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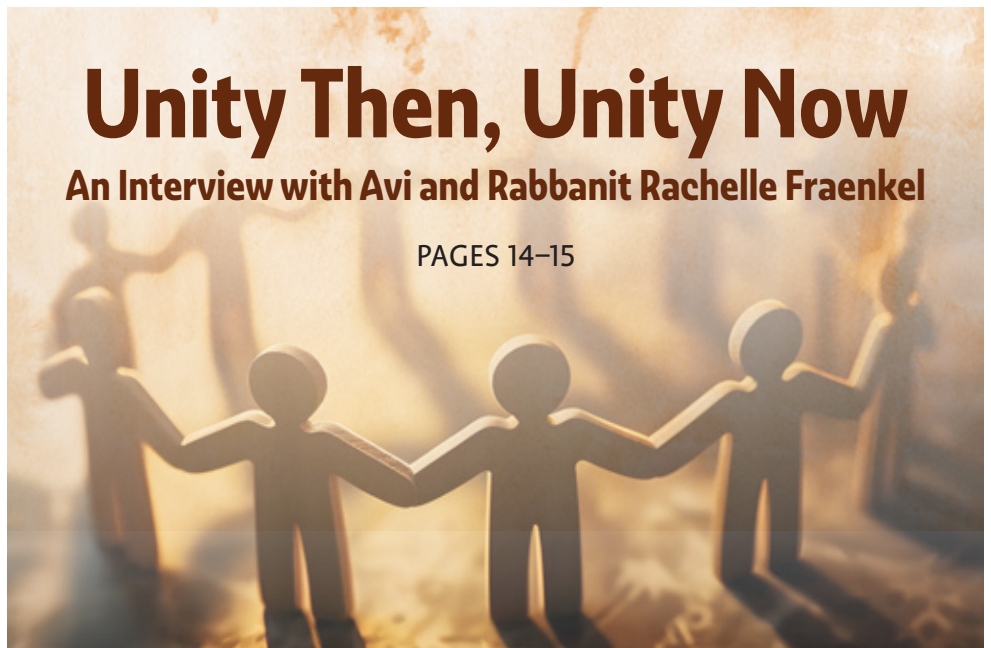
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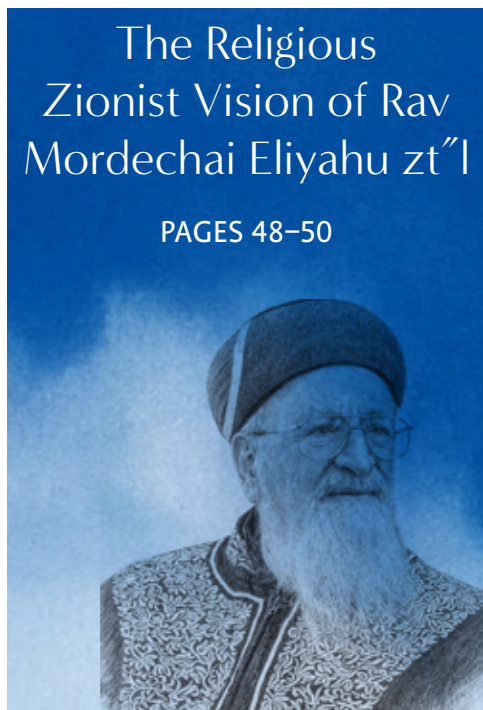
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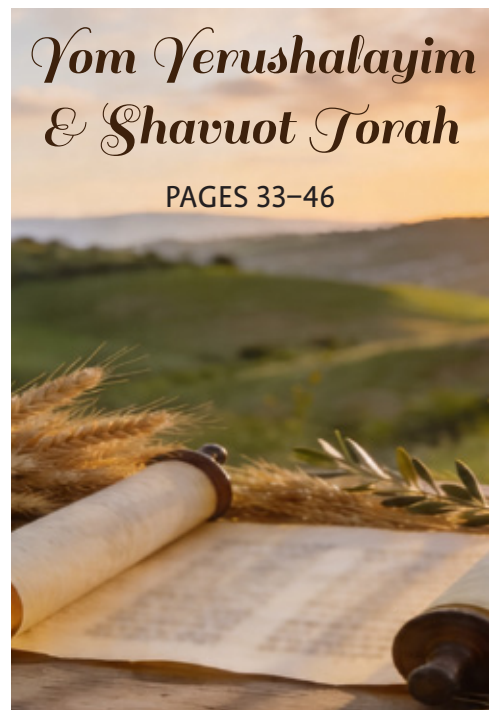
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Founding Fathers and Mothers

The Uniqueness of the Jewish People

Rabbi Doron Perez

Why does the Torah not begin with the greatest prophet of the Jewish people, the one who revealed the Torah at Sinai – *Moshe Rabbeinu*? If the essence of Jewish life is the fulfillment of Hashem's commandments – and it is – then the Torah might have been expected to open with revelation, law, and *mitzvot* (see Rashi, *Bereishit* 1:1). If Judaism were like other religions, it would indeed begin there – with a prophet and with revelation.

But it does not. The Torah begins instead with *Bereishit* – with creation, the first human generations, and ultimately with the story of one family.

This is foundational, reflecting a critical truth about the nature of Judaism itself. Judaism is not merely a religion. At its core lies a transformative idea: before we were a religion, we were a people – and before we were a people, we were a family.

Before we were a religion, we were a people

To understand the meaning of *matan Torah*, we must pay careful attention to the Torah's own narrative structure. The revelation at Sinai appears only midway through *Sefer Shemot*, in chapters 19 and 20 – after the entire fifty chapters of *Bereishit* and eighteen chapters of *Shemot* have already unfolded.

This sequencing is striking. If the giving of the Torah is the crux of Jewish life, why is so much scriptural text devoted to what comes before it?

The Torah is teaching us something essential: the covenant at Sinai was not

given to isolated individuals or to an association of believers. It was given to a people already formed through shared experience, memory, and destiny.

The opening chapters of *Shemot* depict *Bnei Yisrael* in Egypt – not as a religious community defined by law, but as a growing collective shaped by suffering and survival. They multiply, endure oppression, and begin to develop a sense of shared fate and identity – what Rav Soloveitchik has famously termed “a covenant of fate.”

At the burning bush, Hashem's first revelation to Moshe is framed in terms of national redemption: “I have surely seen the suffering of My people... and now go, I will send you to Pharaoh, and you shall take My people, the Children of Israel, out of Egypt.” This is a declaration of the fate of a people before it is a declaration of faith.

As the narrative unfolds – from the confrontation with Pharaoh to the plagues, from the Exodus to the splitting of the sea – we witness the emergence of a nation. The Israelites are not first defined by revelation; they are defined by a shared story. Only after this process of national formation do they arrive at *Har Sinai*. Only then are they given the Torah.

The sequence is deliberate: First, a people with a collective fate – what Rav Soloveitchik termed “the covenant of fate.” Then, receiving the Torah – what he termed “the covenant of destiny.”

A people bound to a land

This peoplehood is not abstract – it is deeply rooted in a specific land.

From the very beginning of the Jewish story, the Land of Israel is central. The first command given to Avraham – *Lech Lecha* – is not a theological directive but a journey to a land: “Go forth from your land... to the Land that I will show you.” Here, peoplehood and land are intertwined from the outset. The Jewish mission is not meant to unfold in a vacuum; it is meant to take place within a defined geographical and historical context.

This land-people connection is reinforced at Hashem's first revelation to Moshe at the burning bush: “I will bring them up from that land... to a Land flowing with milk and honey.”

This feature distinguishes Judaism from other major faith traditions. Religions such as Christianity and Islam are not inherently tied to a specific people or land; they are defined primarily by belief and practice. Judaism, by contrast, is inseparable from the story of a particular people connected to a particular place.

This makes Jewish life unique and difficult to define. Taken together, Judaism is more than a religion or a nation. The best description perhaps is a civilization – one that encompasses nationhood, culture, language, land, religious practice, and spiritual purpose.

Rav Kook: Judaism beyond religion

This broader understanding of Judaism is articulated with remarkable depth by Rav Avraham Yitzchak HaKohen Kook, particularly in his essay *L'Mahalach Ha'Edeiot B'Yisrael*.

In modern Western thought, religion is typically understood as a private domain – a system of beliefs and rituals that exists alongside, but separate from, national and civic life. Rav Kook argues that this definition is foreign to Judaism.

Judaism is not a compartment of life; it is the totality of life. The Jewish people are not merely adherents of a faith; they are a nation whose very existence is shaped by a divine calling. The Torah is not simply a collection of religious doctrines; it is the constitution of a living people. It speaks to every dimension of human existence – ethical, social, economic, political, and spiritual. To reduce Judaism to “religion” is therefore to fragment something that is inherently whole.

Rav Kook explains that the perception of Judaism as a religion emerged during the long centuries of exile. Stripped of land, sovereignty, and national institutions, the Jewish people were forced to sustain their identity in dispersed community structures built around accentuated religious practice.

As a result, Judaism came to resemble other religions: expressed primarily in places of worship and study halls, devoid of land, sovereignty, and national society. The Sages articulated this clearly: “Since the day the *Beit HaMikdash* was destroyed, all that G-d has in His world are the four cubits of *halacha*” (*Berachot* 6b).

With the beginning of the collective return to the Land, Rav Kook saw the making of a profound transformation. The revival of Hebrew as a spoken language, the renewal of agriculture and national life in our ancient homeland, the eventual reestablishment of political sovereignty – all these signaled the reemergence of Judaism’s full character. Judaism was expanding once again – from religion and the fragmentations of peoplehood into a renewed civilization.

This process, in Rav Kook’s view, was not merely political. It was spiritual – a manifestation of divine providence unfolding through history, restoring the Jewish people to the fullness of their identity.

Before we were a people, we were a family

And yet, even peoplehood does not reach the deepest layer of Jewish identity. For before we became a nation, we were already a family.

This truth is embedded in the very language of the Torah. The first time the Jewish people are referred to as an *am* – a nation or people – is in the opening chapter of *Shemot*. Strikingly, it is Pharaoh who makes this declaration: “Behold, the nation of the Children of Israel has become numerous and strong.” This phrase is telling: not simply a nation, but *the nation of the Children of Israel*. At the very moment we are recognized as a people, we are defined as a family.

Jewish nationhood is not built solely on shared religious ideology or national fervor. It is rooted in kinship – in the bonds of family that begin with a single household.

To understand this, we must return to *Sefer Bereishit*. *Bereishit* is not a book of laws; it is a book of relationships. It tells the story of parents and children, of spouses and siblings. It is, fundamentally, the story of a family. First and foremost, the Jewish story begins with Avraham and Sarah – our founding father and mother.

This is a remarkable departure from the way other nations understand their origins. The American people begin with founding fathers – figures such as Washington, Hamilton, and Jefferson – individuals who are the political architects of a nation, not biological ancestors. Their wives, families, and descendants are not the story of the American people.

In contrast, the Jewish narrative begins with a biological father and mother – *Avraham Avinu* and *Sarah Imeinu*. This family continues through Yitzchak and Rivka, and then through Ya’akov – renamed Yisrael – and his wives Rachel, Leah, and their maidservants, who together have twelve sons: the Children of Israel.

Here, the distinction becomes unmistakable: they are not only the founders of a nation; they are the founders of a family that becomes a nation. Jewish identity is therefore not merely adopted; it is inherited. It is transmitted through generations, carrying with it the intimacy and complexity of enduring family bonds.

We can now see the structure of Jewishness with clarity: it begins with a family – Avraham and Sarah, who establish the first covenantal home and family. That family becomes an extended family, a people – through descent, struggle, and shared destiny in Egypt. That

people receive the Torah at Sinai, where they receive their spiritual and divine mission.

Each stage is essential, and each builds upon the previous one. Without family, there is no people. Without people, there is no Torah.

A message for our time

This idea carries profound implications for us today. As we approach Yom Yerushalayim and *matan Torah*, we are reminded that unity is not merely an aspiration; it is a prerequisite for our mission.

Yerushalayim was never divided among the tribes; it belongs to all (*Rambam, Beit HaBechira* 7:14). And at Sinai, the people stood “as one person with one heart” – together as one.

This unity was not uniform. It was the unity of a family. Families are not defined by agreement. They contain differences, tensions, and disagreements. But they are bound by something deeper – a shared identity that cannot be dissolved.

To see another Jew as a family member is both comforting and demanding. It offers belonging, but it also imposes responsibility. It requires us to maintain connection even in the face of disagreement, to resist the temptation to fracture into separate camps. When we succeed in doing so, we affirm the deepest truth of Jewish existence: before we were a religion, we were a people – and before that, a family. And families, for all their imperfections, represent the most enduring form of human belonging.

This is why the Torah begins not with Sinai or Egypt, but with home and family – a spiritual odyssey directed to Avraham and executed together with Sarah as the founding father and mother of the Jewish people.

As I shared in my eulogy for our beloved son at his second funeral: “We may be the smallest people, but we are the largest family.”



Rabbi Doron Perez
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Six Days That Changed History: Halachot of Yom Yerushalayim

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

On the eve of the Six Day War in 1967, Israel's security situation was extremely tense. The Arab states were preparing for war, and in Israel there was deep fear of catastrophic consequences – a complete destruction of the state. But when the war broke out, we witnessed open miracles: the IDF destroyed large portions of the Egyptian air force while it was still on the ground, and within six days captured the Sinai Peninsula, Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria, and the Golan Heights. It was a dazzling victory.

To mark this victory – which was a salvation from death to life – and to mark the liberation of Jerusalem from foreign rule after two thousand years of *galut*, we celebrate Yom Yerushalayim.

Reciting Hallel on Yom Yerushalayim

In general, the *halachic* ruling regarding Yom Yerushalayim is identical to – and in fact more straightforward than – the ruling regarding Yom HaAtzmaut. Regarding Yom HaAtzmaut, there is room to debate whether the miracle is sufficient to warrant reciting *Hallel* with a *beracha* – since the miracle was incomplete, our enemies still seek our destruction, and the spiritual state of the country remains unrectified. But regarding Yom Yerushalayim, it is even easier to rule that *Hallel* should be recited with a *beracha*: the victory of the Jewish people in the Six Day War was total and unqualified, it was a complete salvation from death to life, and it included the capture of Jerusalem – our capital, our holy city, our glory.

Rav Unterman writes: “There is certainly a supremacy to the day that marks the

very existence of the state with regard to celebration and joy, and it will forever remain the birthday of the State of Israel. We hope our state will flourish and prosper, will gather the exiles and go from strength to strength, paving the way for our complete redemption. However, regarding the blessing of *Hallel* – there is a preference for the 28th of Iyar, when open miracles were seen: how the entire power of our enemies collapsed within two days, and we liberated Jerusalem and the surrounding cities. For a day of open miracles – *Hallel* must be recited with a *beracha*” (*She’elot u-Teshuvot Shevet MiYehuda*, vol. 2, OC *siman* 59:2).

Indeed, regarding Yom Yerushalayim, the Chief Rabbinate ruled from the outset that *Hallel* is recited with a *beracha* (Chief Rabbinate of Israel, 967–979; see also *Eretz Chemdah* [Rav Shaul Yisraeli], 1:66–71), and this remains the accepted practice today.

Yom Yerushalayim that falls on Friday

Unlike Yom HaAtzmaut – where the accepted practice is to recite *Hallel* on whatever day the celebrations are held that year, not necessarily on the 5th of Iyar itself – regarding Yom Yerushalayim it has been established that *Hallel* is recited every year on the 28th of Iyar, even when it falls on Friday (Yom Yerushalayim cannot fall on Shabbat). Only the public celebrations are moved up to Thursday to prevent *chillul Shabbat* (Chief Rabbinate of Israel, 983–984). The reason is that unlike Yom HaAtzmaut, the celebrations of Yom Yerushalayim do not carry the same risk of leading to *chillul Shabbat* (see *She’elot u-Teshuvot BeOhalah shel Torah*, 2:73).

Mourning practices of Sefirat HaOmer on Yom Yerushalayim

Since Yom Yerushalayim falls after Lag BaOmer, and many follow the practice of concluding their mourning customs after Lag BaOmer, the question of shaving and celebrating on Yom Yerushalayim is relatively simple. It is therefore permitted to shave, sing, and rejoice on Yom Yerushalayim – even for those who still observe *aveilut* practices during this period of the Omer.

Additionally, the Chief Rabbinate of Israel has ruled that it is permitted to marry on Yom Yerushalayim (*She’elot u-Teshuvot Shevet MiYehuda*, vol. 2, OC *siman* 60; *She’elot u-Teshuvot BeMar’eh HaBazak*, 3:59, p. 101), and this is the accepted practice. It is proper to ensure that the *chuppah* takes place either on the night of Yom Yerushalayim after *tzeit hakoachavim*, or on Yom Yerushalayim itself before *shkiah*.



Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

is the Nasi of World Mizrahi.

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



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THE DUET

A New Community in the Heart of Jerusalem

Rabbi Cohen, tell us about your background and how it led to this new project in Jerusalem.

I've been in the rabbinate for about 35 years, and throughout that time one idea has shaped everything we've done: building communities that are deeply rooted in Torah, but also open, warm, and welcoming to all.

I grew up in Atlanta, my wife in Charleston, and we were both influenced by communities where people felt comfortable regardless of their level of observance. The focus was always on connection – between people, to Torah, and to a shared sense of purpose.

