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המזרחי HAMIZRACHI

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World Mizrachi is the global Religious Zionist movement, spreading *Torat Eretz Yisrael* across the world and strengthening the bond between the State of Israel and Jewish communities around the world.

Based in Jerusalem and with branches across the globe, Mizrachi – an acronym for *merkaz ruchani* (spiritual center) – was founded in 1902 by Rabbi Yitzchak Yaakov Reines, and is led today by Rabbi Doron Perez. Mizrachi's role was then and remains with vigor today, to be a proactive partner and to take personal responsibility in contributing to the collective destiny of *Klal Yisrael* through a commitment to Torah, the Land of Israel and the People of Israel.

HAMIZRACHI

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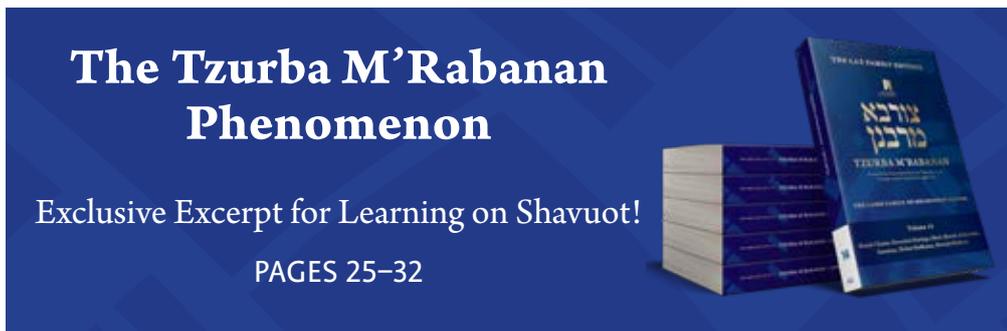
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Mizrachi Celebrates Israel 75 and the World Orthodox Israel Congress

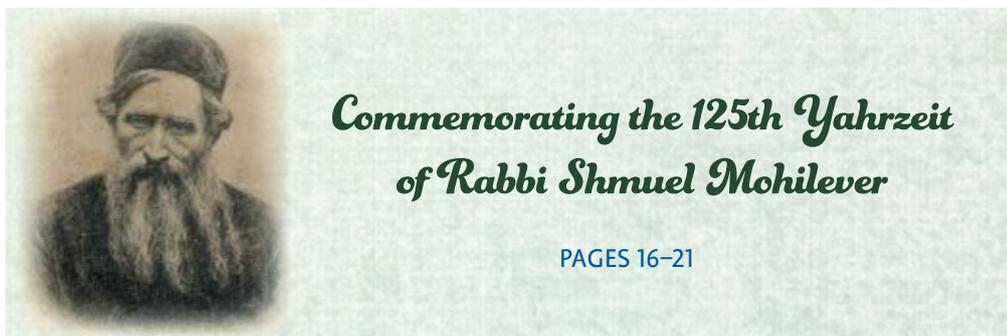
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"Everyone to whom Israel is dear should have this book in their library."

Rabbi Berel Wein

“ Rabbi Doron Perez has authored a powerful and passionate call for civility and unity within the Jewish community.... He makes a compelling case for the central role the State of Israel can play and, in particular, the Mizrachi movement which he heads with such distinction can – and must – play in assuring the continued flourishing of the Jewish people.... Read this book carefully and be inspired to do your share.

Rabbi Jacob J. Schacter, University Professor of Jewish History and Jewish Thought, Yeshiva University

“ Rabbi Doron Perez has masterfully woven biblical sources with medieval commentaries and contemporary thinkers to create a magnificent tapestry of the unique Jewish state illustrating its past and future. From the teachings of Avraham Avinu through Rav Kook, he has highlighted the religious, national, and universal tenets embraced by the Jewish people, and the importance of incorporating these three principles as a cultural platform for unity.

Rabbanit Shani Taragin, Educational Director, Mizrachi; Rosh Beit Medrash for Women, YU Israel

“ The success and sustainability of the Jewish people is in many ways dependent on its internal unity. Rabbi Perez has written a critical book about this very topic.... As a person who dedicates herself to sharing a love of Judaism, Israel, and of all Jews, I strongly recommend reading this book about our beloved Jewish state.

Miriam Peretz, Recipient of Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement



The Jewish State – From Opposition to Opportunity, by Rabbi Doron Perez, was launched at Mizrachi’s World Orthodox Israel Congress.

**TO PURCHASE THE BOOK,
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The Revolutionary Idea of Covenant

Rabbi Doron Perez

Last month, Mizrahi Press and Gefen Publishing House released “The Jewish State – From Opposition to Opportunity” by Rabbi Doron Perez, Executive Chairman of World Mizrahi. The following essay is adapted from the book.

Human life is first and foremost about relationships, particularly those that matter to us most. We have different types of relationships – with our families, our communities, and with G-d. According to Jewish tradition, there is one central organizing principle to all these critical relationships. The Tanach introduces us to one of the most transformative ideas in all of religious history – the concept of a *brit*.

Mentioned 283 times in Tanach, this revolutionary idea creates a unique framework to define the nature of the relationships between G-d and humanity, G-d and the Jewish people as a whole, G-d and each of the founding fathers of the Jewish people, the founders and their descendants, and indeed, the relationships among all members of the Jewish people for all generations. The *brit* is the paradigmatic framework through which Jews are charged

to relate to each other, to their historic community, and to Hashem.

Covenant versus contract

The *brit* forges a covenantal bond beyond what the rational human mind can conjure on its own. To understand this transcendental, divinely inspired concept, we must juxtapose it with the human constructs of agreements and contracts.

One of the most influential political philosophers, Englishman Thomas Hobbes, was the first to define the organizing principle of human society and the state as “the social contract.” In his 1651 book *Leviathan*, he described the way human beings create societies through a type of social contract in which members of society commit to collectively protecting their own individual rights. The main motivations of a functional society are self-interest and self-preservation. People agree to a central governing mechanism to try to ensure that

no one harms another, in an attempt to live and let live.

A biblical covenant could not be more different. While the social contract focuses predominantly on self-interest and personal benefit, the covenant focuses on the collective. The focus is less on the protection of individual rights and more on people’s responsibility to society as a whole. While preserving individuality and personal dignity in the process, a covenantal system encourages the individual to be driven by a commitment to the greater good. The goal of the individual in a covenantal system is to dedicate oneself for the sake of society as opposed to utilizing society to serve oneself.

This can only be done when individuals transcend personal gain and protection of their own individual space and focus on fulfilling the needs of others. Values and moral commitment are at the heart of the covenant, whereas parochial individual

needs and interests are at the heart of normative agreements and contracts. Contracts protect rights; covenants delineate mutual responsibilities. Contracts are built on what each party can get; covenants specify what each party ought to give. Contracts are self-serving; covenants transcend the self.

Rav Kook highlights this very distinction between general human societies and a distinctly Jewish one. A general society may be compared to a large insurance company; in essence, every citizen is ensuring his or her personal needs by being part of this society. Not so a Jewish society, which should be based first and foremost on mutual values and lofty moral and spiritual ideals (*Orot Yisrael* 6:7).

An everlasting bond

The biblical covenant is an everlasting binding agreement. Those who commit to it enter a new entity of unparalleled dedication and commitment in which the other is the focus. G-d binds Himself in an eternal bond, a divine contract, as a party in an agreement that He is bound by. A *brit* is not only something that binds G-d to a people and the Jewish people to G-d, but it is something that binds all Jews across generations. Even those yet to be born are committed to this bond.

Multiple covenants appear at every critical juncture of Jewish history, always reinforcing and expanding mutual commitment. Particularly at times of challenge and suffering, G-d would remember His commitment to and covenant with His people. Immediately prior to the Exodus, G-d responds to Moshe's plea regarding *Bnei Yisrael's* suffering and says that He will surely redeem them, as He remembers the covenant that He made with their forefathers. So too, later on at the end of the horrific curses in *Sefer Vayikra*, G-d says that He will remember the covenant made with all three of the forefathers and will not forsake His people despite anything they have done. At the foot of *Har Sinai*, an additional covenant is made for the Jewish people to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (*Shemot* 19).

With the giving of the Ten Commandments and the Torah at Sinai, the Jewish people say the eternal words of "*na'aseh v'nishmah*," "We will do and we will listen," committing themselves as a people to the values of the Torah (*Shemot* 24:7). Before entry into the Land, as the entire new generation stands together, Moshe enacts another covenant, this time explicitly binding all Jews for all generations as part

of the eternal spiritual entity of *Knesset Yisrael* (*Devarim* 29).

Rights versus responsibilities

At the very core of all covenantal relationships is the primary value of responsibilities.

Commitment and responsibility to others is the very heart of a Torah-based civil society, as opposed to the Western ideal of protecting personal security and mutual self-interest. Similar to the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Constitution of the United States speaks of the "unalienable rights" to "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness." Human law enshrines rights, while Jewish law focuses on responsibilities.

Fascinatingly, nowhere in the Torah is there a specific focus on individual rights. Throughout the Torah, though, there is a focus on duties and responsibilities, epitomized in the 613 *mitzvot*. In the Torah's perspective, all individual rights stem directly from the personal responsibility that the Torah places on the individual. If I am personally responsible for my moral behavior and called upon to act with loving-kindness to others, then ipso facto, I and all others have inalienable individual rights. It is the duty to be kind and considerate to others that begets the rights of one and all.

Why does the Torah focus on responsibilities as opposed to rights?

First, it seems that a major shortcoming of focusing primarily on rights is that it is not clear exactly who is responsible to provide them. For example, if I have the right to food and sustenance, should I be solely responsible for providing it? Perhaps others should also be responsible – my family, community, government, or society at large? This can lead to dependency and a sense of privilege and entitlement; after all, if I have a right to something without being responsible to provide it for myself, then I am entitled to receive it from someone else.

Second, there is another essential difference between human law and divinely mandated law. Rabbeinu Nissim explains that the primary focus of civil law is to create a functional and organized society, whereas the main focus of civil law from a Torah point of view is of a spiritual nature – to create a more G-dly society (*Derashot HaRan*, 11).

Rabbi Shlomo Zalman Pines, a student of Rav Kook, explains this further. He argues that societies rooted in human civil law can ultimately create an orderly society,

by preventing people from hurting one another and damaging each other's property. The aim of *mishpat* (Jewish law), though, is to transform human beings spiritually and morally – to help people be more selfless and less selfish and to encourage them not to act on animalistic instincts, but rather on moral conscience, to aim to do what is right rather than what is convenient, and to be driven by values and not by expedience (*Mussar HaMikra v'HaTalmud*, 36).

In short, a legal system rooted in human consensus alone is a collective effort to ensure the protection of individual rights – to guard against mutual harm. This is very noble, and the Western world has done much to advance the dignity of all human beings. But the Torah requires more. The aim is no less than a heavenly society collectively committed to the ethic of personal responsibility – a life of personal and communal spiritual transformation in which individuals proactively partner with G-d in creating a better and more just society, by seeing all human beings as created in His image.

The covenantal relationship at the heart of Jewish society is thus based on mutual responsibility to one another and the good of society as a whole. The idea of the covenantal relationship in Judaism is so positively transformative that it is seen as the very ideal that the nations of the world will wish to emulate in aiming to build a better society. In the famous words of Yishayahu the prophet, a Jewish society will be a source of light to the nations: "I, the L-rd, have called you to display My righteousness, and I will take you by the hand and guard you, and I will make you [the Jewish people] an exemplar of a covenantal nation, a light to the nations" (*Yishayahu* 42:6).

It is this eternal bond of the Jewish people among each other, with all generations both before and after, and with their G-d that ought to animate the ongoing project of Jewish statehood.



Rabbi Doron Perez
is the Executive Chairman
of World Mizrahi.

“Mothers of The Nation”



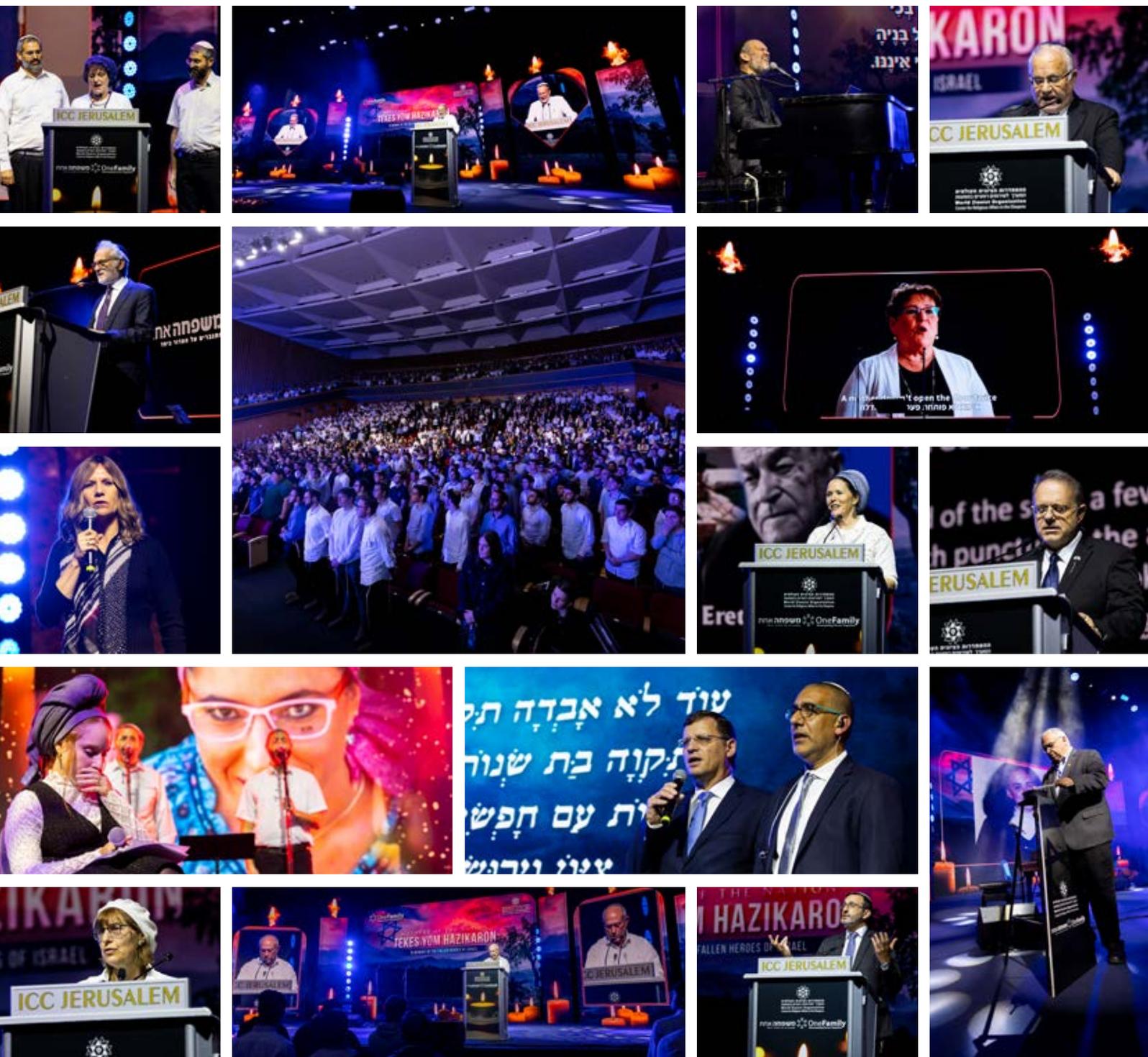
המסדרות הציונית העולמית
 המערך לשירותים רוחניים בתפוצות
 World Zionist Organization
 Center for Religious Affairs in the Diaspora

משפחה אחת OneFamily
 מתגברים על הטורף ביחד Overcoming Terror Together

On Yom HaZikaron evening, a moving *tekes* (ceremony) was held in Binyanei Hauma on the topic of the “Mothers of the Nation”. The *tekes* featured: Opening words from Rabbi Leo Dee, who lost his wife Lucy and daughters Maia and Rina in a terror attack on Pesach • Miriam Peretz, who lost two sons in battle • Rabbanit Rachelle Fraenkel, who lost her son Naftali who was kidnapped and murdered along with Gilad Shaer and Eyal Yifrach • Yossi Ron, who lost his mother and father in the battle for Kfar Etzion on the eve of the founding of the State of Israel, and recited *kaddish* on their 75th *yahrzeits* • Elaine Hoter, who lost her son Gavriel in a terror attack • Renana Meir, whose mother Dafna was murdered in a terror attack • Devorah Kay, whose son Eli was murdered in a terror attack in the Old City • Chana Goodman, who lost her son Yosef when he sacrificed himself to save his commander in an IDF parachute jump accident

The evening was accompanied by the music of Yonatan Razel and the Hoter family, and inspirational words from World Mizrahi Executive Chairman Rabbi Doron Perez, Chairman of OneFamily Marc Belzberg, and World Zionist Organization Chairman Yaakov Hagoel.

The event was organized by the Department for Religious Affairs in the Diaspora of the World Zionist Organization headed by Roi Abecassis, representative of World Mizrahi in the national institutions, in partnership with OneFamily.





Israel 75

המרכז
לשליחות
ציונית
לתפוצות



Commemorating Yom HaZikaron and Celebrating Yom HaAtzmaut

The Center for Zionist Shlichut to the Diaspora (founded by World Mizrahi) together with KKL-JNF organized two days of programming over Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut for over 300 participants from around the world.

