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FROM THE Editor

Bread or Dreams?

At the end of his novel *Altneuland*, Theodor Herzl ends with some concluding thoughts. He writes that “Dreams are not so different from action, as people usually think. All actions of men are founded upon dreams, and their end is a dream too. *B’nafsho yavi chalomo* – he lays down his soul to bring home his dreams.”

Herzl’s expression, *b’nafsho yavi chalomo*, is a paraphrase of the well-known words from *U’netaneh Tokef*, one of the dramatic moments of the *Yamim Nora’im*. “Man is founded in dust and ends in dust. He lays down his soul to bring home bread (*b’nafsho yavi lachmo*). He is like a broken shard...”

These words powerfully describe the lowliness and misery of the man who works day and night to earn a living, who “lays down his soul to bring home bread.” Herzl, by switching the order of the letters of “*lachmo*” (bread) to “*chalomo*” (dream), describes a different kind of man, a man of greatness who lays down his soul to fulfill his dreams.

For Herzl, this wasn’t simply a brilliant turn of phrase, but the way that he lived and died. The dream of Israel’s return to Zion burned brightly and constantly in his consciousness. He laid down his soul to fulfill his dream and that of his people, giving every ounce of his strength to the Zionist movement until his body failed and he died of a heart attack at 44. He gave his soul to his dreams, but his dreams came true.

Forty-five years after Herzl’s death, another man dreamed – and he, too, was ready to lay down his soul to fulfill his dreams. On May 13, 1948, the day before the people of Israel declared their independence in Tel Aviv, the Jordanian Legion slaughtered the last defenders of Kfar Etzion and razed the settlement to the ground. For the next 19 years, Rav Hanan Porat *zt”l* and the children of Kfar Etzion dreamed of returning to their homes. Their dream was about more than returning to one town; it represented our nation’s



The grave of Rav Hanan Porat *zt”l*.

dream of “*v’shavu vanim ligvulam*, and the children will return to their borders.” Rav Hanan laid down his soul to return to his childhood home and then to all of Judea and Samaria through the Gush Emunim movement that he founded together with Rav Moshe Levinger *zt”l*. When he died in 2011, these three words – *b’nafsho yavi chalomo* – were inscribed upon his grave in Kfar Etzion. For he, like Herzl before him, was both a dreamer and a man of action.

In this life, there are two kinds of Jews. There are those who spend their days in search of *lechem*, who “lay down their souls to bring home bread.” Buying a bigger home and taking the family away for Pesach doesn’t come cheap; it requires a lifetime of hard work. But then there are the dreamers, the people of *chalom* who dream of things far bigger than themselves, and dedicate their lives to bringing those dreams to fruition. The Jews of *lechem* might be lovely people, and they may have great success, but they are “like a broken shard, like dry grass, a withered flower, like a passing shadow and a vanishing cloud.” It is the dreamers who work to

actualize their dreams who make a lasting mark on this world.

Everyone knows Rami Kleinstein’s beautiful song “*Matanot Ktanot*, Small Gifts,” a beautiful song of gratitude and appreciation for the many gifts G-d gives us in this life and which we too often take for granted. But as we celebrate the miracle of Israel amidst an existential war for survival, I think we also need another song, a song we could call “*Matarot Gedolot*, Great Goals.” “Sound the great *shofar* for our freedom; raise a banner to gather our exiles, and bring us together from the four corners of the earth into our Land... Speedily cause the scion of David Your servant to flourish... restore the service to Your Sanctuary.”

It’s time to dream big again, like Herzl and Rav Hanan, and to lay down our souls to fulfill them. These are not impossible fantasies, but real and concrete dreams – dreams that are in our grasp. If we will it, it is no dream.

Elie Mischel



Rabbi Elie Mischel is the Editor of HaMizrachi magazine.

Victory over Hamas: A New-Old Heroism

Rabbi Doron Perez

What would constitute victory over Hamas? This question has been an issue of great ongoing tension and debate. What, indeed, does victory look like for Israel in the Swords of Iron War?

Three distinct objectives for this war were put forward by the War Cabinet. First, the returning of all the hostages taken on October 7th, including the four hostages taken before the barbaric Hamas attack on Simchat Torah. Second, the total dismantling of Hamas's military and political infrastructure in Gaza, thus preventing any future October 7th style invasion attempts. Third, the return of all 126,000 evacuees from southern and northern Israel to their homes.

Thus far, none of these three objectives have been achieved. Currently, there are painfully 133 hostages still in Gaza, including the body of our son Daniel *hy"d*. Of the 24 Hamas terror battalions, 5 to 6 remain intact for many months now – mainly in Rafah – giving Hamas the ability to continue to fight and rebuild. Relatively few evacuees have begun returning to their homes in the south and almost none in the north. There is no clear horizon in sight for achieving these aims. To add insult to injury, skirmishes with Hezbollah have not stopped, while Iran launched 300 drones and ballistic missiles at Israel. The war with Hamas is far from over and achieving our objectives seems remote.

Besides the hostages and evacuees, Israel has 1,500 dead including 900 civilians and 600 soldiers and thousands injured.

What, then, has been achieved other than partial fulfillment of some of the above



Has there been any type of victory, or are we losing this war?

stated objectives? Has there been any type of victory, or are we losing this war?

The revelation

I believe that one of the greatest achievements of this war is the astonishing revelation of the almost supernatural spirit of courage and heroism displayed by our soldiers and civilians alike. On that dark day in October and every day subsequently, a truly remarkable heroism has been and is being displayed – a courage and heroism which is revolutionary and transformative, both for ourselves and our enemies.

The remarkable reservoirs of *gevurah* and the daring and dauntless courage of our society has delivered a very powerful message of deterrence to our enemies. Over the last decade, Hassan Nasrallah *yimach shemo* has written about the inherent weakness of Israeli society. He has famously compared Israel society, including all of its intricate defense systems, to a flimsy spider web – a “cobweb.” His cobweb theory is based on the fact that Israel appears externally strong but is, in reality, intrinsically weak. A cobweb looks very strong from the vantage point of an insect but when you zoom in, a very different picture emerges. A cobweb is essentially temporary in nature and can

be dismantled with ease in one fell swoop. Israel, in his opinion, is nothing more than a modern Jewish Crusader state which will be dismantled, just as the great Muslim leader Saladin achieved against the Christian Crusaders.

In recent years, Israeli society was greatly divided, which Nasrallah sees as a great source of frailty and fragility and proof of lack of societal cohesion. With five elections in four years, almost unheard of in democratic societies, our division was easily identified by our enemies. And then we experienced a terribly divisive battle over judicial reform, which Nasrallah in Lebanon and Sinwar in Gaza interpreted as a sign that Israeli society was imploding from within and could, G-d forbid, be destroyed, which led to Sinwar and Hamas launching their surprise attack on October 7th. By the grace of G-d, Hezbollah and Nasrallah did not join the attack on that devastating day – the worst in modern Jewish history since the *Shoah*.

But then something totally unexpected happened¹ – the immediate and heroic response of soldiers and civilians alike from all walks of life on that day, who were prepared to lay their life on the line to defend Israel – whatever the cost. Our son Daniel *hy"d* along with 300 other soldiers and 900 civilians paid with their lives. An additional 300 soldiers have lost their lives subsequently. Yet none of these horrific losses have dampened the incredible resolve and spirit of our nation to defend ourselves and to defeat Hamas. Our enemies did not believe that Israel would have the boldness to send her sons into the poisonous spider's lair of hundreds of kilometers of booby-trapped terror tunnels. Israel has and will continue to fight in

those tunnels with a steely determination and iron will – without fear or fright. Our enemies underestimated the deep resolve and resilience of the Jewish people and our unwavering belief in the morality and justice of our cause – to return our hostages and root out their barbaric threat to Israel.

This remarkable heroism has also been a great lesson internally for the Jewish people in general and Israeli society in particular. Many thought our social media addicted TikTok infused generation, growing up in a culture of self-centered individualism, would not exhibit the same self-sacrifice as their forebears. How wrong they were. This new generation now fighting their own War of Independence has shown that they are no less heroic than all previous generations – than those who fought in the Yom Kippur War 1973, the Six-Day War of 1967 and the War of Independence of 1948. They are no less heroic than the *Maccabim*, and the great armies of King David. They have assumed their position in the pantheon of the great generations of bravery and self-sacrifice for Jewish destiny. The unity and camaraderie on the front lines of all for one and one for all has reminded us who we are and why we are here.

This incredible ongoing *mesirut nefesh*, self-sacrifice, bravery and heroism is, I believe, our greatest victory and the greatest deterrence for our enemy.

Why the 5th of Iyar?

This remarkable heroism has enormous *halachic* ramifications. It is the very reason that the 5th of Iyar, Yom HaAtzmaut, was adopted by the Chief Rabbinate as a day of *Hallel* and thanksgiving.

Why indeed was this specific day the one selected by the Chief Rabbinate? It doesn't seem to make *halachic* sense. After all, days of *Hallel* and thanksgiving are usually instituted *after* we have emerged from the threat of annihilation. Was Pesach not instituted on the day we came out of Egypt, the day of redemption, and an additional day of thanksgiving on the last day of Pesach, when the Egyptian army drowned in the sea and the threat of annihilation was averted? So too with Purim, when we established the festival only after

the threat of Haman was totally removed. Why did the Chief Rabbinate institute the very day the State was declared as the day of thanksgiving? Wasn't this the very day which led our Arab neighbors to attempt to annihilate the nascent state beginning the very next day? The War of Independence lasted for 10 months. Shouldn't the day the war ended be the day of thanksgiving and not the day of declaration of the state?

Rabbi Shlomo Aviner beautifully answers this question.² This day was the most miraculous day of revelation of *gevurah*, for it took almost otherworldly self-sacrifice, courage and heroism to declare independence no matter what the consequences. It was a psychological miracle of epic proportions – that after 1,900 years of statelessness, wandering and persecution, a new spirit arose. A daring desire for freedom and independence, for redemption and dignity with unmatched bravery and determination. Ben-Gurion and the leadership of the *Yishuv* knew that they would face the threat of annihilation the moment they declared a state. They were divided, knowing that it may be the shortest lived state in Jewish history. Yet somehow, a spirit of national revival and astonishing bravery gripped their hearts and, by the narrow vote of 6 to 4, they voted in favor of declaring a state. Indeed, the quorum on that day who made this remarkable decision displayed a heavenly inspired remarkable heroism. At that moment, we became a people committed to redemption and sovereignty, regardless of the consequences.

This display of courage was a watershed moment. One of the leading rabbinic luminaries at the time, Chief Rabbi of Haifa Meshulam Roth *zt"l*, explains why the 5th of Iyar is a day of thanksgiving. He notes that this day was a great turning in Jewish history with a ripple effect of miraculous salvation. From servitude to freedom and redemption, with miraculous military victories and the ingathering of the exiles – this was the day that opened the gates of collective return for Jews from all around the world.³

The revelation of remarkable courage and heroism on October 7th was the same *gevurah* we saw on the 5th of Iyar. It is that

same heroism that is a continuation of all previous generations who were prepared to give their lives for the survival and thriving of the Jewish people. The flaming torch of *mesirut nefesh* has been valiantly accepted by our young generation. This is the great revelation for ourselves and our greatest deterrence for our enemies.

May Hashem bless us to achieve all three objectives of the war in a painless and peaceful way.

1. This and what follows has been found in documentation from Gaza, which I heard first-hand from the heads of Israel's intelligence and secret services.
2. Rabbi Shlomo Aviner, *Tal Chermon*, 210–212.
3. Rabbi Meshulam Roth, *Responsa Kol Mevasser*, 21.



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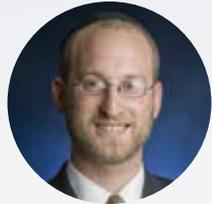
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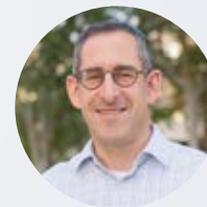
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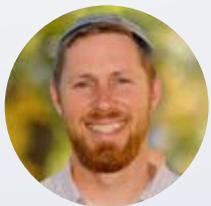
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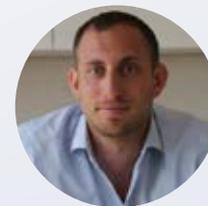
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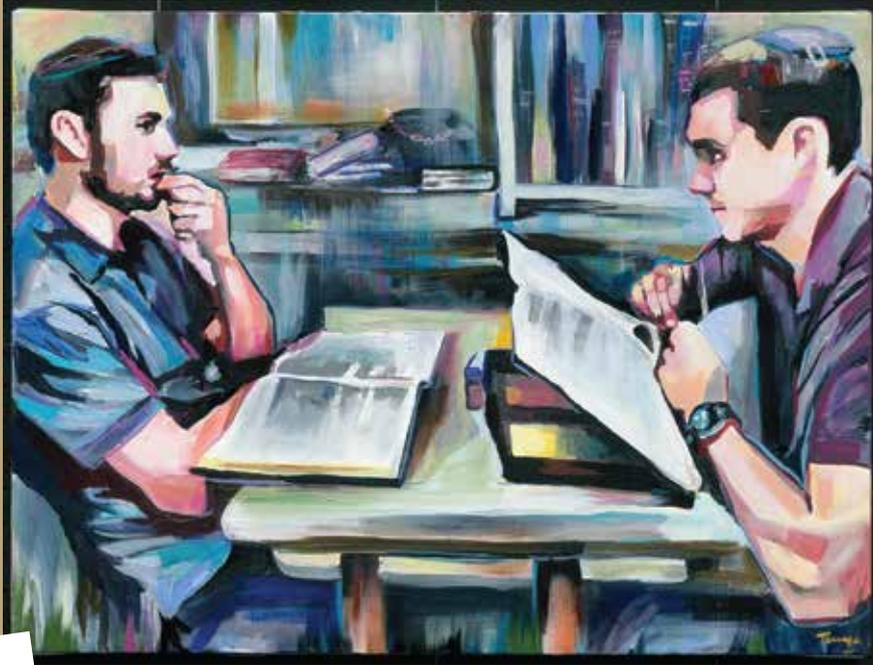


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A New Generation of Heroes

An Introduction by Rabbi Aron White

Last year, Israel celebrated its 75th birthday in an atmosphere of apprehension. Four years of political deadlock had been followed by a controversial government whose judicial reform plan had unleashed unprecedented protests. Many feared that the political divides were cutting deeper than they had before, pointing to a more troubling, even existential issue. Rabbi Doron Perez wrote the following in these pages last year (“The Next Seventy-Five Years”, Vol. 6, No. 1), based on the ideas of Israeli writer Netanel Ellinson:

In both prior Jewish commonwealths, a crisis ensued as the nation neared its seventy-fifth year of independence. Quite remarkably, seventy-three years after David’s coronation as king over all the tribes of Israel, the people of Israel tragically split into two separate kingdoms: Yehudah and Yisrael. The same is true of the Hasmonean kingdom in Second Temple times. The Hasmonean kingdom was established by Shimon HaChashmonai, followed by Yochanan, and then King Alexander Yannai and Shlomtzion HaMalkah. In the seventy-third year, once again, a deep division ensued between the two princes Aristobulus and Hyrcanus. This became a family feud and a deep political divide, with one brother enlisting the support of the rising Roman Empire, giving Rome a foothold in Judea and eventually leading to the decimation of the Hasmonean kingdom and the destruction of the Temple.

In both cases, Ellinson notices a troubling trend within the first three generations of the establishment of statehood. The first generation is that of the founders, who rally all their resources to found the state and ensure its viability at the outset. The second generation is that of the builders, who build on the success of the founders to expand and enhance the national infrastructure and build sustainability for the generations to come. He poignantly terms the third generation as “the generation of the destroyers.” This generation by and large do not know firsthand the challenges

of the founders but reap the benefit of their sacrifice and investment. Apathy sets in, then discord, and finally tragic divisiveness. This has happened not once but twice in the history of Jewish sovereignty in the Land of Israel.

On October 7, some of those fears of the Jewish commonwealth coming apart were realized. Israel was attacked, suffering the most painful blow to the Jewish people since the Holocaust. But in the minutes, hours, days and months following that unbearable pain, we have seen this generation respond in ways that confounded our fears. Rather than causing Israel to come apart, the attack revealed deep reserves of courage, self sacrifice and commitment that have carried this war effort for the past six months. There are countless stories of bravery, of people choosing to risk their lives to save their family, community and people. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis have been serving as reservists, including thousands of people who flew back from abroad to serve. Supported by the gifts, messages and visits of millions of Jews around the world, a generation of Israeli teenagers and young adults have put everything aside to protect the Jewish homeland. While young Israelis may have grown up on the same diet of Fortnite and TikTok as their Western peers, something in the education and culture in Israel has created a generation of young adults totally committed to something much larger than themselves. We were worried that this new generation was the “generation of destroyers.” We have learned that they are a generation of heroes.

As we celebrate Israel’s birthday, once again under a cloud of doubt about the future, the spirit of this young generation gives us hope. In this edition, we tell the story of a new generation of heroes who will, with G-d’s help, carry the Jewish state to victory.



PHOTO: DAVID STEIN

BATTALION 77

Heroes of October 7

Rabbi Aron White



At 6:30am on October 7th, the tank soldiers of Battalion 77 woke up to the sounds of sirens like everyone else. They were the unit of tanks assigned to the Gaza border at that time. As there were no intelligence warnings of a heightened level of threat, only the regular forces were there, and moreover their ranks were depleted because it was Shabbat and Simchat Torah. On the morning of October 7th, there were 14 tanks and their crews on army bases around the Gaza border.

Within a few minutes, they would be called into action to face a threat no-one had imagined and a scenario many orders of magnitude greater than what they were equipped for. Starting in those early hours of the morning, the 50 soldiers of Battalion 77 had no choice but to try and defend the border as best as they could, to stem the tidal wave of death and destruction coming over it. By the end of the day, many of them had given their lives, others were injured and others captured. They killed hundreds of terrorists, saved countless lives and protected many Israeli towns. This is the story of the heroism of Battalion 77.

Pictured above: "Tzevet Peretz", Daniel Perez's tank crew, part of Battalion 77

Ido Somech is a 19-year-old tank driver from

Afula. On October 7, he was based close to Be'eri. Immediately after the sirens sounded at 6:30am, his tank crew was directed to head to the border following reports of terrorists invading. In the radio recording from the tank, you hear the *mefaked* (officer) of the tank, Shai Levinson, guiding the loader, Ophir Testa, the gunner, Ariel Eliyahu, and Ido, the driver. Shai stood with his head out of the turret, directing the tank towards the streams of Hamas terrorists as they poured over the border. "Suddenly, I saw a terrorist on a motorbike directing an RPG towards the tank from about 40 meters away," said Ido. It was too close range to fire the tank's gun at them, so Ido used the tank to drive over the terrorist. "My heart rate was probably at 200," said Ido. "You are hoping that you don't die, that you won't be hit by one of the RPGs." At about 6:55am, the tank was hit by an explosive, and the radios in the tank went silent. Ido struggled to breathe as smoke filled the tank, but he was alive. Eventually, Ophir Testa came onto the radio, barely alive, and said that Ariel Eliyahu was still breathing. As there was no sign of their commander, and the loader and gunner were both critically injured, there was no way he could keep fighting, so Ido started driving to Re'im to get medical attention. As Ido kept driving, he saw an army jeep, and hoped they would be able to help treat Ophir. As he got closer, Ophir suddenly realized they were Hamas terrorists dressed up as soldiers, and Ido managed to run them over with the tank.