That philosophy guided us through our years of learning, including at Yeshiva University and in Israel, and throughout our rabbinic journey. For the past two decades, we've led a growing, vibrant community in Stamford, Connecticut – one defined by warmth, chesed, and a real sense of belonging. It's the kind of place where people show up for each other.

At the same time, Israel has always been central to our lives. Not just as an idea, but as something deeply personal. We've always believed that it's not enough to speak about Israel – you have to create opportunities for people, especially your children and your community, to develop their own connection to it.

This new chapter is really where those two threads come together: a lifelong commitment to building community, and a deep emotional connection to Israel.

What is the vision behind this development, and what makes it unique?

What makes this project so compelling is that it's not just about real estate – it's about creating a community from the ground up in Katamon, one of the most dynamic and evolving areas of Jerusalem.

Developed by Nissim Shibli, "The Duet" is a development that consists of two modern residential towers – 10 and 23 stories – set in a part of the city that's undergoing significant transformation. Located on Berl Locker street in Katamon, Jerusalem, there's a brand-new park just behind the buildings, newly developed public spaces, and, importantly, a new light rail line that will run literally steps from the front entrance. That kind of accessibility is a game-changer in Jerusalem – it connects residents seamlessly to the rest of the city while still offering a sense of neighborhood and calm.

Inside the complex, the design reflects the same vision. There will be a synagogue on-site, shared communal areas, spaces for gatherings and kiddushim, and even a dedicated area for a communal sukkah. It's intentionally built to foster interaction – to turn neighbors into a true community.

But what really sets it apart is the purpose behind it. The goal isn't simply to sell apartments; it's to create a vibrant, values-driven community in the heart of Jerusalem – one that brings people together and contributes to the broader city.

Who is this community for, and what kind of lifestyle can people expect?

The community is designed for people who are looking for more than



Rabbi Daniel and Rebetzen Diane Cohen

just a place to live – they're looking for connection, meaning, and a sense of belonging.

While many residents will likely come from English-speaking backgrounds, the vision is intentionally global. This is a place that will bring together Jews from North America, Europe, Australia, and beyond. That diversity isn't a challenge – it's a strength. It creates a richer, more dynamic environment where people are united not by where they're from, but by shared values and aspirations.

Day to day, the lifestyle will combine the best of both worlds: the energy and accessibility of central Jerusalem, with the warmth and intimacy of a close-knit community. You'll have meaningful tefillah, opportunities for learning, and a strong culture of chesed – but also the simple, powerful experience of living among people who know you, care about you, and are invested in one another.

It's the kind of place where a conversation in the lobby leads to a Shabbat invitation, where communal spaces are actually used, and where relationships form naturally.

How do you build that sense of community in practice?

Community doesn't happen automatically – it's built through shared experiences and a culture of giving.

In our current community, one of the most powerful examples of this started during COVID. We launched "Making Mitzvah Moments" a communal whatsapp group to mobilize our community and inspire opportunities for eternal impact. One example was delivering challah to people who couldn't leave their homes. Volunteers of all ages got involved,

and what began as a practical solution quickly became something much deeper. Relationships formed between people who had never met before, and a culture of chesed took root. Even after the pandemic, it continued – because people wanted to stay connected and keep giving.

That’s exactly the kind of spirit we want to bring here. A community where people are constantly looking outward – toward each other and toward the broader city. Whether it’s supporting neighbors, engaging with local institutions, or creating initiatives that make a difference, the goal is to build something that radiates beyond the building itself.

What stage is the project at, and why is now the time to get involved?

Construction is already underway, with completion expected in the coming years. At the same time, the community itself is already beginning to form.

We’re actively meeting with people around the world – hosting both in-person and virtual events – and there’s a real sense of momentum. People are excited not just about the apartments, but about the opportunity to be part of something from the very beginning.

And that’s really the key point: getting involved now means helping shape the community. It’s not just about moving into a finished space – it’s about being part of its creation, helping define its character, and building relationships from day one.

What would you say to someone considering making this move or investment?

Decisions like this are never just practical – they’re deeply meaningful.

There’s a powerful idea that when we make major life choices, we’re not only influenced by our past, but also by our future – by the legacy we want to create. The people who came before us invested in Jewish life and in Israel in ways that allow us to even consider opportunities like this.

Now it’s our turn to make choices that will shape the future.

Being part of a community in Jerusalem – especially one built around connection, purpose, and shared values – is more than a lifestyle decision. It’s a way of stepping into that larger story.

What excites you most about what’s ahead?

The opportunity to build something meaningful in Jerusalem – something that combines vision with real, everyday life.

To create a community where people feel at home, where they grow, where they support one another, and where they’re part of something bigger than themselves – that’s incredibly exciting.

Because at the end of the day, it’s not just about where you live. It’s about how you live, and who you’re building that life with.

And in a place like Jerusalem, that takes on an even deeper significance.

If you would like more information, please contact Rabbi Daniel Cohen at +1 203-252-8252 and Shmuly Eisenmann on WhatsApp at +972 54-872-0470 OR email shmuly@capitol.com

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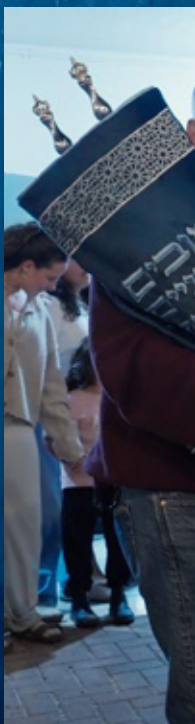
Nachal Oz is a small *kibbutz* whose name is now etched into Jewish consciousness. Located just 800 meters from the border of Gaza, this otherwise quiet farming town was at the center of the inferno on October 7th. At the adjacent Nachal Oz army base, 53 soldiers were killed and 10 were captured, and on the *kibbutz*, 15 people were killed and 8 kidnapped. It was only in June 2025 that the residents were told they could return to the destroyed *kibbutz*.

In February 2026, a unique event took place – a *hachnasat Sefer Torah* on the *kibbutz*. The Torah was dedicated in memory of Captain Daniel Perez, who died on October 7th defending Nachal Oz. He had been based on the Nachal Oz military base, and had fought for hours in the fields between the base and the border, preventing a worse infiltration into Nachal Oz.

The theme of unity pervaded the celebrations. The Torah was dedicated by the Young Israel of Lawrence-Cedarhurst, providing a moment of connection between Jews from *chutz la'aretz* and Israel. Led by Rabbi Ya'akov Trump and Alan Weichselbaum, this was another *Sefer Torah* the *shul* has dedicated in honor of fallen soldiers. The Torah was also donated to a unique pre-army academy called *Meitarim*; the student body of this academy are one-third religious, one-third secular and one-third *masorati* (traditional). Finally, the Torah connected the legacy of one heroic soldier to a new generation of soldiers, training to take their place in the IDF.

It is customary at a *hachnasat Sefer Torah* for any incumbent *Sifrei Torah* to be brought out to “greet” the newly dedicated scroll. At the *Meitarim* academy in Nachal Oz, there was already one existing *Sefer Torah* – one dedicated in memory of Naftali Fraenkel, one of the three boys kidnapped and killed by Hamas in June 2014. The memory of both *kedoshim*, Naftali Fraenkel and Daniel Perez, now became connected and joined.

As the last letters were completed, and the sounds of signing and dancing filled the air, one could almost touch the palpable holiness of the moment. Young and old, men and women, religious and secular, Israel and Diaspora – hundreds of Jews danced together, celebrating a Torah that remembers, that sanctifies and that unites.







Unity Then, Unity Now

An Interview with Avi and Rabbanit Rachelle Fraenkel

In the summer of 2014, the Jewish world was galvanized to action as we prayed for the return of three kidnapped Israeli boys. Despite the tragic ending to that chapter, the Fraenkel family has been determined to bring goodness to the world following the murder of their son Naftali. Rabbi Aron White sat down with the Fraenkels to hear about their story and their ongoing efforts to strengthen unity within the Jewish people.

Thank you for sitting down with us. To start, can you each share a little about your background?

Avi: I was born in Rechovot and grew up around the Weizmann Institute. I studied at the *yeshiva* in Ma'ale Adumim and later at Bar-Ilan University. For many years, I served in legal roles within the Israel Police.

Rachelle: I was born and raised in Ramat Gan to parents who made *Aliyah* from the United States. For many years, I have been part of the growing world of women's Torah study, mainly in the *batei midrash* of Matan and Nishmat, teaching *Gemara* and *halacha*. We live in Nof Ayalon, where we raised our seven children.

Twelve years have passed since those days in June 2014. For those who may be too young to remember, can you describe what happened?

Avi: Naftali was 16 years old, a student at Makor Chaim Yeshiva High School in Kfar Etzion. He was finishing eleventh grade, just before his *bagrut* exams. He was kidnapped by Hamas terrorists, together with Eyal Yifrach and Gil-ad Shaer, while standing at a bus stop at the Alon Shvut junction.

The search lasted 18 days and involved extraordinary efforts by security forces. But the deeper story, in many ways, unfolded beyond the operational side. Across Israel and throughout the Jewish world, there was an outpouring of prayer, concern, and unity that was truly unprecedented.

There were mass gatherings at the Kotel, in cities across Israel, and in Jewish communities worldwide. Jews in the Diaspora rallied, prayed, and reached out to leaders standing in solidarity

with the families, with Israel, and with one another. Inside Israel, the concern for the boys bridged social, religious, and political divides. It created a sense of shared destiny that connected people in a way we hadn't felt for decades.

Even after the boys were found and the outcome became known, the memory of those days – of hope, prayer, effort, and unity – remained deeply etched in the national consciousness.

When did you realize that this was touching millions of Jews around the world?

Rachelle: Within just a few hours, the story had spread across the globe. Suddenly, we found ourselves at the center of the Jewish world. Those 18 days felt like an eternity – an intense, almost surreal drama.

In recent years, dwarfed by everything *Am Yisrael* has gone through, including the mass kidnapping of hostages, some of whom spent over two years in captivity, it feels almost like we were characters from a previous season of the same series. The themes are familiar, but the scale has changed.

You later founded the Jerusalem Unity Prize. How did that come about, and what is its goal?

Rachelle: In the months after the kidnapping, we were dealing with many emotions. One of the strongest was a deep sense of gratitude, and also a sense of responsibility. We felt we owed so much to the millions of Jews who stood with us, who *davened* for boys they had never met. There was a desire and a sense of responsibility to preserve at least some of that unity.

We also discovered so many remarkable individuals and organizations working to bridge divides within Jewish and Israeli society. Disagreement and tension are very deep features of our society, and many are trying to address them in meaningful ways.

With significant support from Nir Barkat, who was then the Mayor of Jerusalem, we established the Jerusalem Unity Prize. Its purpose is to recognize and amplify those efforts – to give a platform and encouragement to the remarkable people working to bring *Am Yisrael* closer together.

Avi: Over time, the initiative also grew into what is now *Yom HaAchdut*, the Day of Unity. It has been officially recognized by the Knesset and is now part of Israel's national calendar, marked by educational and cultural activities in schools, communities, and *shuls*. For us, it's a way of continuing to say "thank you" and "let's keep going!"

Twelve years later, do you think unity is easier or harder to achieve?

Avi: *Achdut* has always been a challenge for *Am Yisrael*. Sometimes I feel like we were almost programmed with different perspectives about the right path for our people, and with a strong belief that my way is the right one.

There have certainly been better times and worse times when it comes to unity. But our task remains the same: to choose our path, to argue and debate, but to remember that we are one people. We have one heart.

Rachelle: It's hard to say. In every generation, people say, "It's never been this divided, this fractured." But I've heard from people who lived through earlier periods that they felt exactly the same way.

If you look back, Israeli society has gone through many painful and divisive moments: the disengagement, the assassination of Rabin, the Oslo years and the terror that accompanied them, the public debate around the Lebanon War, the Yom Kippur War and its aftermath, the reparations agreement with Germany, the Altalena, the Saison, the Arlozorov affair, and more. These were all deeply charged, traumatic periods.

And yet, we came through them. By G-d's grace, this state did not collapse. Israeli society is strong and resilient, and the State of Israel is deeply precious to people across the spectrum, even when they disagree passionately about its future.

So as Avi said, this is probably not the last argument we'll have. G-d willing, we will be here for many more years: arguing, disagreeing, and continuing to build something together.

We've just marked Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut, days that carry such emotional weight. Is there a particular thought or message that has been with you this year?

Avi: For me, especially over the past twelve years, Yom HaZikaron carries a kind of tension between our personal story and the larger story of *Am Yisrael* – the soldiers and victims of terror who gave their lives so that we can live here, in *Medinat Yisrael*.

This year, on Yom HaAtzmaut, when I said *Hallel* in *shul*, I felt something stronger than usual: a deep sense of gratitude to Hashem for how we have managed to stand back up, and way



Avi and Rabbanit Rachelle Fraenkel participating in a panel as part of a conference at Mizrahi's Israel 70 celebrations in 2018.

beyond that, since Simchat Torah of October 7th. There was a feeling of gratitude and joy.

Rachelle: I remember that in the first year after the kidnapping, people asked me, "How does Yom HaZikaron feel for you now?" The question surprised me. It wasn't obvious to me that I was supposed to step into a different role, to "play" the part of the bereaved family. In a way, Yom HaZikaron hasn't really changed for me. Life has changed – there are new personal dates: Naftali's birthday, the day of the kidnapping and murder, the day he was found and buried. But Yom HaZikaron itself has always belonged to all of us. To me, it is one of the closest things to holiness that a secular calendar can create. It was never just a gesture or tribute toward bereaved families; it's a collective gathering around a loss that belongs to all of us. You don't have to lose a first-degree relative to feel that this day is part of your personal and family calendar in this country.

In the past few years, especially, Yom HaZikaron has taken on new intensity. The fresh losses sharpen the sense of mission: that life here must become better because of them.

Their friendship is our challenge. Their *arvut* – their sense of mutual responsibility – becomes our responsibility. We wish to turn love into care, passion into respectful disagreement, sacrifice (*korban*) into greater closeness (*kirva*), and to translate memory into an even better life. ■



Rabbi Aron White

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



UNITY

UNDER

FIRE

ELYASHIV RAICHNER

During the recent 40-day war with Iran, dozens of Iranian ballistic missiles rained down on Israel. Elyashiv Raichner, a resident of Yerucham and a journalist for Makor Rishon, visited the town of Arad after it took a direct hit from a missile. He describes how, for a moment, people from across the religious and political spectrum – from all segments of society – came together as Israel experienced unity under fire.

Near the site where the missile fell on Saturday night in Arad, Raichner met on Monday morning with Leah Hershkovitz, director of the Arad Tennis Center. She had come with her daughter to collect sentimental belongings from the destroyed apartment of her parents, Hannah and Yishai Tapsai. The apartment is on the first floor of the building closest to the missile's impact site – a building that will likely be demolished and rebuilt.

Hannah and Yishai had lived in that apartment for over forty years, since immigrating from Ethiopia in 1983. They raised their seven children there. Leah's father is already 92 years old. On that Saturday night, as sirens wailed across the Eastern Negev, her parents had not initially gone to the shelter because of her father's difficulty on the stairs. But when the alert came, Yishai Tapsai made the decision to go down, and as a result, they were unharmed.

Wearing a helmet, Leah entered the destroyed apartment. Throughout the morning, other residents of the damaged buildings arrived to retrieve what they could. One asked to collect clothing for the coming days; another needed diapers for her elderly father. Each required entry authorization and accompaniment by Home Front Command personnel, as the buildings near the impact site had been declared dangerous.

On Sunday, the Prime Minister, the President, and a long line of ministers and local officials visited Arad to support the residents and municipal staff. Monday morning was dedicated to philanthropy. Representatives from the Keren HaYesod Foundation, KKL (Jewish National Fund) leadership, and the Jewish Agency came to show solidarity and leave financial contributions. Arad's mayor, Yair Ma'ayan, repeatedly visited the large crater on Shimon Street, recounted the events of

Saturday night, and collected funds and donations.

From the moment the missile fell, Ma'ayan projected calm. Watching the video he recorded shortly after the impact, one could already sense the contrast between the alarming media headlines about a mass-casualty event and the mayor's measured description. "The damage was relatively minor – the missile went into the ground, and the buildings only suffered blast damage," Ma'ayan reported about two hours after the strike.

On Monday morning, Edna Weinstein-Gabay, CEO of Keren HaYesod, told Ma'ayan she was surprised by how calm his video had been. "Forgive me for not being more emotional," he replied. "A leader needs to reassure. No building collapsed – only walls were pushed – and thankfully, despite injuries, we have no fatalities. It was a great miracle that the missile went straight into the ground and didn't hit any of the buildings. You can see for



Volunteers helping at the site of the fallen missile.

yourselves that the adjacent concrete shelter wall remained intact without a scratch.” Ma’ayan noted that his experience as Director-General of the Jerusalem Municipality from 2007 to 2011, having lived through the bus bombings in the city, helped him keep perspective. He raised the need for funding a new therapeutic pool in the city, as well as a more urgent need for forty bomb shelters.

THE POWER OF COMMUNITY

The Tlalim neighborhood, where the missile struck, is one of Arad’s older neighborhoods, established about five years after the city was founded in the 1960s. Unlike other development towns in Israel, which were built with crowded, poorly planned apartment blocks, Arad was constructed with more care and forethought, evident even in its older neighborhoods. The main planning principle was that residents should be able to access most services within the neighborhood without leaving or using a car. Shimon Street, where the missile fell, is in fact a wide pedestrian path with no road or parked cars. By what can only be described as providence, the missile landed in the center of that street, between buildings.