Highlights included: Opening dinner hosted by Nefesh B'Nefesh • Guided tours at Har Herzl following the Yom HaZikaron siren and official ceremony • Lunch hosted by Jerusalem College of Technology • Visits to families of fallen soldiers and victims of terror • A Yom HaAtzmaut celebratory extravaganza featuring Ishay Ribo, the IDF Rabbinal Choir, and a special performance by Miami Boys Choir alumni who made *Aliyah* • Festive Yom HaAtzmaut musical tefillah led by Aaron Razel • Special tours across Gush Etzion, culminating in a barbeque lunch at the Oz VeGaon Nature Reserve



Opening dinner at Nefesh B'Nefesh



Visiting graves of a fallen soldier at Har Herzl on Yom HaZikaron



Rabbi Doron Perez addressing the lunch hosted by Jerusalem College of Technology



Rabbi Perez visiting Miriam Peretz at her home on Yom HaZikaron



IDF Rabbinal Choir performing at Sultan's Pool



Miami Boys Choir alumni who have made Aliyah perform



MK Ohad Tal speaking at the Yom HaAtzmaut celebration



Ishay Ribo performing at Sultan's Pool



Aaron Razel leading Hallel on Yom HaAtzmaut



Yom HaAtzmaut festive tefillah



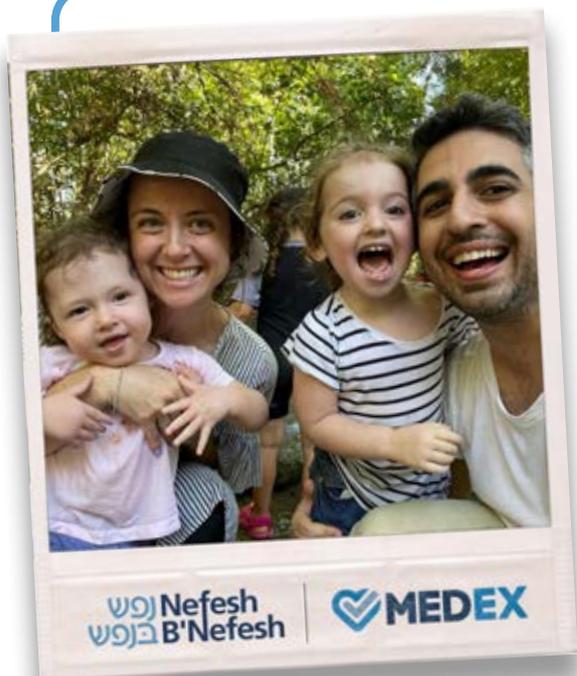
Tours across Gush Etzion



Lunch at Oz VeGaon Nature Reserve

(PHOTOS: AREL OHANA)

Young Olim Giving Back to Israel



Elle Shimoni has always felt a deep responsibility to contribute to her homeland. Elle graduated nursing school in 2015 and originally planned to work for a few years before making *Aliyah*. However, the murder of Dafna Meir changed her plans. Elle felt a strong connection to Dafna, who was also a nurse, and decided to dedicate her *Aliyah* to her. Only five days after making *Aliyah* in 2016, Elle met with Dafna's widower, Natan Meir, and it was the most special day of her life. Natan says that Elle's dedication to Dafna's memory brought light into his family's life.

After making *Aliyah*, Elle completed an Ulpan program and worked in the Terem medical center. She then moved on to the pediatric and postpartum units at Hadassah Hospital, all while raising two children with her husband. The past six years have been busy, but great. In March 2023, Elle joined Nefesh B'Nefesh at MedEx to share her experiences as a nurse in Israel. She hopes to inspire other nurses and nursing students to consider making *Aliyah* and to contribute to Israel.

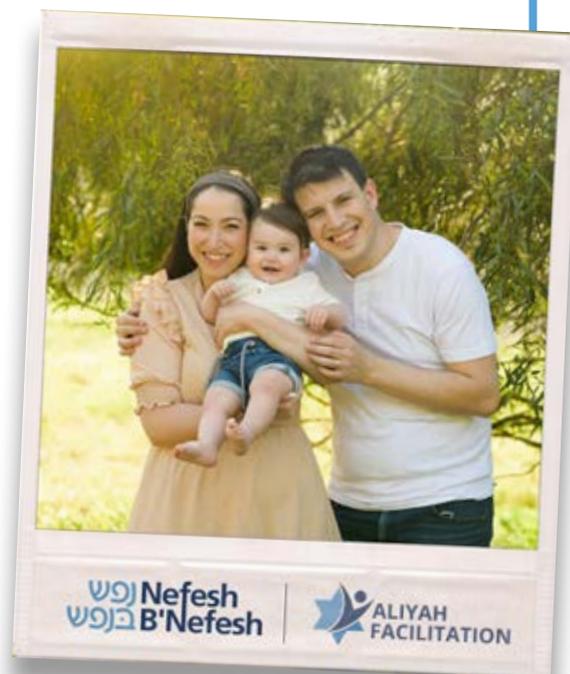
Elle has found that working in Israel presents unique challenges and opportunities. She has learned to adapt to a different healthcare system and has gained a greater appreciation for the resilience of the Israeli people. She believes that working as a nurse in Israel is not just a job but a calling to serve the Jewish people. Elle's inspiring dedication to her work and her commitment to Dafna's memory reminds us of the importance of serving others and the power of the human spirit.

When **Chaya Engel** first traveled to Israel, she never imagined it would become her home. As an American, she thought that making *Aliyah* was reserved for those who fit a "certain mold," which she did not. Despite her reservations, she found herself drawn to Israel, feeling a magnetic attraction that she couldn't resist. Everything changed for Chaya when she staffed her first Birthright Israel trip in the summer of 2014, only a few weeks after three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped and murdered. Despite the circumstances, Chaya boarded her flight with 40 American college students who were eager to learn and explore. Hours after they landed, war broke out, and rockets began to fall.

For the next three years, Chaya struggled with her dream of making *Aliyah*. In July 2017, she was ready to face her fears and take a leap of faith. She spent the entire *Aliyah* flight overthinking everything, afraid that she had made a mistake. Despite the rocky start, Chaya persevered and found her place in Israel. A year and a half into her *Aliyah*, she met the man who would become her husband, and they now have a sweet 1.5-year-old baby boy. Looking back, Chaya is grateful that she didn't let her fears get the best of her and that she continued to persevere, despite the challenges.

Living in Israel is not easy, but Chaya loves it here. Making *Aliyah* helped her to find her family and her place in the world. Sadly, she lost her father unexpectedly four months ago. Chaya's father was a brilliant, honest, and hard working man who always believed that "children are the only wealth that lasts." Despite his passing, Chaya feels that she is living out her destiny and her father's dream. She remembers the eve of her wedding when her father walked the streets of Jerusalem, crying in joy and love for the Jewish homeland.

Chaya is forever grateful for the journey that led her to Israel. She now works at Nefesh B'Nefesh as an *Aliyah* Advisor helping other *olim* make Israel their home. Despite the challenges she has faced, Chaya remains committed to her life in Israel, honoring her father's memory every step of the way.



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FOR ISRAEL



Ministry of Aliyah
and Integration



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On April 26–28, 2023 (Iyar 6–7, 5783), World Mizrahi hosted the historic inaugural World Orthodox Israel Congress in Yerushalayim. Over 1,500 attendees representing communities in 48 countries gathered in Yerushalayim to discuss modern Jewish issues including Israel-Diaspora relations, Women’s Leadership, the Future of Jewish Education and many more. From our gala dinner on Wednesday night, through two days of sessions and a special Mishmar, new conversations began and new relationships formed. We are excited to build on this success as we move forward!



Gael Grunewald, Senior Representative of World Mizrahi in the National Institutions



Robbie Rothenberg, Board Member, World Mizrahi



Rabbanit Shani Taragin, Educational Director, World Mizrahi



Dr. Danny Lamm AM, Vice Chairman, World Mizrahi



Rabbi Hershel Schachter speaking to the Youth Leadership delegates



Rabbi Doron Perez, Rabbi Hershel Schachter, Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter, and Rabbi Menachem Genack



Rabbanit Yemima Mizrahi, Dr. Rona Novick, Rabbanit Chana Henkin, Rabbanit Rachele Fraenkel, and Rabbanit Shani Taragin



Mrs. Laurie Novick, Director and Head Writer of Deracheha, womenandmitzvot.org



Sivan Rahav-Meir speaking at the mishmar



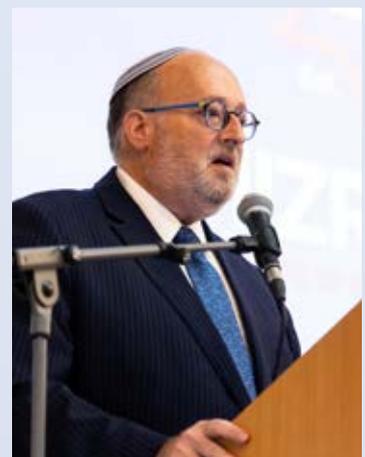
Rabbi Mark Dratch, Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon, Rabbi Hershel Schachter, and Rabbi Yosef Carmel



Meeting of the head delegates from each of the 48 countries represented at the Congress



Mrs. Miriam Tawil, Midreshet Eshel



Rabbi Dr. Kenneth Brander, President and Rosh Yeshiva, Ohr Torah Stone



Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis gave the Keynote Address at the opening gala dinner



Harvey Blitz, Chairman, World Mizrahi



Rabbi Doron Perez, Executive Chairman, World Mizrahi



Rabbi Danny Mirvis, Deputy CEO, World Mizrahi



Rabbi Hershel Schachter, Rosh Yeshiva, RIETS



Miriam Peretz, Chief Rabbi David Lau, and Natan Sharansky at the opening plenary



Ariel Chesner, Dr. Joseph Jacobson, Hadas Kramer, Dr. Simcha Chesner, and Rabbi Yuval Cherlow



Senior Diaspora rabbis meet with Minister of Diaspora Affairs Amichai Chikli together with Natan Sharansky



Ricka Razel Kumzitz at the women's mishmar



Roof tour with David Weinberg



Michael Bloch, Y. Dov Meyer, Mitchel Aeder, Debbie Isaac, and Aryeh Goldberg



Rabbi Reuven Taragin, Educational Director, World Mizrahi



Mrs. Bracha Krohn, Midreshet Moriah



The Congress took place at the iconic Hechal Shlomo and Great Synagogue in the center of Yerushalayim

Over 1,500 Participants at Inaugural World Orthodox Israel Congress



Miriam Peretz, Recipient of the Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement and Special Contribution to Society



Ro'i Abecassis, Senior Representative of World Mizrahi in the National Institutions



Rabbi Dr. Jacob J. Schacter, Professor of Jewish History and Jewish Thought, Yeshiva University



Shira Lankin Sheps, The Layers Project



Rabbi Eliezer Melamed, Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon, and Rabbi Benzion Algazi



Yonah Rossman and Rabbi Leo Dee speaking to the Youth Leadership delegates



Asher Fredman, David Weinberg, Fleur Hassan-Nahoum, and Aryeh Lightstone



Rabbi Mark Dratch, Chief Rabbi Pinchas Goldschmidt, Hamutal Rogel, Rabbi Yechiel Wasserman, and Mr. Gady Gronich



Minister of Aliyah and Absorption Ofir Sofer meets with leaders of Diaspora Jewish communities



Prof. Yedidia Stern, Dr. Nitsana Darshan-Leitner, and Prof. Moshe Koppel



Chief Rabbi Sir Ephraim Mirvis speaking to the Youth Leadership delegates



Gael Grunewald, Rabbi Reuven Tradburks, Rabbi Dr. Leonard Matanky, Minister Amichai Chikli, MK Ohad Tal, Rabbi Binyamin Blau, and Rabbi Moshe Hauer



Rebbetzin Natalie Altman, Rabbi Andrew Shaw, and Rabbi Dr. Seth Grauer presenting to the Youth Leadership delegates



David Weinberg and Itzik Stern



Youth Leadership delegates with Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon



Rabbi Scot Berman and Rabbi Dov Zinger

(PHOTOS: ARIEL OHANA/JACOB ZALDIN)



Meeting Old Friends and New

One of the most exciting aspects of the World Orthodox Israel Congress was the new relationships formed and conversations begun. Throughout all aspects of the Congress, the 1,500 participants from 48 different countries got to interact with an unprecedentedly diverse group of Jewish leaders. We are looking forward to seeing these relationships and conversations continue!



Reflections on the Mizrachi World Orthodox Israel Congress

Odelia Glausiusz

Walking into Mizrachi's World Orthodox Israel Congress last Thursday, I wasn't sure what to expect. After picking up my name tag, I tried to orient myself. The lobby was filled with book stands and people were milling around. The international flavor of the event was obvious; a friendly lady from San Diego introduced herself to me as we walked upstairs, and I soon bumped into delegates I knew from London. There was a palpable sense of enthusiasm and optimism in the air.

Dr. Rena Novick, Dean of the Azrieli Graduate School of Jewish Education, summed up the atmosphere of the Congress: "It's incredible to be with so many like-minded people who are committed to advancing the Jewish story, to advancing the Religious Zionist story; people who are both bright-eyed but also reasonably realistic about the challenges we face." By the end of the day, I saw that Dr. Novick's insight was spot on. The panelists were thought-provoking and forthright in addressing our community's challenges, but also hopeful that these challenges could be overcome.

Miriam Peretz, recipient of the Israel Prize for Lifetime Achievement and Special Contribution to Society, set the tone in her opening address. She stressed that our strength as Jewish people in the Land of Israel is due to the *ruach*, the spirit, of the people who live here. Above all, she emphasized that we are obligated to look out for one another. "When I see you," she said, looking out at the audience, "I see *yachad*, oneness. I feel that you are my brothers and sisters." Natan Sharansky gave the final opening address, and similarly concluded his speech with the words, "Zionism unites everyone." For him, as a Jew in Ukraine, "to be Jewish was to be born with a disease." But after 1967, Israel

entered his life. He realized we are a people with an incredible history that he, too, could be a part of. "You discover you have a family, a state. When you discover this identity, you have the strength to start fighting... you are sure that all of Israel is fighting for you."

In a later session I sat next to another friendly lady, who turned out to be Sondra Sokal, vice-chair of World Mizrachi. She commented that though the relationship between Diaspora Jewry and Israelis has so often been antagonistic, "this [Congress] has been so different, so purposeful, and so focused on bringing people together. It's refreshing." Similarly, Rabbanit Rachelle Fraenkel noted the "interesting blend of people that came from abroad," and the sense of connection between everyone: "There's a lot of excitement, a feeling of growth of Religious Zionism in *chutz la'aretz*, and it wasn't always that way. It's growing again, and there's enthusiasm and a great energy here."

At a session on "Defining and Developing Women's Torah Leadership," a vibrant panel of inspiring female educators spoke with infectious passion. They addressed the unique contributions that female community leaders have to give, and the need not only for Torah teachers, but also for lay leaders to properly guide and impact the lifestyles of Jewish women today.

The need for leadership was a consistent theme throughout the day. At a session addressing the worldwide shortage of educators and rabbis, the panelists discussed the severity of the problem as well as creative plans to increase the number of quality candidates entering the field. I was struck by these educators' idealism, and left the room with a better understanding of the challenge and renewed hope for the future of Jewish education.

Another fascinating panel addressed the ways in which technology is reshaping Judaism, while a rooftop tour of Jerusalem offered a succinct and eye-opening explanation of Jerusalem's current geopolitical climate. The last session I attended, "From Antisemitism to *Ohr Lagoyim*: Religious Zionism's Moment to Impact the Nations of the World," was an eye-opening discussion between two Jews and two Christians about *Am Yisrael's* impact on the broader world. Whether we realize it or not, millions of non-Jews around the world are turning to us for leadership.

Rabbi Leo Dee opened the evening *Mishmar* sessions with moving words about faith and how a growth mindset is the key to happiness. He asked us all to "take energy and direct it into something you're passionate about, in memory of Lucy, Maia and Rina." It was a fitting challenge to end an extraordinary day. How will the hundreds of rabbis, educators and lay leaders present channel the passion and insight gleaned from the Congress when they return to their communities? By the look of inspired determination on the delegates' faces, it was clear they are up for the challenge.



Odedia Glausiusz
recently moved to Jerusalem where
she works as a freelance writer.



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Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever זצ"ל

Commemorating the 125th Yahrzeit of the Forefather of the Mizrachi Movement

Rabbi Elie Mischel

When Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever passed away 125 years ago on the 19th of Sivan, 1898, he left the world with the satisfaction of knowing that his life's work had not been in vain. Among the founders of the *Chibbat Zion* movement and one of the spiritual fathers of Religious Zionism, Rav Mohilever planted the seeds that would later flower and become the Mizrachi movement founded by Rabbi Yitzchak Ya'akov Reines.

Born in 1824 in Glubokoye, a village in northern Belarus not far from Vilna, Rav Mohilever was soon recognized

as a child prodigy and brilliant young Torah scholar. He married at fifteen and studied at the famed Volozhin Yeshiva, where he was later ordained at the age of eighteen.

Initially, Rav Mohilever refused to practice as a rabbi, working as a flax merchant for five years. But the death of his wealthy in-laws and business reversals compelled him to enter the rabbinate in his home village. In the decades to follow, Rav Mohilever would serve as the rabbi of ever larger Jewish communities. In 1868, he moved to Radom, in modern-day Poland, where he first began to actively work for the

resettlement of *Eretz Yisrael*. Inspired by Rav Zvi Hirsch Kalischer's groundbreaking Religious Zionist work, *Derishat Zion* (1862), Rav Mohilever began writing for the Hebrew-language weekly *HaMagid*. Like Rav Kalischer, Rav Mohilever discerned Hashem's hand in his generation, sensing that the world was experiencing the early stirrings of the Messianic era.

In early 1881, shortly before he was elected as the rabbi in Bialystok, horrific pogroms in Kiev and other cities throughout Imperial Russia pushed Rav Mohilever and other early Zionists to act. When tens of thousands of

Jews fled across the Russian border to Galicia, Rav Mohilever participated in a conference of western Jewish leaders to decide what to do with the refugees. He argued, unsuccessfully, that the refugees should be resettled in Palestine.

Most significantly, the pogroms were the catalyst for the formation of the *Chovevei Zion*, also known as *Chibbat Zion* – a variety of groups and organizations established to promote emigration to Palestine. Though the movement was dominated by secularists like Leon Pinsker, Rav Mohilever quickly became one its most important leaders, elected president of the *Chovevei Zion* conference in 1884.

Rav Mohilever's decision to work side-by-side with secularists and agnostics in the *Chibbat Zion* movement set a critically important precedent for the Religious Zionist movement. Standing between Orthodox traditionalists who rejected all cooperation with irreligious Zionists and secular Zionists who regularly flouted *halacha*, Rav Mohilever's balancing act foreshadowed the difficult role the Mizrachi movement would later play in the Zionist movement and the State of Israel.

Interestingly, Rav Mohilever also worked closely with Laurence Oliphant, a Christian Zionist and an emissary of the Lord Mayor of London. Both men sought to help as many Jews emigrate to Palestine as possible. Rav Mohilever even issued a public statement of support for Oliphant: "Our brethren should not suspect that his intention is to strengthen the Christian religion and divert our people from their faith... He and his wife wish only for the fulfillment of the words of the prophets that Israel will be restored to its Land, and that [the Jews] should do this in a way that enables them to keep every detail of the Jewish religion."

In 1882, the Ottoman Sultan forbade Jews from entering Palestine, threatening the viability of the new settlements. During this precarious time, Rav Mohilever performed his greatest service for the Zionist movement. He traveled to Paris to meet the young Baron Edmond de Rothschild and successfully convinced him to support the struggling pioneers in *Eretz Yisrael*. After hearing the rabbi out, Rothschild announced, "Rabbi... state the sum and I shall give it." Until his death in 1934, Rothschild remained the single greatest benefactor of the new *Yishuv*.

