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הַמִּזְרָחִי HAMIZRACHI

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Congratulating Rabbi Doron Perez

On his additional role as President
of the World Zionist Organization

INTERVIEW AND COVERAGE OF
THE WORLD ZIONIST CONGRESS
ON PAGES 14–24



(PHOTO: YONA BRODER)

Dedicated in memory of Rabbi Moshe Hauer zt"l, a partner and friend of the Mizrachi movement,
whose towering gentle leadership will be sorely missed.



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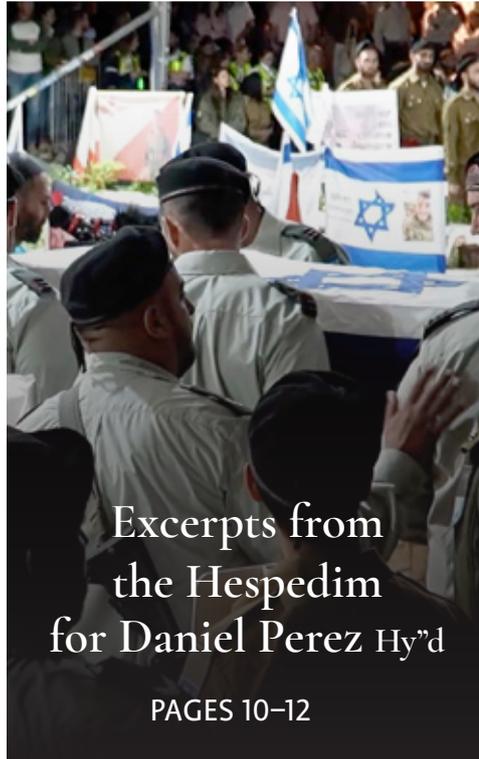
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THANK YOU!

To all our voters, partners and ambassadors – thanks to your amazing support, we are delighted to share what **you** have helped achieve for the next five years:

President of the World Zionist Organization

- Rabbi Doron Perez will be the President of the World Zionist Organization for the full five-year term.

Mizrachi-OIC representatives will also serve as:

- Deputy Chairman of the World Zionist Organization (Gael Grunewald)
- Deputy Chairman of Keren Kayemet LeYisrael (Roi Abecassis)
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- Head of new Department for Orthodox Zionist Jewish Identity
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- Chairman of Regulations Committee (second 2.5 years)
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Due to impressive election results, Mizrahi-OIC secured places on the Executives and Boards of Governors of:

- The World Zionist Organization
- Keren Kayemet LeYisrael
- The Jewish Agency
- Keren Hayesod – UIA

The Coalition Agreement also includes new budgets secured for:

- Sending Educators on Shlichut in schools
- Advancing Zionist Shlichut initiatives
- Promoting Jewish Unity (major annual budget)
- Empowering Zionist Federations around the world
- Strengthening Zionist identity of Yeshiva and Seminary students
- Orthodox Zionist programming
- Solidarity missions to Israel
- Educators missions from Israel
- Supporting Religious Zionist youth movements (Bnei Akiva and NCSY)

Your Values

These are not achievements in and of themselves, but influential tools we have secured with your support to promote in the broadest possible way our cherished values of a love of *Am Yisrael*, *Torat Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael* in Israel and across the globe over the next five years.

We will also endeavor to represent you in promoting respect, unity, and dignity in the National Institutions, as a voice of bridge-building, cooperation and commitment to our joint fate and common destiny.

SMALLEST PEOPLE, BIGGEST FAMILY

Jerusalem to Johannesburg, Moscow to Washington

Rabbi Doron Perez

Our family had the privilege of meeting with Matan Angrest, the lone survivor from our son Daniel's tank crew.

Incredibly, Daniel's body returned for burial on the same day that Matan returned alive after over two years of captivity. Remarkably, Daniel was killed and taken captive on Simchat Torah morning, and his body returned to Israel exactly two years later, on Simchat Torah evening. Matan afforded Daniel a great honor by leaving his hospital bed only two days after his terrible 25-month captivity ended to attend his commander's funeral. When my wife Shelley saw him, she felt that a part of Daniel had returned.

He surprised us by not only coming to the funeral against his doctor's orders but by unexpectedly stepping forward to eulogize his commander in the most loving way. We always knew how much Daniel loved his crew; we had learned from the parents of Matan, Itay z"l, and Tomer z"l how much they loved him too.

The internal tank communications of their two-hour-and-sixteen-minute battle also revealed the great love, respect, friendship, professionalism, and camaraderie the four of them shared. Listening to Matan in the time our families spent together validated just how deep the connection between Daniel and Matan was – and indeed between all members of their team.

A tank commander is the only commander who sleeps in the same barracks as his soldiers. They sleep in close quarters as this is how they function in the tank – ready to operate as one person with one heart. The tank crew transforms into a



Daniel's tank unit insisted on being at the border to receive their comrade-in-arms, Captain Daniel Perez z"l – whose body was returned for burial on Simchat Torah, exactly two years to the day since he was killed and taken captive. (PHOTO: IDF SPOKESPERSON'S UNIT)

tight team who forge deep friendships and who then become like family – literally brothers in arms.

The largest family

At Daniel's open grave, I shared one of the most powerful lines I'd ever heard about what it means to be part of the Jewish people:

"We may indeed be the smallest people on earth, but we are the largest family."

This pithy and succinct statement explains with great clarity and depth what is unique about the Jewish people and what perhaps our greatest secret is.

What binds us together as Jews is not just feelings of religious affiliation, national connection, or patriotic fervor, but rather a deep family bond – we are *'mishpocha.'*

This explains, in my humble opinion, why we are prepared to pay seemingly irrational prices to free our hostages. What I believe is often at play in the decision-making is not only rationality and the good of the collective, but rather a profound bond of family connection. After all, is there any father who would not dive into raging rapids to try and save his drowning child? Is there any brother who would not dive into the sea or charge into a fire to save his beloved brother or sister? Is the overriding consideration one of rationality and cost-benefit analysis, or is it a visceral instinct of familial love and affection? It is, of course, the latter.

This seemingly irrational sacrifice for family was taught to us by our founding father Avraham Avinu. I have often wondered why it is that Avraham was prepared to sacrifice his life and entire Divinely-mandated life mission in order to

save his errant nephew, Lot, from captivity. After all, it was Lot who chose to separate from Avraham and to settle in the despicably immoral city of Sodom. But when Avraham is informed of Lot's captivity, he immediately springs into action – taking his entire able-bodied household of 318 men to embark on a dangerous military operation against the soldiers of four powerful kings. Why did Avraham not seek counsel from G-d? How did he know that this is what G-d would want him to do? The answer, I believe, is in the text of the Torah itself – “And Avraham heard that *his brother* had been captured...” (*Bereishit* 14:14).

There you have it. To Avraham, Lot was not just his sinful errant nephew – he was his beloved brother. Once Avraham viewed Lot as his brother, he did not need to ask any questions. Any brother would do all they could to save their sibling. It is written in our hearts with bonds of blood and brotherly love!

From the beaches of Goa

This also explains why over 100,000 people returned to Israel in the weeks following the October 7th massacre to put their lives on the line and fight for Israel.

On the beaches of Goa in India, three groups found themselves side by side: thousands of Ukrainians, Russians, and Israelis. The Ukrainians and Russians had fled their countries' war to find safety on India's tranquil shores. They watched in disbelief as the Israelis did exactly the opposite – abandoning the safety of Goa's beaches to fly straight back into a war zone. To them, it seemed irrational, even reckless.

Indeed, from a rationalistic perspective it defies logic. But when viewed through the prism of family, everything fits into place. They were returning to defend their home, to fight for their family, to protect their brothers. Fellow Jews across the globe rallied together with the same unparalleled camaraderie. They paid for soldiers to return. They provided every type of protective gear. They sent hundreds of millions of dollars to a beleaguered Israel. They came in droves to show support and solidarity.

This gives Israel and the Jewish people worldwide an unusual advantage. We are not a country of 10 million or a people of 15 million against an enemy of 300 million. We are a large family with few degrees of separation. Like siblings, we may quarrel among ourselves, but when the chips are down, we stand together with bonds of unconditional love and loyalty that only a family can possess.

Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Moscow, and Washington

No geographical distance or cultural difference can dampen the profound covenant of fate shared by the Jewish family. In Israel, young soldiers and veteran reservists fought valiantly and selflessly side by side not only to defeat and deter Hamas, but with a burning desire to bring every last one of their brothers and sisters home – until the last hostage.

Rabbi Berel Lazar of Russia played a crucial role in the release of Russian Israelis. Steve Witkoff, Jared and Ivanka Kushner pressed the Trump administration to bring their fellow American Jews home and pledged not to rest until every last hostage returned.

My friend Zev Kregel from South Africa worked tirelessly behind the scenes with the authorities to bring our Daniel, a South African Israeli citizen, home for burial.

A small people perhaps, but a large, loving, and caring family.

The Hasmonean family

The power of the Jewish family is pivotal in the Chanukah story. One man, Matityahu the High Priest, and his five sons: Yehuda, Shimon, Yochanan, Elazar, and Yonatan – one small family known as the Hasmoneans – changed the course of Jewish history forever.

This one family stood up against an empire – challenging the debilitating decrees of the Syrian Greek King Antiochus Epiphanes, who threatened to uproot every last vestige of authentic Jewish life. They sparked a revolution, built a Jewish sovereign state, and rededicated the Temple in Yerushalayim. They succeeded in not only stemming the tide, but in reinvigorating the Jewish people's belief in themselves and G-d, enabling them to survive and push back the military, political, and cultural onslaught of their era's dominant superpower.

Outnumbered 20 to 1, Yehuda and his brothers and their small group of untrained men defeated the huge and well-trained armies of Antiochus. With a conviction driven by the profoundest bonds of brotherhood, Yehuda and three of his brothers died in battle, survived only by Shimon, who alone would live to tell the tale. We light Chanukah candles today, over two millennia later, as a glowing tribute to the Hasmonean family's dual covenants – a covenant of fate and family as well as a covenant of faith and destiny.

The family light to the nations

Perhaps this is our greatest contribution to the family of nations – to remind the nations of the world that we are first and foremost a family.

Indeed, the book of *Bereishit* traces the history of humanity to one family. Adam and Eve and their children – we are all their descendants. After everyone was wiped out in the flood, save Noach and his wife and children, humanity once again grew from one family. Although the 70 descendants of Noach were dispersed across the earth into 70 disparate nations, G-d singled out one family – Avraham and Sarah and their son Yitzchak – to build a people from this one family. Yitzchak and Rivka's son Ya'akov would become Israel, and his wives' sons would become the family known as the Children of Israel. This family of 70 descendants in Egypt did not disperse into 70 disparate nations like Noach's descendants. Instead, they were forged through the furnaces of Egypt into one people bearing the same name of their original family – the Children of Israel.

Perhaps this is the Jewish light which shines brightest today – the light of familial love and loyalty at the heart of nationhood. Not cruel parochial tribalism but the caring and kindness of kinship. One for all and all for one. We remind all nations how we are prepared to sacrifice for each other. We may be a close family as Jews, but all nations are our extended family. We all descend from the same ancestors, Adam and Noach, and all are created in the image of G-d.

Perhaps the crucible of family reveals what makes the Jewish people distinct – a light that shines against the darkness of barbaric religious radicalism and nationalist fervor.

We are not the smallest people; we are the largest family.

● *The hespedim for Daniel, including those of Matan and President Herzog, can be found on pages 10-12.*



Rabbi Doron Perez
is the Executive Chairman
of World Mizrahi.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Send us your comments
editor@mizrachi.org

MY NAME IS Summer Pitocchelli Schwartzman, and I am a long-time reader of *HaMizrachi* magazine as well as a member of the Mizrachi-OU JLIC Givat Shmuel community.

Words hold power, and as writers and speakers, we must exercise responsibility in how we use them. This is especially true when writing on behalf of Religious Zionism and its broad international readership – *Baruch Hashem!*

In your recent Sukkot issue (Vol. 8, No. 5), the word “fertility” was used in two separate instances where “birth rate” appears to have been intended.

In both cases, I believe the term fertility was mistakenly substituted for birth rate. The birth rate refers to the frequency of live births within a population, whereas fertility is a biological term referring to the ability or potential of individuals to conceive.

Beyond this technical distinction lies a world of deep emotional resonance. Fertility is a profoundly sensitive topic within the Jewish experience. As we begin *Bereishit*, we will soon encounter the stories of our *Imahot*, who struggled with infertility – *Sarah Imeinu* was even described as *akarrah* (barren), a term modern Israeli medicine has wisely replaced with more hopeful language. Rashi even interprets this as meaning that Sarah was born without a womb – an extraordinary yet very real medical condition that still occurs today.

These linguistic nuances carry weight – not only in translation but also in how we understand the experiences behind them. Sometimes, *akarut* is even translated as sterile. Again, this confers a very different meaning than the one suggested by the Hebrew term. The word sterility is used to describe a lack of reproductive ability, but its medical implications differ between men and women. For men, this may involve an absence of viable sperm; for women, a range of complex disorders can affect conception. Yet, with modern advances such as IUI and IVF, many of these challenges can now be overcome.

For women, the correct term is usually infertility, which differs both medically and emotionally from sterility. Until the 1990s, most reproductive research was conducted on men, leaving significant gaps in understanding conditions such as PCOS and endometriosis – both major contributors to infertility that can remain undiagnosed for years. These conditions also affect women well beyond their reproductive years, underscoring the need for accuracy and compassion in how we speak about them.

It would take a far longer letter to unpack why using fertility rates to mean birth rates is not only inaccurate but also risks perpetuating misunderstanding and stigma toward couples struggling to conceive. Reportedly, infertility rates are, in fact, rising globally. In light of this growing reality, clarity and sensitivity are essential – especially in publications that represent *Am Yisrael* on a global scale.

Please understand this letter in the spirit it is written: a gentle correction, not criticism. Precision in language reflects precision in empathy. Few subjects are closer to the heart of our people than our children.

As we approach Simchat Torah, many communities dance with both the *sifrei Torah* and their children, celebrating what is most precious to us. Yet for every parent lifting a child during *hakafot*, there are others watching, praying for the blessing of a *neshama* of their very own to raise *l'Torah u'l'chuppah u'l'ma'asim tovim*.

May the coming year bring greater sensitivity to all who struggle within our communities – and may their prayers be answered speedily.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,
Summer Pitocchelli Schwartzman

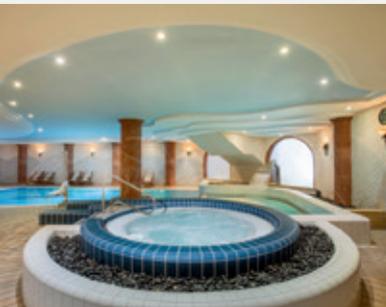


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Why Do We Read the Parasha of the Nesi'im on Chanukah?

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

The *Mishnah* (*Megillah* 30b) lists the Torah readings for the holidays and states that on Chanukah we read the portion about the offerings of the *Nesi'im* – the tribal leaders – from *Parashat Naso* (*Bamidbar* 7). However, it doesn't explain why.

Rashi explains: “for it was also the dedication of the altar.” The Book of Maccabees describes how the Maccabees found the *mizbe'ach* defiled, tore it down, built a new one, and dedicated it on the 25th of Kislev. It is therefore appropriate to read on Chanukah the portions dealing with the dedication of the *mizbe'ach* (see *Tosefot Yom Tov, Megillah* Chapter 3, *Mishnah* 6).