The evacuation of residents was swift. Two Home Front Command rescue units were dispatched to Arad, one arriving by helicopter from central Israel. Magen David Adom, ZAKA, United Hatzalah, fire services, and Arad’s local rescue unit all arrived quickly. Their efficiency meant that within less than an hour, there were no missing persons at the scene. The commander of the Nevatim Airbase also

contacted Ma’ayan immediately after the strike and sent ambulances and fire trucks from the base.

Many local Bedouin residents assisted as well, evacuating dozens of injured people on their own, in addition to the forty treated by Magen David Adom. Some of these Bedouins live in the city, in nearby buildings. Two of them, Mahmoud and Mamdukh Abu-Jama, were at the scene on Monday morning. Their cousin is a security officer in the Arara council and also serves in the reserves. The two described to Ma’ayan how, immediately after the strike, they rushed into the buildings and began evacuating children. “We saw a mother injured with two injured children – we carried them down the stairs and ran to Magen David Adom,” they recalled. “When we went back to rescue more children, we found a child who had fallen from the third floor. We took him to Magen David Adom and went back inside.”

The blast radius was wide. Windows were shattered in buildings hundreds of meters from the impact site. Public buildings – including the community center, the municipality, and stores in the shopping center – were damaged by the blast. Twelve residential buildings were significantly damaged, with four having entire walls collapse. As of Monday, the Property Tax Authority had approved demolition of only two of the four; the municipality is pressing for all four to be demolished and rebuilt. Each building houses eight families. Altogether, including families from nearby damaged streets, approximately 200 families, nearly 1,000 people, were evacuated.



Leah Hershkovitz in her parents destroyed apartment.

Contrary to some media reports, this is not an exclusively Gur Chassidic neighborhood. Gur families constitute about a third of those evacuated, but because they tend to be large families, they make up nearly half of the evacuees. The other residents are elderly and young couples, mostly of lower socioeconomic status. About 300 residents were evacuated to the David Hotel at the Dead Sea, a similar number found temporary housing within the city, and about 450 from the Gur community were evacuated to a hotel near Jerusalem, within walking distance of the community’s central synagogue.

The Gur community currently makes up nearly forty percent of Arad’s population, and in recent years there have been tensions between Gur residents and parts of the older population. Just last week, a conflict erupted over a city shelter in the Ne’urim neighborhood being used as a synagogue for the Gur community. Although the shelter was open to all during sirens, the synagogue’s leadership was upset by an unsanctioned children’s program, which in turn prompted some secular women to interfere with learning in the shelter. Ma’ayan is sanguine about it. “We’ve achieved a temporary truce in the city,” he jokes. “Israeli unity until the next explosion.” He adds, more seriously, that

while there are extremists on both sides, the city is not governed by its radicals.

One recent point of contention has been the Arad Mall, located directly opposite the missile impact site and struck by the blast, which damaged its ceiling and shattered its windows. Recent ownership changes had already created cultural tensions: new owners, affiliated with the Gur community, began playing Chassidic music, covered images of women, and pushed to close the supermarket on Shabbat, alarming secular residents. The city's legal advisor sent a warning letter demanding the changes be reversed. Ma'ayan negotiated with the owners to stop the music and the harassment, and the mall has since continued to operate for all residents.



Yair Ma'ayan, the mayor of Arad.

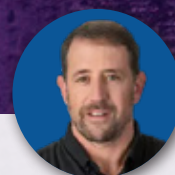
Leah Hershkovitz later described what she had gathered from her parents' destroyed apartment: traditional Ethiopian clothing, prayer books, and other items of personal significance. Although her parents are staying temporarily in her home, she and her brother found a small apartment nearby to minimize the disruption of such a drastic change at their age. She was clear that the family's grief is not over material possessions, but over the loss of a home and forty years of memory.

● Originally published in Makor Rishon. Photos by Maya Meshel.

NOT JUST WALLS

On Monday morning, the mall's parking lot was filled with hundreds of volunteers from across the country, helping clear glass and seal windows in the surrounding streets. Organizations involved included Lev Echad, HaShomer HaChadash, Bnei Akiva's "Hineini" operations center, and the Fourth Quarter youth movement.

Social workers, municipal engineers, psychologists, and property representatives assisted residents at the Levaot School, which was converted into an information and aid center for those whose homes were damaged. About twenty people remained hospitalized as of Monday, including children in intensive care.



Elyashiv Raichner





is a resident of Yerucham, and a journalist at Makor Rishon newspaper.



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JEWES with VIEWS

We asked five Maslul Mizrachi Gap Year participants: What was the highlight of your year on Maslul?



Maslul Gap Year, the gateway stage of Mizrachi's leadership pipeline, engages students during their year of Yeshiva or Seminary study in Israel in immersive experiences rooted in Religious Zionist thought, values, and commitment. Through seminars, trips, advocacy projects, and shiurim from leading Religious Zionist voices, participants emerge inspired and prepared to strengthen and advance Religious Zionism on campus and beyond.



Yitzchak Mishkin

I love Maslul because it gives me, as a *yeshiva* student, the opportunity to better understand the State of Israel and what it truly means to be a Religious Zionist. It pushes me beyond the classroom and into the reality of the country I live in – its challenges, its history, and its responsibility for the future. Maslul creates a space where I can ask real questions, think deeply about leadership, and understand my role in something larger than myself.

One of my favorite moments was meeting someone and hearing his story from October 7th – what he lived through and what he's doing now. We also had the privilege of meeting war hero Avigdor Kahalani, one of the remarkable few who helped save Israel in multiple wars almost single-handedly. Listening to these men made everything feel personal and immediate. It wasn't just about events in the news – it was about real people, real choices, and real responsibility. Hearing how they responded, and what they continue to do, deepened my connection to Israel and to the values of Religious Zionism in a way no classroom ever could.

Yitzchak Mishkin is from Chicago, IL, and spent last year learning at Lev HaTorah in RBS, returning this year for Shana Bet. He was part of Maslul's inaugural cohort, served on the board, and now works as the logistics coordinator. A tech-savvy problem solver, Yitzchak takes quiet satisfaction in making things run smoothly. Off duty, he's into EDM, grilling, and spending time with great people.



Judy Elbaz

It's difficult to isolate just a single highlight from Maslul because the program functioned as a total expansion of my world. Coming from a background where I knew next to nothing about Religious Zionism, the experience was a true turning point, introducing me to a vibrant community and way of life I had never previously encountered. The program bridged this gap by offering the incredible opportunity to learn directly from the movement's modern giants, such as Rabbi Doron Perez and Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon. Hearing from such influential leaders grew my perspective in ways I hadn't imagined.

The journey was defined by unique, standout moments – most notably visiting the Knesset, where I even managed to get a photo of Bibi Netanyahu. Yet the true heart of the program lay in the connections. I found myself networking with an inspiring new generation and forging lifelong friendships with a diverse group of people. These relationships, combined with experiences that went far beyond what I was taught growing up, have left me with a deep enthusiasm for the community. Maslul didn't just give me memories; it gave me a new network, a deeper connection to my roots, and a much broader horizon.

Judy Elbaz discovered her passion for Israel and Religious Zionism while studying at Midreshet Lev. Originally from the Syrian community in Brooklyn, NY, after her year as a Maslul student, she has returned as a madricha to inspire the next generation of leaders. Currently performing her Sherut Leumi, Judy plans to make Aliyah in the near future, G-d willing, and is dedicated to sharing her love for the land and its people.



Marcos Saadia

The highlight of my year at Maslul was the trip to the Knesset – an opportunity to truly understand the essence of leadership, which is at the heart of Maslul’s mission. There, I saw how leaders with different, and sometimes opposing, perspectives work tirelessly toward a shared goal: serving their country and addressing the challenges facing the Jewish people every day.

We had the privilege of speaking with MK Ohad Tal, who shared: “The existence of debates arises from the nature of a people who do not avoid conflicts, but face them in order to find solutions.” This reminded me that even amid the identity challenges we face as a people, open dialogue strengthens and unites us – helping us find solutions for the Jewish nation.

In *Pirkei Avot* 1:2, we are taught that the world is sustained by three things: *Torah*, *avodah*, and *gemilut chasadim*. Every Jew naturally connects with at least one of these qualities, and through their actions helps sustain the entire world. The true lesson is that when we bring our unique strengths together, we create a nation stronger and full of potential – turning our unity into a *kiddush Hashem*, a sanctification of G-d’s name, and showing that every contribution matters and that together we can achieve extraordinary things.

Maslul’s activities, talks, and incredible speakers continually motivated us and taught us how to grow into the next generation of leaders. These experiences made my year at Maslul truly unforgettable.

Marcos Saadia is from Mexico City and is currently spending a year-and-a-half learning in yeshiva in Israel, focused on Torah, Jewish peoplehood, and the Land of Israel, while pursuing personal growth and making a positive impact on those around him.



Leah Hornung

There is nothing more inspiring than seeing students not only study their values but truly live them – and that is something I have the privilege of witnessing again and again as a *madricha* at Maslul. It didn’t take long to realize that I had surrounded myself with students who consistently inspire me through the seriousness and care with which they approach Religious Zionism.

Having been part of Maslul during its inaugural year and again this year, I’ve witnessed remarkable growth. At the World Zionist Congress a few months ago, I reconnected with several of last year’s students, and the clarity and confidence with which they spoke about Torah, Israel, and responsibility reflected just how deeply their understanding of Religious Zionism had taken root.

At the same time, I see that same development unfolding in this year’s cohort as they ask probing questions, challenge assumptions, and begin to build upon their own values and commitments. I truly believe the future strength of Religious Zionism lies in its young leaders – not just in what they will one day become, but in the impact they are already making now. I am deeply grateful for the privilege of watching these future leaders come into their own.

Leah Hornung serves as a madricha at MMY and a mentor for Mizrahi Maslul in Yerushalayim. A delegate at the recent World Zionist Congress, she is passionate about helping young leaders translate Torah values into meaningful action and purposeful leadership.



Samshrael Davidovich

There were so many powerful things this year at Masul Mizrahi. Two that really spoke to me were listening to Din Tesler, a survivor of the Nova festival and hearing from Jen Airley.

Din shared his story and discussed his experience during and after October 7th. Because I heard from Din, my visit to the Nova site later in the year was very impactful. Seeing with my own eyes where he had been and what he had gone through made everything more real. I also traveled to Europe later in the year and saw many similarities between the Holocaust and October 7th. Hearing from Din before going to these sites gave me a deeper appreciation for all those who have survived antisemitism, and a renewed appreciation for my own life and survival.

Hearing from Jen Airley was really inspiring and uplifting. Her story demonstrates clearly the sacrifices our soldiers and their families make for our country. The way Jen took such intense pain and turned it into purpose with Beit Binyamin really shows powerful resilience and strength.

I am also grateful to be part of Masul Mizrahi where I have the opportunity to learn more about Religious Zionism. I have come to understand that being religious and being Zionist are not mutually exclusive – you can be a passionate, observant Jew while simultaneously embracing Zionism. Masul has helped me shape the path I want to pursue in my personal and religious life.

Samshrael Davidovich grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, and is currently studying at Yeshivat Ashreinu in Ramat Beit Shemesh. He has a deep love for the Land of Israel and a lifelong passion for animals. Samshrael’s dream is to open a therapy farm in Israel – “Shmuel’s Healing Homestead” – creating a place of healing and connection for individuals and families impacted by the trauma of October 7 and other terror attacks.

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A Halachic Framework for *Bein Adam L'chaveiro*: From Integrity to Ahavat Yisrael

There is a striking placement in the *Tur* and *Shulchan Aruch (Orach Chaim)*.¹ Immediately after the laws of prayer and the synagogue, the discussion turns, in *siman* 156, to business conduct and interpersonal responsibility. This highlights the central message that a Torah life extends well beyond the walls of the synagogue or beit midrash. The sources and commentaries in this *siman* outline a broad vision of *bein adam la'chavero*: from earning a livelihood with integrity, to relating to others with respect, care, and a commitment to unity. In the following pages, we will draw on some of these sources to present several interconnected themes that shape how Torah is lived in our daily interactions – and how, through them, a person brings honor to Torah itself.

Integrity in Business

We begin with the main focus of the *siman*, business conduct. The *Tur* in this *siman* introduces a fundamental balance. A person must work in order to sustain himself – yet at the same time, he must ensure that Torah remains the fixed center of his day. When this balance is maintained, both can succeed. The *Tur* then presents a central directive: one must conduct business with integrity.



Tur, Orach Chaim 156

Afterwards a person should go and engage in business, for all Torah study that does not incorporate work with it will ultimately be nullified and cause sin. For if one does not have what to eat, poverty will cause him to transgress the will of his Creator. However, one must not make one's work the foremost priority; rather, it should be secondary while his Torah is fixed, as we have seen regarding the early pious ones, who made their work temporary and their Torah fixed, and they were successful at both.² **For there is no lack for Hashem to save us whether with a lot or a little** [effort to earn a livelihood], **so one should conduct his business with integrity.**

1. טור | או"ח קנו

ואחר כך ילך לעסקיו, דכל תורה שאין עמה מלאכה סופה בטילה וגוררת עון, שאם אין לו מה יאכל – העוני יעבירנו על דעת קונו. ומכל מקום לא יעשה מלאכתו עיקר אלא עראי ותורתו קבע, כמו שמצינו בחסידים הראשונים, שהיו עושין מלאכתן עראי ותורתן קבע וזה וזה נתקיים בידן, כי אין מעצור לה' להושיע ברב או במעט, וישא ויתן באמונה.

A source for the imperative to conduct business honestly can be found in the Gemara in *Masechet Shabbat*, which teaches that the very first question a person will have to answer in the Heavenly court is whether one conducted one's business honestly.

1. The material here has been taken and adapted from the *Tzurba M'Rabanan* English series, volume 13, *shiur* 1.
2. The question of whether it is preferable to study Torah full time or earn a livelihood is discussed in more detail in *Tzurba M'Rabanan* volume 2, *shiur* 4–5, and volume 12, *shiur* 7.

נ Masechet Shabbat 31a

Rava said: After departing from this world, **when a person is brought to judgment** for the life he lived in this world, **they say to him:** Did you conduct business faithfully? Did you designate times for Torah study?...

This Gemara makes clear that honesty in business is a foundational element of a Torah life. The *Shulchan Aruch* uses similar language to the *Tur* in quoting this halacha.

ס Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim 156:1

Afterwards [i.e., after praying in the morning], a person should go and engage in business, for all Torah study that does not incorporate work with it will ultimately be nullified and cause sin, for poverty will cause him to transgress the will of his Creator. However, one must not make one's work the foremost priority; rather, it should be secondary while his Torah is fixed, and one will be successful at both. **And one should conduct his business with integrity.**

This idea is expanded further in the Midrash *Pesikta Rabbati*, which states that one who conducts business with integrity is regarded by Heaven as if he has fulfilled the entire Torah.

נ Pesikta Rabbati, Piska 31

"And what is right in his eyes he should do" (see *Shemot* 15:26), **this refers to dealings in business** and teaches that anyone who does business with integrity, people will be happy with him, **and Heaven views it as if he fulfilled the entire Torah.**

The Gemara in *Masechet Yoma* takes this one step further, framing business conduct as a vehicle for *Kiddush Hashem* (sanctifying Hashem's Name). A person who learns Torah and behaves pleasantly and honestly in business causes others to admire Torah and those who teach it. But when one's behavior falls short, the opposite occurs: Torah itself is diminished in the eyes of others.

נ Masechet Yoma 86a

As it was taught in a *baraita* that it is stated: "**And you shall love the Lord your God**" (*Devarim* 6:5), which means **that you shall make the name of Heaven beloved.** How should one do so? One should do so **in that he should read Torah, and learn Mishna, and serve Torah scholars, and he should be pleasant with people in his business transactions.** What do people say about such a person? **Fortunate is his father who taught him Torah, fortunate is his teacher who taught him Torah... So-and-so, who taught him Torah, see how pleasant are his ways, how proper are his deeds.**

2. מסכת שבת לא.

אמר רבא: בשעה שמכניסין אדם לדין אומרים לו: נשאת ונתת באמונה? קבעת עתים לתורה?...

3. שולחן ערוך | או"ח קנו:א

אחר כך ילך לעסקיו, דכל תורה שאין עמה מלאכה סופה בטלה וגוררת עון, כי העוני יעבירו על דעת קונו. ומכל מקום לא יעשה מלאכתו עיקר אלא עראי ותורתו קבע, וזה וזה יתקיים בידו. וישא ויתן באמונה.

4. פסיקתא רבתי | פיסקה לא

"והישר בעיניו יעשה" – זה משא ומתן, מלמד שכל מי שנושא ונותן באמונה – רוח הבריות נוחה הימנו, ומעלין עליו כאילו קיים את כל התורה כולה.

5. מסכת יומא פו.

כדתניא: "ואהבת את ה' א-להיך" שיהא שם שמים מתאהב על ידך, שיהא קורא ושונה ומשמש ת"ח ויהא משאו ומתנו בנחת עם הבריות. מה הבריות אומרות עליו? אשרי אביו שלמדו תורה, אשרי רבו שלמדו תורה!... פלוני שלמדו תורה ראו כמה נאים דרכיו כמה מתוקנים מעשיו

The verse states about him and others like him: “You are My servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified” (*Yeshayahu* 49:3).