Rav Mohilever worked constantly to promote and support the colonization



Participants of a convention of *Chovevei Zion* groups in Katowice in 1884 assembled to address the need of a Jewish state. Seated in the center of the front row are Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever and Dr. Leon Pinsker. (PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

of the Land. He wrote, "From all that has been said, it becomes clear to us that the verse 'And you shall dispossess the inhabitants of the land and dwell in it' (Bamidbar 33:53) is a positive commandment which is equivalent to all the *mitzvot* in the Torah. The most important part of this commandment is the dispossession of the inhabitants and possession of the Land. At the time when Israel was an independent nation, this was done by war, and during our present era, the Land is bought with money. Such an act of buying land is considered by our Sages to gain for the individual a share in the world to come, and the commandment to buy land even pushes aside a *shevut* (rabbinic prohibition) on Shabbat..."

Unlike Rav Kalischer, who never had the opportunity to see the Holy Land, Rav Mohilever succeeded in visiting *Eretz Yisrael* in 1890. He traveled throughout the country, visiting old Jewish communities in Jaffa, Jerusalem and Chevron as well as new settlements like Petach Tikva, Rishon LeTzion and Zichron Ya'akov. He also played a key role in purchasing the land upon which the settlement of Rechovot would soon be established.

Returning to Europe, Rav Mohilever defended the secular Jewish pioneers that he met during his trip: "I am surprised to see many rabbinic scholars and pious Jews opposing the development of Palestine by Jews because, as they claim, the Jewish colonists, particularly the young element, do not observe the law... Even if such accusations were true, I have shown long ago from rabbinic writings that G-d prefers His children to be in His

Land, even if they do not observe the law in the proper manner, rather than live in other lands and observe the law scrupulously" (Benjamin L. Gordon, *New Judea: Jewish life in Modern Palestine and Egypt*, 1919).

In 1893, after a series of disagreements with the secular leadership of the *Chibbat Zion* movement, based in Odessa, Rav Mohilever created a new Zionist center to promote Zionism among the traditional Orthodox community. He called this office "*Mizrachi*," an abbreviation for *merkaz ruchani*, or "spiritual center." Nine years later, when the Religious Zionist movement was reestablished by Rav Reines and other students of Rav Mohilever, they adopted "*Mizrachi*" as the name of the movement.

At the very end of his life, Rav Mohilever merited to witness the rise of Theodor Herzl and the beginnings of political Zionism. The two great leaders corresponded, and though he could not attend the First Zionist Congress due to poor health, Rav Mohilever's grandson read an address at the Congress on his behalf.

In 1913, when secular Zionists established a *kibbutz* in northern Israel, east of Chadera, they chose to name it "*Gan Shmuel*," "Samuel's Garden," in honor of Rav Mohilever. It is a fitting tribute to Rav Mohilever's belief that all Jews must work together to rebuild the Jewish homeland in *Eretz Yisrael*. May his memory inspire our people to turn towards each other in love and unity!

Memories of Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever

Rabbi Yitzhak Nissenbaum hy”d

In 1893, after Rabbi Yitzhak Nissenbaum attended a secret meeting of the Chovevei Zion, Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever offered him the opportunity to become the secretary of the new “Merkaz Ruchani” movement, usually abbreviated as “Mizrachi,” the predecessor to the Mizrachi movement that would later be founded in 1902. Over the next four years until Rav Mohilever’s death, Rav Nissenbaum worked closely with the great rabbi of Bialystok, recruiting thousands of new members to the movement. In his memoir, Alei Cheldi (1930), Rav Nissenbaum included the following memories of Rav Mohilever, translated here for the first time.

Rav Shmuel was constantly concerned for the *Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael*, and used every opportunity he had to assist it or protect it from those who wished it harm – and there were many!

One time the head of the Lomza Yeshiva, Rabbi Eliezer Bentzion Shulevitz, came to Rav Mohilever to request a letter encouraging wealthy donors to support his *yeshiva*. At that time, Mizrachi representatives in many cities frequently complained that the *meshulachim* (fundraisers) from the Lomza Yeshiva would speak disparagingly about *yishuv Eretz Yisrael* and *Chovevei Zion*. Rav Shmuel was very clear with Rav Shulevitz: if he directed his *meshulachim* to change their ways and stop disparaging the honor of the *Yishuv*, then and only then would he give Rav Shulevitz the requested letter. Rav Shulevitz agreed, and from that time on, the *meshulachim* stopped speaking against the *Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael*.

One time, the Maggid Simcha Kahana, who was known as “The Maggid with Long Hair,” came to Bialystok. He always carried hundreds of reference letters from Torah scholars, writers and other important Jews that described him as a “*gadol b’yisrael*,” one the “great rabbis of the generation.” In the advertisements for his *derashot*, he pronounced himself the author of the book *A Defense of the Talmud* – a book no one had ever seen – and in his *derashot*, he boasted that he defended the holy Talmud against the conspiracies and accusations of its internal and external enemies. And then he would begin to rain fire and brimstone on these “internal enemies” of the Talmud – the *Maskilim* and the *Chovevei Zion*, accusing

them of all sorts of conspiracies and evil plots against Jewish tradition and the Talmud. He spoke about the new *Yishuv* as if it were an עיר הנדחת, a “city led astray” by idolatry.

This time, when Kahana came to Bialystok, he wanted to give a *derasha* in the *Beit Midrash HaGavoha*, the largest forum in the city. But the *gabbaim* told him that he needed to obtain a license to speak from Rav Mohilever, and so he came to Rav Shmuel to obtain the necessary license. Knowing the nature of this man, Rav Shmuel did not wish to engage in a long conversation with him, and simply said: “If you will praise the *Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael*, I will give you the license to speak. If not, you can immediately leave the city, for you will not speak in Bialystok!” “But this is bribery!” complained Kahana bitterly. “So be it!” answered the Rav. “A bribe like this I am willing to accept! Otherwise, you will not speak.” The Maggid grudgingly agreed to the terms and requested the license to speak in writing. Rav Shmuel looked at me and said: “Please speak with the *gabbai* of the *Beit Midrash HaGavoha* and tell him that I am only allowing this man to speak on the condition that he praises the *Yishuv* in his speech. And you, Rav Yitzhak, go listen to his *derasha* and make sure he keeps his promise!” And so it was that the Maggid most opposed to settling *Eretz Yisrael* gave a speech in praise of the *Yishuv*.

Rav Shmuel once came to a large city for meetings on behalf of the *Yishuv in Eretz Yisrael*. In his honor, the community organized a large assembly of the most important Jews in the city. When Rav Shmuel finished speaking,

a very wealthy and religious member of the community stood up and began to attack the *Yishuv* “in the name of Torah and *mitzvot*.” When he finished, Rav Shmuel stood up and said: “I will tell you all a story.”

“A young man from a different city was learning in a *yeshiva* in a small town. His father would periodically send him money to pay for his expenses, which the father would send to the local *shochet*’s address for safekeeping to ensure the money would reach his son. One time, the young man received a letter from his father, who wrote that he had sent 25 rubles to pay for his expenses. The young man was surprised, because he had never received the money! He quickly ran to the *shochet* to ask him why, but the *shochet* claimed he had never received the money. When the young man received another letter from his father saying that he had sent the money to the *shochet*, he went to the local rabbi and brought the *shochet* to a *din Torah*, a dispute in front of the local rabbinic court. After hearing both sides of the case, the rabbi ruled that the *shochet* would have to take an oath that he did not steal the money, and then he would be free from any obligation to the young man. At this point, the *shochet* took 25 rubles from his pocket and placed them in front of the rabbi to give to the young man, and then stood up and swore that he had never received the 25 rubles from the man’s father.

The people present were shocked, and asked the *shochet*: ‘If you were willing to return the money to the boy, why did you also take an oath? And if you were willing to swear that you didn’t take the money, why did you give him the 25 rubles?’ The *shochet* explained: ‘If I had given him the money and not taken an oath, you would have said that I stole the money from the boy, but now I was scared of making a false oath and so I returned the money to him. And if I had only taken an oath and not given money to the boy, you would have suspected me in your hearts of swearing falsely for the sake of 25 rubles. But now that I have given the boy this money and also taken an oath, you must all admit that I have sworn truthfully and there is no reason to suspect me of any wrongdoing!’”

Rav Shmuel turned to the wealthy man and said: “If you want me to believe that your opposition to the *Yishuv* “for the sake of Torah and *mitzvot*” stems from a truly pure heart, first give money to support the settling of the Land and *then* make your claims against the *Yishuv*. Otherwise, I have complete permission to say that all your claims against the *Yishuv* “for the sake of Torah and *mitzvot*” derive solely from your desire to be freed of your financial obligation to support it!



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From Near and Far: Reflecting on the Life of Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever

Rabbi Meir Bar Ilan ז"ל

Though he was only seventeen years old at the time of Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever's death in 1898, Rabbi Meir Bar Ilan, son of the illustrious Netziv and one of the Mizrachi movement's greatest thinkers and activists, was well aware of the debt that the nascent Religious Zionist movement owed to Rav Mohilever. In his memoir, From Volozhin to Jerusalem (1939), Rabbi Bar Ilan reflects upon Rav Mohilever's hidden greatness. It is translated here, by David B. Greenberg, for the first time.

A great many events and important people are of entirely different appearance when viewed from up close instead of from afar, though what is seen from afar is not necessarily better or worse. There are other times when both perspectives, from both up close and afar, reflect someone truly great, yet each perspective offers a different insight. Such a man was Rabbi Shmuel Mohilever.

He was an exceptional man, a nationalist Jew in the full meaning of the word. He had a very limited tie to Bialystok, the city he served as rabbi. Bialystok, one of the most important Jewish communities in Russia of the time, was known not so much for the quantity of its Jewish population – though this was more numerous and significant than in other cities of such type – as for the quality of its Jews: students, aristocrats, wealthy individuals, and community operatives. Materially, Białystok was one of the affluent cities, a place of great factories and great enterprises. The city of Bialystok was deemed in economic terms to be second only to Łódź. A minority of the great emporia and factories were owned by Germans, while the bulk of them were owned by Jews. Yet unlike Łódź, Bialystok had a great and long tradition of Jewish

life. The Jewish community there was stable and ordered. The spirit of the great rabbis who dwelled there and the numerous great men of Torah who lived there struck deep roots in the cultural life of the community. In the days of Rav Shmuel Mohilever as well, there were eminent community operatives in Bialystok, some of them illustrious in Torah, who in character and in wisdom stood above the common man.

Despite all this, Rav Shmuel Mohilever was tied more to the wider Jewish world than to his own city. Not all those who knew him on account of his fame knew him as the rabbi of Bialystok. He was less influential in his own city than he was in other places. Despite all the honor that they accorded him and the veneration that the Jews of Bialystok felt for their rabbi, his work for the Jewish collective and his Zionist ideas did not influence the leaders of the local community. His circle of devotees and disciples in Warsaw and Vilna was larger than that in Bialystok, and in his city he was closer to a few young people than he was to the esteemed elders of the congregation.

In this respect, Rav Shmuel Mohilever was a hidden individual. He was held in less high regard in his own city than outside Bialystok, and he was

not appreciated in the wider world of Torah scholarship to the degree he was revered by those who knew him closely. His work as an operative in public matters, particularly in *Chibat Zion*, overshadowed his rabbinate and his scholarly virtuosity. When he came to Brisk for a visit, during the time when Rav Chaim Soloveitchik occupied the rabbinical throne in that place, Rav Chaim took the initiative to go and greet Rav Shmuel. When several of those close to Rav Chaim expressed surprise, because Rav Chaim was the greatest of his generation [and it was beneath his honor to go and greet Rav Shmuel], Rav Chaim responded that Rav Shmuel Mohilever was a great man to be regarded as a rabbinical giant and worthy of having others take the initiative to greet him. After Rav Shmuel passed away, Rav Refael Shapiro, then a rabbi in Babruysk, arose and delivered a great eulogy for him. Rav Refael, who was among the greatest giants of his day and kept a distance from the political world, underscored in his eulogy that Rav Shmuel Mohilever had not been appreciated as would befit his greatness in Torah, as a “prodigy” – just as in his youth he had been dubbed the Prodigy from Hlybokaye – and a great giant.

In truth, not only in the world of scholars – other than among a select few – was Rav Shmuel Mohilever not known, but even in the world of activists and *Chovevei Zion*, he was not seen in the correct light. It may be presumed that in the future too, when people come to write the history of *Chibbat Zion* and its notables, Rav Shmuel Mohilever will be recognized for his actions, but not his essence. Between these actions, whose renown has gone far and wide, and his true self, which was familiar only to individuals close to him, there was a great divide.

In the history of *Chibbat Zion* and the great rabbis and giants of the generation who assisted the movement, without whose assistance it would not have attained the level that it did, the place of honor is occupied by three great men and to some extent, a fourth: Rav Mordechai Eliasberg, the philosopher; Rav Shmuel Mohilever, the doer; my father, may his memory be blessed, the *halachist*; and to some extent, Rav Yitzchak Elchanan, the approbator. The first three names were almost always signed on all the posters of the Odessa Council and on all things relating to *Chibbat Zion*. Sometimes they included the name of Rav Yitzchak Elchanan as well. However, Rav Yitzchak served more in the role of one signaling his approval, just as he did on several other issues – and his approval was highly valuable, because he was a very great authority.

Not so the first three. Rav Mordechai Eliasberg, or as they called him, Rav Mordechai of Bauska, wrote extensively on the idea of the settlement of the Land of Israel. His book *Shevil haZahav (The Golden Path)* is a masterpiece in this field. Regrettably, he is very little known both in the religious world and in Zionist circles. The manner in which Rav Mordechai perceived the *Chibbat Zion* movement in that time was politically and culturally Zionist in the fullest sense, as conceived by Zionist rabbis today. In his time, Achad haAm wrote of him and contended with him to some extent, but he understood and appreciated his greatness as a deep scholar. My father, may his memory be blessed, being busy and dedicated to the affairs of the [Volozhin] *yeshiva*, committed much time and effort to support the idea of the settlement of the Land of Israel. He wrote a few articles about its importance as well as many letters, in which he explained the idea of settling the Land of Israel in a different

manner, with greater depth, than by other rabbis. Father, may his memory be blessed, based the idea of love of Zion on verses and Talmudic dicta and raised it to the level of “*atchalta d’geulah*,” “the onset of the redemption,” and compared the movement and the enterprise, with associated phenomena positive and negative, to the time of Ezra and Nechemiah.

The doer in this field, among those giants of the generation, was Rav Shmuel Mohilever. He was an activist in the simple sense of the word. He would travel to conventions in Odessa, Druskininkai, Katowice, and the like. He held conventions in his city of Bialystok, traveled throughout Western Europe, and in his old age succeeded in visiting the Land of Israel itself. He did all this for the sake of practical acts of love of Zion. He greatly influenced Baron Rothschild, and there is quite a bit of evidence that it was he, Rav Shmuel Mohilever, who influenced the baron to support the settlements of the Land of Israel, ensuring he would have the privilege of becoming “the Noted Patron.”

Rav Shmuel Mohilever will be titled in the chronicles of our time as the doer, or as such is termed nowadays, a practical politician. Those who heard of him or read of him imagine that this individual, who was such a practical man and dealt with people as varied as Dr. Pinsker, Lilienblum, Baron Rothschild and Herzl, surely was a “modern” man. One might assume that he was different in appearance from all the other rabbis, that he must have known foreign languages, was liberal in his outlook, and so forth. Yet in reality he was entirely removed from this imaginary description. Very few rabbis, even of the previous generation, were of such “untended” appearance as Rav Shmuel Mohilever. His gait was bent, his words few, his manner extremely simple, his appearance and garb were of the old generation, and he made not the least effort to spruce himself up – but in his eyes was a bold radiance.

When I met Rav Shmuel Mohilever in Warsaw, when he came to one of the conventions, I expected to meet an activist and politician, but instead I discovered a rabbi and a scholar. He talked with me not about other matters, but about Torah study, and took an interest in what and where I was studying. It was evident that of the idea of *chibbat Zion*, of love of Zion (in other public matters, his participation was very meager) he thought much more than

he spoke. After becoming acquainted with him more closely, people recognized that he was a man of extraordinary depth, and his advocacy for the settlement of the Land of Israel was the fruit of many thoughts, internal struggles, and deep contemplation. He did not approach the question of Zionism based upon the influences and ideas of others, but rather through his own understanding of Torah. After years of thought and study, he was certain of the great importance of practically building up the Land of Israel.

Rav Shmuel Mohilever lived in his own domain; he was not a man of conversation or particularly social. Only because of his great commitment to the Land of Israel was he constantly surrounded by all sorts of people, and frequently by individuals who were different from him in every way. He participated in everything relating to the settlement of the Land of Israel because of his constant awareness of and dedication to a single ideal. For the sake of that ideal, nothing was too difficult for him, whether preaching to the masses, traveling great distances or participating in conventions.

The many wars that Rav Shmuel Mohilever had to endure, waged by those opposed to *Chibbat Zion*, were far removed from him emotionally. His soul, as it were, was untouched by them. Notwithstanding that he was a practical politician, the world of action was of little interest to him, and he had no affinity with politics. He was closed up within himself and boldly made whatever decision he saw fit. He would take action but not argue, strive to influence but not seek to wage war against anyone. Though his dedication to *Chibbat Zion* and Zionism was unparalleled, he had little to do with his surroundings. As noted, as the rabbi of Bialystok he was not particularly close with its citizens, nor was he deeply involved with the average members of the Jewish people. They knew him but little. He was close only to a select few, who were able to appreciate the depth of his thought and personality. His practical actions reflected only a fraction of his unexpressed thoughts.

Notwithstanding the jubilee festivities held in his honor – and this too was a great novelty in those days – and all his travels and conventions, he was in essence an individual more hidden than revealed.

The Soul of Torah

How to Bring Yom Yerushalayim Back to Life!

Rabbi Elie Mischel

Let's be honest: Yom Yerushalayim is a bust.

Though the Knesset established the 28th of Iyar as a national holiday in 1968, the holiday celebrating the unification of Jerusalem and the extraordinary miracles of the Six-Day War has become a sectarian celebration, observed almost exclusively by Israel's Religious Zionist community. In the Diaspora, the holiday barely registers even in Modern Orthodox communities, where it is remembered primarily by *minyans* when the *ba'al tefillah* skips *tachanun* (woohoo!) and adds a quick *Hallel* (feh, five more minutes in *shul*).

Why is Yom Yerushalayim on life support? Have the miracles of 1967 lost their luster? And why does our generation take this modern miracle for granted with a collective yawn?

Though he passed away almost 90 years ago, Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook diagnoses the problem with penetrating insight. In a letter written in 1913, Rav Kook addresses the primary cause of the Jewish people's modern spiritual malaise and why most Jews of his generation failed to recognize the significance of the new *Yishuv*.