Another reason for reading *Parashat HaNesi'im* on Chanukah emerges from a *Midrash Rabbah* (*Bamidbar Rabbah* 13:2). The *Midrash* states that construction of the *mishkan* was completed on the 25th of Kislev, but it remained folded up until the first of Nissan:

“The work of the *mishkan* was completed on the 25th of Kislev, and the *mishkan* stood folded until the first of the month of Nissan. The Israelites were saying: ‘We’ve made the *mishkan* – when will the Divine Presence come and dwell in the work of our hands?’ When the first of Nissan arrived and G-d commanded them to erect the *mishkan*, He sent them word

through Moshe: ‘Why are you afraid? I have already come to my garden, my sister, my bride.’”

In light of this *Midrash*, several early authorities explain (*Siddur Rashi, Siman* 320; Commentary of *Riva* on the Torah, *Bamidbar* 7:84) that since the month of Kislev lost the privilege of having the *mishkan* erected in it, G-d later compensated by establishing the Chanukah dedication on this very day. According to this understanding, *Parashat HaNesi'im* is directly connected to the 25th of Kislev: the construction of Moshe's *mishkan* was completed at this time (though the *mizbe'ach* dedication was postponed to Nissan), and on that same date, the *mishkan* was rededicated on Chanukah.

This connection is further strengthened by the *Ramban* (*Bamidbar* 8:2), who writes in the name of *Rav Nissim Gaon* that the lighting of the candles on Chanukah is the compensation given to Aharon for not having participated in bringing the offerings of the *Nesi'im*. This demonstrates a close connection between Chanukah and the offerings of the *Nesi'im*.

There's another important dimension: The bringing of offerings by the leaders at the dedication of the *mishkan* had special significance. All the tribes of Israel brought offerings for the dedication of

the *mizbe'ach*, creating a unity and partnership of all Israel around it. Through this unity, the Divine Presence dwelled there. Similarly, while the *mizbe'ach* dedication on Chanukah was performed by the *kohanim*, they acted as emissaries of all the people of Israel. When we read the portions of the tribal leaders on Chanukah, we hint at a profound message: to achieve the dwelling of the Divine Presence and redemption in our own days, we need the unity and partnership of all the people of Israel. Through this, we will merit the revelation of the Divine Presence (*Pri Tzaddik, Chanukah*, section 22).



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

is the Nasi of World Mizrahi.

He is the Founder and Chairman of Sula-mot and La'Ofek, and serves as the Chief Rabbi of Gush Etzion, and Rosh Yeshivah of the Jerusalem College of Technology.



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SCAN ME



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Excerpts from the Hespeditim for Daniel Perez Hy'd

On Hoshana Rabbah, the Jewish world rejoiced as 20 living hostages were released from Hamas' captivity. That evening, four bodies of hostages were also returned, including the body of Captain Daniel Perez Hy'd, two years to the day since he was taken. At his funeral, on the night after Simchat Torah, he was eulogized by President Isaac Herzog, Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon, Matan Angrest, and his beloved family. Here are translated excerpts from some of the hespedim delivered at the funeral.

President Isaac Herzog



We have come here today, all of us, with broken hearts, to accompany you to eternal rest, Daniel – on your return to us and to your homeland after two years of immense pain and longing.

We have waited so long to grant you a proper, complete, true resting. And to grant you, the beloved Perez family, a little comfort and solace, a place to visit, to cry, and to be alone with his memory...

On that bitter and hasty morning, two years ago, Captain Daniel Perez commanded "Team Perez" – his force in Nachal Oz – with coolness and supreme courage. He was literally the first line against the waves of the enemy.

Together with his tank crewmates – among them Tomer Leibowitz, the hero of blessed memory, Matan Angrest, whom I was so moved to speak with today – a true hero who returned to us from captivity; and, Itay Chen, the

hero of blessed memory – we embrace his family and demand, cry out and pray and work in every way for his immediate return to the landscape of his homeland, according to the Trump agreement that was signed. *(Editor's note: since Daniel's funeral, thankfully Itay Chen's body has been returned for burial in Israel.)*

In those critical hours, Daniel and the tank crew, with supreme heroism, went out to fight the terrorists from the first moment; and saved many lives, until Daniel died a heroic death and was kidnapped to the Gaza Strip by those evildoers...

Today, Captain Daniel Perez, the son of the nation, returns home. To his land, to our land.

In this moment, so painful, on the mountain of heroism and resurrection, the mountain of longing, tears and faith in the righteousness of the path, I would like to address all the bereaved families, to bow our heads in awe and say 'thank you' on behalf of the State of Israel.

Thank you for the sons you raised – brave warriors who did not hesitate when they set out to save the State of Israel, fight the enemy, and to bring back the hostages.

Warriors who carried pictures of the hostages in their pockets, and strength and power in their hearts. With thanks to the heroic daughters and sons, to the bereaved families, to the wounded who sacrificed so much – thanks to all of them, we have reached these moments – moments that also give hope to our people and the entire region; moments that will be remembered forever and ever in the history of our state.

The beloved Perez family: Rabbi Doron, my dear friend;... Shelley, Adina, Shira, and Yonatan – in the last two years I have been privileged to meet with you again and again, and each time I feel that all of you – Rabbi Doron and dear Shelley as bereaved parents, and the whole family! – are teaching us another lesson: how even in the deepest personal pain one can hold on to the faith of an entire people.

Dear Yonatan, I remember your wedding well, a few days after the outbreak of the war – when you were wounded from the battle on October 7, when Daniel's fate was still unknown, when [your wife] Galya and her family were evacuated from their home in Kibbutz Sa'ad – you married the choice of your heart, and I thought then what a personal example you set for the entire nation, what strength you gave us.

Your power, Perez family, and of course Daniel's, reminds us of the supreme command: We must not stop, we must not become tired, we must not give up or accept a reality of terror, we must not accept a reality in which all of the fallen have not yet returned. The mission is not yet complete. We will continue to do everything until we return everyone to eternal rest.

In closing this circle, may the dear family, and all of Daniel's friends, subordinates, commanders and admirers – know a little comfort and solace; and may the roots of our land finally grant Daniel eternal rest.

May we know how to be worthy, may we know a little more unity on this day and in the days yet to come, may we eradicate the baseless hatred that raises its ugly head, and may we know how to build a future of love of Israel, to build hope, to build a shared Israeli tomorrow.

May the memory of Captain Daniel Perez and the memory of all of our fallen and murdered in the war, be blessed and preserved in the hearts of our people for generations to come and forever.

Excerpted and translated by Rabbi Aron White. Photo: Haim Zach/GPO

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon



Daniel died *al kiddush Hashem*, as a soldier fulfilling the *milchemet mitzvah*, to protect *Am Yisrael* and *Eretz Yisrael*. If we initially thought that Daniel and our precious soldiers protected *Am Yisrael*, today we know that they saved *Medinat Yisrael*. Who would have believed two years ago as we heard about the appalling pogrom, that we would succeed in almost entirely destroying Hezbollah, or certainly to remove its ability to destroy the State of Israel? Who would have believed that we would have destroyed so much of the Syrian army, and certainly to remove its ability to destroy Israel? Who would have believed that in twelve days, we would be able to defeat Iran and damage it significantly. That in Gaza we would be able to strike Hamas strongly. And that we would send a message to all our enemies that anyone who strikes the Jewish people will pay a heavy price.

All this happened with Hashem's help, but it would not have happened without our incredible soldiers. Daniel – you were one of the first in line, who showed through personal example the leadership in battle – a battle that saved *Medinat Yisrael*.

Gail Perez, grandmother of Daniel



This is not the way of things in our world. Parents should not bury children and grandparents should not bury grandchildren. However Daniel, as your father often says, we live in Hashem's world, not our world. You will live in our hearts forever. An unbelievable, *yashar*, straight and honest human being. *Yehi zichro baruch*.

Yonatan Perez, brother of Daniel



I miss you Daniel, my best friend. And now, what I really miss is you being an uncle for Ori Daniel, our son who is named after you. I am sure you would have been an incredible uncle. Every time he passes the fridge and sees your picture, he stops and looks at the picture for twenty seconds... and then tries to eat it! Always the same picture. So I am sure he knows you. He won't unfortunately meet you, only see your photo. When he is old enough, we will tell him the stories: how brave you were, how admired, how seriously and professionally you fought. We will tell him about your decision, as you saw a second wave of terrorists pouring in, to do whatever you can to stop hostages being taken. 'If not you, then who?' You fought with everything you had. Daniel, you are an inspiration to me.

Adina Perez, sister of Daniel



You are home, when you can finally rest in the Holy Land. We have waited so long for this moment, and it should bring peace. But in all honesty, this isn't closure, it's proof. Proof that you are really gone.

As I saw the videos of the hostages returning yesterday, it filled me with such joy I can't even describe – watching families run into each other's arms after two long, cruel years. It was a moment of hope. But then there was this pain, as the devastating truth set in – that as much as I wanted, I would never get that moment with you. I will never see you again, I will never hug you again, and I will never get to say 'I love you' to your face one last time.

Shira Perez, sister of Daniel



On March 17th, 2024, we buried here a bloodied shirt of your IDF uniform, that represents for me Daniel the hero, the brave officer, who wore the olive green uniform with pride. Today we return here your body, that Mom carried as part of her for 9 months, who became a sweet kid, a funny teenager, and who completed his life as an incredible man at the age of 22. Your body that spent so much time with your friends, that gave the best hugs, and where your pure soul resided for your 22 beautiful years. Today you have returned, to rest here forever.

Shelley Perez, mother of Daniel



My precious Daniel – *haChamud sheli*. Every step of the way, the whole world was praying for you. So many good deeds done in your name. All over the world people know your story, the Tzevet Perez story. We miss you every single day. Our family looks different now. On Simchat Torah 2 years ago, your body crossed over into Gaza. On Simchat Torah this year, your body crossed back from Gaza to Israel, where you belong. We miss you, and we love you – you are always in our hearts.

Matan Angrest was captured by Hamas on October 7th, and was held captive for 730 days. Two days after his release, the funeral of his commander, Daniel Perez, took place. Matan left hospital for the first time to attend, and towards the end of the levaya made the impromptu decision to speak and pay tribute.

Matan Angrest



It's a privilege for me to speak here, and is the least I can do. The crew who fought with me are true heroes. I didn't plan to speak, and I still can't believe I am actually here. But coming here is the least I could do for Daniel and the whole crew – I'm sure that G-d is watching over them now, that they are okay, and that they are strengthening me from above. We will continue to fight until Itay Chen returns. I am ready to enter Gaza now to bring him back. (Editor's note: since Daniel's funeral, Itay's body has also been returned to Israel for burial.)

I want to tell you all that Daniel Perez, may his memory be a blessing, is someone to admire. Anyone who had the privilege of knowing him will understand – he is a symbol, the epitome of this country, a *gibor Yisrael*...

To Daniel's family – I will be with you for all my life, I'll never abandon you, and Daniel will always be with me – wherever I go, he will always be with me. And Itay and Tomer as well – they are also an integral part of me. In the battle of October 7th, they were truly the main characters, they did everything they could – it's impossible to describe what happened there. I am proud that together we protected the State of Israel – under the incredible command of Daniel Perez.

It's unbelievable that he is lying here – I can still hear him telling me: "I am so happy that you are on my team, that you are such a good driver, I want you to be well, to help you." I am glad to be speaking here at this moment after two years of captivity, even though my legs are shaking, but captivity is nothing compared to this. This is incomprehensible to me.

I want to thank everyone. To Daniel's family, to his brother (Yonatan) who I have been told fought at the base on October 7th, all the IDF soldiers for whom I stand here and send you strength, to all the bereaved families and the families of the hostages, including those who are no longer with us – may G-d protect them.

Thank you to everyone for coming, I am lost for words. I am used to being a pretty shy person, I am not used to speaking in front of this many people. I feel that Daniel Perez is me – and that I am with him. Daniel, you will walk with me until my last day, and with G-d's help also in the next world, together with Itay Chen and Tomer Leibowitz – they are all my heroes. I'm looking at all of you here in the eyes and I'm telling you – these people gave above and beyond for Israel. The State owes them a huge debt. Thank you all so much for the honor of being able to stand here and speak – I feel a little weak, but I'll be okay...

It is our duty to always remember Daniel. The country has been through a severe upheaval, but together we will get through this and strengthen the families. *Am Yisrael chai!*

May the memory of Daniel Perez, the rest of the crew, and all the fallen soldiers and hostages be blessed. And, *b'ezrat Hashem*, we will defeat the terror and be victorious.

Following the unique moment of a released hostage giving a eulogy just 48 hours after his release from captivity, the crowd of thousands burst into spontaneous applause.



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The World Mizrahi Ideological Summit

The World Mizrahi Ideological Summit brought together over 150 representatives of Religious Zionism from around the globe – from Melbourne to Mexico, and from Canada to Cape Town. The program featured two fascinating panels on Religious Zionism in Israel and the Diaspora, with insights from Laly Derai, MK Simcha Rothman, Aliza Bloch, MK Moshe (Kinley) Tur-Paz, Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brander, Aleza Ben Shalom, and Dr. Danny Lamm AM.

Participants also heard from Mizrahi's representatives in the National Institutions – Roi Abecassis and Gael Grunewald – who shared updates from their departments, as well as a broad overview of Mizrahi's diverse work.

Special presentations were made to those who contributed to the elections for the World Zionist Congress, and the delegates and alternates then participated in breakout sessions to discuss and prepare for the resolutions that were to be voted on at the Congress. The Summit took place at the new Beit Bnei Akiva in Yerushalayim.

PHOTOS: YONA BRODER





A New Chapter in Zionist History

An Interview
with Rabbi Doron Perez



(PHOTO: YONA BRODER)

The 39th World Zionist Congress gathered in Jerusalem in October 2025, and following the Congress, Rabbi Doron Perez became the new President of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) for a five-year term. Rabbi Aron White spoke with Rabbi Perez about his new role, and his vision for the future of Zionism and Israel in the coming years.

The World Zionist Organization was founded by Theodor Herzl in 1897. In 2025, what is the goal of the WZO?

In 1897, the goal of the Zionist movement was to establish a homeland in *Eretz Yisrael*. Fifty-one years later, Israel became the first Jewish sovereign state in 2,000 years. Today, the focus is on protecting, supporting, and educating toward the centrality of the State of Israel for Jewish identity and destiny.

October 7th showed us that Jewish statehood is not guaranteed. We focused on the existential threats of a nuclear Iran and Hezbollah but underestimated other threats. Had Hezbollah's Radwan fighters invaded Israel's north, Iran launched 500 missiles, and Palestinians from East Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria attacked adjacent Jewish towns, Heaven forbid, Israel could have been destroyed. We're grateful for G-d's protection, but it's clear we can't take Israel's survival for granted.

For two years, Israel fought a war on multiple fronts, and Jewish communities worldwide faced increasing threats due to their ties to Israel. In 2025, the term "Zionist" is under attack, as anti-Zionism has become the new antisemitism. 'Zio' is the pejorative for Jews as *Jude* was in Nazi Germany. Educating about Zionism and the importance of Jewish sovereignty for the Jewish and human future is more crucial than ever.

You have been appointed as the new President of the WZO for a five-year term. What are your goals between now and 2030?

As the new President of the WZO, I see two key roles: one internal, focusing on Jewish unity, and the other external, advocating for Zionism and Jewish sovereignty.