One who reads Torah, and learns Mishna, and serves Torah scholars, but his business practices are not done faithfully, and he does not speak pleasantly with other people, what do people say about him? Woe to so-and-so who studied Torah... see how destructive are his deeds, and how ugly are his ways.

עליו הכתוב אומר: “ויאמר לי עבדי אתה ישראל אשר בך אתפאר.”

אבל מי שקורא ושונה ומשמש תלמידי חכמים ואין משאו ומתנו באמונה, ואין דבורו בנחת עם הבריות, מה הבריות אומרות עליו? אוי לו לפלוני שלמד תורה... ראו כמה מקולקלין מעשיו וכמה מכוערין דרכיו!

At the same time, **Rav Chaim Palaggi** warns in his *Kaf HaChaim* how difficult this area can be. The pressures of business can lead a person, if he is not careful, to violate many Torah prohibitions.

Ⓝ Kaf HaChaim (of Rav Chaim Palaggi) 21:7³

...Regarding this sin, there are few that are careful about this. And his innards are paved with lies, being deceitful with trickery, and making false oaths and oaths in vain, saying one thing but meaning something else, and he lacks honesty, he defames people and is honored by the disgrace of his friends, and overprices and steals and takes with force. One who does this constantly views these things as if they are permitted and like a plague of the nation [that everyone does and thus is acceptable], and he thinks that he will not have sufficient [livelihood] without this. But he does not realize that his money will disappear, and he will lose everything other than his punishment in the World to Come.

6. כף החיים (הרב חיים פלאגי) | כא:ז

...והן בעוון זה הינם מעטים דנזהרים בזה, ותוכו רצוף שקר וכזב ועוול ועורמה ותחבולה, ושבועה לשוא ולשקר, ואחד בפה ואחד בלב, ומחוסרי אמונה, ומוציא שם רע, ומתכבד בקלון חברים, ואונאה וגזל ועושק וחמס, והרגיל בהם, נעשו לו כהיתר, וכאילו הוא מכת מדינה, וחושב דלא סגי בלאו הכי, ולא ידע דממונו כלה, ואחריתו עדי אובד, מלבד עונשו לעולם הבא.

For this reason, the *Yalkut Yosef* emphasizes that one must actively learn the halachot of business and interpersonal conduct to navigate these challenges properly.

Ⓢ Yalkut Yosef, Orach Chaim 156:1

A person must be careful to conduct business faithfully, such that there should be no concern that his dealings border on theft or deceit. Therefore, **it is fitting and correct to learn these halachot** in order that a person knows what is permitted and what is forbidden regarding these issues.

7. ילקוט יוסף | או"ח קנ"א

יזהר לישא וליתן באמונה, שלא יהיה בעסקיו חשש גזל ותרמית. ועל כן ראוי והגון ללמוד הלכות אלו, כדי שידע את האסור ואת המותר בענינים אלה.

When a person studies the halachot of proper business conduct and aligns his conduct with them, his business dealings become an arena of Kiddush Hashem, thereby fulfilling the Gemara's vision of making the Name of Hashem beloved through the way one lives.⁴

3. This work should not be confused with the *sefer Kaf HaChaim* written by Rav Yaakov Chaim Sofer on the *Shulchan Aruch* (*Orach Chaim* and part of *Yoreh De'ah*) which is a halachic work similar to the *Mishna Berura*. For more information on Rav Sofer, see *Tzurba M'Rabanan*, volume 4, p. 113.

4. Some other halachot related to business conduct and interactions with others are discussed briefly in the complete *shiur* from which this excerpt was taken. The topic will be discussed more fully in a future *Tzurba M'Rabanan* volume on the laws of *Choshen Mishpat*.

Loving Other Jews and Avoiding Controversy

It is well-known that the Torah commands us to love other Jews and not to hate them.

ת Vayikra 19:17–18

17. **Do not hate your brother in your heart**; you shall certainly scold your fellow, and you will then not bear a sin because of him.

18. You shall not take vengeance or bear a grudge against members of your people. **Love your fellow [Jew] as yourself**: I am G-d.

8. ויקרא | יט:יז-יח

יז. לא תשנא את אחיך בלבבך הוֹכַח תוֹכִיחַ אֶת עַמִּיתְךָ וְלֹא תִשָּׂא עָלָיו חָטָא:

יח. לא תקם וְלֹא תטור את בני עַמְךָ וְאֶהְבֶּתָ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹךָ אֲנִי ה'.

At first glance, however, these mitzvot are not easy to translate into practice. What does it actually mean to “love” another person? Is it simply an internal feeling, or does it require specific actions? And how should one respond when there are genuine reasons for tension, disagreement, or even dislike?

These questions become even more pressing in light of the Gemara in *Masechet Sanhedrin*, which teaches that one who maintains or perpetuates a dispute violates a prohibition.

נ Masechet Sanhedrin 110a

With regard to the verse: “**And Moses arose and went to Datan and Aviram**” (*Bamidbar* 16:25), **Reish Lakish says**: From here **we derive that one may not perpetuate a dispute, as Rav says: Anyone who perpetuates a dispute violates a prohibition, as it is stated: “And he will not be like Korach and his assembly”** (*Bamidbar* 17:5). Even the aggrieved party must seek to end the dispute. Datan and Aviram accused Moshe and by right should have initiated the reconciliation. Nevertheless, Moses was not insistent on this; he went to them.

9. מסכת סנהדרין קי.

”וויקם משה וילך אל דתן ואבירם”, אמר ריש לקיש: מכאן שאין מחזיקין במחלוקת, דאמר רב: כל המחזיק במחלוקת עובר בלאו, שנאמר ‘ולא יהיה כקרח וכעדתו’.

Some *Rishonim*, such as the *Semag*, count this as a Torah prohibition, an approach cited by the *Mishna Berura*.

ס Mishna Berura, Orach Chaim 156:4

One should not perpetuate a dispute, as it says, “and he will not be like Korach and his assembly.” [*Semag, Lo Ta’aseh* 157]

10. משנה ברורה | או”ח קנו:ד

שלא להחזיק במחלוקת שנאמר ולא יהיה כקרח וכעדתו. [סמ”ג ל”ת קנו]

In a world filled with disagreements – within families, workplaces, and broader communal and societal contexts – these teachings are particularly challenging. How can one maintain firm convictions, while still engaging respectfully with others and fulfilling the mitzva to love them and not to hate them?

To address these questions, we must first clarify what the mitzva of loving others actually entails. The *Sefer HaChinuch* explains that loving another Jew is expressed not only in feeling, but in concrete behavior: seeking their wellbeing, protecting their property, and speaking positively about them, as one does for oneself.

1. Sefer HaChinuch, Mitzva 243

...The general principle is that a person behave with his fellow in the way that one behaves [with] oneself, to guard his money and to distance all injury from him. And if he recounts things about him, he recounts them for praise, and he honors him; and he does not become honored through his disgrace... **But one who treats his fellow with love, peace and neighborliness, seeks their benefit, and is happy about their success, the verse states about him, "Israel, about you will I be glorified"** (*Yeshayahu* 49:3).

This definition makes the mitzva both more demanding – and more achievable in practice. Loving others does not depend on natural affinity, but on how one consistently chooses to act.

This idea is further developed by **Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch**, who notes that the Torah commands לרעך – not "love your fellow" as a person, but direct your love toward what affects him.

2. Rav Samson Raphael Hirsch, Vayikra 19:18

...**For the love referred to here is incumbent upon each of us in relation to other people, but the word "le'reiacha** (lit. to your neighbor, as opposed to "*et reiacha*") **does not refer to the personality of the other**, rather to everything that happens to that person: All the conditions that determine his status in life, for the good and for the bad. **To this end we focus our love, we seek goodness and peace for him, just as we seek for ourselves**, we rejoice in his success, and are saddened by his pain, as if these things happened to ourselves. We will gladly give towards his well being, as if it was our own wellbeing, we will distance him from any pain as if it was a danger that we ourselves were facing... this is a command that we are able to fulfill regarding every person even if there is no personal relationship between us.

In other words, the Torah does not require agreement with every individual, nor emotional closeness with every person. It requires a consistent orientation: to care about their wellbeing, to support them, and to relate to their successes and struggles as one would to one's own.

These ideas are codified in halachic sources as well. The **Mishna Berura** in *siman* 156, citing the Rambam, emphasizes speaking positively about others and being concerned for their property and honor.

3. Mishna Berura, Orach Chaim 156:4

He [the Rambam] also writes in ch. 6, halacha 3 [of *Hilchot De'ot*]: It is a mitzva upon every person to love each one of the Jewish People as himself, as it states, "and you shall love

11. ספר החינוך | מצוה רמג

...שכלל הכל הוא שיתנהג האדם עם חבירו כמו שיתנהג עם עצמו, לשמור ממונו ולהרחיק ממנו כל נזק, ואם יספר עליו דברים יספרם לשבח ויחוס על כבודו ולא יתכבד בקלונו... והמתנהג עם חבירו דרך אהבה ושלוש ורעות ומבקש תועלתם ושמה בטובם, עליו הכתוב אומר (ישעיהו מט, ג) ישראל אשר בך אתפאר.

12. רש"ר הירש | ויקרא יט:יח

...כי האהבה האמורה כאן מוטלת עלינו ביחס לכל אדם אך "לרעך" איננו אישיותו של השני, אלא כל המגיע אל אישיותו: כל התנאים הקובעים את מעמד חייו – לטוב או למוטב. לאלה נכוון את אהבתנו; נדרוש שלומו וטובתו, כדרך שאנחנו דורשים את טובת עצמנו; נשמח באושרו ונתעצב בצעריו, כאילו אירעו הדברים לנו; בשמחה נתרום לשלומו – כאילו היה מדובר בשלומנו; נרחיק מעליו צער, כאילו נשקפה סכנה לנו... זו דרישה, שנוכל לקיים אותה ביחס לכל אדם – אפילו אין כל קירבת נפש בינו לבינו.

13. משנה ברורה | או"ח קנו"ד

ועוד כתב בפ"ו הלכה ג' מצוה על כל אדם לאהוב את כ"א מישראל כגופו שנא' ואהבת

your fellow like yourself.” Therefore, a person must talk in praise about him (though before his enemies, that is forbidden, so that they do not come to denigrate him), and to show concern for his money just as he is concerned with his own money and seeks his own honor...⁵

לרעך כמוך לפיכך צריך לספר בשבחו [ובפני שונאיו אסור שלא יבואו לספר בגנותו שם בפ"ז מה"ד] ולחוס על ממונו כאשר הוא חס על ממון עצמו ורוצה בכבוד עצמו...

The prohibition against hating others should be understood within this same framework. While people may have legitimate reasons to feel hurt or upset, this should not develop into hatred of the person himself and wishing for his downfall or harm.

The **Rambam** understands the focus of the *pasuk* in a manner that provides a practical path forward: One should not harbor silent resentment, even when being insulted or hurt by another person, but rather address the person directly and constructively.

1 Rambam, Hilchot De'ot 6:6

If one sins against another, [the one sinned against] shall not remain in silent hate [against the sinner]... On the contrary, it is a mitzva upon him to make [his feelings] known and say to him: “Why did you do this and that to me, and why have you sinned against me in this matter?” As it is said [in the continuation of the verse]: “And you shall rebuke your neighbor”...

14. רמב"ם | הל' דעות ו:ו

כשיחטא איש לאיש לא ישטמנו וישתוק... אלא מצוה עליו להודיעו ולומר לו למה עשית לי כך וכך ולמה חטאת לי בדבר פלוני, שנאמר 'הוכח תוכיח את עמיתך'...

This perspective can help frame how we approach the notion of disagreement itself. Dispute is not inherently negative. The Mishna in *Pirkei Avot* distinguishes between two types of *machloket*: Those that are for the sake of Heaven, and those that are not.

n Mishna, Avot 5:17

Every dispute that is for the sake of Heaven, will in the end endure. But one that is not for the sake of Heaven will not endure. Which is a controversy that is for the sake of Heaven? Such was the controversy of Hillel and Shammai. And which is the controversy that is not for the sake of Heaven? Such was the controversy of Korach and all his congregation.

15. משנה | אבות ה:יז

כל מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים – סופה להתקיים, ושאינה לשם שמים – אין סופה להתקיים. איזו היא מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמים? זו מחלוקת הלל ושמאי. ושאינה לשם שמים? זו מחלוקת קרח וכל עדתו.

Rabbeinu Yona explains further that those held for the right reasons are not destructive even though they often continue; on the contrary, they are ongoing, meaningful engagements that continue constructively over time.

1 Commentary of Rabbeinu Yona, Avot 5:17

That which was stated that any dispute that is for the sake of Heaven will endure, the meaning is that they will remain

16. פירוש רבינו יונה | אבות ה:יז

לומר כי מה שאמר "כל מחלוקת שהיא לשם שמיים סופה להתקיים", הכוונה שלעולם

5. For further discussion of the halachic aspects of this mitzva, see Rav Daniel Feldman, “The Right and the Good,” ch. 12 and “*L’Reiacha Kamocha*,” vol. 2, pp. 17–31 and 80–152.

in dispute, today they will dispute this matter and tomorrow regarding something else – the argument will remain in existence and continue between them for the rest of their lives. Not only that, but days and years will be added to their lives. When it is not for the sake of Heaven, they will not continue to exist; rather, after the first dispute, they will die, similar to the argument of Korach.

יתקיימו במחלוקת, היום יחלקו בדבר א', למחר בדבר אחר, למחלוקת יהיה קיים ונימשך ביניהם כל ימי חייהם, ולא עוד אלא שאורך ימים ושנות חיים יוסיפו להם. ושאינה לשם שמיים אין סופה להתקיים, רק במחלוקת הראשון יספו יתמו ושם ימותו, כמחלוקת של קורח.

Accordingly, disagreement – when properly motivated – is not a violation of the prohibition against *machloket*. It can be productive, enduring, and even positive – provided it is undertaken for the right reasons. At the same time, the **Noda B'Yehuda**, in the introduction to one of his responsa, offers a more sobering perspective: In his time, it was highly unlikely to find an argument that was truly for the sake of Heaven.

א

Responsa Noda B'Yehuda, Mahadura Kamma, Yoreh De'ah 1

...For there is nothing worse than dispute, and in our times **it is not common to find an argument that is for the sake of Heaven**, and the Satan is dancing, so please make peace.

17. שו"ת נודע ביהודה |

מהדורא קמא, יו"ד א

...ואין לך גרוע מהמחלוקת, ובזמננו לא שכיח מחלוקת לשם שמיים והשטן מרקד ונא מאוד שיעשה שלום.

This observation remains deeply relevant. While disagreement is sometimes necessary, it requires constant self-awareness and honesty about one's motivations.

What emerges from what we have learned is a clear practical framework: A person can maintain firm convictions while still fulfilling the mitzva of loving others, by ensuring that his perspective is genuinely directed toward truth and the service of Hashem, rather than personal bias or ego.

At the same time, one avoids the prohibition of hatred by refusing to internalize resentment, and instead engaging, when appropriate, in honest and respectful dialogue. One fulfills the mitzva of *v'ahavta l'reiacha kamocha* by consistently seeking the good of others – rejoicing in their successes, caring about their wellbeing, and supporting them in times of need, even in the midst of disagreement. In this way, even a world filled with differing views and tensions can become not an arena of division, but one of growth, connection, and the living expression of Torah values.

How Yom Yerushalayim Prepares Us for Shavuot

PHOTO: DAVID RUBIN/GERY/CPD

Rabbi Reuven Taragin

G-d orchestrated the liberation of Yerushalayim so that Yom Yerushalayim falls on the 28th of Iyar, precisely one week before Shavuot. Similarly, Yom HaAtzmaut aligns with Pesach, occurring exactly two weeks after Pesach. This alignment is significant because all three days commemorate themes of freedom and redemption. But what is the relationship between Yom Yerushalayim and Shavuot? Is the former meant to prepare us for the latter? To address this, we must examine the prerequisites for *matan Torah*.

The Torah can only be received when the Jewish people are worthy. The *Zohar* explains that this accounts for the seven-week interval between *yetziat Mitzrayim* and *matan Torah*. Just as a *niddah* requires seven days to achieve purity, the Jewish people required seven weeks of self-purification and improvement to become ready to receive the Torah (*Zohar* 3:97a).

One way they needed to improve themselves appears in the Torah's description of the arrival at *Har Sinai*: "Vayichan sham Yisrael neged hahar, Israel encamped there, opposite the mountain" (*Shemot* 19:2). The use of the singular *vayichan* rather than the plural *vayachanu* indicates that the nation encamped "as one person, with one heart" (*Rashi, Shemot* 19:2). G-d gifts the Torah only to a unified Jewish people, as further demonstrated by the nation's consent at *Har Sinai*: "The whole people answered with one voice" (*Shemot* 24:3). Unity is essential for *matan Torah* because G-d intends the Torah for *Klal Yisrael* – the communal entity of the Jewish people – rather than for individuals. No individual or subgroup can receive it independently.

Unity is likewise a prerequisite for our relationship with Yerushalayim. Our merit in receiving and maintaining a presence in the city depends upon our *achdut*.

Rav Moshe Zvi Nerya applied this principle to explain the contrast between the unsuccessful and successful efforts to liberate Yerushalayim in the twentieth century. In 1948, we lost the Old City because the fighters fought as separate entities. The

Palmach attacked *Sha'ar Tziyon*; the *Haganah* fought for *Sha'ar Yafo*; and the *Lechi* and *Irgun* approached *Sha'ar HaChadash* – each group attacking a different gate at a different time, and each therefore unsuccessful.

