, planned to travel on Friday to Washington from Prairie Village, a Kansas City suburb, to take care of her daughter’s dog, a goldendoodle named Andy.

On Wednesday night, Mr. Milgrim was getting ready for bed when news alerts on his cellphone appeared, describing [a deadly shooting in Washington](#) outside an event for the American Jewish Committee, where his daughter was a fellow. He immediately called the F.B.I. and the local police station, but neither could provide any information.

Nancy Milgrim opened a locator app on her cellphone and looked for her daughter’s location. It showed her at the Capital Jewish Museum, where the shooting had taken place.

“I pretty much already knew,” Mr. Milgrim said. “I was hoping to be wrong.”

Then Nancy Milgrim’s phone rang. It was Israel’s ambassador to the United States, Yechiel Leiter. He said Ms. Milgrim and her boyfriend had died, and gave his condolences.

It was a horrific moment, Mr. Milgrim said. He pointed to rising antisemitism [since Israel went to war](#) in Gaza following the Hamas-led attacks on Israel on Oct. 7, 2023.

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“What went through my mind is, I feel the antisemitism that has surfaced since Oct. 7 and also since the election of President Trump,” Mr. Milgrim said. “It’s just an extension of my worst fears.”

It was the ambassador who told them that Mr. Lischinsky had bought an engagement ring this week and intended to propose in Jerusalem.

“The ironic part is that we were worried for our daughter’s safety in Israel,” Mr. Milgrim added. “But she was murdered three days before going.”

Sarah Milgrim and Mr. Lischinsky were both passionate about their work at the embassy, according to people who knew them.

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Mr. Lischinsky had known from a young age that he wanted to be a diplomat for Israel, said Professor Nissim Otmazgin, one of his teachers at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem.

“He saw that as his calling,” said Professor Otmazgin, the dean of the university’s faculty of humanities. Mr. Lischinsky studied there from 2018 to 2021, earning a bachelor’s degree in international relations and Asian studies.

Mr. Lischinsky specialized in Japanese studies and was an outstanding student, according to Professor Otmazgin. “He was an idealist,” he said. “He wanted to build bridges between Israel and other countries, especially in Asia.”

He grew up in a culturally mixed family with a Jewish father and a Christian mother, and was a practicing Christian, according to Ronen Shoval, the dean of the Argaman Institute for Advanced Studies in Jerusalem, where Mr. Lischinsky participated in a yearlong program in classical liberal conservative thought after earning a master’s degree in government and diplomacy.

“He was a devout Christian,” Dr. Shoval said, “but he had tied his fate to the people of Israel.”

In his application to join the program, which Dr. Shoval shared with The New York Times, Mr. Lischinsky described his upbringing in a multicultural family and “the inner struggles” he faced while growing up in a religious household within secular societies in Germany and Israel.

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Hanan Lischinsky said his brother had been considering applying to the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs’ cadet course to train to be a diplomat. People who worked with Yaron Lischinsky in the embassy said that there, he had identified as Jewish.

Michael Herzog, who served as Israel’s ambassador to Washington from late 2021 until January, described Mr. Lischinsky and Ms. Milgrim as a “vibrant, bright and talented” couple who were “brimming with energy and always smiling.”

Ms. Milgrim got her bachelor’s degree from the University of Kansas in 2021. She had lived abroad in several places, including in Costa Rica, where she earned her master’s degree in natural resources and sustainable development from the University of Peace, established by the United Nations. She also earned a master’s in international affairs from American University.

At the Israeli Embassy, Ms. Milgrim worked on a range of environmental issues and helped organize events that promoted cooperation on issues like water scarcity between Israelis and Palestinians.

“She was a constant bridge builder,” said Jennifer Laszlo Mizrahi, co-founder of the Mizrahi Family Charitable Fund, which works on climate change. She added that Ms. Milgrim was “full of energy and optimism.”

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Like many young Jewish Americans, Ms. Milgrim and her 28-year-old brother, Jacob, also participated in Birthright Israel, which offers free trips to Israel in an effort to bolster Jewish identity. In Israel, she worked for an organization that connected young Israelis and Palestinians, her father said.

Attacks shook the Jewish community in suburban Kansas City when she was growing up. In 2014, [a gunman opened fire](#) outside a Jewish community center and a nearby retirement community in Overland Park, Kan., killing three people.

In 2017, swastikas were graffitied on Ms. Milgrim’s public high school in Prairie Village. A senior at the time, Ms. Milgrim [told](#) the local television station KSHB-TV: “I worry about going to my synagogue, and now I have to worry about safety at my school. And that shouldn’t be a thing.”

Mr. Milgrim said that his daughter and Mr. Lischinsky were both concerned about peace in the Middle East, the stability of Israel and the plight of Palestinians.

“She was doing what she loved, she was doing good,” her father said. Doing good, he added, is “what brought her life to an end.”

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