As Ido drove towards Re'im, he found himself at the site of the greatest carnage that day - the Nova music festival. Shockingly, while the army had approved the Nova festival, the tank division in the area had not been informed that it was taking place.

"Daniel and I were hiding in the front of a car," said Mai Suissa, a woman who had attended the party. "The terrorists were going car by car, shooting each one." "As the terrorists were standing above us, we heard a loud noise from the road - it was a tank," said Daniel. In those few seconds, the terrorists were scared off, and Mai, Daniel and probably many others were saved as Ido's tank drove onto the scene.

Ido found himself in the middle of a shoot-out. "I saw a battle of about ten policemen and security guards fighting about fifty terrorists," said Ido. "The tank couldn't shoot, but it is still a tank." He drove his tank to protect the policemen. Ophir Testa, barely alive at this point, used the last of his strength to get down



Ido Somech

from the tank to give his gun to someone, and was then killed.

Ido saw through the window that Hamas terrorists were starting to climb onto his tank, and he knew they were going to enter the tank. "At that point, I knew I was going to die, but I said to myself - at least let me take some of them down with me." He moved out of the driver's cabin towards the entrance, crouching down and shot the first terrorist as he entered. The other terrorists had not realized anyone was alive in the tank, and they retreated, throwing grenades into the tank. Ido started to drive around backwards and forwards, the only way he had to fight off tens of terrorists who were trying to conquer the tank. Eventually, the engine gave out, and Ido had to get out of the tank. "Before I went, I checked Ariel's pulse one time, but he was dead."

Ido got out of the tank, and joined two partiers who were fleeing the Nova festival. All around them were gunshots and terrorists. "We saw five people coming towards us, with rocks and knives. I killed one, but then my gun jammed. They started attacking me with the rocks, breaking my jaw and nose." Ido managed to get away from them, but the two people he was with were killed. Ido would lie down for 5 hours together with two other partiers from the Nova festival, in tremendous pain from the injuries to his face.

As he lay there, his tank, just a few hundred meters away, became a protection point for many of the partiers, who gathered around it. A few policemen gathered around them and the tank to protect them. A symbol of the IDF, the tank gave them hope, even if it was no longer functional. Around 5:00pm, the IDF and police found Ido, and were able to take him to Soroka hospital. Ariel Eliyahu and Ophir

Testa were killed that day, and buried a few days later. Shai Levinson, the commander of the tank, was killed, and his body was taken by the terrorists to Gaza.*



The first of the official "Ten Values of the IDF" is commitment to the mission, a trait exemplified by numerous soldiers from Battalion 77. Ben Zonshein is a captain from Herzliya who was based in the southern part of the Gaza region. A few minutes after the rockets were fired, he got a call from Asaf Chamami, the commander of the Southern Gaza Brigade, saying there was a terrorist infiltration near Nirim. Ben led his tank towards Nirim, where his crew fought with terrorists. During the next few hours, he engaged terrorists at Ein HaShlosha, Magen and Nirim, killing tens of terrorists. These *kibbutzim* are close to Nir Oz, the *kibbutz* from which one quarter of the residents were murdered and kidnapped. Ben's tank helped ensure the other *kibbutzim* did not suffer the same fate.

Outside of Magen, their tank was hit and they were unable to keep fighting. Ben and his tank squad got out of the tank, flagging down a passing car of policemen to get a ride back to their base, where they hoped to get onto another tank. When there wasn't space to get into the passenger seats, Ben climbed into the trunk of the car. The car drove them back to their base, where Ben would take command of defending the base from the terrorists trying to invade it. After the base was secured, Ben got into another tank, and spent the next 48 hours fighting to expel the terrorists from southern Israel.



Ben Zonshein

*This story is based on the televised documentary "One Tank at the Nova", screened on Channel 12 in April 2024.

Daniel Perez always told his soldiers that they have to be ready, as you never know when a war or attack is going to happen. When his team assembled in the bomb shelter as the sirens blared, many soldiers were still in their pajamas, but Daniel's team was fully dressed and in uniform. They immediately headed out to the border near Nachal Oz, preventing terrorists who were heading for Sa'ad and the Nachal Oz base from getting in. Three soldiers in the tank, including Daniel, were killed on that day. One soldier is believed to be alive and remains in captivity.



The Yahalomi family was taken captive by Hamas from Nir Oz and was en route to Gaza when Eyal Zopolski's tank from Battalion 77 passed by, offering a brief window of opportunity for the Yahalomi women to escape to freedom. In a matter of seconds, three women were saved from captivity. While Eitan (12) was fortunate to be released in the initial hostage exchange, Ohad (50) the father of the family remains in captivity.



Daniel Perez hy"d

What stands out about these soldiers is their remarkable blend of bravery, commitment and humility. Many expressed that when confronted with a large number of terrorists and chose to engage them head-on, they knew they probably wouldn't come out of it alive. The most basic human instinct is for self-protection, but these

soldiers' primary instinct was to fight and safeguard Israel. All those interviewed carry themselves with pride but without a trace of arrogance. Most haven't had the opportunity to reflect further, as they've been fighting in Gaza since October 7.

On that morning, at 6:30am, no-one in the country knew what was going on. These 50 soldiers saw it in their periscopes, with bullets and RPGs firing at them, and were the first line of defense of the opening salvo of this war. They are an inspiration to the hundreds of thousands of Israeli soldiers who follow them.



Rabbi Aron White
is the Managing Editor of
HaMizrachi magazine.

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The following is an unedited excerpt from the forthcoming *One Day In October* by Yair Agmon and Oriya Mevorach from Maggid Books, an imprint of Koren Jerusalem.

Abba, You Can't Leave Us Alone

Hadar Bachar's Story, aged 13 (Kibbutz Beerli)

The night before October 7th, we were in Gan Yarden, this park in the kibbutz. I was there with two of my friends, and we talked and laughed and hung out until late, and we made this clip on TikTok. We didn't post it, we just filmed it, and in the clip me and my friend made it look like we were making my other friend Alma disappear. We did it a few times, and at 2:30 we finally went to sleep. And only much later, after it all, when Alma was being held hostage in Gaza – only afterwards we realized that we had made Alma disappear in the clip. And then she really did disappear.

.....

We started to hear shouting in Arabic, really loud shouts, right outside the window, and then we heard the terrorists coming into the house, we heard their footsteps, and they came up to the shelter, to the shelter door, and they started shouting there in Arabic, "Iftah al bab! Iftah al bab! - Open the door! Open the door!" and Abba and Carmel were holding the door because it didn't lock, they were holding the handle, and the terrorists were pounding on the door, and screaming at us, really screaming, and then my father said to them in Arabic that there are children here, "Ruḥ kulahn valad!" and the second he said that, they started shooting at the door. The bullets pierced through the door and hit Carmel, they hit his arm. His arm just flew out of place from the terrorists' gunfire.

And because my mother takes care of babies, she did a first aid course, so she knew how to make a tourniquet, so we went over to Carmel together and made him a tourniquet, and the whole time the terrorists are shouting at us to open the door, and they fire at the door again, and this time they hit Abba, they hit his legs, and my father is thrown to the floor, and the terrorists come right up to the door and try to open it, but they can't, they must have somehow hit the mechanism and they can't open it at all. My dad's hands are still fine, so he manages to make a tourniquet for his legs to stop the bleeding. And as he's treating his own wounds, they started setting our house on fire, from the inside.

.....

And then one of the terrorists stuck the barrel of his gun through the hole, and shot a few bullets inside, and one of the bullets hit my mom – she got hit in the lungs, and she fell to the floor, and kind of keeled over. All four of us were wounded, but I was in the best shape, so I took everyone's phones and started sending messages to whoever I could, I sent recordings to the whole kibbutz, I still have that message: "We need someone to come save us, help, help, Carmel can't breathe, please, please someone come."

I called Magen David Adom and they said that they can't get into the kibbutz. I called the military security coordinator but he didn't answer – I didn't know that he was already dead – and I got a phone call from Magen David Adom and they said, "Strip Ima! Check where she was hit!" so I tore off her pajama top and looked for a wound, but I couldn't find anything, and Ima and Carmel kept saying goodbye to us, they kept saying, "I love you," "I love you all," and they slowly kind of faded away, and Carmel asked us to bury him with his surfboard, and that's what we did, we buried him with his surfboard.

.....

By this point we were lying on the floor, the whole room was still full of

smoke and our nostrils were all black, but it was easier to breathe on the floor, and I'm trying to clean all the black off of Ima's nostrils, and she starts whispering, "I have nothing against anyone, I have nothing against anyone," that's what she said, and then she just died. And I call Magen David Adom and they say to me, "Check her breath," and there's no breath. And then Abba says, "It's okay, Ima isn't suffering anymore. Now let's focus on Carmel." And at one point I made myself a tourniquet on my leg, I took off my shirt and had nothing but my underwear on, and I made myself a tourniquet. I lost a lot of blood myself, from all the shrapnel. And then they came back again and started burning us, they started another fire, and at this point I got burns on my legs because they were too close to the door, so I said to Carmel, "Come on, we have to move," so we moved to another part of the room. But then Carmel and my dad kept passing out, so I kept saying to them, "Wake up! Wake up! Stay conscious!" and I sent loads of messages, I called everyone I could, and I asked them all to come and save us. At one point Carmel started wheezing, his breathing was all weird, and I tell him, "Carmel, listen, you can't wheeze now! There are terrorists outside, if they hear us, they'll come in and take us away, and kidnap us, or they'll throw a grenade and we'll all die." But a few minutes later, his breathing got weaker and weaker, and then he died too. And I tried to pick him up so I could try and resuscitate him, but my arms were far too weak. I was so weak from all the smoke I had to breathe in. And Abba said to me, "Hadari, Ima and Carmel aren't suffering, let's focus on ourselves."

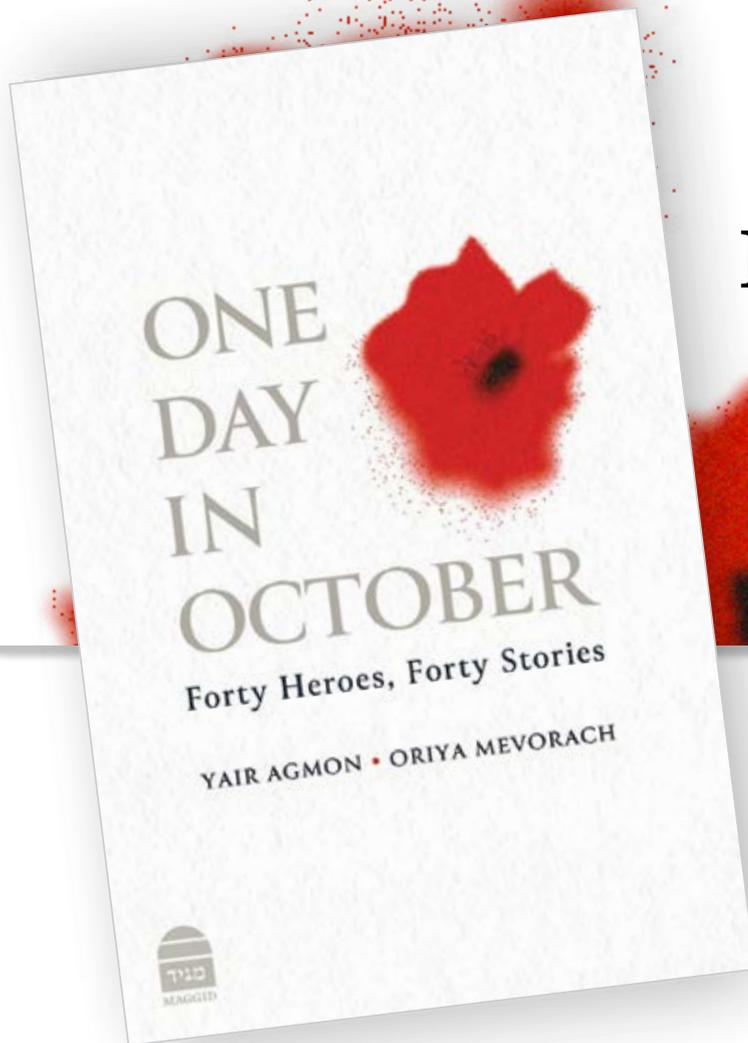
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It must have been something like seven in the evening. We were there for about twelve hours, with all the smoke and the blood and the wounds. The soldiers couldn't open the door from the outside, so we had to get out somehow, so I climbed out of the window, and I couldn't put any weight on my foot, and the soldiers brought me something to cover myself with because I was only in my underwear, and I told them that I needed water, and I drank a liter and a half in one gulp, in two seconds flat.

And then they carried me in a chair, and Abba in a stretcher. They took us to an exit from the kibbutz, and drove us away in an army ambulance, and then to another ambulance to Soroka Hospital. When we reached the ER the orthopedists came, and cleaned up my leg, and took off the tourniquet, and one of them said to me, "If you had had to keep that tourniquet on for another half hour, you would have lost your leg." And they took Abba for emergency surgery, he was mortally wounded, they tried to save his leg, they tried to reconnect the main artery, but they saw it that it was too late, so they had to amputate. But at least they saved him. At least Abba and me are still alive.

I don't know what to say about that whole story. I just don't know. I have nothing to say. I dream of going back to the kibbutz. I dream of becoming a pastry chef. But I don't dream much now, and I don't really know what I wish for myself. My friend Alma, who was held hostage in Gaza, was just released in the hostage deal. And now we're together again, we sit and talk and hang out in the park. But something has changed. Everything has changed. Even when we're laughing together, it's just not the same anymore.

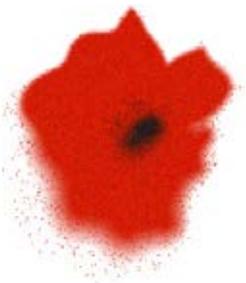
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One Day in October: Forty Heroes, Forty Stories *by Yair Agmon and Oriya Mevorach*

This amazing book tells the stories of forty regular people and their heroic actions from October 7. Of how these individuals embodied the essence of heroism. They exemplified the highest level of courage. Amidst the challenges and fear, they provided us with the opportunity to share a different story—a narrative of hope and compassion. This is the story we now recount, for the sake of future generations, for the comfort we seek, and for the generations to come. *One Day in October* presents a unique and compelling project, introducing readers to forty genuine heroes whose actions unfolded within a single day. Set against the backdrop of a turbulent landscape, these stories captivate readers, leaving a lasting impression. Here lie unforgettable heroes and stories that offer solace amidst the chaos.”



IT'S TRUE EVERYONE HERE LOOKS NORMAL
BUT WE ARE A NATION OF SUPERHEROES
INSIDE EVERYONE A SOLDIER HIDES
READY TO SAVE THE WORLD
(FROM THE SONG "GIBOREI AL (SUPERHEROES)" BY HATIKVA 6)

נִכּוֹן כָּלֵם נִרְאִים רְגִילִים אֲבָל
אֲנַחְנוּ עִם שֵׁל גְּבוּרֵי עַל
בְּכָל אֶחָד תְּמִיד מְסַתֵּר חַיִּיל
מוֹכֵן לְהַצִּיל אֶת הָעוֹלָם

MATAN ABERGIL HY"D



Matan (19) served in the Golani Brigade, and on Simchat Torah headed to Nir Am in an APC (armored personnel carrier) to defend the *kibbutz*. When a grenade was thrown into the APC, Matan jumped on the grenade, saving the lives of his comrades.

AMIT MANN HY"D



Amit (22), the youngest of five sisters from Netivot, was the MDA volunteer on call for Kibbutz Be'eri on October 7th. When the terrorists got into the *kibbutz*, she left her home to go to the *kibbutz* clinic to treat injured people who were arriving. She continued to treat patients for hours, until she was murdered in the clinic at 2pm.

EDEN NIMRI HY"D



Eden (21) was an officer in the Rochev Shamayim unit that operates drones. When Hamas took over the Nachal Oz base, Eden stood at the entrance to the bomb shelter, engaging the terrorists until she was killed. In that time, the ten female soldiers who were in the shelter were able to escape, and all ten survived that day.

ITIEL ZOHAR



Itiel joined his uncles Elchanan and Menachem Kalmanson on Simchat Torah, and drove from Otziel to Be'eri to help get people out of their bomb shelters. They helped more than 100 people to safety that day. Elchanan was killed, and a few months later, Itiel named his son after him. The trio were awarded the Israel Prize for 2024 for their bravery.

ANER SHAPIRA HY"D



Aner (22), from Arnona in Yerushalayim, was at the Nova festival, and started heading back to his army base on the morning of Simchat Torah. He stopped in a bomb shelter near Re'im, in which tens of partiers had gathered. He stood by the entrance, with only a glass bottle in hand to defend them. When Hamas forces arrived, they threw a grenade into the shelter, but Aner threw it out. Aner managed to throw seven grenades out of the shelter, but was killed by the eighth. Aner's actions saved many lives (Aner's friend Hersh Goldberg-Polin lost his arm from the grenade attack, and remains in captivity).



TOURO UNIVERSITY STANDS WITH ISRAEL ON ITS 76th BIRTHDAY NOW AND ALWAYS



THE FALLEN SOLDIERS OF CHARVOT BARZEL

Since 1949, the day before Yom HaAztmaut has been marked by Israel as Yom HaZikaron – the national day to remember those who fell in Israel's battles and terror attacks. Since last Yom HaZikaron, more names have been added to the list of fallen soldiers than any year since 1982.

The 608 soldiers who have fallen in this war made the ultimate sacrifice for Am Yisrael and Medinat Yisrael. May their memories be a blessing.