In 1967, the situation was dramatically different. Facing existential threats, Israel established its first Unity Government. A unified IDF, supported by a united populace, succeeded in retaking the Old City. G-d returns His city to us only when we fight for it together (*Moadei HaRe'iah*, 480). This unity is symbolized by the iconic photograph of three paratroopers at the Kotel: Tzion Karasenti, born in Morocco to a religious *Mizrachi* family; Yitzchak Yifat, an Ashkenazic secular *Sabra*; and Chaim Oshri, from a traditional Eastern European family. Despite their differences, they stood shoulder to shoulder, celebrating the reunification of Yerushalayim.

The requirement of *achdut* as a condition for receiving Yerushalayim is rooted in our earliest relationship with the city. The Torah highlights this in its first narrative concerning Yerushalayim: *akeidat Yitzchak*. Twice within three verses, the Torah describes Avraham and Yitzchak proceeding "yachdav, together," to *Har HaMoriya*. Rashi explains that this togetherness persisted even after Yitzchak understood that Avraham intended to sacrifice him (*Bereishit* 22:8). Yitzchak remained unified with Avraham, even when Avraham's intention might have driven them apart.

David HaMelech likewise used the word *yachdav* when describing Yerushalayim as the "ir she'chubrah lah yachdav, The city that connects together" (*Tehillim* 122:3). Yerushalayim connects Jews to one another (*Yerushalmi, Bava Kamma* 33b).

This unity is integral to *aliyah l'regel*, the *Yom Tov* pilgrimage to Yerushalayim. The *mitzvah* is not solely for individuals to visit, but for the Jewish people to ascend collectively (*Sefer HaMitzvot L'Rambam, Aseh* 20). Just as we stood unified before G-d at *Har Sinai* to accept the Torah, so too are we meant to stand three times a year before G-d at *Har HaMoriya* as one people. The central role of unity in our relationship

with Yerushalayim also explains why *sinat chinam* led to its destruction. The city was merited through unity and lost through division.

Two millennia after *sinat chinam* led to our exile, G-d returned Yerushalayim to us during a moment of profound Jewish unity in 1967. Unfortunately, we were unable to sustain this unity, and our disunity intensified before October 7th. The Hamas attacks served as a stark reminder of the importance of Jewish unity.

Yom Yerushalayim celebrates the city's reunification under Jewish sovereignty. Yet despite official declarations, Yerushalayim remains divided – not only between Jews and Arabs, but within the Jewish community itself. The ultimate redemption and genuine unification of Yerushalayim depend upon *achdut* among the Jewish people.

May our Yom Yerushalayim celebration strengthen our bonds with our Jewish brethren and foster the unity that enables the *kabbalat haTorah* of Shavuot, the ultimate reunification of Yerushalayim, and closeness between us and G-d.



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From Purim to Shavuot: From Hidden Providence to Chosen Covenant

Rabbanit Shani Taragin

As we approach Shavuot, we turn to one of our most intimate and formative texts – *Megillat Ruth*. Together with *Megillat Esther*, these are the only biblical books named for women. Both place female courage, vulnerability, and moral initiative at the center of Jewish destiny. Yet they do more than tell parallel stories. Although set in the time of the Judges, predating Persian exile by centuries, *Sefer Ruth* was only enacted to be read as a *Megillah* on Shavuot during the time of the *Geonim* (*Masechet Sofrim* 14), whereas *Megillat Esther* was codified earlier by the *Tanna'im* to be read on Purim. Read sequentially – from Purim to Shavuot – they trace a profound spiritual arc: from hiddenness to revelation, from survival to covenant, from exile to the beginnings of *geulah*.

Two women, two houses, two worlds

Megillat Esther unfolds in a world of *הַמְּלָכָה*; Hashem's Name is absent and identities are obscured. The narrative glitters with the royal splendour of *בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ*, the king's palace. We read of “the house of the women” (1:9), of Esther brought to “the king's house” (2:8). The word *בֵּית* in *Megillat Esther* almost always signals a house of power, external display, and hidden identity.

Megillat Ruth could not be more different. The opening *pasuk* immediately introduces a different *בֵּית*: “a man went from *Beit Lechem* in *Yehudah*” (*Ruth* 1:1). This is not a palace but a village, not a seat of empire but a home (or literally a *house of bread*). The entire *Megillah* is a journey away from and back toward that house: its name contains both the destination and the promise. Where Esther's *בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ* is a place of concealment, Ruth's *Beit Lechem* is a place of nourishment, return, and eventual restoration and redemption of identity.

Fatherless daughters and those who nurtured them

Beneath the surface of both narratives runs a quietly devastating parallel: both Esther and Ruth are young women without parents. Esther has lost both mother and father (*Esther* 2:7), and Ruth has left everything behind in Moav to follow a destitute mother-in-law to an unknown land. Into this void step two elder figures who fill

the role of parent to their “adoptive” daughters with extraordinary tenderness. “וַיִּקַּח אֶסְתֵּר לוֹ לְבַת”, he [Mordechai] took her as a daughter for himself” (*ibid.*). Mordechai guards Esther in exile – operating protectively and strategically within the structures of a foreign court. Naomi calls Ruth “בְּתוּרִי, my daughter” throughout the *Megillah*. “Go, my daughter” (*Ruth* 2:2), “Return, my daughter” (1:12), “Sit still, my daughter” (3:18). The word *בְּתוּרִי* on Naomi's lips is the instinctive love language of a mother to a child she has claimed without formality or ceremony, and it unfolds in the open fields of *Beit Lechem*.

Both women are guided by these elder figures, yet both must ultimately act alone, with courage and decisiveness. Both approach a powerful man uninvited, risking everything in the hope of favor for salvation. What defines them is not where they begin, but how they respond in choosing the *בֵּית* where they may either deflect responsibility or perpetuate their family lines.

Courage and covenant – by coercion/choice?

Esther's greatness lies in her transformation from passivity to responsibility. Initially hidden, she ultimately declares her identity and risks her life: “And if I perish, I perish” (*Esther* 4:16). She gathers her people in fasting and *tefillah*, echoing communal return to Hashem even where His Name goes unspoken. And yet the outcome of her story is preservation, not transformation. The Jews are saved, but they remain in the *בֵּית הַמֶּלֶךְ*'s shadow, still in exile, taxed by the Persian king.

Ruth stands at the threshold of belonging and utters one of the most profound declarations in all of *Tanach*: “Your people shall be my people, and your G-d my G-d” (*Ruth* 1:16). Her actions and words of devotion echo the national commitment of *Har Sinai* – “We will do and we will hear” (*Shemot* 24:7). But unlike Sinai, when *Am Yisrael* accepted the Torah under coercion (*Shabbat* 88a), Ruth's acceptance was entirely voluntary, born not of crisis, but of love, loyalty, and spiritual clarity. What began on Purim as *קִיּוּם*



וקבלו – reaffirmation of covenant, but still under pressure of annihilation, finds its fullest expression in Ruth’s personal קבלה chosen, enduring, life-defining.

From exile to Eretz Yisrael

Ruth’s story unfolds in *Eretz Yisrael*, and this changes everything.

Megillat Ruth opens with a devastating departure: a family leaves Beit Lechem and is broken by grief. Yet through Ruth’s devotion and acts of *chesed*, and through Naomi and Boaz addressing a foreign woman as בְּתוּלָה until she truly becomes one, restoration of the בְּתוּלָה begins. Not only personal, but national – “May Hashem make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and like Leah” (*Ruth* 4:11), one that leads to a royal home, not in Shushan, but the Davidic line in Israel. The בְּתוּלָה that began as a place of departure and demise over ten years, becomes the very source of redemption over ten generations.

The story of Esther represents Divine providence hidden within exile – anonymous and concealed. *Megillat Ruth* represents Divine Presence revealed through life in the Land, in the בְּתוּלָה that nourishes and redeems. If Esther ensures continuity, Ruth builds destiny.

The journey we are called to continue

Together, Esther and Ruth trace a single arc. There are moments in history that demand survival within concealment in the exilic בְּתוּלָה, anonymous and afraid. And there are moments that demand the courage to build, to belong, and to return – to *Beit Lechem*, to *Beit David*, to *Beit Yisrael*.

For a generation privileged to live in *Eretz Yisrael*, yet challenged by ongoing Persian/Iranian uncertainty and tension, this movement from Purim to Shavuot carries particular urgency. The story of Ruth reminds us that *geulah* is not only miraculous salvation, but the slow, faithful work of return – to land, to people, to Torah, and to Hashem. Shavuot calls upon us not merely to remember *matan Torah*, but to reenact it as Ruth modeled for us – not out of coercion or crisis, but out of will, love, and responsibility.



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The Three Mysteries of Shavuot

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks זצ"ל

Great arguments, like old soldiers, never die. Nor do they fade away. One of the most fateful arguments in Israel today, on which the character and identity of the state will ultimately turn, is itself a replay of one of the most bitterly contested questions of the Second Temple period.

On the surface, the terms of the debate are quite different. But the underlying issue is the same. Two thousand years ago, the subject at hand was Shavuot. But at stake was something more fundamental. To understand what it was, we need to undertake an historical investigation into the foundations of an ancient dispute about the meaning of the festival and of Jewish identity.

Even the most cursory reading of the Torah reveals something strange about Shavuot. Unlike the other festivals, it comes wrapped in three layers of mystery.

The first is the question of what it commemorates. The festivals each have a seasonal dimension, and in this respect Shavuot is no exception. Pesach is a celebration of spring, Sukkot of autumn, and Shavuot is described by the Torah as *Yom HaBikkurim*, “the day of the first-fruits”, and *Chag HaKatzir*, “the harvest feast”. So far, so good. Shavuot, like the other pilgrimage festivals, marks a turning point in the cycle of the year – in this case, as spring ends and summer begins.

The problem arises when we turn to the historical dimension of the festival. About Pesach and Sukkot, the Torah is explicit. Pesach commemorates the Exodus from Egypt. Sukkot recalls the booths in which the Israelites lived as they wandered through the desert. But what of Shavuot? Alone of the three, it has no explicit historical reference. We know it, of course, as *zman matan Torateinu*, the anniversary of the giving of the Torah at Sinai, which took place, according to the Torah, “in the third month” – in other words, during Sivan, the month in which Shavuot falls. However, the connection between Shavuot and the revelation at Sinai is nowhere made in the Torah itself. It belongs, instead, to our Oral Tradition.

The second mystery is the date of Shavuot. Every other festival is given a calendar date in the Torah. Not so Shavuot. Instead, in a curiously roundabout way; we are commanded to count 50 days, “until the day after the seventh week,” and then bring an offering of new grain. Indeed, in early times, before the calendar was fixed by calculation, one could not predict in advance whether the months of Nissan and Iyar would be short (29 days) or long (30 days), and there was therefore no guarantee that it would fall on the 6th of Sivan, as it does today. One way or another, the silence of the Torah on the calendar date of Shavuot is conspicuous.

But it was the third mystery that created schism. We are commanded to count 50 days and then celebrate Shavuot. The question is: when does the count begin? The Torah uses the phrase, *mimachorat haShabbat* – literally, “the day after Shabbat.” The Sadducees interpreted the words literally. For them, if the Torah says, “the day after Shabbat,” it must mean the day after Shabbat. So they began counting the Omer on Sunday and celebrated Shavuot on Sunday, seven weeks later. The Pharisees, however, relied on an ancient tradition that, in this case, the word “Shabbat” meant “festival” – specifically, the first day of Pesach. That, of course, is the rule we observe today.

Since the Babylonian exile, Jews have never been concentrated in a single country. Thousands of years before the internet was invented, and the word “globalization” was coined, the Jewish people became the world’s first “virtual community” – a community in time rather than space. Jews were a nation not because they lived in the same land but because, wherever they were, they kept the same laws and observed the same holy days at the same time. A split in the calendar, with some Jews keeping Shavuot on one day, some on another, was nothing less than a rift in the nation, as if a chasm had opened up between Jew and Jew.

What, then, was at stake between the Sadducees and the Pharisees? Historians have tended to concentrate on the obvious disagreement between them. The Pharisees believed in the Oral Law; the Sadducees did not. According to the Sadducees, only the written text of the Torah was binding. The Pharisees pointed out

that the written text was full of gaps and ambiguities. From the outset, it had been supplemented by a set of unwritten traditions, passed down from teacher to disciple since the days of Moshe.

So, when it came to the meaning of the word “Shabbat” in the context of Shavuot, the Sadducees, in effect, turned to a dictionary. The Pharisees turned to tradition. At this level, the debate was about the authority of the Oral Law. It was a theological rift.

But the argument, I suspect, went further. After all, in retrospect, the Pharisaic case seems overwhelming. Judaism is a religion of historical remembrance. To this day, we still commemorate such events as the assassination of Gedaliah, commander of Judea at the time of the Babylonian exile.

Is it conceivable that the calendar would not celebrate the anniversary of the greatest day of all in Jewish history – the revelation at Mount Sinai, our birth as a nation under the sovereignty of G-d? How could there not be a festival of “the Giving of the Law”? An anniversary – any anniversary – needs a fixed date in the calendar, which is precisely what the Sadducees denied. What, then, did Shavuot mean for them?

Well, who were the Sadducees? The late Louis Finkelstein made much of the fact that they were the land-owning class, the squires and farmers of Israel. For them, Shavuot was precisely what the Torah said it was: a festival of the harvest.

We have indirect evidence for this. The *Gemara* (*Menachot* 65a) records a debate between Rabban Yochanan ben Zakkai and a Sadducee, who gave a novel explanation why, in his view, Shavuot always falls on Sunday. What is the best gift you can give a farmer after seven hard weeks of gathering in the crops? Answer: a long weekend.

Moses, having compassion for the farmers, arranged for Shavuot to be on Sunday to give them a two-day break at the end of the season. So, argued Finkelstein, the debate was part of the class war between Sadducean landowners, with their harvest festival, and the urban Pharisees, who had no land to celebrate.

Maybe so. But I prefer the more profound distinction drawn by Professor Daniel Elazar, of Bar-Ilan University, in his studies of Jewish political theory. The Sadducees, he says, were the party of the state. They dominated the priesthood. They controlled most of the positions of political power. For them, Jewish identity was predicated on national institutions – the Temple and the seat of government in Jerusalem. For the Pharisees, by contrast, Jewish life rested on quite different institutions – the synagogue, the school, and the *beit midrash*.

On the basis of this distinction, we can mount a large hypothesis. We know precisely the historical event Shavuot commemorated for the Pharisees: the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. What event of comparable significance might it have represented for the Sadducees? The answer is obvious. If Pesach represents the exodus from Egypt, and Sukkot the 40 years in the wilderness, what else could Shavuot have meant for the party of the state but the arrival at, and conquest of, the Land of Israel? It was the festival of national independence – the Yom HaAtzmaut of biblical times. And what better time to celebrate it than at the end of the harvest, when the Land flowed with milk and honey?

If so, what was at issue was not just a theological schism or a class divide but the most fundamental question of Jewish identity.

For the Pharisees, Jews were the people of Torah. For the Sadducees, they were the people of the Land and State of Israel. Both

celebrated their supreme value on Shavuot. But it was a different value in the two camps.

For one, it was a spiritual-ethical vocation that could be pursued even in exile. For the other, it was a matter of land and independent nationhood. To be sure, this was a matter of emphasis rather than exclusion. Both groups valued Torah. Both cherished the Land of Israel. The question was: which was supreme? Israel, the state? Or Torah, the way of life? The Sadducees made their wager and lost. With the destruction of the Second Temple and the collapse of the Bar Kochba rebellion, Jews were left without a state for 1,800 years. The Sadducees disappeared, almost without trace. Had it not been for the Pharisees, their belief in the Oral Law, and their dedication to Torah, there would be no Jewish people today.

Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose. The debate did not die. It merely went into hibernation. Today, the Jewish people have a state again. The question is: what will become of Jewish identity? Professor Elazar estimates that some 80 percent of Jews worldwide are what he calls “neo-Sadduceans,” identifying with Israel and the Jewish people but not necessarily with the Torah.

Meanwhile, in Israel itself, the “post-Zionists” have taken Sadduceanism a stage further, arguing that statehood is enough. Israel requires no specifically Jewish character. If you have a land, what need is there for Torah?

This view was wrong 2,000 years ago, and it is wrong today. But the divide goes as deep now as it did then, and there is even less of a common language between today’s secularists and religious than there was between Sadducees and Pharisees, who at least had a written Torah in common.

We long for peace in the Middle East. But we know that peace is not entirely in Israel’s hands. It depends equally on Israel’s neighbours. What is entirely in Israel’s hands – and ours – is peace between Jew and Jew. We must begin a deep and urgent conversation about the nature of Jewish identity and the place of Torah in a Jewish state and the Jewish people. That will require openness and generosity on the part of religious and secular alike. It will take us back, inevitably, to Shavuot, and to a new understanding of the ancient covenant between G-d and the Jewish people.

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The Mother-In-Law

Shira Melamed

The story of Ruth is a testament to strength, resilience, and the power of an often underrated and misunderstood bond: the relationship between a mother and her daughter-in-law.