October 7th made it crystal clear: the most urgent focus for the Jewish people is our internal cohesion. I had the privilege of publishing a book entitled *The Jewish State*, focusing on Jewish unity, just six months before the attack. It was based on Rabbi Kook's teachings, and if it was relevant before, it's even more so now. The internal divisions over judicial reform nearly tore us apart. We became distracted and weakened from within, and our enemies exploited that. What followed was the worst day in Jewish history since the *Shoah*.

The WZO is the ideal platform to play a unifying role, with its diverse geographic and ideological membership: 40% from Israel, 30% American Zionists, and 30% from all other global Zionist movements. It represents all ideologies, from ultra-Orthodox and ultra-nationalist to ultra-progressive and ultra-liberal. But October 7th taught us something vital: our enemies don't care what kind of Jew we are. Whether in Israel or Jewish communities worldwide, every Jew is under threat – this ought to prod us to

focus on what unites us. The WZO serves any Jew who identifies as a Zionist, and we must fight not just against anti-Zionism, but also educate on the importance of Jewish sovereignty in our historic homeland.

The second goal is outward-facing – advocating for the pivotal role Zionism and Jewish sovereignty in *Eretz Yisrael* play for the betterment of humanity. Firstly, no nation on earth has a deeper, more justified connection to its land than the Jewish people to Israel. The malicious blood libel of anti-Zionism, which equates Zionism with racism, emerged at the UN 50 years ago. This is a challenge, but also an opportunity for us to educate about Israel. Zionism is not racism; it's a blessing, as promised to Abraham – to be a blessing to all humanity. As Douglas Murray said, Zionism is not only good for Jews but for the whole civilized world – upholding freedom, liberty, and the values that are vital to the future of Western civilization.

How will you balance your role as Executive Chairman of the World Mizrahi movement with your responsibilities as President of a non-partisan organization that represents such a diverse range of parties within world Jewry?

All of life is a balancing act. We constantly balance between our physical and spiritual lives, our personal and collective responsibilities, and many other aspects of life. This will be another balancing act – between two privileged roles: Executive Chairman of the World Mizrahi movement and now President of the broader World Zionist Organization.

Our Religious Zionist view is one of bridge-building, respect, and cooperation. This was evident in how our Mizrahi delegation to the Congress conducted itself in various committees where resolutions were being pulled to extremes. Our delegates found ways to respectfully bridge gaps – this is the spirit we aim to bring to our roles in the global Zionist movement. As representatives of Mizrahi worldwide, we are committed to supporting Religious Zionist activities, ensuring that our educational initiatives and programs receive as much support as possible.

We also aim to represent our communities worldwide in the decisions and policies of the World Zionist Organization, ensuring that our ideology plays an influential role in shaping the organization's direction. It is absolutely critical, especially in today's challenges, that we put the needs of the Jewish people above partisan divides in order to address these issues.

The National Institutions of the Zionist movement were not created to provide roles or positions for individuals or any specific party. They were created so that individuals and parties could contribute to advancing the Zionist endeavor. We should enter any role not asking what it can do for us, but what we can do for it.

I've seen firsthand how Mizrahi's bridge-building role is vital in fostering unity. Some groups may push to the extremes and create division, but Mizrahi has consistently played a unifying role. This was especially clear during the judicial reform debates, which threatened to tear the World Zionist Organization apart. The World Zionist Organization is not the Knesset, and it doesn't have any jurisdiction in the decision-making process of many of the contentious issues roiling Israel – religion and state, the Charedi draft, or sovereignty in Judea and Samaria. Its mission is different yet no less important – to advocate and educate on the pivotal role of Jewish statehood to Jewish and human



destiny. On a practical level, the World Zionist Organization has given Diaspora Jews a voice in these decisions and allowed us to support our communities.

Could you provide tangible examples from your tenure at World Mizrahi of how the National Institutions provide value to Jewish communities around the world?

During our time heading various departments, such as the *Chativa LeHityashvut* (Rural Growth and Development Division), which Gael Grunewald led in recent years, we helped rebuild devastated communities in the North and South as a result of the debilitating war. Our Department of Education, which Roi Abecassis headed and will now be led by Gael, has dispatched hundreds of educators annually to Jewish schools around the world. Our Shlichut Center, led by Rabbi Hillel Van-Leeuwen and supported by the National Institutions, dispatches and supports around 600 *shlichim* annually across Religious Zionist *shlichut* organizations like Sherut Leumi, Bnei Akiva, Torah MiTzion, Mizrahi, and our partners at Machon Amiel of Ohr Torah Stone. We work to ensure that as many *shlichim* as possible serve in Jewish communities globally.

We've also heavily invested in our affiliated network of 42 Religious Zionist *yeshivot* and *midrashot*, where around 3,000 young men and women learn each year. These institutions and their gap year programs are the engine of the future of our global Religious Zionist community. We invest in fundraising initiatives, Yom HaZikaron ceremonies, trips to the South, and much more to ensure transformative experiences for our future leaders.

In partnership with OU-JLIC, we've heavily invested in Jewish campus life at Israeli universities to help our Modern Orthodox and Religious Zionist students transition smoothly and build strong Jewish communities.

These are just a few examples of how the National Institutions offer opportunities to impact the course of Zionism, while also facilitating support for our communities worldwide.

In the major leadership roles we will have the privilege of holding, as well as in important committees within both the WZO and KKL, I foresee, *b'ezrat Hashem*, a significant impact – both within these organizations and in shaping the future of Zionism. These organizations will play a crucial role in supporting both the future of Zionism and our global Religious Zionist communities. ■



A LEADERSHIP PATHWAY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF RELIGIOUS ZIONISTS

Across the Jewish world, a powerful question echoes: Who will lead our communities, campuses, and families into the next generation?

At a moment when Jewish identity is challenged by assimilation, rising antisemitism, and other challenges on campus, Maslul Mizrachi has emerged as a vibrant, structured answer. Maslul is Mizrachi’s leadership pipeline – a guided path that accompanies young Jews through their most formative years: Maslul Gap Year in Israel, Maslul Plus (*Shana Bet*), campus life, and young adulthood.

Built in partnership with Religious Zionists of Chicago, Religious Zionists of America, and World Mizrachi, Maslul revitalizes the movement’s longstanding vision of raising proud, articulate, Torah-grounded Religious Zionist leaders committed to strengthening *Am Yisrael* and *Medinat Yisrael*.



MASLUL GAP YEAR

Four core seminars with educators including Rav Doron Perez and Rav Yosef Zvi Rimon; professional Israel advocacy workshops; experiential activities and 4 trips, such as the Knesset, Sheba Medical Center, and to the South. **75 completed Maslul Gap Year Cohort 1 and 104 have signed up for the second cohort, representing 21 US States, 10 countries, on 4 continents.**



MASLUL PLUS

A second-year experience for alumni who wish to continue their growth in Israel. Maslul Plus offers advanced Religious Zionist study, leadership intensives, and a strong alumni chevra. Graduates serve as madrichim and role models for the incoming Gap Year cohort, strengthening continuity across the movement.



MIZRACHI CAMPUS FELLOWS

A fellowship program, in partnership with Yavneh on Campus, empowering students across U.S. and Canadian universities to lead proudly on campus. Fellows receive mentoring, project funding, training, and opportunities to build Religious Zionist communities during the most challenging years. **18 Mizrachi Campus Fellows across 12 campuses**



MIZRACHI YOUNG LEADERSHIP

A growing network of young professionals developing leadership skills, building community, and contributing to local Mizrachi branches. This stage ensures that Maslul participants remain engaged, connected, and empowered long after college. Of the graduates of Maslul’s first cohort, 34 have already expressed their intention to remain part of the Mizrachi movement.

Discover how Maslul is shaping future leaders and explore how you can be part of it.

Contact: maslul@rza.org

Dr. Marcel Engelmayr Receives “Distinguished Honoree Award”



Dr. Marcel Engelmayr of Switzerland was honored with receiving the World Mizrahi Movement’s “Distinguished Honoree Award” in recognition of his extensive and dedicated years of activity and for his special contribution to the Mizrahi movement. (Photo: Yona Broder)

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English Speaking



World Mizrahi mourns the passing of the President of Mizrahi France, Binyamin (Gaston) Sayada.

Binyamin z”l was a G-d-fearing Jew and a passionate Zionist. He would rise early and stay late in the synagogue, as the president of the Rabbi Hai Taieb Lo Met Synagogue in Belleville, setting aside fixed times for Torah study. Always warm and kind, he greeted everyone with a smile, and was beloved, respected, and cherished by all his friends and acquaintances.

A devoted member of the Mizrahi movement, and its leader in France for many years, he dedicated his utmost energy, strength, and time to his cause. For many years, he served as the president of Mizrahi France and, in that capacity, took part in the Zionist Congress – where five years ago he was honored to open the Congress as its most senior member – as well as in the Zionist Federation of France.

Binyamin z”l holds an honored place in the ‘mizrach’ – the forefront – of the Mizrahi movement and the Jewish people.

He was transported to Israel – the country that he defended with great passion and dedication – where he was laid to rest.

Yehi zichro baruch, may his memory be a blessing.



Binyamin (Gaston) was given the honor of opening the 38th World Zionist Congress in 2020 as the oldest delegate, aged 93. (Credit: WZO)



Remembering Rabbi Moshe Hauer זצ"ל

Following Simchat Torah this year, the Jewish world learned of the tragic and untimely passing of Rabbi Moshe Hauer, the Executive Vice President of the Orthodox Union. Through decades as a rabbi, and since 2020 in his role at the Orthodox Union, Rabbi Hauer was a leader who profoundly impacted the Jewish world. At the World Mizrahi Ideological Summit, Chairman of World Mizrahi's board Harvey Blitz paid tribute to Rabbi Hauer.

As I welcome you all to the Mizrahi Summit, in advance of the World Zionist Congress, it's impossible to begin the program tonight without spending a moment to reflect on the unfortunate *petira* of Rabbi Moshe Hauer זצ"ל, the Executive Vice President of the OU.

Rabbi Hauer was a truly unique person. A huge, tremendous *talmid chacham* who was a rabbi for decades in Baltimore, a leader of the community. And five-and-a-half years ago, he was hired to be the Executive Vice President of the Orthodox Union. He did a spectacular job, in expanding all of the OU's activities, whether they be religious or communal, whether the Women's Initiative or NCSY – everything expanded tremendously under Rabbi Hauer.

His greatest quality was that he acted as a mentor to all the senior staff at the OU, and if you talk to any of them about it, they say he was truly interested in making them successful

in their position. That isn't the end of it – because what's even more impressive is if you speak to the senior staff, they tell you that he was what they called their 'close friend.' He was interested in their personal lives and in their families. He was somebody who was unbelievably effective at the same time as being unbelievably personable.

He led the OU effort to support the Orthodox Israel Coalition-Mizrachi slate in the American elections for the World Zionist Congress and he was personally, directly involved in all of it. He spoke to me regularly, getting reports and making suggestions.

In addition to that, he's been a member of the Jewish Agency's Unity of the Jewish People Committee. He had a way of speaking to all Jews: Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, secular, speaking to all of them softly. I can't remember ever hearing him raise his voice. He spoke softly, and he spoke to the heart all the time. He worked together with the non-Orthodox on things that were not religious in nature – we could work together, in a unified way. But I will tell you that Rabbi Hauer never yielded an inch in what he believed was a religious principle. He stood up and said what he thought, and the others respected him very much for it.

Since his untimely *petira*, there has been this outpouring of respect for Rabbi Hauer, which is just a reflection of how much we're going to miss him. The Torah community is bereft without him.

Yehi zichro baruch, may his memory be a blessing.

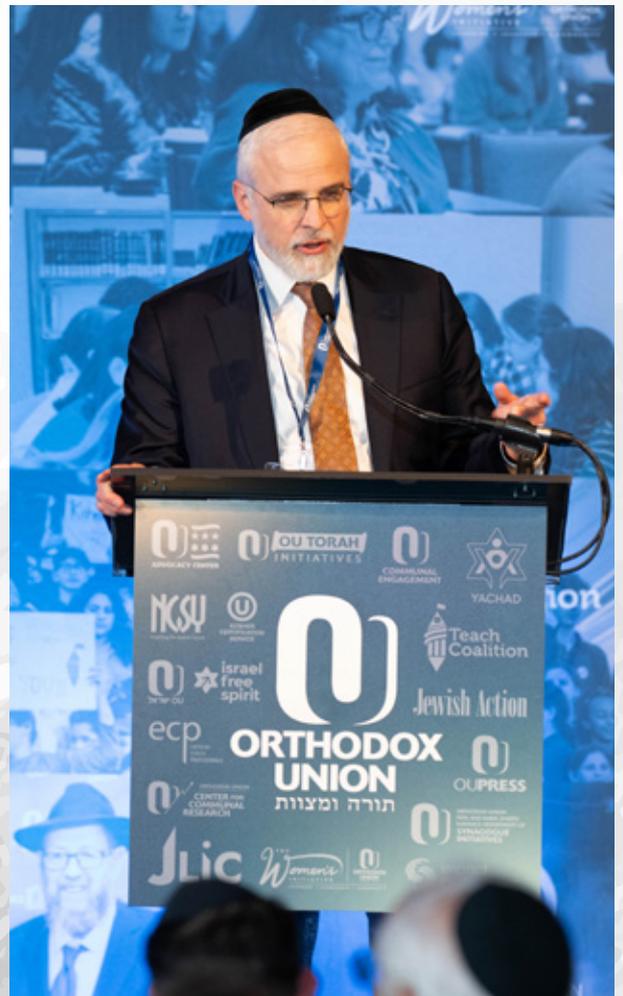
Harvey Blitz
Chairman, World Mizrahi



(PHOTO: NACHSHON PHILIPSON)



The World Mizrahi leadership meeting at the OU office with Rabbi Hauer zt"l and the leadership of the Orthodox Union.



(PHOTOS: OU)

JEW'S with VIEWS

We asked
five Mizrachi
delegates:
What was the
highlight of the
World Zionist
Congress
for you?



Jonathan Bollag

Attending the World Zionist Congress in Jerusalem for the first time was an unforgettable experience. As a Swiss delegate, I felt a special connection knowing that the very first Zionist Congress took place in Switzerland. Being in Jerusalem, where Herzl's vision ultimately took root, made that history feel vivid and close.

The moment that moved me most was the singing of *Hatikva* at the opening event. I looked around and saw Jews from every corner of the world, of all ages and backgrounds. Many of us hold strong and often opposing political opinions and very different visions for the future. The debates during the Congress sometimes highlighted those differences. Yet in that moment, none of it mattered. Everyone stood together and sang with one voice. It was simple, yet full of emotion and a deep sense of belonging, especially after what Zionists around the world have experienced over the past two years.

Rav Doron Perez says we are a tiny people, but the biggest family in the world. In that hall, I felt exactly that. That moment captured the true spirit of the congress and reminded me how much more unites us than divides us.

Jonathan Bollag was born and raised in Zurich, where he still lives. He grew up in Bnei Akiva and now leads the movement in Switzerland. He serves as president of the Swiss Zionist Federation, represents Mizrachi at the World Zionist Congress, sits on the boards of the Jewish Zionist school Noam and KKL-JNF Switzerland, and is an alumnus of the Zionist Leadership Academy (ZLA). He works in finance at a major Swiss bank.



Avigail Chana Elazar

My highlight of the World Zionist Congress was seeing the incredible diversity of *Am Yisrael* gathered in one place. Jews from so many different backgrounds and communities came together, all united by a shared love for Israel and the Jewish people.