"We must not ignore the general cure that will heal all of our problems, and the abandonment of which has led to our downfall. [The root of the problem] is something that I have bitterly cried out, time and time again, hundreds and thousands of times: that we have abandoned the *soul* of the Torah. This is the great flaw that has surrounded many generations, from the times of the prophets, the rabbis, the *ris'honim* and the *acharonim*. Our most capable Torah scholars have focused primarily on the practical side of Torah... while the emotional aspect, even more so the theoretical

aspect, and certainly the holiest aspects of Torah – in which the redemption is hidden – have been entirely ignored... The essential elixir of life is abandoned in the corner" (*Iggrot Ra'ayah* #483).

Rav Kook repeats his lament over the Torah world's neglect of *penimiyut haTorah*, the inner Torah, throughout his writings. "As long as the light of the higher Torah is sealed, the inner demand of return to Zion is not aroused with the depth of faith" (*Orot* 64). But what, precisely, is the "soul of Torah" that we are missing, and why is it so critical? Is the study of this "higher Torah" merely a *segulah* for bringing the redemption, or is there a more logical reason why this particular form of Torah study is so critical for our time?

Because of the sheer number of *mitzvot* and *halachot* contained in our Torah, many people view the Torah as a vast collection of rules and laws, as if each *halacha* stands on its own. Rav Tzvi Yehudah, Rav Kook's only son, would often cite a verse from Yishayahu when describing this approach to Torah: "For it is commandment by commandment, commandment by commandment; line by line, a bit here and bit there" (28:13).

Every *mitzvah* and *halacha* is holy and important, but when our grasp of Torah, the Jewish people and our role in the world is not holistic but rather "a crumb here and a crumb there," Yishayahu warns that we will "fall backward" and become "broken, snared, and captured" (*ibid.*). In other words, if we only study the details of Torah without understanding how the details work together to create a coherent whole, we are likely to descend into complications, confusion, and heresy. Studying Torah exclusively this way is akin to standing too close to a work of art. As your eyes almost touch the painting,

you see many vivid splashes of color, but nothing more. Only by stepping back can you see how all of the individual colors work together to create a beautiful and coherent whole.

What is *penimiyut haTorah*? It is the Torah that illuminates the whole and enables us to hear the beautiful symphony of Judaism, how all the individual musical notes, the *mitzvot* and *halachot*, fit together. Rav Kook also calls this *Torat Eretz Yisrael*: "This is *Torat Eretz Yisrael*, the Torah that is always concerned for the bigger picture and for the greater soul of the entire nation... in which the details are absorbed into the greater whole and are uplifted and crowned with its glory" (*Orot HaTorah* 13:3,6).

Practically, what qualifies as the "soul of Torah"? Rabbi Shlomo Aviner writes that it can be studied on three levels, summarized through the abbreviation of **נ"חך**, "*Kemach*" (flour): **K**abbalah (ק), **M**ussar (מ) and **Ch**akirah (ח). Rabbi Elazar ben Azariah's teaching – "If there is no Torah, there is no flour; if there is no flour, there is no Torah" (*Pirkei Avot* 3:16) – aptly captures the necessary balance between the "body" of Torah and the "soul" of Torah. "If there is no Torah," if we do not acquire a firm foundation in *gemara* and *halacha*, "there is no flour" – we will be ignorant Jews who fumble through life, uncertain of G-d's will. But at the same time, "if there is no flour," if we ignore the *soul* of Torah, "there is no Torah," the Torah will become dry and oppressive to us, for each detail of Judaism, on its own, will feel pointless and meaningless.

Of the three ways to study the "soul of Torah," I believe the middle level – *chakirah*, Jewish thought – to be the most critical for our generation. Most of us feel ill-equipped to study *Kabbalah* without a

teacher, while *Mussar* focuses primarily on applying *penimiyut haTorah* to an individual's inner world. *Chakirah*, which includes foundational books like Rabbi Yehuda HaLevi's *Kuzari*, the writings of the Maharal, *Chassidut* and the works of Rav Kook himself, helps us see the big picture of Judaism – why G-d created mankind, the role of *Am Yisrael*, His chosen nation, the meaning of Jewish history and the return to the Land of Israel, and much, much more.

Without this bigger picture perspective, Judaism can easily feel like an oppressive and ridiculous collection of “thou shalt nots” – “thou shalt not rip toilet paper on Shabbat,” “thou shalt not sleep in after a hard day at work for fear of missing *minyan*,” and “thou shalt not check the score of the Mets game on Shabbat (though really, what's the point? They're the *Mets*).” Should we really be surprised if our children, who too often study Torah “a bit here and a bit there,” find it boring at best?

A baby needs to be bathed and fed, and there's always another diaper to change. Each of these tasks, on their own, are unlikely to fill an exhausted parent with joy. But when the baby's parents remember the bigger picture – that they have the incredible merit to care for and raise a precious child to serve Hashem – their busy lives will be more joyous and energized. In the same way, when we study and absorb the larger goals of Judaism, each of the many details of *halachic* life become meaningful ways to advance our mission. And when our lives feel meaningful, we

quickly discover newfound passion, energy and joy.

But studying the “soul of Torah” is critical for another reason. Rabbi Ya'akov Moshe Charlop explains that only those who are connected to the “*ruach haSod*,” “the inner spirit” of Torah, can clearly see and feel the extraordinary holiness and value of *Eretz Yisrael* (*Mei Marom* 6:235). On its face, the Land of Israel is a physical place like any other. Its people are imperfect, its streets are clogged with traffic, and yes – it's *hot*. Only by studying the soul of Torah will one learn to see more deeply and appreciate the holiness of the Land of prophecy and the awesome significance of our people's return to the Holy Land.

If this is true of the Land of Israel generally, it is doubly true of Yerushalayim. Economically, Yerushalayim is no Silicon Valley, nor is it a particularly affordable or convenient place to live (try renewing your car registration in the Holy City, *without* a bottle of schnapps). Is it any wonder that our generation, blessed to walk the physical streets of Jerusalem, are not overwhelmed with emotion on Yom Yerushalayim?

To appreciate the gift of Yerushalayim, the gift our generation too often takes for granted, requires eyes trained to see the *soul* of our Land, eyes that grasp the bigger picture of Jewish history and Jewish destiny. When Rav Kook tried to create a movement that would infuse religious depth into Zionism, he named it *Degel Yerushalayim*, for if Zion is the *body* of our people, Yerushalayim is its *soul* – something so profound, it cannot be adequately

expressed in words. As Elie Wiesel once wrote: “‘Jerusalem,’ my grandfather would say, weeping, weeping with his whole being. ‘Jerusalem,’ my Master would say, laughing, laughing with his whole being.”

To appreciate Jerusalem, the soul of the Land, we must study and absorb the soul of Torah. In our *shuls* and schools, alongside *daf yomi* and *Tzurba M'Rabanan*, we must study *Torat Eretz Yisrael*, the inner Torah that for too long has been neglected. It is the only way to awaken our nation and open our eyes.

Yes, there will always be other priorities demanding our time and attention, particularly today, as terrorism and antisemitism threaten us from without and political infighting threatens to tear us apart from within. But these dangers only heighten the importance of understanding the big picture of Torah. As Rav Kook concludes his letter: “Specifically during times of crisis and danger, we must take the most effective medicine. We must be radicals... Whomever has courage in his heart, strength in his pen, and the spirit of G-d in his soul, must go out into battle and shout for light!”



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Hallel on Yom Yerushalayim

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

During the days before the Six-Day War in 1967, the security situation in Israel was very tense. Arab nations were preparing for war with the State of Israel, and the terrified nation feared the worst – that an attack would wreak havoc and destruction throughout the country. But when the war broke out, we saw open miracles: the IDF destroyed most of the Egyptian air force on the ground, and within six days, we conquered half the Sinai Peninsula, Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the Golan Heights. It was a brilliant victory!

To mark this victory, in which we were saved from annihilation, and to mark the liberation of Jerusalem from 2,000 years of the yoke of foreign rulers, we celebrate on the 28th of Iyar, the day Jerusalem was liberated.

Many *halachic* discussions relating to Yom Yerushalayim are similar to those regarding Yom HaAtzmaut: establishing a day of joy, reciting *Hallel* with a blessing, and whether the celebration overrides the laws of mourning that apply during *Sefirat HaOmer*.

As a general rule, the *halachic* decisions regarding Yom Yerushalayim are even simpler than those regarding Yom

HaAtzmaut. On Yom HaAtzmaut, one can debate whether the Independence War was a miracle worthy of commemorating with *Hallel* recited with a blessing. The miracle was not complete, our enemies continued to try to destroy us after the war, and the spiritual situation in Israel at the time was far from ideal. But on Yom Yerushalayim, it is easier to rule that *Hallel* should be recited with a blessing, for the military victory was overwhelming; we were saved from death, and we conquered Jerusalem, our holy city and the source of our glory.

In the words of the Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Isser Yehuda Unterman *zt”l*:

“When it comes to celebrations and joy, there are certainly some superior aspects to Yom HaAtzmaut, the day that symbolizes the very existence of the State, and this day will always be the birthday of the State of Israel. We hope that our State will flourish and prosper, absorb the ingathering of our exiles, and go from success to success to pave the way to our complete redemption. However, when it comes to reciting *Hallel* with a blessing, Yom Yerushalayim takes priority, for on the 28th of Iyar, we saw open miracles: the mighty staff of our enemies utterly collapsed in just two days, and we liberated

Jerusalem and the surrounding cities. To commemorate a day of open miracles, we are obligated to recite *Hallel* with a blessing.” (*Shevet MiYehudah*, Part 2, *Orach Chayim* 59:2)

And so the Chief Rabbinate of Israel established, from the very beginning, that *Hallel* should be recited with a blessing on Yom Yerushalayim, and this is the accepted view today.



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The Tzurba M'Rabanan Phenomenon



In recent years, the Lax Family Tzurba M'Rabanan halacha series has become extraordinarily popular in both Israel and the Diaspora. A systematic and concise learning method that walks the reader through the entire halachic process, Tzurba M'Rabanan covers the Biblical and Talmudic sources through modern-day halachic application. With its clear introductions and trademark color-coded sections, Tzurba M'Rabanan has changed the way thousands of people study halacha.



To learn more about the “Tzurba phenomenon,” Rabbi Aron White spoke with Rabbi Doron Podlashuk, Director of the Lax Family Tzurba M'Rabanan English Series and founder and director of the Selwyn & Ros Smith and Family Manhigut Toranit Program, a five-year post-semicha program whose goal is to develop serious rabbinic leaders who will impact communities and strengthen their commitment to Torah, mitzvot and Eretz Yisrael.

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Additionally, in the United States, there are over 50 communities with weekly Tzurba *chaburot* learning our regular volumes. We have dedicated staff coordinating with *chaburot* to be sure they have what they need and to celebrate the completion of volumes. Due to increased demand, the Tzurba volumes are now available on Amazon which means most people can get their order within 2 days.

What are the origins of Tzurba M'Rabanan and how did the English series come to be?

Rabbi Benzion Algazi is the mastermind behind the original Hebrew version of Tzurba. Rav Algazi began giving classes on

halachic topics to some of his graduates from Kerem B'Yavneh who joined the workforce and wanted to seriously learn halacha. This process of compiling sources and condensing them became the Tzurba prototype. The Tzurba Hebrew program has grown from this one *shiur* to over one thousand *shiurim*.

Years later, Rav Algazi moved to Yad Binyamin, where I live, and began giving a Tzurba *shiur*. One of my friends, Jonny Ucko, remarked how it's a great shame these amazing materials aren't accessible to the English-speaking world, and I agreed. We decided that Manhigut Toranit, along with Rabbi Eli Ozarowski, would translate and expand the Hebrew Tzurba volumes into English and that our *avreichim* would write additional in-depth articles to supplement the translations. In recent years, Marsha and Michael Lax have become the key supporters of the project, enabling us to expand our reach in unprecedented ways. The program has grown tremendously just in the last few years, due to the hard work of the internal Tzurba team together with the efforts of World Mizrachi.

Our generation is blessed with many learning opportunities, from dafyomi to Torah podcasts and more. What makes Tzurba unique?

Dafyomi is wonderful; I've personally taught a *dafyomi* *shiur* for over 18 years. However, Tzurba is unique because it not only helps you study Torah in depth, it also impacts your daily life and the way you view daily halachic living. It conveys the logic behind each halacha, helping people develop a deeper appreciation for what they are practicing in their everyday lives. Many people find halacha confusing or simply a long list of rules; learning halacha in depth gives them a new perspective on the halachic system. I believe Tzurba brings our *mesorah* to life in a very unique way. Just by learning a few Tzurba pages you can begin to see and appreciate the full tapestry of halacha.

THE PURPOSE OF TALMUD TORAH

What is the purpose of the mitzva of *talmud Torah*? Is it to attain as much knowledge as possible of Hashem's wisdom, or should the goal be primarily studying in order to know how to perform the other mitzvot that we are obligated to do? It seems that the sources are somewhat conflicted concerning this issue. One relevant passage can be found in the **Gemara** in **Kiddushin**.

ד Masechet Kiddushin 29b

From where do we derive that a father is obligated to teach his son Torah? As it is written: "And you shall teach them [velimadtem] to your sons" (Devarim 11:19). And in a case where his father did not teach him he is obligated to teach himself, as it is written, i.e., the verse can be read with a different vocalization: "and you shall study [ulmadtem]."

18. מסכת קידושין כ"ט:

"ללמדו תורה" – מנלן? דכתיב: "ולמדתם אותם את בניכם" (דברים יא, יט). והיכא דלא אגמריה אבוא – מיחייב איהו למיגמר נפשיה, דכתיב: "ולמדתם" (דברים ה, א).

The Gemara here states that a father is obligated to teach his son Torah, but if he did not do so, the son is obligated to teach himself. This seems to imply that if the father did teach his son Torah (or enabled him to study), and the son has acquired all of the necessary knowledge for living according to the Torah, the son no longer has an obligation to do so. This is also the implication of the **Rambam**.

ה Rambam, Hilchot Talmud Torah 1:3

And one is obligated to hire a teacher for his son to teach him... **one whose father has not taught him is obligated to teach himself when he realizes**, as it is stated: And you shall study them and be careful to keep them (Devarim 5:1). **And so do you find in every place**, that study precedes action, since study leads to action, and action does not lead to study.

19. רמב"ם | הל' תלמוד תורה א:ג

וחייב לשכור מלמד לבנו ללמדו... מי שלא לימדו אביו – חייב ללמד את עצמו כשיכיר, שנאמר: "ולמדתם אותם ושמרתם לעשותם" (דברים ה, א). וכן אתה מוצא בכל מקום, שהתלמוד קודם למעשה, מפני שהתלמוד מביא לידי מעשה, ואין המעשה מביא לידי תלמוד.

From this halacha as well, it seems that one is obligated to study Torah only if he was not taught by his father, but if one was taught by his father, one would be exempt, and it would seem that the next line provides the reason: Torah study leads to proper fulfilling of the mitzvot (and therefore takes precedence), so one must teach himself only if he has not yet learned how to perform them.⁸ But a few halachot later, the Rambam states that everyone is obligated in the mitzva of *talmud Torah*.

ו Rambam, Hilchot Talmud Torah 1:8, 10

8. Every Jewish man is obligated to study Torah, whether he is poor or rich, whether his body is healthy and whole or afflicted by difficulties, whether he is young or an old man whose strength

20. רמב"ם | הל' תלמוד תורה א:ח, י

ח. כל איש מישראל חייב בתלמוד תורה, בין עני בין עשיר, בין שלם בגופו בין בעל ייסורין, בין בחור בין שהיה זקן גדול שתשש

8. See, though, the *Kesef Mishneh*, who is bothered by the connection between the two.

has diminished. Even if he is a poor man who derives his livelihood from charity and begs from door to door, even if he is a husband and [a father of] children, he must establish a fixed time for Torah study during the day and at night, as it is stated (*Yehoshua* 1:8): “You shall think about it day and night.”

10. Until when is a person obligated to study Torah? Until the day he dies, as it is stated (*Devarim* 4:9): Lest you remove it from your heart, all the days of your life.” And whenever a person is not involved with study, he forgets.

כחו. אפילו היה עני המתפרנס מן הצדקה, ומחזור על הפתחים. ואפילו בעל אישה ובנים – חייב לקבוע לו זמן לתלמוד תורה ביום ובלילה, שנאמר: “והגית בו יומם ולילה”.

י. עד אימתי חייב ללמוד תורה? עד יום מותו, שנאמר: “וּפֶן יִסּוּרוּ מִלְבָּבְךָ כָּל יְמֵי חַיֶּיךָ” (דברים ד, ט), וכל זמן שלא יעסוק בלימוד הוא שוכח.

This passage seems to fit better with the sources we saw earlier about the importance of daily Torah study, which seem to be unrelated to whether one was taught by his father or whether one knows the halachot or not. How can we understand the relationship between the various sources?

The *Beit HaLevi*, **Rav Yosef Dov Soloveitchik** of Brisk, develops the idea that there are two elements within the mitzva of *talmud Torah*:

1. Torah study in order to know how to fulfill the mitzvot properly
2. Torah study for its own sake⁹

Beit HaLevi on the Torah, Shemot 24:7

...And it is known that Torah study contains two elements: One is to know how and what to do [with regard to fulfillment of the mitzvot], and if he doesn't learn, how will he fulfill them? “And an ignoramus cannot be pious”... but there is another level...¹⁰ the study is also an independent positive mitzva, like wearing *tefillin* and the like. Thus, there are two dimensions: Preparation for the mitzvot, and also a purpose of its own. And this is what it means in *Menachot* 99b when “Ben Dama asked, etc.,” that the obligation [of study] due to [enabling proper] fulfillment of the mitzvot he had already fulfilled, since he already knew how to fulfill the entire Torah, as something that is done for a certain purpose, one need not continue once the purpose has been achieved, and he is only obligated due to the mitzva of the Torah study itself...

21. בית הלוי על התורה | שמות כד:ז

...והנה ידוע, דלימוד התורה הוא משני פנים: אחד, כדי לידע היאך ומה לעשות, ואם לא ילמוד – היאך יקיים? “ולא עם הארץ חסיד” (אבות ב:ה). אמנם... יש עוד מעלה... הווי הלימוד גם מצוות עשה לעצמו, וכמו הנחת תפילין וכדומה. ונמצא הווי שתי בחינות – מבוא להמצוות, וגם תכלית בפני עצמו. וזהו דאיתא במנחות צט: “שאל בן דמא”... דהחויב דהווי משום קיום המצוות, הא כבר יצא בו, כיוון שיודע כל התורה כולה היאך לעשות, דדבר הנעשה לאיזה תכלית – אין לו להימשך יותר מכפי הצורך לאותו התכלית המבוקש, ורק מכל מקום חייב מצד עצם המצווה של הלימוד תורה...