Society today has crowned the mother-in-law dynamic as one of the most complicated relationships in a person's life. Oprah Daily even categorizes mothers-in-law into distinct and negative groups – The Nosy Nancy, The Over-Share, The Guilt-Tripper, The Jealous One, The Boss, The Judge – and then advises us on how to “handle” her. We are flooded with articles emphasizing the importance of boundaries and self-preservation when encountering our mothers-in-law.

This Shavuot, I want to suggest a different approach. Instead of leaning on modern stereotypes, let us look to the story of Ruth for guidance. It is no coincidence that we read this *Megillah* on Shavuot, the very day we receive the Torah. For me, there is a direct correlation between my Judaism and my relationship with my mother-in-law.

In *Bereishit*, Hashem speaks to Avraham: “And Hashem said to Abram, ‘Go forth (לך) from your land and from your birthplace and from your father's house, to the land that I will show you (אשר אראך)’” (*Bereishit* 12:1).

The wording is strikingly similar in *Ruth*, when Boaz speaks to Ruth: “And Boaz replied and said to her, ‘It has been told to me all that you did for your mother-in-law after your husband's death, and you left (ותעזבי) your father and your mother

and your native land, and you went (ותלכי) to a people that you did not know before (אשר לא ידעת)’” (*Ruth* 2:11).

There are three beautiful linguistic parallels in these verses that teach us what it means to truly commit to a new relationship:

1. Leaving it behind (לך לך... ותעזבי): When we leave our “homeland,” we are often leaving behind deeply ingrained habits. We are creatures of habit, frequently resolute in our opinions – whether about an argument, an idea, a *mitzvah*, or a general approach to life. We don't just think we are right; we know we are. But when we marry into a family, we are called to commit wholeheartedly to understanding a new way of being. Ruth teaches us that to build this bond, we must approach our new family with an open mind, leaving our ego behind and replacing it with a genuine desire to learn.

2. Moving forward (לך לך אל... ותלכי): A relationship is an entity in constant motion. It is either moving backward or reaching forward; there is no such thing as a standstill. It is imperative that we remain mindful of this momentum and actively work to ensure its advancement. The greatest tool we have for this is the gift of time. We cannot expect to feel close to Hashem if we do not speak to Him or make time to learn His Torah. Similarly, we cannot expect a relationship to blossom if we take it for granted, assuming it will simply sustain itself. It won't.

A student of mine, transitioning from seminary to college, recently shared a realization about finding time. She said, “If I learn Torah for ten minutes a day, I am giving Hashem less than 1% of my day. How can I justify giving Him less than that?” Investing just ten deliberate minutes a day into the relationships that matter most ensures they continue to grow. Go. Spend the time. It is always worth it.

3. Emunah (אשר לא ידעת... אשר אראך): When entering into life's most vital relationships, we are inevitably faced with the unknown. That is simply the nature of life. We must learn to let go of our need for total control and cultivate *emunah* – faith – trusting that we are loved and valued in this new dynamic.

Hashem created you with intention. You were handpicked to exist, to thrive, and to make this world a better place. That is the *emunah* you must hold onto when life feels uncertain. The same is true for the family you marry into. You were chosen to be part of this family; you were handpicked by your spouse, and by extension, his family. Once you make this *emunah* your focal point, you will naturally feel less threatened and less insecure. Your defenses will lower, paving the way for a relationship that can truly flourish.

The mother-in-law dynamic has been deemed “complicated” by the world, but if we shift our focus to these three core components – leaving behind our ego, dedicating our time, and leaning into *emunah* – we realize that we have actually been blessed with the greatest gift of all: the opportunity to build a beautiful, unified Jewish family.

Dedicated in honor of my mother-in-law, Michal Melamed.



Shira Melamed

is the Director of Midreshet Torat Chessed. She received her degree in Social Work from Bar Ilan University and her Kallah Teaching Certificate from the Religious Council of Gush Etzion. Shira's expertise on mental health has proven imperative to her students' personal development. Her passion for Torah and chessed is contagious both inside and outside the classroom.

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Love in the Shadow of Death: The Story of Ruth

Rabbi Chaim Steinmetz

All of life is a footnote to love and death. These two poles of existence overshadow everything else; love creates life and death takes it away, filling our lives with joy and sorrow in unending succession.

It is easiest to consider love and death separately, as two very different chapters of life – and emotionally, they are worlds apart. *Halacha* reflects this instinct, treating mourning and celebration as irreconcilable opposites. Mourners don't attend celebrations, and the joy of the holidays terminates *shiva*. The heart cannot accommodate both joy and grief simultaneously, because both inspire intense, all-encompassing emotions.

Love is intoxicating. *Shir HaShirim* portrays its exceptional power, with couples who are “lovesick” and unable to act rationally. This reality repeats itself throughout history. When Ya'akov falls in love with Rachel, he dramatically overpays for her, offering to work seven full years for her hand – yet imagines he is getting a bargain, so great is his love. Ya'akov is blinded by love. William Blake captured this mindless blindness in verse: “Love to faults is always blind, always is to joy inclin'd, lawless, wing'd and unconfin'd, and breaks all chains from every mind.” Lovers are oblivious to reality, living in their own two-person universe, like Adam and Chava in the Garden of Eden.

Death brings a blindness of its own. When King Shlomo writes *Kohelet*, he opens with a lament about the pointlessness of life. As Rashi puts it, “The author of *Kohelet* issues a complaint against the seven days of creation, that the world is all a vanity of vanities.” Death, the question without an answer, confounds him. What purpose does life have, *Kohelet* asks, if the righteous man meets the same end as the wicked, and the wise man has the same fate as an animal? The bitter, skeptical tone of *Kohelet* seems out of place in the *Tanach*; perhaps its purpose is to expose us to our own bitterness and cynicism, to show us that hope will disintegrate without faith.

Franz Rosenzweig observed that life stands perpetually in death's shadow, and “all that is mortal lives in fear of death... each newly born waits with fear and trembling for the day of its passage into the dark... every new birth multiplies the fear of death, for it multiplies that which is mortal.” When one enters the realm of death, a cold cynicism descends, choking off any experience of joy.

Shir HaShirim and *Kohelet* each deserve their own book; they faithfully explore the experiences of passion and despair. Because joy and grief are opposites, we assume love and death are utterly incompatible. But they are not.

A third biblical book, the Book of Ruth, brings death and love together. A family moves from Israel to Moav, where the sons take Moabite wives. In short succession, the father and both sons die young. Alone and impoverished, one daughter-in-law, Ruth, returns with her mother-in-law Naomi to Israel, abandoning her homeland rather than leave her beloved Naomi behind. She persists despite discrimination and desperation, insisting on perpetuating her husband's family's legacy – and in the end, she does exactly that. She marries a relative of her husband's, Boaz, and the family continues; their great-grandson is King David.

The Book of Ruth is not simply a book of love and death; it is a book about love in the shadow of death. After the family's tragedies, Naomi succumbs to cynicism, suggesting she should rename herself “bitter.” Ruth refuses this path. She battles the angel of death and teaches us how to pursue redemption in the valley of the shadow of death.

The Hebrew root for redemption, *ga'al*, appears multiple times in the Book of Ruth, because that is what the book is about. By remarrying and bringing grandchildren to Naomi, Ruth redeems and rebuilds a once-broken family. Her descendant King David becomes the very symbol of Messianic redemption, bringing deliverance to the nation as a whole.

Ordinarily, death erases life and destroys all that love has built. In redemption, love gets the final word, staying one step ahead in a cosmic wrestling match. When you continue to love after tragedy – when you courageously pour your broken heart into rebuilding a broken world – you have taken the first steps on the road to redemption.

The very foundation of Jewish history is this story: a people who, despite every reason to be bitter and cynical, continued to rebuild and repair. This has never been more evident than in the past century. Crushed by the Holocaust, it would have made sense for the Jewish people to give up. Instead, following Ruth's example, they built the State of Israel – a modern miracle of redemption.

Last year I joined the Ramaz Upper School mission to Israel, together with nearly 500 students and teachers. Israel is filled with stories of redemption, both large and small. At Tel-a-Saki, the site of one of the fiercest battles of the Yom Kippur War, we heard about the heroism of the soldiers who fought there. Three tanks, commanded by Yoav Yakir, held off hundreds of Syrian tanks for nearly two days, giving the army precious time to reinforce their defenses on the Golan Heights. Even after it became clear they could no longer hold the line, Yoav chose to fight as long as possible – and fell in battle. After the war, a

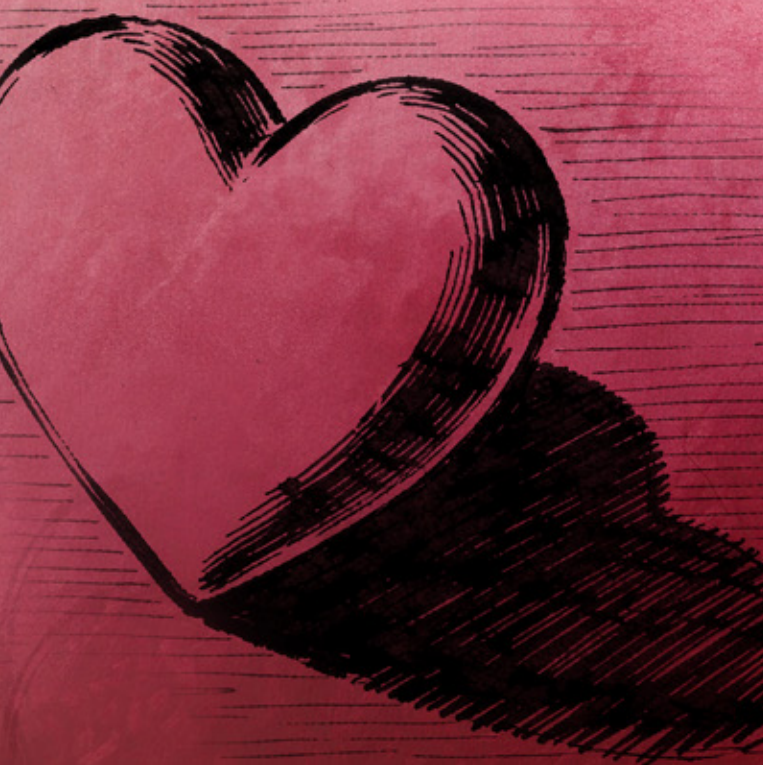
member of Yoav's unit, Yitzchak Nagarker – a war hero in his own right, with his own incredible story of courage – had a baby boy. At the *bris*, Yitzchak invited Yoav's father to be the *sandak*, and named his firstborn Yoav in honor of his fallen comrade. "Love is as strong as death" – and Yoav's legacy lives on in Yitzchak's son.

Our mission prayed at the Kotel on Friday night, just a day before Yom Yerushalayim. Through centuries of exile, the Jewish people's passion for Jerusalem never wavered. We continued to dream of this place, to declare "*Ishana haba'ah biYerushalayim*, next year in Jerusalem." On June 7, 1967, for the first time in 1,900 years, that dream came true. An Israeli flag was raised over the Kotel; with tears in their eyes, the exiles had returned to Zion. The Kotel is the ultimate monument to redemption, its stones whispering *Am Yisrael Chai* – the Jewish people live on.

After Friday night *davening*, the Ramaz students gathered in the plaza – and then something remarkable happened. They formed one large circle and sang Jewish songs for half an hour, other visitors drawn over to watch this moment of inspiration. At that moment, the students were making Ruth's legacy their own, singing the song of redemption and continuing an undying love story that has lasted for thousands of years.

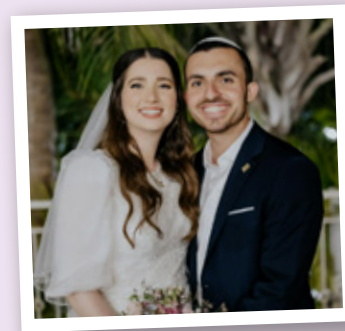


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SHAGRIRIM BALEV

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It's worth joining Shagririm Balev even if it is outside your comfort zone (sometimes it's hard for people to sign up for matchmaking platforms). There are so many great options and wonderful people you could meet that you simply wouldn't encounter without the platform!

A funny story from one of your dates:

On one of the early dates we went to eat cholent, and Yehoshua started chatting with an older couple sitting next to us. They gave us brachot and said we should get married – and it was only the sixth date... Yehoshua left with a souvenir – he took a photo with the man!

Tell us about the marriage proposal:

I (Nitzan) wanted Yehoshua to surprise me somewhere with a beautiful view. We had already decided before the proposal that we were getting married, so we had started organizing the wedding and were super busy with everything. Then one Friday, Yehoshua wanted me to drive to his grandmother's birthday party "in the middle of nowhere" – he even prepared an invitation. I had no suspicion at all and showed up dressed in totally casual clothes, slippers, and didn't even get a manicure – what were the chances? The moment I arrived, my friends jumped out of the bushes and I realized it was a proposal! It was thoughtful and beautiful – even without the manicure and the fancy dress...

Is there anything else you want to share?

Enjoy your dates – it's supposed to be fun, not stressful and critical!

Who are the ambassadors who set you up and what would you like to tell them?

The ambassadors who set us up are Lior Brenner and Noa Katan.
Thank you so much, we love you both!



516
total
engagements



778
candidates
dating now



5712
ambassadors
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“How Great is Your Goodness, that is Hidden for those who Fear You!”

Rabbanit Noa Lewis

In memory of Daniel Perez hy”d

Regarding the aftermath of the great conflict between Yosef and his brothers – which led to Yosef being sold and Yehuda’s descent – the *Midrash in Bereishit Rabbah* (85) teaches:

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nachman opens with the verse, “For I know the plans I have for you” (*Yirmiyahu* 29:11). While the brothers were busy selling Yosef, Ya’akov was grieving in sackcloth and fasting, and Yehuda was occupied with finding a wife, G-d was quietly creating the light of the *Mashiach*.

This *Midrash* reveals something powerful: even in times of darkness – conflict, pain, mourning, and division – a great light is hidden beneath the surface. Beneath the harsh and painful reality, something deep and purposeful is unfolding.

The Book of Ruth, which we read on Shavuot, tells a similar story. It describes famine, displacement, and loss: Elimelech and his family leave Yehuda for Moav, Elimelech and his sons die, and Naomi and Ruth are left in poverty. Yet from within this difficult reality emerges King David – the figure most closely associated with the *Mashiach*.

The *Gemara* offers a deeper reading of a verse in *Divrei HaYamim I* (4:24), explaining that the names “Yoash and Saraf” refer to Mahlon and Chilion. These names reflect despair and spiritual failure: “Yoash” suggests giving up hope for redemption, and “Saraf” implies deserving destruction. They had settled in Moav and married Moabite women. But the verse continues: “and returned to Bethlehem” – this refers to Ruth the Moabite, who returns and

binds herself to the people of Israel. And from this unlikely and painful chain of events, G-d ultimately says, “I have found David My servant.”

Out of despair, loss, and even assimilation – David emerges. The king of Israel emerges. The seed of the *Mashiach* emerges.

This idea – that G-d’s light, the light of the *Mashiach*, is hidden beneath layers of darkness – is not just an ancient concept from biblical times. It is a timeless truth, relevant today as much as ever.

In our own days, when we are living through periods marked by conflict, grief, tragedy, and division, we are called to adopt a deeper perspective. Alongside fully acknowledging the pain and difficulty, we hold onto a perspective of faith – one that recognizes a hidden, enduring light within everything we are experiencing. Even the darkness itself can be part of how that light is revealed.

This theme is also central to the days of the Counting of the Omer leading up to Shavuot. We begin with the Omer offering – barley, considered animal food – symbolizing a low, physical starting point. From there, we journey upward, moving from the depths of spiritual impurity toward receiving the Torah. These days carry a unique potential to strengthen our belief in the greater light: the light of Torah, the light of Shavuot, the light of the *Mashiach*.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov teaches (*Likutei Moharan, Tanina* 10:14) that even in the lowest, most physical aspects of life – symbolized by barley – G-d’s presence is fully there.

These are days of anticipation – of preparing ourselves for the revelation of the Torah’s eternal light. Each year, we take this journey again, refining ourselves and becoming vessels for something greater. We count day by day, each person in their own way, deepening their relationship with G-d and with Torah. It’s a process that includes struggle, pain, and encountering G-d even in our lowest moments – and through that, we become ready to receive something higher.

May it be G-d’s will that we merit to experience the light of the *Mashiach*, and to learn Torah from him.

As it says in *Tehillim*: “How abundant is the goodness You have stored away for those who fear You” (31:20). There is so much goodness stored away for us – may we merit to be those who fear G-d.



Rabbanit Noa Lewis

is the CEO of ECHAD, and director of OLAH, a program for Jewish women in Europe. She is also the leader of the IDF Women’s Chevra Kadisha.

Mincha Chadasha

A Shavuot Piyut by Zechariah Haber ז"ל

Zechariah Pesach Haber ז"ל was a multi-talented man, who had made Aliyah from the USA with his family at the age of eight. He studied plants, and specialized in the genetics of wild wheat in the research for his doctorate from Tel Aviv University. Zechariah read widely, and in particular was a Talmid Chacham who wrote Torah writings during his time studying at Yeshivat Har Etzion, and continued to give Torah shiurim when he had moved on to the academic world. He combined his knowledge and love of the land with his love of his family, and would travel with them across the country. He is remembered by all as someone wise, smiling, energetic and helpful.

When he was called to reserve duty after the October 7th attack, he arrived ready to defend his country. He fell in Gaza on the 6th of Shevat 5784, and is survived by his wife, three children, parents, siblings and an extended family and many friends who will continue to remember him with love and longing.