Growing up, I didn't have much exposure to other Jewish denominations, so it was really meaningful to meet and learn from people whose understanding of Judaism is different from mine. Our conversations were open and respectful, and they reminded me how much strength there is in our diversity.

Attending as a proud Maslul Mizrachi alum, and now returning as a *madricha* for the next cohort, made the experience even more special – knowing I can help others connect to that same sense of shared destiny and feel part of something bigger than themselves.

Avigail Chana Elazar is a Machon Maayan alum and current Maslul Mizrachi madricha. With a background in computer science, she strives to bridge Torah and technology while deepening the connection between faith, innovation, and the Land of Israel.



Coby Pollack

Serving as a Mizrahi delegate at the World Zionist Congress was one of the biggest honors of my life. At 20, I was often the youngest person in the room. Rather than let that intimidate me, I saw it as a challenge – a chance to prove that young voices belong at the table where decisions about our people’s future are made.

Before voting began, each delegate was assigned to a committee. I was chosen for the Constitutional Committee, the body responsible for writing and updating the rules governing the entire Congress – everything from policy to budgets to how Jewish communities worldwide are represented. The weight of that responsibility wasn’t lost on me.

The moment I’ll never forget came when I stood to speak before the entire committee. The room went quiet. Here I was, the youngest delegate there, and people were listening. Really listening. I wasn’t just speaking for myself – I was giving voice to my generation, showing that we have skin in the game, that the future of *Am Yisrael* matters to us as much as it does to anyone else.

That experience taught me something crucial: young people aren’t just the future of the Jewish people. We’re part of its present. And we have every right to help shape it.

Coby Pollack, from Lawrence, NY, is currently a student at Yeshiva University. He is a proud graduate of Mizrahi’s Maslul leadership program, and an alumnus of Yeshivat Sha’arei Mevaseret Zion. He is currently a Mizrahi Campus Fellow, where he continues building his passion for Religious Zionism, Jewish leadership, and strengthening Jewish life on campus.



Avital Seifman

Representing Emunah Australia at the World Zionist Congress, I saw something rare: what happens when people actually listen to each other.

I had drafted a resolution on expanding mentorship and leadership pathways for young Jewish women. What made the committee discussions meaningful wasn’t the proposal itself, but how delegates engaged with it. People asked questions with genuine curiosity. They listened with patience. They challenged ideas without attacking integrity. The resolution improved because of that process – it became something collective rather than individual.

This atmosphere isn’t always the norm at Congress. The political tensions and fractures in other rooms made clear how rare it is when truth-seeking and respect coexist. I was fortunate to experience it.

A *pasuk* kept echoing in my mind throughout: “*Ha’emet v’hashalom ehavu, Love truth and peace*” (*Zechariah 8:19*). Our committee room reflected that ideal. When we pursue truth with integrity and hold peace with intention, our leadership becomes stronger. Our community becomes wiser.

Avital Seifman is co-president of Emunah Australia and serves on the Mizrahi Melbourne committee. She is an Educational Consultant and parent advocate, as well as a mum of three and wife to Marc.



Sam Wartelsky

It’s 11:30p.m., the end of a long day – the second day of the World Zionist Congress. We’d spent the day in heated debates about central issues facing the Jewish people, issues we vehemently disagreed on, even to the point of yelling and shoving. Now at the conclusion of the voting plenary, all the delegates stood on opposite sides of the room, the center empty between us.

Then we joined together in singing *Hatikva*. Left, right, center – everyone singing with shared hope for the future. A recognition that even with all the infighting, we look forward, towards a future where we are unified.

We don’t need resolutions and procedures to know that we are one nation, one family, *shevet achim v’achayot*, singing and working towards a better future for *Am Yisrael*.

Sam Wartelsky is currently a Shana Bet student in Yeshivat Hakotel. From Teaneck, New Jersey, he attended Yeshivat Frisch and Camp Moshava IO. Sam served as a delegate at the 39th World Zionist Congress in Jerusalem.

Sondra Sokal Honored as "Amit Kavod" by Zionist Movement



Sondra Sokal, World Mizrahi Vice-Chairman and former President of AMIT, was awarded the honor of "Amit Kavod" (Honorary Member) at the 39th World Zionist Congress in Yerushalayim in recognition of her many years of devotion to the Zionist movement. (Photo: World Zionist Organization)

4th Annual World Aphasia Shabbat



Parshat Shemot • January 10, 2026 - 21 Tevet 5786

"לא איש דברים אני... כי כבד פה וכבד לשון אני." (שמות ד:י)
"I am not a man of words... I am slow of speech." (Shemot 4:10)

Koach Eitan and Congregation Ohr Hatorah Atlanta are collaborating with shuls and communities worldwide to learn about aphasia and advocate for greater inclusion within Jewish observance. This unique project will take place on Parshat Shemot, as we read the story of Moshe, the great Jewish leader who struggled with speech.

What is Aphasia?

Aphasia is a language impairment that can impact speech, reading, writing, and comprehension. Caused by damage to the language center of the brain, aphasia can be the result of stroke, brain injury or neurodegenerative diseases. Individuals with aphasia encounter significant challenges in their interactions with others.

Goal

Seeking to raise awareness and foster understanding of aphasia, World Aphasia Shabbat aims to educate your community on effective communication strategies to include those affected by aphasia, empowering them to actively participate in Jewish life and engage with the community.

How to Participate

Upon registering, you will receive educational materials including an explanation of aphasia's challenges, divrei Torah, a halachic guide to aphasia and disability, and communication tips. By dedicating a Shabbat to learning about aphasia, we hope to make Shabbat joyful for all community members.

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When Innovation Becomes a Miracle: Israel's AI Revolution Healing Hearts Across the World

By AISAP LTD

In a year when Israel has been tested like never before — fighting on multiple fronts and carrying unbearable sorrow since October 7th — something extraordinary has continued to flourish beneath the shadow of war: innovation that refuses to stop.

At Sheba Medical Center, which not only treated thousands of wounded but also cared for the majority of the returning hostages, the spirit of Israeli resilience persisted. Even as eight AISAP team members served more than 400 days of reserve duty, a small team of cardiologists and engineers asked a courageous question:

Can we build a miracle? Can Israeli ingenuity make it possible for any clinician — anywhere — to look into the human heart with the clarity of an expert cardiologist?

This question gave birth to AISAP CARDIO, an FDA-cleared AI platform transforming cardiac care across Israel and the United States. What once required years of specialization and costly equipment can now be performed in minutes at the bedside — whether in a hospital, an outpatient clinic, a nursing home, an urgent-care center, and even at home.

This is not science fiction. It is the power of Israeli innovation — alive even in the hardest year our nation has faced.

A Miracle of Knowledge at Every Bedside

AISAP CARDIO uses simple, portable point-of-care ultrasound combined with advanced deep-learning algorithms. Within seconds, the system identifies signs of heart failure or valvular disease with accuracy previously reserved for specialists.

This technology has been validated with the top institutes in the United States, including Mass General Brigham (MGB), Stanford Health, Jefferson Health, Mayo Clinic, Tampa General Hospital, and multiple community and rural clinics.

It is now being deployed across leading U.S. healthcare settings including Stanford Health, Jefferson Health, Mayo Clinic, Tampa General Hospital, and multiple community and rural clinics.

In many American counties, more than 80% lack a single cardiologist. AISAP ensures that every clinician — family physician, internist, ER doctor, urgent-care clinician — can deliver accurate cardiac assessments immediately. This is the future of medicine.

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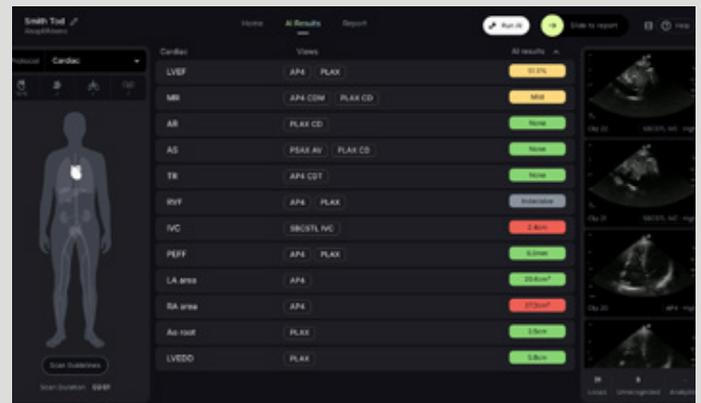
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The story of AISAP is one of science — but also of spirit and people.

Among those people is Israel Ben Shitrit, a reservist severely wounded in Gaza who now serves as AISAP's Director of Global Jewish Community Partnerships. His journey — from the battlefield to helping bring lifesaving technology to the world — embodies the strength and purpose of the Israeli people.

For community leaders, donors, and supporters who wish to be personally involved, Israel Ben Shitrit is available to speak, present, or guide you on how to take part in this mission.

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May this season remind us that healing, like light, knows no boundaries.

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The Few

Rabbi Reuven Taragin

Israel and the Jewish people are outnumbered on every front – on the battlefields, in international forums, and on social media. It is understandable that this feels daunting. Practically, how can Israel survive? Ideologically, being so in the minority causes many to question the validity of our beliefs.

The answer lies in our past.

Throughout our history – and throughout the seventy-seven years of the state – we have often been few and distinct. This began with the first Jew, *Avraham Avinu*. *Chazal* explain that he was called *Avraham Halvri* because he lived apart from the world (*Bereishit Rabbah* 42:8). Like him, the Jewish people became known as *Ivrim*, a people set apart, a minority with a unique purpose.

This history should inspire confidence. Just as we have survived and thrived as a minority for millennia, we can trust we will continue to do so.

Our small numbers are not accidental; Hashem chooses to keep our numbers small. Moshe tells the Jewish people that Hashem calls us the “smallest of the nations” (*Devarim* 7:7). *Chazal* explain that our small numbers are meant to teach us humility: a small nation learns to attribute success to Hashem, not to its own strength (*Chullin* 89a). The smaller we are, the clearer it is that survival comes from Him.

Our *tefillot* on Chanukah reflect this truth. The *Al HaNissim* prayer celebrates Hashem’s “hand” in our victory over the Greeks, describing how He delivered the “strong into the hand of the weak, and the many into the hand of the few.”

The *Maccabim* embody this principle. Militarily and culturally, they were a tiny minority that declared war against the vast Greek empire. Yet they knew that victory depends not on numbers, but on G-d. *Yehuda HaMaccabi* explained: “Victory in battle emanates not from the multitude of numbers, but from the strength

given from Heaven... whatever the will of Heaven be, so shall it transpire” (*Maccabees* 13:18-19).

Yet the small size of the Jewish people can teach us more than just lessons about survival. Rabbi Jonathan Sacks suggested that Hashem made the Jewish people small to show that a nation’s greatness and significance do not depend on its size:

“Nations are not judged by their size but by their contribution to human heritage. Of this, the most compelling proof is that a nation as small as the Jews could produce an ever-renewed flow of prophets, priests, poets, philosophers, sages, saints, *halachists*, *aggadists*, codifiers, commentators, rebbes, and *roshei yeshivot*; that they could also yield some of the world’s greatest writers, artists, musicians, filmmakers, academics, intellectuals, doctors, lawyers, business-people, and technological innovators.

Out of all proportion to their numbers, Jews could and can be found working as lawyers fighting injustice, economists fighting poverty, doctors fighting disease, and teachers fighting ignorance. You do not need numbers to enlarge the spiritual and moral horizons of humankind.”

Rabbi Sacks continues, applying this to the State of Israel:

“Nowhere is this more evident today than among the people of Israel in the State of Israel: traduced in the media and pilloried by much of the world, yet still, year after year, producing human miracles in medicine, agriculture, technology, and the arts, as if the word ‘impossible’ did not exist in the Hebrew language.

When, therefore, we feel fearful and depressed about Israel’s plight, it is worth returning to Moses’ words: ‘The L-rd did not set His affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you are the fewest of all peoples.’ Small? Yes. Still surrounded, as the Israelites were

then, by ‘nations larger and stronger than you.’ But that small people, defying the laws of history, outlived all the world’s great empires, and still has a message of hope for humanity. You don’t have to be large to be great. If you are open to a power greater than yourself, you will become greater than yourself. Israel today still carries that message to the world” (*A Tiny, Treasured People, Covenant and Conversation, Va’etchanan* 5772).

Though Rabbi Sacks wrote this thirteen years ago, his words ring even truer today. The continued survival and disproportionate success of the State of Israel over the past eight decades – and especially over the past two years – remind us of Hashem’s role in our lives and the blessed nature of the Jewish people.

May this realization strengthen our pride and reinforce our confidence in our people, in our state, and in the One behind both of their successes.



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Rabbi Reuven Taragin

is Educational Director of Mizrahi and Dean of the Yeshivat Hakotel Overseas Program. His book, *Essentials of Judaism*, can be purchased at rabbireuventaragin.com.



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From Captivity to Clarity: The Spiritual Work of Two Years

Rabbanit Shani Taragin

As the hostages began returning home in the early light of Hoshana Rabbah through Shemini Atzeret – exactly two years from the day they were torn from their families – one of the verses that powerfully rose to mind was the opening of *Mikeitz*: “*Vayehi mikeitz shenatayim yamim*, And it came to pass at the end of two years” (*Bereishit* 41:1). The verse, associated with Yosef’s emergence from captivity, suddenly felt uncannily contemporary. It carried the weight of waiting, the ache of delayed redemption, and the fragile hope that trembles on the threshold between darkness and dawn.

This year, that resonance deepens as we read the *parasha* on Shabbat Chanukah, a moment that itself marks the boundary between shadow and light. Chanukah reminds us that redemption often arrives in ways we do not foresee. The *Chashmona'im* did not know when their resistance would shift from desperate struggle to miraculous triumph; their victory emerged slowly, quietly, through steadfast faith and disciplined courage. In this way, Chanukah mirrors Yosef’s end of two years of captivity – a turning point that reveals, suddenly but not randomly, the hidden orchestration of divine providence.

In *Tanach*, “two years” is never a neutral measurement; it is a spiritually charged span of time, a crucible in which faith matures. Yosef’s story unfolds at this juncture. “In all sorrow there is profit” (*Mishlei* 14:23) is read by *Chazal* as a commentary on Yosef’s suffering in prison: anguish that ultimately bore fruit, for it led to his emergence as a leader whose wisdom would preserve nations in famine (*Tanchuma Yashan, Mikeitz 2*). Yet the same *Midrash* teaches that these two years were added because Yosef put too much trust in the royal cupbearer with the doubled request of “if only you would remember me... and remember me” – inviting Hashem’s rebuke: “By your lips you sought help; by your lips your redemption will be delayed” (*Tanchuma Yashan, Mikeitz 2*).

Bereishit Rabbah deepens this, invoking “Happy is the man who places his trust in G-d” (*Tehillim* 40:5). Yosef momentarily turned toward “delusions and falsehoods” and so “two years were added to him” for his faith to ripen (*Bereishit Rabbah* 89). *Chazal* explain that these two years were Yosef’s final preparation before his ascent to greatness.

If Yosef’s “two years” exemplify the process of patient redemption, the distorted prophecy of Chananya ben Azur (*Yirmiyahu* 28) offers a painful contrast. There, too, a prophecy of “two years” is proclaimed: a promise that the exiles would swiftly return and the Temple vessels be restored. It was a message the nation desperately wanted to believe after 597 BCE when the nation’s aristocratic class was exiled to Babylonia. But *Yirmiyahu* warns that authentic prophecy does not anesthetize longing; it clarifies the moral and spiritual work required for true restoration. Chananya’s timeline bypassed the labor of transformation and repentance necessary for return. His message collapsed not only because it was false, but because it was easy.