According to the *Beit HaLevi*, we can answer our questions as follows. When the Gemara in *Kiddushin* and Rambam refer to an obligation of Torah study only when one has not been taught by one's father, they are referring to the dimension of Torah study as preparation for properly fulfilling the mitzvot. Therefore, if one already knows the practical guidelines for doing so, one no longer need engage in Torah study

9. Some commentaries, including the *Bach* and the *Ba'al HaTanya*, suggest an additional element of Torah study for the sake of bringing us closer to Hashem. Moreover, it is not entirely clear what the notion of *Torah lishma* actually means. See Yehudah Levi, “*Torah Study*,” p. 170, for a synopsis. [Addition of the English editors]

10. In this context, the *Beit HaLevi* also discusses (in the sections not quoted here) the difference between the obligation of Torah study for men and for women. We will address the issue of Torah study for women more fully in the next *shiur*.

for this purpose. This is also the basis for the question posed to Rabbi Yishmael in *Menachot* 99b: He had already mastered the entire Torah, so perhaps it was permitted to study Greek wisdom.

By contrast, when the Gemara and Rambam indicate that one must learn Torah every day, they are referring to the dimension of learning Torah *lishma*, for its own sake, independent of any aspect of knowing the practical halacha. This was also the response given by Rabbi Yishmael in *Menachot* 99b: Since the obligation of Torah study for its own sake applies at all times, one would not be permitted (in his opinion) to study other subjects.

The *Beit HaLevi* then uses the same principle to explain a famous passage in the **Gemara** in *Nedarim*:

ד Masechet Nedarim 81a

As Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: What is the meaning of that which is written: “Who is the wise man that may understand this, and who is he to whom the mouth of the Lord has spoken, that he may declare it, for what the land is perished and laid waste like a wilderness, so that none passes through” (Yirmiyahu 9:11)? This matter, the question as to why Eretz Yisrael was destroyed, was asked of the Sages, i.e., “the wise man,” and of the prophets, “he to whom the mouth of the Lord has spoken,” but they could not explain it. The matter remained a mystery **until the Holy One, Blessed be He, Himself explained** why Eretz Yisrael was laid waste, as **it is written** in the next verse: **“And the Lord said: Because they have forsaken My Torah which I set before them, and have not obeyed My voice, nor walked therein” (Yirmiyahu 9:12).** It would appear that **“have not obeyed My voice” is the same as “nor walked therein.”** **Rav Yehuda said that Rav said:** The expression “nor walked therein” **means that they do not first recite a blessing over the Torah** before commencing their studies, and they are therefore liable to receive the severe punishments listed in the verse.

According to the Gemara, the reason why the *Beit HaMikdash* was destroyed and the Jews were sent into exile is that they did not recite *Birkot HaTorah*, the blessing recited daily on Torah study, prior to learning Torah. This passage is difficult to understand. What is the significance of the people not reciting *Birkot HaTorah*, and why is this transgression sufficiently severe to warrant the Jewish people being exiled from Eretz Yisrael?

The *Beit HaLevi* explains this passage as follows:

ד Beit HaLevi, Shemot 24:7

And in Nedarim it states: Because they have forsaken my Torah, that they do not first recite a blessing over the Torah. And it also says there: And for what reason is it not common for Torah scholars to give rise to Torah scholars from among their sons? Because they do not first recite a blessing over the Torah... **But according to what was explained earlier, one can explain that they thought that Torah study was not an independent mitzva;**

22. מסכת נדרים פא.

דאמר רב יהודה, אמר רב: מאי דכתיב: “מי האיש החכם ויבן את זאת ואשר דבר פי ה' אליו ויגדה על מה אבדה הארץ” (ירמיה ט, יא)? דבר זה נשאל לחכמים ולנביאים ולא פירשוהו, עד שפירשו הקדוש ברוך הוא בעצמו, דכתיב: “ויאמר ה' על עֲזָבֶם אֶת תּוֹרַתִי אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לְפִנֵּיהֶם וְלֹא שָׁמְעוּ בְקוֹלִי וְלֹא הִלְכוּ בְהָ” (שם שם, יב). היינו “לא שמעו בקולי”, היינו “לא הלכו בה”! אמר רב יהודה, אמר רב: [לומר] שאין מברכין בתורה תחילה.

23. בית הלוי | נדרים פא.

והנה בנדרים (דף פא) איתא: “על עזבם את תורתך – שלא היו מברכין בתורה תחילה”. וכן אמר שם: “מפני מה אין תלמידי חכמים מצויין יוצאין מבניהם תלמידי חכמים? שאין מברכים בתורה תחילה...” ולפי המבואר לעיל יש לומר, דהם היו סוברים דלימוד התורה אינו מצווה מצד עצמה,

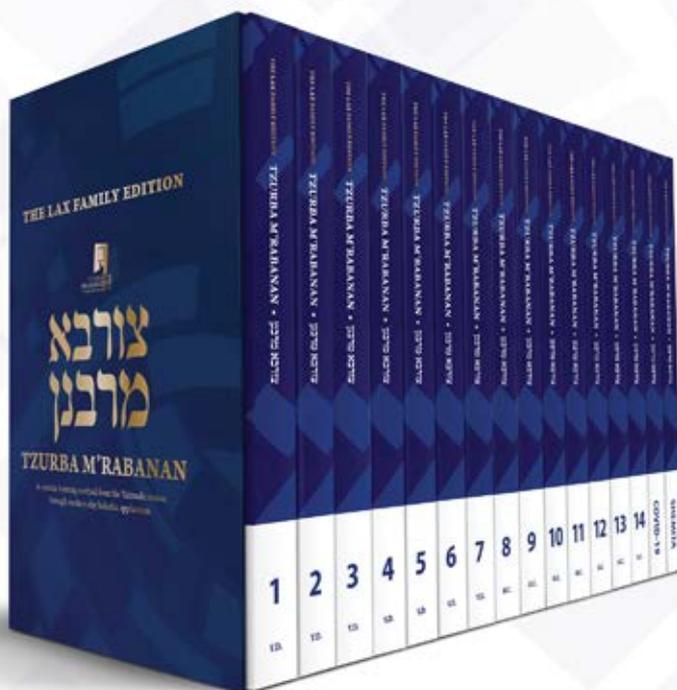
But according to what was explained earlier, one can explain that they thought that Torah study was not an independent mitzva; rather the primary reason to learn is to know how and what to do, but the primary element is the performance, and we say in *Menachot* (42) that any mitzva whose performance is the conclusion of the mitzva, such as *mila*, we recite a *beracha* on it, while any mitzva whose performance is not the conclusion of the mitzva, we do not recite a *beracha* on it. **And for this reason, in their opinion, they didn't recite the *beracha* of *Birkot HaTorah*, since it is not the conclusion of the mitzva...**

רק עיקר מה שצריך ללמוד הוא כדי לידע היאך ומה לעשות, והעיקר הוא העשייה, והא אמרינן במנחות (דף מב), דכל מצווה דעשייתה גמר מצווה – כגון מילה – מברכין עליה, וכל מצווה שאין עשייתה גמר מצווה – אין מברכין עליה. ומשום הכי לפי דעתם לא היו מברכין ברכות התורה, כיוון דאינו גמר מצווה...

According to the *Beit HaLevi*, the Gemara means that the people did not recite *Birkot HaTorah* since they misunderstood and underestimated the full purpose and importance of Torah study: It is not simply about learning in order to fulfill the mitzvot, for which one would not recite the *beracha* immediately, but also about learning for its own sake.¹¹

11. It should be noted that other commentaries suggest other approaches to this passage. The Ran explains that the Torah was not important in their eyes, and they studied it for reasons other than the right ones. The notion of reciting the *Birkot HaTorah* represents attaching the proper importance to Torah study, and not simply treating it like another subject or a source of information.

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WHICH PARTS OF TORAH SHOULD ONE LEARN?

As we know, the Torah contains numerous different realms, such as Chumash, Mishna Gemara, and halacha. Does the halacha present us with any guidelines as to what to learn and how to do so? We will begin with the **Gemara** in *Kiddushin*, which addresses this question in the following manner:

ד. Masechet Kiddushin 30a

The Sages said that **a person should always divide his years into three parts**, as follows: **A third for Tanach, a third for Mishna, and a third for Talmud.** The Gemara asks: **Who knows the length of his life**, so that he can calculate how long a third will be? The Gemara answers: **No, it is necessary for one's days**, i.e., one should divide each day of his life in this manner.

24. מסכת קידושין ל.

לעולם ישלש אדם שנותיו – שלישי במקרא, שלישי במשנה, שלישי בתלמוד. מי יודע כמה חיי? לא, צריכא – ליומי.

Rishonim dispute how to understand the answer of the Gemara. According to **Rashi**, it means that one should divide up the days of the week with regard to what one studies.

ה. Rashi, Kiddushin 30a

The days – The days of the week.

25. רש"י | קידושין ל.

ליומי – ימי השבוע.

Tosafot rejects Rashi's explanation, as the Gemara's question would not be answered: How does a person know whether he will live for the entire week? Tosafot therefore suggests that the Gemara refers to dividing up one's learning time during one day. However, Rabbeinu Tam posits that a person may still fulfill his obligation to study all three aspects by studying Gemara, which includes elements of all three.

ו. Tosafot, Kiddushin 30a

No, it is necessary for the days – Rashi explains that this means the days of the week, meaning [that one should study] Tanach for two days, Mishna for two days, and Gemara for two days. But this is not logical, as if so, it should have still asked, "who knows how long one will live?" But it seems to me to explain that **one should divide [one's time] into three each and every day.** For this reason, Rav Amram Ga'on instituted in his daily order [to do] what we do every day before *Pesukei D'zimra* (the preliminary morning prayers before *Shema* and *Shemoneh Esreh*), to recite [a portion of] Tanach, Mishna, and Gemara.¹²

26. תוספות | קידושין ל.

לא, צריכא ליומי – פירש בקונטרס: "ימי השבת", כלומר: שני ימים מקרא, ושני ימים משנה, ושני ימים גמרא. ולא נהירא, דאם כן אכתי הוה מצי למיפרך "מי ידע כמה חיי"? ונראה לי לפרש, בכל יום ויום עצמו ישלש. על כן תיקן בסדר רב עמרם גאון, כמו שאנו נוהגים בכל יום קודם פסוקי דזמרה, לומר מקרא ומשנה וגמרא.

12. Tosafot here refers to three passages found within the *Korbanot* section of *Tefilla* recited prior to *Pesukei D'zimra* known as *Parshat HaTamid*, *Eizehu Mekoman*, and *Rabbi Yishmael Omer*. The first is the passage describing the mitzva of the daily offering in the *Beit HaMikdash*, which was instituted to recite daily, the second consists of the fifth chapter of Mishna, *Masechet Zevachim*,

And Rabbeinu Tam explains **that we rely on that which we say in Sanhedrin (24a): The word Babylonia means mixed with Tanach, mixed with Mishna, and mixed with Talmud, that the Talmud Bavli (Babylonian Talmud) encompasses all of them.**

ורבינו תם פירש, שאנו סומכין אהא דאמרינן בסנהדרין (כד.): "בבל – כלולה במקרא, במשנה ובגמרא", דגמרת בבל כלול מכולם.

The **Rambam** suggests a different interpretation of the Gemara.

רמב"ם | הל' תלמוד תורה א:יא

A person is obligated to divide his study time in three: One third should be devoted to the Written Law; one third to the Oral Law; and one third to understanding and conceptualizing the ultimate derivation of a concept from its roots, **inferring one concept from another and comparing one concept to another, understanding [the Torah] based on the principles of Biblical exegesis**, until one appreciates the essence of those principles and how the prohibitions and the other decisions which one received according to the oral tradition can be derived using them. **And this [latter] topic is called Gemara.**

רמב"ם | הל' תלמוד תורה א:יא

וחייב לשלש את זמן למידתו: שליש בתורה שבכתב, ושליש בתורה שבעל פה, ושליש ביין וישכיל אחרית דבר מראשיתו, ויוציא דבר מדבר, וידמה דבר לדבר, ויבין במידות שהתורה נדרשת בהן, עד שידע היאך הוא עיקר המידות, והיאך יוציא האסור והמותר, וכיוצא בהן, מדברים שלמד מפי השמועה, ועניין זה נקרא "גמרא".

According to the Rambam, the term "Gemara" does not refer to the Talmud, as the Rambam interprets the term "Mishna" to include the interpretation of the Mishna, i.e., Gemara, as well. Rather, the Rambam understands the term "Gemara" to refer to an analysis of the sources, which today we often call *iyun*, in depth learning. In essence, the method of study that the Rambam refers to as "Gemara" is actually what the Talmud itself does in analyzing the Mishna. Thus, the Rambam understood that we should use the same analytical method in studying the Talmud as the Talmud itself uses in analyzing the Mishna.

According to this approach of the Rambam (which differs from that of Rashi and Tosafot), one should divide one's time for learning between Tanach, Mishna/Gemara, and analysis/*iyun* of Gemara. The Rambam notes in the next halacha (quoted below) though that this division is intended to apply for only part of a person's life. However, after a person has already studied a large portion of the Torah, he should spend most of his time studying "Gemara," i.e., studying Talmud analytically with the "*iyun*" method.

רמב"ם | הל' תלמוד תורה א:יב

How is the above expressed? If one is a craftsman, and is engaged in his trade for three hours a day and in Torah study for nine [hours], **during those nine hours he reads the Written Torah for three, the Oral Torah for three, and he should use his intellect to derive one matter from another during the other three.** And *divrei kabbala* [i.e., Tanach] is included in the Written Torah, and their interpretations are included in the Oral Torah. And the concepts known as

רמב"ם | הל' תלמוד תורה א:יב

כיצד? היה בעל אומנות, והיה עוסק במלאכתו שלוש שעות ביום, ובתורה תשע – אותן התשע קורא בשלוש מהן בתורה שבכתב, ובשלוש בתורה שבעל פה, ובשלוש אחרות יתבונן בדעתו להבין דבר מדבר. ודברי קבלה

and the third is a listing of the thirteen hermeneutical principles of Rabbi Yishmael. According to this approach, the institution of these three passages, one from the Torah, one from Mishna, and one from Midrash (which is similar to the Gemara), was designed to fulfill this obligation of dividing one's daily time for Torah study into the three categories mentioned. [Addition of the English editors]

is included in the Written Torah, and their interpretations are included in the Oral Torah. And the concepts known as “*Pardes*” are included in Gemara.

When does this apply? The above applies in the early stages of a person’s study. However, when a person increases his knowledge and he does not need to study the Written Torah, or occupy himself with the Oral Law constantly, he should study the Written Torah and the oral tradition at designated times. Thus, he will not forget any aspect of the laws of the Torah. [However,] he should focus his attention on the Gemara alone for his entire life, according to his ambition and his ability to concentrate.

בכלל תורה שבכתב הם, ופירושם בכלל תורה שבעל פה. והעניינים הנקראים “פרד” בכלל הגמרא הם. במה דברים אמורים? בתחילת תלמודו של אדם, אבל כשיגדיל בחכמה, ולא יהיה צריך לא לתלמוד תורה שבכתב, ולא לעסוק תמיד בתורה שבעל פה – יקרא בעיתים מזומנות תורה שבכתב ודברי השמועה, כדי שלא ישכח דבר מדברי דיני תורה, ויפנה כל ימיו לגמרא בלבד, לפי רוחב שיש בליבו וישוב דעתו.

Concerning this topic, the **Shulchan Aruch** follows the Rambam, while the **Rema** cites the opinion of Tosafot.

א Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh De’ah 246:4

A person must divide his study time into three: One-third on the Written Torah, i.e., the twenty-four books [of Tanach], one-third on Mishna, i.e., the Oral Torah, and the commentaries on the Torah are included in this, and one-third on *talmud*, meaning that one understands the latter idea from the former idea, and he derives one concept from another, and he compares one concept to another, and he interprets [the Torah] based on the principles of Biblical exegesis until he understands the essence of the mitzvot and how the prohibitions and the other decisions that were received by oral tradition can be derived...

The above applies in the early stages of a person’s study. However, when a person increases his knowledge and he does not need to study the Written Torah, or occupy himself with the Oral Law constantly, he should study the Written Torah and the oral tradition at designated times so he will not forget any aspect of the laws of the Torah. [However,] he should focus his attention on the *Gemara* alone for his entire life, according to his ambition and his ability to concentrate.

Rema: But some say that a person fulfills his obligation for all of them with the *Talmud Bavli*, which is mixed with *Mikra* (Tanach), Mishna, and Gemara...

29. שולחן ערוך | יו”ד רמז:ד

חייב אדם לשלש למודו: שליש בתורה שבכתב, דהיינו הארבעה ועשרים, שליש במשנה דהיינו תורה שבעל פה ופי’ תורה שבכתב בכלל זה, שליש בתלמוד דהיינו שיבין ושכיל אחרית דבר מראשיתו ויוציא דבר מתוך דבר וידמה דבר לדבר וידון במדות שהתורה נדרשת בהם עד שידע היאך עיקר המצות והיאך יוצא האסור והמותר וכיוצא בזה דברים שלמד מפי השמועה...

במה דברים אמורים? בתחילת לימודו של אדם, אבל כשיגדיל בתורה ולא יהא צריך לתלמוד תורה שבכתב ולא לעסוק תמיד בתורה שבעל פה, יקרא בעתים מזומנים תורה שבכתב ודברי התורה, כדי שלא ישכח דבר מדיני התורה, ויפנה כל ימיו לתלמוד בלבד לפי רוחב לבו וישוב דעתו.

הגה: וי”א שבתלמוד בבלי שהוא כלול במקרא במשנה וגמרא אדם יוצא ידי חובתו בשביל הכל...

If one were to follow the *Shulchan Aruch* entirely, it would seem that during the formative years of learning, one would spend one third of one’s time on Tanach, one-third on Mishna and Gemara studied more quickly (*beki’ut*), and one third on *iyun*. The Rema would say that one need not spend so much time studying Tanach or Mishna, but can learn Gemara alone should one choose, as it includes everything.

Although these models are often not followed completely today, the **Pesakim Uteshuvot** (Y.D. 246:18) notes in the name of many *Acharonim* that based on these opinions, it is common today for yeshivot to spend one learning period (*sefer*) on *iyun*-style Gemara learning and another on *beki’ut*.¹³

13. For a brief summary of additional sources concerning the study of *iyun* vs. *beki’ut*, including the famous passage in the Gemara (*Horayot* 13b) concerning “*sinai*” and “*oker harim*,” see “*Torah Study*,” pp. 178–181. [Addition of the English editors]



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Kosher Travelers has a 10-day Iceland tours scheduled for 31 July 2023. The tours start in Reykjavik, the capital, and include natural wonders such as glaciers, hot springs, volcanoes, lava fields, snow-capped mountains, waterfalls and more.