Ten years ago, Zechariah wrote this piyut for Shavuot. He felt that while many sang zemirot on Shabbat, there weren't enough songs sung for chagim, and he hoped his piyut would encourage others to sing and write songs for the chagim.

The book "And From Roots, Renewal: Essays and art inspired by the Shavuot piut of Zechariah Haber OB"Z" is being printed prior to Shavuot for pickup from various locations in Israel. Order at tinyurl.com/HaberShavuot



The first of your harvest, come reap
After measuring a full seven weeks
That you may mark your counting complete
Ending the time that for students we did weep

וְקִצְרְתֶם אֶת קְצִירָהּ
מוֹנִים שְׁבוּעוֹת שְׁבַע
לְקַיֵּם סְפִירָה תְּמִימָה
עַל תְּלִמְדֵינוּ נוֹגָה

From the time that your harvesting grain has begun
Offer it to G-d beneath the afternoon sun

מֵהַחֵל חֲרַמְשׁ בְּקִמָּה
בְּהִקְרִיבְכֶם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה

A rope around the first fruits he is tying
Let us go, arise, to where the Leviim sing
"My father was a fugitive Aramean," recounting
These bikkurim leave the threshing-floor pure and clean

קוֹשֵׁרוֹ בְּגָמִי וְאוֹמֵר
קוּמוּ וְנַעֲלֶה לְמִשְׁוֹרֵךְ
אֲרָמִי אֲבֹד מִסֶּפֶר
יֵשׁ בּוֹ גֵרֹן לֹא אוֹסֵר

From the time that your harvesting grain has begun
Offer it to G-d beneath the afternoon sun

מֵהַחֵל חֲרַמְשׁ בְּקִמָּה
בְּהִקְרִיבְכֶם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה

To the nation whose heart is as one
From G-d who in giving, his self has given
Another two tablets of transmission
Learning at their feast, to make up for sleeping

כְּאִישׁ אֶחָד בְּלֵב
אָנָּה נִפְשִׁי כְּתִיבַת יְהוָה
עִם שְׁנֵי לוחוֹת הַתְּיַצֵּב
לוֹמֵד בְּנִשְׂפָא אַחֵר הֶסֶב

From the time that your harvesting grain has begun
Offer it to G-d beneath the afternoon sun

מֵהַחֵל חֲרַמְשׁ בְּקִמָּה
בְּהִקְרִיבְכֶם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה

G-d asks of his children dear
When the days of the harvest-judgment appear
The true end of Pesach is near
A time of white linens, of joyous atmosphere

בְּבִקְשָׁה מִכֶּם בְּנִים
עַל פְּרוֹת מַעֲשֵׂים
עִם שְׁבַע מוֹל שְׁבַעִים
מִקְרָא שְׁמִחָה לְבָנִים

From the time that your harvesting grain has begun
Offer it to G-d beneath the afternoon sun

מֵהַחֵל חֲרַמְשׁ בְּקִמָּה
בְּהִקְרִיבְכֶם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה

Let all Jews come and attend
With offerings, of two ma'ot to extend
Which may be offered up to day seven
In memory of our sacrifices, let our prayers ascend

יִרְאֶה כָּל זְכוּרָה
שְׁתֵּי מַעוֹת מְעָה
מַעוֹת יִתְקוּן שְׁבַעִה
אֲסֵרוּ חַג לְמִטָּה

From the time that your harvesting grain has begun
Offer it to G-d beneath the afternoon sun

מֵהַחֵל חֲרַמְשׁ בְּקִמָּה
בְּהִקְרִיבְכֶם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה

May it be your will, my L-rd
Creator enthroned on high, adored
Let joy and gladness be our reward
And our Messiah be restored

יְהִי רָצוֹן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ
יוֹשֵׁב מְרוֹם - הַבוֹרָא
לְשִׂשׁוֹן וְלִשְׂמִיחָה יְהוָה
וְנִצְרָ מִשְׁרָשְׁיוֹ יִפְרָה

From the time that your harvesting grain has begun
Offer it to G-d beneath the afternoon sun

מֵהַחֵל חֲרַמְשׁ בְּקִמָּה
בְּהִקְרִיבְכֶם מִנְחָה חֲדָשָׁה

The Home of the Jewish Heart

Rabbi Josh Broide

“**N**ever has a city had such power over a people’s imagination. Never were a people more loyal than our ancestors who endured 20 centuries of exile and persecution so that their children or grandchildren or great-grandchildren could come home to Jerusalem, *Ir Hakodesh*, the holy city, the home of the Jewish heart” (Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks *zt”l*).

There are cities that shape history, and then there is Jerusalem, which shapes the Jewish heart.

For nearly two thousand years, Jews were scattered across continents, cultures, and civilizations. We built lives in lands not our own. We spoke different languages, wore different clothing, and lived in very different worlds. And yet, no matter how far we traveled, we all turned in the same direction. Three times a day, we faced Jerusalem. At every wedding, we broke a glass. At every *Seder*, we said, “Next year in Jerusalem.”

It is hard to explain that kind of loyalty. Nations come and go. Identities fade. Memories don’t usually last that long. And yet, somehow, the Jewish people held on to a vision of a city most had never seen.

Because Jerusalem was never just a place. It was a promise, and with it, a responsibility.

This year, for the first time, I will be celebrating Yom Yerushalayim not as a visitor, but as an Israeli. And like most meaningful things in life, it did not happen overnight.

For five years, my wife and I prepared for *Aliyah*, understanding that something this meaningful would come with its share of challenges. We had built a life, created programs that mattered, and

developed lasting relationships over 25 years in Boca Raton. Our children grew up there, and our work took deep root there. Leaving was not simple, and it was not easy.

At a farewell gathering before we left, Boca Raton Synagogue gave each guest a parting gift: a passport cover designed to look identical to an Israeli passport, meant to wrap around their American one. On the cover was a quote from our rabbi, Rabbi Efreim Goldberg, that captured exactly what we had been feeling: “There are legitimate reasons not to make *Aliyah*. But there are no legitimate reasons not to be struggling with the question of when, not if.”

That idea stayed with us. And when the plane finally landed, the moment felt real in a way that is hard to describe – something generations before us had only dreamed about.

Rabbi Jonathan Sacks described Jerusalem as “the home of the Jewish heart.” A heart does not just exist. It connects. It gives life to every part of the body. It holds everything together. That is what Jerusalem has always been for us. Not just a destination, but a unifying center.

But here is the question Yom Yerushalayim asks: What happens when we finally arrive physically, but are still working to arrive as one people? Today, we walk the streets of Jerusalem. We stand at the Kotel. We are building a future here. And yet, the unity Jerusalem represents can still feel just out of reach. We are divided – religiously, politically, culturally. The same people who once shared a single longing sometimes struggle to share a common language.

So maybe the question is not just whether we have come home to Jerusalem, but whether we are ready to live up to it. To call Jerusalem “the home of

the Jewish heart” is not just poetic. It is a responsibility.

Just like a heart connects every part of the body, Jerusalem calls on us to connect to one another. Beneath all the differences is something deeper – a shared story, a shared destiny, and a shared center. Maybe that is why Jerusalem was never given to a single tribe. It belongs to all of us, or to none of us.

And maybe that is also why its name carries its mission: *Yerushalayim* – a blend of *yirah*, awe, and *shalom*, peace – reminds us that being here is not just about feeling inspired. It is about creating peace among us.

Our ancestors did not dream of Jerusalem just so we could arrive. They dreamed of a people who would take responsibility for one another, who would build something worthy of the city they longed for. On this first Yom Yerushalayim as an Israeli, I feel that more than ever. Coming home is not just about where you land. It is about the responsibility you take for the people standing beside you.



Rabbi Josh Broide

is the Director of the Silver Foundation and Partners in Jewish Life. He has spent his career bringing Jewish communities together through relationship-building, education, and leadership, and was honored with the Jerusalem Unity Prize in 2018 for his work in strengthening Jewish unity.

Living in a State of Disconnection:

What Yom Yerushalayim Teaches Us About Reunification

Aleeza Ben Shalom

There are moments in history that echo into our personal lives. Yom Yerushalayim is one of those moments. Celebrated on the 28th of Iyar, it commemorates the reunification of East and West Jerusalem during the Six Day War in 1967. For the Jewish people, it marked a profound return. After years of separation, access was restored to the Kotel and other sacred sites, igniting a sense of connection that had been longed for across generations.

Jerusalem was never truly two places, it was always one, living in a state of disconnection. And if we look inside ourselves, that is what happens in our relationships all the time. Two people can be technically together, yet emotionally divided. The connection is still there, but it no longer feels unified.

Most relationships do not break in a single dramatic moment. They drift. A misunderstanding goes unaddressed. A moment of hurt turns into quiet distance. A conversation that should have never happened does. Slowly, almost imperceptibly, what once felt whole begins to feel fragmented as if you're on opposite sides.

Reunification, whether of a city or a relationship, does not happen by accident or with ease. It requires intention. It requires movement toward each other which often feels uncomfortable. It requires courage, patience and wisdom.

When Jerusalem was reunited, people did not simply celebrate the new borders, they ran to the places that held meaning. In relationships, these are your emotional "holy sites." They are the moments when you felt closest, the conversations that flowed, the experiences that made you feel seen and chosen.

If you are in a relationship now that is struggling, reflect on when you felt most like a team. Reconnection does not begin with fixing everything that is broken; it

begins with remembering what was once whole and intentionally returning to it.

Another essential step in reunification is reclaiming access. For years, there were places in Jerusalem that were physically inaccessible. In relationships, we create similar barriers, though they are often invisible. We stop sharing certain thoughts. We hold back emotions. We tell ourselves it is not worth the effort to explain how we feel. Over time, entire parts of ourselves become off-limits.

Rebuilding a relationship requires reopening those gates. It might mean saying something you have been holding back, even if it feels vulnerable. It might sound like admitting distance, expressing hurt, or simply acknowledging that you miss the closeness that once existed. Access is the foundation of connection. Without it, two people may remain side by side, but they are no longer truly together.

Conflict also plays a role in division, and how we approach it determines whether we deepen the divide or begin to bridge it. Many people enter conflict trying to win, but in relationships, winning often comes at the cost of connection. Reunification is about shifting the focus from being right to understanding one another. Research by John Gottman at the Love Lab found that 69% of relationship conflicts are perpetual problems – disagreements that cannot be resolved but must instead be managed and navigated over time. While we will always remain different from one another, we don't need to remain distant.

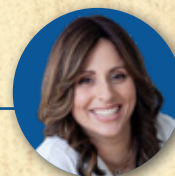
Perhaps the most challenging part of reunification is the willingness to move first. There is a quiet stalemate that often occurs in relationships, where each person waits for the other to soften, to reach out, to take responsibility. But when both people are waiting, nothing changes. Reconnection begins when one person chooses to step forward. Be that person, make the effort first.

And in the case of Yom Yerushalayim, we move beyond reunification into something even greater: Shavuot. The journey from reunification leads directly into the story of commitment. On Shavuot, we celebrate the moment the Jewish people stood at Mount Sinai and entered into a covenant with Hashem, a relationship often described as a marriage.

It is not a perfect relationship, but it is a committed one. It is a relationship that includes distance and return, missteps and repair, moments of separation and the ongoing choice to reunify. That is the model we are given. Not perfection, but perseverance.

Yom Yerushalayim reminds us that we need courage to return, to rebuild, and to choose connection again and again.

Just like Yerushalayim, the most meaningful relationships are not the ones that were never divided. They are the ones that found their way home.



Aleeza Ben Shalom

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



Jewish Matchmaking MOVEMENT

The Jewish Matchmaking Movement is an exciting global collaboration between World Mizrahi and Aleeza Ben Shalom to guarantee future Jewish generations.



Yom Yerushalayim Sameach? Not Yet.

Rabbi Leo Dee

Every year we greet one another with the words “*Yom Yerushalayim Sameach*.” But this year, as Israel faces missiles and threats from Iran and Hezbollah, it is worth asking a harder question: What exactly are we celebrating?

Yom Yerushalayim commemorates the reunification of Jerusalem during the Six Day War – a moment that felt to many Israelis like a moment of redemption. Soldiers stood at the Kotel and wept. Our divided capital city was restored. After two thousand years, the Jewish people had returned not only to their land, but also to their heart.

And yet, within days of that victory, Moshe Dayan made a decision that still defines Jerusalem today. Although Israel had captured the Temple Mount, he returned administrative control of the site to the Muslim Waqf. He considered it a strategic step to prevent a religious war at a fragile moment. But it also created a paradox that remains unresolved nearly sixty years later: Jerusalem is united geographically, and yet we relinquished control over its holiest space.

The *Mishnah* teaches that there are ten levels of holiness within the Land of Israel, eight of them located within the *Beit HaMikdash* compound itself (*Keilim* 1:6–9). So, while Israel governs nearly all of Jerusalem, the majority of the spiritual essence of the city remains beyond our control.

So, perhaps Yom Yerushalayim is not yet fully “*sameach*.”

That tension has become sharper during the current war. As Iran and Hezbollah fired missiles at Jerusalem, some Jews quietly wondered what might happen if a rocket were to strike the Dome of the Rock, the location of our Holy of Holies (one or two of them came close!). No one was calling for its destruction, but history sometimes moves through unexpected

openings. Would such an event change the status quo that has remained frozen since 1967? Perhaps the fact that it did not happen was itself meaningful.

Even had such a strike occurred, Rabbi Ari Landa suggests that Israeli politicians would have felt obligated to rebuild the Dome of the Rock in order to preserve regional stability. Additionally, even among Jews who long for the rebuilding of the *Beit HaMikdash*, there is no consensus about how the redemption will unfold. For those who believe that the Third *Beit HaMikdash* will descend miraculously from Heaven, even a missile falling from the sky may not be recognized as the hand of G-d. They would likely claim that redemption cannot simply be engineered by circumstance.

Perhaps the biggest obstacle we face is not spiritual but political. Any decision to rebuild the *Beit HaMikdash* would require a *Sanhedrin* of seventy leading rabbis capable of working together. At present, such unity remains beyond our reach. That may be the most painful reality of all.

So, we remain where we have been since 1967: sovereign, but not complete; reunited, but not whole.

Meanwhile, our enemies are telling us exactly what they think this struggle is about.

Hamas called its October 2023 assault “The Al-Aqsa Flood.” Iran frames its confrontation with Israel as a fight for Jerusalem and marks its own Jerusalem Day annually on the streets of Tehran. Hezbollah places “the liberation of Jerusalem” at the center of its ideology. Our enemies understand something essential: Jerusalem is not just a city. It is the place where G-d’s Presence rests.

Which raises a deeper question – not what Jerusalem means to our enemies, but what it means to us.

Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook taught that it is not only the Jewish people who build the Land of Israel; the Land of Israel builds us (*Orot, Eretz Yisrael*, sec. 1). And perhaps this is even more true of Jerusalem itself. Jerusalem is not simply a territory that we recovered in 1967. It is a calling that continues to shape us – morally, spiritually, and nationally. A truly unified Jerusalem is the litmus test of a truly unified Jewish nation.

Perhaps that is the real meaning of Yom Yerushalayim today. It is not yet the celebration of a completed story. It is the anniversary of a chapter still being written.

This year, instead of saying “*Yom Yerushalayim Sameach*” as a statement, perhaps we should say it as a prayer: “May we soon merit to celebrate in Jerusalem – complete in geography, holiness and *Shalom*.”



Rabbi Leo Dee

is an educator living in Efrat. His book “‘The Seven Facets of Healing’ is dedicated in memory of his wife Lucy who, together with his daughters Maia and Rina, was murdered by terrorists in April 2023. It is available from Amazon and in Israel from Bookpod.co.il



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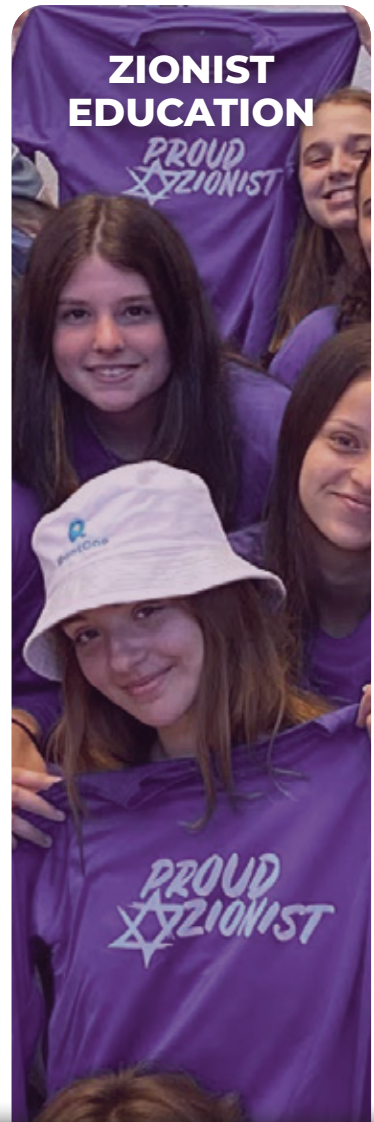
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No Jew is Written Off: The Religious Zionist Vision of Rav Mordechai Eliyahu zt”l

Rabbi Elie Mischel

In 1951, a twenty-one-year-old *yeshiva* student stood before an Israeli court and explained, with complete composure, why he joined an underground organization that torched cars on Shabbat and butcher shops selling non-kosher meat. “I felt that the Jews have an inferiority complex that causes them to be disrespected by others. I believed that through the underground we could impose Torah living in the state.”¹ He was sentenced to ten months in prison.