The story of Chanukah deepens the contrast. The Greeks, like Chananya, offered a vision of brilliance without sacrifice, progress without principle, and redemption without refinement. The *Chashmona'im* rejected such illusions. Their victory was not instant; it was earned through fidelity, perseverance, and moral clarity. Chanukah thus becomes the festival that celebrates not rushed promises but the slow, courageous ascent toward light.

Two-plus years after October 7th, *Tanach*’s dual model of “after two years” speaks with piercing relevance. We long for healing, unity, safety, and the return of every captive. But we cannot impose deadlines on redemption, nor confuse aching hope with guaranteed timelines. The temptation to demand that suffering conform to a predicted time span has appeared before – in Chananya’s soothing but deceptive prophecy. The Torah calls us instead to

Yosef’s path: steadfast hope without illusion, trust without passivity, faith that deepens through endurance and communal responsibility.

The past two years have given us time to move from initial shock to sober understanding, long enough for the depth of our wounds to be revealed, long enough to recognize that rebuilding requires integrity, unity, and courage. Yet it is also short enough for hope to remain alive, short enough for resilience to gather force, short enough to remember that Yosef’s turning point arrived precisely when redemption felt furthest.

Chanukah’s lights do not erase the darkness – they sanctify the act of refusing to surrender to it. They illuminate the military and spiritual work of two years: the perseverance that bridges captivity and clarity, the discipline that transforms yearning into purpose, and the unwavering faith that redemption will come in its destined hour. May we merit to see that light soon, with all our brothers and sisters worldwide returned safely home.



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Fighting the Darkness of Stam

Rabbi Elie Mischel

On May 2, 1980, Arab terrorists ambushed Jews returning from the *Me'arat HaMachpela* in Chevron, murdering six innocent people and wounding twenty others. In the wake of this attack, a group of Jews from nearby Kiryat Arba made the bold decision to return to the heart of Chevron, reestablishing a Jewish presence that was violently erased during the massacre of 1929.

Among them was a young 21-year-old man named Yechiel Leiter – today serving as Israel's Ambassador to the United States. He played a critical role in reviving the ancient Jewish community on land known as *Admot Yishai*, named for the father of King David who is buried in Chevron. Leiter later recalled spending several days on the hilltop with friends, standing on the very ground where Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov once lived, and where David first established his throne. After visiting Yishai's tomb, they explored the archaeological excavations nearby, where they met an Arab who was puzzled by their interest. "What's so important to you here?" he asked. With a shrug, he waved his hand over the ancient ruins and muttered dismissively: "These are just holes."

Ambassador Leiter explains that in Hebrew, there is a word for this attitude: *stam*. It means "just," "nothing special," "it doesn't matter." To call something *stam* is to strip it of meaning, to treat it as empty, irrelevant, or random. He writes: "How wrong this Arab was! *Stam*? Just the place where the nation of Israel was born, where our forefathers taught the world that it is G-d who created man, and not man who created G-d? Just the place where King David established the Kingdom of Israel? Just the place where Jews lived and flourished for centuries, until they were slaughtered in 1929? *Stam*?" (Rabbi Yechiel Leiter, *Aloh Na'aleh*, 3–5).

Many among the nations treat our claim to the Land, and the mission of *Am Yisrael* itself, as if it were "just" politics, "just" coincidence, "just" history. This attitude is nothing new.

"And Yitzchak dug anew the wells of water which had been dug in the days of Avraham his father, which the *Plishtim* had stopped up after Avraham's death; and he called them by the same names that his father had called them" (*Bereishit* 26:18).

On the surface, these are just physical wells – holes in the ground for water. But the Kotzker Rebbe teaches that water symbolizes Torah. Avraham's wells weren't only about water; they were new paths of serving G-d, new revelations of holiness in the world. When Avraham dug deep, he uncovered treasures of faith and truth (*Emet Ve'Emunah*, 28).

But after Avraham's death, the *Plishtim* stopped up the wells. "*Vayesatmum Plishtim*" – literally, "the *Plishtim* made them *stam*." The very word for closing up the wells is from the same root as *stam*. They didn't just fill them with dirt; they branded them as *stam*, as meaningless. To the *Plishtim*, Avraham's teachings were "just" words, "just" ideas, "just" the eccentricities of a man now dead. Yitzchak, however, would not allow his father's legacy to be buried under this attitude of *stam*. He re-dug the wells, showing that what others dismissed as ordinary or irrelevant was anything but.

The struggle of Yitzchak is the struggle of his descendants, of *Am Yisrael*. Time and again, we are told that our story is *stam*. Our Land? *Stam* politics. Our survival? *Stam* coincidence. Our faith? *Stam* superstition. Our return to Zion? *Stam* colonialism. Emmanuel Macron and Keir Starmer tell us we must give away the "West Bank" for a "two-state solution" as if it were just another piece of land. But this Land is not *stam*. It is Judea and Samaria – the cradle of our people and heart of our identity.

The Greeks, like the Philistines before them, dismissed our Torah as "*stam*" – just another book, another tribal collection of laws and stories. This is the war of Chanukah. The *Chashmona'im* weren't just fighting armies; they were fighting a philosophy that turned everything holy into *stam*. Rav Hirsch explains that "the people of Israel serve as a living testimony before all nations against the Greek heresy, which claimed that everything in the world happens by chance, with no guiding hand evident in it" (*Shemot* 20). To the Greeks, that tiny jug of oil was *stam* – random chance, a fluke. But we light the *menorah* each year to declare the opposite: there is no such thing as *stam*. Not in our survival, not in our miracles, not in our return home.

We ourselves, our very existence, are proof that nothing is *stam*. No nation has ever been exiled from its land, dispersed across the entire globe, survived for millennia and returned to its homeland. It defies all logic. This is why we exist – to teach the nations that life is not meaningless, that behind every event there is a divine plan.

The Arab in Chevron looked at the excavations and said: "These are just holes." But we know better. We have come home, to dig again and restore what our enemies tried to erase. Most of all, we are here to declare: nothing is *stam*.



Rabbi Elie Mischel

is the Editor of HaMizrachi magazine and the author of *The War Against the Bible: Ishmael, Esau and Israel at the End Times* (2024).



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Chanukah in Hindsight

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks שליט

History itself has a history. Our perspectives shift over time, and some moments may only seem meaningful in retrospect. We don't always understand the real significance of an event until many decades later or sometimes even centuries. A classic example of this is the history of Chanukah.

At one level, the Chanukah story is very simple. From the days of Alexander the Great of Macedon, Israel was under the dominion of the Alexandrian Empire of the Greeks. This meant that in the third century BCE, it was under the control of the Ptolemies who were based in Egypt and Alexandria. Then, during the second century BCE, Israel came under the domain of the Seleucids who were based in Syria.

The Seleucid leader, Antiochus IV, who modestly called himself Epiphanes, meaning "G-d made manifest", decided to force the pace of Hellenization on the Jews of the Land of Israel. Among other things, he forbade the public practice of Judaism, erected a statue of Zeus in the *Beit HaMikdash*, and offered swine before it as a sacrifice, in a desecration of Jewish values that Jews of the time called the Abomination of Desolation.

An elderly Priest called Mattityahu, and his sons and their supporters known to history as the Maccabees, rose in revolt. Over the next three years they scored a momentous victory over the Seleucids, reconquering Jerusalem and bringing it back under Jewish sovereignty. They cleansed the *Beit HaMikdash* and rededicated it, lighting the great *menorah*, the candelabrum that stood in the *Beit HaMikdash*, for a celebration lasting eight days.

That is the story of Chanukah as captured in history in the first and second books of Maccabees. But that is not how the story was ultimately told within the Jewish tradition, as it was ruled that the two books of Maccabees, and others under the same title, should be called *Sefarim Chitzoni'im*, apocryphal works, and kept out of the Bible. The Chanukah story that is told instead is a very different one, with a powerful message.

The Talmud tells us that in the first century, in the last days of the Second *Beit HaMikdash*, a rabbi called Yehoshua ben Gamla established a network of schools throughout Israel. The result of this was that from the age of six, every child in the country received a publicly-funded universal education. This was the

first education system of its kind anywhere in the world, and also a clear indication of the now familiarly Jewish commitment to education and to ensuring our children are literate in their heritage. According to the Talmud, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Gamla's memory is blessed, because without his intervention the Torah would have been forgotten in Israel. Without him, there would have been no survival of Judaism and ultimately no Jews.

What Rabbi Yehoshua ben Gamla and the other Sages understood, and what was not understood at the time of Chanukah itself, was that the real battle against the Greeks was not a military one, but a cultural one. At the time, the Greeks were the world's greatest in many fields. They were unparalleled in their advances in art, in architecture, in literature, in drama, in philosophy. Even today, their achievements have never been surpassed. But Jews nonetheless believed, and surely history has borne this out, that there is within Judaism, within ancient Israel and still within its heritage to today, something special. Something worth fighting for. Judaism, with its emphasis on the sanctification of life, and the belief that every human being was created in G-d's image, held eternal truths that we could not abandon. This was the unique distinction between the culture of the Greeks and the world of Torah and Judaism. As a result, Jews have always known that the real battle is not necessarily fought on the physical battlefield with physical weapons, but rather in the hearts and minds of future generations.

So Judaism, and the Jewish people, became a faith and a nation no longer focusing on its military heroes, but on its spiritual ones. It became a civilisation rooted in texts, and in teachers, and in houses of study. We became the people whose heroes were teachers, whose citadels were schools, and whose passion was learning and the life of the mind. The end result was that Judaism did survive and thrive throughout the centuries, whereas Ancient Greece, the Greece of Athens, the Greece of Alexander the Great, declined. In fact, it was only a short time after the events of the Chanukah story that Greece began its decline, and Rome rose to take its place.

That is the message of Chanukah, and to articulate our story, we focus in a rather beautiful and symbolic way on just one tiny detail of the original chain of events: That one cruse of pure,

undefiled oil was found by the Maccabees among the wreckage and defilements of the *Beit HaMikdash*, just enough to light the *menorah* until more oil could be sourced.

One of the most interesting aspects of this shifting perspective from the original way of telling the story to the current way is reflected in the name of the festival itself. Chanukah, from the word *chanuch*, means re-dedication. That is what the Maccabees did to the *Beit HaMikdash*. They rededicated it, as described in the books of Maccabees. Yet over time, Chanukah became connected to the word *chinuch*, a word meaning education. What we re-dedicated was not a physical building – the *Beit HaMikdash* – but living embodiments of Judaism, namely our children, our students, the people to whom we teach and hand on our heritage and values.

From being the festival of a military victory, Chanukah became the festival of a spiritual and civilizational one.

I believe this history of our history has a message for us all. It teaches us this fundamental truth, as relevant to our lives today as ever before: To defend a country physically you need an army, but to defend a civilization you need education, you need educators, and you need schools. Those are the things that kept the Jewish spirit alive and the *menorah* of Jewish values burning throughout the centuries in an everlasting light. Often what

seems at the time to be the headline news, the military victory, is, in the hindsight of history, secondary to the cultural victory of handing your values on to the next generation.

If we do that, we will ensure that our children, and theirs, light up the world.

Chanukah Sameach!



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THE MESSAGE IN THE CANDLES

RABBANIT SALLY MAYER

Chanukah commemorates an extraordinary miracle: when the *Chashmona'im* rededicated the *Beit HaMikdash* after their military victory, a small flask of oil – enough to light the *menorah* for only one night – miraculously burned for eight. Yet this is hardly the greatest miracle ever to occur to the Jewish people. There is no holiday marking the stopping of the Jordan River when the Jews crossed into *Eretz Canaan*, no festival for the fire that descended from heaven for *Eliyahu* on *Har HaCarmel*, no celebration of the sun standing still for *Yehoshua* in *Giv'on* – and the list goes on. Why, then, does this miracle of oil lasting eight nights, wondrous though it was, merit an eight-day festival that the Jewish people are commanded to observe forever?

Moreover, miracles were commonplace in the First *Beit HaMikdash*, as the *Gemara* describes: there was never a fly in the slaughtering area; the smoke from the altar rose straight upward, unaffected by the wind; and even when the courtyard was packed with worshippers, there was always room for everyone to bow down at the right moment (*Yoma* 21a). So why do we specifically celebrate this miracle – the endurance of a small flask of oil?

Perhaps the answer lies in the unique symbolism of the *menorah* in the *Beit HaMikdash* and the particular moment in history when this miracle occurred. The *Gemara* teaches that the Second *Beit HaMikdash*

was inferior to the First in five ways: there was no *Aron Kodesh*, no heavenly fire, no *Shechinah*, no *Ruach HaKodesh*, and no *Urim v'Tumim* (*Yoma* 21b). How do we know that the *Shechinah* – Hashem's Holy Presence – was missing? The *Gemara* in *Shabbat* explains that its presence was revealed through the western lamp of the *menorah*, which contained the same amount of oil as the other lamps but miraculously burned longer than all the rest. For the forty years that *Shimon HaTzaddik* served as *Kohen Gadol* during the Second Temple period, this daily mini-miracle of the *menorah* – a quiet sign that G-d was present in the *avodah* of the *Beit HaMikdash* – returned for a time (*Yoma* 39a). After his passing, however, it appeared only sporadically.

The *Chashmona'im* fought valiantly to rededicate the Second *Beit HaMikdash*, but it remained a diminished *Mikdash*, lacking the visible signs of Hashem's favor that had once filled it with awe. When Hashem not only restored a miracle from the First *Beit HaMikdash* but magnified it eightfold, imagine the joy and gratitude that swept through the Jewish people! This was not merely a supernatural event – it was a divine message. Hashem was affirming their efforts, declaring His partnership and presence once again in the *Beit HaMikdash*. At a time when even the daily service seemed diminished, when the Jewish people's brave warriors might have questioned whether their struggle was worthwhile, Hashem sent a miracle that spoke directly

to their hearts – a miracle symbolizing His renewed closeness and care.

Remarkably, we celebrate this miracle even though the other miracles never returned and the *Beit HaMikdash* itself retained but a shadow of its former glory. By establishing an eight-day festival in honor of this one miracle, *Chazal* teach us something profound: celebration is warranted even when redemption is incomplete. Just as the Jews in the days of *Ezra* and *Nechemiah* rejoiced over the rebuilding of the Second *Beit HaMikdash*, though it was less magnificent than the first, so too do we rejoice on Chanukah – not because everything was restored, but because something sacred returned.

In our own time, we have witnessed moments of light amid deep darkness. We celebrated the miraculous return of twenty of our precious brothers from Hamas captivity after two years of unimaginable suffering, even as we continue to mourn all those we have lost, and pray for the remaining fallen hostages to reach *kever Yisrael*. Like our ancestors, we choose to rejoice in the signs of Hashem's mercy along the way, showing us that He loves and believes in us, even as we continue to pray for the ultimate redemption – when His *Shechinah* will once again dwell in Jerusalem, and His presence will fill the world with light.