David says: "It is the tour guide that makes or breaks a tour. We secure the best available guides through careful research and proven experience. All Kosher Travelers adventures are enhanced by visits to Jewish heritage sites and communities, beautiful Shabbat programs, and prominent guest speakers."

Following the signing of the Abraham Accords in September 2020 which normalized relations between Israel and the UAE, there has been tremendous growth in the number of Jewish travelers visiting Dubai and Abu Dhabi, including tours organised by Kosher Travelers. "We call our tours to the UAE 'missions' as they include special speakers such as David M. Weinberg, who is a brilliant strategic analyst and well-known diplomatic columnist, as well as Emirati guests. We have organized seven tours to the UAE and most recently hosted 40 guests from Los Angeles with Rabbi Elazar Muskin and Rabbi Kalman Topp in advance of the inspiring World Mizrahi Israel75 Celebrations."

Dubai is home to the Burj Khalifa, the world's tallest building; Palm Jumeirah, a man-made island shaped like a palm; indoor ski hills and theme parks; as well as magnificent markets and historical sites. Abu Dhabi is billed as the world's richest city with attractions including the Louvre Abu Dhabi Museum and the Presidential Palace. Additional activities include Jeeping in the sand dunes outside of Dubai followed by a kosher BBQ dinner in the desert with music and dance.

Morocco's fusion of French, African, Arab, and Islamic cultures, along with its rich Jewish history, makes it a fascinating destination. Kosher Travelers tours the famous cities of Fez, Marrakech, Rabat and Casablanca and takes you overnight glamping in the Sahara desert.

During Covid when travel in and out of Israel was restricted Kosher Travelers launched a successful new project - exclusive educational tours of the magnificent Israeli wine landscape across all parts of the country. The three-day tours visit many high-end wineries, accompanied by an acclaimed scholar and accredited wine connoisseur. They offer a comprehensive wine education in English, alongside lunches at boutique wineries, meat and wine dinners, strategic tours, Jewish heritage walks, and Torah talks.

Over Pesach, Kosher Travelers hosted 600 guests from around the world in Rhodes, Greece featuring Rabbi Doron Perez as one of our Scholars-in-Residence. His passion for Israel and religious Zionism made a deep and lasting impact on our participants. The connections made were astounding and enjoyed by all ages and we plan to go back next Pesach.

"Our motto at Kosher Travelers is 'Discover, Connect and Enrich.' Guests on all our tours get to discover the culture of the destination, make family and friendly connections, and leave entirely enriched by the experience. We seek to deliver these components on every project we undertake."

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Jewry's Journey to a Second Shavuot

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ל"צ

In June 1997 – 100 years after the First Zionist Congress – the Jewish Chronicle published an article written by (then) Chief Rabbi Jonathan Sacks about a new kind of Zionism which hinged on the question of Jewish identity and the sense of belonging.

Sometimes, the most contemporary debates in Judaism are also the most ancient. That is certainly true of the most fundamental of all – the question of Jewish identity. What is it to be a Jew? Today, that debate reverberates throughout the Jewish world. Is being a Jew simply living in a Jewish state, or, in the Diaspora, being part of an ethnic group? Is it a matter of belonging rather than of believing? Or is Jewish identity something essentially religious, a faith and a way of life?

The most interesting of all answers is given by the Torah. At a certain point, Jews ceased to be a family – the children of Ya'akov – and became a nation. When did this take place, and how? To this, the Torah gives two different accounts. They could be called the Pesach and Shavuot definitions of Jewish identity.

On Pesach, at the *Seder* table, we expound the following passage: "A wandering Aramean was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there, few in number. And there, he became a nation..." (Devarim 26:5).

On Shavuot, we recall a quite different text. At Mount Sinai, prior to receiving the Ten Commandments, the Israelites heard these words from G-d: "Now, if you obey Me fully and keep My covenant, then out of all the nations you will be My treasured possession, for all the earth is Mine. You will be for Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation" (Shemot 19:5-6).

According to the first text, Jews became a nation in Egypt. According to the second, they became a nation only when they left Egypt, traveled into the desert, and were offered the Torah as their covenant with G-d. How are we to reconcile the texts?

There are two ways in which individuals come together to become a nation. The first is when they face a common enemy; that is what happened to the Israelites in Egypt. They were different. They were enslaved. Their suffering forged them as a group. They shared a collective fate. In Hebrew, we call such an entity an *am*, a people. But at Sinai, Jews became a nation in a quite different sense. They became a body politic, with G-d as their Sovereign, and the Torah as their written constitution. They were brought together not by a

common history of suffering but by a shared commitment to a unique way of life.

The Hebrew for such a group is *edah*, a congregation. An *am* is defined by what happened to it in the past. An *edah* is defined by what it is called on to do in the future. An *am* is a community of fate. An *edah* is a community of faith. The Torah does not suggest that Jewish identity is exclusively one or the other. To be a Jew is to be both part of an *am* and a member of an *edah*. More precisely, it is to journey from the first to the second.

Moshe discovered his Jewish identity when he saw his brothers and sisters suffering in Egypt and knew his fate was joined to theirs. But he did not stop there, not even when he had led them out of slavery. He took them onward to Sinai, where they became the people of the Torah. That is the journey we retrace from Pesach to Shavuot. It is also our journey as modern Jews.

One hundred years ago, in the summer of 1897, a gathering took place in the small Swiss town of Basel that was to change the course of Jewish history. The first Zionist Congress, convened by Theodor Herzl, was an unlikely

gathering. It brought together religious, non-religious, and even anti-religious Jews from across Europe. What united them was a common threat – antisemitism.

The term “antisemitism” was itself coined in 1879. Two years later, a series of pogroms broke out in Russia, followed by a spate of anti-Jewish legislation, the May Laws. By 1894, the Dreyfus affair in France had convinced Herzl that even the assimilated Jews of Western Europe faced the same danger. The only answer lay in a second exodus, a new journey across the wilderness to the promised Land. Herzl believed that, at Basel, he had laid the foundations of a new Jewish state and that it would be a reality within 50 years. He was off by only one year.

The 100 years between 1897 and today have been the century of the nightmare and the dream – the nightmare of the Holocaust, and the dream of Jewish sovereignty restored. We have seen the renaissance of the Hebrew language, the ingathering of exiles, the rebirth of the Jewish people as an independent nation in its own land, the rebuilding of Jerusalem. But the Jewish journey does not end there. Pesach is the beginning of a process, not the end. The destination is Shavuot.

The Zionist movement and the State of Israel have revitalized Jewry as an *am*, a people of shared fate. For the past century, most Jews throughout the world have been united by a sense of kinship in the face of antisemitism, the Holocaust, and the struggles and triumphs of Israel.

The young Jews today who participate in the March of the Living, witness the concentration camps, and go on from there to Israel, are tracing out the path of modern Jewish history as a journey from slavery to freedom. They are reliving the Pesach of our time.

But Jewry has not yet reconstituted itself as an *edah*, a people under the

sovereignty of G-d, whose constitution is the Torah. We have not yet had a second Shavuot.

Despite this, there have been remarkable developments in the past 30 years. Three institutions have appeared which have no precedent in Jewish history. Today, there are *hesder yeshivot*, where Israeli soldiers devote half their time to Torah study. There are *ba'al teshuvah yeshivot* for young Jews returning to their heritage. And there are seminaries where, for the first time, women are studying Torah at the highest level. These represent a rare burst of spiritual creativity.

Throughout the Diaspora, Torah study is flourishing in ways that would have astonished previous generations. In Britain, adult education programmes are over-subscribed. In the United States, communities that a generation ago were on the edge of eclipse, today boast *yeshivot* and *kollelim*, institutes of higher Talmudic learning. In Australia, later this year, thousands of Jews will gather to celebrate the completion of *daf yomi*, the seven-year cycle of daily Talmudic study.

A new Zionism is in the making, just as it was a century ago. But this time, it is focused not on Pesach but on Shavuot. It is about Jewish identity not as an *am* but as an *edah*.

The first Zionism was about the journey from slavery to freedom. The new Zionism is about the journey towards becoming the people of Torah.

“Zion” does not mean only “place.” It is also related to the Hebrew word for “signpost,” something that stands out from its surroundings and signals a direction. Zion thus became a metaphor for the Jewish people. They, too, were distinctive. They stood out from the surrounding culture. Their role was to serve as a moral and spiritual signpost at the crossroads of human civilization.

So there is a Zionism of Torah, just as there is a Zionism of land and state. It follows the latter as Shavuot follows

Pesach. That is the historical process at whose beginning we stand. Sadly, we will lose many Jews on the way. We will lose them spiritually, as a previous generation lost them physically. We will lose them for essentially the same reason – that we are an obstinate people.

We will be slow to recognise the imperative of the second Zionism just as a previous generation was slow to recognise the imperative of the first. The current disagreements about continuity programs mirror arguments a century ago about Zionism.

The first Zionist Congress was held in Switzerland because virtually the entire German rabbinate refused to allow it to take place in Germany. Today, yet again, Jews seem more intent on fighting one another than on heeding the call of history. But we will survive, because deep within the hearts of many young Jews is the knowledge that we are more than a community of fate.

Jews are not the only people to have been persecuted. We are not the only people to have fought for freedom, to have sought independence, sovereignty, a land, and a state of our own. These are part of the Jewish story. But they cannot account for the unique influence we have had on the civilization of the Western world. Nor can they explain the tenacity and pride with which Jews passed on their identity to their children across four millennia.

We are ultimately the people of Torah. To be a Jew is to be part of a nation which defines its very identity in terms of serving G-d, translating revelation into society and the choreography of daily life. That is the journey which our best young people are pioneering today – and more will join with every passing year. It will dominate the Jewish agenda for the coming century. The Jewish people await its second Shavuot.

TAKING FULL ADVANTAGE: A SHAVUOT CHESHBON HANEFESH

Rabbi Reuven Taragin

The central pillar

Shavuot, the holiday that celebrates the giving of the Torah, is the time when both Hashem and the Jewish people reflect upon our relationship with the Torah He gave us.

Though *Shimon HaTzaddik* identifies Torah study as one of three pillars that support the world (*Avot* 1:2), the pillar of Torah is the most important. “*Talmud Torah k'neged kulam*,” “the significance of Torah learning is equal to that of all other *mitzvot*” (*Peah* 1:1).

This explains why the world's existence hinges upon Torah learning. The Torah describes the sixth day of creation as “*yom hashishi*” as opposed to “*yom shishi*,” unlike its description of the previous days of creation. Chazal explain that Hashem conditioned Creation on the events of a future “sixth day” – the sixth of Sivan – when the Torah was given. Had we not committed ourselves to Torah, the world would have been returned to nothingness (*Avodah Zarah* 3a).

Rav Chaim Volozhin understood that just as creation hinged on our

original acceptance of the Torah, so the world's continued existence depends upon Torah learning. If there would be even one moment completely bereft of Torah learning, the world would cease to exist (*Nefesh HaChayim*, Sha'ar 1:16). Along these lines, Rabbi Meir emphasizes that one person learning Torah makes the entire world's existence worthwhile (*Avot* 6:1).

Pirkei Avot begins with *Shimon HaTzaddik's* assertion that the world exists for the purpose of Torah learning. It ends with Rabbi Meir taking this notion a significant step further by portraying even a *single* person's Torah learning as justifying the existence of the *entire* world!

The greatest and highest life

“If you have learned much Torah, do not take special credit; it is why you were created” (*Avot* 2:8). The world was conceived as a context for Torah learning, and the Jewish people were created to be the vehicle. This explains why Hillel taught that one who does not study Torah deserves to die, for Torah study is the central reason for our existence (*Avot* 1:13). If we do not fulfill our role, the gift of life will, G-d forbid, be taken from us.

When some questioned his commitment to teaching Torah in violation of a Roman prohibition, Rabbi Akiva compared a Jew's need for Torah learning to a fish's dependence on water (*Berachot* 61b). Torah is not just an enhancer of life; it is a condition for it. Though we can physically live and breathe without Torah, our spiritual life hinges upon its nourishment.

Why is Torah study so important? It is the only pursuit we can devote all of our free time to. While *chessed* is performed in response to a situational need and *tefillah* is recited at set intervals, Torah can be learned at any free moment. At any moment, we can draw close to Hashem by immersing ourselves in His thoughts.

Rabbi Meir asserts that Torah learning makes one “greater” and “higher” than all other creations. In Rav Yosef's view, Torah learning is “great” because it makes those who learn it “greater,” elevating us to the highest version of *ourselves* (*Avot* 6:2). Rav Yosef explained his custom to celebrate Shavuot with a “triple-meat” sandwich by asserting that without Torah learning, he would have amounted to no more than “the average Joe / Yosef” (*Pesachim* 68b).

There are many ways people seek to distinguish themselves. There are the Joe DiMaggios and Joe Namaths of sports and the Joe Bidens and Joe Liebermans of politics. Though some of their accomplishments are impressive and impactful, only (*ilmaleh*) Torah learning truly develops us in a meaningful way.

This appreciation lies at the heart of *Chag Shavuot*. To celebrate Shavuot properly, we need to reflect upon how central Torah learning and values are to our



identity. Celebration without this reflection is superficial and merely physical.

Heaven's cry

"Every day, a heavenly voice cries out from Sinai saying: 'Woe to the creatures who insult the Torah' by not taking advantage of the opportunity to study it" (Avot 6:2).

This lament is especially relevant to our times. The Industrial Revolution and subsequent technological advances shortened the amount of time needed to complete our workload, while electricity lighting up our nights has expanded our ability to be productive at night. Together, these advancements afford us an unprecedented amount of free time. But how do we use this time? Unfortunately, much of the world devotes it to leisure and entertainment, using their free time for activities that do not enrich them or impact their surroundings in any meaningful way.

"Rabbi Chanina the son of Chachinai would say: One who stays awake at night, or travels alone on the road, and turns his heart to idleness, has forfeited his life." (Avot 3:4). The problem is not being up at night in and of itself, but, rather staying up at night *without learning Torah*. Night time was created for Torah study and sleep (Eruvin 65a); one who wastes it does not deserve the life he has been gifted.

We live in an age of constant distraction. It is, in fact, no further than the palms of our hands. Though people have always been drawn to meaningless pursuits, easy access to smartphones, social media and entertainment has increased the temptation dramatically.

Shavuot is the time to consider the contrast between the great value of Torah study versus the amount of time we commit to it. We should reflect upon the activities in which we invest our time and consider the growth we would achieve if we devoted that same time to Torah study.

Translating our good intentions

Many of us have tried to devote more time to Torah study, but have struggled to actualize our good intentions. After Shavuot, when we return to the busyness of everyday life, our hopes of intensifying our Torah study often fall by the wayside.

Chazal addressed this problem with a practical recipe for success. It begins with being "*kovei'ah itim l'Torah*." Devoting a set time each day and night to Torah learning reinforces our appreciation of its importance and gives us a better chance of continuing consistently.

Ideally, we should set aside the first and last hours of each day for Torah study. Learning first thing in the morning shows that Torah is our priority and ensures we learn before the days get busy. Learning at the end of our day frames the day with holiness and infuses our sleep with thoughts of Torah.

Studying with a *chavruta* in a *beit midrash* and joining a set daily learning program (like *daf yomi*) will also help us maintain a commitment to learning. *Chavruta* study makes us responsible to someone else, while learning in a *beit midrash* among a cadre of learners adds atmosphere to our learning. Finally, joining a daily learning program links us to a global community devoted to a common Torah goal.

Many of us spend hours commuting each day. What do we do while driving or on the train, bus or plane? Travel time is an excellent opportunity to listen to a *shiur* or read a *sefer*. By doing so, we increase our Torah learning and reinforce our appreciation of Torah.

Every Jew should aspire to become a Torah scholar. Our appreciation of the Torah's value should also inspire us to seek to grow our Torah knowledge. It is never too late to acquire Torah knowledge. Rabbi Akiva began his meteoric growth at age forty. Most of us are already ahead of him and just need to maintain our focus and effort.

What our life amounts to

Rav Ovadia Yosef *zt"l* told the story of a rabbi who visited a town for the first time. The locals gave their honored guest a tour, taking him to see the *shul*, the school, the *mikveh* and finally the cemetery. The rabbi was shocked to see that all the gravestones memorialized children who had died young: Reuven, 12 years old. Shimon, 11 years old. Levi, 15 years old, and so on. "Was there a plague here?" he asked. "A pogrom? Why did they die so young?"

"No, rabbi," the mayor explained. "In this town, we keep track of the time we spend each day learning Torah and

doing *mitzvot*. At the end of the day, we count up those hours and write them down on a little pad. At the end of each week, month and year, each person tallies his total hours of Torah study. When someone dies, we add up the total amount of time they spent learning Torah and doing *mitzvot*. For this person, it was ten years, for that person twelve. The ages on the gravestone are their Torah ages, not their biological ones."

Shavuot is a time to reflect upon how to make our days, months, and years count. The Tschebiner Rebbe used to challenge his *chassidim* to consider what would happen if someone already deceased was given the opportunity to return to this world for a few days. How would he spend his limited time? The newly revived man would surely rush to the *beit midrash* to learn as much Torah as possible and certainly wouldn't waste his time on idle chatter and meaningless activities. We, too, should appreciate the limited time we have in this world and use it well.