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 רס"ר (במיל) קאלקידן מהרי
 רס"ל (במיל) סאלם אלכרישאת
 רס"ן דור זימל
 סמל עילאי צעיר
 סמל ריף הרוש
 סמל אמיתי אבן שושן
 סמל אלון קודריאשוב
 סמ"ר ניסים כחלון
 סמ"ר ליור רביב
 רס"ל עילי דוד גרפינקל
 רס"ב (במיל) סבסטיאן איון
 סמ"ר מתן וינוגרדוב
 סמל דניאל פרץ
 רס"ר אורי מויאל
 סמ"ר איתי חן
 רס"ך (במיל) מיכאל גל
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 סמ"ר דוד ששון
 רס"ם (במיל) דניס יקימוב
 סמל ינון יצחק
 סמל אפיק טרי
 סמל דולב חיים מלכה
 סמ"ר איתי סייף
 רס"ן יפתח שחר
 סמל עוז דניאל
 סמ"ר עידו אלי זהירן
 סמ"ר נריה בלטה
 רס"ך אייל שומינוב
 סמ"ר אברהם אובגן
 סמ"ר מעוז מורל
 סמ"ר סימון שלומוב
 רס"ל אורי יעיש
 סמ"ר נועם חבה
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 סמ"ר שי לוינסון
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 סמ"ר אורי גרבי
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 סמל רועי טל
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 סמ"ר בירהו קאסיה
 סמ"ר ניר רפאל קנניאן
 סמל עמית הוד זיו
 רס"ל (במיל) טל שועה
 סגן שי איילי
 סגן עומרי שורץ
 סגן יעקב אליאן
 סמל לביא גיהסי
 רס"ר (במיל) אוריאל כהן
 סמ"ר (במיל) ליאור סיון
 רס"ר (במיל) מעוז פניגשטיין
 סמ"ר (במיל) רותם יוסף לוי
 רס"ר (במיל) דניאל יעקב בן הרוש
 סמ"ר (במיל) נתנאל סילברג
 סמ"ר ירון גהלי
 רס"ל (במיל) ליאור יוסף קרואני
 רס"ר (במיל) טל פיליבה
 רס"ר (במיל) איתן נאה
 רס"ל ליאב אלוש
 רס"ל אוריה באייר
 סמ"ר בוריס דובבסקי
 רס"ל (במיל) שלום זלצמן
 רס"ר (במיל) יוסף אבנר דורן
 רס"ב (במיל) יחזקאל עזריה
 רס"ר (במיל) תומר שלמה מיארה
 רס"ל (במיל) שי אוריאל פיזם
 רב"ט ניק בייזר
 סמל רון שרמן
 סמל עוז שמואל ארדי
 רס"ם (במיל) אלישע לוינשטרן
 רס"ן בן שלי
 אל"ם יצחק בן בשט
 סמל ערן אלוני
 רס"ל רום הכט
 סמל ליאל חיו
 סמ"ר אוריה יעקב
 סמל אחיה דסקל
 רס"ן משה אברהם בר-און
 סמ"ר רועי מלדסי
 סמ"ר תומר גרינברג
 רס"ר (במיל) צביקה לביא
 רס"ר (במיל) ארי יוחאי זנילמן
 סמ"ר (במיל) אליהו יאנובסקי
 רס"ן (במיל) רומן ברושטיין
 רס"ן גל בכר
 רס"ן (במיל) אביתר כהן
 רס"ם (במיל) איתי פרי
 סמ"ר (במיל) גדעון אילני
 סגן נתנאל מנחם איתן
 סמ"ר יונתן דין חיים
 סמ"ר חיים מאיר עדן

רס"ר (במיל) ליאב אטיה
 רס"ר (במיל) עמרי בן שחר
 סמל מאור כהן איזנקוט
 רס"ר (במיל) נפתלי יונה גורדון
 רס"ל (במיל) עומרי רוט
 רס"ר (במיל) איל מאיר ברקוביץ'
 רס"ם (במיל) קובי דבש
 רס"ם (במיל) יונתן דוד דיטש
 רס"ר (במיל) גל מאיר איזנקוט
 רס"ר (במיל) מאור גרשוני
 סמ"ר עלמנאו עמנואל פלקה
 סמ"ר עמית בונצל
 רס"ם (במיל) עדי שני
 סמ"ר יוחאי גור הרשברג
 רס"ל (במיל) יהונתן מלכה
 רס"ר (במיל) עילי אליהו כהן
 רס"ר (במיל) מתן דמארי
 רס"ר (במיל) גיל דניאלס
 סמ"ר יהל גזית
 סמ"ר איתן פיש
 סמל יקיר ידידיה שניקובלסקי
 סמ"ר תובל יעקב צעני
 סמל בנימין יהושע נידהם
 רס"ם (במיל) נריה שאער
 רס"ל (במיל) בן זוסמן
 רס"ר (במיל) אור ברנדס
 סמ"ר אסף אלו סמה
 אל"ם אסף חממי
 סמל שקד דהן
 סמל קיריל ברודסקי
 סמ"ר תומר יעקב אחימיס
 סמ"ר איתן דב רוזנצווייג
 סמ"ר לירון שניר
 סמ"ר (במיל) ארנון משה אברהם
 בבניסטי וספי
 סמ"ר איליה סנקין
 סמ"ר איתן דישון
 סמ"ר דביר ברזני
 סמ"ר ינון תמיר
 סמ"ר (במיל) אדיר פורטוגל
 סמ"ר גל מישאלוף
 רס"ן (במיל) חן יהלום
 רס"ם (במיל) רני טחן
 רס"ר (במיל) יקיר ביטון
 סמל בנימין מאיר ארלי
 סמ"ר (במיל) רועי ביבר
 רס"ן ג'מאל עבאס
 סמ"ר שחר פרידמן
 סמ"ר עדי מאלכ חרב
 סמ"ר עדי פרוביזור
 סמ"ר שלמה גורטובניק
 רס"ר (במיל) דוד (דודי) דגמי
 רב"ט אברהם פטנה
 סמ"ר שלמה בן נון
 סמ"ר אסף מסטר
 סמ"ר כפיר יצחק פרנקו
 סמ"ר (במיל) עמרי יוסף דוד
 סמ"ר ידידיה אשר לב
 רב"ט נועה מרציאנו
 רס"ר (במיל) רז אבולעפיה
 סמ"ר רועי מרום
 רס"ן יששכר נתן

סמ"ר איתי שהם
 רס"ר (במיל) נתנאל (נתי) הרוש
 רס"ר (במיל) סרגיי שמרקין
 רס"ם (במיל) יוסי הרשקוביץ
 רס"ן (במיל) משה ידידיה לייטר
 רס"ר (במיל) מתן מאיר
 סמ"ר יהונתן יצחק סמו
 סמל רוני אשל
 סמ"ר גילעד רוזנבליט
 רס"ר (במיל) דב משה (דובי) כוגן
 רס"ר (במיל) אליהו בנימין אלמקייס
 סמ"ר נועם יוסף אבו
 רס"ל יונתן חצור
 רס"ל (במיל) יעקב עוזרי
 סמ"ר שחר כהן מבטח
 רס"ר (במיל) נערן אשחר
 סמל יהונתן מימון
 רס"ן יהודה נתן כהן
 סמ"ר גלעד נחמיה ניצן
 סמ"ר יונדב רז לוינשטיין
 רס"ר ליאור ארזי
 סמ"ר ים גלס
 רס"ל (במיל) ידידיה אליהו
 סמ"ר איתי טענדון
 סמ"ר בני וייס
 רס"ר (במיל) אוריה מש
 רס"ר (במיל) יהונתן יוסף ברנד
 רס"ם (במיל) גיל פישץ
 סמ"ר יאיר ניפוס
 סמ"ר רועי סרגוסטי
 רס"ל (במיל) אלחנן אריאל קליין
 סמ"ר סלמאן חבקיה
 סמ"ר (במיל) יובל זילבר
 רס"ל (במיל) שלום ציון שרעבי
 סמ"ר פדיה מנחם מרק
 סמ"ר איתי יהודה
 סמ"ר שי ארז
 סמ"ר אריאל רייך
 סמל אסף לוגר
 סמ"ר עדי דגן
 סמ"ר הלל סולומון
 סמ"ר ארז מישלובסקי
 סמ"ר עדי ליאון
 סמל עידו עובדיה
 סמל ליאור סימנינוביץ
 סמ"ר רועי דאוי
 סמ"ר רועי וולף
 סמ"ר לביא ליפשיץ
 סמ"ר מידן ישראל
 רס"ן יאיר זלוף
 רס"ל (במיל) ינון פליישמן
 סמ"ר ישראל חיים פור
 סמ"ר שהם משה בן הרוש
 רס"ב זיו דדן
 סמל תמיר ברק
 רס"ל (במיל) עומר בלוח
 רס"ם (במיל) רן פוסלושני
 סמ"ר איתי יהושע
 רס"ם (במיל) אריה (אריק) קראוניק
 רס"ן (במיל) אורן שטרן
 רס"ם (במיל) חגי אבני
 רס"ר (במיל) אופיר ליבשטיין

רס"ן אריה שלמה צירינג
סמל אורי לוקר
רב"ט אופיר דודיאן
סמ"ר אילי גמזו
סרן איתי מאור
רס"ן אברהם חובלאשוילי
סמ"ר איתי אליהו מרציאנו
סא"ל יהונתן (ברנש) צור
רס"ן אדיר עבודי
סמל ירון זהר
סרן יותם בן בסט
סמ"ר אופיר ציוני
סגן אדר בן סימון
סמ"ר אור אמתו
סא"ל סהר ציון פורשטיין
סמ"ר אפיק רוזנטל
סגן ניאי קמינקא
סרן אור מוזס
סמ"ר עומרי ניב פירשטיין
סמל דביר ליישה
סמ"ר עדן אלון לוי
סמ"ר יובל בן יעקב
סמל גיא בזק
רב"ט נריה אהרון נגרי
רב"ט נעמה בוני
סרן יפתח יעבץ
סמ"ר עידו הרוש
סגן יואב מלייב
סמל נתנאל יאנג
רס"ן חן בוכריס
רס"ן אור יוסף רן
סמל עדי גרומן
רס"ל אמיר פישר
אל"ם יהונתן אהרן שטיינברג

סמל רועי פרי
סמ"ר עידן רז
סא"ל אלי גינסברג
סגן נוה אלעזר לקס
סמ"ר טשגר טקה
סגן יונתן גוטין
סמל אדיר טהר
סרן ניתאי עמאר
סמל עמית צור
סמל שירה שוחט
סמ"ר יוסף איתמר ברוכים
רס"ן (במיל) רועי נגרי
רס"ן פלג סאלם
סמ"ר ירון אורי שי
סמ"ר בן רובינשטיין
סרן איתי כהן
סמל עילי בר שדה
סמ"ר אוראל משה
רב"ט ליאור לוי
רס"ן אריאל בן משה
סרן שילה כהן
רס"ן אמיר סקורי
רס"ם אהרון פרש
סמל דנית כהן
רב"ג עידו רוזנטל
סמל עמית גואטה
סמ"ר אור מזרחי
סמ"ר רועי וייזר
סגן אדיר גאורי
סמ"ר גיא שמחי
סמל אריאל אליהו
רס"ן טל גרושקה
סרן רום שלומי
סמל איתמר עיש
רס"ל ויטלי סקיפקביץ'
רס"ם (במיל) עמרי מיכאלי
רס"ן עידו יהושע
סרן תומר שוהם
אל"ם רועי יוסף לוי
רס"ל אהד כהן

סרן אורי מרדכי שני
סמ"ר מיכאל בן חמו
סרן רון צרפתי
סמ"ר נועם אלימלך רוטנברג
סמל תומר נגר
סמ"ר ברנדו דוד פלורס גרסיה
רס"ר (במיל) ישראל עמיחי ויצן
סמל לביא בוחניק
רס"ן (במיל) איתן מנחם נאמן
סמל נתן חי ליאר
סרן (במיל) יובל הליבני
רס"ם סלמאן אבן מרעי
רס"ל אלעד מיכאל ששון
רס"ן אוריאל ביבי
סמ"ר שלו ברנס
סמ"ר בר רוזנשטיין
סמ"ר נהוראי סעיד
סמל דוד מיטלמן
רס"ר (במיל) אביחי אמסלם
סרן סהר סעודין
סמ"ר אופיר מלמן
סמ"ר רגב אמר
רס"ל יונתן סביאקי
סרן אייל קליין
סמ"ר רועי ברקת
סמ"ר עמית מוסט
סרן אמיר צור
סמ"ר אביטר אוחיון
רס"ן מרדכי שמיר
סמל שגב שוורץ
סמל אוריאל סגל
סמל אמיר לביא
רס"ם (במיל) ליאור בן יעקב
רס"ם (במיל) טל ממן
סמ"ר עדי צור
סמל ראם מאיר בטיטו
רס"ל יוסף מלאכי גדליה
רס"ר (במיל) עמרי בלקין
סמ"ר תומר ברק
רס"ן עידו ישראל שני
סמ"ר מקס רבינוב
רס"ן רז פרץ
סמל שיר שלמה
סמל אושר שמעיה
סמ"ר יעבן בן יעקב
סמ"ר בנימין לב
סמל שיר ביטון
סרן דקל סויסה
סמ"ר דניאל משה דנינו
סמ"ר יקיר לוי
רב"ט עילי עזר
רס"ל עמית פלד
סמ"ר טיון שמחה אסראף
רס"ן טל כהן
סמל אריאל ארז
סמל אריאל אוחנה
סמ"ר איתי נחמיאס
סמ"ר יוגב אהרן
סמ"ר הלל שמואל סעודין
סרן הדר קמה
סמ"ר יונתן גולן
סמ"ר דוד רתנר
סמל אופיר טסטה
סמ"ר עמיחי יעקב ונינו
סא"ל עלים עבדאללה
סמ"ר טל לוי
סרן אלינה פרבוסודובה
רס"ן רועי צ'אפאל
רס"ר (במיל) תומר דולב
סרן עדן נימרי
סמל ליאור עזיזוב
סמ"ר רותם דושי
סמ"ר אלכסנדר מאסלי
סמ"ר אור מלכה
רס"ן (במיל) דוד מאיר

רס"ר (במיל) דניאל קסטיאל
סמ"ר אופק ארביב
רס"ל (במיל) מתניה אלסטר
רס"ר (במיל) איתי שלמה מורנו
סמל אופיר ירוחין
סרן איליי עדני
סמ"ר שחף ניסני
סמל בועז מנשה יוגב
רס"ם (במיל) נועם סלוטקי
סמ"ר שהם בר
סמ"ר ישי פיטוסי
סמל אמיר איל
סמ"ר נריה בן דוד
סמ"ר ירון מארי פלד
רס"ם (במיל) אביעד גד כהן
סמ"ר נועה פרייס
סמל חביב קיעאן
סמ"ר דביר חיים רסלר
סמל יעל לייבושור
סגן סהר טל
סמל מתן מלכה
רב"ט הדר מרים כהן
סמ"ר דניאל קסבצ'אק
סמל אור אביטל
רס"ם (במיל) אילן פיורנטינו
סמ"ר איתי אופק גליסקו
סמל בנימין גבריאל יונה
רב"ט לידור מקייס
סמ"ר ברק יעקב בן דוד
סמל נתיב קוצרו
סמ"ר ולנטין (אלי) גנסיה
סמל שמעון לוגאסי
סמל קארין שוורצמן
סרן רועי נהרי
רס"ם (במיל) לירן מונס אלמוסונינו
רב"ט שירת ים עמר
רס"ן שגיא גולן
סמ"ר נאור סיבוני
סמל אביב חג'ל
סמל עילי נועם בן מוחה
סרן שיר אילת
סרן עידן באלוי
רס"ל אופק רוטו
סרן שילה ראוכברגר
סגן יוחאי דוכן
סגן יובל יפה
סמל שיראל מור
סמ"ר דניאל שפרבר
סמ"ר דור ירחי
רס"ל אביאל מלקמו
רב"ט מיה ויאלובו פולו
רס"ם (במיל) ראובן שישפורטיש
סמ"ר אביעד רבלין
סמ"ר אדם אגמון
רס"ל איתי יהודה באוסי
רב"ט יונתן אלעזרי
סמ"ר שמעון אלרואי בן שטרית
סמ"ר דולב אמויאל
סמל עידו ביננשטוק
רס"ן עילי זיסר
סמ"ר דביר זכאי
סמ"ר תומר יעקב מזרחי
סמל איתמר כהן
סמ"ר סהר מידאני
רב"ט נועם אברמוביץ
סמל אמיל סמילוב
רס"ר (במיל) בכור סויד
סמל עמיחי שמעון רובין
רס"ר (במיל) ידידיה משה רזיאל
רס"ן בן ברונשטיין
רס"ל ג'ואד עאמר
רס"ר (במיל) גלעד מולכו
סמל שי אשרם
סמ"ר אברהם נריה כהן
סמל בר יענקלוב

רס"ם (במיל) טל אילון
רס"ר (במיל) יובל גבאי
רס"ם (במיל) איתן חדד
רס"ן (במיל) אופיר ארז
סמ"ר שלו דגן
רס"ם (במיל) אופיר מרדכי ירון
רס"ם (במיל) נדב עמיקם
רס"ם (במיל) בועז אברהם
רס"ב (במיל) עמית וקס
רס"ר (במיל) עידו קסלסי
סרן אמתיה צבי גרנות
סמל ליאל ויינשטיין
סמ"ר דניאל ראשד
רס"ן (במיל) רם נגבי
רס"ר (במיל) אורי ויקטור שחר
סמ"ר אופיר שושני
רס"ם (במיל) אברהם גבריאל קורין
רס"ן (במיל) אורי שמעון רוטו
סמל קאמי אחיאל
רס"ל (במיל) עומר ניסים ביתן
רס"ל (במיל) אופק ארזי
סמ"ר אליסף בן פורת
רס"ם (במיל) סער מרגוליס
רס"ם (במיל) גיל אביטל
רס"ם (במיל) אביב ברעם
רב"ג (במיל) אברהם פליישר
רס"ב איברהים ח'רובה
סרן (במיל) עדי בהרב רבינוביץ
סרן דור שדה
רס"ר (במיל) דן אסולין
סמ"ר עדי לנדמן
סמ"ר (במיל) עדי אודיה ברוך
סמ"ר עמרי פרץ
רס"ם (במיל) שחר צמח
סרן (במיל) יפתח גורני
סרן (במיל) יעקב נדלין
סמל אושר שמחה ברזילי
סמל רותם קופץ
רס"ם (במיל) שחף ברגשטיין
רס"ב (במיל) גיל בוים
רס"ן (במיל) נוי שוש
סמל תומר ליבוביץ
סמ"ר ים גולדשטיין אלמוג
סרן גיא אדמוני
סמ"ר רואי חיים גורי
רס"ר (במיל) חיים ישורון כצמן
סמ"ר איתי אברהם רון
סמ"ר בנימין בלאי
סמ"ר אורי כרמי
סמל נחמן דקל
סרן (במיל) אברהם חננאל הנדי
סמ"ר דניאל בזגודוב
סמ"ר שלמה רשטינקוב
סמ"ר ענר אליקים שפירא
אל"ם (במיל) ליאון בר (בן מוחה)
סמ"ר דור לזימי
סמל יותם הלל
סמל שוהם שלמה נידם
סמ"ר נדב ביטון
רס"ן בנימין (בנג'י) טרקונסקי
סמ"ר גלי רועי שקותאי
סרן (במיל) אלחנן מאיר קלמנזון
סמ"ר אדיר אישטו בוגלה
סמ"ר נהוראי לוי אמיתי
סמ"ר מארו אלם
סמ"ר נטע בר עם
סמ"ר אור מזרחי
רס"ן שילה הר-אבן
רב"ט עידן ברוך
רס"ן (במיל) עדו חוברה
סמל מתן אברג'יל
רס"ר (במיל) ישי סלוטקי
סרן עומר וולף
רס"ן (במיל) אמיר נעים



A Wounded Warrior's Road to Healing

A Conversation with Shlomo Klein

Since October 7th, close to 3,200 IDF soldiers have been injured – half in the initial days, and half since the ground invasion of Gaza. Behind that statistic lies literally thousands of remarkable stories – of pain, perseverance and the long road to recovery.