Rabbanit Sally Mayer
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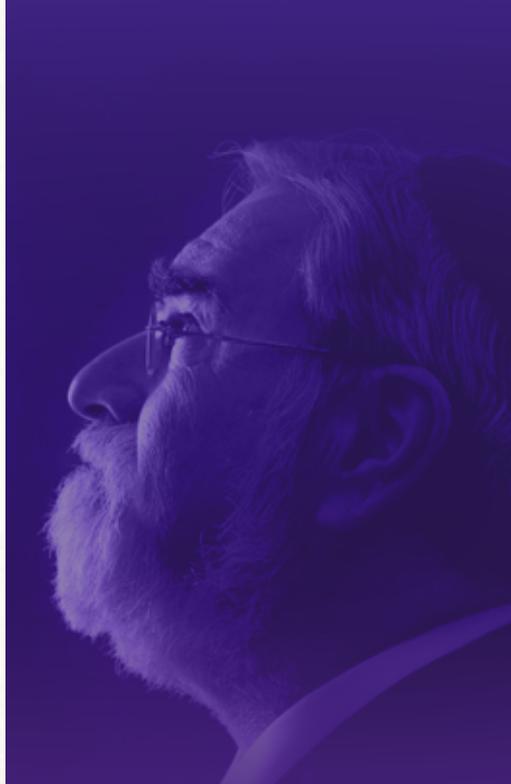


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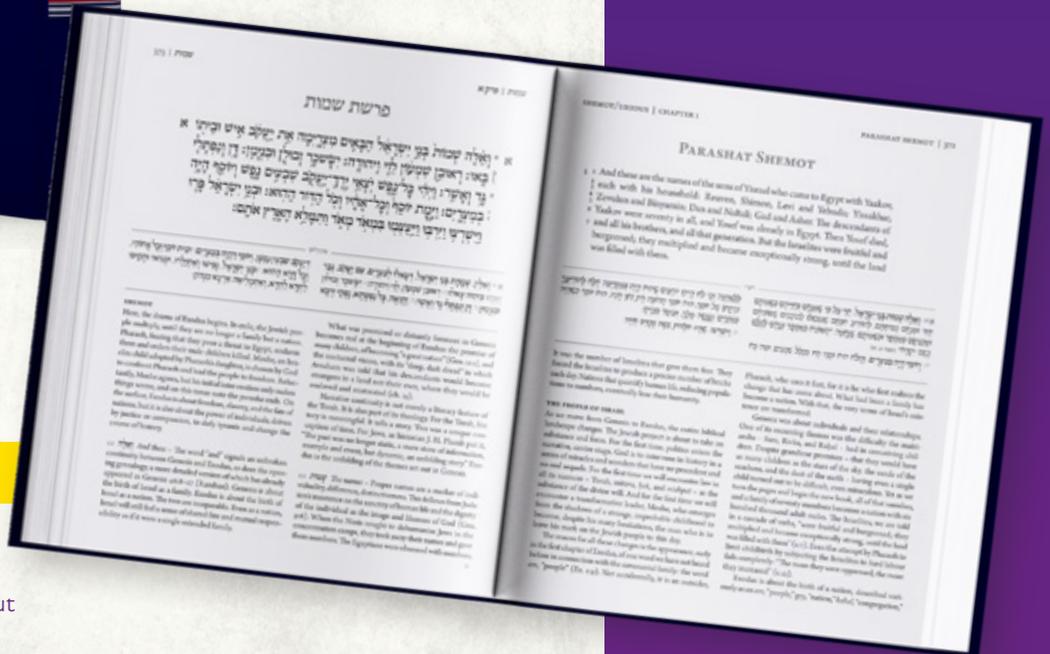


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Matchmaking Miracles: Eight Lights of Love for Chanukah

Aleeza Ben Shalom

Chanukah is the holiday of publicizing miracles, of sharing light so it spreads beyond your own window. But isn't that what love does too? We find someone, we connect, and suddenly there's more light in the world.

The Talmud teaches that the *mitzvah* of Chanukah is to reveal the miracles Hashem places in our lives. Not to whisper them quietly, but to shine them outward. When we share those stories – moments that shouldn't have happened but did – we remind ourselves that G-d is still here, still matching hearts.

In honor of the eight nights of Chanukah, here are eight modern-day matchmaking miracles that prove that even when the world feels dark, light always finds a way in.

1. Eliya Cohen & Ziv Abud

Before October 7, 2023, Eliya had already bought the ring to propose to Ziv after the Nova Festival. Then he was kidnapped and held in Gaza for 505 days, never knowing if she was alive. When he came home, he proposed. She said yes. The ring that waited through terror now shines with redemption.

2. Matan Zangauker & Ilana Gritzewsky

Both were kidnapped from Kibbutz Nir Oz. Ilana came home after nearly eight weeks; Matan was held for almost two years. When they reunited in October 2025, the world saw their photo – two souls who had waited, prayed, and hoped. Love doesn't expire; it endures.

3. Rabbi Leo Dee & Aliza Teplitsky

When Rabbi Dee lost his wife Lucy and daughters Maia and Rina in a terror attack, he became a symbol of faith through heartbreak. This year he married Aliza Teplitsky. Their marriage isn't about replacing what was lost, it's about honoring it. It's a love story that whispers: *You can begin again.*

4. Hadas Loewenstern & Hod Reichert

Hadas lost her husband Elisha z"l, who was killed while rescuing wounded soldiers in Gaza. Hod lost his wife Chagit shortly after childbirth. They lived on the same street in Harish, raising young children and learning to breathe again. Friendship became comfort, and comfort became love. Before leaving for Gaza, Elisha told Hadas, "If something happens to me, remarry as soon as possible." Even before he was gone, he blessed her healing.

5. Naomi Haimov & Avner Yosefi

Naomi's husband Aharon, an MDA ambulance driver, was murdered on October 7 while saving lives in Ofakim. Left with two young children at 25, she didn't think she could laugh or love again. This year she became engaged to Avner Yosefi, a Jerusalem *kashrut* supervisor whose gentle strength brought light back into her life. Their love doesn't erase Aharon's memory, it honors it.

6. Rachel Goldberg & Aminadav Rotenberg

Rachel lost her husband Avi Goldberg z"l – a rabbi and IDF Captain who fell in Lebanon last year – father of her eight children. In a Torah class for widows, she met Aminadav Rotenberg, a fellow educator and widower who had worked with her late husband. Their bond grew slowly and naturally, honoring their pasts together.

7. Odeya Atiya-Fenigstein & Elhanan Atiya

Odeya lost her husband Sgt. Maoz Fenigstein in Gaza, leaving her with a three-month-old baby. She found love again with Elhanan Atiya, a close friend of Maoz. Their wedding was filled with tears and joy – a reminder that sometimes the same people who help you mourn help you live again.

8. Noa Argamani & Avinatan Or

The world saw the footage: Noa screaming on a motorcycle, crying out for her

boyfriend as Hamas took them. They were separated – she was rescued in June 2024, he was held for another 16 months. On October 13, 2025, they were finally reunited. Their embrace was the hug of an entire nation that refused to stop hoping.

When love becomes light

Every one of these stories is a candle – some burned through grief, some through fear, but all brought light. Like the oil that kept burning, these miracles remind us: love doesn't arrive on our timeline, but it always arrives right on time.

As you light your *menorah* this year, may every heart waiting for its match keep believing, keep hoping, and see the miracles already unfolding.



Aleeza Ben Shalom

is a soulmate clarity coach, she was on Netflix's "Jewish Matchmaking" and is an in-demand speaker, expert, and author of numerous books. She leads the Jewish Matchmaking Movement, in partnership with World Mizrahi.



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The Chanukah Candles:

Rabbinic Obligation or Torah Obligation?

Rabbi Azarya Berzon

Rava in the *Gemara* (*Shabbat* 23b) raises a question about Chanukah candles and *kiddush* on the Shabbat of Chanukah. What should someone do if they cannot afford both wine for *kiddush* and oil for the *ner Chanukah*? Rava concludes that one should buy oil for the *ner Chanukah*, prioritizing *pirsumei nisa* – the publicizing of the miracle.

The Rashba and the Ran raise a difficulty: *Kiddush* is a Torah obligation, so how can a Rabbinic commandment like lighting the Chanukah candles override it? They resolve the issue by noting that if one has bread, the obligation of *kiddush*, on a Biblical level, can be fulfilled over the bread, freeing the money that would have been spent on wine to purchase oil for the *ner Chanukah*. Although wine is preferable to bread, that requirement is only Rabbinic, hence Rava establishes that he should fulfill his Biblical *kiddush* on bread and forfeit the preference for wine for the sake of *pirsumei nisa*.

However, the *Tosafot Rid* (*Nazir* 4a) questions this solution. He notes that wine for *kiddush* is a Biblical requirement derived from *halacha leMoshe miSinai*, and even though one can fulfill his obligation with bread, nevertheless, Rava in formulating his question regarding the individual with limited funds does not indicate at all that the person possesses bread. Hence, the question remains: how did Rava conclude that a Rabbinic *mitzvah*, lighting the Chanukah candles, could override *kiddush*, a Biblical *mitzvah*? Even though the Chanukah candles have the added merit of *pirsumei nisa*, nonetheless the fact remains that the *mitzvah* is a Rabbinic commandment. The issue is left unresolved.

We would like to suggest that the *sugya* of Rava be understood in light of a much broader principle. The Torah includes

several general commandments whose specific details are not spelled out in the Torah itself. Let's mention just three examples amongst many: *ve'ahavta l'reacha*, the commandment to love one's fellow; *ve'initem et nafshoteichem*, the obligation to afflict oneself on Yom Kippur; and *mikraei kodesh*, the *mitzvah* to sanctify the days of *Chol HaMoed*. In all these cases, the Torah endows the *Chachmei Yisrael* (the Sages of Israel) the authority to determine the specifics of the *mitzvah*, when and how the *mitzvah* is to be fulfilled. Yet fulfilling the Rabbinic enactments in these cases constitutes fulfillment (*kiyum*) of a Torah commandment.

Similarly, the Torah commands, “*v'nikdashti*, I shall be sanctified among the Children of Israel” (*Vayikra* 22:32) – a general obligation to sanctify G-d's name and to publicize our faith in Him. The Torah does not specify how or when this commandment should be fulfilled. The Sages established that during the eight days of Chanukah, one lights the candles to publicize the miracle and demonstrate faith in G-d. By doing so, one sanctifies His name. For this reason, the *mitzvah* of lighting the *ner Chanukah* carries the weight of a Torah-level obligation (see *Harerei Kedem*, Vol I, page 275).

Using this approach, Rava's question can be understood as follows. On the one hand, a person faces a Torah obligation of *kiddush* and has neither wine nor bread to fulfill his *mitzvah*. At the same time, there is the Torah-level obligation to publicize the miracle by lighting the Chanukah candles. Which *mitzvah* takes preference? Rava concludes that lighting the candle takes precedence, since it fulfills the commandment to sanctify G-d's Name – that fulfillment is sufficient to override the obligation of *kiddush*.

The *Sefer Revavot Ephraim* (*Orach Chaim* 2:115) rules: One who is uncertain whether he lit Chanukah candles is obligated to light again. This despite the rule that when one is in doubt regarding a Rabbinic commandment he may be lenient. It would seem that this ruling – to light the candles in a case of doubt – is based on the premise that one fulfills a Biblical *mitzvah* by lighting the *ner Chanukah*. Therefore, the appropriate principle is “be stringent in a case of doubt.”

This ruling should be understood in light of the broader discussion outlined above, namely, that a Rabbinic enactment that fulfills a Torah obligation is treated as a *mitzvah shel Torah*. The *mitzvah* of Chanukah candles is an example of this principle since by lighting the candles one publicizes the miracle and sanctifies His Name, fulfilling a great Torah obligation.



Rabbi Azarya Berzon

is the Rav of Kehilla Oz Lamelech in Ramat Beit Shemesh and the author of *Hagigei Oz*.



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Prayer for Protection

Mrs. Shira Smiles

Throughout the Jewish calendar year, we find special moments that are considered an *eit ratzon* – times of particular favor, when our *tefillot* carry extra potency and ascend to higher realms with greater ease. Lighting the Chanukah candles is one such time. The heavens are open for *tefillot* and for requests concerning both spiritual and physical needs. It is therefore customary to recite select chapters of *Tehillim* following the lighting.

Chassidic sources note that the last verse of Chapter 90 and Chapter 91 has unique significance (some say it should be recited seven times), as do Chapters 30, 33, 67, 91, and 133, along with the text of *Ana b'koach*. Let us focus here on the end of Chapter 90 and Chapter 91 to gain a deeper understanding of this sacred time and the power it holds.

We are taught that *Moshe Rabbeinu* wrote these two chapters when the *mishkan* was completed and erected in the desert on the 25th of Kislev. Although the

actual *Chanukat haMishkan* – the inauguration ceremony of the *mishkan* – took place on a later date, Hashem “repaid” the 25th of Kislev thousands of years later with the *Chanukat haBayit* in the time of the *Chashmona'im*. When we recite this chapter, we recall the distinctiveness of this day both during the Israelites’ sojourn in the desert and in the time of the Chanukah miracle.

In *Netivot Shalom*, the Slonimer Rebbe notes that these verses express the overarching perspective and faith of the *Maccabim*. Saying these words fortified their *emunah*, as they recognized that with Hashem’s help alone could they succeed. Indeed, the Tashbetz teaches that we repeat the last verse of Chapter 91 so that we can say 130 words (with the *kolel*, including the word itself) – the numerical value of *hako-hanim*. This signifies that the very essence of the *Maccabim* was their understanding that the great power of *bitachon* – trust in Hashem – brings salvation from a supernatural realm.

The theme of the chapter articulates complete dependence on Hashem; He alone is our stronghold and protection. Furthermore, the *Netivot Shalom* points out that *bitachon* in Hashem is the central motif of Chanukah – the only way we, as Jews, can withstand and survive the struggles and challenges of *galut*.

Rav Kaufman *zt”l* in *Mishchat Shemen* suggests another rendering of the name Maccabi found in old manuscripts. *Maccabi* is generally understood as the acronym *Mi Kamocha Ba’elim Hashem* – “Who is like You among the mighty ones, Hashem?” – conveying Hashem’s might and strength in battle. However, *Maccabi* can also be spelled with a *kuf* instead of a *kaf*, forming an acronym for the phrase *Mei’olam Kivinu Becha Hashem* – “We have always placed our hope in You, Hashem.” This version shifts the focus from physical prowess to total reliance on Hashem.

We recite this chapter in the nightly *Shema* as well, reminding ourselves that only by placing our hope and faith in Hashem can we merit true salvation.

Mrs. Shira Smiles

is a sought after international lecturer, popular seminary teacher, and experienced curriculum developer. Mrs. Smiles is well known for her special teaching style, which seeks to bring understanding of Torah texts through analysis of tens of relevant sources, while making the lessons learned from every verse relevant to her students’ lives in her shiurim. Mrs. Smiles has authored five books, *Torah Tapestry on the Parsha*.



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The Special Nature of Chanukah

Rabbi Jesse Horn

Both the language and structure of the *Al HaNissim* prayers recited on Chanukah and Purim are strikingly similar. It is clear that they are written with one voice.

The texts share an identical opening: “*Al haNissim v'al haPorkan...* Because of the miracles and the redemption.” Both continue with a similar phrase, “*Bi'yemei...* In the days of...” followed by the central characters of each holiday: Mordechai and Esther for Purim, and Matityahu ben Yochanan, the *Chashmona'im*, and his sons for Chanukah.

Subsequently, each *Al HaNissim* prayer describes the potential threat, beginning with the phrase “*k'she-amad*” or “*k'she-amda*” – “When they (the villains) stood up” – and then labels them each as “*rasha*, wicked.” The texts then record the actual threats: for Chanukah, it is the Greek kingdom's threat, and for Purim, Haman's.