Our communities do so much good. We send our children to fine schools, *daven* in beautiful *shuls*, and are deeply committed to *chesed*. Our commitment to Torah learning, on the other hand, definitely needs strengthening. Let us use *Chag Matan Torateinu* as a time to reflect on the importance of Torah learning and the ways we can deepen our commitment to it. *Chag Sameach!*



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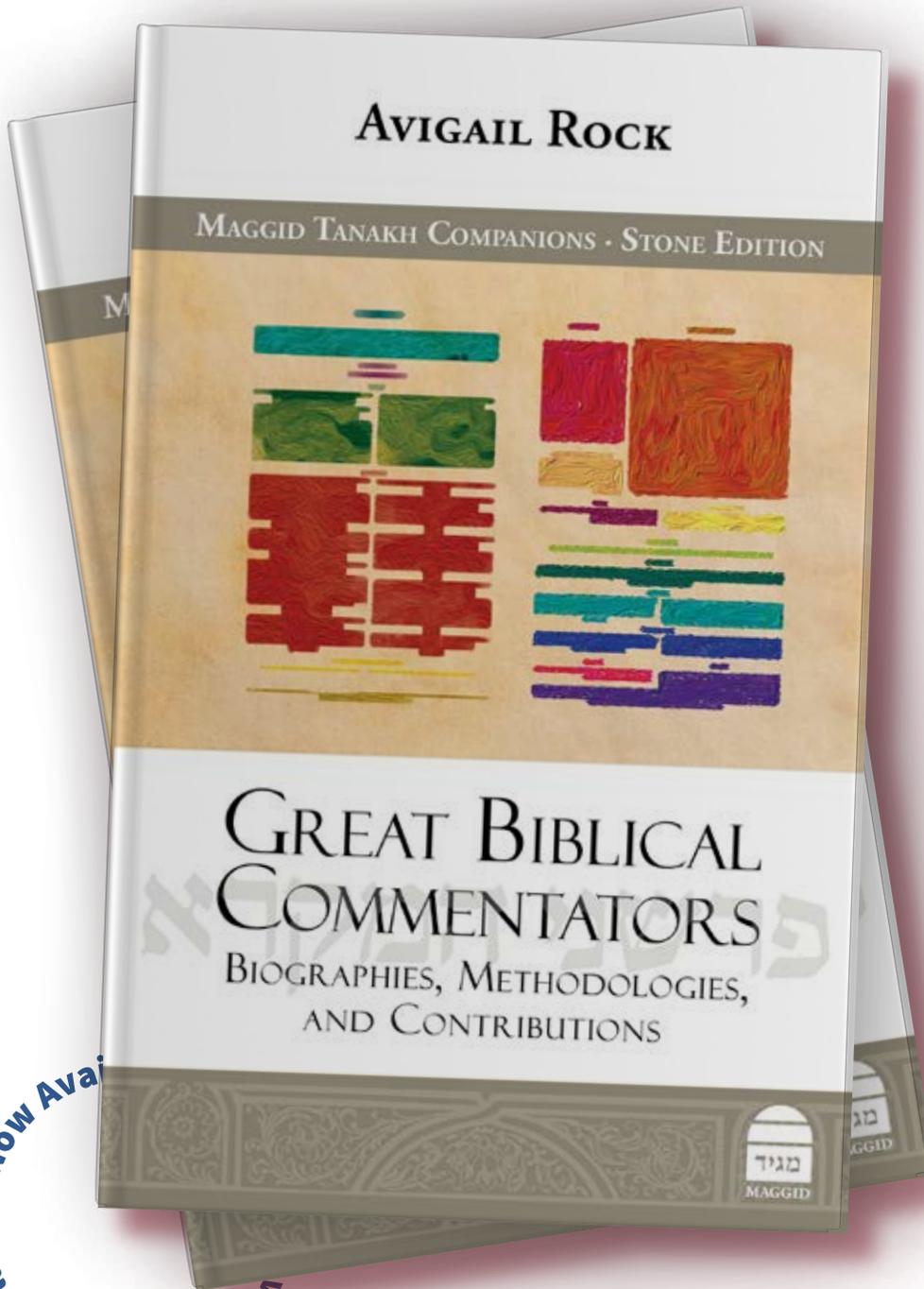


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Personal Narrative and Collective Destiny

A Tribute to the Dee Family

Malka Hubscher

The Torah calls Shavuot the “*Chag HaBikkurim*,” referring to the special offerings brought in the Temple during the festival. But what, exactly, is the *mitzvah* of *bikkurim*? Interestingly, there are two entirely separate offerings referred to as *bikkurim* in the Torah, and both are offered in the Temple on Shavuot.

“You shall bring out of your dwellings two wave-loaves of two-tenth parts of an ephah; they shall be of fine flour, baked with leaven, as *bikkurim* for Hashem” (Vayikra 23:17). The first *bikkurim* offering is what is known as the *Shtei HaLechem*, the only offering on the altar that consists of leavened bread. As there is a prohibition against bringing *chametz* on the altar, these loaves of bread are only waved by the *kohanim*, and not actually offered on the altar. This is a communal offering paid for by public funds and is baked from the first flour from the new crop of wheat, harvested just before Shavuot. It is a proclamation of gratitude to Hashem for another year of bounty and prosperity on behalf of all of Israel.

But there is also a second *bikkurim* offering: “You shall take the first of all the fruit of the ground, which you shall bring from the Land Hashem your G-d gives you, and put it in a basket and go to the place Hashem your G-d will choose...” (Devarim 26:2). At harvest time, each individual farmer enters his own field and marks the first fruits from that year’s yield. On Shavuot, he makes a pilgrimage to the Temple and offers a basket of the first fruits to the *kohen*. Unlike the communal *Shtei HaLechem*, this offering is brought by each individual. As he presents his basket, each farmer recites a text called “*Arami Oved Avi*,” “My father was a wandering Aramean” (Devarim 26:5), describing the Jewish enslavement in Egypt, the Exodus and the conquest of Israel.

Interestingly, the farmers do not offer praise to G-d for the winter rains and their



successful crops, as you might expect. Instead, the farmers recite a Jewish history lesson! Why are there two *bikkurim* sacrifices on Shavuot, and why must farmers recite *Arami Oved Avi*?

As Jews, we must find a balance between our identity as singular individuals connecting to our Creator in our own unique way, while simultaneously identifying with the collective Jewish narrative that transcends our own personal experience. On Shavuot, the day of *Matan Torah*, we accept the Torah both as individuals and as members of the Jewish nation.

This is why we bring two *bikkurim* sacrifices on Shavuot. The two offerings represent the duality of our identity. The communal *Shtei HaLechem* represents the story of our nation, while the first fruit offering represents each individual’s part in this story. But it is not enough to bring these two offerings separately; they must be intertwined. And so every farmer must recite “*Arami Oved Avi*,” the history of our people, to remember that his personal fate is intrinsically bound up with our national destiny.

For this reason, we recite the very same passage on *Seder* night, 50 days earlier. The goal of *Seder* night is for each and every Jew, in every generation, to feel like he left Egypt – that he is part of *Am Yisrael*! The Exodus is not ancient history, but rather *our* story, a story that continues to this very day. This theme begins on *Seder* night, continues through the seven weeks

of the *Omer*, and culminates on Shavuot. Yes, we are all unique individuals, but we are also part of something far greater – the glorious destiny of *Klal Yisrael*!

Since the brutal murder of Lucy, Maia and Rina Dee *hy”d* on *Chol Hamoed Pesach*, the Dee family has shown our community in Efrat and the entire world that every Jew’s personal destiny is bound up together with the destiny of our people. From the depths of their horrific personal pain and suffering, they have inspired us all to take pride in our heritage and in our Land, encouraging us to unite and hope for better times.

As we celebrate Shavuot, we must commit to keeping the beautiful memories of Lucy, Maia and Rina alive. They were taken from us on Pesach, but they remain in our hearts as we march forward to Mount Sinai. As Leo Dee has taught us, our people are not only united by common suffering, but also *כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד בְּלֵב אֶחָד*, “as one person with one heart,” united by our national love, mission and determination.



Malka Hubscher

has taught in seminaries and women’s learning programs in Israel since 2000.

From Moav and the UK to the Hills of Beit Lechem

In Memory of Lucy Dee hy”d

Rabbanit Shani Taragin

Nearly a month has passed since that fateful Friday of *Chol HaMoed Pesach* when Lucy (Leah) Dee (48), from the Zayit neighborhood in Efrat and an *olah* (immigrant) from the United Kingdom, was critically injured in a terror attack near the Hamra junction in the Jordan Valley on her way to Teveriya. Terrorists fired on the car she was driving and then shot over 20 bullets at close range, killing her daughters Maia (20) and Rina (15), who were in the car with her. Lucy was evacuated by military helicopter to Hadassah Medical Center in Jerusalem. Unfortunately, despite the heroic efforts of the medical team, she succumbed to her wounds three days later and was laid to rest next to her daughters in Kfar Etzion, across the road from my home in Alon Shvut. Thousands attended her funeral, alternating between songs and sobs. The heart-wrenching eulogies of her husband, Rabbi Leo Dee, and her surviving children, Keren, Tali and Yehuda, will not soon be forgotten.

When tragedy strikes here in *Eretz Yisrael*, we feel the pain on a personal level; every Jew is a family member. But certain losses hit even closer to home. I had the merit to learn regularly with Lucy since she made *Aliyah* in 2014, through *shiurim* offered by the Women's Beit Midrash of Efrat and Gush Etzion. She assiduously took notes so as not to miss a single word, and after each *shiur* would wait to say “thank you” and explain how that *shiur* would change her perspective and actions going forward. Bumping into each other in the supermarket, we would continue our Torah discussions in the fruit and vegetable aisles. As Yom Yerushalayim approaches, I recall how she would sit with friends at the annual Women's Beit Midrash *shiur* and breakfast with tears in her eyes, appreciative of the opportunity

to learn and celebrate only a few miles from our cherished city.

As I think of Lucy and remember her together with her close friends and neighbors, I am struck by numerous remarkable parallels between Lucy and another mother from the hills of Beit Lechem: Ruth. Both Ruth and Lucy left their homelands, their birthplace and their families to come to the fields of Judea. They were not raised as observant Jews, but both Ruth and Lucy pursued lives of Torah observance. At the *shiva*, the daughter of the Chabad *rebbe* *tzin* who taught Lucy many years ago spoke about Lucy's unusual curiosity and commitment at the young age of twelve!

Having studied Asian and Near-Eastern Studies at Oxford, Lucy lived in Japan for a year while keeping Shabbat and *kashrut*, and later traveled the world with her husband Leo. She served as *rebbe* *tzin* of the communities of Hendon and Radlett, and like Ruth the Moabite, her priority was her family and their well-being, instilling in her children the values of *Torat chessed*. Like Ruth, Lucy taught through example and devotion. Rachel Wilk, a close friend of Lucy's, said that Leo and Lucy insisted their children not only adjust to Israel but also become contributors to Israeli society, in *shul*, school, and especially in their youth organizations. Lucy modeled this way of life by regularly attending *shul* with her four daughters and organizing community events and *shiurim*.

Lucy organized the weekly Shabbat *shiur* in the Zayit. Her long-time “*shiur chavruta*” and next-door neighbor, Annie Pomerantz, reflected upon Lucy as “a phenomenal teacher, making it into a mission to teach English and invest in her students. She never spoke *lashon hara*. If she didn't agree, she wouldn't argue but remain quiet.”

Caroline Peyser-Bollag, a family friend, remarked, “Lucy was always interested in making holiday celebrations fun for her family. She loved connecting with people and joining together to celebrate. Lucy would love to hear or share a *dvar Torah* and then think together about how she could turn it into a conversation starter to engage her kids at the Shabbat table. She put a lot of thought into her parenting and into providing her children with enriching and meaningful experiences.” Valerie Pessin described her as an “extraordinary hands-on mother” who was, in Elana Abelow-Kronenberg's words, “idealistic, an incredible wife and an extraordinary friend.”

Rena May-Juni shared how touched she was when Lucy proactively reached out and befriended her soon after her *Aliyah*. “Lucy craved deep friendships and worked tirelessly to maintain these friendships, despite our busy lives as mothers and professional women.”

Ruth was willing to sacrifice her past to provide Naomi with a future. Not only did she enable Naomi to safely return to the Land, but she also provided her with a child through Boaz to perpetuate her family. Like Ruth, Lucy left her homeland and became a vibrant member of *Am Yisrael* in *Eretz Yisrael*, committed to her family and community in the same hills of Yehuda. Both had struggles yet remained focused on building, surviving and thriving with relentless dedication.

Ruth could not have known the impact her loyalty and kindness toward Naomi would have on future generations. Chazal explain that the story of Ruth was canonized to teach us the rewards bestowed upon those who perform kindnesses (*Ruth Rabbah* 2:14). Ruth's sacrifices were rewarded with her progeny as she became the “mother of

royalty.” Like Ruth, Lucy could not have known the impact of her sacrifice, a sacrifice that has inspired our entire nation.

“What can I do to honor Lucy’s memory?” asked Rena May-Juni. “Be proactive in nourishing friendships, cherish every moment with my children, be forgiving to myself and others, encourage creativity, commit to physical fitness, harness my power as a woman to do good in the world, embrace my flaws and love my spouse and children unconditionally.”

Ruth did not live to see her great-grandson rise to royalty and begin our people’s messianic line. Yet after three millennia, we continue to learn from her and remember her as one of Israel’s greatest women of valor. United as one family and one nation, we hope and pray that we will learn from Lucy’s remarkable legacy. May we soon see the regards of her sacrifice.



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JEW'S with VIEWS

We asked five accomplished Jews from around the world: Which sefer can keep you awake all night long on Shavuot?



Rabbi Reuven Boshnack

Rav Chaim HaCohen of *Aram Tzoba*, also known as Aleppo, Syria, was a student of Rabbi Chaim Vital who wrote a fantastic commentary on *Shulchan Aruch*. Though much of the commentary was lost, we still have many sections of *Orach Chaim* and the laws of mourning. It is named the *Tur Baret - Mekor Chaim*, after one of the columns of precious stones on the *kohen gadol's* chest plate. This unique book explains the interface between the laws of daily life, the secrets of Torah and the life lessons which emerge from them.

“His head is a shining gem, the curls of his hair are black like a raven” (Shir HaShirim 5:11). The Midrash explains these curls of hair represent the curls and nuances of *halacha*. Rav Aharon HaLevi of Starshellye (*Parashat Naso*) comments that hair grows from the head, and yet we feel nothing when it is cut. Each nuance of *halacha* emerges from Hashem’s will, but often we don’t understand how or why it matters or what difference it makes in our lives. Herein lies the charm in Rav Chaim HaCohen’s *sefer*. I find it incredibly compelling to delve into the meaning behind each curl of *halacha*, how it connects us with Hashem and how each law aims to improve our lives.

Rabbi Reuven Boshnack is the Rav of Pri Eitz Chaim/OAJC and a Rebbe, Mashgiach and Advisor for Undergraduate Torah Studies at Yeshiva University. He is the author of several sefarim on the Maharal, Sefas Emes and Izhbitz.



Shira Lankin Sheps

Over 18 years ago, when I was a student in seminary, I had the opportunity to be taught by Dr. Yael Ziegler. As a teen, I hadn’t yet discovered what the stories of our history as a people meant to me. In her *Tanach* classes, I was empowered to read the text in a different way, parsing out the meaning of every verse and understanding characters, values, allusions, and messages that transcend the individuals in the narratives. She taught me that the messages of *Tanach* are as applicable to our lives today as they were in their own time. They are messages that were meant for all generations.

When her book *Ruth: From Alienation to Monarchy* was published, I instantly knew that it would become a favorite of mine and a constant companion for my Shavuot night learning. Utilizing *midrashic* readings to uncover deep textual analysis and a revelation of religious meanings in the *megillah* of Ruth, Dr. Ziegler offers insights into the themes of leadership, redemption, identity, and social morality.

Over the last few years, I have stayed up through the early morning hours of Shavuot reading and re-reading her scholarship. Every time I crack open the spine once more, I uncover new ideas, deeper meaning, and a stronger connection to the text and the holiday.

Shira Lankin Sheps, MSW, is a writer, photographer, and clinically trained therapist. She is the creator and publisher of The Layers Project Magazine, an online magazine that explores in-depth insights into the challenges and triumphs of the lives of Jewish women. She is the author of “Layers: Personal Narratives of Struggle, Resilience, and Growth From Jewish Women” published by Toby Press in 2021.



Rabbi Dr. Yosef Bronstein

On Shavuot night I do not want to just learn Torah. I want to feel enveloped by the *mesorah* of Torah – the unbroken chain of Jews who studied, argued over and contributed to the Torah from Sinai until today. I aspire to receive the Torah anew accompanied by the intergenerational *mesorah*-community.

For this reason, one of my favorite books to learn on Shavuot night is *Kunterus Divrei Sofrim* of Rav Elchanan Wasserman. Using the lens of classic Talmudic methodology, the book dives deeply into the role of Torah scholars throughout the ages as transmitters and contributors to the *mesorah* of Torah. In essay after essay, Rav Elchanan masterfully clarifies key meta-questions about the *mesorah* such as: Which *halachot* come from G-d, and which were developed by the Sages over time? Which *halachot* are immutable, and which can be changed? What is the source of rabbinic authority? *Kunterus Divrei Sofrim* provides a window into the dynamic interplay between the Torah G-d gave us at Sinai and the collective contributions of the Sages.

A student of Rav Chaim of Brisk and the Chafetz Chaim, Rav Elchanan was deeply rooted in the legendary *yeshivot* of Eastern Europe. His lifetime was tragically cut short when he and his entire *yeshiva* were murdered by the Nazis. Studying Rav Elchanan's Torah thoughts about the *mesorah* is a way of giving him and the Torah that he represents the ultimate victory over the Nazis. Decades after the fall of our enemies, Rav Elchanan's words live on, connecting us to our roots and challenging us to be our own link in the unbroken chain of Torah.

Rabbi Dr. Yosef Bronstein is the Rosh Bet Medrash of Machon Zimrat Ha'aretz, a new community Bet Medrash and rabbinical training program in Kehilat Shirat David in Efrat.



Rebbetzin Natalie Altman

I grew up in a *ba'al teshuvah* family, received Chabad schooling and attended a Modern Orthodox *midrasha* in Israel. Upon my return to South Africa, I was involved in Ohr Somayach, Bnei Akiva and the University Jewish Student programme. I am currently the Director of the Religious Zionist yeshiva day school in South Africa.

For me, Shavuot is about *mesorah* (tradition) and the very personal way that each of us express that *mesorah*. I am curious about the traditions that take hold over time, the ones that are rejected and those that are personalized and tweaked by different communities and individuals over generations.

A book I could read all through the night is Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski's *Generation to Generation: Personal Recollections of a Chassidic Legacy*. Rabbi Twerski shares personal stories of his family's *Chassidic* dynasty through the lens of Torah and psychology. It is moving to read about the practical, day to day expressions of the Twerski family's authentic Torah lifestyle. This is the culture I try to create for my own children and students, and it is important to remind myself of this goal every year.

I work with teenagers who are searching for and shaping their identities, and particularly their Jewish identity. In his description of his father's home, Rabbi Twerski describes his father's rebuke in three Yiddish words: "*Es past nisht*," "that is not becoming of you." Our children face many challenges, distractions and competitors to their *yiddishkeit*. When we teach them about the great depth of tradition and the beautiful legacy they must live up to, we help them recognize their own inherent greatness. It is an inspiring call for them – and us – to live our best lives.

Rebbetzin Natalie Altman is the Director of Yeshiva College Schools in Johannesburg, South Africa.



Rabbi Yossi Goldin

I have personally found that over the years, different *seforim* and areas of Torah have piqued my interest and kept me up learning all night on Shavuot. Often the *seforim* I chose reflected the stage in life I was in. When I was younger, I enjoyed going through *Megillat Ruth* with my friends – taking snack breaks every 10 minutes, but also feeling a sense of accomplishment at finishing the *Megillah* each year. As I entered my years in *yeshiva* and college, Gemara learning became my area of passion and focus and Shavuot night a prime opportunity for a "*chazara* (review) marathon." During my *semicha* years, my focus shifted to learning *halacha* in-depth. Years later, a newfound interest in *Torat Eretz Yisrael* dominated my attention.