Rabbi Aron White spoke with Shlomo Klein, who was injured on October 7th, underwent numerous operations, and has undergone 5 months of rehabilitation at Sheba Medical Center.

On October 7th, you were in an army base close to the Gaza border, serving in an elite unit, Sayeret Nachal. How did you come to join that unit?

I grew up in Efrat to Canadian parents, and after graduating high school went to Ma'alot Yeshiva. Like many of my contemporaries, I tried getting into an elite unit of the IDF, and was accepted for the tests to get into *Sayeret Matkal*. I didn't pass the test, but was then accepted to *Sayeret Nachal*. I joined with my friends from Ma'alot, and underwent a year and two months of training. The first place we were posted was at the Gaza perimeter.

On the morning of October 7th, I was in Mutzav Sufa when the sirens went off. I grabbed my gun and ammunition, but didn't have time to get my full gear on. Our *mefaked* told us there were terrorists breaking into the base, and we ran across

the base to engage them. I would end up engaging about 15 of the 60 Hamas terrorists who infiltrated the base. We ran into the dining room, and the terrorists were on the other side of the wall. I was steeling myself, counting down to 3 to get ready to go around the wall and engage them, when they threw a grenade at us. I was able to evade it, and only got some shrapnel in my back. We were defending from around the wall, shooting and taking down some of the terrorists, when my friend who was next to me, Hallel Sa'adon, was killed. After a few seconds, I was worried they were going to take Hallel's body, so I reached out my right hand to pull his body back to me – and that's when I got shot in the lower arm.

I pulled back, and started screaming at my friend to apply a tourniquet above my elbow, to cut off the blood flow to ensure I don't bleed to death. I was in tremendous

pain from the bullet and the tourniquet, and my friend followed protocol and ripped off the rest of my clothes except underwear, to ensure I wasn't bleeding anywhere else. After I stabilized, I had to maneuver myself with one arm to try and get to the safest place that I could behind a wall.

For the next 5 hours, we were waiting for backup forces to come and rescue us. I tried my best to continue fighting off Hamas, but with only my left arm available, there were only so many shots I could take with my 15-pound Negev gun. I was lying on top of other soldiers, some dead and some alive. There were about 15 grenades thrown into our area, and each time I would protect my head with my left hand, say *Shema*, and be very thankful I was still alive after the explosion. As it was Simchat Torah, I sang Simchat Torah songs to myself, and even *leined* to myself



PHOTO: DROR FARKASH



the parts of my *Bar Mitzvah parasha* that I remembered by heart.

What happened when the backup forces arrived?

When the *Shayetet 13* (Navy SEALs) arrived, we didn't know if we could trust that they really were the IDF, since they could have been Hamas terrorists pretending to be in the IDF. They shouted out *Shema Yisrael, Chag Sameach*, and other ways to identify themselves, and our group lowered their weapons to allow them in. I was covered in blood, in pain and very dizzy, and one of them helped me out of the base. We got out of the base at 2:15pm, but by 3:00pm we still hadn't been picked up by a helicopter to be taken to a hospital, since there were so many casualties all over the region. I got into a car, with six or seven other injured and dying soldiers piled into the back, and I was ready to drive us with only my left hand to Soroka Hospital in Be'er Sheva, as we all really needed medical attention. A female officer talked me out of it, and she took the wheel. Eventually we met up with a helicopter at a landing spot, and were all taken to Soroka Hospital.

At Soroka, I was operated on, about nine hours after I was shot and my arm had been placed in a tourniquet. When I woke up, the first thing I noticed was that I still had my right arm. My parents later told me that when the doctors went in for surgery they weren't sure if they'd be able to save my arm. But in the first operation to remove the bullet, they were able to save the arm.

Soroka was overwhelmed with so many people, and so my parents arranged for me to be moved to Hadassah Ein Kerem in Jerusalem. By the time I arrived there, I had a serious problem with my kidney. Because I had the tourniquet on my arm for nine hours, large amount of toxins



Shlomo with Dr. Anna Weitzman, the head of the rehabilitation unit at Sheba hospital.

built up, and my kidney was failing. The doctor told us to pray that it would return to functionality, and thankfully it did.

For the next few weeks in Ein Kerem, I had an operation every three days on my arm, because of the damage caused by having no blood flow to it for 9 hours. I had surgery every Sunday and Wednesday. After a total of seven surgeries, I was transferred to Sheba to begin my rehabilitation.

What does rehabilitation involve?

Every day I would have physical therapy, occupational therapy, and often psychology. I arrived at the beginning of November. On January 11th, I moved my right bicep independently for the first time. On January 28th, I moved my right wrist for the first time. At the end of March, I reached the milestone of being able to pick up a cup and take a drink of water. I am now an outpatient, traveling from Efrat to Tel HaShomer four times a week. They



After months of rehab, Shlomo drinking from a cup independently with his right arm for the first time.

still have to see in a few months how my nerves are doing.

What was your mood like during these months?

Honestly, at points it's been pretty difficult, and I sometimes got irritated with my friends and the medical staff around me. However, I've been surrounded by so much support from my family, and the army has sent lots of support too. It's been nice having groups visit from *chutz la'aretz* as well. Sometimes it can be a bit much, but they have also given generous gifts - one group gave me a new MacBook! ■



When I met with Shlomo, World Mizrahi Co-President Rabbi Yechiel Wasserman joined the meeting as well. 50 years ago, Rabbi Wasserman was in Sheba Medical Center for his own rehabilitation, after being injured in his tank by the Suez Canal. His wedding was delayed, and he was only released from the hospital eight months later.

Since the founding of the state, thousands of Israel's soldiers have been wounded and left with scars, both physical and psychological. That is the sacrifice paid by the defenders of our country. Shlomo, alongside thousands of other IDF heroes injured in this war, is doing what it takes to move forward with his life. Let us never forget their sacrifice.

The Gen-Zionist Heroes:

An Interview with Eylon Levy



PHOTO: CLAUDINE HARTZEL

Since October 7th, Eylon Levy has become one of the most recognizable faces of Israel, appearing in hundreds of interviews presenting Israel's story to Western media in his capacity as the Spokesperson for the Government of Israel.

Rabbi Aron White spoke with Eylon while he was still serving as a government spokesperson. Since then, he has launched an independent media apparatus and continues to tell Israel's story.

When you made Aliyah 10 years ago, did you think this type of work would be what you would do? Did you dream or plan to work as a spokesperson for Israel?

I made *Aliyah* twenty minutes after Operation Protective Edge. I got on a flight while the war was still raging, and landed twenty minutes after the ceasefire came into effect. Twelve hours later, I was already at the enlistment bureau ready to sign up for the army. If you told me at the end of that awful war with Hamas in Gaza that ten years later we would be in another, bigger war with Hamas in Gaza, clearly that would not have been encouraging. But I moved to Israel not only for the weather and proximity to the beach but also out of a desire to do something meaningful for Israel and the Jewish people.

I definitely wanted to find myself in a spokesperson capacity. Speaking for Israel, arguing for Israel. It's only sad that this had to happen in such horrific and tragic circumstances.

Olim often worry that they'll always be immigrants and that it's hard to make an impact as a newcomer to a country. Do you have any general advice for succeeding as an *oleh* in Israel?

I've been here for ten years and still consider myself an "*oleh chadash*," because it's a matter of mentality. I was fortunate to move here already speaking Hebrew fluently because my parents were Israeli and we spoke Hebrew at home, which definitely gave me an easier landing. But Israel is a country where you very much have to make your opportunities. Fortunately, that is very easy to do because we're a small country where no one is more than a WhatsApp away. But it's definitely not a country where anything comes easy or on a silver platter. It takes work, it takes perseverance, and it takes commitment, but the whole of Israel is an immigrant society. Even recent immigrants are punching way above their weight in terms of the contributions they're making to Israel.

This is not a country where immigrants, *olim*, are somehow sidelined. They are the central bridge between Israel and the wider world, between the wider world and the Israel that needs bridges and connections, so they play an absolutely critical role. Not only in the public relations world but in business and elsewhere.

You have a front row seat to how Western media perceives Israel. From your perspective, do you think it's all bad, or are there areas where there is support for Israel?

Look – the situation is not good, the information architecture is stacked against us with a whole chorus of UN officials and international agencies and NGOs that have picked a side in this war and are deploying the most outrageous information to try and pressure Israel into ending this war with Hamas still on its feet and the hostages still in Gaza. On the other hand, we're recording this interview five months into the war and our allies still maintain that we have a right to defend ourselves. And that involves neutralizing Hamas and bringing back the hostages. They are not calling for a permanent ceasefire with Hamas because they understand that you cannot simply hope that Hamas will stop attacking us. They understand that for Hamas, a permanent ceasefire means the fighting will simply pause until they decide to resume the war against us.

We are fighting to maintain that support. That support is guided not by a sense of charity but a sense of these states' understanding of their own national security interests and why it is critical to end this war and make sure that it will not erupt again. This war cannot end like previous rounds of conflict, with a temporary fix that leaves a terrorist army in control of neighboring territory threatening to break that trust again. It must end with serious change.

That's why we're not talking about degrading Hamas but dismantling it. That's why we're talking about the need for deradicalization and addressing the root cause of this conflict – the persistent Palestinian refusal to accept the legitimacy of a Jewish state in any borders. Because we want peace, and in order for there to be peace we need a pathway to peace. That's why Prime Minister Netanyahu is talking about his three "d"s for peace. The three prerequisites you need for peace to be realistic are: Destroy Hamas, demilitarize Gaza, and deradicalize Palestinian society. We need those three things to happen in order to escape the cycle of violence and we're fighting so that countries will not pressure us to end this war, leaving in place the conditions that will guarantee the next war. Rather we must end this war with a total Israeli victory and with conditions that will enable us to escape this cycle of violence.

When Francesca Albanese, the UN's special Rapporteur, denies the antisemitic nature of the massacre and says that it was an act of resistance against oppression, she has picked a side in this war. And the whole chorus of international officials and agencies that couldn't bring themselves to even share a crocodile tear on October 7 have invested all their energies into trying to pressure Israel into ending this war in a way that leaves Hamas on its feet, because they adopt the Palestinian narrative. It's really as simple as that. And you see this with the United Nations as well, where the only thing that these countries can agree on is that they don't like Israel. So they gang up on Israel because it gives them a way to cooperate and show how committed they are to multilateralism. Just look at the numbers – there are 15 million of us, not all of whom are on our side, and two billion Muslims who are very consistent with their messaging, so of course the odds are stacked against us. It's not a fair fight.



Please G-d, this war will be won, but realistically this bias will remain. Is the media war something that we're ever going to be able to win? Will the world ever understand our side?

One of the things that we are demanding – and I speak about this with every foreign delegation of policymakers and lawmakers that I meet – is the need for accountability for the international officials that have been covering up the fact that Hamas wages wars out of hospitals, is hijacking aid, has embedded itself in military areas and then blames Israel for the tragic casualties that result when a terrorist army wages war from under and behind civilians.

If the World Health Organization cannot bring itself to condemn a terrorist army for fighting a war under a hospital, what is the point of the World Health Organization? They have chosen expediency by blaming Israel because they'll get automatic support from so many countries that don't like us instead of doing their job, which is to protect civilians and protected facilities.

So we need international accountability, not because the World Health Organization and the Red Cross have let us down, not even because they clearly let the Palestinians down, but because they're letting the world down. Because if you believe in multilateralism and international institutions and global governors you have to understand how poorly you are being served by organizations that can't even condemn terrorists for waging war out of hospitals.

Over the last few months, you've been to the UK and the US, speaking to policymakers and media but also interacting heavily with the local Jewish community. I know you've been very vocal on social media about that. What have you seen firsthand in those meetings?

These are the best of times and the worst of times. On the one hand, the antisemitism situation is so much worse than I realized – and I thought I was paying careful attention. I've just come back from the United States and I've heard horror stories. This is the beginning of a very dark turn of events, and it's worse than I realized.

On the other hand, I have been awed and inspired to see the incredible Diaspora awakening, meeting people who dropped everything and are committing their resources and expertise to helping us with this fight, to bring back the hostages, and fight antisemitism. People who before the war were connected to Israel are doubling down on that commitment. But there are

also people who are unaffiliated and unconnected who suddenly, when the masks came off, realized who their people are, who their friends are, and what they have to do. And there are so many of them, so many of them for whom October 7 was a wake-up call that has fundamentally transformed how they see themselves. It's phenomenal to see that fighting spirit and commitment to *ahavat Yisrael* and mutual responsibility in the Diaspora as well, and I really, really hope that we can build on that. If we Jews in Israel and the Diaspora realize how much we need each other and how much we love each other, the rest will sort itself out.

You've been very active in reaching out to and speaking with Gen-Z, the younger generation. It's a hot topic – what will happen when today's eighteen-year-olds are the policymakers? What have you seen with this population and how have you tried to reach out via social media and messaging to that group?

I'm trying to light a fire under them. The reason I flew to the US was to take part in the Hillel International Summit, where I gave a speech about what it means to make Gen-Z into "Gen-Zionist." I had T-shirts printed with the victory sign and the slogan "Gen-Zionist," and the following day we handed out a thousand of these T-shirts. I needed a T-shirt cannon – I have never seen young people more excited to wear a T-shirt that said Zionist on it. And the following day, half the people walking around the Atlanta airport were wearing a T-shirt that said Zionist on it. It was phenomenal.

In the speech I said: Zionism has always been about standing up to bullies. "בְּכָל דּוֹר וָדוֹר, in every generation," we refuse to be the snotty-nosed kid who gets pushed into lockers. And Gen-Zionists stand up to bullies. You refuse to let them call you names, you refuse to let them define you, refuse to let them push you around, and you stand up for yourself because people will only respect you when you respect yourself and stand up to bullies. Yes, the odds

are stacked against them, but the odds have been stacked against every generation, stacked up more than the TikTok algorithm is stacked up against them. The odds were stacked against the generations that dreamed of Israel, built it, and fought for it. I told them that if they want heroes, Zionist heroes to look up to, they do not need to go back to David Ben-Gurion with his pants pulled above his belly button or Theodor Herzl with his millennial hipster beard, because Israel is a nation of everyday heroes. And when October 7 happened, Israel's Gen-Zionists discovered that they were bigger heroes than they could have ever imagined. They were the people who ran back into the fire at the festival to try to save people, who didn't wait for orders to join reserves, grabbed their guns and went to defend the *kibbutzim*. They were the people who set up inspiring civil society initiatives to help displaced families and victims of trauma. If the kids your age can be in a tank fighting Hamas, you can go on campus and face the Hamas fangirls.

I told them that I don't want to be too dramatic, but that nothing less than the future of the free world is on their shoulders. Because if their friends are still fangirling for Hamas, when these hate parades march down the hallways of power in twenty years we're in big trouble. America, Israel, the whole free world will be in trouble! They can't let that happen, they can't let these countries go down the antisemitic rabbit hole.

What does it mean to be a Diaspora Zionist? First of all, do not run away. Gen-Zionists do not run away. If you want to come to Israel, that's great – I believe life is more colorful under the Mediterranean sun, I love living a two-minute walk from the beach. But if you're going to stay in America, there is nothing more Zionist than standing up, because we need you to make the world safe for Israel, so Israel can make the world safe for Jews.

How do you stay so calm on camera?

Honestly, sometimes in an interview you don't realize how outrageous the line of questioning is until afterwards, because you are so in the zone. But I think it's a misnomer to ask me how I





stay so calm. What, I'm speaking to a journalist who has hostile questions? You should ask the Gen-Zionist heroes who are down in Gaza with tanks and guns who are being shot at by terrorists "how do you stay so calm?" Why do they not spray gunfire in every direction? How do they stay focused and targeted? Because that's their mission. That's what they have been trained for, to remain composed, and disciplined on mission.

I'm doing the same thing, but in much less hostile circumstances than people my age are having to do just an hour's drive away.

You've been in Gaza in the tunnels. You've seen a lot and dealt with a lot during this war. Are you optimistic, overall, about the future of this country?

I'm more optimistic than I was six months ago. I have been truly awed and inspired by the resilience, generosity, creativity, and initiative of Israeli society. We went through a very painful year of political polarization, where the atmosphere was really toxic. October 7 was a very rude awakening that I think made everyone understand what the stakes are, how much we need each other, and how important unity is. I am so impressed by the way Israeli society dropped everything and came together on October 7, immediately, within microseconds, understanding that there was only one thing that mattered at that moment. I hope that the spirit of *ahavat Yisrael* and mutual responsibility continues after this war. We really do have the most incredible nation. And I think that this collective trauma has made us appreciate that more than we did before. ■

Facing page: Mizrachi's solidarity mission from Kemp Mill Synagogue attended a lunch and conversation with Eylon.

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SECURING YOUR FUTURE IN ISRAEL

Building this Land Together

Miriam Peretz

Following Yom HaAtzmaut 5783, World Mizrahi hosted the inaugural World Orthodox Israel Congress. Miriam Peretz, an Israel Prize Winner whose two sons fell serving in the IDF, gave a keynote plenary opening the Congress. While so much has happened in the past year, the words of Miriam Peretz ring as true as ever today.

To come here, after Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut, is not simple. These are days that weigh heavily on the families of fallen soldiers. You need time to process. There is no button that can just be pressed that ends Yom HaZikaron and suddenly we become happy. So, how do we do it? How do we continue?

I think about a *piyut* that we read on Rosh Hashanah, it is read by Jews from Morocco or Tunisia. The *piyut* is called The Time of the Gates of Desire (*Eit Sha'arei Ratzon*), and it is read before the blasts of the *shofar*. The *piyut* describes *Akeidat Yitzchak*, but includes this sentence: "The eyes weep in bitterness, and the heart is happy." *Am Yisrael* is like that: the eyes weep in bitterness on Yom HaZikaron, but the heart rejoices for what we have on Yom HaAtzmaut. This is our nation. We are a people that knows how to mark the Holocaust, but also the revival that follows it. Destruction and rebuilding. We never leave behind the broken stones; instead, we pick up and gather the broken pieces and build a new building. And the biggest building that we have built is here.

Seventy five years ago, our fathers and mothers in Iraq, Poland, Germany, Tunisia, Italy, and everywhere in the world, had the same dream. The dream was one word: "Yerushalayim." Yerushalayim is a code. It is the home of the freedom of a Jew. We thank Hashem that we are able to come to Yerushalayim, that we came home. We build buildings (sometimes too many buildings, it feels like we are becoming one big concrete jungle!) but we still need to build the most important building: the spiritual building. And who will do this? Mizrahi. Rav Doron (Perez), you have no idea what kind of influence you have on this building of the spirit of *Am Yisrael*.

What is the spirit of *Am Yisrael*?