After describing the threats, the salvations are mentioned next. Again, each begins with the identical phrase “*v'Atah b'rachamecha haRabim*, and You with great mercy” – and proceeds to describe the salvation.

Once the salvations are recounted, the Purim prayer concludes, whereas the Chanukah prayer continues with an additional section demarcated by the phrase “*shem gadol*, great name” – at the beginning and “*Ishimcha haGadol*, Your great name” – at the end. The *Al HaNissim* prayer on Chanukah has an entire extra paragraph that describes how the Jews retook and entered the *Beit HaMikdash*, cleaned and purified it, and established Chanukah.

The most obvious question is: why does the Chanukah text contain this additional section? What does it add, and why does the Purim text not have it?

Additionally, the description of the danger Haman imposes is significantly richer with detail than that of the Greek kingdom. There are more synonyms and

details mentioned in the Purim prayer. Why does the *Al HaNissim* text of Purim describe the threat with such extensive detail?

Lastly, when explaining the salvation, the Chanukah text is significantly more descriptive, offering more detail about the military victory than the Purim text does. And again, why?

In order to answer our three questions – (1) What extra dimension exists in Chanukah and not in Purim? (2) Why are there more details regarding Purim's threat? and (3) Why are there more details regarding Chanukah's salvation? – we must look at the difference between the holidays themselves.

The fundamental difference between Purim and Chanukah is that Purim is a story of Jewish survival, while Chanukah is one of a nation thriving. The Purim miracle enables the Jewish people to avoid annihilation and destruction. At the end of the Purim story, they return to their original, neutral status. Purim takes place outside of Israel, where the goal is survival, and that is what the Purim miracle ensures. Chanukah, by contrast, takes place in Israel, the place destined to build the Jewish future. It is therefore not surprising that the Chanukah story ends with a significantly greater climax: namely, the rededication of the *Beit HaMikdash* and the powerful opportunity that brings.

It is for precisely this reason that the description of Purim's threat is more fully developed. Since it took place outside of Israel – a place for Jewish survival – the focus of the *Al HaNissim* text is more on the potential threat and less on the salvation. Ultimately, Purim is an example where there was a serious threat and it was thwarted. The *Al HaNissim* of Chanukah, by contrast, emphasizes the salvation instead. Taking place in Israel, the Chanukah miracle enabled the Jews to return to

the *Beit HaMikdash* and granted them an incredible opportunity to bring the *geulah* – redemption – to the world.

In light of this understanding, we can now also appreciate the additional element found in Chanukah's *Al HaNissim*. Because the *Al HaNissim* on Chanukah is designed to capture the potential the Jewish people have specifically when there is a *Beit HaMikdash*, it has an additional section – one designed to illustrate the significance and great importance of rededicating the *Beit HaMikdash* and the opportunity to praise and share with the world G-d's great name: “*Ishimcha haGadol*, Your great name.”

Based upon this, one may further explain why the miracle of Purim is celebrated internally by reading the *megillah*, retelling the story to the Jewish people. Chanukah's miracle is celebrated differently, by placing candles by a window projecting outward, perhaps recalling the Jewish responsibility to be an “*or lagoyim*, a light unto the nations” and to share with the world G-d's great name.



Rabbi Jesse Horn

is a Senior Ra"m at Yeshivat Hakotel.



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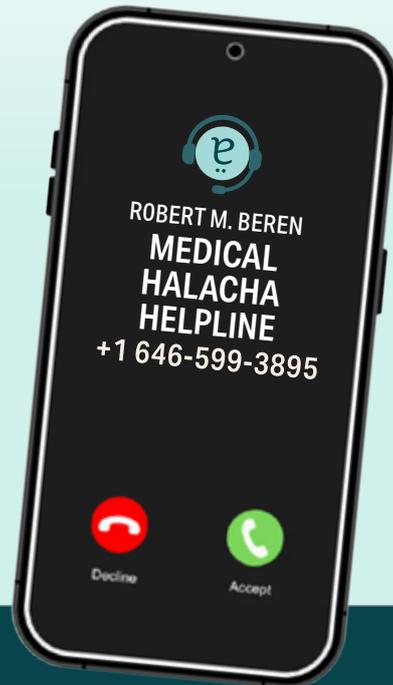
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This Year, Chanukah Feels Different

Rabbi Alan Haber

This year, as we kindle the lights of Chanukah, their glow feels different. The flames rise against a backdrop of grief and resolve, of uncertainty and faith. Across the Jewish world, people are asking what “rededication” means in a time when so much still feels broken.

This is not a new question. It lies at the very heart of the *Maccabim*'s victories that we celebrate on Chanukah. Long before them, however, other generations also wrestled with this question. To understand it, we must reach back in time to the inaugural days of the first *Beit HaMikdash*.

King Shlomo's two houses

The *Tanach* tells us (*Melachim I* 7:1–12) that King Shlomo built two separate “houses”: *Beit Hashem* (“G-d’s house” – the biblical term for the *Beit HaMikdash*) and *Beit HaMelech* – his own house, the royal palace. It is noteworthy that Shlomo even felt the need to build a royal palace; a beautiful palace had already been constructed for his father David only a few decades earlier (*Shmuel II* 5:11).

But Shlomo’s design – a new royal palace adjacent to the Temple – was not merely functional; it expressed an ideal. The holiness of *Beit Hashem* was meant to infuse moral purpose into *Beit HaMelech*, while the strength of the king’s house was meant to protect and sustain the Temple. The political and spiritual leadership of the Jewish nation must work in harmony; *Am Yisrael* can thrive only when holiness and sovereignty stand together.

A haftarah for Chanukah

Centuries later, when the prophet Zechariah and his generation returned from Babylonian exile, they faced the challenge of rebuilding both the *Beit HaMikdash* and the national political framework that gave it life.

The *haftarah* for Shabbat Chanukah (*Zechariah* 3:1–4:7) brings their struggle vividly to

life. The prophet sees Yehoshua, the High Priest, standing before an angel, “clothed in filthy garments” (3:3). The image is unsettling: the people had returned to their land and begun rebuilding the *Beit HaMikdash*, yet something remained tainted, unresolved.

Then the angel commands, “Remove the filthy garments from him... See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you in rich garments” (3:4). It is a vision of purification and renewal – an assurance that forgiveness and rebuilding are still possible.

The vision ends with a dual charge. On the one hand, “Hear now, Yehoshua the *Kohen Gadol*... behold, I will bring My servant *tzemach* (‘plant’)” – an apparent messianic reference (see *Yishayahu* 11:1; *Yirmiyahu* 23:5; 33:16) directed at Zerubavel, the political leader at the time (see *Zechariah* 4:8–14). The message is clear: *Beit Hashem* can only be rebuilt alongside *Beit HaMelech*.

Yet at the same time, Zechariah also says, “This is the word of the L-rd to Zerubavel: Not by strength nor by power [will you reign], but by My spirit, said the L-rd of Hosts.” This companion message is equally clear: *Beit HaMelech* can only succeed under the guidance of *Beit Hashem*.

From Zechariah to the Maccabim

The same dynamic reappears centuries later in the story of Chanukah. The *Maccabim* fought not only to cleanse *Beit Hashem* – the defiled *Beit HaMikdash* – but even more so to reassert Jewish political sovereignty and self-determination. Undoubtedly, the persecutions introduced by King Antiochus IV, which undermined centuries of religious freedom, taught the Jews that only through political and military power, symbolized by *Beit HaMelech*, could they guarantee their spiritual and religious independence.

Yet tragically, history showed that the balance is easily lost. The Hasmonean dynasty ultimately lost its way, succumbing to

corruption and internal division. Holiness without structure could not protect itself, and unchecked power without holiness eroded from within.

The enduring message

Today, as we face our own tests of resilience – in Israel and throughout the Jewish world – Zechariah’s vision speaks with renewed clarity. Once again, we are called to strengthen both “houses”: to preserve our sovereignty with wisdom and courage, and to root it in the spiritual and ethical ideals that define us as a people.

It is easy, especially in times of danger, to focus solely on *Beit HaMelech* – defense, unity, and survival – or to retreat into the spiritual safety of our synagogues and *batei midrash* – contemporary remnants of *Beit Hashem*.

Chanukah reminds us that enduring strength depends equally on both: *Beit Hashem*, meaning inner faith and resolve, and *Beit HaMelech*, the political and military structures needed to sustain and live by the Torah’s values.



Rabbi Alan Haber

has been involved in Torah education for about forty years, and currently serves on the faculty of Midreshet Torah V'Avoda (MTVA). He is member of the editorial staff of the Koren Talmud Bavli, several editions of the new Koren Tanakh, and the upcoming English edition of the Steinsaltz commentary on the Rambam. Many of his shiurim and publications can be seen on his website: www.rabbihaber.net



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SHAGRIRIM BALEV

Friends Setting Up Friends



**Our Couples:
Introducing
Allison Davidson
and Uriel Weisz!**

Where was your first date?
I Our first date was in Mamilla. We walked to Aroma, had our date there, and then ended up walking all the way back to Baka to get on the train tracks.

**What did you learn from the dating process that you'd like to share?
Do you have any tips?**

I learned that it's important to be open, willing to share, and willing to give. That's what makes you feel comfortable on a date. Another tip is not to waste too much time – you should know when to move forward.

Why is it worth joining the Shagririm Balev database?
Joining Shagririm Balev gives you the opportunity for more people to see your name, profile, and information.

A funny story from one of your dates:
One time, I told Uriel that my parents were in town and we were going out for dinner. He thought he was invited too, even though we had just met a couple of weeks earlier! He still showed up at my parents' apartment before Shabbat with flowers to meet everyone, which was both funny and sweet.

Who are the ambassadors who set you up and what would you like to tell them?
Shlomo-Eli Schweitzer and Adina Rosenwasser set us up. We want to thank them sincerely for thinking of us and signing us up – we are very grateful.

Tell us about your marriage proposal.
We wanted Shlomo-Eli and Adina to be in the country for our engagement l'chaim. Coordinating schedules was tricky, so we had just one day that worked. Uriel arranged everything quickly, including getting the rooftop in the Old City from his brother-in-law's brother. However, when we arrived, the rooftop looked different from the pictures we had seen, which was really funny. Despite that, it was beautiful and special to be in the Old City.

Is there anything else you want to share?
We feel really lucky. Baruch Hashem, we have amazing friends and family who set us up and celebrated with us at our wedding. We were able to get married just a few weeks before the Iran attack, set up our apartment, and now we're on to the next phase of our lives.



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The Modern Maccabees

Rabbi Avi Billet

At a tour of Shura Army Base a few weeks before Chanukah 2023, Rabbi Binyamin Zimmerman told our group that the IDF was distributing 100,000 *menorahs* to soldiers for Chanukah, due to the high demand. He shared a profound insight on the turn he saw in the IDF and in the country post-October 7. “We’ve known how to die *al kiddush Hashem* (to sanctify G-d’s name). What we have come to learn is that we can live *al kiddush Hashem*... The miracle of Chanukah is not just that they won the war, but that they went to war.”

Kiddush Hashem is first introduced to us by Avraham, who lived to spread the word of G-d to the people of his era. His commitment to G-d was elevated when he embraced the challenge of *akeidat Yitzchak*, taking his beloved son to Mount Moriah for an unclear mission.

The Netziv notes that the purpose of that journey was to teach us about *kiddush Hashem*. The *Midrash* relates three types of “tests” that G-d uses to test the righteous: banging a pot to see how strong it is, beating flax to strengthen it, and increasing the burden on an animal

and then to reward it afterwards (*Bereishit Rabbah* 32). The Netziv explains that Avraham experienced the flax test, which “was meant to elevate Avraham and to train his children to be ready to give themselves up, with love, for the sanctification of G-d’s name...”

Historically, *kiddush Hashem* often meant martyrdom in the face of persecution, as witnessed through Rabbi Akiva, Masada, and the victims of the Crusades, Inquisition, Chmielnicki massacres, and Holocaust. However, the current war has revealed a profound truth: living to sanctify G-d’s name holds greater meaning than dying for it. This suggests that the real message to Avraham wasn’t about sacrificing his son, but rather about being prepared to make that sacrifice while choosing to live in service of G-d.

Chanukah commemorates two miracles: the oil that burned for eight days and the victory of the few over the many. While rabbis have long debated whether this victory represented the Maccabees triumphing over the Seleucids or over Hellenized Jews, today we witness a different kind of miracle since October 7, 2023. Every IDF soldier who fights – whether they return unharmed, wounded, or fall in battle – is holy, regardless of their background or beliefs. They all fight to protect Israel and sanctify G-d’s name, and in every synagogue, we pray for the safety of all soldiers without distinction.

The story that has changed the fabric of the IDF, however, is the high percentage of fallen soldiers who come from the Religious Zionist camp in Israel.

Israel’s Central Bureau of Statistics found in 2021 that the Jewish population is divided into 4 basic categories, presented here with their approximate percentage within Jewish Israeli society – Charedi (10%), Religious (12%), Traditional (33%), Secular (45%). These numbers have shifted over the years, as the secular community used to be a much larger percentage of the population. As the IDF is made up of soldiers from a cross-section of society, the percentages in all categories of wounded and fallen should match up to the populations. But this has not been the case, as it is quite clear that the religious soldiers and their families, percentage wise to their population, have paid the heaviest price in this war.

The pain of those who have lost a beloved soldier is heartbreaking. The strength through which they have inspired a nation is other-worldly. These are the modern-day Maccabees. They don’t fight in order to die *al kiddush Hashem*. They fight for all of us to be able to live to sanctify G-d’s name. Just as the Maccabees’ victory secured centuries of Jewish sovereignty and forced their enemies to abandon their designs on the Land of Israel, may today’s soldiers succeed in convincing our enemies that their fight against the Jewish people is futile.

The Seleucids underestimated the Jews’ military capabilities. Led by the *kohen gadol* and his sons, the Jewish warriors rallied to Moshe’s ancient battle cry: “Whoever is for G-d, come join me!” They proved that Jews fighting in G-d’s name possess extraordinary strength and determination.

May G-d grant our soldiers and all Jewish people the blessing to live long lives dedicated to sanctifying His name, just as our ancestors did before us.



Rabbi Avi Billet

is the rabbi of Anshei Chesed Congregation in Boynton Beach, FL, and is a mohel in the larger South Florida community.