Thirty-two years later, that same man walked into the Yochanan Ben Zakai Synagogue in the Jewish Quarter of Jerusalem, a hundred meters from where he was born, and was installed as the *Rishon L'Tzion*, the Sephardic Chief Rabbi of Israel. The young man who tried to impose Torah on the Jewish state by force was now its highest religious authority.

Rav Mordechai Eliyahu was born in 1929 in Jerusalem's Jewish Quarter, into an Iraqi rabbinic family of unusual distinction. His father, Rav Salman Eliyahu, was a Kabbalist and disciple of the Ben Ish Chai – Rav Yosef Hayyim of Baghdad, one of the great Sephardic poskim of the nineteenth century. His mother was the Ben Ish Chai's niece. The Ben Ish Chai's *halachic* methodology – integrating *halachic* literature with Kabbalistic sources – would define Rav Eliyahu's own approach to *halacha* for the rest of his life.

Rav Salman died when Mordechai was eleven, leaving the family desperately poor. He sold cooked chickpeas in the street and checked *mezuzot* to help support his mother, and continued to learn Torah whenever and wherever he could. He eventually made his way to Porat Yosef Yeshiva, where he studied under Rav Ezra Attiya. Over the years, he would study from a remarkably broad range of teachers, including the Chazon Ish, Rav

Mordechai Sharabi, Rav Yaakov Mutzafi, Rav Yitzchak Kaduri. In later life, he also cultivated a unique relationship with the Lubavitcher Rebbe.

In 1950, he joined *Brit HaKanaim*, the “Covenant of the Zealots,” a small underground organization made up mostly of young *yeshiva* students who believed that secular Israeli policies – particularly efforts to secularize immigrant communities and restrict Torah education – were destroying Jewish religious life from within. They saw themselves as defenders of the Jewish people's spiritual future.² Some members crossed serious legal lines, and the group paid the price when the Shin Bet dismantled it in 1951.

Though he never renounced the group's goals, he came to recognize that its methods were wrong. Years later, he said, “I admit the way that I went in the past is not appropriate for our generation; not that the Torah has changed, heaven forbid, but rather the way to instill it in the people has changed.”³

What changed most dramatically was his understanding of who secular Israelis actually were. When Rav Elazar Shach described secular Israelis as “pork-eaters and rabbit-eaters,”⁴ Rav Eliyahu responded sharply: “Even pork-eaters and rabbit-eaters are Jews, and even if all the rabbis decide as Rabbi Shach does, they cannot strip the name ‘Jew’ from any person.”⁵

He made this position the subject of a formal article, titled *Ein Yehudi Muktzeh*,⁶ in which he argued that no Jew could ever be written off completely. “There are no heretics today. Everyone is simply a poor soul. Everything they do comes from ignorance and lack of knowledge.” The secular Israeli who drove on Shabbat was not a rebel against the Torah, but rather a Jew who was never properly taught about Shabbat.

“Even the one who desecrates Shabbat, or eats non-kosher is in favor of there being kosher food and Shabbat.” Underneath the indifference and hostility, he saw “a thirst and a search for something positive.”⁷

This conviction translated into action. He traveled to secular *moshavim* and *kibbutzim*, spoke anywhere he was invited, and refused to wait for people to seek him out. “A rabbi should not sit in his office waiting for people to come and ask him. A rabbi must travel from city to city, from settlement to settlement, from school to school.” He reported that he encountered no hatred in these places, only people who had been led to believe that rabbis looked down on them. And he demanded the same effort from every religious Jew: go to your secular neighbors, learn Torah together, make *chavrutot*, and reach out person to person. “A drop of light drives away much darkness. Add much more light, all the more so.”⁸

Defending the diversity of halacha

At only 30-years-old, Rav Eliyahu was appointed *dayan* in Be'er Sheva – the youngest in the history of the modern State. He rose steadily through the Jerusalem rabbinical court to the Supreme Rabbinical Court, and in 1983 was elected *Rishon L'Tzion*, serving alongside Ashkenazic Chief Rabbi Avraham Shapira until 1993.

Writing after Rav Eliyahu's passing, Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon described him as “a combination of a Kabbalist thoroughly versed in *Shas* and the *poskim*, and a *posek* who has a distinguished place in Kabbalah.”⁹ The Ben Ish Chai, his methodological anchor, drew on both Kabbalistic tradition and the *Rema*, the great Ashkenazic authority, producing rulings that were consistently stricter than the *Shulchan Aruch*. This put

Rav Eliyahu on a different track from Rav Ovadia Yosef, who held that Sephardic practice follows the *Shulchan Aruch* alone and had little patience for Kabbalistic stringencies.

The practical consequences of this divide have implications across the entire range of *halacha*. Take one example: making coffee on Shabbat. Rav Ovadia permitted pouring directly from a kettle – a *kli rishon*, or primary vessel – over the coffee grounds. Rav Eliyahu required that the water first be poured into a *kli sheni*, a secondary vessel, before being used, following the Ben Ish Chai, who holds, like the *Rema*, that a *kli rishon* continues to cook whatever it contacts.

Their larger disagreement ran deeper than any individual ruling. Rav Ovadia sought to consolidate all Sephardic practice into a single unified “Israeli Sephardic” *halacha* based on the *Shulchan Aruch* and his own rulings. Rav Eliyahu resisted this systematically. The Iraqi tradition, the Yemenite tradition, the Moroccan tradition – each had its own authorities, its own customs, its own long and holy tradition. He published his own siddur, *Qol Eliyahu*, as a direct counter to Rav Ovadia’s project. It was a declaration that the Ben Ish Chai is the final authority for the Iraqi community, and that no unification project has the right to erase what centuries of tradition had built.

In the introduction to his commentary on the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch*, he explained his thinking: “Especially in our generation, which is a ‘time of gathering the harvest,’ and Torah scholars have increased from all the communities, and there is love and brotherhood among them – therefore every Torah scholar must know all the customs of all the communities.” This was his vision of what the ingathering of the exiles demanded of a rabbi: “In every community there are people from different communities who learn and pray together and live as one. A teacher in such a community cannot teach from standard *halachic* books in a general way, because he may end up teaching a *halacha* that is correct for one community, while members of another community must practice differently.”¹⁰ For Rav Eliyahu, the diversity of Jewish tradition was not a problem to be solved, but rather a treasure to be honored.

For all the principled distance between him and Rav Ovadia, their personal

bond was something else entirely. About ten years before Rav Eliyahu’s passing, Rav Ovadia personally appeared at his door on Purim morning, carrying *mishloach manot*, unannounced and without his usual entourage. When Rav Eliyahu opened the door and saw who was standing there, he wept.¹¹

A Religious Zionist gadol

Rav Eliyahu stood in the broad orbit of Rav Kook’s Religious Zionism. He believed that “our generation is the generation of redemption,” saw the return of *Am Yisrael to Eretz Yisrael* and the establishment of the State as part of that process, and shared the activist conviction that Jews must settle every part of the Land. But he was not a Rav Kook disciple in any systematic sense. He did not build a philosophical theology of redemption. His worldview was more instinctive than ideological, rooted in the Sephardic tradition that the Land, the people, and the Torah are inherently holy, and that a rabbi’s job is to respond to the reality G-d places before him.

A beautiful expression of this theology was the *L’shem Yichud* he composed for IDF soldiers before battle. The *L’shem Yichud* is a Kabbalistic declaration of intent, recited before a *mitzvah* to unify the act with its divine purpose. Rav Eliyahu wrote one for soldiers, framing military service as the fulfillment of three Torah commandments: “I am hereby prepared to fulfill the positive Torah commandment to conquer the Land and dwell in it, as written in the Torah: ‘And you shall possess it and dwell in it’”

it; and the commandment of loving Israel, as it is written: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’; and the commandment to protect and save Jews, as it is written: ‘You shall not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor.’”¹² A soldier reciting these words before entering combat understands that he is more than a soldier in the IDF. He is a soldier of G-d Himself.

Rav Eliyahu’s opposition to the Oslo Accords, and to any surrender of the Land of Israel, was absolute and uncompromising. “No one, even the Prime Minister, has the right to cede even one granule of the Land of Israel! The Holy One, blessed be He, gave it to us!”¹³ He also rejected the phrase “returning territories,” which was casually used by many Israeli politicians, journalists, and diplomats: “We expressed a firm position as the Chief Rabbinate against ‘returning territories.’ The expression ‘returning’ is out of place. Whoever uses this term is as if acknowledging that he is returning something that belongs to someone else. This belongs to us. Others took it from us. When we retook the territories in 5727 [1967] – that was the true ‘return.’”¹⁴ After Beit Lechem and Chevron were transferred to the Palestinian Authority under Oslo, he



ruled that one who drives by these cities is obligated to tear *kri'ah*, as one does at the death of a close relative.¹⁵

His most fraught public battle was with Rav Ovadia Yosef over the Oslo Accords. Rav Ovadia ruled that surrendering land was not only permitted but potentially required. If security experts assured him it would save Jewish lives, then *pikuach nefesh*, the obligation to preserve life, overrode the sanctity of the Land. Rav Eliyahu believed that Rav Ovadia's position was built on false premises, that Rav Ovadia had been misled by the politicians and security officials around him about what the Oslo Accords would actually produce. He met with Rav Ovadia in person to tell him so, but Rav Ovadia would not be moved. Shas stayed in the coalition and gave the Rabin government the political support it needed to push the process forward. Years later, Rav Eliyahu was measured in how he assigned blame: "Had they revealed the truth to him at the time of the Oslo Accords, everything would have been different. At the time, people around him misled him."¹⁶

What followed, of course, was not peace. The Oslo Accords unleashed a wave of suicide bombings and terror attacks that killed hundreds of Israelis and left thousands of families shattered. "Land for peace" turned out to be "Land for slaughter" – and Rav Eliyahu saw it coming.

Beyond the public positions

For all the fierceness of his public positions, those who knew Rav Eliyahu personally encountered a different dimension of the man. In 1957, on his first day as a *dayan* in Be'er Sheva, he noticed a woman standing outside the courthouse, praying from a small book of *Tehillim*. She was there the next day, and the day after. He finally sent the *beit din's* secretary to bring her inside.

She was a recent immigrant from Morocco who had made *Aliyah* alone. A week after her wedding, at the end of the *sheva brachot*, her husband, a taxi driver, was killed in a crash. His body was never found. Without a body, the rabbinical courts in Morocco had refused to declare him dead, leaving her an *agunah* – a chained woman, unable to remarry. She came to Israel with one hope: that what the courts of Morocco could not do, the courts of Israel would.

Rav Eliyahu asked her why she remained outside praying and didn't come into

the *beit din* to speak with the judges. Her answer was simple: "Who are you? I pray to G-d, not to you!"

Rav Eliyahu took her papers and made her case his own. He traveled to the Baba Sali in Netivot, who directed him to his brother, the Baba Haki in Ramle, who told him there were only two Jewish burial officials, *kavranim*, in all of Morocco, and that both had since immigrated to Israel. One lived in Dimona, the other in Kiryat Ata. Rav Eliyahu headed to Dimona first, only to find the man's family sitting *shiva*. He had died just a few days earlier. Rav Eliyahu went in anyway and offered words of Torah and comfort to the mourners. When he explained why he had come, a man in the room stood up. He was the second *kavran*. "I know that story. I was the one who buried the taxi driver." Rav Eliyahu brought him to testify before the *beit din* in Be'er Sheva, and the woman was freed.

"This is the power of prayer," Rav Eliyahu said afterward. "Both hers and mine."¹⁷ But the truth is that this story only happened because, on his very first day on the job, he looked up from his desk, noticed someone standing outside – and asked who she was.

In the end, the young man who went to prison for trying to impose Torah on the Jewish state became the rabbi who understood that Torah cannot be forced – only taught and lived, one person at a time, with patience and love. When he passed away on the 25th of Sivan, 5770 (2010), at the age of 81, over one hundred thousand people accompanied him to his burial on *Har HaMenuchot*. He loved his people with all his heart – and they loved him in return.

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Rabbi Elie Mischel

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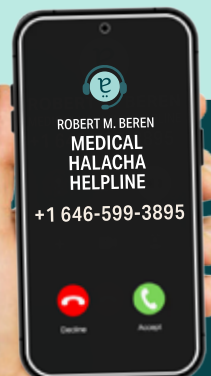
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“Dayeinu” with Pilots on their Return Journey from Iran

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

Before Pesach, I shared a special “Dayeinu” for this war. In the introduction, I explained why I felt the need to write it:

“On Simchat Torah, in a time of anguish, evil men struck us with horrific murder, kidnap, humiliation, and degradation. On that same day, the nation united in great solidarity and renewal, and since then we have been privileged to witness miracles the likes of which our people had not seen for thousands of years. *Dayeinu* does not mean that we are content with this alone, but rather that each stage is itself enough reason to give thanks.

“A few months ago, I wrote *Megillat HaTekuma* about the miracles of this war. Many told me it gave them strength, but I was especially moved by the dozens of bereaved families who said they drew great strength from it and found added meaning in the fall of their loved one, *hy”d*. Their words gave me the strength to write this *Dayeinu*. Seeing the greatness of the events does not undo the pain; it makes it

possible to confront the pain and to rise from within it.

“On *Seder* night, we do not recite *Hallel* only for the past. We also give thanks for our own miracles, for the privilege of being a generation of redemption, a generation privileged to feel the footsteps of *Mashiach*.”

Even before the chag, I received a message from soldiers in Gaza: “Rabbi, I just read your *Dayeinu* aloud here on base. There were many soldiers, many of them not religious. People had tears in their eyes. They were deeply moved. Thank you for the *chizzuk*.”

After *Seder* night, I received many messages from people who said they included this special *Dayeinu* in their *Sedarim*, and that it gave them a great deal of strength, *emunah*, and hope. But what moved me most was a message from someone closely connected to an Air Force squadron. He had shared the *Dayeinu* with one of the squadron leaders, who later told him: “We were on our way back from Iran after a difficult mission – very successful, but

exhausting. On the flight back, we needed strength. I read the *Dayeinu* aloud to the pilots. Everyone was deeply moved, and throughout the entire flight, they discussed each line through their own unique perspective. Thank you for the *Dayeinu* – it helped us remember the greatness of the hour and gave us strength.”

I also recited this special *Dayeinu* with hundreds of widows, orphans, and bereaved families from the war, with whom I had the privilege of spending the *Seder*. I was deeply moved when many of them told me how much it strengthened them and gave additional meaning to the loss of their son *hy”d*.

With Hashem’s help, may we merit to see many more miracles; and next year, may we be able to add even more meaningful lines to our *Dayeinu*, as the process of our redemption continues to unfold before our eyes.

● The *Dayeinu* can be found online at mizrachi.org/dayeinu5786



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| 4. V'ahavta L'reiacha _____ | 9. Im Ein Kemach, Ein _____ |
| 5. Kaved Et Avicha Vet _____ | 10. Talmud Torah K'neged _____ |

Answers: 1. Nishma 2. Moshe 3. Sinai 4. Kamocha 5. Imecha 6. Elokecha 7. Tignov 8. Machazikim Bah 9. Torah 10. Kulam

MEET RITA LEVI-MONTALCINI



April 22, 1909 - December 30, 2012 (1 Iyar 5669 - 17 Tevet 5773)

A Tenacious Scientist despite the Nazis

Rita Levi-Montalcini was born in Turin, Italy, in 1909. From a young age, she was determined to study medicine. She graduated medical school in 1936 and planned to specialize in psychiatry and neurology. But under Fascist rule, Jews were banned from many professions, so she could no longer work normally as a doctor or scientist. During World War II, Rita built a secret laboratory in her home and continued her research. She studied chicken embryos and rode long distances by bicycle to find the eggs and equipment she needed. She also helped the anti-fascist resistance by forging documents. After the war, Rita was invited to work in the United States and divided her time between America and Italy. Her research led to the discovery of nerve growth factor, a substance that helps cells grow and develop. This breakthrough greatly advanced the understanding of the brain and nervous system, and she later received the Nobel Prize. Rita also worked for social causes, especially women's education and peace efforts. Even in her nineties and beyond, she remained active in public life. She died in 2012 at the age of 103.



Adapted from *Iconic Jewish Women*
by Dr. Aliza Lavie. Scan the QR code
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DID YOU KNOW?

- The Old City of Jerusalem has 8 gates to enter! Jaffa, Zion, Damascus, Dung, New, Herod's, Golden and Lion!
- The Kotel has stones that are over 2,000 years old!
- Many people wear white on Shavuot!

Test Your Knowledge

Why is Shavuot called Shavuot?

In what year was Jerusalem reunified?

What animal appears in the middle of Jerusalem's flag?



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

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Shavuot Cheesecake Bites

Ingredients:

- 1 cup cream cheese (softened)
- 1 cup crushed biscuits
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla

Toppings:

- Crushed biscuits
- Coconut
- Sprinkles
- Mini chocolate chips

Instructions:

1. Mix the cream cheese, crushed biscuits, sugar, and vanilla in a bowl.
2. Chill in the fridge for 20 minutes.
3. Roll into small balls.
4. Coat in your favorite topping.
5. Chill again and enjoy!

Tip: Try making different flavors and colors for a fun Shavuot dessert tray!

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