My son Eliraz had long *peyot* and wore a big *kippah*. He was a commander in the army, second-in-command of Golani's 12th battalion. But when he returned from fighting, he never went straight back home, even if his family hadn't seen him in a month. He could have been in Lebanon or Jenin for a month, but he would not go to his house. Instead, he would first go to the *beit midrash*. Why? In order to receive the spirit of our nation. Because with this spirit, it is impossible to break the nation of

Israel. The resilience of the nation of Israel does not depend on the amount of tanks we have. It depends on our spirit. The spirit of the Jewish people, the spirit of the pilots, tank drivers, and the citizens of the country – it is about this spirit that we fight for today, for this spirit to continue.

We came here and built it together. We brought our heritage and culture from all across the world. This is not at all normal. *Am Yisrael* is different from all other nations. When we left Egypt, it wasn't only Ashkenazim or Moroccan Jews. Twelve tribes left Egypt, and each of them had a different flag. But what did they all have in common? When everyone held up their flagpoles, the one thing in the middle was the *Mishkan*. The spirit was in the middle, it united them. We continue with that spirit today. We also have our differences, which is fine. The biggest challenge we have today is living with others who are different, with respect for one another, recognizing the other. The Torah is not only found in me. When we pray, at the end of the *Amidah* we say "עוֹשֵׂה שְׁלוֹם בְּהָרוֹמַי", He who makes peace in the heavens." And what do we do when we say this? We take three steps backwards. You must move a little, in order to give space for another person. In order to listen to another person.

This land is not just the land of the Jews in Israel. This is the homeland of *all* Jews around the world! This is everyone's homeland. There is a responsibility on all of us, you and I, to protect this Land. It is not just my responsibility, or my sons who fought in the army. They did not fight only for the citizens of the State of Israel – they fought for you as well. So that one day, when you want to come home, someone will have protected this home and have paid such a heavy price to keep this Land for all of us.

In the prophecy of Yeshayahu, he talked about what will be in the future, about peace: "And the wolf will live with the lamb" (11:6). He did not say that the wolf would become a lamb. He did not say that the religious will become non-religious, that the left-wing will become right-wing. He did not say this. The most important words he said, in my eyes, are "will live with." To live together from a multitude of countries with all the differing opinions. Men and women, religious and non-religious, left-wing and right-wing, everyone. We need to learn to live together. And I want to tell you, that when I see you here, I see this unity. You





Miriam Peretz speaking at the World Orthodox Israel Congress last year.

are with us. Mizrachi sent you on Yom HaZikaron to the homes of bereaved families. You came to be with us on Yom HaZikaron, including in my home as well, there were people who came to sit with us. To feel, to be with us.

I feel that you are my brothers and sisters. When my children fought in battle, they protected our home. They didn't check who lives in the home, whether the people living there are religious or right-wing. They fought for our home. They left to fight together, and their common goal was: to win and to return home safely. When they call each other, they don't say "Ya'akov" or "Shmuel." They call each other "*achi*, my brother" – always brothers.

In times of hardship we do not lose the DNA of the Jewish people, our mutual guarantee of responsibility for one another (*arvut hadadit*). I know that if I fell in the street, the person who would say "you are *not* my sister" would be the first to pick me up, because it is in our soul.

I am not a person who falls into despair; we have no right to despair. *Am Yisrael* is a nation that falls and gets back up. *Am Yisrael* is a nation that breaks apart but then rebuilds.

There are challenges along the way. I will never understand why *HaKadosh Baruch Hu* gave me this difficult test. I have a choice: I could choose to stay in bed and cry and accuse. But I have another choice: "choose life," to continue to live. Why? Because on Yom HaZikaron we say that "they command us to live." They did not fall for me not to live; they fell so we can continue to live here.

Everyone just wants to be deserving of their love for this Land, their sense of brotherhood, of friendship, to the spirit between them. I feel this is the spirit that you are cultivating here, and we stand united – not just at this moment, but we are always united. Blessed are the people whom these are their children. May there be better days and good news for all of *Am Yisrael*. ■

MATAN'S

SUMMER PROGRAM

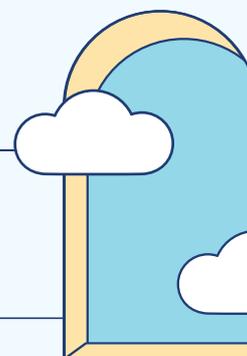
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Do the Customs of Mourning during Sefirat HaOmer Apply to Yom HaAtzmaut?

Rabbi Yosef Zvi Rimon

There are different customs as to when, during *Sefirat HaOmer*, to apply the customs of mourning. According to all opinions, the fifth of Iyar – Yom HaAtzmaut – is one of those days that we do apply the customs of mourning. These customs of mourning include not being able to marry, have a haircut, dancing and listening to music. Are these prohibitions allowed on Yom HaAtzmaut?

Weddings

According to Rav Yitzchak Nissim, it is permissible to get married on Yom HaAtzmaut, because it is a day on which a miracle occurred and so the customs of mourning do not apply. However, the *Yaskil Avdi* (III:10:2:7-8) rules that it is forbidden to marry on Yom HaAtzmaut, since the essence of the miracle was not the declaration of the State – either the day of the ceasefire or the day of the UN's

decision. In practice, the accepted custom is not to get married on Yom HaAtzmaut.

Shaving

If a person makes a *simcha* during the Omer, such as a *brit milah* or a *sheva berachot*, he is allowed to shave (*Rema* 493:2). This is because it is a festival for him and so the laws of mourning do not apply (*Shulchan Aruch, Orach Chaim* 559:9). We can therefore apply a *kal vachomer*. On a day which is itself a festival, such as Yom HaAtzmaut, it is permissible to shave (Rav Avraham Shapira, *Rabbanut HaReishit*, 878).

We can suggest a new idea as well. There are those who say that Rabbi Akiva's students, for whom we mourn during the Omer, died in Bar Kochba's rebellion (Rav Moshe Zvi Neria, *Emunat Itecha* 41:5). In other words, they died while trying to establish a state. According to this, all our mourning is based on the fact they were not able to establish a state. Therefore, we

certainly say the customs of mourning do not apply on the day we *did* establish a state!

In practice, since Yom HaAtzmaut is a day of rejoicing, we do not mourn and it is permissible to shave. One can even shave before nightfall in preparation for Yom HaAtzmaut. Likewise, it is permissible to dance and to listen to happy music.



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.



Heroines of Spirit – Sisters of Strength and Love

Rabbanit Shani Taragin

Lexicographers define the English vernacular of *gevurah*, “heroism,” as “fulfilling a high purpose or attaining a noble end” (Merriam-Webster), “exalted courage, intrepidity, or boldness” (Oxford), or “bravery” (Cambridge, Collins). Heroes are defined as “main characters in a narrative or dramatic work” (Oxford), “mythological or legendary figures often of divine descent endowed with great strength or ability, or illustrious warriors” (Merriam-Webster).

In *Pirkei Avot* 4:1, our Sages define heroism and heroes quite differently: “Ben Zoma said: Who is a *gibbor*? He who subdues his inclination, as it is said: ‘He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that rules his spirit than he that takes a city’ (Proverbs 16:32).”

In addition to the hundreds of thousands of soldiers fighting with extraordinary strength and spirit for the past seven months in defense of our Land, our nation and our values, there are many unsung heroines who have been standing by the sidelines on the Home Front. I am referring to the mothers, wives, daughters and sisters who stand behind the soldiers at the front, the soldiers who have been wounded, and the soldiers who have valiantly fallen. These women are heroines who have “ruled their spirit,” who have experienced intense anxiety, frustration, pain and unfortunately all too many losses, and yet somehow go on – with remarkable faith, resilience, and love for life and people of Israel.

Where does this heroism emanate from?

Some of their strength lies in our DNA, for we are great-granddaughters of Yocheved, Miriam and the righteous women in the Egyptian exile who while witnessing the deaths of thousands of Jewish infants, persevered and ensured the Jewish people would birth another generation. We also have the DNA of Queen Esther who proactively emerged from silence of acquiescence to selfless sacrifice on behalf of her people. And we also possess the will of

Devorah and Yael, unconventional “mothers of Israel” who looked evil in the eye and did not flinch.

The *Midrash* teaches of Hashem’s response to the destruction of the *Beit HaMikdash*: “The Holy One blessed be He said to Jeremiah: ‘Today I am like a person who had an only son, made a wedding canopy for him, and he died within his wedding canopy; do you not feel pain for Me or for My son? Go and call Avraham, Yitzchak, Ya’akov, and Moshe from their graves, as they know how to weep’... Avraham said before the Holy One blessed be He: ‘Master of the universe: Why did You exile my children, deliver them into the hands of the nations, kill them with all kinds of uncommon deaths, and destroy the Temple, the place where I elevated my son Isaac as a burnt offering before You?’... Yitzchak, Ya’akov and Moshe similarly beseeched Hashem to have mercy on His children as they sacrificed for the children of Israel! Moshe also said before Him: ‘Master of the universe, You wrote in Your Torah: “An ox or a sheep, it and its offspring you shall not slaughter on one day” (Vayikra 22:28). But have they not killed many, many children and their mothers, and yet You are silent?!”

The known *Midrash* regarding the cries of *Rachel Imeinu* had also elucidated for me another source of *gevurah*, especially as I hear the cries of Binyamin Achimeir’s *hy’d* mother as I write these words: “At that moment, Rachel our matriarch interjected before the Holy One blessed be He.” Unlike the others, Rachel did not speak about her love or sacrifices for her children (though she died in childbirth!), nor did she focus on Ya’akov’s love and labor for her. Rather, she spoke of the suppression of her own desires, and her mercy on her sister; *achoti*, “my sister” is mentioned *seven* times in the *Midrash*! “I performed an act of kindness for [Leah], I was not jealous of her, and I did not lead her to humiliation’... Immediately, the mercy of the Holy One blessed be He was aroused and He said: ‘For you, Rachel, I will restore Israel to its place’” (*Eicha Rabbah*, Petichta 24).

Rachel emerges as the heroic matriarch not because of her love for her children, but because of her love for her sister. Hashem’s mercy is not sufficiently aroused when we display love for our children; parental love and discipline are both natural elements of the parent-child relationship. Rather, Hashem awaits true *gevurah* – conquering of jealous, fissiparous sentiments and inclinations towards our brothers and sisters.

Today, as I hear our heroines speak with love, unity and admiration about every demographic of Israeli society, downplaying protests and surmounting justifiable sentiments of resentment and anger, I am moved by their awesome *gevurah* – heroism that cannot fail to arouse Hashem’s mercy.

“So said Hashem to Rachel: ‘Restrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears, as there is reward for your actions... And there is hope for your future... and your children will return to their borders’” (*Yirmiyahu* 31:15–16). Hashem awaits our love for one another as siblings to elicit His love for us as our Father. May the heroines of today inspire us with the *gevurah* to overcome negativity and embrace all of *Am Yisrael* as brothers and sisters!



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Yom HaAtzmaut after October 7th: How We Should Celebrate This Year

Rabbi Reuven Taragin

The last Yom HaAtzmaut feels like it was a decade ago. The past year has been a long and traumatic one for the State of Israel and for all of us. How should we approach Yom HaAtzmaut this year? Should we celebrate and dance while thousands mourn and heal from their wounds? Should we sing while over one hundred families still suffer and desperately hope for their loved ones held hostage to be brought home?

Despite experiencing hardships, we must celebrate and thank Hashem for His miraculous assistance. This is why our ancestors celebrated our holidays in the darkest times and places, including ghettos and concentration camps. They were able to see beyond what they were experiencing. When their reality was bleak, they commemorated past miracles and reinforced their belief in future ones.

We have even more reason to celebrate Yom HaAtzmaut, for there is an important difference between the attacks we are experiencing and the suffering and martyrdom of our ancestors. Their suffering was heroic and a *kiddush Hashem*. They were killed because they were Jews, because of their identity and beliefs. That said, their death was part of our exilic persecution. Our present suffering is of a different ilk. Jews in *Eretz Yisrael* today are

giving their lives to defend our people, our Land, and our state. Our losses and suffering are tragic and painful, but they are part of the process of our redemption – our return to and rebuilding of *Eretz Yisrael*.

We must not allow our pain to overshadow the process we are privileged to be part of. Israel has two memorial days in two subsequent weeks. Yom HaZikaron reminds us of the price we pay for having a state; Yom HaShoah reminds us of the price of not having had one. Over one thousand people were killed on October 7th. That is less than the number killed in a single hour in Auschwitz alone. The price we pay for a state is high, but now more than ever, we must not forget how fortunate we are to have it.

Still, our celebration should be different this year. Our modes of expression must be sensitive to those who are suffering. Yom HaAtzmaut should be less boisterous and more reflective. In addition, we should ensure that our celebration is rooted in a meaningful appreciation of the State of Israel. We can accomplish this by taking full advantage of Yom HaZikaron. Just as Purim follows the reflection of Ta'anit Esther, Yom HaAtzmaut follows Yom HaZikaron. Before we celebrate, we remember those who paid the ultimate price on our behalf and the process they helped

facilitate. We consider why our return to and rebuilding of *Eretz Yisrael* is so challenging and what further steps we must take to merit peace and the completion of our redemption.

May we soon see the complete and final redemption!

● For suggested reflections and an expanded version of this essay, go to www.mizrachi.org/hamizrachi.



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The Sirens

Ronit Chaya Janet



It has been many years since I heard the sirens.

It was in 2014, when I stood at a ceremony in the main street of Ra'anana and watched the faces of soldiers as they were projected on the walls of Yad L'Banim. Face after face of young people who had given their lives so that we could have a state. It was profound, but I cannot compare it to the powerful moment that occurred on the very next day, on the very same road, where we all stood still as a siren wailed. I watched as a young boy got off his bike and bowed his head in respect. The siren spoke to him, whispering the stories of those who had passed and those who had sacrificed. The siren drew to a close, and he rode on.

Just a few months later, on another visit, I heard a different siren, one that woke me from a deep slumber. It shouted: "Wake up! Get to safety! Get the children!" Our hearts pounded to the rhythm of the siren. We stood in hallways, bathrooms and shelters waiting for the "all-clear," listening to the not-so-gentle booms of the Iron Dome that seemed to say "We've got your back." The siren drew to a close, and we moved on.

This year as I approach Yom HaZikaron, my mind again hears the sirens of remembrance and warning. I see the faces of the slain soldiers, still fresh in our minds and new in their graves. I painfully remember the thousands of mourners carrying the blue and white coffins. I see the tears of mothers and fathers. I hear

the eulogies of siblings who never wanted to be alone. I feel the heartbreak of the fiancés who declare that these graves will be their homes.

This year, there are more new faces to remember, their images plastered all over my Facebook feed just days ago. Border Police, soldiers, civilians... all fighting a battle without warning, an enemy with a knife and a battle cry. The sirens of emergency vehicles, the frightening reality of calling to check in with family and friends who were locked down in a school, just minutes from the scene. You thank G-d they are 'ok' but in the same breath weep for the father whose last breath protected his child.

As a mother and teacher, I encourage my children and students to walk in the steps of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'akov in our Holy Land, to go on an Israel program for a few weeks or a year, or even to take the ultimate step onto the tarmac of Ben-Gurion as Israel's newest *oleh*. But then I think of the sirens, like the mythological creatures who enticed the sailors off their ships. Yes, these sirens echo in my mind, feeding my fears and doubts about walking the streets of our Holy Land.

But I also hear the reassuring voice of the late Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks *zt"l* as he explained how "religions of hope create healthy cultures of responsibility. This empowers us to take risks, engage in long-term projects, and refuse to capitulate in the face of despair. The flames of injustice,

violence and oppression are not inevitable. We must refuse to accept the world as it is... We are summoned to the long journey at whose end is redemption."

Yes, we must heed the sirens; the sirens of warning, remembrance and protection. And we must acknowledge the fear and sadness that they bring. But we must know and remember that they are precursors to another cry, something far more redeeming and healing...

One day.



Ronit Chaya Janet

is a multi-level educator, working at both Yeshiva College of South Africa and the Academy of Jewish Thought and Learning. She is the former editor of the South African Jewish Observer.



The Greatest Story Ever Told

Sivan Rahav-Meir

Last year, more than a thousand people came to a Yom HaAtzmaut ceremony at the Young Israel of Woodmere synagogue in New York. Sivan Rahav-Meir was the keynote speaker. The following excerpts are taken from her remarks.

This week I heard the following question: In another 75 years, where will Israel be? Well, the most predictable thing about the Jewish people is their unpredictability. They break all the rules. There is no precedent for a nation that loses one-third of its people – six million – all at once. But then there is no precedent for a nation that was scattered to the four corners of the earth but kept its faith, its identity, and its homeland, and then rose from the ashes after two thousand years.

Most of the time, we are simply too pre-occupied with our daily troubles and internal conflicts to zoom out for a brief moment in order to see the process that is at work. Sure, there are difficulties and setbacks, but the number of casualties from all the wars and terrorist attacks in the State of Israel is the same as the number of Jews who died in Auschwitz in a single month.

It is not unrealistic to predict that the nation of Israel will continue to fulfill all the positive prophecies that are found in the Bible. This is completely realistic. Indeed, these prophecies were read for thousands of years in Yemen and in Morocco, in Poland and in Russia, but for

us, these prophecies, such as the following one, have come true: “Old men and women shall yet sit in the streets of Jerusalem... And the streets of Jerusalem shall be filled with boys and girls playing.” These words of the prophet Zechariah have come to pass in the playground in my own neighborhood.

The forecast for Messianic times has been recorded as follows: “The wolf will live with the lamb and the leopard shall lie down with the kid,” and “Out of Zion shall go forth Torah and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.” Israel can and must be the world’s center of peace, creativity, education, and technology. Above all, the start-up nation must lead the world in spiritual start-ups of faith, holiness, and morality.

This week, I met thousands of our friends, Jews and non-Jews alike. I did not know we had so many unofficial ambassadors. Thank you to all of you in the United States who chose to be on our side, the right side of history, even when it’s not always popular to be there.

I am often asked as a journalist to name my biggest scoop. The answer is this: My biggest scoop is the story of the nation

of Israel. There is no story more exciting than ours, with more chapters still to come. *Yom HaAtzmaut Sameach!*

● *Translated by Yehoshua Siskin.*



Sivan Rahav-Meir

is a media personality and lecturer. She lives in Jerusalem with her husband, Yedidya, and their five children, and serves as World Mizrahi’s Scholar-in-Residence.

She is a primetime anchor on Channel 2 News, has a column in Israel’s largest newspaper, Yediot Acharonot, and a weekly radio show on Galei Tzahal (Army Radio).



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“Great in our Midst” The Ongoing Miracle of the State of Israel

Rabbi Jonny Brull

“**S**hout for joy, you who dwell in Zion, for great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel” (Yishayahu 12:6).

This verse concludes the *haftarah* traditionally recited on Yom HaAtzmaut. The utopian messianic paradise described by the prophet Yishayahu, wherein the “wolf shall dwell with the lamb” and the “lion like the ox shall eat straw,” culminates in the above proclamation, that the inhabitants of the Promised Land should joyously exclaim G-d’s greatness in their midst. But in what sense, precisely, is G-d portrayed here as being “great” in the midst of Zion?