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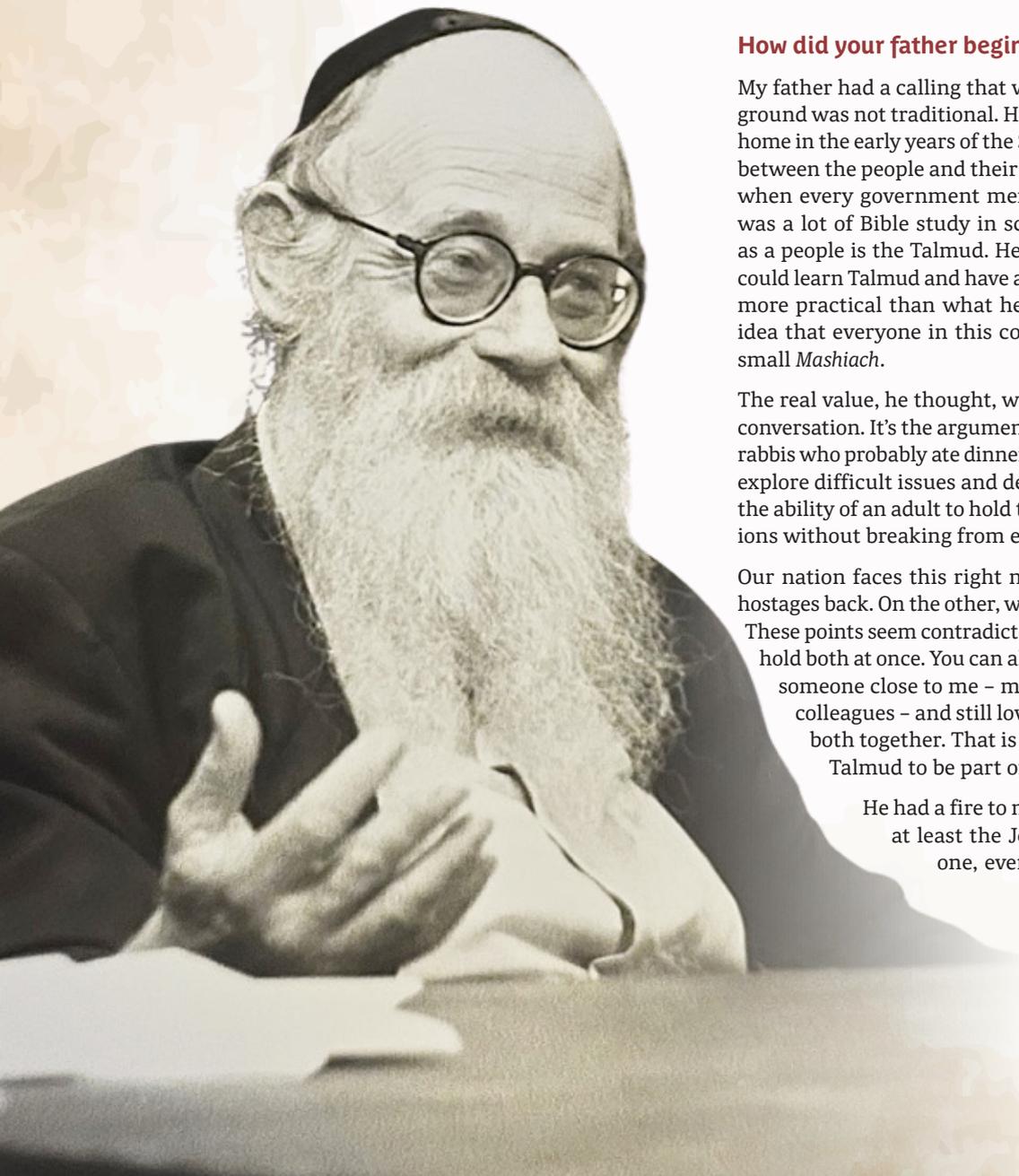
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Opening the Gates of Torah

An Interview with Rabbi Meni Even-Israel

Rabbi Adin Even-Israel Steinsaltz zt"l, who passed away in 2020, was one of the most influential rabbis of our generation, renowned for his groundbreaking work in making Jewish texts accessible to all. Through his translations, commentaries, and publications, he opened the gates of the Talmud, Tanach, and Chassidut, and his visionary approach to education inspired institutions and students worldwide. Rabbi Aron White spoke with Rabbi Meni Even-Israel to explore his father's remarkable legacy and the ongoing mission to share his Torah with future generations.



How did your father begin his career in teaching Torah?

My father had a calling that was very unique because his background was not traditional. He grew up in a secular, communist home in the early years of the State of Israel. He saw a dissonance between the people and their Judaism – even in the early years, when every government member quoted the Bible and there was a lot of Bible study in schools. He said that our core text as a people is the Talmud. He believed that if the entire nation could learn Talmud and have access to it, Judaism would become more practical than what he called “Messianic Judaism,” the idea that everyone in this country is a prophet, everyone is a small *Mashiach*.

The real value, he thought, was the civility of the Talmud – the conversation. It's the argument in the harshest of tones between rabbis who probably ate dinner together afterward. Their debates explore difficult issues and demonstrate true human maturity: the ability of an adult to hold two seemingly contradictory opinions without breaking from either.

Our nation faces this right now: on one side, we all want the hostages back. On the other, we all want Hamas to be eliminated. These points seem contradictory, yet that is adulthood – you can hold both at once. You can also do it personally: I can fight with someone close to me – my spouse, my children, my family, colleagues – and still love and care for them. You can have both together. That is what he wanted: the sanity of the Talmud to be part of the Jewish people.

He had a fire to make the entire Jewish library – or at least the Jewish canon – available to everyone, everywhere. He kept saying that the motto “let my people know” was literal. Everyone had to know. You could argue, you might not act correctly, you might not be observant – but in your mindset, it is yours. What he did was open the gates. He gave you the key.



When people think of the Talmud, they think of legal intricacies written in a foreign language. What was your father's secret to making it accessible?

His secret, in my opinion, was that he never left his upbringing behind. He kept his secularism intact. When he wrote a text, he wrote it in the language of the people, which was exactly the point of the Talmud. For Abaye and Rava, Aramaic was not an issue – that was the lingua franca at the time. For us, Aramaic is a foreign language, but for them, it was accessible. The point was to speak the Talmud in the language of the people and make it comprehensible.

This is why he emphasized translating into modern Hebrew, then English, then French, and other languages. He wrote in the common language. Later, when we translated the Bible with his commentary, we updated the English too, because nobody reads Shakespearean English today. People read modern English. That was the key: to make the text understandable. If you ask me what distinguishes our publications, it is that we insist on good, contemporary language – English, Hebrew, or French – the language of the people.

Your father is also known for publishing works of Chassidut. Where did that connection come from?

His love of *Chassidut* began when he was searching for himself. He was drawn to the world of Chabad-Lubavitch. His first teachers were mainly Lubavitch, though his Talmud teacher was a *Gerrer Chassid*. The world he connected to was *Chassidut*. He came to see that in our modern day, *Chassidut* is the key to understanding the light in the world. It gives meaning to everything and shows that G-d is everywhere.

One major difference in the *Chassidic* mindset is the belief that G-d is literally everywhere. It's not about rejecting secular life. Secular pursuits are part of Judaism. You can find holiness in everything – or make everything holy – even secular matters. Therefore, there is no problem attending university, serving in the army, or engaging with the world, as long as it is for the right purpose. The work in the mundane becomes sacred because everything we see is divine.

Your father also founded Makor Chaim high school. What was his educational philosophy?

He created the first serious modern Orthodox *Chassidic yeshiva*. At the time, attending a Religious Zionist *yeshiva* and studying Rav Nachman and *Tanya* was unheard of. Typically, *yeshivot* focused on *Gemara* and *Mussar*. He wanted to integrate *Chassidut* and spiritual growth into the curriculum.

He also emphasized flexibility: students did not have to follow a strict dress code or wear a specific type of *yarmulke*. Originally, he created Shefa Yeshiva in 1974–75, with a diverse group of students, including people like Yaron London, who was definitely not very religious. People came and went, learning alongside rabbis, professors, and doctors. Eventually, it became Makor Chaim high school.

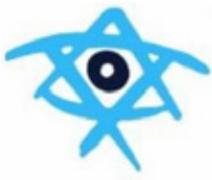
This approach changed the meaning of “*yeshiva*”: it wasn't just the rabbi lecturing. Students could sit together almost as equals, and caring for someone's soul became central. Today, there are dozens, maybe hundreds, of *yeshivot* that embed *Chassidut* and spiritual growth in their curriculum.

Can you talk about your current work in propagating your father's Torah and upcoming projects?

I have been working for the Steinsaltz Center since 2005, focusing on major projects involving Talmud, *Tanach*, *Mishnah*, and Rambam. Over the next three years, we will publish the *Mishnah* and Rambam in English. My father left about 9,000 articles and texts, plus 3,000 hours of video, so there is much to continue publishing. We are also releasing more of his *Chassidut* works in Hebrew in time for Chanukah. By January, we expect to complete the entire French Talmud.

Before his passing, he decided everything should be available online. We created the Steinsaltz portal, which includes *Gemara*, *Mishnah*, *Tanach*, Rambam, *Tanya*, articles, and lectures at steinsaltz-center.org. We also have an app, which currently has 46,000 downloads, continuing his dream of bringing Torah to anyone interested in learning. ■

Rabbi Aron White is the Managing Editor of HaMizrachi magazine. He lives in Carmay HaNadiv, Kiryat Malachi, and serves as the Rabbi of Beit Knesset Tzameret Arnona in Yerushalayim.



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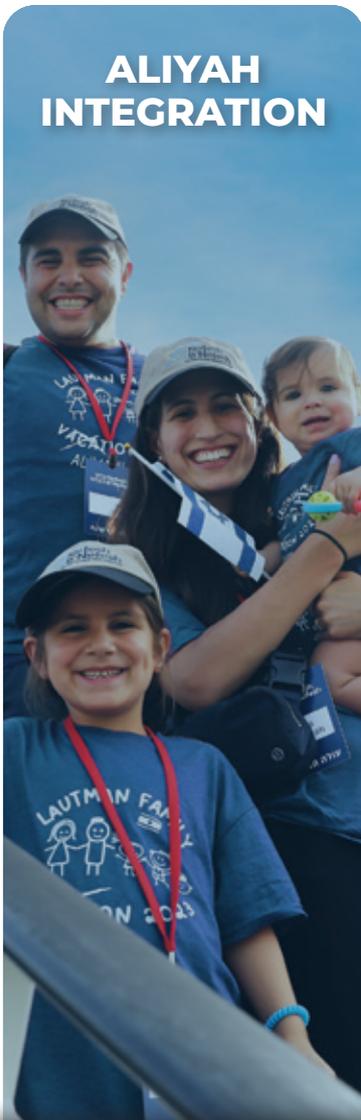
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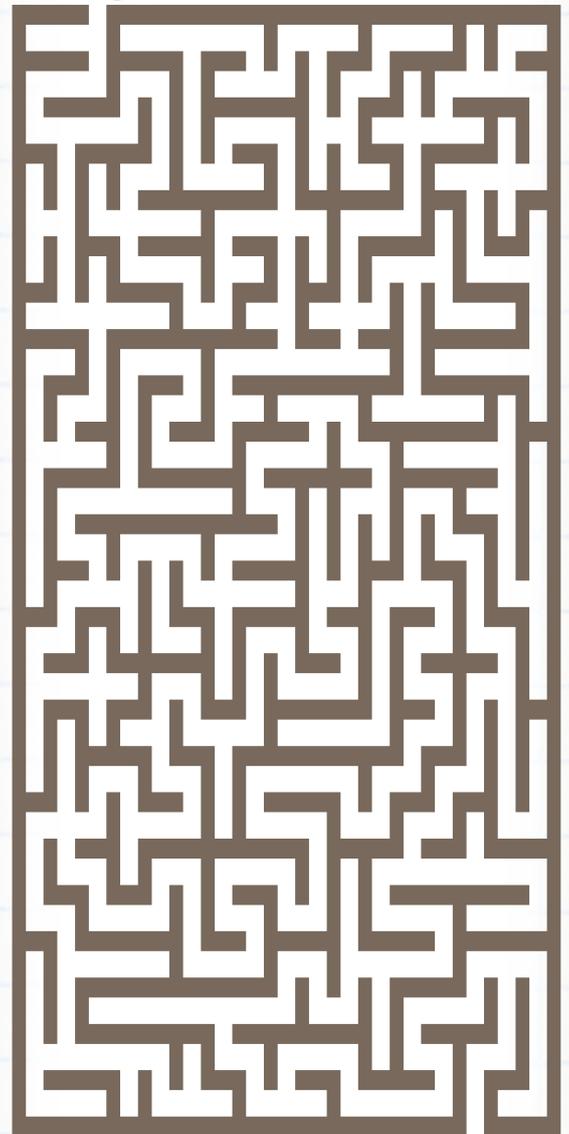
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MEET HANNAH MAISEL-SHOHAT



December 25, 1883 - March 29, 1972 (26 Kislev 5644 - 14 Nissan 5732)

Agricultural Sustainability Teacher

Hannah Maisel-Shohat's dream was to train girls and young women in specialized agricultural work. Born to a family of eleven children, Hannah was taught at home, in Grodno, by a private tutor and as she grew older she chose to study agriculture. She believed that agriculture would contribute greatly to the new society being established in the Land of Israel. In 1902, with her husband, Hannah immigrated to Israel and they joined her husband's brother and wife and tried to take part in the agriculture work on the farm. She had a firm belief that women must be a part of agricultural work in their own unique way so she began planning a special farm to train women. She eventually established the Young Women's Farm where they lived lives of sustainability learning about coops, barns and vegetable gardens. The farm was taken by the Turks in WWI, but afterwards she established a new agriculture farm for women in Nahalal. The school was notoriously hard to get into, as they would only take very serious women. That being said, during WWII they ended up having much less rigid acceptance standards and eventually opened the school up for men as well.



Adapted from *Iconic Jewish Women* by Dr. Aliza Lavie. Scan the QR code to purchase on Amazon.



DID YOU KNOW?

- The dreidel was originally invented to distract the Greeks from the Jews learning Torah!
- The first day of Chanukah can fall out on any day of the week except for Tuesday!
- Jeffrey Hoffman, an astronaut that was in space during Chanukah, brought a dreidel to space which he spun and a menorah which he "lit"!

Test Your Knowledge



Which sect of Jews drive around with Chanukiot on their cars during Chanukah?

Where does the story of Chanukah NOT appear?

What do the letters on a dreidel stand for and mean?

Look for the answers in the Parshat Vayigash Youth Edition – see below for more details!

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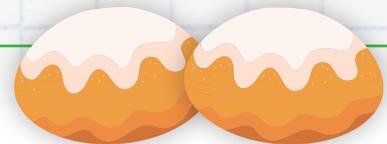
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BAKED SUFGANIYOT!



Ingredients:

Sufganiyot

- 3 ¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 tsp instant yeast
- 1 tsp salt
- ¾ cup milk, warmed
- ¾ cup butter, melted
- 4 eggs, at room temperature
- ¼ cup honey
- 1 tsp vanilla extract

Glaze

- 1 ½ cup powdered sugar
- 2-3 tablespoons milk
- 1 ½ teaspoons vanilla extract

Instructions:

1. In a large bowl, add flour and yeast and mix well.
2. In a separate bowl, whisk together the milk, eggs, honey, melted butter, salt and vanilla extract.
3. Mix the wet into the dry ingredients with a spatula until a loose dough forms.
4. Cover the bowl with cling film and lay a towel over the top. Leave to rise at room temperature for 2-3 hours. You will see it rise and bubble up. Once doubled in size, place the dough in the fridge overnight, roughly for 12 hours. The dough can be kept for 3 days in the fridge.
5. Once your dough has rested, place it on a floured surface, roll out your dough to ¼ of an inch thick. Using a round cookie cutter or a cup, cut out your round pieces of dough.
6. Lay your sufganiyot on a baking tray lined with parchment paper.
7. Cover your sufganiyot with a towel and leave to rise again at room temperature for 20-30 minutes. You will know when they are ready because they will have puffed up.
8. Gently brush the sufganiyot with butter before placing them in an oven that's been preheated to 190°C or 375°F. Bake for 15 minutes. Keep a close eye on them so they don't get too brown.
9. Once out of the oven, let the sufganiyot cool while you mix together the ingredients for the glaze, then dip your sufganiyot in the glaze and enjoy!



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