Recently, however, my Shavuot night learning has once again shifted dramatically. As a number of my children have reached the ages where they stay up for at least part of Shavuot night, I now spend the night learning with each of my kids, continuing the learning we do together every Shabbat, but for a longer amount of time. There is something incredibly rewarding about this experience. Aside from the Torah learning itself and spending quality time with my children, the opportunity to pass on the experience of Torah study to the next generation on Shavuot night, when we celebrate our nation's *kabbalat haTorah* and the privilege that a life of Torah provides us, is profound – and something I do not take for granted.

Rabbi Yossi Goldin is a 9th grade Ra"m at YTA, Israel Immersion Program Coordinator and Placement Advisor at YU/RIETS Israel, and Coordinator of Community Engagement at World Mizrahi/NCYI.



Who Murdered Chaim Arlozorov?

Rav Kook's Fight for Justice for the Falsely Accused

Moshe Nachmani

Ninety years ago, on Friday night, June 16, 1933, Chaim Arlozorov, head of the political department of the Jewish Agency, was murdered on a beach in Tel Aviv. Two right-wing Jewish activists, Avraham Stavsky and Zvi Rosenblatt, were suspected of the murder. Their ten-month trial caused a storm of controversy in the Jewish community in Israel, and at the end of the trial, Stavsky was sentenced to death by hanging.

One of the most prominent figures in the story of Stavsky's rescue from execution was the Chief Rabbi, Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook. Rav Kook came to Stavsky's defense on the grounds that there was no actual evidence that he committed the murder, arguing that it was forbidden to execute a suspect under such circumstances.

Rav Kook's argument was not based on *ruach hakodesh*, nor on the assumption that a Jew is incapable of killing, as some respected researchers claim, but on confidential information he received that exonerated Stavsky. The decisive information was given to him by Bechor Sheetrit, the prosecutor in the murder case. Sheetrit had interrogated two Arabs who were suspected of the murder and became convinced that they were, indeed, the culprits. After Rav Kook swore that he would keep the matter a secret, Sheetrit revealed his conclusions to him.

An action committee was established to save the accused, and Rav Kook won the public campaign to save Stavsky. He published announcements and urged distinguished public figures to join the rescue attempts. He did all this despite the heavy public pressure directed towards him and accusations that he was protecting a murderer. Left-wing extremists hung posters on the walls of his house: "Woe to the generation whose *kohanim* protect murderers." For many weeks, the left-wing press published a slew of hateful articles against Rav Kook.

Rav Kook was not frightened by the propaganda campaign. In one of his proclamations, he wrote: "We can all testify that [Stavsky] is completely free of guilt. We must not stand idly by! Anyone who has a spark of G-dliness in his heart, from all of Israel and from all of humanity, must protest against this terrible sin of shedding clean and righteous blood, and do everything in his power to

correct the perversion of the law and restore to the pure victim his complete freedom."

When Rav Kook was asked if he was sure that Stavsky was not the murderer, he replied: "I am not 100% sure; I am 120% sure!" In an assembly attended by fifty people, including the leaders of the *Yishuv*, he said: "I am ready to swear on Erev Yom Kippur in front of an open *aron kodesh* that Stavsky is innocent."

Interestingly, though Rav Kook was one of the leaders of those who worked for the acquittal and release of Stavsky, to this day no comprehensive study has been written that describes all of his efforts. Much has been written about the Arlozorov murder, but the experts have, for some reason, purposely concealed Rav Kook's role. For example, in the book *The Murder of Arlozorov* by Shabtai Tevet, Rav Kook's name is mentioned only twice incidentally.

After Stavsky was acquitted in court, Beitar leader Ze'ev Jabotinsky sent an emotional letter to the Religious Zionist rabbi Natan Milikovsky (Benjamin Netanyahu's grandfather), and among other things he wrote: "Overnight, Rav Kook's name became a sublime symbol in the hearts of countless multitudes... If I were not a boor completely ignorant of the Torah and afraid to open my mouth on a religious matter, I would call publicly at this moment for something I have dreamed about since my youth: to renew in our days the title of *kohen gadol*!"

Upon his release from detention, Stavsky ran to Rav Kook's house to thank him for saving him from death. When he arrived at the Rav's house, he realized that Rav Kook was at a resort on Mount Carmel. Rav Kook's assistant, Rabbi Avraham Chechik, came to



Stamp in honor of Avraham Stavsky.

Naomi Shemer: “I Grew Up in her Light”

Sivan Rahav-Meir

The 7th of Tammuz is the anniversary of the passing of one of Israel’s most well-known songwriters, Naomi Shemer. 19 years have passed since the woman who wrote *Yerushalayim shel Zahav* (Jerusalem of Gold), *Lu Yehi* (If Only), *Lo Tinzachu Oti* (You Will Not Defeat Me), and many other memorable songs passed away. I spoke to her son, Ariel Horowitz, and asked him if there was a story that had not yet been published about his mother. He immediately told me the following story:

“My mother felt compelled to answer every letter sent to her, and she received quite a lot of them. These were the days before email when you had to sit with paper and pen and actually write. Furthermore, she was not just some celebrity cut off from the public; the opposite was true.

I remember there was a mother who was sitting *shiva* over the passing of her son who fell while serving in the IDF. He was not the first son of hers to have given his life for his country. Mother took a sheet of paper and wrote at the top of the page, “I have no words” and, at the bottom, signed her name, “Naomi Shemer.”

In the hospital, two days before her death, my mother suddenly said to me: ‘Ariel, there is a problem.’ I asked what the problem was and she said: ‘I received a letter from fourth graders and I cannot respond.

I ask that you locate their teacher, contact her, and request that she tell the children

that I apologize, that I am very ill and therefore cannot answer them. I also ask that they not send wishes for my recovery, because I will not be able to answer those messages either. Tell them that if they bless me in their hearts, I will feel those blessings in mine.”

I asked Horowitz, a singer and composer himself, what it was like to grow up in the shadow of such a prominent songwriter. Correcting me, he said: “I did not grow up in her shadow. I grew up in her light.”

● Translated by Yehoshua Siskin.



Sivan Rahav-Meir

is a media personality and lecturer. She lives in Jerusalem with her husband, Yedidya, and their five children, and serves as World Mizrahi’s Scholar-in-Residence. She is a primetime anchor on Channel 2 News, has a column in Israel’s largest newspaper, *Yediot Acharonot*, and has a weekly radio show on *Galei Tzahal* (Army Radio).



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ALIYAH DIARIES

MORE MADONNA, LESS FUNGUS

KALLY KISLOWICZ

It's hard to escape the news these days. The country feels like it's on fire, the left hates the right, the right hates the left, the religious and secular feel diametrically opposed, and then there's the Arabs and the Jews... The headlines are filled with name-calling and incitement and bad behavior. We are having trouble being remotely civil, let alone finding common ground.

As an optimist, I take comfort in the belief that this country has seen challenging times before. We have been pulling ourselves back from the brink and rising phoenix-like from the ashes since before I was born. That's just how we roll. So when the situation gets me down, I think about my recent encounters with "the other" and I take heart.

Not long ago, I was waiting my turn in line at the nut counter. As I juggled my bags of pistachios and cashews, and commented on the rainy weather to the bewigged, long-skirted woman behind me, I heard the unmistakable opening chords of Madonna's 1986 classic, *Papa Don't Preach*. I subconsciously started moving my feet and humming along to her plea for parental understanding. As Madge and I geared up for the chorus, I noticed that our duet had suddenly become a trio. The *Charedi* woman behind me had started bobbing her head and quietly singing along. Our eyes locked, and I realized what a fool I was to imagine that the weather was all

we had in common. While it might be a stretch to say that we were rockin' out by the time we left the store, I can honestly say that we were singing together well above a whisper and doing more than just tapping our toes. Whatever our religious beliefs and backgrounds, Madonna had transcended our differences, bringing hope and understanding to the aptly named nut counter.

Fast forward a week and I am at the mall with one of my teenage sons as he is trying to buy a new pair of jeans. He has tried on several pairs in a number of stores; boot cut, skinny, athletic fit, distressed, retro, skinny athletic retro, and other combinations. It's been a long afternoon, and he has finally made a decision. All we have to do is pay for our purchase and then there will be nothing standing between me and my I-survived-shopping-with-my-teen-and-all-I-got-was-this-delicious-Rebar.

We walk to the counter to pay, but alas, there is no store employee in sight. We flag down a worker, who explains that he can't operate the register, but he has called in his coworker from the back room and he should be with us shortly.

We wait, and are soon joined by a mother and son who are speaking to each other in Arabic. I pull up the Rebar menu on my phone and am temporarily distracted by the myriad options and flavor adventures that await me. But minutes later we are still waiting. I catch the glance of the Arab

mother, and we share a tired and frustrated moment.

My son asks if we could just leave the correct amount of cash next to the register and be on our way. I am contemplating this course of action when I notice the large, plastic anti-theft device stapled to the jeans.

Could we just gnaw that off, we wonder together? I open my mouth and lift the device closer in a show of desperation. The other mother sees me and laughs. I don't think we share a common language, but I use international symbols of eye-rolling and foot-stomping to say "This is taking forever. Where exactly is this back room? My son better wear these retro jeans until they actually come back into fashion again to make this all worth it! And what do you think about me getting a dash of *techina* in my Rebar, will the taste be overpowering?" She answers back with expressive eyes, "Oh honey, there is no back room. We are standing here in perpetuity out of love for our sons. And we both know that those jeans will get painted at a Bnei Akiva event and be unwearable in six weeks, tops. But say yes to the *techina*, if we ever get out of here. You won't regret it."

After many more minutes, shared sighs, smiles, and exaggerated pantomimes, a salesperson materialized from the fabled back room to ring up our transaction. With a heartfelt wave to my new

compatriot, I grabbed the jeans and skipped off to Rebar. She was totally right about the *techina*.

Our oldest son is soon to be entering the Israeli Army. This marks a major transition in the life of any family, but as immigrants without prior military experience, I feel even more out of my depth than usual. I cannot help my son navigate the bureaucracy, I have no understanding of what his army service will entail, and I am bewildered by the new jargon and the endless strings of acronyms that are now part of our everyday conversation. I want to support and prepare my child, but at this juncture, I am woefully inept.

I have joined a WhatsApp group of English-speaking parents with children in the army. The group is made up of Anglos from all backgrounds. We are religious and secular, moms and dads, veteran army parents and newbies like myself. It's a great place to ask questions and seek advice and support. Posts range from, "What's the best way to wash my son's uniform?" to "My daughter is graduating from her officer's course, how much schnitzel should I bring to the celebration?"

While there are many posts to sift through, the main take-away that I have reached after hours of diligent scrolling is that if my child is to be successful in this new era of his life, I must buy him thick, antifungal socks.

And so to protect my baby, I went on Amazon and bought the hell out of those antifungal socks! Not just your cheap, run of the mill antifungals, mind you. These socks promise to scare the life out of any fungus that even thinks about gathering at my boy's feet. This sharing community of strangers has helped me cope with what lies ahead, and I am truly grateful.

What I have learned here is that while we cannot currently discuss judicial reform without causing phoenixes to lose their wings, we are still united by so many things: we love the Material Girl and we hate preaching. We love *techina* and we hate that our teeth are incapable of gnawing through anti-theft devices. We love our soldiers, and we maintain a fierce and passionate hatred of fungus.

And as the political saga plays out over the next few weeks I hope we will see that this is enough to go on. Until then, my protest chant is:

More Rebar, Less Mushrooms!
More Voguing, Less Athlete's Foot!
More Madonna, Less Fungus!

Left, right, or center, on these things we can certainly agree.



Kally Kislowicz
made Aliyah from Cleveland, Ohio, to Efrat in 2016.



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Hallel and Shamma!

Mizrachi Yom Yerushalayim & Shavuot Adventures

18	19	20
26 Iyar	27 Iyar	28 Iyar
EREV YOM YERUSHALAYIM	YOM YERUSHALAYIM	SH
21	22	23
1 Sivan	2 Sivan	3 Sivan
ROSH CHODESH SIVAN	YOM HAGOLAN	LEARN-A-THON!
24	25	26
4 Sivan	5 Sivan	6 Sivan
LAST NIGHT of Omer	EREV SHAVUOT	SHAVUOT

IT'S GONNA BE A BUSY WEEK

THE MOST WONDERFUL TIME OF THE YEAR!

Did someone say time?

TIME MACHINE

...AVRAHAM LOOKED UP, AND SAW THE PLACE FROM AFAR.

וַיִּשָׂא אֲבָרָהָם אֶת עֵינָיו... וַיִּרְא אֶת הַמָּקוֹם מֵרֶזֶק.

YITZCHAK WENT OUT TO MEDITATE IN THE FIELD BEFORE EVENING...

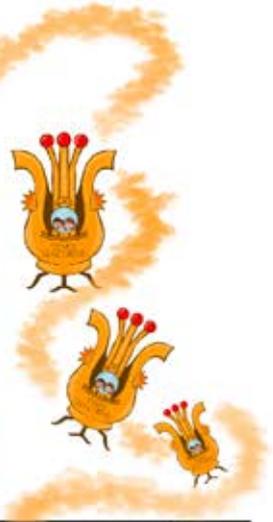
Jerusalem 1948

Jerusalem 1967

Jerusalem Mode

WRITTEN BY
SHIRA GREENSPAN

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START HERE!

Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi

(who lived during the 3rd century in Israel) taught something fascinating about the stories of Avraham: everything that happened to our forefather Avraham would also happen to Avraham's

descendants, the nation of Israel- כל מה שאירע לו אירע לבניו.

(מדרש תנחומא על פרשת לך לך (פרק ט))

Nachmanides (aka Rav Moshe ben Nachman who lived from 1194–1270 in Spain and Israel) applied this idea to all of the forefathers - Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov - that everything that happened to them would also happen to the nation of Israel.

אומר לך כלל תבין אותו בכל הפרשיות הבאות בענין אברהם יצחק ויעקב, והוא ענין גדול... (רמב"ן על בראשית יב:ו)

With this idea in mind, we are now ready to consider how the stories of each of our forefathers is reflected in the course of our national history, particularly when it comes to the holy city of Yerushalayim.

אברהם



How do each of the Avot's experiences parallel our national experiences of Galut (Exile)?



THE FIRST EXILE: MITZRAYIM

- Avraham's exile in Mitzrayim (Egypt) starts with a famine. It is a famine that starts our national exile in Mitzrayim as well. In the days of Yosef, famine leads the rest of Bnei Yisrael to go down to Mitzrayim.
- Another parallel: Avraham says to Sarah when they reach Mitzrayim "והרגו אתי ואתך יחי" "and they will kill me and let you live" (Bereishit 12:12). Years later, Pharaoh decrees that all of the Hebrew baby boys be killed but that the girls should not.
- Finally, both Avraham in his time as well as his descendants in the time of the Exodus from Mitzrayim leave with great wealth.

How do each of our Avot relate to Moriah?



...וישא אברהם את עיניו, וירא את המקום מרחק.

...Avraham looked up, and saw the place **from afar**. (Bereishit 22:4)

ויקרא אברהם שם המקום ההוא, ה' ראה, אשר יאמר היום, בהר ה' יראה.

Avraham called the place 'Hashem Yireh', as people say... 'In the **mountain** of Hashem will be seen.' (Bereishit 22:14)

How does each Beit HaMikdash reflect each of the Avot's connection to Moriah?

THE FIRST BEIT HAMIKDASH

- A mountain is spectacular when seen from a distance. But it can't be appreciated the same way up close. The inspiration is not long-lasting.
- Nations from near and far were especially inspired by the First Beit HaMikdash. But that inspiration was limited.

The State of Israel



1948 | 5708

For 2,000 years, we yearned and dreamt of returning home to Eretz Yisrael. The miraculous declaration of the State of Israel on the 5th of Iyar, 5708 and the subsequent War of Independence finally allowed us to live freely as a nation in our land. But the heart of Yerushalayim, the Old City, was still in Jordanian hands. All we could do at that time was look to the holy mountain from afar.

יצחק	יעקב
<p>THE SECOND EXILE: BAVEL</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yitzchak's exile experience is for a relatively short time and in a relatively close location (the neighboring Gerar). - Our national exile in Bavel (Babylon) was for a relatively short seventy years and in the neighboring kingdom of Bavel. 	<p>THE THIRD EXILE: EDOM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Yaakov is forced into exile by Esav. Many years later, in the time of the destruction of the Second Beit HaMikdash, Esav's descendants, the Kingdom of Edom, force Bnei Yisrael, Yaakov's descendants, into exile. - Yaakov's exile experience is the longest of all the forefathers (twenty-two years). Edom is our longest exile (2,000 years).

Which Exile do we find ourselves in now?

<p>ויצא יצחק לשוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה, לַפְנוֹת עָרַב... Yitzchak went out to meditate in the field before evening... (Bereishit 24:63)</p> 	<p>ויִירָא, וַיֹּאמֶר, "מֵה נֹרָא, הַמָּקוֹם הַזֶּה: אֵין זֶה כִּי אִם בַּיִת אֱ-לֹקִים, וְזֶה, שַׁעַר הַשָּׁמַיִם." [Ya'akov] was afraid, and said, "How full of awe is this place! This must be the house of Hashem, and this is the gate of Heaven." (Bereishit 28:17)</p> 
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<p>THE SECOND BEIT HAMIKDASH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A field is not as impressive as a mountain but it holds greater opportunity for growth. So too, the Second Beit HaMikdash lacked much of the greatness of the First, but it was a time of deepening our connection to Torah (especially the Oral Torah), just as Yitzchak deepened the work and legacy of Avraham. 	<p>THE THIRD BEIT HAMIKDASH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A house represents commitment and a lasting, intimate relationship. - The Third Beit HaMikdash will be the ultimate expression of the highest level of our relationship with Hashem. Unlike the others, it will not be destroyed.
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On a scale from "First Beit HaMikdash" to "Third Beit HaMikdash," where in Jewish history are we now?

<p>1967 5727 The miracles Hashem did for us during the Six Day War in 5727 are felt to this day. Among those miracles was the reunification of the Old City of Yerushalayim. While we are closer than our ancestors ever dreamed to our holy Har HaMoriah, the years since the Six Day War have not been easy. Yerushalayim is no longer a distant mountain, but an opportunity for growth.</p> 	<p>"הַר הַבַּיִת בְּיָדֵינוּ!" Lieutenant General Mordechai "Motta" Gur led the victorious brigade into the Old City 56 years ago. He famously broadcasted the words, "<i>Har Habayit b'yadeinu!</i> The Temple Mount is in our hands!" Did he know at the time that his words were like a prophecy? Did he understand that the message he shared to every Jew across the world and across time was that the future of the mountain of the bayit is in our hands, up to each of us.</p> 
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What is the literal meaning of "Har Habayit b'yadeinu?" What is the figurative meaning? What can you do to help the Nation and Land of Israel finally reach the phase of "Bayit?"



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