Ibn Ezra writes: “It is proper that you should raise your voice, O daughter of Zion, for the Divine Presence is in your midst.” Ibn Ezra opts for a more literal reading of the verse, namely, that it is quite simply the increased revelation of G-d’s presence in Israel that is the cause for joy. G-d’s *shechinah* is literally “great in our midst”: G-d has returned to Zion and is among His people once more.

An alternative explanation for this verse, however, is found in a careful reading of Radak’s commentary. He explains that “G-d’s name is great in your midst, through the miracles that He has performed.” In stark contrast to Ibn Ezra, who emphasizes the overt manifestation of G-d as the source of elation, Radak’s reading here implies that it is through G-d’s *deeds* that He will truly be revealed in times to come.

Radak’s interpretation is most appropriate when we apply Yishayahu’s prophetic words to Yom HaAtzmaut. It is very easy to look at the modern, primarily secular State of Israel through a critical lens. Certain sects of Judaism scorn the celebration of Israel’s independence as a G-dless

endeavor. Radak’s exegesis to the verse in Yishayahu provides us with the response: We cannot deny the miraculous nature of Israel’s inception – the wholly unlikely act of the establishment of the State of Israel is testimony to G-d’s great name in our midst. It may be a secular state, but its very existence is nothing short of a miracle. G-d is indeed “great in our midst,” not through blatant messianic revelation, but through the wonders He has performed in establishing the Jewish state.

During my service in the Israeli army, I was once asked by a secular soldier why I had chosen to make *Aliyah* and join the IDF. “You could be studying at university in your hometown of London right now,” he noted with incredulity, “and instead, you are standing on guard duty on some random hilltop at two o’clock in the morning with me!” I responded to him that the very premise of his question was erroneous. “This is not ‘some random hilltop,’” I replied. “It is the Land which was promised to our forefathers, where our ancestors twice established a kingdom. I feel more closely connected to this Land than any location in London or anywhere else in the world.”

The close connection so many of us feel to our homeland can be described as twofold in nature, in a similar fashion to the *Mishkan*. On the one hand, the *Mishkan* is described as the “*ohel moed*,” the “Tent of Meeting.” It was fundamentally a place where man meets G-d and seeks out His presence. Yet, simultaneously, it is also called the “*Mishkan haEidut*,” the “Sanctuary of the Testimony,” wherein the *luchot haEidut*, the two Tablets, were kept, exemplifying its role as the home of Torah. Thus, the *Mishkan* – and later the *Beit HaMikdash* in Jerusalem – was both a

place where G-d’s presence rested and the center of Torah.

I believe that the entire Land of Israel serves this dual purpose. On the one hand, Israel has boomed as a central hub for Torah study. Unprecedented numbers of *yeshivot* and *midrashot* are flourishing, with masses of students flocking to the Promised Land from all four corners of the earth each year. Never has Torah been more accessible to the entirety of the nation, and never in modern times has one location on Earth held that status as the center of Torah learning.

At the same time, Israel is undeniably the center for spirituality, the place where G-d can be felt more than anywhere else in the world. Not just at the Kotel, but throughout the bustling streets of a land long left barren, the revival of Jewish activity in the land is simply the voice of G-d calling to us through the modern state. That is how Radak understands the words of Yishayahu, and it is that feeling which I conveyed to my fellow soldier on that hilltop in the small hours of the night.



Rabbi Jonny Brull

is Rosh Kollel Torah MiTzion at Mizrachi Melbourne. He learned for ten years at Yeshivat Har Etzion, and has a B.Ed in Torah Shebe’al Peh and Hebrew Language from Herzog College and an M.A. in Jewish Education from the Hebrew University.

Olim Giving Back to Israel



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Joey Sacharow

My name is Joey Sacharow. I'm a medical licensing specialist with NBN's International Medical Aliyah Program (IMAP). I made *Aliyah* in 2013 from Baltimore, Maryland and enlisted in the IDF as a lone soldier. This was my second *Aliyah*, as my parents came when I was a baby and stayed only for a short while. Returning to Israel on my own was always a dream of mine. It was also important to me to make *Aliyah* and serve in the IDF. I served in the infantry as a combat medic and as company medic in my battalion's medical platoon.

On the 7th of October, my wife, our son, and I were visiting family in the United States. Within a day of returning, I joined my unit along the Gaza perimeter. A few weeks later, we were already in Gaza with the objective to secure the humanitarian corridor.

The war sadly goes on. Since I haven't hung up my uniform for good, there hasn't been much opportunity to reflect on my time in and out of Gaza. But I do vividly recall our first Friday night deep in Gaza. In near complete darkness, we hastily sang the songs of *Kabbalat Shabbat*. As we were preparing *kiddush*, my thoughts were with my family. Whenever I'm away from home on Shabbat, I give my son a blessing from afar. I shared with my guys that I was about to bless my son and asked permission to say it out loud and with them

in mind too. Every single soldier said yes and gathered nearby. I told them that beyond the bond we shared as brothers in arms, that there were times as their medic, I felt like a parent and that I loved them as such. Closing my eyes, stretching out my hands, and over the sounds of war around us, I asked G-d to bless, protect, and to grant them peace. After a collective '*Amen*' and the exchange of a few hugs, we sat down to our modest meal. That moment has stuck with me every Friday night since.

We understood that we were fighting for Jews everywhere, not just here in Israel. Our survival as a people is rooted in our return to the only place we have ever truly called home. It's a privilege to have not only answered the call to make *Aliyah* myself, but to also defend that right for others to do so as a soldier in the IDF.

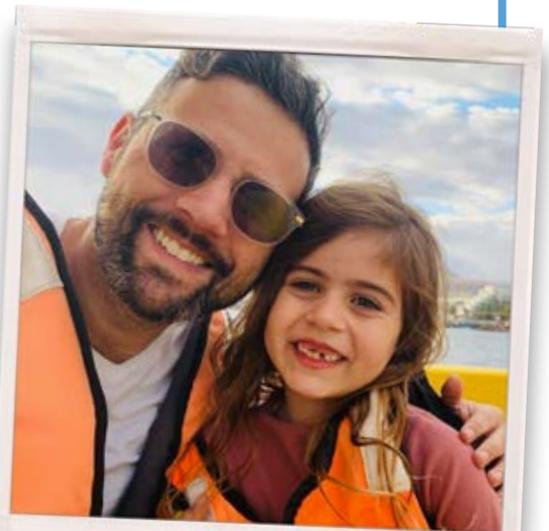
Yisroel Weiss

Making *Aliyah* is probably one of the hardest decisions people can make in their lifetime. But it is so, so worth it. Yes, there will be challenges, but they will make you stronger because of them. I cannot possibly advocate for *Aliyah* more; it is definitely worth it to be able to live and raise a family in our ancestral homeland. Your future generations will thank you for it!

My name is Yisroel Weiss. I made *Aliyah* from Toronto, Canada because I used to come with my family to visit for the *chagim* and absolutely fell in love with the Land and the people. I told everyone my goal was to make *Aliyah* before I turn 30. And that's exactly what happened.

Since October 7th, together with Just One Chesed and an excellent team of volunteers, we have thrown ourselves completely into doing whatever we can for the *chayalim*, their families, as well as displaced people. We started the morning of October 8. It has been an initiative run almost entirely by *olim* who felt it was their obligation to contribute to the war effort as many of our neighbors were called up to reserve duty. Many of us volunteer all morning before starting our regular jobs in the afternoon. To date, we have distributed over \$5 million of supplies to soldiers all over the country.

Though at times we focus on our differences, the Jewish nation of Israel is truly one family. I have a colleague who lives in Rechovot, and we live different lifestyles. Last Pesach, after three members of the Dee family were tragically murdered, my co-worker immediately reached out to me to see how my family and the Efrat community were doing. Just a few short weeks later, a rocket from Gaza hit a building and killed a person in Rechovot right near where my co-worker lived. After checking in on my co-worker, I stopped to reflect on how we all are one nation, one people.



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Israel: Our Hope and Pride

Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks ל"צז

Rabbi Sacks delivered this address at the Bnei Akiva Yom HaAtzmaut ceremony on May 11, 2005 at Finchley Synagogue.

“**A**nd he said, ‘Your name shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, because you have commanding power with [an angel of] G-d and with men, and you have prevailed!’” (Bereishit 32:29).

Not lightly does the Torah give the name Israel to our people and to our Land, for it means “you have struggled with G-d and with men, and have prevailed.” To be a Jew, to be a member of *Am Yisrael*, has always been a struggle, sometimes with G-d, sometimes with our fellow human beings. But that is our destiny, our call, our task.

For more than 2,000 years the Jewish calendar went without significant addition, whether of new holy days or new fast days, whether of remembrances of grief or of joy. Four new days have been added, all in the period of *Sefirat HaOmer*, between Pesach and Shavuot, between the Exodus and revelation – two days of grief, two days of joy; Yom HaShoah and Yom HaZikaron on the one hand, Yom HaAtzmaut and Yom Yerushalayim on the other.

The American writer Milton Himmelfarb once said that we are a tiny people, but great things seem to happen around us and to us. Already before the 20th century, Jewish history was recognized as unique: by Pascal, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Tolstoy. Little could they have known that some of the most dramatic of all chapters of Jewish history were yet to be written: the *Shoah*, the attempt once and for all to silence the Jewish voice and eliminate the Jewish presence, *rachmanah litzlan*, from the face of the earth.

On Yom HaZikaron, we remember those who fell in Israel’s defense as they discovered that the Jewish people still have to fight for the right to be, to exist, to have one place on earth where we can defend ourselves.

Yet out of the very depths of those very tragedies came two of the greatest moments in 2,000 years of history: Yom HaAtzmaut – the

restoration of Jewish sovereignty after 1,900 years – and Yom Yerushalayim, the return to the ancient and holy city, Jerusalem, home of the Jewish heart, focus of all our prayers, embodiment of all our hopes.

Yet Israel is again under attack. At the very moment that terror is being contained, Israel is facing a new attack – a systematic campaign of delegitimization and demonisation among the media, non-governmental organizations, university teachers, and perhaps even among the churches – as if the cause of peace, or justice, or reconciliation, or coexistence were served by listening to only one voice in the conversation, only one side, the other side, in the conflict.

No one summed up the irony of our present situation better than the Israeli writer Amos Oz. “In the 1930s, our enemies said: Jews to Palestine. Now they say: Jews out of Palestine. They don’t want us to be here. They don’t want us to be there. They don’t want us to be.”

Why? Why, after 57 years and more of seeking peace, is Israel still seen as the aggressor? Why, after ten years of negotiation, in which the Palestinians were offered their own state in all of Gaza, 97% of the West Bank, with a capital in East Jerusalem, is Israel still seen as the sole obstacle to peace? Why, in a world in which there are 57 Islamic states and something like 100 Christian ones, is the desire of the Jewish people to have just one state of its own seen as – G-d forbid – racist or exclusionary? Why, when Israel occupies a quarter of one percent of the land mass of the Arab world, is it deemed to be Goliath against David? Why, alone among the almost 200 nations that comprise the United Nations, is Israel the only one whose very right to be is still called into question? Why is the Israel-Palestinian conflict seen by one European public after another as the greatest threat to world peace, when anyone with the most rudimentary understanding

of the contemporary world knows full well that were – G-d forbid a million times – Israel to cease to be, not one of those problems of the world would be changed by a millimeter?

There would still be conflict in Kashmir, Chechnya, Bosnia, Kosovo, Indonesia, the Philippines, China, Sudan, Algeria, and Zimbabwe. There would still be global warming, poverty, illiteracy, disease. Most people of the world would still be deprived of the most basic freedoms and human rights. All that would have happened is that the bravest experiment of modern times – the introduction of freedom and democracy into a corner of the Middle East – would have failed, and with it the hopes of many peoples, not just our own.

Why is Israel blamed for almost every problem affecting the 21st century? Why is Israel held up as the explanation for the underachievement, inequality, and lack of human rights in other countries?

This afternoon, I attended the service of remembrance for the victims of the tsunami with its devastating loss of life throughout the Indian Ocean. The tsunami. A tidal wave. I thought, here was a disaster for which Israel could not be blamed. I was wrong. Within days a religious teacher (in another part of the world) let it be known that the tsunami was caused by Israel's program of nuclear testing. When it comes to hate, the capacity for self-delusion knows no bounds.

Why, when the whole history of the 20th century tells us what happens when hate is unchecked, when lies are told in the media as truth – as they were in the case of Jenin – when universities discriminate against this or that one, we know what happens at the end of that path that begins that way. Why do these things still happen?

Do we still – after 60 years of Holocaust education, 60 years of anti-racist legislation, 60 years of inter-faith activity – have to defend the right of the Jewish people to be?

All too often, in defense of Israel against defamation, we, the Jewish people have had to stand alone. No people should be left to face hate alone. As Martin Luther King said, “In the end we will remember not the words of our enemies but the silence of our friends.”

“You shall be called Israel, for you have wrestled with G-d and with men.”

Consider the five overriding problems that will face all humanity in the 21st century:

1. The environment: Israel was the first country in the modern world to plant trees, not cut them down, to reforest not deforest. Long before ecology had entered the moral imagination, the Jewish people were turning a land that for centuries lay desolate into a fertile landscape of farms and forests and fields.
2. Asylum seekers. Israel is the only country other than the United States built out of asylum seekers. They came from 103 different countries, speaking 82 different languages, and out of that global mixture of refugees a great nation was born.
3. Terror: Israel's security fence, so often described as a wall, is the only effective non-violent protection against terror yet devised in this age of global terror.

4. Economic divisions: according to Harvard University's Professor of Economic History, David Landes, only one country in the world has moved in 50 years from being a third world economy to a first world economy, and that is Israel.
5. Democratic freedom: Not only is Israel the only genuine democracy in the Middle East, but it has sustained its democratic freedoms under strains and stresses that would have broken the back of weaker cultures.

If there were justice in the world, Israel, a tiny country of indomitable courage, would be seen as the role model among the nations, not the pariah among the nations.

“You shall be called Israel, for you have wrestled with G-d and with men.” The struggle continues and is part of what it means to be a Jew.

Yet today, this evening is a religious moment, and of all the words in the religious vocabulary of *Am Yisrael* and *Torat Yisrael*, the key one is the word: *emunah*.

Emunah is normally translated as faith, but it does not mean faith. What it means is faithfulness, loyalty, not walking away when times are tough. It means being steadfast in our loyalty to our people and our Land, the home of all our hopes, the place where long ago the Jewish people was born, and where, within living memory, it has been reborn.

Ve'erastich li be'emunah. We are betrothed to Israel in unbreakable, unshakable loyalty. Nothing will stand between Israel and our love.

Not for nothing were our people and land called Israel. Throughout more than a hundred generations of our history, we have known that to be a Jew involves struggle – sometimes with our fellow human beings, sometimes with G-d, sometimes with both. Yet in that very name, a momentous hope, a promise, was born – that though the people of Israel must struggle, *vatuchal* – it will always prevail. That, for the State of Israel, is our faith and our prayer. Israel is our hope, our people's freedom, and our pride.

And so it will be forever. Amen.



The Rabbi Sacks Legacy

perpetuates the timeless and universal wisdom of Rabbi Lord Jonathan Sacks as a teacher of Torah, a leader of leaders and a moral voice. Explore the digital archive, containing much of Rabbi Sacks' writings, broadcasts and speeches, at www.rabbisacks.org, and follow The Rabbi Sacks Legacy on social media @RabbiSacks.

Manna and Miracles

Lessons from the Desert

Rabbanit Sharon Rimon

After the Israelites' period in the desert, when they were indoctrinated into a life governed by the will of G-d, they arrived at the border of the "good Land," as described at length in Devarim 8:7-10. Life in the desert was not an ideal way of life but merely a "series of lessons" that Israel must learn in preparation for entering the Land.

Life in the Land, one overflowing with bountiful abundance, would be completely different from life in the desert. The contrast between "He afflicted you and starved you" in the desert and the abundance in the Land of Israel is salient. In the sparse desert, the people ate in order to survive, but in the Land of Israel – flowing with water and rich with fruit – they would eat to satiety.

This seems to be an appropriate ending to the chapter: after the desert's "series of lessons," the Israelites would – having internalized the awareness that all blessings come directly from G-d and having learned to live a life fully governed by G-d – be worthy of inheriting the Land.

However, it appears that, despite their lengthy desert education, the people of Israel were still not immune to forgetting G-d, and *Moshe Rabbeinu* saw fit to warn them accordingly. Although G-d had educated the Israelites to place all their trust in Him during times of hardship

and crisis, that did not guarantee that they would place all their trust in Him during times of plenty. That is because, when a person is accustomed to receiving bounty in a natural, material way, he is liable to grow arrogant and forget that it is G-d who is bestowing all of this goodness upon him.

Therefore, in the concluding section of chapter 8, Moshe describes the desert period from a slightly different perspective. He describes how terrible it was and how it was fraught with dangers like snakes, scorpions, and lack of water. In those circumstances, G-d was Israel's benefactor, Who made their journey through the desert possible, brought water out from the rock, and gave them manna.

Thus, according to this concluding section, Israel received G-d's kindness in the desert, an experience meant to imprint awareness of the Source of all good on their minds and lead them to recognize that everything good comes from G-d: "And you shall remember Hashem your G-d, for it is He who gives you strength to produce wealth" (Devarim 8:18).

In this concluding section, Moshe describes the Israelites' desert years as a time when G-d provided for all of their needs in a miraculous way. Water flowed from the rock and the clouds of glory surrounded them, protecting them

from snakes and scorpions and smoothing the way before them. The purpose of this period was to imbue Israel with the quality of gratitude and to prepare them for the abundance awaiting them in the Land of Israel.

When everything comes to a person directly from G-d, without any effort on his part, he is liable to take everything for granted rather than recognize that this abundance is a gift from Heaven. How can a person be thankful to G-d for saving him from snakes and scorpions when he is wrapped in the protective clouds of glory and has never even seen a snake and scorpion?

For this reason, G-d gave the Israelites the manna. Its purpose was to teach them an important lesson. "Who gave you manna to eat in the desert, something your ancestors had never known, to afflict you in order to test you so that in the end it might go well with you?" (Devarim 8:16). Although the manna was one of the good things that G-d bestowed upon Israel, it had a certain aspect of affliction and trial, and, as such, it prepared Israel for the goodness that they would receive in the future.

How was the manna a trial and affliction for Israel?

The manna was given to the Children of Israel in order to solve the problem

of hunger in the desert. In this sense, it is similar to the water that flowed from the rock, which solved the problem of thirst. However, unlike the water, which – although it was produced in a supernatural way – was an ordinary substance, the manna was a new creation whose very existence was miraculous.

The wondrous quality of the manna was a constant reminder of its Divine source. The manna was unknown in the world before this time – “that you did not know and that your forefathers knew not” – and was created for Israel’s needs in the desert. The procedure of collecting the manna was subject to strict rules, unlike usual eating. A specific amount had to be gathered, none could be left for the next day, and twice as much had to be gathered on Fridays. The manna followed Divine rules: it would rot overnight but not on Fridays and, according to the *Midrash*, no matter how much each person gathered, he would always end up with the same amount. Finally, the people were aware of their dependence upon the manna, which fell anew each day, and only enough for that day (except on Fridays).

The manna’s unique quality complemented the Divine profusion of the clouds of glory. Unlike the clouds of glory, whose purpose was to fulfill the people’s needs completely, to the extent that they were not even aware of the dangers they faced, the manna was a gift that served as a constant reminder of unceasing Divine abundance.

Thus, the manna functioned as a test for Israel. In the plainest sense, it tested whether they would follow G-d’s instructions on how to gather the manna – not to gather more than required for that day, not to leave over for the next day, and not to go out gathering on Shabbat. But the manna was also a psychological test. The people had to be completely, utterly dependent on G-d, having faith that He would bring down manna from

the heavens every day, without having any food stored for times of need. The manna forced the Children of Israel into a perpetual state of utter dependence on G-d.

The people expressed their cravings for a richer, diversified menu, complaining about the monotony of the manna and concluded, “We never see anything but this manna!” Ramban explains: “[The people] said, ‘We never see anything but this manna. Even the food we live on is not in our hands, so that we would feel full and satisfied. But we constantly desire it and lift up our eyes to see if it is coming. All we have is our hope for the manna.’ Regarding the nature of this affliction, our Sages (*Yoma* 74b) expressed the well-known analogy that a person who lacks a loaf in his basket is not comparable to a person who possesses a loaf in his basket” (Ramban, Bamidbar 11:6).

On the one hand, the manna was a gift from above, bestowed upon Israel in G-d’s kindness, which enabled their existence in the desert. But on the other hand, it was a perpetual test, a difficult trial.

As the Israelites stood at the threshold of the Land of Israel, a land flowing with milk and honey, Moshe twice mentioned their time in the desert so that they would not forget the important lesson that they had learned there. The Israelites’ time in the desert taught them to trust in G-d, Who controls and rules all, and to know that everything – both the good and the bad – is governed by Him.

Moshe described the years spent in the desert in two different passages, teaching Israel that there are two realities that may lead a person to stop keeping the *mitzvot*: either crisis and difficulty, when a person may feel that G-d is not helping him, or even that G-d is afflicting him, or abundance, when a person’s life is so filled with earthly goodness that he may forget the true Source of goodness.

The manna was an answer to both of these potential states of mind. On the one hand, a person could learn from it that even in times of difficulty and affliction, G-d bestows goodness on humanity. Then he would realize how his life is governed by G-d and understand that G-d was teaching him a lesson through hardship, just as parents educate their children: “For by every word that proceeds out of Hashem’s mouth does [a person] live...” (Devarim 8:3), “And you shall know in your heart that as a father disciplines his son, so Hashem your G-d is disciplining you” (ibid. 8:5). The Children of Israel must remember the lessons learned in their collective “childhood” in the desert, where they “grew up” before arriving upon the border of the Land of Israel with all of its abundance.

On the other hand, manna represented constant abundance, which must not be taken for granted. The manna taught Israel that they were entirely dependent on G-d, and that this would also apply in the times of abundance when they would enter the Land of Israel. Even when they would become people of wealth, they must remember that their wealth comes from G-d: “And you shall remember Hashem your G-d, for it is He who gives you strength to produce wealth” (Devarim 8:8).



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AMIT
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Achievements of the representatives of the Orthodox Israel Coalition in the National Institutions as part of Mizrachi's global representation.

30,000

participants in international conventions for strengthening the connection to the State of Israel

2 million

NIS towards supporting solidarity delegations during the war

290

Teacher Shlichim in 126 schools in 97 cities worldwide **including over 200 in schools across the US**

27 million

NIS raised for youth villages and Israeli Religious Zionist institutions

4 million

NIS towards activities in Religious Zionist communities across the world





MIZRACHI
WORLD MOVEMENT

From the front lines of the IDF to projects around Israel, World Mizrachi has been playing its part in the war effort in Israel.



Gael Grunewald
Deputy Chairman, WZO



Roi Abecassis
Deputy Chairman, KKL



1,000,000+

views on digital content and inspiration connected with the war

88 million

NIS raised

benefiting 50 yeshivot and seminaries and 3,000 gap year students from the US through Masa funding and annual Mizrachi Causematch campaigns since the last World Zionist Organization election

90+

Mizrachi missions to Israel from 14 countries around the world



4,000

yeshiva and seminary students participated in educational activities, including Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut events



40,000

soldiers received crucial equipment through the Sulamot/Tzevet Perez campaign, including 5,000 ceramic vests

600

Religious Zionist shlichim including 380 across the US will be in communities across the globe in 5784, coordinated by the Shlichut Center

3300+

letters and videos received from 13 countries sent to soldiers and schoolchildren in Israel



2 million

NIS towards Religious Zionist activities across France with 100 guest speakers, and supporting absorption of French olim



160+

members of Mizrachi staff, program participants and shlichim serving in the IDF

The Joy of Settling Eretz Yisrael

Rabbi Zalman Baruch Melamed

In honor of Yom HaAtzmaut 5783, Israel's 75th anniversary, World Mizrachi partnered with Yeshivat Beit El to translate the drashot of Rabbi Zalman Baruch Melamed, the Rosh Yeshiva of Yeshivat Beit El. These drashot were delivered over many decades on Yom HaZikaron and Yom HaAtzmaut in the yeshiva. The following is a selection from Chapter 31, Yom HaAtzmaut 61 (5769).

A gift acquired via tribulations

Living in *Eretz Yisrael* is both a gift and a *mitzvah*. The Sages taught: “G-d gave three gifts to Israel... Torah, Eretz Yisrael, and the World to Come” (*Berachot* 5a). Torah and *Eretz Yisrael* are both a *mitzvah* and a gift. But why is Torah considered a gift, if we see in *Pirkei Avot* that “the Torah is acquired in 48 ways” (6:5). What kind of gift is it if we have to pay such a high price for it in the form of hard work and much effort?

The answer is that although we have to pay for the Torah, what we receive is worth much more than the price we pay. G-d exacts a “price” from us, but it is like paying ten shekels for a house worth millions. Is that a sale or a gift? People often say about a purchase they made, “What a find it was!” They mean they paid so little that it was as if they found it on the street. This is also what is meant by the Sages’ dictum on Torah study: “If you worked hard and found [results], you can believe it,” meaning, it is logical to call it a find; this is because the value of the Torah is

so great that even after you work hard for it, what you achieve is actually a great “find.”

The same is true for *Eretz Yisrael*; it is a *mitzvah* and also a gift, and is acquired through suffering. It would seem to be an expensive purchase, but the suffering and efforts that we invest are small in relation to the Land’s value. It is thus a “gift acquired via tribulations.”

וְהָיָה כִּי תָבוֹא אֶל הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר ה' אֱ-לֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ בְּנְחֻלָּה וּבִירֻשָׁתָהּ וַיִּשְׁבְּתָהּ בָּהּ. וְלָקַחְתָּ מִרְאשִׁית כָּל פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה...
...מִרְאשִׁית כָּל פְּרֵי הָאֲדָמָה...

“It shall be that when you come to the land that Hashem your G-d gives you for an inheritance, and you possess it and settle in it, you shall take of the first of all the fruits of the ground...” (*Devarim* 26:1-2).

The classic commentator Ohr HaChaim explains that the first word of this verse, וְהָיָה, meaning “it shall be”, signifies happiness (*Bereishit Rabbah* 42:3). He writes that this “tells us that we must be happy only in the settling of the Land, as is written in Tehillim



(126:1-2), Then [when G-d returns us to Zion] our mouths will be filled with laughter.”

The Ohr HaChaim explains that this verse includes four commandments: 1. “That Hashem your G-d gives you” – to remember that it is Hashem Who gives us this land; 2. “and you possess it” – to dispossess the gentiles living there of the Land and inherit it from the hands of G-d’s enemies, even if you have other places to live; 3. “and settle in it” – the *mitzvah* to settle in *Eretz Yisrael*; and 4. “you shall take of the first of all the fruits”, known as the *bikkurim*, and bring them to Jerusalem.

There is no joy equal to the joy of settling in *Eretz Yisrael* – and happiness must be expressed in song, as we will now see.

Levels in song

The Talmud teaches: “The Holy One, Blessed be He, wanted to make King Chizkiyahu the *Mashiach*, and the war of Sanheriv (Sennacherib) would be the final war, that of Gog and Magog. The Attribute of Judgment protested: ‘Master of the Universe! King David sang songs of praise to You and yet You did not make him the *Mashiach* – so why should You make Chizkiyahu the *Mashiach*, who did not sing songs of praise to You even though You did all these miracles for him?!’” (*Sanhedrin* 94a).

This must be clarified. We read in the words of the prophet Yeshayahu that on the night that Sanheriv was overwhelmingly defeated before Chizkiyahu, הַשִּׁיר יִהְיֶה לָכֶם כְּלַיִל הַתְּקִדָּשׁ הָג וְשִׁמְחָת, לָבָב כְּהוֹלֵךְ בְּחִלְלֵי הַלַּיְלָה, “This song shall be to you as the night of the sanctification of the festival, and the joy of heart like one who goes with a flute” (*Yeshayahu* 30:29). That means that there was a song that night!

Perhaps we can say that because Chizkiyahu took no action to fight Sanheriv, but slept in his bed while Hashem killed his enemies (*Midrash Petichta Eichah Rabbati* 30), his song of praise was not on a very high level, but only on the level of one who had no partnership in the salvation. David, however, actively fought his own wars, and consequently his songs of praise were much more meaningful.

This, however, presents an apparent difficulty, as the opposite took place at the crossing of the Red Sea, when Israel was not proactive and yet their song, the Song of the Sea, was quite significant! To this we can say that in truth, both the Song of the Sea and Chizkiyahu’s song were merely songs of thanks, while David’s song, composed by one who took an active role in bringing G-d’s plan to fruition, was much more than thanks, rendering it potentially strong enough to bring the *Mashiach*.

And we must know there is another condition that will enable the coming of the *Mashiach*: The generation must be on the level of that of King Chizkiyahu, about which is written, “The yoke shall be destroyed because of oil” (*Yeshayahu* 10:27). The Talmud explains what this means: “Rav Yitzchak Nafcha says: The yoke of Sanheriv was destroyed due to the oil of Chizkiyahu that would burn in the synagogues and study halls at night [because the Jewish people were engaged in Torah study. The learning was so widespread that] they searched from Dan in the north to Be’er Sheva in the south, and did not find an ignoramus; they searched from Gevat to Antipatris and found no child, man or woman who was not expert in the complex laws of ritual purity and impurity” (*Sanhedrin* 94b).

That is, in order to bring the *Mashiach*, both conditions are required: spiritual wholeness and song. This is a song with completeness of faith, a “new song.” ■

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Zo Artzeinu This is OUR land

JEW'S with VIEWS

We asked five accomplished Jews from around the world: What moment in your life made you proudest to be Israeli?



Rabbi Ben Menora

Early in my IDF service, I was heading back to base one Sunday morning and ran into a friend who had already been serving for a while. He asked me how my service was going, and I said “great.” Somewhat skeptical, he said: “I guess ‘the slap’ hasn’t hit you yet.”

Soon after, our commanders woke us up one night for high intensity training – with gas masks on. At one point they gave us a short break. After removing my gas mask, a commander called me out in front of everyone: “Menora, you think this is funny?! You better wipe that smile off your face, or I’ll make you!”

When I couldn’t stop smiling, he let me explain myself. I told him how happy I was to be there. After thousands of years, Hashem brought us home, and gave us opportunities to build our Land, our state and our army. At that moment, I felt so proud to be living that full experience of Hashem’s gift.

I later realized it was that perspective that kept the “slap” away during my service. It is that perspective that makes me proud and grateful to be Israeli every day since.

Rabbi Ben Menora and his wife Ellie are graduates of Mizrahi’s Shalhevet program, and are the OU-JLIC directors at Binghamton University.



Ayelet Glatt

The moment I felt proudest to be an Israeli was shortly after October 7th. While I did not fully grasp the magnitude of the tragedy that struck us on Simchat Torah, I distinctly remember feeling so immensely proud when reading that over 300,000 Israelis had already made it back home, ready for whatever their country might need from them.

I myself had just returned to Israel after two years of *shlichut* in Cape Town, South Africa, only three weeks before the beginning of the war. Many people asked me if I regretted coming back right before the war. My answer to them was: “On the contrary! In times like these, there is absolutely no other place I’d rather be than at home, with my people, my amazing, crazy people, a third of a million of whom dropped everything they were doing around the world to sprint back to a country under attack.”

“Who is like Your people, Israel?” What we witnessed in the weeks following October 7th was nothing short of supernatural.

Ayelet Glatt is the international coordinator for Shagririm BaLev. She has a degree in Tanach and Special Education from Herzog College, and was a World Bnei Akiva shlicha in Cape Town.



Marc Rosenberg

There are so many rich moments over the past 21 years that have made my life in Israel extremely meaningful and significant. I have had the amazing privilege of escorting a plane full of 250 new *olim* aboard a Nefesh B'Nefesh charter flight – walking down the aisle of the plane with a wide spectrum of Jews in age, practice and beliefs, all heading in the same direction to build their lives together in Israel.

My niece in New Rochelle reminded me of an experience that stands out the most. Six years ago, I was at the airport very early to receive an *Aliyah* flight. Among thousands of people who came to celebrate the arrival, we cheered and shouted as they came off the bus. When it seemed like the last bus had arrived, the crowds flowed into the hangar for the start of a welcome ceremony. Suddenly, we noticed an El Al truck pulling up – a special vehicle that helps wheelchair bound passengers deplane. The group turned around to run, dance and shout to welcome an elderly couple who were making *Aliyah*, just arriving a bit later than others. I recognized them; both Holocaust survivors, they were parents of our neighbors in Jerusalem. Eighty years ago, elderly people were the first to be murdered by the Nazis. But now, the way hundreds of Israelis fulfilled the *mitzvah* of respecting our elders with love and care made me beam in pride at the Jewish nation and how far we have come.

Marc Rosenberg is the VP of Diaspora Partnerships at Nefesh B'Nefesh, which is revitalizing Aliyah from North America. He is an experienced educator and lives in Jerusalem with his wife and family.



Yocheved Hartman

I was deeply proud to be Israeli when I watched President Herzog speak on video to the rally in Washington earlier this year. I was proud to belong to a country with a President who speaks a Jewish language, cited ancient Jewish texts and used G-d's name in his blessings.

I am proud to call Israel my home, I am proud that the Jewish people have a spiritual and national homeland, and that I have the great privilege of helping build it.

Yocheved Hartman spearheaded the Mizrahi missions throughout the past few months, and is studying in the 'Morot l'halacha' program at Matan HaSharon.



Rabbi Aharon Herskovitz

As part of our preparation for *shlichut* in the UK five years ago, I went with other emissaries-in-training to welcome a group of *olim* who were getting off a plane from France. A massive event was arranged to welcome them, with music and food, family and friends, government figures and technical staff all on hand to greet these new arrivals with flags, singing and hugs. I remember the look of joy on the *olim*'s faces, the feeling that they had arrived in a new country that was happy that they were here, and feeling a strong sense of pride.

In many places around the world, immigration is viewed as a problem that has to be “managed” one way or another. Even when immigrants are welcome, it is often out of a sense of pity for people who were suffering in their home countries. But here immigration is viewed as a blessing. It's not about strangers we are allowing into our land, but about welcoming home our brothers and sisters.

Rabbi Aharon Herskovitz is the Rav of Kehillat Shevet Achim in Netanya, where he lives with his wife and five children. He also works as a clinical psychologist in Ra'anana.



MIZRACHI
WORLD MOVEMENT



Unity in Action: Sulamot and La'Ofek in Times of Chaos

Sulamot and La'Ofek, both founded by Rav Yosef Zvi Rimon to address the diverse needs of Am Yisrael, usually tread separate paths. Sulamot, nurturing Jewish education and Jewish communal strength; La'Ofek empowering marginalized Israelis with employment opportunities.

Yet, amidst the chaos of war, they merge seamlessly. Sulamot standing with IDF soldiers and evacuated communities; La'Ofek with jobs and a support network for evacuees, each expanding their reach while maintaining their core missions.

We salute and thank the thousands of friends and partners from the four corners of the Jewish world who have joined us in this ongoing journey, continuing to make it possible.

SULAMOT

Simchat Torah 5784 / October 7, 2023

Rav Rimon provides spiritual and halachic guidance to soldiers on their way to the battlefield.

October 8

Urgent influx of requests for ceramic vests, helmets, and vital gear.

October 9

Logistical center established to provide urgently needed gear to soldiers, coordinating directly with the IDF and global partners for swift aid delivery to soldiers and evacuated communities.

October 10

Rav Rimon travels to Gaza border to provide support and chizzuk for IDF soldiers.

October 20

Sulamot successfully delivers 5,000 ceramic bullet proof vests to soldiers on the front lines!

October 22

Atufim Project Launch: Support extended to communities on the Gaza border, starting with Netiv Ha'Asarah, Zikit, and Holit.

Logistical and financial aid provided alongside community resilience and rehabilitation assistance.

LA'OFEK

Motzei Simchat Torah 5784 / October 7, 2023

Urgent check-ins with Ta'asuchayil program's lone soldiers.

October 16

Assessing financial and employment needs of evacuees at hotel locations.

October 22

Consultations with Homefront Command and welfare offices.

November 2023

Global Jewish communities start to adopt southern communities through Project Atufim
Sulamot's Project Atufim adopts Moshav Yachini, Shokeda, and Tzochar.

November 5

"Atufim for Employment" Program Launches: Employment aid and mentoring for displaced people from Israel's south and north based on our successful JobKatif model.

November 15

Over 700 individuals from north and south seek employment assistance.

Atufim Employment team tackles evacuee trauma, distant transportation, and childcare hurdles.

December 2023

Project Atufim extends to Kerem Shalom.

December 2023

"Atufim for Employment" doubles employer network from 2,000 to 4,000.

January 2024

Expansion Continues: Project Atufim adopts Talmei Eliyahu.

January 2024

New CRM system implemented for effective management of needs of 1,500 evacuees.

February 2024

Southern community of Yated joins Project Atufim.
Shokeda community begins the process of returning home.

February 2024

Reintegration of Ta'asuchayil soldiers into employment, addressing the needs of impoverished and lone soldiers returning to work after several months at battle.

March 2024

Camera security system purchased and installed in Tzochar.
Tzochar initiates the process of returning home.

March 2024

Deployment of efficient website to cater to the requirements of employers and displaced citizens.

April 2024

7 adopted communities remain displaced.
Rehabilitation programming for 9 southern communities continues; communities that have returned home still endure rocket fire and the unsettling sounds and tremors from Gaza explosions.

April 2024

Hundreds more evacuees secure jobs through website platform, increasing our reach to over 1,800 evacuees.

May 2024

Introducing the Achdut Project: Bringing together youth and adults from varied secular and religious backgrounds through collaborative dialogue, planning, and project creation to foster unity.

May 2024

First Yom HaZikaron & Yom Ha'atzmaut since October 7th: La'Ofek programs continue to strengthen Israeli society in its most vulnerable sectors through education, employment, and empowerment.

"In these historic times, unity must prevail, shaping a new chapter for Am Yisrael," says founder Rav Rimon. "It's imperative to translate unity into tangible action, leveraging the profound surge of solidarity inspired by the war as a catalyst for sustained unity on both macro and micro levels."

Teaching by Example: It's Time to Go Home

Rabbi James Kennard

A colleague once said to me, “Everyone should make *Aliyah*, except *mechanchim* (Jewish educators).” His logic seemed sound; a teacher in the Diaspora can make a great impact on young people’s lives and Jewish growth, while in Israel they are unlikely to find a similar role, given that the supply of educators there vastly outstrips the demand. For the sake of the greater good of the Jewish people, they should not move to Israel.

I disagree. One Jew has as much “right” to make *Aliyah* as any other, whatever their profession. To tell a Jew, especially one imbued with Religious Zionism, that he or she should not fulfill the *mitzvah* of living in Israel is analogous to telling him not to observe Pesach.

Still, should the community ask *mechanchim* to deny their personal dream of *Aliyah*? The argument in favor is predicated on there only being one way to contribute to the growth of the Jewish people – by working in education. Yet that perspective itself demonstrates clearly the profoundly different natures of Jewish life in Israel and in the Diaspora. Diaspora Jews live their Jewish lives in their *shuls* and schools on the margins of their “general” lives. Thus there is considerable “Jewish” impact that an educator can make, but far less for those employed in other fields.

Conversely, Jewish life in Israel is manifest in every aspect of life – in schools and *shuls* certainly, but also in hospitals, offices, in the orchard and on the street. A fine Jewish educator in the Diaspora can be a fine member of Israeli society and can find myriad ways to contribute to the Jewish future.

A crucial element of the Zionist dream was that Jewish destiny would be forged, not in America or Europe, but in the

Jewish state. We are blessed to see the fulfillment of this vision. When the history of the Jewish people in the modern era is written, there will be sections devoted to Diaspora communities, but the chapter headings will be Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Sad though it may be, Australia will be a footnote. A citizen of Israel is playing a part in determining that destiny simply by being in Israel and taking part in the Jewish conversation.

If an educator wants to continue working in Jewish education in Israel, it is not true to say there are no opportunities. A vast number of schools, *yeshivot*, seminaries and other projects cry out for talented staff. It is a tough field with much competition, but it is a fallacy to say that there are no educational opportunities, just as it is untrue to say that a Diaspora educator can never be replaced. As we all know, no one is indispensable.

These arguments apply now, more than ever. This is not because Jews in the Diaspora are experiencing levels of antisemitism we have not seen since the Shoah. Israel is treated as a pariah, and Jews as alien and untrustworthy. As the horrors of October 7 began to sink in, we expected little sympathy for Israel and its victims; what we did not foresee was how quickly Israel would be charged as the aggressor and the atrocities meted against her ignored, denied or justified. Antisemitism did not die after the Holocaust; it was only sleeping, and we are living through its re-awakening.

Fleeing to Israel in times of emergency is not the fulfillment of the Zionist vision. Rather, now is the time to move to Israel to show solidarity with our brothers and sisters in their time of trial. Yet even more critical is the opportunity to play a part in Israel’s future at a time when our people are at a crossroads. Will the unity of the last six months deepen and continue, or

will it dissipate in favor of the divisions that were so stark last year and may still lurk below the surface? Will the various “tribes” of Israel treat each other with respect and tolerance, and find a way to share burdens equally?

B’ezrat Hashem, my wife and I will be making *Aliyah* in the next few weeks. We look forward to being close to our children who live there, and to being part of our grandchildren’s lives. We also feel the chill of growing antisemitism. But the overwhelming motivation for our move is to be part of Israel’s future and the future of the Jewish people. I believe that contribution is no less than that of the crucial work of our *mechanchim* in the Diaspora.

There may be individual cases where the calculus is different, where a teacher can best serve the Jewish people by continuing in their role. Since moving to Israel is ultimately a *halachic* imperative, a *halachic* expert should be consulted. But the notion that an educator must always remain at their post is unsound. Perhaps the very best lesson a Jewish educator can teach is to lead by example and come home.



Rabbi James Kennard
is the outgoing Principal of Mount Scopus
Memorial College in Melbourne, Australia.



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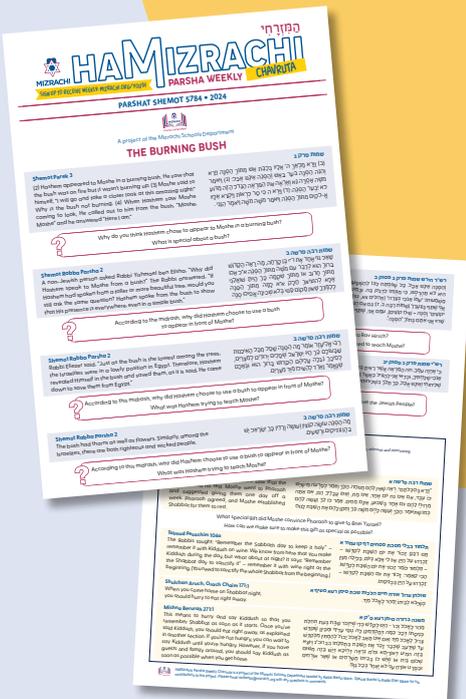


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El Malei Rachamim for Soldiers and 10/7

Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Brody

On November 17th, 1949, the young State of Israel buried 323 soldiers and citizens who were killed in Gush Etzion, Latrun, and elsewhere during the War of Independence. Stores were shuttered throughout Jerusalem as tens of thousands came to pay final respects during the first military funeral at Mt. Herzl. What prayer does one say on such an occasion?

The man arguably most responsible for making these burials possible was IDF Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren. For weeks, he and his comrades made painstaking efforts to locate and retrieve the corpses and body parts of killed fighters. At times, they even entered minefields within enemy territory. Clearly, an appropriate *tefillah* had to be composed for this somber moment.

Rabbi Goren chose to adapt the classic *El Malei Rachamim* memorial prayer with the following tribute: “G-d, full of mercy... grant fitting rest... to the souls of the Israel Defense Forces that sacrificed their lives for the sanctification of G-d’s name, the nation, and the Land.” This became the basis for the prayer recited at all military funerals and on Yom HaZikaron.

A few weeks later, on the eve of Chanukah, the prayer was similarly adapted by the Israeli Chief Rabbinate to commemorate the Jews, known as “*ma’apilim*,” who died at sea while attempting to make it to the shores of Israel. As Dr. Yoel Rappel has shown, the text continued to be utilized after other tragedies. When an El Al flight was shot down over Bulgaria in 1955, killing 58, Rabbi Goren’s prayer commemorated the “holy souls of our brothers and sisters... whose blood was spilled over foreign soil.”

This powerful Israeli use of *El Malei Rachamim* is the latest way in which the storied prayer has been utilized to memorialize communal tragedies. The *tefillah* itself is first referred to in *Yaven M’tzulah* (“Abyss of Despair”), a book by Nathan of Hanover, who chronicled the Chmielnicki

massacres in 1648–49. He describes how a certain cantor, Reb Hirsch of Zywtow, mournfully chanted *El Malei Rachamim* over their brethren slaughtered in 1648, which caused everyone to break out in loud cries. An extended version is frequently attributed to Rabbi Yom Tov Lipman Heller, the author of the *Tosafot Yom Tov* commentary, who composed a *selicha* in 1650 to the memory of Rabbi Yechiel Michel of Nemerov and his community. Another version of the text appears in 1656 to memorialize the holy ones murdered in Warsaw and other Polish cities. It is considerably longer than the version that we have today, and reads more like a *kinah* lamentation recited on Tisha B’Av. Various versions of *El Malei Rachamim* were adapted for different tragedies, like the great 1689 fire in Prague.

Over time, the prayer was also utilized to commemorate the loss of individuals on their *yahrzeit* and in *Yizkor*. Rabbi Yosef Eliyahu Henkin argued that the same text should not be used for people who did not die as martyrs; his suggestion, however, was not accepted. Nonetheless, *El Malei Rachamim* remains at its core a prayer composed for martyrs.

In the midst of the Holocaust and soon afterwards, figures like Chief Rabbi Yitzchak Herzog wrote versions in memory of those murdered by the Nazis. At times, the language became contentious, as rabbis, politicians, and historians debated whether to detail the ways in which *Shoah* victims died (should “buried alive” be included?), their countries of origin (why mention some but not others?), and how to mark their murderers (Germans? Nazis? Their allies?). The details are symbolically significant, although most important in my mind is to make sure that we continue to recite one version or another as the number of survivors dwindle. Given this history, it’s not surprising that various versions of *El Malei Rachamim* have already been composed for the victims of October 7th and the subsequent war. One version, composed by IDF Chief Cantor



The funeral procession down King George Street for the 323 fallen soldiers. (PHOTO: WIKIMEDIA COMMONS)

Shai Abramson, is translated on the Ematai website.

To a large extent, the post-1948 versions of *El Malei Rachamim* continue the tradition of 1648. Yet we should never lose sight of one key difference. Since 1948, we not only memorialize those who died as victims but also those who gave their lives as defenders of the Jewish people. Today, the history of *El Malei Rachamim* tells both the travail – and triumph – of Jewish history.



Rabbi Dr. Shlomo Brody
is the executive director of Ematai and the
author of *Ethics of our Fighters: A Jewish
View on War and Morality* (Maggid).



A member of the Mizrahi Speakers Bureau
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Building upon the Ruins of Sichon and Og

Rabbi Eliezer Kashtiel

The conquest of the Land of Israel begins with the acquisition of the lands of Sichon and Og. This territory, located across the Jordan River, would ultimately be settled by the tribes of Gad and Reuven. Interestingly, it was the conquest of the lands of Sichon and Og that enabled Moshe to deliver his final address to the nation.

“It was in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first of the month that Moshe addressed *Bnei Yisrael* in accordance with everything that Hashem had commanded him to [tell] them, after he defeated Sichon the king of the Emori who lived in Cheshbon, and Og the king of the Bashan” (Devarim 1:3–4).

In order to understand the relationship between the defeat of Sichon and Og and Moshe’s address in *Sefer Devarim*, it is crucial to understand what these two kings, and their downfall at the hands of *Bnei Yisrael*, represent.

The conflict between Moshe and these kings calls attention to the sharp contrast between the Jewish concept of monarchy and that of other notions of government. The Jewish approach is rooted in the Torah’s perspective that the word of Hashem must direct the nation and its leadership, just as it guides the individual.

Sichon and Og represent two different forms of government. Rav Kook describes Sichon as a “fierce and ruthless king” who was characterized by “savage inner strength that would erupt without

constraint” (*Olat Re’iyah* 2, 83). His form of government is predicated on the ruler’s power and tyrannical control of his nation. Throughout history, there have been countless despots whose subjects were intimidated by their rulers’ complete lack of restraint and were terrified of disobeying their orders. Sichon’s character is illustrated by his reaction to *Bnei Yisrael*’s simple request to pass through his territory. Being a fearsome and intolerant tyrant, Sichon refused to comply.

In contrast, the leader of the Jewish camp – Moshe – was perfectly refined and humble. His nation did not fear him; rather, they submitted to his authority because they viewed him as a faithful emissary of Hashem. Far from being a cruel tyrant, he was a paragon of self-restraint. Moshe’s example served as a powerful statement to the world: that it is possible to govern with kindness and compassion, rather than resorting to tyranny and intimidation.

Og employed a different style of governance, one that is more commonly encountered in modern times. Og ruled over a rich and fertile land. Og himself was an imposing giant of a man, the embodiment of physicality. His subjects did not submit to his authority out of fear; rather, they were motivated by the promise of material gain.

The king of the Bashan was among the “remnant of the [giant] Refaim” (Devarim 3:11). As a king who ruled over his nation in line with his personal mindset, he

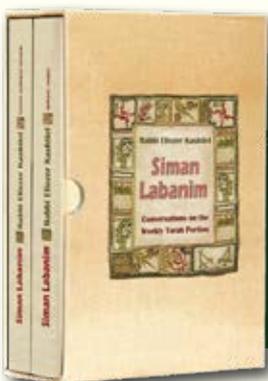
defined success and fulfillment exclusively in terms of material dominance (Rav Kook, *Ein Ayah, Berachot* 2:9:8). Og’s style of leadership exists in many contemporary societies where political leaders often gain power by promising financial benefit.

The Talmud relates that Abba Shaul once chased a deer through a huge thigh bone, which turned out to belong to Og (*Niddah* 24b). *Aggadic* stories such as these are generally interpreted by commentaries as dreams, visions or metaphors, and there is certainly a metaphoric lesson here: A person should pursue purity, symbolized by the deer, not coarse materialism, represented by Og’s thigh bone.

The collapse of the kingdoms of Sichon and Og represented the failures of their respective worldviews – the beliefs that a kingdom could be built on strength and intimidation or on the promise of material bounty alone. It was only after Moshe defeated Sichon and Og, thereby negating their approaches, that he could teach the people how they were to live as a nation in Israel. Today as in ancient times, the struggles between Israel and its enemies are actually a reflection of a battle between competing ideologies and value systems.

● Translation: R. Dovid Sussman

● Editing and adaptation: R. Yitzchak Twersky, Academic Language Experts



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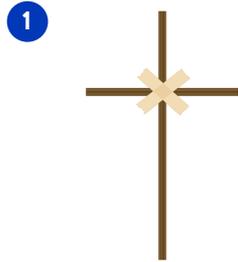
KIDS CORNER

HOW TO MAKE A KITE TO FLY AT YOUR YOM HAATZMAUT BBQ!

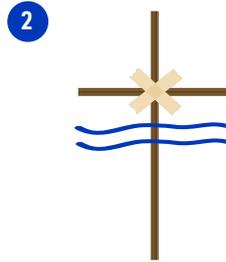


Materials you will need:

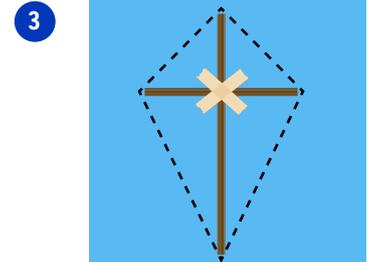
- 2 sticks, one being 4 cm shorter than the other one
- Strong tape
- Plastic table cloth or large garbage bag
- Long string or yarn (at least 100 meters/300 feet)
- A small piece of cardboard to wind the string onto
- Ruler, scissors and a marker



1 Lie the shorter stick horizontally across your bigger stick, a few cm from the middle and tape the sticks together where they crossover.



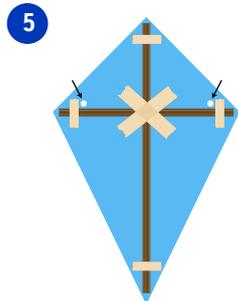
2 Cut a piece from the string that is two times the length of the horizontal stick and set aside.



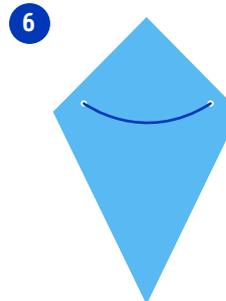
3 Take the taped sticks and lie them on the tablecloth/garbage bag and trace a diamond shape on the bag. Then, cut out the traced diamond shape.



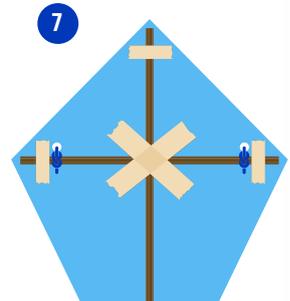
4 Tape down each end of each stick securely to the plastic.



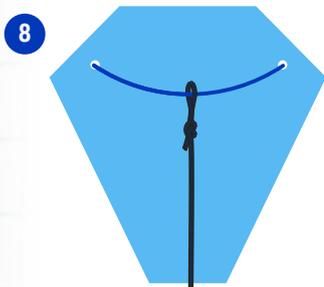
5 Poke a hole on each side of the horizontal sticks just past where the tape was put.



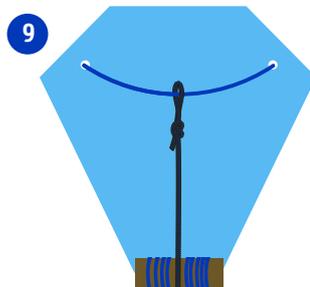
6 Flip the kite over, take the string from step #2, and thread each end of the string through one of the holes.



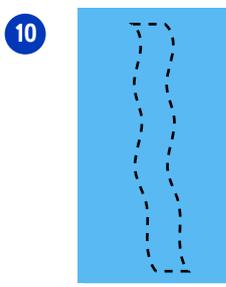
7 Flip the kite back over and tie each end securely to the stick. Repeat on the other side.



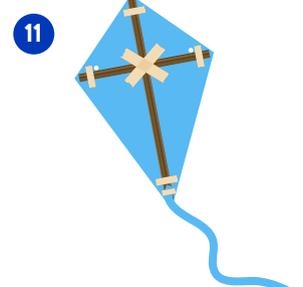
8 Flip the kite over and take the rest of your string and tie it to the middle of the looped string on the front of the kite.



9 Take the end of the rest of the string and wrap it around the cardboard.



10 Cut out a long tail from the leftover plastic.



11 Attach it to the bottom end of the longer stick with tape to act as a tail so that the kite can fly well!

TAKE THE KITE OUT TO YOUR BBQ AND RUN WITH IT WHEN THE WIND STARTS TO PICK UP!



MEET GEULAH COHEN



December 25, 1925 - December 18, 2019 (8 Tevet 5686 - 21 Kislev 5780)

Geulah, one of ten siblings, grew up in Tel Aviv and joined the underground to fight the British when she was seventeen. Due to her strong Hebrew accent, she was chosen to be the announcer on the "Voice of the Jewish Underground" radio station, but was caught by the British in 1946 in the middle of a broadcast and was sentenced to nine years in jail. She managed to escape two different jails and helped edit the Lehi newspaper, The Youth Front. When the State of Israel was established, Geulah tried to be elected to the Knesset; when she was unsuccessful, she became a journalist and writer. Later, in her fifties, Geulah was elected a Member of Knesset where she served for nineteen years working to bring Soviet and Ethiopian Jews to Israel. Until the end of her days, she was a passionate revolutionary who refused to compromise on her political beliefs. When Geulah Cohen was asked how old she was, she said: "I am four thousand years old, like this nation; seventy like the state; ninety-two like my biological age – but I am always eighteen."



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



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- Every year, about 1,000 letters are sent to Jerusalem, Israel, that are addressed to Hashem.
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What was the Hebrew and English date of the founding of the State of Israel?

How many Jews were living in Israel at the time of the founding of the State of Israel?

Which location in Israel is the lowest point on Earth?

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